

The arrival of Sim Coope, broad-faced, northcountry, splayfooted, pale and flabby of face, going bald, with nervous mannerisms of speech as if absent-mindedly lost. He could sparr, however. When he first came he addressed me as "Dir," when I took particulars, and he was installed at Cassier's loft. He slept at Cooper's. Was one of our most conscientious loftmen and like all such men in the army got into trouble early.

The famous Alec came round and Sim happened to be standing in the passage of school billet instead of in garden or loft.

"Why aren't you watching your loft while it's working?"

"I am, sir. I can see the trap from here without scaring the birds--I'm still rather new to them."

"They don't know you by this time. What's that. Now my man, if I ever come round here and find you while your loft's working and you're not in the loft or watching on the spot here, I'll have you court-martialled."

Collapse of Sim with wind up.

Tales of Alec who used to go round stripping corporals if all wasn't in order.

One cpl was having his tea in the estaminet below loft when Alec came.

"How many birds have you got?" ran the formula, the same with which he had stunned Sim, who, too nervous to remember correctly answered 73 at random and got through.

"How many hens, and how many cocks cut down?"

"Is your switch on?"

"Oh, yes, Sir."

They went up and had a look at loft and a bird came in while they were there. No bell from the platform rang.

"I thought you said your switch was on," said Alec with cholera fixing his monocle which he swung about.

"So it is, sir." He always had it fixed while he had his tea so that if a bird came he could help his mate.

Alec went down the stairs to switch. It was not on. The cpl. was stripped. Cpl. swears that Alec turned switch off so he could strip him as he had a grudge against him.

After that morning of shells, tales of the time in ~~1914~~ 1915 of Pop's day of horror, when the streets "swam with blood", and the telephonist in Dupont's loft was blown against wall and killed. The safe blown open and contents scattered--nothing ever found of contents officially afterward. Other telephonist who had just risen to answer a call saved. The slain man due for leave.

Wed
Oct 4
THURS
OCT 5
IDAY
T 6

Caseby took birds. I phoned and wrote.

Mending bike all day.

Yells of delight in the camp because Superintendent Roberts under open arrest. He very unpopular because he had our cook there arrested and put in Town Hall for being drunk and the boy was crimed and sent away. I couldn't believe my ears that such a piece of poetical justice had overtaken a man in our army so compact of jobbery injustice and crookery. It happened thro: his being so cocksure and swelled-headed. The Capt. of the Intelligence complained that he hadn't been able to get thro' to Pop. Signal Office. Roberts said it wasn't our lines, which were alright. To prove this he told the men on duty to ring every half hour for 24 hours. Naturally Captain Hall wanted to know "What he meant" by it? Said it was insolence and he'd report him. Now occurred Roberts' mistake. Next day he rang up the Signal Master of Second Army, said he had not been insolent, that he was perfectly in order, and that Captain Hall's complaint that he had rung their operator up at night was untrue.

"How did you know that Captain Hall was making any such complaint?" asked the Signal master.

"A-well-as Superintendent of a signal office one gets to know--
"You mean you were overlistening on the phone. There was no other way. Consider yourself under open arrest. Another man will be sent to replace you.""

Cpl. Clift came, handsome, mild, fresh-looking about 45, an old regular with S.A. medal, the first old sweat I have met out here who was decent. The Old Belgian Interpreter who used to come in and drink wine with Galloway and Clift.

Took birds myself and arranged with Jak Hilton to have the names of not only Bdes. but also batts to which ring nos of birds were sent. This was in case a bird came back without message stating who had liberated him. Then we knew where he came from. Each day I handed to my officer a list of the birds and where they went to, so that if a message came in they had only to refer to his ring no. on the message and to my report to find who was sending the message. I had tried all gags. It was not practical be

SAT
OCT 7

for me to allot certain birds to Bdes. because bdes and batts were relieving each other and changing all the time. And also, as soon as I brought birds up to Ramparts, they were let out in the aviary, and then had to be caught again when the men from Brigades came for them. If Jack had to catch certain numbers only for certain batts. it would mean he would have to go through the whole aviary handling the birds several times which would not do their plumage good. So he used to issue a doz or 8 birds, take their numbers, and give me a copy of that allotment.

I saw Mr. Diem, the warrant officer whom I had met at Tara Hill, now a Lieut. with Military Cross. A decent stick.

SUNDAY
OCT 8

Went up again with birds to see that new distribution going on alright. Home late. Had tea with Pip. in the San Martin. Adrienne and Julir and Helene. I believe, however, this tea was down at 66, which later was taken over as officers' mess, and monopolised by them to the exclusion of the D.R.'s and R.F.C. men. Music by Vic Tayloer in Drawing room.

"They wouldn't believe me. Taylor rather swanky and pushed lips as he pushed piano and hot temper. How he leapt at ---- and knocked him down. In the kitchen, with Belgian soldier, a cousin, we were quite one of family. The two scented rumpl-mouthed sist-

ers, the old mother, and the fine erect strong young girl in a yoke of black, from the Convent school, who liked to be there. The trade done in the shop at 66 was enormous. Soldiers resting back at Abeele bought silk aprons, squares, handkfs, all sorts of metal souvenirs, cigars, books, cig-cases. $\frac{1}{2}$ doz other shops like this all selling big turnover.

9;th. Various clerical work

10th.

Birds up, and now with Caseby, because he had left new incoming lots of pupils to hang about untended. Afa. trying to arrange rations for new 24 men. To Rghlst for same from Anzac div. but S.M "boxed up"; however, got some promised. Strident waords in stair-room after gear-pin out, so left bike and walked home, carrying vests and card for Tom Cavill. Looked at Cemetery on right before crossing. On left called in for chocolate Bonne-

bouches at shop plus estaminet first left before ry. crossing. Often passed it and wondered what like. A rather buxom but graceful, scented, faintly powdered, refined-looking girl there who spoke almost perfect English. (Later, Alan Marr tells me A british D.R. got engaged to her).

Telegram awaited me: "Evans at Kruisstraat Loft ill. Caseby to go out i/c of loft." Ib decision. To be efficient wished to send Caseby at once but didn't want to do the dirty on him, especially as he was an older cpl. by service. Left it, my slumber at first invaded by speculation--not for long. Caseby never took any responsibility and never volunteered to help in a single thing. He grinned because I had to accept responsibility. At same time, he knew that our etiquette as D.Rs. who were opposed to the discipline of the ordinary army, forbade my taking advantage of my seniority on this job to order him about. He sheltered behind this to lazy and grin and throw all on to me.

"Why should I go to-night? One man can manage there. I shall do nothing when I get there. There's a mass of stuff I'll have to shift. What does it matter. The pigeon service is a farce anyway, and it's all a joke."

"You'll have to go if it's necessary."

"Ma bike's dis. They've sent no car. I can't walk there. How am I going to get there?" And so on. He knew he was annoying me.

This morning ~~task~~ lectured. Aft. Corps. Walked there re my bike and surprised Lt. Larking. Williams had mended the gear box of my bike which I had had fetched by pigeon car from Rghlst and left at workshop. Tea--omelettes, I pay. Rode home, too late for Cinema, so washed my clothes in moon light. Wrote Vicky then read and bed. Restful without Caseby's talk and cooking of chocolate sauce etc. At first we had been fairly agreeable, I fetching milk from the farm on left by brewery. Farm that always stank so where there was feline slatternly girl attending Anzacs drinking out of hours all night. A skinny boned mother, a son of 8 years who seemed in a starved trance by the stove. An old man and occasionally an old hag. The girl said she was the daughter of a medecin and didn't like being there as servant. A liar. chocolate sold as a blind. One of those tall square gaunt houses whose upper rooms look as if made for secret acts of vice.

10/10
I used to fetch this milk and Caseby in the mellow Sept evenings would make porridge or chocolate custard. He was careful with his money, would buy Quaker Oats and custard powder, but try and plank it on the mess, but never went anywhere for a drink.

We were having before he went frequent arguments at the mess because apparently not everyone paid--- a franc a week for others and two francs for us Cpls. Caseby wanted more to be paid into the mess. No treasurer, and it transpired that Jim had been paying for things out of his own money when mess money ran short.

Decided to have a mess treasurer, Caseby, but it was difficult to suggest it to Jim who was very sensitive. (Put this in conversation?) The way Caseby used to smile handsomely at you, unshaved and unwashed, but knowing he had fine curly hair and dark eyes. If he was early he made a row about breakfast not being ready for his mouth and about the dishes unwashed. If

as usual he was late, he used to come down unwashed and touzled covering his lateness with yawns and loud talk.

At Kruisstraat (Kroonstat) Caseby schwärmerisch about rations and finds. "Look here. They give me what I want. The cooks here 'll give ye bacon, rice, conserrve. A leg of mutton. Look in this sack. In the dug-out you a pair of artillery boots I've won. Look at 'em. I'm quids in. There 's nothing to do. I jnow sweet F.A. about the loft and I'm a passenger."

Before this, my pigeon class did not turn up. Lieut. Larking also chasing after me. Waited at S.O. telephoning till 11.45. About to go, but had dinner and car came. Caseby gives no help but blathers about Evans' post. Tea, 4.30. Cinema, waiting in queue Did flimsies at 9 with Cooper in S.O. I trying to restore order to chaos.

OCT 13 Morning checked answers to Q.s in class. New ²⁴ZC men arrived. Evg. FRIDAY was wasted waiting for pay. Doug. wouldn't come but I went over to concert of & S.M. Miles' send-off at Abeele. Groping, found it at an estaminet on left on Watou Rd, two rooms into one.

files
end-off
arking
speaks.
Lt. Larking: After the S.M. has had several beers, two bottles of fizz, and a few chasers, he'll tell his life-story. It's interesting, but he darsen't tell it all, because there are so many boys here. But it's not so bad---he had so many opportunities. Always had a bottle of beer and a pack of cards in his shack, and he knew what he did with it--the beer, not the cards.

He's going to take the frightful plunge that loses so many a man his best pals--by the way--I'm the only man here that can call the Sergeant Major a bloody fool. Of late he's been one. He's been worried--he's--I've gone over when he called me--found his train, that is, got him the Singer car from here to port. Calais.

By the way, there's one of those men, traffic men, on the Steenvoorde Crossroads--we must watch him. He's colour-blind, doesn't know how to use flags, so he does it anyhow, and then picks up the bits at the collision, for souv nirs."

After one hour, Larking half drunk and gesticulating. While he speaks an Anze pushes in for drink and because they don't serve him, shouts at the counter.

"There's an officer speaking, can't you see?" says Bruce.

"I don't care if J. C. is speaking. I want my beer and have a right to it in hours."

"Sall-right--I'm an Anzac Myself," splained Larking.

Bruce ear-holing as usual. The estaminet was crowded and two dark women, one old, one young, serving for all they were worth at the rancy-baize-covered tables, round which were wooden chairs and some benches by the wall. Pocket counter and stove. Oil-lamp swinging fairly light. Lace curtains Brise-bise at windows.

Oct. 14
Saturday.

Home in dark. Took car round with Sergeant E. Caseby on my nerves. He jokes me on taking service seriously. Aft. finished at L.C.V. and dinner. Rushed up to get pay having kept officer waiting and orderlies

being sent down for me. Spologised. Class in afternoon. This morning met Lieut. Larking as going to Corps to see him. After my report, he said:

SUNDAY
OCT. 15

"I've been very pleased with the way you've done things here. I told Captain Whaley that you'd been running the service practically on your own. I've recommended you for a sergeant as soon as a vacancy occurs. And also to the Major and it'll go forward in the papers."

"Thank you very much, sir. It's v ry good of you."

"Good? Why is it good? You've deserved it haven't yiu?"

No answer. He introduced me to Lieut. Cumberland, fat, ruddy, dark, jocu ar. Aft. I finished lesson, the off tp bsnd at cinema.

MONDAY
OCT. 16

Went with birds and lost temper with Caseby who had arranged for men who refilled at Kruisstraat loft to stop at Ramparts and refill there, his reason being that they had to pass the Ramparts so they said to get to K. I thought this would lead to mix up. Caseby inconsequential and blathering. He irritated me. Regreetted losing temper. Afternoon, 4th Division (Australian) came up. No lorry no rations with the. Could get no reply from 4th Div. Was going to lend some men cash for "tucker" but Maclaren, very gentlemanly fellow about 40 dissuaded me hinting same wo ld only go in beer. Cinema evening.

TUESDAY
OCT 17

Morning fringed a out trying to get lorry which I had promised for 16 men to get away back with. Div widnt, and eventually Corps sent ay 1.45 after I'd hung on to telephone all morning while adjusting lamp, gears and clutch.

Dull
Rain
rain.

Found men , tired of waiting, had gone. Bitt rly upset that I as Englishman had had to break (or seemed so) my pledge to Anzacs.

Ait. as starting for Corps, gears again wrong. Vexed. Off at 4. All wrong to-day. Rain. Dull tea of 5 in estaminet. Home in rain after anxiety about gear pin (wanted new but left it too late) and clips, of which we were short and Lieut Larking was having a few ones made in workshop from scraps of aluminium and tin.

Wed
Oct 18
heavy
rains
OCT 19

with pigeons to Ypres and Krusstraat. Thought hard on round. Ait. wrote reports and thought. (reports for Corps and reports for Divs/ to show what they were doing with birds).

Heavy rains all day. Undecided in rain, morn, to Cinema hall for key which jim had lost and thought mislaid there. Wrote out chart of how the school-work had been accomplished by 2nd Australian Div, men, putting them in three classes. Aft. to Corps re Cotterill's leave. Evening Cinema and wrote 2nd Div report.

Oct 20
Friday

Driving back from r und temper of American, who had previously said as he drove ys up to Hallebast corner -Dickebusch road: "These roads 'll never be dry again till Spring." His temper because Sam Booth came on footboard. A Driving back via Watou this was one of the d's when M.P's, shepherded by officers, stopped all cars and demanded to see passports. (Rumours at once, of course, of Germ n spies.)

"Who are you?"

"SM BOATH."

"Who?"

"Boath-Sam Boath."

"Bes, but what unit, rank, etc."

"Pigeons, Cpl. R.E. 8th Corps."

"Have you got a pass? q"

"No, but I'm on business, going to see a loft."

"Well, let's see your pay-book." Indignatn Sam produced it,

SAT
OCT 21
Sunday
Ocs 22

clean and uncrumpled. Worked all afternoon. Repairing and Cleaning bike all morn and cleaning clothes in petrol. Round with pigeons, omitting to leave stock baskets at Reningham. "Hurst. " Aft., to Corps and had tea with Pip and Blackmore.

POINT. CONVERSATIONS. Walter Jones on Lieut. Larking getting drunk , coming in to mess before Col Iles, and seeing bacon, going to window and puking.

Lt. Larking and the race down in car for leave.

Can a D.R. be stripped.

Capt Steevens and Walla. and S.M.

Geordie and the boat--what constitutes seaworthy craft. Geordie and Gillam--Oh, the Siren; I meant the Wyvern the best boat ever went out of Shields. Skone and buying a horse. Geordie and accidents.

Monday
Oc 23

Morning work on bike -gears and carburettor. Aft. to Corps re Cotterell's request for leave--bother--. Settled he's to stay. At Abeele distribution of presents to school children by British Brig. General and Belgian officers. The kids iwht spectacled fussy weak-kneed pale teacher were waving the toys and sweets give them in the field as I went to our Mobile Loft. Evening to 8th Corps Lofts re lost pigeon. First struck Robby after enquiring at Signal office in small front room in ordinary house. Robby was seated drinking at "The Pelican" Inn, where one loft was and where they billeted. Altho' we often gave Robby a dinner at our billet he did not treat me to a drink but allowed me to treat him and his loft cpl. Large interior of estaminet. Same appearance as all of them---dingy, topa z tinted as in sub-aqueous. A few men talking, but as it was out of hours, not many drinking then. Loft in garret over jeweller's shop and loft at top end over gateway of estaminet where presided tall moustached handsome man with one finger gone. Level-headed and cool. Pretty hostess who favoured him but charged us well for wine. **MADE**

S
TUESDAY
OCT 24

WED
OCT 25

Cotterell impassive on receipt of news Aft sent message to Corps, and in S.O. wrote Indent. Evg. Cinema.

Rose at 6 and at 7, on misty fair morn rode to Cassel with post with Pip. The spirals up to Cassel, my first time of riding, treacherous with mist on them. "Can you do the hairpin bend on top gear?" That is the vital question. Pip rode better and faster than I. Breakfast of eggs and cakes in shop next to Jeanne's.

~~XXXXXX~~
OCT 26

Discreet gloom of interior, and sallow daughter, cosmeticed, serving us with smiles. Back and spent morning at Corps.

Afternoon at Talbot Houses, wrote chart of 2nd Australian Div. Pigeon School men.

No car, so with birds on bike

Ahursday Cotterell said he was going to "beat it" to the corps to see about his leave.

"Well, everything has been done. It'll make no difference. I don't think you better leave the loft."

"What's it to do with you?"

"Well, I'm supposed to be in charge of this service."

"Oh, you've got charge? You want me to remain here always. you don't want me to go to Corps.---I've heard from someone else (Caseby?) what you're on for."

"I'll tell you to your face, I've never disguised the fact that I don't like you, and I don't think you're particularly keen on your duties."

"In what instance haven't I been keen on my duties?" (Menacing)

"Well, your suggestion to go to Corps, leaving the loft with no G.H.Q. man here shows that."

It must have been the time before this, when Mt. Cumberland first took over, and as the army had phoned Corps they were sending no car, he had painfully acquired the box car, only, on visiting the lofts, to find me gone. With great sense he had brought a basket of pigeons from Cooper's.

I was talking to Cotterell when he came.

"Did n't you want the car after all?"

"Yes, sir, but I didn't know it was coming, so I had to get on with the birds."

"I've got a basket of pigeons here. Do you want them?"

"Well then Cotterell, I shan't want yours now."

"But Cooper says," said Lieut Cumberland, "don't use his if you can possibly avoid it. These want res." I know nothing about it."

"I better have yours after all."

Cotterell looked absolutely disgusted.

"What a pity," said Cumberland, "this is the first time I've taken over from Mr. Larking, and I'm messing it up."

He goes and has a look at loft.

"That's alright, sir. Thank you very much for bringing the box car."

"That's a fine-looking bird."

"Well, I don't fancy a white bird myself, though he's pretty," said Cotterell.

"What's that bird doing, bowing and scraping?"

"He's making up to that hen. She won't look at him. She's paired."

"Randy old rip."

I explained matters re Cotterell to Cumberland either as he was coming away from estaminet on corner or as we walked back. So far fair I must have been, he thought I was pleading for Cotterell. Sergt. Edmunds--argued about war and Daily Mail--and related Cotterell incident. Evg to Cinema, saw funniest Charlie Chaplin film, and perhaps the first I had seen in my life. Great.

Two messages for me on return.

DON'T FORGET THE ATTITUDE OF BRUCE ON THE SOMME: ASKING ME WH& WE WERE USING SO MANY CLIPS AND THE QUARTER SAID IT WOULD HAVE TO

STOP

ALSO QUARTER'S ATTITUDE AT ABLELE---ALWAYS GRUDGING ME GOODS

AND KEEPING ME WAITING FOR THEM AND SCOWLING.

ALSO WALTER'S REMARK:

YOU'RE TREATED LIKE THIS BECAUSE YOU'RE IN THE LIMELIGHT.

FRIDAY The usual. Hung about for pay which did not materialise.
 OCT 27 Birds out waiting ready in baskets in passage. No car.
 Sergt. Edmonas came for stray bird--No car still. Ouderdoes up to
 say Officer up for pay. Rushed round. Mixup avoided. Round with
 basket to Reninghelst. At K. Mr. Cumberland turned up with lorry
 and 3 baskets of birds, when followed the conversation recorded
 on previous page. Used only 8 from Kruisstraat. I followed the
 SAT lorry on bike and found Hiltor and Archer showing Cumberland into
 OCT 28 their Ramparts dugout. A low dark cavern, with benches on ground
 , here and there cubicle made by blankets, and sergeant major's
 den at the end. To left as go in, Archer and Jack's bed, Jack's
 all tidy with equipment hung G.K, Archer's anyhow. Dark but elec-
 tric lights in corners. Coming in you had to pass officer's rooms
 on the right. Off home, then back in sunlight twice, about list
 forgotten to be taken and clips to be left, and about training birds
 coming up to be tossed from Ramparts.
 SUN Met Mr. Larking as I went over to arrange about training journeys.
 OCT 29 He in fine spirits and colour. "Been rather tied for time, lately,
 Davis?" He gave me permission to have my pal Pip Boyd work with
 me, as Caseby still at K and no spare loftman supplied yet by G.H.
 Q.
 MON On the way through liquid mud to Hallebast corner my belt rim pul-
 OCT 30 led off, and I borrowed Pip's machine and took both lots of birds,
 while he phoned for spare wheel to be brought to Reninghelst
 Signal office where he went after I got back. (He went on his
 own bike first and phoned for wheel. Came back to me. I took
 birds, while he waited. Back I waited, while he fetched wheel)
 As I waited, watched troops marching up road, and horse lines
 over the way. Troops came and rested. In a big shack packed out
 with block hay, Anzac corporal and pals smoked cosy and played
 cards by fire in bucket. On left side of road just over ditch.
 Imp() Troops came and rested on bank in rain as they fell from march.
 Amid slush and rain good old pip fixed cover and tube in new wheel
 sluicing same in the running stream on right. Then I had to spur
 back again thro' mud which spurtr'd out each side in slant fountain
 because I had left in the Anzac shack my report books. Wind up
 because no lamp and dark coming. But it cleared a little. Skidded
 past Ouderdom, and then home by B just in time, but too late for
 Cinema.

TUESDAY
OCT 31

Morning, wrote chart of progress of last Australian Division.
At Talbot House while piano played. Rumours of our moving explained
ed when Lieut Larking called on me and said that 30 men from the
41st Division were coming to me for training. Address of billet
given him. I to arrange for pay of orderlies (Anzac). (What
does this mean?) Hired for rations, new K.E. Divisional Orderly
and fixed up billet. Late again for tea but not 1 hour at Cinema
Rose st 7, old Pip sleeping heavily, and I got off early to Abchurch
, leaving broken wheel at workshop and cart at Corps. and fetching
Trewartha's birds for training. Got round after Pip by 2.

ED
NOV 1

Afternoon wrote reports. Tibbies and Cinema at 6. I went to
to the Cinema on the policy: On the Sonnet I hadn't been able to.
there was no knowing when we might be shoved down there or out
somewhere in a God-forsaken hole where we couldn't get entertain-
ment, so have it while you can was my motto.

THURSDAY
NOV 2

Morning, men arrived in 1/2 dozens up to 12.30. Lectured. Good
men. Afternoon, ditto. At dinner Caseby (Is he back, now?)
Caseby: "One pigeon man who has flown pigeons ever since he was a

boy, is in a hell of a rage. He was going to report ye."
Suppressed passion began to work in me.

"I don't believe you. You're such a bloody liar," I said.

"It wants tact with the men," said he.

This annoyed me. I prided myself on getting on well with the
men.

"Easy to be tactful when you've nothing to do," I snarled.
I fetch the mail every day besides classes and getting birds up
All the difficulties I have to settle, and if there's anything
unpleasant to be insisted on I've got to do it. I don't believe
in being false to people in order to get on pleasantly."

"It's you're two-faced," he shouted. "You say I'm lazy and
yet you said the reports I wrote at K were splendid."

"I say so now. You're a good writer, and I'm not. But you don't
take the work really in earnest. You laugh at the Pigeon Service
and ~~you~~ can't expect the pigeon men to do their work well if you

you're making fun of my instructions."
Work till 7.30. writing reports.