

The Ypres Salient

In the Field.

5.5.15.

Dear Mother & Father

We are now back in billets at the same place as we were in, when I came back from leave. I have had a very eventful time since I last saw you. We left to relieve the other Division in the trenches very soon after I came back & had marched about twelve miles to our billets, closer up to the firing line. Late on the night of our arrival there, we received an order to hold ourselves in readiness to move in half an hour's notice (possibly by train). However, after a sleepless night we were ordered to march to a small place up in the north about twenty-four miles march. We started at midday & arrived at these billets at 1.30 a.m. A long & weary march. They did not give us any rest there for at 5 a.m. we started to a place near Ypres, & arrived there about midday (another 12 miles) We then were told that the division were to attack that afternoon against the line N.E. of Ypres. However we were given a day's rest & we marched another 6 to 8 miles the following morning where we lay in formation for the attack, quite exposed to shells coming from both rear & front. We received our orders about 1 p.m. & attacked at 2 p.m. after a heavy artillery bombardment. We were in reserve as a brigade, the other two attacking. The French were attacking on our left & the 6th Division & Canadians as well. However the attack was not successful owing to the French not keeping up sufficiently on our left. We entrenched where we finished off, that night, & my brigade relieved a brigade in the firing line who suffered severely in the attack. Next morning we attacked ourselves with the French but the same thing hap-

as the previous attack. The Germans driving back the French with poisonous gases. Every day we prepared for attacking & had a hard time of it. We had to dig all night long & were shelled all the time. The Ypres salient is far the worst place I have been in as it looks as if one was surrounded, & our guns got a bad time of it. We have had a hard time of it but got off very lightly on the whole & we kept off the Germans from attacking us which was what we intended to do. Poor Capt Tarrant was killed while in an advanced trench where the Germans used poisonous gases on us but failed to drive us out. We lost pretty heavily in the division & are very glad to get a rest again. I was in command of a Company all the time. Capt Alston has joined us now & is second in command. Major Hoyer has gone home again, having sprained his leg while riding. Col. Dill is left in command again. I hear Murray-Lyon & Henderson are being made temporary captains. That leaves me next for it. We had a long march back here & we are all rather weary after our efforts. The Brigadier-General was very pleased with our work at Ypres & was sorry we were not able to complete our attacks, as they started so well. It was unlucky the French not being able to push on. I was very lucky to get out of this show safely as I had several very narrow escapes & bullets & shells whizzing all round.

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John. Robert. Cowan.