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200 years of migration to England

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hospitals, and no instance of attempted proselytising ever came to my notice. An officer once narrated to me how he lay seriously wounded in a C.C.S., and the Padre sought to comfort him by telling him, with the best intention in the world, that, if he died, the Jewish Service would be read over his body, if I was not within reach! When the Chief Rabbi sent out his excellent books on Jewish literature, they were in great demand among the Christian Chaplains, to whom, as to other Christian officers, there is no doubt they came as a new revelation of Jewish ideals and Jewish teachings. Both at the bases and up the line, we were often invited to meetings of Chaplains and treated with every courtesy. The Revs. E. M. Levy and L. Geffen delivered addresses to their brother Chaplains on aspects of Jewish life. On one occasion, Major-General Mercer of the 3rd Canadian Division summoned a gathering of his Chaplains to discuss their respective duties. Though I was not officially attached to the Division, as I was working in the area, I received an invitation and spent a pleasant hour in the General's billet, where he presided over the meeting. General Mercer took the greatest interest in his Jewish Canadians, once stopping me in a village street to ask about our arrangements for certain services. It was with great regret that I heard of his death shortly afterwards in the Ypres salient.

The general conduct of the Jewish soldier won for him an excellent record throughout the Army, and tended in every way to reflect credit upon the Jewish name. The number of courts-martial which were brought to my notice throughout the war in which Jewish soldiers were involved was agreeably small. Upon four occasions, when men appealed to me for assistance, I engaged the services of Jewish officers in the respective areas who belonged to the legal profession, with satisfactory results. In one case, however, when a R.A.M.C. lad had been rude to his N.C.O. and disobeyed orders, there was no one in the district available, so that I had to act as "prisoner's friend" and did my best to defend him before the officers of the court-martial—I am sorry to say, without the success I had desired. I only heard of one case throughout the whole war of a Jewish soldier being shot for cowardice, and he was entered in his battalion as a member of the Church of England. All other offences with which Jews were charged belonged to the ordinary category of military misdemeanours.

In the early days of the war certain of our men attempted to conceal their identity by not reporting themselves as Jews. Some, whilst remaining Jews,

and, shaking hands, asked which denominations we represented. "I am glad to see you working so well together," he said, "as you can help us greatly by teaching the men about the noble cause for which we are fighting."

To return to my wanderings—for I was known in France as the "Wandering Jew"*—I later removed to Beauval—a pretty village near Doullens, where my mess occupied rooms in a stately chateau—in order to be at hand during the coming Somme offensive—preparations for which I saw being made in all directions. Mr. Simmons took over my area in the north, and ministered to the Australian troops before the Rev. D. I. Freedman arrived from the East, where he had been on duty with the forces. I held services for every division which took part in the battle on July 1st, 1916, and the succeeding days, working the area of the Third Army from my centre at Beauval and taking each corps and divisional district in turn. The attack on the line from Fonquevillers to the north of Albert having failed, I left No. 4 C.C.S. as the inflow of wounded had ceased, and transferred my home to No. 21 C.C.S., which bore part of the burden of the heavy casualties of the continuous struggle round Albert. I found a lodging in a small cottage, which consisted of two rooms, in the village of Corbie, the centre of the C.C.S. and the camps of the Albert sector. This billet was a most uncomfortable one, as there was scarcely a whole pane of glass to the room in which I slept and did my work. Every division that marched down to take part in the Somme "push" passed my window day and night, the result being an atmosphere of dust and noise. As each division rested for a night or two on its way to take part in the great battle, in which all except two Divisions in France were engaged, I hastily organised meetings of our men, many of whom gave me messages for their kinsfolk to be sent home in the event of their not returning from the conflict. Here I came into contact for the first time with the South African soldiers who were attached to the 9th (Scottish) Division, and learnt of their wonderful doings in the battle of Delville Wood. I afterwards visited the scene of the fight, and was able to gather some idea of the terrible struggle that raged for months round this wood and the adjacent High Wood, in which large numbers of Jewish soldiers fell.

It was at High Wood that, in September, 1916, the tanks were first used, and I saw the first batch hidden in a wood near Acheux being prepared for the great experiment. I learnt later that the *camouflage* on the tanks had

* I find a note in my Diary recording that in August, 1916, I expended petrol for 1,670 miles.

been painted by Lieutenant-Colonel Solomon J. Solomon, R.A., whom I frequently met whilst he was engaged in his work at the front, utilising his artistic genius in aid of the great cause.

Shortly before the New Year Festival I ascertained that the 60th London Division had arrived in France, and taken over the line to the north of Arras. Each division had its lorries and other transport marked by some design in colour, all numbers being suppressed. Thus the First Division was indicated by the ace of hearts, the Twelfth by the ace of spades, the 56th (London) by an inverted sword, the 34th by a chess-board, the 37th by a golden horse-shoe, the 62nd (Yorkshire) by a pelican, and so on. When on my travels a new sign was observed, inquiries were at once set on foot. One day I saw a bee painted on a cart, and I was told that General Bulfin's 60th Division had arrived from England. I called for a nominal roll, as was customary as soon as a new division came out, and found that there were over 300 Jewish soldiers to be looked after. I therefore decided to remove from the Albert area for a short time, in order to get into close touch with these men and other troops in the district. On arriving at Aubigny, which was the railhead for Arras, the only billet the Town Major could find for me was in an undertaker's shop. After passing through rows of tombstones I reached my bedroom, on the walls of which hung a number of *immortelle* wreaths. "Monsieur will not mind these," explained my polite landlady, "as it is better to see them when one is alive than when dead!"

I had very frequently to pass through Arras, which was daily under fire, the noble Cathedral and Hotel de Ville having already been laid in ruins. The most exciting visit I paid to this renowned city was in the month of May of that year, from Beauval, when the German line was less than a mile from the railway station. As I was accustomed to do, I had sent a message to the commanding officer of the battalion in which I knew a number of Jewish soldiers were included, asking if I could hold a service for the men. I received a reply that if I came to Arras on a certain morning I would be welcome. Definite instructions were given to me for the journey, as only one road was at all safe by which to enter the city by daylight, as it was under constant observation of the enemy's artillery and his snipers. The last two miles from Dainville to Arras were covered in record time by my driver, who realised the risk we were running. The service was held in a battered building used as a Soldiers' Club, near the ruined Cathedral in the heart of the