



www.movinghere.org.uk

200 years of migration to England

third party copyright - Jewish Museum, London

Butte de Warlencourt, etc., as suitable subjects for his brush. On the day before the great attack which led to our retreat, Professor Rothenstein, as though having some knowledge of what was about to happen, took his portfolio of paintings to G.H.Q. and so was not with us when the retreat began. The same night a piece of shrapnel penetrated the bed which he would have occupied, whilst another fragment pierced the wall of my hut. I was aroused about 5 o'clock in the morning of March 21st by a loud explosion close by. For weeks past the sky had been lit up every night by the flashes of the guns, and one never went to bed without hearing the noise of a bombardment to which one became accustomed. But this time the shells, coming from a few miles away, were exploding all round us, and some fell within the grounds of the two casualty clearing stations which stood close to the railway station at Achiet. No. 45 C.C.S., which was about 50 yards away, suffered 24 casualties in a few minutes, a shell striking a trench in which a large number of men had taken refuge. Fourteen native Indian labourers were killed on the road at the side of our camp. We were all ordered to resort to the dug-out which had been constructed for the nurses, and it was one o'clock in the day before we could safely emerge, the shells coming over at regular intervals of about two minutes. We had then no knowledge that we were about to remove or that the enemy had been successful in his advance. On the afternoon of March 21st—so little did we suspect that we were about to be involved in a great retreat—that after tea the Colonel invited me to a game of chess, and we were about to begin when an orderly brought a message to the effect that the enemy had broken through and it was thought advisable to evacuate the C.C.S. at once. The sisters were sent away in lorries as soon as possible, and the wounded were packed off to the Base in a Red Cross train which was still running. The unit was ordered to move off early next morning and general activity prevailed.

The shelling began again in the evening and the enemy airmen hovered around us for many hours. That night we slept crowded together in the dug-out. Two R.A.M.C. men were wounded by a bomb dropping in our C.C.S. area.—At this point I should like to give my testimony to the effect that, as a rule, German aviators did not attack British hospitals, but carefully avoided injuring them. One of the cases that came to my knowledge of a deliberate air raid on a hospital was in May, 1918, at the Canadian Hospital in Doullens, where terrible destruction was wrought. I had been summoned

to bury a Jewish Sergeant of the U.S.A. infantry, who had died of wounds received during his first tour of instruction in the British trenches. I found the hospital in flames and Doullens being shelled. The cemetery was on the outskirts of the town, and we all wore our tin-hats during the ceremony at the graveside, as we were under continuous shell-fire. In most other cases where C.C.S.'s or hospitals were bombed, it was owing to the proximity of these places to railway lines or dumps or camps. Although the enemy, night after night for about three months, sought to destroy the railway line and the station at the important junction of Achiet, about 100 yards away from our C.C.S., it was extraordinary that, except on the night just mentioned, our C.C.S. was never touched by a bomb, although they fell round us, doing great damage to camps which were close by. Few other cases of wilful bombing of medical units came under my direct notice. I once visited the Rev. L. Morris—who had the Rev. D. Hirsch with him for the customary week's instruction as a new Chaplain—and saw the damage that had been done the night before when bombs had been dropped on their C.C.S. at Remy, outside Poperinghe—Mr. Morris's tent being perforated by pieces of shell. The Rev. E. M. Levy had been present when the hospitals at Etaples were both bombed and attacked by machine-gun fire, and next morning I passed that way and learned full details of this outrage.

About three in the morning of the 22nd of March we were roused and informed that we had to leave immediately, and then began our exodus amid a terrific bombardment, as the enemy was now pressing down the Cambrai-Bapaume road towards the latter town, which they captured two days later and thus prevented me from holding the Passover Service which had been arranged for March 28th. Our first halt was in a field next to Aveluy Wood, immediately outside Albert. We little thought that Albert itself would soon be captured, for the town had been partially rebuilt since the battles of the Autumn of 1916, and many shops were opened. That night I slept in a hut belonging to an Indian Labour Company, and next day was again on the move backwards together with our unit. Part of it marched and the rest travelled with what equipment we could rescue by the few lorries which were allotted to us. The enemy captured Achiet-le-Grand three days after we had left it. Passing through Doullens during the retreat, I saw the cars of Marshal Foch, Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, Mr. Lloyd George and M. Clemenceau outside the Town Hall, when the famous decision was reached to appoint Marshal Foch as Generalissimo of the Allies.

Butte de Warlencourt, etc., as suitable subjects for his brush. On the day before the great attack which led to our retreat, Professor Rothenstein, as though having some knowledge of what was about to happen, took his portfolio of paintings to G.H.Q. and so was not with us when the retreat began. The same night a piece of shrapnel penetrated the bed which he would have occupied, whilst another fragment pierced the wall of my hut. I was aroused about 5 o'clock in the morning of March 21st by a loud explosion close by. For weeks past the sky had been lit up every night by the flashes of the guns, and one never went to bed without hearing the noise of a bombardment to which one became accustomed. But this time the shells, coming from a few miles away, were exploding all round us, and some fell within the grounds of the two casualty clearing stations which stood close to the railway station at Achiet. No. 45 C.C.S., which was about 50 yards away, suffered 24 casualties in a few minutes, a shell striking a trench in which a large number of men had taken refuge. Fourteen native Indian labourers were killed on the road at the side of our camp. We were all ordered to resort to the dug-out which had been constructed for the nurses, and it was one o'clock in the day before we could safely emerge, the shells coming over at regular intervals of about two minutes. We had then no knowledge that we were about to remove or that the enemy had been successful in his advance. On the afternoon of March 21st—so little did we suspect that we were about to be involved in a great retreat—that after tea the Colonel invited me to a game of chess, and we were about to begin when an orderly brought a message to the effect that the enemy had broken through and it was thought advisable to evacuate the C.C.S. at once. The sisters were sent away in lorries as soon as possible, and the wounded were packed off to the Base in a Red Cross train which was still running. The unit was ordered to move off early next morning and general activity prevailed.

The shelling began again in the evening and the enemy airmen hovered around us for many hours. That night we slept crowded together in the dug-out. Two R.A.M.C. men were wounded by a bomb dropping in our C.C.S. area.—At this point I should like to give my testimony to the effect that, as a rule, German aviators did not attack British hospitals, but carefully avoided injuring them. One of the cases that came to my knowledge of a deliberate air raid on a hospital was in May, 1918, at the Canadian Hospital in Doullens, where terrible destruction was wrought. I had been summoned