

Report of work, on and during the days that followed, April 9th

Sir,

During the week ending April 7th I received instructions from the senior Chaplain of the 1st Division to report for duty, on the morning of April 9th at the 2nd Field Ambulance, Ecoivers.

I joined the Field Ambulance on the afternoon of April 8th in time to assist in handling a number of casualties that were brought to the dressing station as the result of a severe bombardment which the village suffered during the afternoon. The total casualties were about 20, six of whom were killed or died of wounds.

The morning of April 9th, a day long to be remembered, was cloudy and threatened rain. Promptly at 5:30 our artillery opened fire so we knew that the great attack was on with Vimy Ridge the objective.

By 10 o'clock the wounded began to arrive from the advanced dressing stations, from one or two walking cases the numbers slowly increased until towards evening they came through in almost a constant stream.

The real rush however did not take place until Tuesday night owing to the difficulty experienced in bringing the wounded to the advanced stations, ambulance after ambulance arrived until every available space in the dressing station was occupied by stretchers. By four o'clock on Wednesday morning the rush was over and most of us were able to retire for a few hours of well earned rest.

By Thursday morning the wounded of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday had all been evacuated to the CCAC [Cdn. Casualty Assembly Centre] and the dressing room of the Field Ambulance became something like normal again.

It is no easy matter to record just what I did during those busy days. Perhaps it will be sufficient to say that I tried to make myself as useful and helpful as possible, that, of course includes a wide range of activities from handing out coffee and writing post cards to relatives, to putting on bandages and assisting operations.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday I assisted also with the burials at the Ecoivers Cemetery where there was considerable congestion and confusion due to a lack of proper system.

On Thursday I visited the scene of Monday's battle, a sight I shall certainly never forget. During those five days I saw three phases of the war which were new to me. The hospital dressing station, the military cemetery and the battle field and I have no hesitation in saying that this last phase was the most terrible sight of all, the saddest sight I have ever seen or ever hope to see.

On Sat. I rejoined my unit as the rush at the Field Ambulance and Cemetery was over.

I have the honour to be

Sir,

Your obedient Servant

Chas. S. Oke Capt.

Chaplain 2nd Bde. C.F.A [Cdn. Field Ambulance]

[Transcribed from the original, which is held by Library and Archives Canada]

Textual: **Document written by Presbyterian Chaplain Rev. Charles S. Oke**

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