

Section 167-02

Caring for the Wounded

L/Cpl Henry Lovejoy

Lance Corporal Henry Lovejoy (12867) joined the 6th Battalion early in the war and went out with them to France on 25th July 1915. He was just about to go on leave when a shell knocked him down.

His account, written much later, of his treatment in hospitals in France and England is a tribute to the nursing staffs of the military hospitals who did so much to keep up the spirits of the men under their care.

Wounded and First Aid

Then they were just moving off .. when a shell came over and knocked me down. I felt blood running down my face and my eyes wouldn't open and I was burning. The sergeant [Tom Bowley] came running round and said "Poor Harry, What bad luck." The lads came rushing back and said "Its the poor old King" - they used to call me King Fairhead. They all wished me a quick recovery and took me off to the doctor. [Capt Ackroyd?] He said 'Well corporal Lovejoy, we have met a lot of times but I didn't hope to see you like this. "

I said "What's the worst Doc?" and he said "You may be blind but nothing else serious if I can get you down to hospital" He gave me an injection and packed me off by ambulance. We had only just started off when a shell pitched in front of the ambulance. We were lucky the blast went the other way.

Hospital in France

I got to the hospital and more injections. Went to another hospital, more injections. I happened to say "How many more injections?" The doctor said "How many have you had?" I said "plenty". He looked at my arm and said "I should think you have. Tell the next doctor at the hospital you have had enough" I said "Have I got to go to another hospital?" He said "Yes, to Le Treport up in the mountains overlooking the sea. You will then go to England."

I got to Le Treport and what a nice welcome I got. I was the first blind one they had so I was spoiled. The sister who came to my bed said "Well my man, dont worry, we will look after you" After she had washed me she gave me some chicken sandwiches and tea and put some oranges and chocolate on the bed. "As you can't see, put your good hand out and feel for it. It doesn't matter what the doctor says, he will understand, he is a good sort. He will pull your leg" I thought she was a grand girl and could tell she was Scotch by her voice. I wondered what kind of face she had.

She came back with the doctor. He was an American specialist. He said "Hello, and whats your name?" When I told him he said "No wonder sister said I must come and see you at once, there will soon be a wedding. Look at

the mess on the bed, oranges, chocolates, cigarettes. I don't know what it's coming to. I don't know how you can eat anyhow with all those bandages on your head and face, and one hand done up. Well never mind, sister will have the last say. Let's have a look at you. Take the bandages off sister while I am looking at his papers." He said "You are a lucky young man. By all other accounts, tell me about it sometimes" After he had looked at the he said to the sister "As you are so fond of him you had better get a sterilized needle and get a box to put the shrapnel in from his head, face, arms and legs and have him sent down to the operating table tomorrow at ten. Don't tire him, do a bit each day. I know he will like that. Don't let the night sister do any, that is your job, unless you are staying on night duty. I wouldn't put it past you." She said "Doctor. don't tease." He said "all right nurse, he is just yours. I shall expect the report from you sister if he should complain about his mouth. Send for me at once. Bye bye Joy Joy. I will come and see you tonight. You are in good hands."

When she started to get the shrapnel out she said "Good gracious, there are nails, stones, bits of glass, what is that I wonder in your forehead. It looks like a big nail. I must show the doctor tonight. Does it hurt?" I said "No, I have got no feeling back yet." Then she said, "That is enough for today. Put this box with what I have got out already in your locker and show the doctor. I haven't got half of it out yet. I shall think about you all night. Do you sleep all right?" I said 'I wake up in starts thinking the shells were coming." She said "I will tell the night sister to give you something"

She got my tea and fed me and lit a fag and stayed to see I didn't burn myself Then the night sister same on and she said "This is the poor blind boy I have heard so much about in a few minutes." Sister said "How did you know?" She said "Doctor told me he was your special care. Well my boy and how are you?" I hope you will like me as much as your day sister I hope I shall please you. Now for all my instructions sister." Just then the matron came in. She had been out when I was brought in. "Hello girls, so this is the boy who is getting so much attention from sister. Well young man, how are you? You are well bandaged up. Have you had them off sister?" "Yes, look what I got out of him, only a few." "Good gracious" said the matron. 'Nails, stones, all sorts. Poor lad and blind at that. Is there anything you would like?" She said. I said "Yes please matron I would like a chicken sandwich for supper." "You shall have one my boy if we have to kill a chicken." I said "Thank you very much matron." and she said "If they don't look after you well, let me know in the morning I don't think you will have to. Good night, good sleep."

She said to the night sister. "You had better leave the day sister with him to say good night to him." "Don't tease matron." Anyway, I thought I was in a good place, not worrying about England. I was going to. Well I found the night sister very nice. I got through the night all right. I must have slept well after a dose of something. Next

morning my day Sister was in to see me. She said "Joy, joy, how are you? Did you have a good night?" I said "Yes Thanks." The doctor came in. He said "You've been here all night Sister?" She said "Not quite." "How is he? Good morning Joy Joy, how are you?" I said "Feeling all right thanks." He said "No need for you to come for an operation this morning. Still, I think you had better come." The sister said "Doctor, look at that place on his forehead. What is it?" He looked and said "It is a nail. I will get it out this morning. How is the mouth?" I said "I can't open it much." He came and looked. He said "Give me something." to the sister. He put something in between my teeth and said "No eating for four hours. Then you can take it out. Don't go to sleep and swallow it. Then bring him down to the theater and I will see what I can do for him".

So I was taken down to the operating theater. He said "Well Joy Joy what do you think I am going to do?" I said "I don't care." He said "All right, lets have a look" He said "One eye will be blind for life. The other one I think I shall take out. He looks in such a mess I think I will leave it. you are going to a better man than I am in England. I will leave it to him." He said "I will take out the nail in your head and all the big shrapnel. Sister will get the little bits out. she will like that. I suppose you don't want to go to England now, whens the wedding's coming off? Take him back to Sister and tell her I will be in to show her the nail he had in his head and the other bits." He came in and showed her. "Here is a souvenir for you to keep to remember Joy Joy. Here, he tells me he isn't going to England now."

Delayed Departure

The time came when the doctor said "Joy Joy you've got to go to England tonight so you and sister must make all the arrangements today." "Please doctor, don't tease. We shall all miss him because he has been so good, no trouble at all." He said "Of course he has been a good boy. see that he has chocolate and things for his journey. I will see you when you go Joy Joy." When he was gone sister said "Henry". The first time she had called me that. "Promise me you will write." I said "yes I will." "There was something in the doctor's teasing, still I like you as you are. You have been easy to look after." She said. I was leaving a hospital at le Treport, France which I hadn't seen. The sister told me it was a lovely place on a mountain overlooking the sea She said my windows overlooked the sea. She used to tell me all ships that were passing. She said the grounds were lovely. To get up the mountain to the hospital there was a rocks railway. Shows how high it was. Of course everyone wants to get home, but I had spent such a happy time there and everyone had been so kind, especially the day sister. At last she told me her name was Heather Willis.

Well, night came and two orderlies came with the Stretcher and said "You're off to Bightly lucky chap." I said "I don't know. I've been happy here and could stay." He said to his mate "Hark at him, don't want to go back to Bightly." At that moment the sister said good-bye. That done, they said "Now we know why he doesn't want to go Aren't you going with him sister?" Yes, I was sorry to leave her. She had been so kind. I think a little tear came in my eyes. I was put on the ambulance. The doctor was there. He said "Good Luck Joy Joy. I hope they will be able to do something good for you at Chelsea. Good luck. One thing, we shall be seeing more of Sister Willis, where is she? Not here? Fetch her". Matron kissed me and said "Good luck, you have been a good patient." The night

sister was there. She kissed me, then the doctor said "Come on sister Willis you are holding up the party." "Matron" the doctor said. "Jump up in the ambulance and go to the boat, you can say farewell." "You ought to know they said farewell in the ward;" "Oh yes" he said.

After good-byes, we moved off and had only got a little way when we stopped. I found we were going back. We pulled up and they took me out of the ambulance. I could hear the doctor say "Here, Joy Joy is back. What's happened? Where is sister Willis? Is she off duty? Tell her Joy Joy is back." They took me to the same ward. The night sister was there. "What happened?" She asked. I said "Submarines in the channel won't let us go." "Well, you had better be put to bed. I will tell sister Willis to come and see you." She soon came and said "Henry, what happened." I told her subs were in the channel. She said "I am glad to see you but it makes it harder. I can't stay tonight but will be in tomorrow morning." She kissed me goodnight. I said "Goodnight Heather, God Bless you." The night sister was very good. she stayed with me a bit, then said "I will come and see you later. Sister Willis will be here again" and gave a chuckle.

Moming came and sister Willis came on duty and said "Well Henry, had a good night?" I said "Yes thanks Heather. I was thinking it was nice I was going to see you again." She said "I too was thrilled, but it will be hard again tonight." I said "Never mind, we must make the most of today. The doctor will soon be in teasing again." Heather said "I don't know if I can stay with you today. I shall have to go on another ward. I will come and see you when I can." I said "Don't leave me too long Heather." She kissed me and said "That will last you a little while." The doctor came in and said "How are you Joy Joy?" I said "all right thank you doctor." He said "Where is sister Willis?" I said she had gone out to another ward and he said "I will send her back. I wonder if you will be able to go tonight?" Heather came back She said "What did you say to the Doc?" I said "He asked where you were. I said you were working in another ward." She said "You didn't like being alone." I said "What did matron say?" She said "Yes" and we spent a very nice day together. The day soon passed and I said farewells, and was off to Bightly.

Journey to Bightly

I got on the boat, was put in a bunk and must have had a sleep. I woke up and said "Is there anyone there?" Somebody said "What do you want?" I said "Something to eat." He said "What! Haven't you been sick?" I said "No." He said "I haven't anyone standing up, everyone's sick. It has been a terrible crossing. Of course. I'm sorry, you are blind, you wouldn't feel it. I will get you something to eat my boy." He brought back some sandwiches and tea.

We at last arrived at Dover and were put on the platform to wait for our train for London I was going to the second London General Hospital at Chelsea which was lucky as my home was only 25 mile away. As I lay on the stretcher on the platform a well meaning lady said "Would you like a cigarette?" I was all bandaged, head, face and one hand Only my mouth showing She lit the fag and marched off. The next thing I knew somebody was beating my bandages. They had caught alight when she lit the fag. I said "Some lady to light your fag and then go off and leave you."

We were put in the train and were soon in London. We were put in ambulances. I felt something keep hitting me. It was flowers people were throwing on us, it was a lovely

smell. They gave us cigarettes and chocolates and a lady asked the address of your parents so as to let them know where you were.

died in Sunningdale in 1962.

Hospital in England

I arrived at the hospital and was put in the blind ward with 28 others with eye wounds. Number two (2) ward Number five (5) bed. The sister or nurse who washed me said *"I have just looked at your bed board, your name is Henry Lovejoy. Do you come from Sunningdale?"* I said *"Yes. I worked on the Ladies Links. Used to look after the third, fourth, fifth and sixth holes."* She said *"Well, you know me well enough You remember Mrs. Bowman who used to bring her little dog out there, and you knew my maid Elsie. You had many a cup of tea there"* I said *"Yes I do. How are you?"* I said I was very pleased it was her who was going to look after me. She said *"When I go off duty I will ring up the Ladies Golf Club and tell them you are here. I am so sorry you are blind. Did you have a nice hospital in France?"* I said *"Yes. It was very nice. They were so kind."* She said *"Oh, I am so glad they were so good to you."*

She was as good as her word. The next day a lady member of the club who lived in London came to see me. She said *"Oh, Henry I am so sorry you are so badly wounded."* She told me about other lady members and said *"When will you be allowed out?"* I said *"Not yet. You had better ask the matron."* She went to see the matron and came back and said *"The matron said it will be some time yet before you can get out of bed. you have to have the operations first. She will let me know, but I will come and see you each week and will tell the others."* I told her one of the nurses was one of the members of the Ladies Club. She said *"How handy."* She left me money and cigarettes and chocolates and other ladies came to see me.

Two of my Officers were in the Officers Quarters of the same hospital. They came to see me and talked about how the Regiment was getting on and told me where different chaps were and what they were doing.

Convalescence

The time came when I was able to get out. Mrs. Watson used to take me out in the car twice a week. She said one day *"Where do you think we are going today?"* I said *"I wouldn't know."* and she said *"Sunningdale! I have arranged for your mother and father and friends and lady members of the club to be at the Dormy House, to all have tea together."* I said *"That will be grand"* She said *"Bring another boy with you"* We had a grand time and when we left the ladies filled the car up with flowers. They gave us money and cigarettes. That was a day to remember.

I had many more good day outings with her. She was a good woman. When I came home, she said *"My house is a free house to you. Come in and out when you like"*, and when she went away I used to go down to Battle in Sussex for holidays with her. Yes, she was one of the good old sort.

Epilogue

Henry was to partially recover the sight in one eye and was discharged from the Army on the 17th July 1916. He got a job back at the Sunningdale Golf Club and