



Devastation at Ypres 1914-1918

## **‘The Real Life for Me’**

Sergeant H. J. Pursey, of the 2nd Wessex Royal Engineers, 27th Division, writing to his parents under the date of April 21st., says: -

“I am going to try and describe what being in a bombarded city is like. In the place I refer to – which I must not mention – all and every particle of glass has ‘gone west,’ and whole houses are blown to atoms. The effects of the large shells is terrible. While going along the street you hear a funny whistling, and then you hold tight. In a second the shell pitches, and then the crash is terrific. I have seen a shell burst and sent a piece 300 yards, which, in its turn, has made another hole five feet in the ground. The actual shell makes a nice little hole about the size of our front room at home! The people get absolutely panic-stricken and old women of 80 years old are to be seen carried to the hospitals wounded, and also the dear little children. If some of the people in England could see the awful misery there would never be anymore strikes! One shell pitched in a square where several civilians were selling things to the troops, and it blew seven of them to atoms. Nothing can stand against it, and the noise is deafening. I am not there now, but the sight I saw there baffle description. I think our papers said the Germans were running short of ammunition. Well, I hope this is so, but I have failed to notice it! Although heaps of people clear out and go to England there are heaps more who stick to their homes. Then one day a shell comes along, and those who survive the explosion can only see a heap of bricks where their homes once stood. This is what might have happened in England. These are things I have actually seen, but you need not worry about me in the least. This is the real life for me, so let ‘em carry on.”

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