To 2 Australian General Hospital

Boulogne France

Word came here from the O.T.M. office late on Thursday night that Major Kelly and I could go away next morning on leave to Paris and Biarritz. We had applied some time before but we both felt we needed a bit of a spell after the hard work of the past few months.

The train didn't leave Boulogne until 11am on Nov 29th but we had to go for our movements orders at the O.T.M. office in Hougoumont. The ambulance came about 10am and after seeing two or three times the delay in getting our tickets we arrived and we had more too much time in Paris over ten before the train started. The trains everywhere now are packed and we were fortunate in getting a couple of seats there. The kindness of a young officer on the platform, who
we passed Paris. Amiens on the way to Paris we passed this alongside trenches and dugouts which we entered. The trenches were well camouflaged and it continued more or less all the journey.

I think we have come to a pretty good idea of the nature of the country up to Paris. This was just before I was going to the South of France, so I would rather you with any repetition just before I was going to the South of France.

we passed Paris and Amiens again. Amiens is a big place and it is scattered over a large area and even now we saw plenty of evidence of the German bombardment. Amiens was the most important line. There was great confusion at Amiens. The German aeroplanes were very active at night time and tried to do a great deal of damage to the lines at Amiens. Of course the lines entering Amiens were numerous - they appear to come from all quarters. The big Central Station gives one the impression of a spider's web with a number of legs. A great many more people joined the train at Amiens so that we were now more crowded than ever, even the corridors were packed.
With the less congestion of traffic along this line the express had been speeded up a great deal saving about four hours, so that we got into Paris about 4:30, about the same time as in January last but then we left about 7am.

The Gare du Nord seemed crowded with people as we had a long wait before we could get a taxi. We decided to go straight to the Cafe Lucas Doria at Station the Bordeaux Barring St. started from as we drove to the streets they were still very crowded after King George's State entry with Paris that afternoon & we passed many French Cavalry troops. All the buildings had flags of every allied Country & as it was getting dark some of the illuminations were already lit up. However we were keen about going to Paris as express speed for the tour. So on getting to the station we enquired about trains. We found one leaving about 8.20 that evening & another an hour later. We paid our tickets & tried to book seats also and found that that booking office closed about 4.50. The girl warned us to get down very early & that there might be a chance of securing a couple of seats. If not the trains now were very crowded so she told us. Unfortunately there were no Pullman night cars attached & therefore we changed getting a sleeper.

After that we went to the Hotel Buffet for dinner. I had a leisurely meal as this was a rather poor and expensive one.

We arrived on the platform at 7.30 when the train drew in + to suitable tips & Cook's agents the woman conductor of one of the Carriages we got a couple of good seats. After we were seated up it was rather interesting to watch the electric motors instead of engines which are used for shunting purposes. They are shaped thus - rather queer looking things. But they are very silent & get up their speed very quickly.

There were a good many Americans on the train going to Bordeaux which is one of their main cities in France.
We had very little sleep during the night as the compartment was crowded. Personally I find it difficult to sleep for any length of time while sitting bolt upright as one's legs get so stiff & ache.

We got to Bordeaux a little before 9 in the morning. Unfortunately we didn't know that we would stay there for nearly 30 minutes or else we should have had a chance of getting a cup of coffee or a roll. There was no restaurant car attached so we didn't get any food until we got to Biarritz.

Bordeaux seemed to be a very pleasant place, but we could not see much of the place in the poor light as it was still drizzling rain. From Bordeaux on to Bayonne the country is quite flat & we passed miles & miles of pine woods - mostly the trees showing evidence of being tapped for their gum or resin. The tapping is done by breaking or stripping a narrow strip of the bark off periodically, some trees being tapped for a year's time. The gum is collected in a pot at the ground where a small tin trap is placed to collect the gum.

Of course, the lumbermen are cut down for timber tress as needed a good many sawmills. The lumbermen in these forests in past here all these forests of Southern France. In fact, what American officers we met on the train (also later at Bayonne & Biarritz) belonged to the lumber companies & t.v. nice fellows they were too.

Of course, we also saw a good many other trees besides pine - & these it was interesting to note still retained their leaves & autumn tints. They looked very fine among the sombre green of the pines & especially in painted stretches.

It was the first opportunity we had of advantage the red autumn look of a wood which we had.

Bayonne we passed near, then a few kilometres on we had to leave the train at the station (the train continues on its journey to the Spanish border). We took another train to Biarritz, which we reached at 12:30. When we left Paris we
had not the slightest idea where we would stay after leaving Biarritz we asked a French officer about the hotel to be mentioned 3074 of which we considered we would send for "this comfortable." At the railway station we saw quite a large group of decorated hotel porters and at once decided that we would go to the Hotel du Palais. There was no doubt about it being a Palace because it is the biggest hotel in the place. A few minutes drive once reached there we found it most comfortable. It was not the kind of place which we would have selected for a long journey as our nerves were not big enough—but we certainly did enjoy our week's stay there and it was so wonderfully quiet clean hot water etc etc. It is a large place built right on the cliff overlooking the Bay of Biscay—the land having acquired from the Empress Eugenie who had a small chateau which was burnt down on a celebration of her weddings. So the hotel uses the napoleon's Bourbon coronets on their place re.

Our bedrooms overlooked the sea and were very comfortably furnished with bathroom and wardrobe rooms attached, and the electric lights and fittings were splendidly arranged. Large certain switches which could be manipulated without getting out of bed, and the bells for the servants were similarly arranged. We felt we were living like millionaires even for a brief spell—but there was no ill, even if it was to get away from influenza cases for a while. We had a ball and a hot bath were quite tucked after the long journey, and then were ready for dinner. Such a meal, such a meal too. But I don't think I should tell you anything about these meals we had there as they are not like you will think that we become so, but we were amazed and the waiters and attendants of one kind and another. I incidentally on our departure the use of
new faces we saw for the first time casual coming across our path & with us on our voyage was remarkable. Anyone might have thought that our was a remarkably popular one the great agony end of we had! But still the French are nice & even if they look out for their tips like everyone else similarly employed they do it very quietly & with that affection that one sometimes notices elsewhere.

Besides they do look after you & attend to you well. After lunch as it was still raining we thought we would go for a little rest after the fatigue of the long journey. Biarritz is over 500 miles from Paris & between 6-700 miles due south of Boulogne so that there is a decided difference in the climate & also the length of the day. We noticed that we had the light until about 5.15. A good two hours later than Boulogne & we could easily do about without overcoats on the weather was so mild. Upon from Sunday morning until the Saturday afternoon, the day for departure the weather broke fine it was bright sunny very similar to what we experienced at Mentone last winter.

Boulogne & Biarritz are at the foot of the Pyrenees mountains. The latter what we saw of them were very bare. At the back of us were various tiers many the peaks being snow capped. The coast on Spain the right angular bend of the Spanish coast westward was highly mountainous & very beautiful. Some afternoons these mountains looked particular fine with such clear atmospheric conditions. Biarritz has no harbour except a couple of small "yards" artificially made by cement walls connecting small coves so as to protect small launches & fishing boats. The town is a big place & has numerous private houses or chalets (as compared with the villas along the Riviera littoral) & a
Great many pensions & hotels because it is a very popular resort for French & English rich. Some of the places were perched on curious places on the cliffs. I was as much as possible at the beach, & its magnificent rollers coming in on the beaches. One afternoon we strolled beyond the light-house & down on to the fine broad brown sweep of sandy beach, & we were fairly fascinated by the surf. I think it is quite the best I have seen. Such huge curlers breaking with such terrific power & sending the water up for yards. Oh, if all that power could only be harnessed into power!

And speaking of power, these places seem to be wonderfully provided with cheap power. We used to Monte Carlo Monte Carlo to see all the electric lighting is generated up in the mountains by the wonderful water power. The light in the ranging houses, the electric lights are seen everywhere.

There is a splendid promenade beginning from the new gate of the Hotel des Palais & nearly to a Caro. Of course, & of course, it is curious they are plenty of places for these rich people to unload some of their wealth — & it is curious, the no. of curio shops there are, I suppose mostly the people who come down during all the year & we were there — the time is Sept. 1st & after times the English people arrive & perhaps the best time of all is Easter. But the hotel people told us that they had been very full until quite recently. That a great many of the rich Parisians (especially the Jews, jewelles) flock to it in swarms after the trip German push in March when Paris was threatened, and they brought most wonderful things with them — their jewellery & other treasures.
The entire load is pulled along from the head. No other harness is used. The drovers make them look picturesque (it also helps) by having a woolly or hair-mat covering the yoke & heads of the oxen. The drover walks in front with a pole like a long brown handle & by directing this pole one side or the other the oxen are directed to the right or left.

Centrally Bajourne is a large market for selling mules from Spain. A very big trade is done here with the Americans. The afternoon we were there we saw many strings of mules being taken off by American cowboys after their purchase. These cowboys have the Mexican boat-stirrup.

We were greatly interested in Bajourne. It is a wonderful old city surrounded by a huge wall & a deep moat. The latter has been cleaned off. The wall in 20 places has been broken so as to favour Greek traffic. As you know it is a place...
There are a large number of small steamers which trade between Spanish ports (Boroune & the latter place presents all the appearances of being a busy place.

The steamers themselves are very similar to the Italians even to the elegant curvy shapes & will tempt appearance. In some we saw evidences of recent invasion by the type of features on the stern.

One morning we breakfasted early. Left Biarritz for Boroune shortly after 5 o'clock. Caught the train shortly after nine for a little picnic. After a day's outing in the Pyrenees, we went to Saint Jean Pied de Port. The train followed up the valley of the river & for several miles we passed Vaucluse' agricultural land with farms dotted about & we arrived just as the small country towns — some of them were rather well known for their thermal springs. Of course had Bath-rooms & tea.

Then the valley narrowed & the scenery became more mountainous & we passed...
There was a track on either side, one for the railway and one for the road traffic. It was very interesting to travel along overlooking the river, which was very broken in places andraped.

Then we came to a beautiful plateau (after recrossing one of the mist clouds) where the little town of St. Jean Pied-de-Port is. It was a pretty sight, especially as it was a brilliant sunny day and absolutely still. I suppose the surrounding mountains made it so still. The mountains were magnificent - the heights and valleys were so deep that we couldn't have picked a more ideal day than we had.

As soon as we arrived at the station the people looked at us with curiosity. Then one old gentleman came up to me and asked if we were American officers. I told them no British. He seemed pleased as it was "very strange" for Americans. Then he asked from what part of Britain. When I told him "Australia" he appeared delighted and exclaimed in French (but for your benefit I shall translate it): "Ah, Australians! They are the best British troops. Ah, Good Australia! Good Australia!" I all seemed so genuine. Simple and afterwards during our stay there of 3 1/2 hours wherever we settled we were made cordially greeted and everyone seemed so pleased to tell us of this place and its unflaggingly visited by the military people. The old chap directed us to the Hotel France which he said was the best. There again we had everyone's eyes on us during the meal. They seemed so interested. Afterwards a couple of the old chaps came along and related the Australian deeds in saving Anciers & Paris. They were so proud of the French people. One old fellow told us he had been to South America (Argentina) and that he spoke Spanish very well, the old town was very interesting especially the old walled in...
Houses were built on either side of the river. The foundations of their walls, tapering down to the water's edge, as they had small balconies built out over the river. They presented the same picturesqueness as those I described in the Riviera. They had the same pulley method of dropping buckets into the stream for water.

The women also used to wash their clothes in the receding stream—a rather cold business I should imagine as the water is ice cold.

I managed to get some interesting pictures of views & I hope they will arrive safe. Donkeys often seem to use almost entire trees instead of horses.

All this part of France is inhabited by Basques—a very strong vigorous type of French people. They are mostly dark—not so dark as Spaniards & they look active & tall. The heads appear very prosperous. They almost universally wear a small dark blue or black cap (something like a tam-o'-shanter) made to fit like a skull cap.

As the train is a little late & too tall. They seem to be very proud of their chaste attire. Headgear of the soldiers & officers in the French army are permitted to wear them. It is ludicrous to see these caps in miniature worn by the old women to cover their bunch of hair & certain not bigger than an apple or orange!

On the homeward journey after the long hot walk we ran into fog until we reached Bayonne so that we were not sorry to be back in Beaurit between 6 & 7.

We had some very nice walks at Beaurit—excluding a couple of jaunts to the salt mines there. Port as we fell sorry when we had to make our homeward journey on the Saturday afternoon. We were told that there were 77% We were told that there were 77% of 77% We were told that there were 77% of 77% We were told that there were 77% of 77% We were told that there were 77% of 77%
Three Spaniards was well going to Paris to enjoy the festivities. They also looked prosperous & were very nice fellows & we thoroughly enjoyed their company. They spoke French very well & were in good humor, but we managed to get along all right. It was very tedious & tiresome sitting up all night when we got to Paris at 10 am.

We were very tired. Paris was very crowded & we tried different hotels & fell a room for a bath & a clean up. So we kept our luggage at the Gare du Nord & got our tickets for the 10:15 pm train that night. Then saw the R.L.O. He advised us to go to the Inter-allied Club at 33 Rue Faubourg next to the British Embassy. We were glad the trip & we taxed there at once & found it a most luxurious place. We discovered that it was Baron de Rothschild's place lent as a club for any of the Allied officers. We saw there a good many French & British officers. A few Americans. It was nice to get a real bath & later on have

\[\text{Lunch for 25 francs for the two — I believe this would have cost 2½ - 3 times that amount in the Paris restaurants at the present price of things in Paris. After lunch we strolled along Rue Royale to the Rue St. Bouviers, des Capucines & then to Madeleine. Which we visited for a few minutes. The final stage of the service was taking place over the beautiful church. The church was crowded & it is a little wonder that the old pomm & full of people. Afterwards we made our way down to the Place de la Concorde & there we found thousands of people there viewing the captured German guns which were in large numbers of every size & description. There was also a Steam Tank. As you know at various points around this Place are huge statues representing the leading provinces of France. The scene is closely as we reached it also & went down to the Tuileries & then returned to the Club for a couple of hours.} \]
We left the Club at 9:15 giving ourselves a full hour, as it was 9:15 to the station in case we couldn't get a taxi—or various other delays. It was just as well because being Sunday night, we were told that it would be impossible to get a taxi, so the best way was by the underground electric — the Metropolitan. There was a station at the Concorde, and it would be necessary to change at the Chatelet. However, as we passed Maxim's along the Rue Royale, we, by a bit of manœuvring, managed to get a taxi to the tube we were in good time at the station. In the compartment with us was a naval officer from seamen, an American, and a Sudanese officer. It was a long tedious journey to Boulogne, so we got back to the hospital for breakfast at 9:30. Both of us were glad to have a couple of hours bed after that as we were both pretty tired with two night journey in the train. Altogether our trip was most enjoyable and I am able to tell you more about it on our return to Melbourne.