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SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE

Dr. Harvey Cushing
on the Bombing
of the Harvard Hospital Unit
in France

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The Bombing of the Harvard Base Hospital

Letter from Dr. Harvey Cushing

ON Tuesday, September 9, the U. S. Army Base Hospital, No. 5, conducted in France by the Harvard University Unit, in charge of Dr. Harvey Cushing, Moseley Professor of Surgery, suffered a night-attack of bombs dropped by a German air-raider. The newspaper accounts of the affair gave few of its details. The following letter from Dr. Cushing to Dr. E. H. Bradford, Dean of the Medical School, fully describes the outrage.

Of the persons mentioned in the letter, Lieut. W. F. Fitzsimmons (killed) was an officer of the O. R. C., U. S. A., as also are Lieuts. C. A. McGuire, R. W. Whidden, '07, M.D. '11, and T. D. Smith. Others, mentioned in the letter by surnames only, are Capt. Reginald Fitz, '06, M.D. '09, Lieut. J. J. Morton, M.D., Capt. E. W. Cutler, '09, M.D. '13, and Lieut. J. L. Stoddard, '10, M.D. '14.

U. S. Army Base Hospital No. 5,
(No. 11 General Hospital),
A.P.O. S.18,
B.E.F., France,
September 13, 1917.

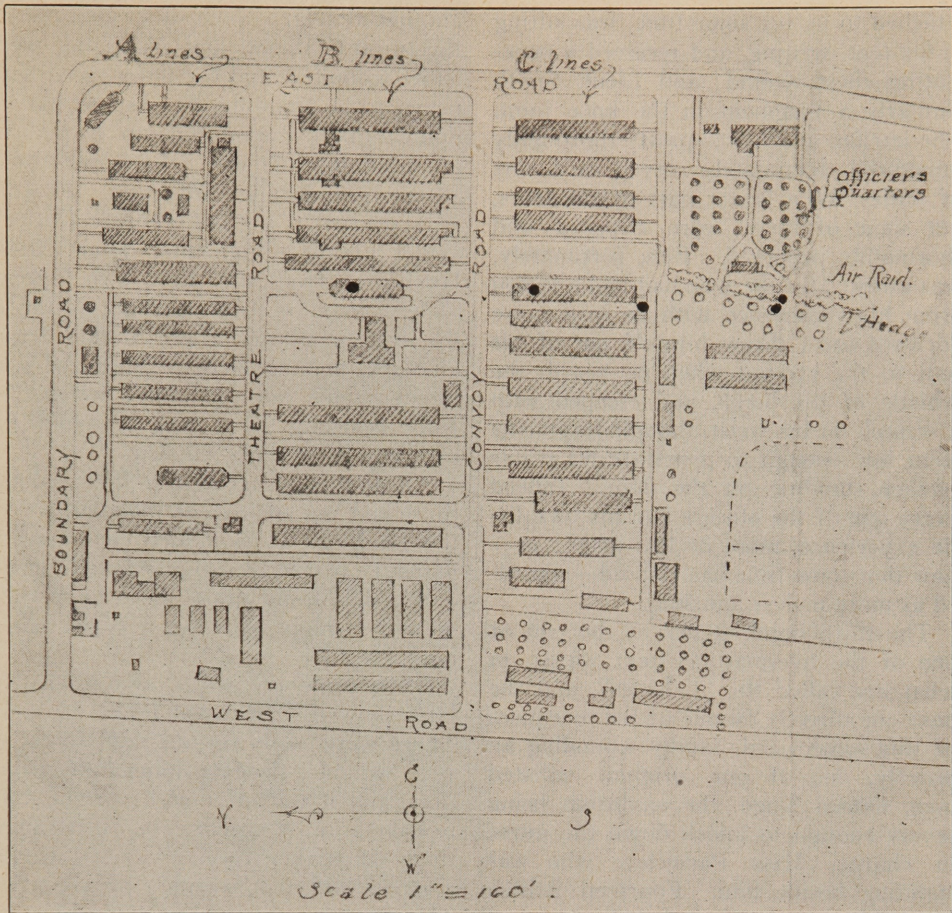
Dear Dr. Bradford:

Our Harvard University Unit has had its full quota of work with the British during the past three months, and now it has had its baptism of fire. It is nothing new, this night-bombing of hospitals by enemy air-raiders, though heretofore this particular attention has been largely confined to hospitals at more advanced stations, and many of them have suffered considerably of late. Having, with a few others of our Unit, been temporarily detached for a period of work at one of these more forward areas, I was not present—to my everlasting regret—when this No. 11 General, which has been taken over by our Unit, was victimized on the night of Tuesday last.

Fragments of the story which I have heard, after getting a permit to rejoin the Unit the next morning, may not be without interest to our friends at home, for I doubt not that many inaccurate accounts may have reached you. Not having been a participant myself makes it possible for me to be the spokesman, for I feel very proud of the way our entire Unit reacted after being subjected to this unexpected bombing; and five direct hits on one hospital compound is unusually accurate marksmanship. In the area where I have been, one or two are not uncommon, and may be repeated on successive nights, but, so far as I am aware, five in one camp is the record.

It was shortly after eleven P. M., and having had a rather strenuous two days, our people were just about turning in, most of the officers were in or about their tents, and the wards for the most part had quieted down for the night. Our officers' quarters consist of a mess hut and some thirty-odd bell tents, with a latrine in the rear, made of some asbestos boards; behind this a hedge, and then another row of tents, chiefly occupied by sergeants, in which two of our newly attached M. O.'s were temporarily quartered.

Just where this particular raider had been, or was bound, I do not know, but he evidently was flying in a northerly direction. He had dropped a bomb, luckily in an open place, in the outskirts of one of the hospitals to the south of us; then a torpedo—fortunately a "dud"—in the hospital adjoining us. A warning had been received, possibly some fifteen minutes before, of his approach; the lights of the camp and district were extinguished so that by those who were awake it was of course known that a raider was in the neighborhood, and the whistle of the torpedo nearby made those



Ground Plan of the Harvard Hospital Camp.
 The Five Black Spots Show Where the Bombs Struck.

who were aware of its significance prostrate themselves. Unhappily, all did not do so, and in a few seconds the next two bombs dropped within ten feet of each other, near the hedge back of the officers' compound.

Poor Fitzsimmons had been roused, had come to the door of his tent and called to one of the sergeants near by, as one of the bombs dropped practically at his feet. The poor fellow with his tent was literally blown to pieces, and fortunately could never have known what had occurred. McGuire, another Kansas City man, in the tent next Fitzsimmons, was in his bunk, out of which he was

practically blown, receiving only three penetrating wounds—shoulder, arm, and thigh—a fortunate escape, for his tent was riddled with holes—someone counted four hundred—and the condition of his possessions can be imagined.

These bombs were of the "daisy-cutting" variety, with low-flying fragments which scatter widely, some of the missiles from these first two bombs even reaching and penetrating our wooden mess hut, one hundred and sixty feet away; and were found in the adjoining hospital the next day

Lieut. Rae Whidden, who, though not a member of our original group, has been

attached to us for some time, was sitting in his tent, writing, and received a penetrating chest wound; and Lieut. Smith similarly a fragment in the knee joint. The latrine, which was pretty thoroughly punctured, fortunately served as a sort of buffer for a larger part of the tents, but some of them were exposed and thoroughly peppered. Fitz, fortunately, was away; Morton, who had had a lesson from his experience with us in a more forward area, threw himself out of his tent to the ground when he heard the whistle of the bomb, and escaped with a scratch on his wrist, though fragments went low enough to penetrate his water pitcher standing on the floor. Indeed every one of the officers had his own little experience, more or less tragic, or—now that some time has elapsed—regarded as more or less amusing.

The third bomb struck at the end of one of the five-marquee tent wards, in what are called the "C-Lines", and the next one directly on one of the marquees of this same ward, fatally wounding an orderly, one of our original enlisted men, named Tugo, the explosion being severe enough to knock down the nurse in charge, Miss Parmelee, who was standing beside him. Fourteen British Tommies were re-wounded in this, and in the adjoining ward.

The fifth and last of the bombs made a direct hit on the reception tent, and it is lucky we were not "taking in" at the moment, for when a convoy of wounded arrives, this is the most congested spot in the hospital camp, with ambulances, stretcher-bearers, and medical officers in addition to the crowd of walking and lying wounded. Sergeant Edwards and three other men were on duty there. Edwards saw the earlier explosions, shouted a warning, leapt from the chair he was sitting in, and rushed to the end of the tent. Our bugler, Woods, a regular, attached to us at Fort Totten, got up from the floor, thanked him for the seat he had vacated, sat down, and was instantly killed; as was also Rubino,

another regular. Two other privates in this group, Mason and McCloud, were badly wounded, and the latter, who happened to be standing, has had to have a double thigh amputation—in fact three amputations—the last a high one for a severe secondary gas infection. That he is recovering is a great credit to Cutler's skill. Flying fragments from these bombs, as from the first two, spread widely, some of them reaching as far as the little laboratory where Stoddard was at work, making media. Stoddard was intent on his job and didn't budge, not fully realizing what had smashed his sash and broken his window.

All of this occurred in a few seconds' time, and out of a clear moonlight sky; the kind of sky a raider chooses, for flying is perfectly safe, and an uncamouflaged hospital must show up plainly on such a night, whether it is lighted or not.

Then came the work, and then the Unit showed what it was really made of. There were many serious, and some severe wounds, needing immediate attention; and it is bad enough for the staff to have a lot of urgent cases thrust upon them when they receive—as we usually receive—sufficient warning of a convoy. The operations, moreover, had to be carried out by the light of candles and lanterns, for there was no more current that night; and not a few of them were urgent ones for hemorrhage. Everyone of course took a hand, and that there was so much to do was probably a blessing, for it certainly must have helped to crowd out all other thoughts.

There were many instances of presence of mind; of self-sacrifice. It is hardly proper to ask about them or to single them out. I may mention one or two examples that have come to me. Miss Parmelee, who had such a close call, went right to work on the re-wounded in her ward, and found when she tried to take a patient's pulse, that her watch had been cut away from its strap. In the morning she reported to the operating

room, to have a small fragment removed from her eyelid; there were about a dozen holes through her jersey and wraps. Mason, one of the men who had been in the reception tent, got to work immediately with the others, carrying wounded, and not until some time after was it noticed that he too was wounded: he had indeed a penetrating wound of the skull.

It is difficult, after such a sudden experience as this, for people to recall exactly what happened—whether the raider's engines were heard or whether they were shut off and he was gliding. One of our sergeants tells me he saw the machine distinctly, flying very low. In that case, he had probably glided down very low over the camp and made his hits sure. Certainly he was not found by the searchlights, for this is known to be difficult on a moonlight night, and no anti-aircraft guns were fired. He may have felt that if he flew low enough over the hospitals they would not dare fire at him. He threw down, in addition to the bombs he released, some ten-pfennig bits, which were found the next day. Can you tell me why? To pay for the damage he had done?

Very sincerely,
HARVEY CUSHING.

P.S. Private Frost, one of our original enlisted men and a landscape architect by profession, has made this plan of our camp, showing where the bombs fell. There is no great difference in hospitals and Fritz already has plenty of photographs of this one, so that I doubt not the censor will let you have it. Moreover he knows that he hit us, but he doesn't know that we are more mad than scared.

H. C.

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