

How Gunner Harold Gooding Died.

THE WHOLE BATTERY BLOWN UP.

Mrs G. Gooding, of Arkona, has received the following account of her gallant son's death (Gunner Harold Gooding), from Mr C. E. Torby, father of the late Lieut. Austin Torby, since killed in action:—

173 Queen Street,
Melbourne.

DEAR MRS GOODING,—I received your letter and am glad to know it reached the right party. I am enclosing in this a copy of a letter I received about my son Austin, and what occurred when his Battery got blown up. Your son was with him at the time. I may say Gunner Gooding was looked upon as one of the best gunners in the battery, and a man the other boys could always rely on. The returned soldier who told me where Gunner Gooding came from was not with the battery at the front, being at the base, and did not know any particulars. My people, at Sheffield, gave me what news I have been able to give you, as my son was there with them just before he died:—

At the time the brigade was in the Menin road, running S.E. from Yonnebeche, and was placed in the cross roads—a very dangerous position, as it was a point which, of course, the Germans constantly shelled. There were two objects near, subject to heavy fire and Austin's guns got all the "overs" from these points.

One night they got the "S.O.S." order and left their dug-outs to man the guns. They had very heavy casualties, and there were only four men left for Austin's gun. After a time two of these men were killed going out of the gun pit for ammunition, that left Austin and a man called Gooding alone to work the gun.

I must tell you here that the enemy shelling was so severe that the order had come to evacuate the guns, but Austin's gun never got the order, so they stuck to it. In a short time the lights on the gun went out, and the two men were standing close together, trying to light it. Austin was partly behind Gooding, with his arm over his shoulder, and the next thing he knew was when he came to himself yards away, a shell having landed on the gun pit and blown Austin and Gooding up. When he collected himself—being yet dazed—he found his way back to the gun, and saw Gooding in a sitting position quite dead. I don't think, however, that Austin realised things properly, for he said he went quite mad. All sense of fear left him, and he tried to find a stretcher for Gooding, but as I have already said the other guns had been evacuated, and it was some time before he found anyone.

He told me he had sent you a piece of shrapnel that stuck in his pocket book,

which he found next day, this had struck him when he was blown up. He told me the next day he felt no ill effects from the shock, but the following day he lost all control of his limbs. He was sent back and kept in bed for several days and then got over it.

I feel this was a fine action, that two men should have such courage and sense of duty as to continue to serve a gun when all the rest had been knocked out.

[S.O.S. means "Save our Souls." It is a signal sent out by the infantry to the artillery that the enemy is attacking and wants them to shell the enemy in front of their trenches.]