

BEST O'LUCK

ALEXANDER McCLINTOCK, D.C.M.

Walker Nov 20 1917

27 4



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

B E S T O ' L U C K

BY ALEXANDER McCLINTOCK, D. C. M.

“The Distinguished Conduct Medal has been awarded to Sergeant Alexander McClintock of the Canadian Overseas Forces for conspicuous gallantry in action. He displayed great courage and determination during a raid against the enemy’s trenches. Later he rescued several wounded men at great personal risk.”

*Extract from official communication
from the Canadian War Office to the
British Consul General in New York.*

BEST O' LUCK

HOW A FIGHTING KENTUCKIAN
WON THE THANKS OF BRITAIN'S KING

BY

ALEXANDER McCLINTOCK, D. C. M.

Late Sergeant, 87th Battalion, Canadian Grenadier Guards

Now member of U. S. A. Reserve Corps



NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

117

COPYRIGHT, 1917,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY MOTHER

MAUDE JOHNSON McCLINTOCK

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I TRAINING FOR THE WAR	11
II THE BOMBING RAID	43
III "OVER THE TOP AND GIVE 'EM HELL"	75
IV SHIFTED TO THE SOMME	101
V WOUNDED IN ACTION	123
VI A VISIT FROM THE KING	153

TRAINING FOR THE WAR

BEST O' LUCK

CHAPTER I

TRAINING FOR THE WAR

I don't lay claim to being much of a writer, and up 'till now I never felt the call to write anything about my experiences with the Canadian troops in Belgium and France, because I realized that a great many other men had seen quite as much as I, and could beat me telling about it. Of course, I believed that my experience was worth relating, and I thought that the matter published in the newspapers by professional writers sort of missed the essentials and lacked the spirit of the "ditches" in a good many ways despite its excellent literary style, but I didn't see any reason why it was up to me to make an effort as a war historian, until now.

Now, there is a reason, as I look at it.

I believe I can show the two or three millions of my fellow countrymen who will be "out there" before this war is over what they are going to be up against, and what they ought to prepare for, personally and individually.

That is as far as I am going to go in the way of excuse, explanation, or comment. The rest of my story is a simple relation of facts and occurrences in the order in which they came to my notice and happened to me. It may start off a little slowly and jerkily, just as we did—not knowing what was coming to us. I'd like to add that it got quite hot enough to suit me later—several times. Therefore, as my effort is going to be to carry you right along with me in this account of my experiences, don't be impatient if nothing very important seems to happen at first. I felt a little ennui myself at the beginning. But that was certainly one thing that didn't annoy me later.

In the latter part of October, 1915, I de-

cided that the United States ought to be fighting along with England and France on account of the way Belgium had been treated, if for no other reason. As there seemed to be a considerable division of opinion on this point among the people at home, I came to the conclusion that any man who was free, white, and twenty-one and felt as I did, ought to go over and get into it single-handed on the side where his convictions led him, if there wasn't some particular reason why he couldn't. Therefore, I said good-by to my parents and friends in Lexington, and started for New York with the idea of sailing for France, and joining the Foreign Legion of the French Army.

A couple of nights after I got to New York I fell into conversation in the Knickerbocker bar with a chap who was in the reinforcement company of Princess Pat's regiment of the Canadian forces. After my talk with him, I decided to go up to Canada and look things over. I arrived at the Windsor Hotel, in Montreal, at eight o'clock in the morning, a couple of days later, and at ten

o'clock the same morning I was sworn in as a private in the Canadian Grenadier Guards, Eighty-seventh Overseas Battalion, Lieut.-Col. F. S. Meighen, Commanding.

They were just getting under way making soldiers out of the troops I enlisted with, and discipline was quite lax. They at once gave me a week's leave to come down to New York, and settle up some personal affairs, and I overstayed it five days. All that my company commander said to me when I got back was that I seemed to have picked up Canadian habits very quickly. At a review one day in our training camp, I heard a Major say:

"Boys, for God's sake don't call me Harry or spit in the ranks. Here comes the General!"

We found out eventually that there was a reason for the slackness of discipline. The trouble was that men would enlist to get \$1.10 a day without working for it, and would desert as soon as any one made it unpleasant for them. Our officers knew what they were about. Conditions changed in-

stantly we went on ship-board. Discipline tightened up on us like a tie-rope on a colt.

We trained in a sort of casual, easy way in Canada from November 4th to the following April. We had a good deal of trouble keeping our battalion up to strength, and I was sent out several times with other "non-coms" on a recruiting detail.

Aside from desertions, there were reasons why we couldn't keep our quota. The weeding out of the physically unfit brought surprising and extensive results. Men who appeared at first amply able to stand "the game" were unable to keep up when the screw was turned. Then, also, our regiment stuck to a high physical standard. Every man must be five feet ten, or over. Many of our candidates failed on the perpendicular requirement only. However, we were not confined to the ordinary rule in Canada, that recruits must come from the home military district of the battalion. We were permitted to recruit throughout the Dominion, and thus we gathered quite a cosmopolitan crowd. The

only other unit given this privilege of Dominion-wide recruiting was the P. P. C. L. I. (Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry), the first regiment to go overseas from Canada, composed largely of veterans of the South African and other colonial wars. We felt a certain emulation about this veteran business and voiced it in our recruiting appeals. We assured our prospective "rookies" that we were just as first-class as any of them. On most of our recruiting trips we took a certain corporal with us who had seen service in France with a Montreal regiment and had been invalided home. He was our star speaker. He would mount a box or other improvised stand and describe in his simple, soldierly way the splendid achievements of the comrades who had gone over ahead of us, and the opportunities for glory and distinction awaiting any brave man who joined with us. When he described his experiences there was a note of compelling eloquence and patriotic fervor in his remarks which sometimes aroused the greatest enthusiasm. Often he was cheered

as a hero and carried on men's shoulders from the stand, while recruits came forward in flocks and women weepingly bade them go on and do their duty. I learned, afterwards that this corporal had been a cook, had never been within twenty miles of the front line, and had been invalided home for varicocele veins. He served us well; but there was a man who was misplaced, in vocation and geography. He should have been in politics in Kentucky.

While we were in the training camp at St. Johns, I made the acquaintance of a young Canadian who became my "pal." He was Campbell Macfarlane, nephew of George Macfarlane, the actor who is so well known on the American musical stage. He was a sergeant. When I first knew him, he was one of the most delightful and amusing young fellows you could imagine.

The war changed him entirely. He became extremely quiet and seemed to be borne down with the sense of the terrible things which he saw. He never lost the good-fellowship which was inherent in him,

and was always ready to do anything to oblige one, but he formed the habit of sitting alone and silent, for hours at a time, just thinking. It seemed as if he had a premonition about himself, though he never showed fear and never spoke of the dangers we were going into, as the other fellows did. He was killed in the Somme action in which I was wounded.

I'm not much on metaphysics and it is difficult for me to express the thought I would convey here. I can just say, as I would if I were talking to a pal, that I have often wondered what the intangible mental or moral quality is that makes men think and act so differently to one another when confronted by the imminent prospect of sudden death. Is it a question of will power—of imagination, or the lack of it—of something that you can call merely physical courage—or what? Take the case of Macfarlane: In action he was as brave as they make them, but, as I have said before, the prospect of sudden death and the presence of death and suffering around him changed him ut-

terly. From a cheerful, happy lad he was transformed into an old man, silent, gloomy and absent-minded except for momentary flashes of his old spirit which became less and less frequent as the time for his own end drew nearer.

There was another chap with us from a little town in Northern Ontario. While in Canada and England he was utterly worthless; always in trouble for being absent without leave, drunk, late on parade, or something else. I think he must, at one time or another, have been charged with every offense possible under the K. R. & O. (King's Regulations and Orders). On route marches he was constantly "falling out." I told him, one day when I was in command of a platoon, that he ought to join the Royal Flying Corps. Then he would only have to fall out once. He said that he considered this a very good joke and asked me if I could think of anything funny in connection with being absent without leave—which he was, that night. In France, this chap was worth ten ordinary men. He was always cheerful, al-

ways willing and prompt in obeying orders, ready to tackle unhesitatingly the most unpleasant or the most risky duty, and the hotter it was the better he liked it. He came out laughing and unscathed from a dozen tight places where it didn't seem possible for him to escape. To use a much-worn phrase, he seemed to bear a charmed life. I'll wager my last cent that he never gets an "R. I. P."—which they put on the cross above a soldier's grave, and which the Tommies call "Rise If Possible." Then there was a certain sergeant who was the best instructor in physical training and bayonet fighting in our brigade and who was as fine and dashing a soldier in physique and carriage as you ever could see. When he got under fire he simply went to pieces. On our first bombing raid he turned and ran back into our own barbed wire, and when he was caught there acted like a madman. He was given another chance but flunked worse than ever. I don't think he was a plain coward. There was merely something wrong with his nervous system. He just

didn't have the "viscera." Now he is back of the lines, instructing, and will never be sent to the trenches again. We had an officer, also, who was a man of the greatest courage, so far as sticking where he belonged and keeping his men going ahead might be concerned, but every time he heard a big shell coming over he was seized with a violent fit of vomiting. I don't know what makes men brave or cowardly in action, and I wouldn't undertake to say which quality a man might show until I saw him in action, but I do know this: If a man isn't frightened when he goes under fire, it's because he lacks intelligence. He simply must be frightened if he has the ordinary human attributes. But if he has what we call physical courage he goes on with the rest of them. Then if he has extraordinary courage he may go on where the rest of them won't go. I should say that the greatest fear the ordinary man has in going into action is the fear that he will show that he is afraid—not to his officers, or to the Germans, or to the folks back home, but to his mates; to the men with

whom he has laughed and scoffed at danger.

It's the elbow-to-elbow influence that carries men up to face machine guns and gas. A heroic battalion may be made up of units of potential cowards.

At the time when Macfarlane was given his stripes, I also was made a sergeant on account of the fact that I had been at school in the Virginia Military Institute. That is, I was an acting sergeant. It was explained to me that my appointment would have to be confirmed in England, and then reconfirmed after three months' service in France. Under the regulations of the Canadian forces, a non-commissioned officer, after final confirmation in his grade, can be reduced to the ranks only by a general court-martial, though he can escape a court-martial, when confronted with charges, by reverting to the ranks at his own request.

Forty-two hundred of us sailed for England on the *Empress of Britain*, sister ship to the *Empress of Ireland*, which was sunk in the St. Lawrence River. The steamer was, of course, very crowded and uncom-

fortable, and the eight-day trip across was most unpleasant. We had tripe to eat until we were sick of the sight of it. A sergeant reported one morning, "eight men and twenty-two breakfasts, absent." There were two other troop ships in our convoy, the *Baltic* and the *Metagama*. A British cruiser escorted us until we were four hundred miles off the coast of Ireland; then each ship picked up a destroyer which had come out to meet her. At that time, a notice was posted in the purser's office informing us that we were in the war zone, and that the ship would not stop for anything, even for a man overboard. That day a soldier fell off the *Metagama* with seven hundred dollars in his pocket, and the ship never even hesitated. They left him where he had no chance in the world to spend his money.

Through my training in the V. M. I., I was able to read semaphore signals, and I caught the message from the destroyer which escorted us. It read:

"Each ship for herself now. Make a break!"

We beat the other steamers of our convoy eight hours in getting to the dock in Liverpool, and, according to what seemed to be the regular system of our operations at that time, we were the last to disembark.

The majority of our fellows had never been in England before, and they looked on our travels at that time as a fine lark. Everybody cheered and laughed when they dusted off one of those little toy trains and brought it up to take us away in it. After we were aboard of it, we proceeded at the dizzy rate of about four miles an hour, and our regular company humorist—no company is complete without one—suggested that they were afraid, if they went any faster, they might run off of the island before they could stop. We were taken to Bramshott camp, in Hampshire, twelve miles from the Aldershott School of Command. The next day we were given "King's leave"—eight days with free transportation anywhere in the British Isles. It is the invariable custom to give this sort of leave to all colonial troops immediately upon their arrival in England.

However, in our case, Ireland was barred. Just at that time, Ireland was no place for a newly arrived Canadian looking for sport.

Our men followed the ordinary rule of soldiers on leave. About seventy-five per cent. of them wired in for extensions and more money. About seventy-four per cent. received peremptorily unfavorable replies. The excuses and explanations which came in kept our officers interested and amused for some days. One man—who got leave—sent in a telegram which is now framed and hung on the wall of a certain battalion orderley's room. He telegraphed:

“No one dead. No one ill. Got plenty of money. Just having a good time. Please grant extension.”

After our leave, they really began to make soldiers of us. We thought our training in Canada had amounted to something. We found out that we might as well have been playing croquet. We learned more the first week of our actual training in England than we did from November to April in Canada. I make this statement without fear that any

officer or man of the Canadian forces alive to-day will disagree with me, and I submit it for the thoughtful consideration of the gentlemen who believe that our own armies can be prepared for service here at home.

The sort of thing that the President is up against at Washington is fairly exemplified in what the press despatches mention as "objections on technical grounds" of the "younger officers of the war college," to the recommendations which General Pershing has made as to the reorganization of the units of our army for service in Europe.

The extent of the reorganization which must be made in pursuance of General Pershing's recommendations is not apparent to most people. Even our best informed militia officers do not know how fundamentally different the organization of European armies is to that which has existed in our own army since the days when it was established to suit conditions of the Civil War. But the officers of our regular army realize what the reorganization would mean and some of them rise to oppose it for

fear it may jeopardize their seniority or promotion or importance. But they'll have to come to it. The United States army can not operate successfully in France unless its units are convenient and similar multiples to those in the French and British armies. It would lead to endless confusion and difficulty if we kept the regiment as our field unit while our allies have the battalion as their field unit.

There are but unimportant differences in the unit organization of the French, British and Canadian forces. The British plan of organization is an exemplar of all, and it is what we must have in our army. There is no such thing in the British army as an established regimental strength. A battalion numbers 1,500 men, but there is no limit to the number of battalions which a regiment may have. The battalion is the field unit. There are regiments in the British army which have seven battalions in the field. Each battalion is commanded by a lieutenant-colonel. All full colonels either do staff duty or act as brigaders. There

are five companies of 250 men each in every battalion. That is, there are four regular companies of 250 men each, and a headquarters company of approximately that strength. Each company is commanded by a major, with a captain as second in command, and four lieutenants as platoon commanders. There are no second lieutenants in the Canadian forces, though there are in the British and French. The senior major of the battalion commands the headquarters company, which includes the transport, quartermaster's staff, paymaster's department (a paymaster and four clerks), and the headquarters staff (a captain adjutant and his non-commissioned staff). Each battalion has, in addition to its full company strength, the following "sections" of from 30 to 75 men each, and each commanded by a lieutenant: bombers, scouts and snipers, machine gunners and signallers. There is also a section of stretcher-bearers, under the direct command of the battalion surgeon, who ranks as a major. In the United States army a battalion is com-

manded by a major. It consists merely of four companies of 112 men each, with a captain and two lieutenants to each company.

As I have said, a British or French battalion has four ordinary companies of 250 men each and the headquarters company of special forces approximating that number of men. Instead of one major it has six, including the surgeon. It has seven captains, including the paymaster, the adjutant and the quartermaster. It has twenty lieutenants, including the commanders of special "sections." You can imagine what confusion would be likely to occur in substituting a United States force for a French or English force, with these differences of organization existing.

In this war, every man has got to be a specialist. He's got to know one thing better than anybody else except those who have had intensive instruction in the same branch. And besides that, he's got to have effective general knowledge of all the specialties in which his fellow soldiers have been particularly trained. I can illustrate this. Imme-

diately upon our return from first leave in England, we were divided into sections for training in eight specialties. They were: Bombing, sniping, scouting, machine-gun fighting, signalling, trench mortar operation, bayonet fighting, and stretcher-bearing. I was selected for special training in bombing, probably because I was supposed, as an American and a baseball player, to be expert in throwing. With the other men picked for training in the same specialty, I was sent to Aldershott, and there, for three weeks, twelve hours a day, I threw bombs, studied bombs, read about bombs, took bombs to pieces and put them together again, and did practically everything else that you would do with a bomb, except eat it.

Then I was ordered back along with the other men who had gained this intimate acquaintance with the bomb family, and we were put to work teaching the entire battalion all that we had learned. When we were not teaching, we were under instruction ourselves by the men who had

taken special training in other branches. Also, at certain periods of the day, we had physical training and rifle practice. Up to the time of our arrival in England, intensive training had been merely a fine phrase with us. During our stay there, it was a definite and overpowering fact. Day and night we trained and day and night it rained. At nine o'clock, we would fall into our bunks in huts which held from a half to a whole platoon—from thirty to sixty men—and drop into exhausted sleep, only to turn out at 5 A.M. to give a sudden imitation of what we would do to the Germans if they sneaked up on us before breakfast in six inches of mud. Toward the last, when we thought we had been driven to the limit, they told us that we were to have a period of real, intensive training to harden us for actual fighting. They sent us four imperial drill sergeants from the British Grenadier Guards, the senior foot regiment of the British army, and the one with which we were affiliated.

It would be quite unavailing for me to

attempt to describe these drill sergeants. The British drill sergeant is an institution which can be understood only through personal and close contact. If he thinks a major-general is wrong, he'll tell him so on the spot in the most emphatic way, but without ever violating a single sacred tradition of the service. The sergeants, who took us in charge to put the real polish on our training, had all seen from twenty to twenty-five years of service. They had all been through the battles of Mons and the Marne, and they had all been wounded. They were perfect examples of a type. One of them ordered all of our commissioned officers, from the colonel down, to turn out for rifle drill one day, and put them through the manual of arms while the soldiers of the battalion stood around, looking on.

"Gentlemen," said he, in the midst of the drill, "when I see you handle your rifles I feel like falling on my knees and thanking God that we've got a navy."

On June 2d, after the third battle of

Ypres, while Macfarlane and I were sitting wearily on our bunks during an odd hour in the afternoon when nobody had thought of anything for us to do, a soldier came in with a message from headquarters which put a sudden stop to the discussion we were having about the possibility of getting leave to go up to London. The message was that the First, Second and Third divisions of the Canadians had lost forty per cent. of their men in the third fight at Ypres and that three hundred volunteers were wanted from each of our battalions to fill up the gaps.

"Forty per cent.," said Macfarlane, getting up quickly. "My God, think of it! Well, I'm off to tell 'em I'll go."

I told him I was with him, and we started for headquarters, expecting to be received with applause and pointed out as heroic examples. We couldn't even get up to give in our names. The whole battalion had gone ahead of us. They heard about it first. That was the spirit of the Canadians. It was about this time that a story went 'round concerning an English colonel who had been

called upon to furnish volunteers from his outfit to replace casualties. He backed his regiment up against a barrack wall and said:

“Now, all who don't want to volunteer, step three paces to the rear.”

In our battalion, sergeants and even officers offered to go as privates. Our volunteers went at once, and we were re-enforced up to strength by drafts from the Fifth Canadian division, which was then forming in England.

In July, when we were being kept on the rifle ranges most of the time, all leave was stopped, and we were ordered to hold ourselves in readiness to go overseas. In the latter part of the month, we started. We sailed from Southampton to Havre on a big transport, escorted all the way by destroyers. As we landed, we got our first sight of the harvest of war. A big hospital on the quay was filled with wounded men. We had twenty-four hours in what they called a “rest camp.” We slept on cobble stones in shacks which were so utterly comfortless that it would be an insult to a Kentucky

thoroughbred to call them stables. Then we were on the way to the Belgian town of Poperinghe, which is one hundred and fifty miles from Havre and was, at that time, the rail head of the Ypres salient. We made the trip in box cars which were marked in French: "Eight horses or forty men," and we had to draw straws to decide who should lie down.

We got into Poperinghe at 7 A. M., and the scouts had led us into the front trenches at two the next morning. Our position was to the left of St. Eloi and was known as "The Island," because it had no support on either side. On the left, were the Yser Canal and the bluff which forms its bank. On the right were three hundred yards of battered-down trenches which had been rebuilt twice and blown in again each time by the German guns. For some reason, which I never quite understood, the Germans were able to drop what seemed a tolerably large proportion of the output of the Krupp works on this particular spot whenever they wanted to. Our high command had con-

cluded that it was untenable, and so we, on one side of it, and the British on the other, had to just keep it scouted and protect our separate flanks. Another name they had for that position was the "Bird Cage." That was because the first fellows who moved into it made themselves nice and comfy and put up wire nettings to prevent any one from tossing bombs in on them. Thus, when the Germans stirred up the spot with an accurate shower of "whiz-bangs" and "coal-boxes," the same being thirteen-pounders and six-inch shells, that wire netting presented a spectacle of utter inadequacy which hasn't been equalled in this war.

They called the position which we were assigned to defend "The Graveyard of Canada." That was because of the fearful losses of the Canadians here in the second battle of Ypres, from April 21, to June 1, 1915, when the first gas attack in the world's history was launched by the Germans, and, although the French, on the left, and the British, on the right, fell back, the Canadians stayed where they were put.

Right here I can mention something which will give you an idea why descriptions of this war don't describe it. During the first gas attack, the Canadians, choking to death and falling over each other in a fight against a new and unheard-of terror in warfare, found a way—the Lord only knows who first discovered it and how he happened to do it—to stay through a gas cloud and come out alive. It isn't pretty to think of, and it's like many other things in this war which you can't even tell of in print, because simple description would violate the nice ethics about reading matter for the public eye, which have grown up in long years of peace and traditional decency. But this thing which you can't describe meant just the difference between life and death to many of the Canadians, that first day of the gas. Official orders: now, tell every soldier what he is to do with his handkerchief or a piece of his shirt if he is caught in a gas attack without his mask.

The nearest I can come, in print, to telling you what a soldier is ordered to do in

this emergency is to remind you that ammonia fumes oppose chlorine gas as a neutralizing agent, and that certain emanations of the body throw off ammonia fumes.

Now, that I've told you how we got from the Knickerbocker bar and other places to a situation which was just one hundred and fifty yards from the entrenched front of the German army in Belgium, I might as well add a couple of details about things which straightway put the fear of God in our hearts. At daybreak, one of our Fourteenth platoon men, standing on the firing step, pushed back his trench helmet and remarked that he thought it was about time for coffee. He didn't get any. A German sharpshooter, firing the first time that day, got him under the rim of his helmet, and his career with the Canadian forces was over right there. And then, as the dawn broke, we made out a big painted sign raised above the German front trench. It read:

WELCOME,

EIGHTY-SEVENTH CANADIANS

We were a new battalion, we had been less than seventy-two hours on the continent of Europe and the Germans were not supposed to know anything that was going on behind our lines!

We learned, afterward, that concealed telephones in the houses of the Belgian burgomasters of the villages of Dinkiebusch and Renninghelst, near our position, gave communication with the German headquarters opposite us. One of the duties of a detail of our men, soon after that, was to stand these two burgomasters up against a wall and shoot them.

THE BOMBING RAID

CHAPTER II

THE BOMBING RAID

When we took our position in the front line trenches in Belgium, we relieved the Twenty-sixth Canadian Battalion. The Twenty-sixth belonged to the Second division, and had seen real service during the battle of Hooge and in what is now termed the third battle of Ypres, which occurred in June, 1916. The organization was made up almost exclusively of French Canadians from Quebec, and it was as fine a fighting force as we had shown the Fritzes, despite the fact that men of their race, as developments have proved, are not strongly loyal to Canada and Britain. Individually, the men of this French Canadian battalion were splendid soldiers and the organization could be criticized on one score only. In the heat of action it could not be kept in control. On

one occasion when it went in, in broad daylight, to relieve another battalion, the men didn't stop at the fire trench. They went right on "over the top," without orders, and, as a result, were badly cut up. Time and again the men of this battalion crossed "No Man's Land" at night, without orders and without even asking consent, just to have a scrimmage with "the beloved enemy." Once, when ordered to take two lines of trenches, they did so in the most soldierly fashion, but, seeing red, kept on going as if their orders were to continue to Berlin. On this occasion they charged right into their barrage fire and lost scores of their men, struck down by British shells. It has been said often of all the Canadians that they go the limit, without hesitation. There was a time when the "Bing Boys"—the Canadians were so called because this title of a London musical comedy was suggested by the fact that their commander was General Byng—were ordered to take no prisoners, this order being issued after two of their men were found crucified. A Canadian pri-

vate, having penetrated a German trench with an attacking party, encountered a German who threw up his hands and said: "Mercy, Kamerade. I have a wife and five children at home.

"You're mistaken," replied the Canadian. "You have a widow and five orphans at home."

And, very shortly, he had.

Scouts from the Twenty-sixth battalion had come back to the villages of Dinkeibusch and Renninghelst to tell us how glad they were to see us and to show us the way in. As we proceeded overland, before reaching the communication trenches at the front, these scouts paid us the hospitable attentions due strangers. That is, one of them leading a platoon would say:

"Next two hundred yards in machine gun range. Keep quiet, don't run, and be ready to drop quick if you are warned."

There was one scout to each platoon, and we followed him, single file, most of the time along roads or well-worn paths, but sometimes through thickets and ragged

fields. Every now and then the scout would yell at us to drop, and down we'd go on our stomachs while, away off in the distance we could hear the "put-put" of machine guns—the first sound of hostile firing that had ever reached our ears.

"It's all right," said the scout. "They haven't seen us or got track of us. They're just firing on suspicion."

Nevertheless, when our various platoons had all got into the front reserve trenches, at about two hours after midnight, we learned that the first blood of our battalion had been spilled. Two men had been wounded, though neither fatally. Our own stretcher-bearers took our wounded back to the field hospital at Dinkiebusch. The men of the Twenty-sixth battalion spent the rest of the night instructing us and then left us to hold the position. We were as nervous as a lot of cats, and it seemed to me that the Germans must certainly know that they could come over and walk right through us, but, outside of a few casualties from sniping, such as the one that befell the Fourteenth

THE BOMBING RAID

platoon man, which I have told about, nothing very alarming happened the first day and night, and by that time we had got steady on our job. We held the position for twenty-six days, which was the longest period that any Canadian or British organization had ever remained in a front-line trench.

In none of the stories I've read, have I ever seen trench fighting, as it was then carried on in Belgium, adequately described. You see, you can't get much of an idea about a thing like that, making a quick tour of the trenches under official direction and escort, as the newspaper and magazine writers do. I couldn't undertake to tell anything worth while about the big issues of the war, but I can describe how soldiers have to learn to fight in the trenches—and I think a good many of our young fellows have that to learn, now. "Over there," they don't talk of peace or even of to-morrow. They just sit back and take it.

We always held the fire trench as lightly as possible, because it is a demonstrated fact that the front ditch cannot be successfully

defended in a determined attack. The thing to do is to be ready to jump onto the enemy as soon as he has got into your front trench and is fighting on ground that you know and he doesn't and knock so many kinds of tar out of him that he'll have to pull his freight for a spot that isn't so warm. That system worked first rate for us.

During the day, we had only a very few men in the fire trench. If an attack is coming in daylight, there's always plenty of time to get ready for it. At night, we kept prepared for trouble all the time. We had a night sentry on each firing step and a man sitting at his feet to watch him and know if he was secretly sniped. Then we had a sentry in each "bay" of the trench to take messages.

Orders didn't permit the man on the firing step or the man watching him to leave post on any excuse whatever, during their two-hour "spell" of duty. Hanging on a string, at the elbow of each sentry on the fire-step was a siren whistle or an empty shell case and bit of iron with which to hammer on it.

THE BOMBING RAID

This—siren or improvised gong—was for the purpose of spreading the alarm in case of a gas attack. Also we had sentries in “listening posts,” at various points from twenty to fifty yards out in “No Man’s Land.” These men blackened their faces before they went “over the top,” and then lay in shell holes or natural hollows. There were always two of them, a bayonet man and a bomber. From the listening post a wire ran back to the fire trench to be used in signaling. In the trench, a man sat with this wire wrapped around his hand. One pull meant “All O. K.,” two pulls, “I’m coming in,” three pulls, “Enemy in sight,” and four pulls, “Sound gas alarm.” The fire step in a trench is a shelf on which soldiers stand so that they may aim their rifles between the sand bags which form the parapet.

In addition to these men, we had patrols and scouts out in “No Man’s Land” the greater part of the night, with orders to gain any information possible which might be of value to battalion, brigade, division or general headquarters. They reported on the

conditions of the Germans' barbed wire, the location of machine guns and other little things like that which might be of interest to some commanding officer, twenty miles back. Also, they were ordered to make every effort to capture any of the enemy's scouts or patrols, so that we could get information from them. One of the interesting moments in this work came when a star shell caught you out in an open spot. If you moved you were gone. I've seen men stand on one foot for the thirty seconds during which a star shell will burn. Then, when scouts or patrols met in "No Man's Land" they always had to fight it out with bayonets. One single shot would be the signal for artillery fire and would mean the almost instant annihilation of the men on both sides of the fight. Under the necessities of this war, many of our men have been killed by our own shell fire.

At a little before daybreak came "stand-to," when everybody got buttoned up and ready for business, because, at that hour, most attacks begin and also that was one of

the two regular times for a dose of "morning and evening hate," otherwise a good lively fifteen minutes of shell fire. We had some casualties every morning and evening, and the stretcher-bearers used to get ready for them as a matter of course. For fifteen minutes at dawn and dusk, the Germans used to send over "whiz-bangs," "coal-boxes" and "minniewurfers" (shells from trench mortars) in such a generous way that it looked as if they liked to shoot 'em off, whether they hit anything or not. You could always hear the "heavy stuff" coming, and we paid little attention to it as it was used in efforts to reach the batteries, back of our lines. The poor old town of Dinkiebusch got the full benefit of it. When a shell would shriek its way over, some one would say: "There goes the express for Dinkiebusch," and a couple of seconds later, when some prominent landmark of Dinkiebusch would disintegrate to the accompaniment of a loud detonation, some one else would remark:

"Train's arrived!"

The scouts who inhabited "No Man's Land" by night became snipers by day. Different units had different systems of utilizing these specialists. The British and the French usually left their scouts and snipers in one locality so that they might come to know every hummock and hollow and tree-stump of the limited landscape which absorbed their unending attention. The Canadians, up to the time when I left France, invariably took their scouts and snipers along when they moved from one section of the line to another. This system was criticized as having the disadvantage of compelling the men to learn new territory while opposing enemy scouts familiar with every inch of the ground. As to the contention on this point, I could not undertake to decide, but it seemed to me that our system had, at least, the advantage of keeping the men more alert and less likely to grow careless. Some of our snipers acquired reputations for a high degree of skill and there was always a fascination for me in watching them work. We always had

THE BOMBING RAID

two snipers to each trench section. They would stand almost motionless on the fire steps for hours at a time, searching every inch of the German front trench and the surrounding territory with telescopes. They always swathed their heads with sand bags, looking like huge, grotesque turbans, as this made the finest kind of an "assimilation covering." It would take a most alert German to pick out a man's head, so covered, among all the tens of thousands of sand bags which lined our parapet. The snipers always used special rifles with telescopic sights, and they made most extraordinary shots. Some of them who had been huntsmen in the Canadian big woods were marvellous marksmen. Frequently one of them would continue for several days giving special attention to a spot where a German had shown the top of his head for a moment. If the German ever showed again, at that particular spot, he was usually done for. A yell or some little commotion in the German trenches, following the sniper's quick shot would tell the story to us. Then the sniper would receive

general congratulations. There is a first warning to every man going into the trenches. It is: "Fear God and keep your head down."

Our rations in the trenches were, on the whole, excellent. There were no delicacies and the food was not over plentiful, but it was good. The system appeared to have the purpose of keeping us like bulldogs before a fight—with enough to live on but hungry all the time. Our food consisted principally of bacon, beans, beef, bully-beef, hard tack, jam and tea. Occasionally we had a few potatoes, and, when we were taken back for a few days' rest, we got a good many things which difficulty of transport excluded from the front trenches. It was possible, sometimes, to beg, borrow or even steal eggs and fresh bread and coffee.

All of our provisions came up to the front line in sand bags, a fact easily recognizable when you tasted them. There is supposed to be an intention to segregate the various foods, in transport, but it must be admitted that they taste more or less of each other,

THE BOMBING RAID

and that the characteristic sand-bag flavor distinguishes all of them from mere, ordinary foods which have not made a venturesome journey. As many of the sand bags have been originally used for containing brown sugar, the flavor is more easily recognized than actually unpleasant. When we got down to the Somme, the food supply was much less satisfactory—principally because of transport difficulties. At times, even in the rear, we could get fresh meat only twice a week, and were compelled to live the rest of the time on bully-beef stew, which resembles terrapin to the extent that it is a liquid with mysterious lumps in it. In the front trenches, on the Somme, all we had were the "iron rations" which we were able to carry in with us. These consisted of bully-beef, hard tack, jam and tea. The supply of these foods which each man carries is termed "emergency rations," and the ordinary rule is that the emergency ration must not be touched until the man has been forty-eight hours without food, and then only by permission of an officer.

One of the great discoveries of this war is that hard tack makes an excellent fuel, burning like coke and giving off no smoke. We usually saved enough hard tack to form a modest escort, stomachward, for our jam, and used the rest to boil our tea. Until one has been in the trenches he cannot realize what a useful article of diet jam is. It is undoubtedly nutritious and one doesn't tire of it, even though there seem to be but two varieties now existing in any considerable quantities—plum and apple. Once upon a time a hero of the "ditches" discovered that his tin contained strawberry jam, but there was such a rush when he announced it that he didn't get any of it.

There was, of course, a very good reason for the shortness and uncertainty of the food supply on the Somme. All communication with the front line was practically overland, the communication trenches having been blown in. Ration parties, bringing in food, frequently suffered heavy casualties. Yet they kept tenaciously and courageously doing their best for us. Occasionally they even

THE BOMBING RAID

brought up hot soup in huge, improvised thermos bottles made from petrol tins wrapped in straw and sand bags, but this was very rarely attempted, and not with much success. You could sum up the food situation briefly. It was good—when you got it.

It may be fitting, at this time, to pay a tribute to the soldier's most invaluable friend, the sand bag. The sand bag, like the rest of us, did not start life in a military capacity, but since joining the army it has fulfilled its duty nobly. Primarily, sand bags are used in making a parapet for a trench or a roof for a dug-out, but there are a hundred other uses to which they have been adapted, without hesitation and possibly without sufficient gratitude for their ready adaptability. Some of these uses may surprise you. Soldiers strain their tea through them, wrap them around their legs for protection against cold and mud, swab their rifles with them to keep them clean, use them for bed sacks, kit bags and ration bags. The first thing a man does when he enters a trench or reaches a new position

which is to be held is to feel in his belt, if he is a private, or to yell for some one else to feel in his belt, if he is an officer, for a sand bag. Each soldier is supposed to have five tucked beneath his belt whenever he starts to do anything out of the ordinary. When you've got hold of the first one, in a new position, under fire, you commence filling it as fast as the Germans and your own ineptitude will permit, and the sooner that bag is filled and placed, the more likely you are to continue in a state of health and good spirits. Sand bags are never filled with sand, because there is never any sand to put into them. Anything that you can put in with a shovel will do.

About the only amusement we had during our long stay in the front trenches in Belgium, was to sit with our backs against the rear wall and shoot at the rats running along the parapet. Poor Macfarlane, with a flash of the old humor which he had before the war, told a "rookie" that the trench rats were so big that he saw one of them trying on his great-coat. They used to run over

THE BOMBING RAID

our faces when we were sleeping in our dug-outs, and I've seen them in ravenous swarms, burrowing into the shallow graves of the dead. Many soldiers' legs are scarred to the knees with bites.

The one thing of which we constantly lived in fear was a gas attack. I used to awaken in the middle of the night, in a cold sweat, dreaming that I heard the clatter and whistle-blowing all along the line which meant that the gas was coming. And, finally, I really did hear the terrifying sound, just at a moment when it couldn't have sounded worse. I was in charge of the nightly ration detail, sent back about ten miles to the point of nearest approach of the transport lorries, to carry in rations, ammunition and sand bags to the front trenches. We had a lot of trouble, returning with our loads. Passing a point which was called "Shrapnel Corner" because the Germans had precise range on it, we were caught in machine-gun fire and had to lie on our stomachs for twenty minutes, during which we lost one man, wounded. I sent him back

and went on with my party only to run into another machine-gun shower a half-mile further on. While we were lying down to escape this, a concealed British battery of five-inch guns, about which we knew nothing, opened up right over our heads. It shook us up and scared us so that some of our party were now worse off than the man who had been hit and carried to the rear. We finally got together and went on. When we were about a mile behind the reserve trench, stumbling in the dark through the last and most dangerous path overland, we heard a lone siren whistle followed by a wave of metallic hammering and wild tooting which seemed to spread over all of Belgium a mile ahead of us. All any of us could say was:

“Gas!”

All you could see in the dark was a collection of white and frightened faces. Every trembling finger seemed awkward as a thumb as we got out our gas masks and helmets and put them on, following directions as nearly as we could. I ordered the

THE BOMBING RAID

men to sit still and sent two forward to notify me from headquarters when the gas alarm was over. They lost their way and were not found for two days. We sat there for an hour, and then I ventured to take my mask off. As nothing happened, I ordered the men to do the same. When we got into the trenches with our packs, we found that the gas alarm had been one of Fritz's jokes. The first sirens had been sounded in the German lines, and there hadn't been any gas.

Our men evened things up with the Germans, however, the next night. Some of our scouts crawled clear up to the German barbed wire, ten yards in front of the enemy fire trench, tied empty jam-tins to the barricade and then, after attaching light telephone wires to the barbed strands, crawled back to our trenches. When they started pulling the telephone wires the empty tins made a clatter right under Fritz's nose. Immediately the Germans opened up with all their machine-gun and rifle fire, began bombing the spot from which the noise came and sent up "S. O. S." signals for artillery

fire along a mile of their line. They fired a ten-thousand-dollar salute and lost a night's sleep over the noise made by the discarded containers of five shillings' worth of jam. It was a good tonic for the Tommies.

A few days after this, a very young officer passed me in a trench while I was sitting on a fire-step, writing a letter. I noticed that he had the red tabs of a staff officer on his uniform, but I paid no more attention to him than that. No compliments such as salutes to officers are paid in the trenches. After he had passed, one of the men asked me if I didn't know who he was. I said I didn't.

"Why you d——d fool," he said, "that's the Prince of Wales."

When the little prince came back, I stood to salute him. He returned the salute with a grave smile and passed on. He was quite alone, and I was told afterward, that he made these trips through the trenches just to show the men that he did not consider himself better than any other soldier. The heir of England was certainly taking nearly

THE BOMBING RAID

the same chance of losing his inheritance that we were.

After we had been on the front line fifteen days, we received orders to make a bombing raid. Sixty volunteers were asked for, and the whole battalion offered. I was lucky—or unlucky—enough to be among the sixty who were chosen. I want to tell you in detail about this bombing raid, so that you can understand what a thing may really amount to that gets only three lines, or perhaps nothing at all, in the official dispatches. And, besides that, it may help some of the young men who read this, to know something, a little later, about bombing.

The sixty of us chosen to execute the raid were taken twenty miles to the rear for a week's instruction practice. Having only a slight idea of what we were going to try to do, we felt very jolly about the whole enterprise, starting off. We were camped in an old barn, with several special instruction officers in charge. We had oral instruction, the first day, while sappers dug and built an exact duplicate of the section of the Ger-

man trenches which we were to raid. That is, it was exact except for a few details. Certain "skeleton trenches," in the practice section, were dug simply to fool the German aviators. If a photograph, taken back to German headquarters, had shown an exact duplicate of a German trench section, suspicion might have been aroused and our plans revealed. We were constantly warned about the skeleton trenches and told to remember that they did not exist in the German section where we were to operate. Meanwhile, our practice section was changed a little, several times, because aerial photographs showed that the Germans had been renovating and making some additions to the trenches in which we were to have our frolic with them.

We had oral instruction, mostly, during the day, because we didn't dare let the German aviators see us practicing a bomb raid. All night long, sometimes until two or three o'clock in the morning, we rehearsed that raid, just as carefully as a company of star actors would rehearse a play. At first there was a disposition to have sport out of it.

THE BOMBING RAID

“Well,” some chap would say, rolling into the hay all tired out, “I got killed six times to-night. S’pose it’ll be several times more to-morrow night.”

One man insisted that he had discovered, in one of our aerial photographs, a German burying money, and he carefully examined each new picture so that he could be sure to find the dough and dig it up. The grave and serious manner of our officers, however; the exhaustive care with which we were drilled and, more than all, the approach of the time when we were “to go over the top,” soon drove sport out of our minds, and I can say for myself that the very thought of the undertaking, as the fatal night drew near, sent shivers up and down my spine.

A bombing raid—something originated in warfare by the Canadians—is not intended for the purpose of holding ground, but to gain information, to do as much damage as possible, and to keep the enemy in a state of nervousness. In this particular raid, the chief object was to gain information. Our

high command wanted to know what troops were opposite us and what troops had been there. We were expected to get this information from prisoners and from buttons and papers off of the Germans we might kill. It was believed that troops were being relieved from the big tent show, up at the Somme, and sent to our side show in Belgium for rest. Also, it was suspected that artillery was being withdrawn for the Somme. Especially, we were anxious to bring back prisoners.

In civilized war, a prisoner can be compelled to tell only his name, rank and religion. But this is not a civilized war, and there are ways of making prisoners talk. One of the most effective ways—quite humane—is to tie a prisoner fast, head and foot, and then tickle his bare feet with a feather. More severe measures have frequently been used—the water cure, for instance—but I'm bound to say that nearly all the German prisoners I saw were quite loquacious and willing to talk, and the accuracy of their information, when later con-

THE BOMBING RAID

firmed by raids, was surprising. The iron discipline, which turns them into mere children in the presence of their officers seemed to make them subservient and obedient to the officers who commanded us. In this way, the system worked against the Fatherland. I mean, of course, in the cases of privates. Captured German officers, especially Prussians, were a nasty lot. We never tried to get information from them for we knew they would lie, happily and intelligently.

At last came the night when we were to go "over the top," across "No Man's Land," and have a frolic with Fritz in his own, bailiwick. I am endeavoring to be as accurate and truthful as possible in these stories of my soldiering, and I am therefore compelled to say that there wasn't a man in the sixty who didn't show the strain in his pallor and nervousness. Under orders, we discarded our trench helmets and substituted knitted skull caps or mess tin covers. Then we blackened our hands and faces with ashes from a camp fire. After

this they loaded us into motor trucks and took us up to "Shrapnel Corner," from which point we went in on foot. Just before we left, a staff officer came along and gave us a little talk.

"This is the first time you men have been tested," he said. "You're Canadians. I needn't say anything more to you. They're going to be popping them off at a great rate while you're on your way across. Remember that you'd better not stand up straight because our shells will be going over just six and a half feet from the ground—where it's level. If you stand up straight you're likely to be hit in the head, but don't let that worry you because if you do get hit in the head you won't know it. So why in hell worry about it?" That was his farewell. He jumped on his horse and rode off.

The point we were to attack had been selected long before by our scouts. It was not, as you might suppose, the weakest point in the German line. It was on the contrary, the strongest. It was considered that the moral effect of cleaning up a weak point

THE BOMBING RAID

would be comparatively small, whereas to break in at the strongest point would be something really worth while. And, if we were to take chances, it really wouldn't pay to hesitate about degrees. The section we were to raid had a frontage of one hundred and fifty yards and a depth of two hundred yards. It had been explained to us that we were to be supported by a "box barrage," or curtain fire from our artillery, to last exactly twenty-six minutes. That is, for twenty-six minutes from the time when we started "over the top," our artillery, several miles back, would drop a "curtain" of shells all around the edges of that one hundred and fifty yard by two hundred yard section. We were to have fifteen minutes in which to do our work. Any man not out at the end of the fifteen minutes would necessarily be caught in our own fire as our artillery would then change from a "box" to pour a straight curtain fire, covering all of the spot of our operations.

Our officers set their watches very carefully with those of the artillery officers, be-

fore we went forward to the front trenches. We reached the front at 11 P.M., and not until our arrival there were we informed of the "zero hour"—the time when the attack was to be made. The hour of twelve-ten had been selected. The waiting from eleven o'clock until that time was simply an agony. Some of our men sat stupid and inert. Others kept talking constantly about the most inconsequential matters. One man undertook to tell a funny story. No one listened to it, and the laugh at the end was emaciated and ghastly. The inaction was driving us all into a state of funk. I could actually feel my nerve oozing out at my finger tips, and, if we had had to wait fifteen minutes longer, I shouldn't have been able to climb out of the trench.

About half an hour before we were to go over, every man had his eye up the trench for we knew "the rummies" were coming that way. The rum gang serves out a stiff shot of Jamaica just before an attack, and it would be a real exhibition of temperance to see a man refuse. There were no prohibi-

tionists in our set. Whether or not we got our full ration depended on whether the sergeant in charge was drunk or sober. After the shot began to work, one man next to me pounded my leg and hollered in my ear:

“I say. Why all this red tape? Let’s go over now.”

That noggin’ of rum is a life saver.

When the hour approached for us to start, the artillery fire was so heavy that orders had to be shouted into ears, from man to man. The bombardment was, of course, along a couple of miles of front, so that the Germans would not know where to expect us. At twelve o’clock exactly they began pulling down a section of the parapet so that we wouldn’t have to climb over it, and we were off.

“OVER THE TOP AND GIVE 'EM HELL”

CHAPTER III

“OVER THE TOP AND GIVE 'EM HELL”

As we climbed out of the shelter of our trenches for my first—and, perhaps, my last, I thought—adventure in “No Man’s Land,” the word was passed:

“Over the top and give 'em hell!”

That is the British ‘Tommies’ battle cry as they charge the enemy and it has often sounded up and down those long lines in western France as the British, Canadian, and Australian soldiers go out to the fight and the death.

We were divided into six parties of ten men, each party having separate duties to perform. We crouched forward, moving slowly in single file, stumbling into shell holes and over dead men—some very long dead—and managing to keep in touch with each other through the machine-gun bullets

began to drop men almost immediately. Once we were started, we were neither fearful, nor rattled. We had been drilled so long and so carefully that each man knew just what he was to do and he kept right on doing it unless he got hit. To me, it seemed the ground was moving back under me. The first ten yards were the toughest. The thing was perfectly organized. Our last party of ten was composed of signallers. They were paying out wires and carrying telephones to be used during the fifteen minutes of our stay in the German trenches in communicating with our battalion headquarters. A telephone code had been arranged, using the names of our commanding officers as symbols. "Rexford 1" meant, "First prisoners being sent back"; "Rexford 2" meant, "Our first wounded being sent over"; "Rexford 3" meant, "We have entered German trench." The code was very complete and the signallers had been drilled in it for a week. In case the telephone wires were cut, the signallers were to send messages back by the use of rifle grenades.

These are rifle projectiles which carry little metal cylinders to contain written messages, and which burst into flame when they strike the earth, so that they can be easily found at night. The officer in charge of the signallers was to remain at the point of entrance, with his eyes on his watch. It was his duty to sound a warning signal five minutes before the end of our time in the German trenches.

The leader of every party of ten also had a whistle with which to repeat the warning blast and then the final blast, when each man was to drop everything and get back of our artillery fire. We were not to leave any dead or wounded in the German trench, on account of the information which the Germans might thus obtain. Before starting on the raid, we had removed all marks from our persons, including even our identification discs. Except for the signallers, each party of ten was similarly organized. First, there were two bayonet men, each with an electric flash light attached to his rifle so as to give light for the direction of a bayonet

thrust and controlled by a button at the left-hand grasp of the rifle. Besides his rifle, each of these men carried six or eight Mills No. 5 hand grenades, weighing from a pound and five ounces to a pound and seven ounces each. These grenades are shaped like turkey eggs, but slightly larger. Upon withdrawing the firing pin, a lever sets a four-second fuse going. One of these grenades will clean out anything living in a ten-foot trench section. It will also kill the man throwing it, if he holds it more than four seconds, after he has pulled the pin. The third man of each ten was an expert bomb thrower, equipped as lightly as possible to give him freedom of action. He carried a few bombs, himself, but the main supply was carried by a fourth man who was not to throw any unless the third man became a casualty, in which case number four was to take his place. The third man also carried a knob-kerrie—a heavy bludgeon to be used in whacking an enemy over the head. The kind we used was made by fastening a heavy steel nut on a stout stick of wood—a very

business-like contrivance. The fourth man, or bomb carrier, besides having a large supply of Mills grenades, had smoke bombs, to be used in smoking the Germans out of dug-outs and, later, if necessary, in covering our retreat, and also fumite bombs. The latter are very dangerous to handle. They contain a mixture of petrol and phosphorous, and weigh three pounds each. On exploding they release a liquid fire which will burn through steel.

The fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth in line, were called utility men. They were to take the places of any of the first four who might become casualties. In addition, they carried two Stokes-gun bombs, each. These weigh nine pounds apiece, have six-second fuses, and can be used in wrecking dug-outs. The ninth and tenth men were sappers, carrying slabs of gun-cotton and several hundred yards of instantaneous fuse. This explosive is used in demolishing machine-gun emplacements and mine saps. The sappers were to lay their charges while we were at work in the trenches, and explode them as

soon as our party was far enough out on the return journey to be safe from this danger. In addition to these parties of ten, there were three of us who carried bombs and had orders to keep near the three officers, to take the place of any one of them that might go down, and meanwhile to use our own judgment about helping the jolly old party along. I was one of the three.

In addition to the raiding party, proper, there was a relay all across "No Man's Land," at ten paces interval, making a human chain to show us our way back, to assist the wounded and, in case of opportunity or necessity, to re-enforce us. They were ordered not to leave their positions when we began to come back, until the last man of our party had been accounted for. The final section of our entourage was composed of twelve stretcher-bearers, who had been specially trained with us, so that they would be familiar with the trench section which we were to raid.

There were two things which made it possible for our raiding party to get started

across “No Man’s Land.” One was the momentary quickening of the blood which follows a big and unaccustomed dose of rum, and the other was a sort of subconscious, mechanical confidence in our undertaking, which was a result of the scores of times we had gone through every pre-arranged movement in the duplicate German trenches behind our lines. Without either of those influences, we simply could not have left shelter and faced what was before us.

An intensified bombardment from our guns began just as soon as we had climbed “over the top” and were lining up for the journey across. “Lining up” is not just a suitable term. We were crawling about on all fours, just far enough out in “No Man’s Land” to be under the edge of the German shell-fire, and taking what shelter we could in shell-holes while our leaders picked the way to start across. The extra heavy bombardment had warned the Germans that something was about to happen. They sent up star shells and “S. O. S.” signals, until there was a glare over the torn

earth like that which you see at the grand finish of a Pain's fire-works display, and meanwhile they sprayed "No Man's Land" with streams of machine-gun fire. In the face of that, we started.

It would be absurd to say that we were not frightened. Thinking men could not help but be afraid. If we were pallid—which undoubtedly we were—the black upon our faces hid it, but our fear-struck voices were not disguised. They trembled and our teeth chattered.

We sneaked out, single file, making our way from shell-hole to shell-hole, nearly all the time on all fours, crawling quickly over the flat places between holes. The Germans had not sighted us, but they were squirting machine-gun bullets all over the place like a man watering a lawn with a garden hose, and they were bound to get some of us. Behind me, I heard cries of pain, and groans, but this made little impression on my benumbed intelligence. From the mere fact that whatever had happened had happened to one of the

other sections of ten and not to my own, it seemed, some way or another, no affair to concern me. Then a man in front of me doubled up suddenly and rolled into a shell-hole. That simply made me remember very clearly that I was not to stop on account of it. It was some one else's business to pick that man up. Next, according to the queer psychology of battle, I began to lose my sensation of fear and nervousness. After I saw a second man go down, I gave my attention principally to a consideration of the irregularities of the German parapet ahead of us, picking out the spot where we were to enter the trench. It seems silly to say it, but I seemed to get some sort of satisfaction out of the realization that we had lost the percentage which we might be expected to lose, going over. Now, it seemed, the rest of us were safe until we should reach the next phase of our undertaking. I heard directions given and I gave some myself. My voice was firm, and I felt almost calm. Our artillery had so torn up the German barbed wire that it gave us no

trouble at all. We walked through it with only a few scratches. When we reached the low, sand-bag parapet of the enemy trench, we tossed in a few bombs and followed them right over as soon as they had exploded. There wasn't a German in sight. They were all in their dug-outs. But we knew pretty well where every dugout was located, and we rushed for the entrances with our bombs. Everything seemed to be going just as we had expected it to go. Two Germans ran plump into me as I round a ditch angle, with a bomb in my hand. They had their hands up and each of them yelled:

“Mercy, Kamarad!”

I passed them back to be sent to the rear, and the man who received them from me chuckled and told them to step lively. The German trenches were practically just as we had expected to find them, according to our sample. They were so nearly similar to the duplicate section in which we had practiced that we had no trouble finding our way in them. I was just thinking that really the only tough part of the job remaining would

be getting back across “No Man’s Land,” when it seemed that the whole earth behind me, rose in the air. For a moment I was stunned, and half blinded by dirt blown into my face. When I was able to see, I discovered that all that lay back of me was a mass of upturned earth and rock, with here and there a man shaking himself or scrambling out of it or lying still.

Just two minutes after we went into their trench, the Germans had exploded a mine under their parapet. I have always believed that in some way or another they had learned which spot we were to raid, and had prepared for us. Whether that’s true or not, one thing is certain. That mine blew our organization, as we would say in Kentucky, “plumb to Hell.” And it killed or disabled more than half of our party.

There was much confusion among those of us who remained on our feet. Some one gave an order to retire and some one countermanded it. More Germans came out of their dug-outs, but, instead of surrendering as per our original schedule, they threw

bombs amongst us. It became apparent that we should be killed or captured if we stuck there and that we shouldn't get any more prisoners. I looked at my wrist watch and saw that there remained but five minutes more of the time which had been allotted for our stay in the trench, so I blew my whistle and started back. I had seen Private Green (No. 177,250) knocked down by a bomb in the next trench section, and I picked him up and carried him out over the wrecked parapet. I took shelter with him in the first shell-hole but found that he was dead and left him there. A few yards further back toward our line I found Lance Corporal Glass in a shell-hole, with part of his hip shot away. He said he thought he could get back if I helped him, and I started with him. Private Hunter, who had been in a neighboring shell-hole came to our assistance, and between us, Hunter and I got Glass to our front trench.

We found them lining up the survivors of our party for a roll call. That showed so many missing that Major John Lewis,

our company commander, formerly managing-editor of the *Montreal Star*, called for volunteers to go out in “No Man’s Land” and try to find some of our men. Corporal Charleson, Private Saunders and I went out. We brought in two wounded, and we saw a number of dead, but, on account of their blackened faces, were unable to identify them. The scouts, later, brought in several bodies.

Of the sixty odd men who had started in our party, forty-three were found to be casualties—killed, wounded, or missing. The missing list was the longest. The names of these men were marked, “M. B. K.” (missing, believed killed) on our rolls. I have learned since that some few of them have been reported through Switzerland as prisoners of war in Germany, but most of them are now officially listed as dead.

All of the survivors of the raiding party were sent twenty miles to the rear at seven o’clock, and the non-commissioned officers were ordered to make reports in writing

concerning the entire operation. We recorded, each in his own way, the ghastly failure of our first aggressive effort against the Germans, before we rolled into the hay in the same old barn where we had been quartered during the days of preparation for the raid. I was so dead tired that I soon fell asleep, but not for long. I never slept more than an hour at a time for several days and nights. I would doze off from sheer exhaustion, and then suddenly find myself sitting straight up, scared half to death, all over again.

There may be soldiers who don't get scared when they know they are in danger or even when people are being killed right around them, but I'm not one of them. And I've never met any of them yet. I know a boy who won the Military Medal, in the battle of the Somme, and I saw him on his knees before his platoon commander, shamelessly crying that he was a coward and begging to be left behind, just when the order to advance was given.

Soldiers of our army who read this story

will probably observe one thing in particular, and that is the importance of bombing operations in the present style of warfare. You might say that a feature of this war has been the renaissance of the grenadier. Only British reverence for tradition kept the name of the Grenadiers alive, through a considerable number of wars. Now, in every offensive, big or small, the man who has been trained to throw a bomb thirty yards is busier and more important than the fellow with the modern rifle which will shoot a mile and a half and make a hole through a house. In a good many surprising ways this war has carried us back to first principles. I remember a Crusader's mace which I once saw in the British museum that would make a bang-up knob-kerrie, much better than the kind with which they arm our Number 4 men in a raiding party section. It had a round, iron head with spikes all over it. I wonder that they haven't started a factory to turn them out.

As I learned during my special training in England, the use of hand grenades was

first introduced in warfare by the French, in 1667. The British did not use them until ten years later. After the battle of Waterloo the hand grenade was counted an obsolete weapon until the Japanese revived its use in the war with Russia. The rude grenades first used by the British in the present war weighed about eight pounds. To-day, in the British army, the men who have been trained to throw grenades—now of lighter construction and much more efficient and certain action—are officially known as “bombers.” for this reason: When grenade fighting came back to its own in this war, each battalion trained a certain number of men in the use of grenades, and, naturally, called them “grenadiers.” The British Grenadier Guards, the senior foot regiment in the British Army, made formal complaint against the use of their time-honored name in this connection, and British reverence for tradition did the rest. The Grenadiers were no longer grenadiers, but they were undoubtedly the Grenadiers. The war office issued a formal order that battal-

ion grenade throwers should be known as “bombers” and not as “grenadiers.”

Up to the time when I left France we had some twenty-seven varieties of grenades, but most of them were obsolete or ineffective, and we only made use of seven or eight sorts. The grenades were divided into two principal classes, rifle grenades and hand grenades. The rifle grenades are discharged from a rifle barrel by means of a blank cartridge. Each grenade is attached to a slender rod which is inserted into the bore of the rifle, and the longer the rod the greater the range of the grenade. The three principal rifle grenades are the Mills, the Hales, and the Newton, the former having a maximum range of 120 yards, and the latter of 400 yards. A rifle discharging a Mills grenade may be fired from the shoulder, as there is no very extraordinary recoil, but in using the others it is necessary to fasten the rifle in a stand or plant the butt on the ground. Practice teaches the soldier how much elevation to give the rifle for different ranges. The hand grenades are divided also

into two classes, those which are discharged by percussion, and those which have time fuses, with detonators of fulminate of mercury. The high explosives used are ammonal, abliste and sabulite, but ammonal is the much more commonly employed. There are also smoke bombs, the Mexican or tonite bomb, the Hales hand grenade, the No. 19 grenade and the fumite bomb, which contains white phosphorous, wax and petrol, and discharges a stream of liquid fire which will quickly burn out a dug-out and everything it contains. Hand grenades are always thrown with a stiff arm, as a bowler delivers a cricket ball toward the wicket. They cannot be thrown in the same manner as a baseball for two reasons. One is that the snap of the wrist with which a baseball is sent on its way would be likely to cause the premature discharge of a percussion grenade, and the second is that the grenades weigh so much—from a pound and a half to ten pounds—that the best arm in the world couldn't stand the strain of whipping them off as a baseball is thrown. I'm talking by

the book about this, because I've been a bomber and a baseball player.

A bomber, besides knowing all about the grenades in use in his own army, must have practical working knowledge concerning the grenades in use by the enemy. After we took the Regina trench, on the Somme, we ran out of grenades at a moment when a supply was vitally necessary. We found a lot of the German “egg” bombs, and through our knowledge of their workings and our consequent ability to use them against their original owners we were able to hold the position.

An officer or non-commissioned officer in charge of a bombing detail must know intimately every man in his command, and have such discipline that every order will be carried out with scrupulous exactitude when the time comes. The leader will have no time, in action, to prompt his men or even to see if they are doing what they have been told to do. When a platoon of infantry is in action one rifleman more or less makes little difference, but in bombing operations each

man has certain particular work to do and he must do it, just as it has been planned, in order to protect himself and his comrades from disaster. If you can out-throw the enemy, or if you can make most of the bombs land with accuracy, you have a wonderful advantage in an attack. But throwing wild or throwing short you simply give confidence to the enemy in his own offensive. One very good thrower may win an objective for his squad, while one man who is faint-hearted or unskilled or "rattled" may cause the entire squad to be annihilated.

In the revival of bombing, some tricks have developed which would be humorous if the denouements were not festooned with crepe and accompanied by obituary notations on muster rolls. There may be something which might be termed funny on one end of a bombing-ruse—but not on both ends of it. Whenever you fool a man with a bomb, you're playing a practical joke on him that he'll never forget. Even, probably, he'll never get a chance to remember it.

When the Canadians first introduced bombing, the bombs were improvised out of jam tins, the fuses were cut according to the taste and judgment of the individual bomber, and, just when the bomb would explode, was more or less problematical. Frequently, the Germans have tossed our bombs back into our trenches before they went off. That was injurious and irritating. They can't do that with a Mills grenade nor with any of the improved factory-made bombs, because the men know just how they are timed and are trained to know just how to throw them. The Germans used to work another little bomb trick of their own. They learned that our scouts and raiders were all anxious to get a German helmet as a souvenir. They'd put helmets on the ground in "No Man's Land," or in an advanced trench with bombs under them. In several cases, men looking for souvenirs suddenly became mere memories, themselves. In several raids, when bombing was new, the Canadians worked a trick on the Germans with extensively fatal effect. They tossed

bombs into the German trenches with six-inch fuses attached. To the Germans they looked just like the other bombs we had been using, and, in fact they were—all but the fuses. Instead of having failed to continue burning, as the Germans thought, those fuses had never been lighted. They were instantaneous fuses. The ignition spark will travel through instantaneous fuse at the rate of about thirty yards a second. A German would pick up one of these bombs, select the spot where he intended to blow up a few of us with our own ammunal, and then light the fuse. After that there had to be a new man in his place. The bomb would explode instantly the long fuse was ignited.

The next day when I got up after this disastrous raid, I said to my bunkie:

“Got a fag?” (Fag is the Tommy’s name for a cigarette.)

It’s never, “will you have a fag?” but always, “have you got a fag?”

They are the inseparable companions of the men at the front, and you’ll see the sol-

“OVER THE TOP AND GIVE 'EM HELL”

diers go over the top with an unlit fag in their lips. Frequently, it is still there when their work is done.

As we sat there smoking, my friend said:

“Something sure raised hell with our calculations.”

“Like those automatic self-cocking revolvers did with a Kentucky wedding when some one made a remark reflecting on the bride,” I replied.

.
It may be interesting to note that Corpl. Glass, Corpl. Charleson and Private (later Corpl.) Saunders have all since been “Killed in Action.” Charleson and Saunders the same morning I was wounded on the Somme, and Glass, Easter morning at Vimy Ridge, when the Canadians made their wonderful attack.

.

SHIFTED TO THE SOMME

CHAPTER IV

SHIFTED TO THE SOMME

A few days after the bombing raid, which ended so disastrously for us, our battalion was relieved from duty on the front line, and the tip we got was that we were to go down to the big show then taking place on the Somme. Our relief was a division of Australians. You see, the sector which we had held in Belgium was a sort of preparatory school for the regular fighting over in France.

It wasn't long before we got into what you might call the Big League contest but, in the meanwhile, we had a little rest from battling Fritz and the opportunity to observe some things which seem to me to be worth telling about. Those of you who are exclusively fond of the stirring detail of war, such as shooting and being shot at and

bombing and bayoneting, need only skip a little of this. We had an entirely satisfactory amount of smoke and excitement later.

As soon as our relief battalion had got in, we moved back to Renninghelst for a couple of days rest. We were a pretty contented and jovial lot—our platoon, especially. We were all glad to get away from the strain of holding a front trench, and there were other advantages. For instance, the alterations of our muster roll due to casualties, had not come through battalion headquarters and, therefore, we had, in our platoon, sixty-three rum rations, night and morning, and only sixteen men. There was a Canadian Scot in our crowd who said that the word which described the situation was “g-r-r-r-a-nd!”

There was a good deal of jealousy at that time between the Canadians and the Australians. Each had the same force in the field—four divisions. Either force was bigger than any other army composed exclusively of volunteers ever before assembled. While I belong to the Canadian army and believe the Canadian overseas forces the

finest troops ever led to war, I must say that I have never seen a body of men so magnificent in average physique as the Australians. And some of them were even above the high average. The man that punched me in the eye in an "estaminet" in Poperinghe made up entirely in his own person for the absence of Les Darcy from the Australian ranks. I don't know just how the fight started between the Australians and us, in Poperinghe, but I know that it took three regiments of Imperial troops to stop it. The most convincing story I heard of the origin of the battle was told me by one of our men who said he was there when it began. He said one of the Australians had carelessly remarked that the British generals had decided it was time to get through with the side-show in Belgium and this was the reason why they had sent in regular troops like the Australians to relieve the Canadians.

Then some sensitive Canadian wished the Australians luck and hoped they'd finish it up as well as they had the affair in the Dardanelles. After that, our two days' rest was

made up principally of beating it out of "estaminets" when strategic requirements suggested a new base, or beating it into "estaminets" where it looked as if we could act as efficient re-inforcements. The fight never stopped for forty-eight hours, and the only places it didn't extend to were the church and the hospitals. I'll bet, to this day, that the Belgians who run the "estaminets" in Poperinghe will duck behind the bars if you just mention Canada and Australia in the same breath.

But I'm bound to say that it was good, clean fighting. Nobody fired a shot, nobody pulled a bayonet, and nobody got the wrong idea about anything. The Australian heavy-weight champion who landed on me went right out in the street and saluted one of our lieutenants. We had just one satisfying reflection after the fight was over. The Australian battalion that relieved us fell heir to the counter attack which the Germans sent across to even up on our bombing raid.

We began our march to the Somme by a

hike to St. Ohmer, one of the early British headquarters in Europe. Then we stopped for a week about twenty miles from Calais, where we underwent a course of intensified training for open fighting. The infantry tactics, in which we were drilled, were very similar to those of the United States army—those which, in fact, were originated by the United States troops in the days of Indian fighting. We covered most of the ground around Calais on our stomachs in open order. While it may seem impertinent for me, a mere non-com., to express an opinion about the larger affairs of the campaign, I think I may be excused for saying that the war didn't at all take the course which was expected and hoped for after the fight on the Somme. Undoubtedly, the Allies expected to break through the German line. That is well known now. While we were being trained near Calais for open warfare, a very large force of cavalry was being assembled and prepared for the same purpose. It was never used.

That was last August, and the Allies

haven't broken through yet. Eventually I believe they will break through, but, in my opinion, men who are waiting now to learn if they are to be drawn for service in our new American army will be veterans in Europe before the big break comes, which will wreck the Prussian hope of success in this war. And if we of the U. S. A. don't throw in the weight to beat the Prussians now, they will not be beaten, and, in that case, the day will not be very far distant when we will have to beat them to save our homes and our nation. War is a dreadful and inglorious and ill-smelling and cruel thing. But if we hold back now, we will be in the logical position of a man hesitating to go to grips with a savage, shrieking, spewing maniac who has all but whipped his proper keepers, and is going after the on-looker next.

We got drafts of recruits before we went on to the Somme, and some of our wounded men were sent back to England, where we had left our "Safety-first Battalion." That was really the Fifty-first battalion, of the

Fourth Division of the Canadian forces, composed of the physically rejected, men recovering from wounds, and men injured in training. The Tommies, however, called it the "Safety-first," or "Major Gilday's Light Infantry." Major Gilday was our battalion surgeon. He was immensely popular, and he achieved a great name for himself. He made one realize what a great personal force a doctor can be and what an unnecessary and overwrought elaboration there is in the civil practice of medicine.

Under Major Gilday's administration, no man in our battalion was sick if he could walk, and, if he couldn't walk, there was a reasonable suspicion that he was drunk. The Major simplified the practice of medicine to an exact science involving just two forms of treatment and two remedies—"Number Nines" and whale oil. Number Nines were pale, oval pills, which, if they had been eggs, would have run about eight to an omelette. They had an internal effect which could only be defined as dynamic. After our men had become acquainted with

them through personal experience they stopped calling them "Number Nines" and called them "whiz-bangs." There were only two possibilities of error under Major Gilday's system of simplified medicine. One was to take a whiz-bang for trench feet, and the other to use whale oil externally for some form of digestional hesitancy. And, in either case, no permanent harm could result, while the error was as simple of correction as the command "about face."

There was a story among our fellows that an ambulance had to be called for Major Gilday, in London, one day, on account of shock following a remark made to him by a bobby. The Major asked the policeman how he could get to the Cavoy Hotel. The bobby, with the proper bus line in mind, replied: "Take a number nine, sir."

Two weeks and a half after we left Belgium we arrived at Albert, having marched all the way. The sight which met our eyes as we rounded the rock-quarry hill, outside of Albert, was wonderful beyond description. I remember how tremendously it im-

pressed my pal, Macfarlane. He sat by the roadside and looked 'round over the landscape as if he were fascinated.

"Boy," said he, "we're at the big show at last."

Poor fellow, it was not only the big show, but the last performance for him. Within sight of the spot where he sat, wondering, he later fell in action and died. The scene, which so impressed him, gave us all a feeling of awe. Great shells from a thousand guns were streaking and criss-crossing the sky. Without glasses I counted thirty-nine of our observation balloons. Away off in the distance I saw one German captive balloon. The other air-craft were uncountable. They were everywhere, apparently in hundreds. There could have been no more wonderful panoramic picture of war in its new aspect.

Our battalion was in and out of the town of Albert several days waiting for orders. The battle of Courcellette was then in progress, and the First, Second and Third Canadian divisions were holding front positions

at terrible cost. In the first part of October, 1916, we "went in" opposite the famous Regina trench. The battle-ground was just miles and miles of debris and shell-holes. Before we went to our position, the officers and non-coms. were taken in by scouts to get the lay of the land. These trips were called "Cook's Tours." On one of them I went through the town of Poziers twice and didn't know it. It had a population of 12,000 before the war. On the spot where it had stood not even a whole brick was left, it seemed. Its demolition was complete. That was an example of the condition of the whole country over which our forces had blasted their way for ten miles, since the previous July. There were not even landmarks left.

The town of Albert will always remain in my memory, and, especially, I shall always have the mental picture of the cathedral, with the statue of the Virgin Mary with the Babe in her arms, apparently about to topple from the roof. German shells had carried away so much of the base of the

statue that it inclined at an angle of 45 degrees. The Germans—for some reason which only they can explain—expended much ammunition in trying to complete the destruction of the cathedral, but they did not succeed and they'll never do it now. The superstitious French say that when the statue falls the war will end. I have a due regard for sacred things, but if the omen were to be depended upon I should not regret to see the fall occur.

An unfortunate and tragic mishap occurred just outside of Albert when the Somme offensive started on July 1. The signal for the first advance was to be the touching off of a big mine. Some fifteen minutes before the mine exploded the Germans set off one of their own. Two regiments mistook this for the signal and started over. They ran simultaneously into their own barrage and a German fire, and were simply cut to pieces in as little time, almost, as it takes to say it.

The Germans are methodical to such an extent that at times this usually excellent

quality acts to defeat their own ends. An illustration of this was presented during the bombardment of Albert. Every evening at about six o'clock they would drop thirty high-explosive shells into the town. When we heard the first one coming we would dive for the cellars. Everyone would remain counting the explosions until the number had reached thirty. Then everyone would come up from the cellars and go about his business. There were never thirty-one shells and never twenty-nine shells. The number was always exactly thirty, and then the high-explosive bombardment was over. Knowing this, none of us ever got hurt. Their methodical "evening hate" was wasted, except for the damage it did to buildings in the town.

On the night when we went in to occupy the positions we were to hold, our scouts, leading us through the flat desert of destruction, got completely turned 'round, and took us back through a trench composed of shell-holes, connected up, until we ran into a battalion of another brigade. The place

was dreadful beyond words. The stench of the dead was sickening. In many places arms and legs of dead men stuck out of the trench walls.

We made a fresh start, after our blunder, moving in single file and keeping in touch each with the man ahead of him. We stumbled along in the darkness through this awful labyrinth until we ran into some of our own scouts at 2 A.M., and found that we were half-way across "No Man's Land," several hundred yards beyond our front line and likely to be utterly wiped out in twenty seconds should the Germans sight us. At last we reached the proper position, and fifteen minutes after we got there a whiz-bang buried me completely. They had to dig me out. A few minutes later another high-explosive shell fell in a trench section where three of our men were stationed. All we could find after it exploded were one arm and one leg which we buried. The trenches were without trench mats, and the mud was from six inches to three feet deep all through them. There were no dug-outs;

only miserable "funk holes," dug where it was possible to dig them without uncovering dead men. We remained in this position four days, from the 17th to the 21st of October, 1916.

There were reasons, of course, for the difference between conditions in Belgium and on the Somme. On the Somme, we were constantly preparing for a new advance, and we were only temporarily established on ground which we had but recently taken, after long drumming with big guns. The trenches were merely shell-holes connected by ditches. Our old and ubiquitous and useful friend, the sand bag, was not present in any capacity, and, therefore, we had no parapets or dug-outs. The communication trenches were all blown in and everything had to come to us overland, with the result that we never were quite sure when we should get ammunition, rations, or relief forces. The most awful thing was that the soil all about us was filled with freshly-buried men. If we undertook to cut a trench or enlarge a funk hole, our spades struck

into human flesh, and the explosion of a big shell along our line sent decomposed and dismembered and sickening mementoes of an earlier fight showering amongst us. We lived in the muck and stench of "glorious" war; those of us who lived.

Here and there, along this line, were the abandoned dug-outs of the Germans, and we made what use of them we could, but that was little. I had orders one day to locate a dug-out and prepare it for use as battalion headquarters. When I led a squad in to clean it up the odor was so overpowering that we had to wear our gas masks. On entering, with our flashlights, we first saw two dead nurses, one standing with her arm 'round a post, just as she had stood when gas or concussion killed her. Seated at a table in the middle of the place was the body of an old general of the German medical corps, his head fallen between his hands. The task of cleaning up was too dreadful for us. We just tossed in four or five fumite bombs and beat it out of there. A few hours later we went into the seared and empty

cavern, made the roof safe with new timbers, and notified battalion headquarters that the place could be occupied.

During this time I witnessed a scene which—with some others—I shall never forget. An old chaplain of the Canadian forces came to our trench section seeking the grave of his son, which had been marked for him on a rude map by an officer who had seen the young man's burial. We managed to find the spot, and, at the old chaplain's request, we exhumed the body. Some of us suggested to him that he give us the identification marks and retire out of range of the shells which were bursting all around us. We argued that it was unwise for him to remain unnecessarily in danger, but what we really intended was that he should be saved the horror of seeing the pitiful thing which our spades were about to uncover.

"I shall remain," was all he said. "He was my boy."

It proved that we had found the right body. One of our men tried to clear the features with his handkerchief, but ended by

spreading the handkerchief over the face. The old chaplain stood beside the body and removed his trench helmet, baring his gray locks to the drizzle of rain that was falling. Then, while we stood by with bowed heads, his voice rose amid the noise of bursting shells, repeating the burial service of the Church of England. I have never been so impressed by anything in my life as by that scene.

The dead man was a young captain. He had been married to a lady of Baltimore, just before the outbreak of the war.

The philosophy of the British Tommies, and the Canadians and the Australians on the Somme was a remarkable reflection of their fine courage through all that hell. They go about their work, paying no attention to the flying death about them.

"If Fritz has a shell with your name and number on it," said a British Tommy to me one day, "you're going to get it whether you're in the front line or seven miles back. If he hasn't, you're all right."

Fine fighters, all. And the Scotch kilties,

lovingly called by the Germans, "the women from hell," have the respect of all armies. We saw little of the Poilus, except a few on leave. All the men were self-sacrificing to one another in that big melting pot from which so few ever emerge whole. The only things it is legitimate to steal in the code of the trenches are rum and "fags" (cigarettes). Every other possession is as safe as if it were under a Yale lock.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

CHAPTER V

WOUNDED IN ACTION

Our high command apparently meant to make a sure thing of the general assault upon the Regina trench, in which we were to participate. Twice the order to "go over the top" was countermanded. The assault was first planned for October 19th. Then the date was changed to the 20th. Finally, at 12:00 noon, of October 21st, we went. It was the first general assault we had taken part in, and we were in a highly nervous state. I'll admit that.

It seemed almost certain death to start over in broad daylight, yet, as it turned out, the crossing of "No Man's Land" was accomplished rather more easily than in our night raids. Our battalion was on the extreme right of the line, and that added materially to our difficulties, first by compel-

ling us to advance through mud so deep that some of our men sank to their hips in it and, second, by giving us the hottest little spot in France to hold later.

I was in charge of the second "wave" or assault line. This is called the "mopping up" wave, because the business of the men composing it is thoroughly to bomb out a position crossed by the first wave, to capture or kill all of the enemy remaining, and to put the trench in a condition to be defended against a counter attack by reversing the fire steps and throwing up parapets.

While I was with the Canadians, all attacks, or rather advances, were launched in four waves, the waves being thirty to fifty yards apart. A wave, I might explain, is a line of men in extended order, or about three paces apart. Our officers were instructed to maintain their places in the line and to wear no distinguishing marks which might enable sharpshooters to pick them off. Invariably, however, they led the men out of our trenches. "Come on, boys, let's go,"

they would say, climbing out in advance. It was bred in them to do that.

Experience had taught us that it took the German barrage about a minute and a half to get going after ours started, and that they always opened up on our front line trench. We had a plan to take advantage of this knowledge. We usually dug an "assembly trench" some distance in advance of our front line, and started from it. Thus we were able to line up between two fires, our shells bursting ahead of us, and the Germans' behind us. All four waves started from the assembly trench at once, the men of the second, third and fourth waves falling back to their proper distances as the advance proceeded. The first wave worked up to within thirty to fifty yards of our own barrage and then the men lay down. At this stage, our barrage was playing on the enemy front line trench. After a certain interval, carefully timed, the gunners, away back of our lines, elevated their guns enough to carry our barrage a certain distance back of the enemy front trench and then our men went in at

the charge, to occupy the enemy trench before the Germans in the dugouts could come out and organize a defense. Unless serious opposition was met the first wave went straight through the first trench, leaving only a few men to guard the dugout entrances pending the arrival of the second wave. The second wave, only a few seconds behind the first one, proceeded to do the "mopping up." Then this wave, in turn, went forward, leaving only a few men behind to garrison the captured trench.

The third and fourth waves went straight on unless assistance was needed, and rushed up to the support of the new front line. The men in these waves were ammunition carriers, stretcher-bearers and general reinforcements. Some of them were set to work at once digging a communication trench to connect our original front line with our new support and front lines. When we established a new front line we never used the German trench. We had found that the German artillery always had the range of that trench down, literally speaking, to an

inch. We always dug a new trench either in advance of the German trench or in the rear of it. Our manner of digging a trench under these circumstances was very simple and pretty sure to succeed except in an extremely heavy fire. Each man simply got as flat to the ground as possible, seeking whatever cover he might avail himself of, and began digging toward the man nearest him. Sand bags were filled with the first dirt and placed to afford additional cover. The above system of attack, which is now well known to the Germans, was, at the time when I left France, the accepted plan when two lines of enemy trenches were to be taken. It has been considerably changed, now, I am told. If the intention was to take three, four, five or six lines, the system was changed only in detail. When four or more lines were to be taken, two or more battalions were assembled to operate on the same frontage. The first battalion took two lines, the second passed through the first and took two more lines, and so on. The Russians had been known to launch an attack in thirty waves.

It is interesting to note how every attack, nowadays, is worked out in advance in the smallest detail, and how everything is done on a time schedule. Aerial photographs of the position they are expected to capture are furnished to each battalion, and the men are given the fullest opportunity to study them. All bombing pits, dugouts, trench mortar and machine-gun emplacements are marked on these photographs. Every man is given certain work to do and is instructed and re-instructed until there can be no doubt that he has a clear knowledge of his orders. But, besides that, he is made to understand the scope and purpose and plan of the whole operation, so that he will know what to do if he finds himself with no officer to command. This is one of the great changes brought about by this war, and it signalizes the disappearance, probably forever, of a long-established tradition. It is something which I think should be well impressed upon the officers of our new army, about to enter this great struggle. The day has passed when the man in the ranks is sup-

posed merely to obey. He must know what to do and how to do it. He must think for himself and "carry on" with the general plan, if his officers and N. C. O.'s all become casualties. Sir Douglas Haig said: "For soldiers in this war, give me business men with business sense, who are used to taking initiative."

While I was at the front I had opportunity to observe three distinct types of barrage fire, the "box," the "jumping," and the "creeping." The "box," I have already described to you, as it is used in a raid. The "jumping" plays on a certain line for a certain interval and then jumps to another line. The officers in command of the advance know the intervals of time and space and keep their lines close up to the barrage, moving with it on the very second. The "creeping" barrage opens on a certain line and then creeps ahead at a certain fixed rate of speed, covering every inch of the ground to be taken. The men of the advance simply walk with it, keeping within about thirty yards of the line on which the shells are falling.

Eight-inch shrapnel, and high-explosive shells were used exclusively by the British when I was with them in maintaining barrage fire. The French used their "seventy-fives," which are approximately of eight-inch calibre. Of late, I believe, the British and French have both added gas shells for this use, when conditions make it possible. The Germans, in establishing a barrage, used their "whiz-bangs," slightly larger shells than ours, but they never seemed to have quite the same skill and certitude in barrage bombardment that our artillerymen had.

To attempt to picture the scene of two barrage fires, crossing, is quite beyond me. You see two walls of flame in front of you, one where your own barrage is playing, and one where the enemy guns are firing, and you see two more walls of flame behind you, one where the enemy barrage is playing, and one where your own guns are firing. And amid it all you are deafened by titanic explosions which have merged into one roar of thunderous sound, while acrid fumes

choke and blind you. To use a fitting, if not original phrase, it's just "Hell with the lid off."

That day on the Somme, our artillery had given the Germans such a battering and the curtain fire which our guns dropped just thirty to forty yards ahead of us was so powerful that we lost comparatively few men going over—only those who were knocked down by shells which the Germans landed among us through our barrage. They never caught us with their machine guns sweeping until we neared their trenches. Then a good many of our men began to drop, but we were in their front trench before they could cut us up anywhere near completely. Going over, I was struck by shell fragments on the hand and leg, but the wounds were not severe enough to stop me. In fact, I did not know that I had been wounded until I felt blood running into my shoe. Then I discovered the cut in my leg, but saw that it was quite shallow, and that no artery of importance had been damaged. So I went on.

I had the familiar feeling of nervousness and physical shrinking and nausea at the beginning of this fight, but, by the time we were half way across "No Man's Land," I had my nerve back. After I had been hit, I remember feeling relieved that I hadn't been hurt enough to keep me from going on with the men. I'm not trying to make myself out a hero. I'm just trying to tell you how an ordinary man's mind works under the stress of fighting and the danger of sudden death. There are some queer things in the psychology of battle. For instance, when we had got into the German trench and were holding it against the most vigorous counter attacks, the thought which was persistently uppermost in my mind was that I had lost the address of a girl in London along with some papers which I had thrown away, just before we started over, and which I should certainly never be able to find again.

The Regina trench had been taken and lost three times by the British. We took it that day and held it. We went into action with fif-

teen hundred men of all ranks and came out with six hundred. The position, which was the objective of our battalion, was opposite to and only twelve hundred yards distant from the town of Pys, which, if you take the English meaning of the French sound, was a highly inappropriate name for that particular village. During a good many months, for a good many miles 'round about that place, there wasn't any such thing as "Peace." From our position, we could see a church steeple in the town of Baupaume until the Germans found that our gunners were using it as a "zero" mark, and blew it down with explosives.

I have said that, because we were on the extreme right of the line, we had the hottest little spot in France to hold for a while. You see, we had to institute a double defensive, as we had the Germans on our front and on our flank, the whole length of the trench to the right of us being still held by the Germans. There we had to form a "block," massing our bombers behind a barricade which was only fifteen yards from the

barricade behind which the Germans were fighting. Our flank and the German flank were in contact as fiery as that of two live wire ends. And, meanwhile, the Fritzes tried to rush us on our front with nine separate counter attacks. Only one of them got up close to us, and we went out and stopped that with the bayonet. Behind our block barricade, there was the nearest approach to an actual fighting Hell that I had seen.

And yet a man who was in the midst of it from beginning to end, came out without a scratch. He was a tall chap named Hunter. For twenty-four hours, without interruption, he threw German "egg-shell" bombs from a position at the center of our barricade. He never stopped except to light a cigarette or yell for some one to bring him more bombs from Fritz's captured storehouse. He projected a regular curtain of fire of his own. I've no doubt the Germans reported he was a couple of platoons, working in alternate reliefs. He was awarded the D. C. M. for his services in that fight, and though, as I said, he was unwounded,

half the men around him were killed, and his nerves were in such condition at the end that he had to be sent back to England.

One of the great tragedies of the war resulted from a bit of carelessness when, a couple of days later, the effort was made to extend our grip beyond the spot which we took in that first fight. Plans had been made for the Forty-fourth Battalion of the Tenth Canadian Brigade to take by assault the trench section extending to the right from the point where we had established the "block" on our flank. The hour for the attack had been fixed. Then headquarters sent out countermanding orders. Something wasn't quite ready.

The orders were sent by runners, as all confidential orders must be. Telephones are of little use, now, as both our people and the Germans have an apparatus which needs only to be attached to a metal spike in the ground to "pick up" every telephone message within a radius of three miles. When telephones are used now, messages are ordinarily sent in code. But, for

any vitally important communication which might cost serious losses, if misunderstood, old style runners are used, just as they were in the days when the field telephone was unheard of. It is the rule to dispatch two or three runners by different routes so that one, at least, will be certain to arrive. In the case of the countermanding of the order for the Forty-fourth Battalion to assault the German position on our flank, some officer at headquarters thought that one messenger to the Lieut.-Colonel commanding the Forty-fourth would be sufficient. The messenger was killed by a chance shot and his message was undelivered. The Forty-fourth, in ignorance of change of plan, "went over." There was no barrage fire to protect the force and their valiant effort was simply a wholesale suicide. Six hundred out of eight hundred men were on the ground in two and one-half minutes. The battalion was simply wiped out. Several officers were court-martialed as a result of this terrible blunder.

We had gone into the German trenches at a little after noon, on Saturday. On Sun-

day night at about 10 P.M. we were relieved. The relief force had to come in overland, and they had a good many casualties en route. They found us as comfortable as bugs in a rug, except for the infernal and continuous bombing at our flank barricade. The Germans on our front had concluded that it was useless to try to drive us out. About one-fourth of the six hundred of us, who were still on our feet, were holding the sentry posts, and the remainder of the six hundred were having banquets in the German dugouts, which were stocked up like delicatessen shops with sausages, fine canned foods, champagne and beer. If we had only had a few ladies with us, we could have had a real party.

I got so happily interested in the spread in our particular dugout that I forgot about my wound until some one reminded me that orders required me to hunt up a dressing station, and get an anti-tetanus injection. I went and got it, all right, but an injection was about the only additional thing I could have taken at that moment. If I had had to

swallow anything more, it would have been a matter of difficulty. Tommies like to take a German trench, because if the Fritzes have to move quickly, as they usually do, we always find sausage, beer, and champagne—a welcome change from bully beef. I could never learn to like their bread, however.

After this fight I was sent, with other slightly wounded men, for a week's rest at the casualty station, at Contay. I rejoined my battalion at the end of the week. From October 21st to November 18th we were in and out of the front trenches several times for duty tours of forty-eight hours each, but were in no important action. At 6: 10 A.M., on the morning of November 18th, a bitter cold day, we "went over" to take the Desire and also the Desire support trenches. We started from the left of our old position, and our advance was between Thieval and Poizers, opposite to Grandecourt.

There was the usual artillery preparation and careful organization for the attack.

WOUNDED IN ACTION

I was again in charge of the "mopping up" wave, numbering two hundred men and consisting mostly of bombers. It may seem strange to you that a non-commissioned officer should have so important an assignment, but, sometimes, in this war, privates have been in charge of companies, numbering two hundred and fifty men, and I know of a case where a lance-corporal was temporarily in command of an entire battalion. It happened, on this day that, while I was in charge of the second wave, I did not go over with them. At the last moment, I was given a special duty by Major Lewis, one of the bravest soldiers I ever knew, as well as the best beloved man in our battalion. A messenger came to me from him just as I was overseeing a fair distribution of the rum ration, and incidentally getting my own share. I went to him at once.

"McClintock," said he, "I don't wish to send you to any special hazard, and, so far as that goes, we're all going to get more or less of a dusting. But I want to put that

machine gun which has been giving us so much trouble out of action."

I knew very well the machine gun he meant. It was in a concrete emplacement, walled and roofed, and the devils in charge of it seemed to be descendents of William Tell and the prophet Isaiah. They always knew what was coming and had their gun accurately trained on it before it came.

"If you are willing," said Major Lewis, "I wish you to select twenty-five men from the company and go after that gun the minute the order comes to advance. Use your own judgment about the men and the plan for taking the gun position. Will you go?"

"Yes, sir," I answered. "I'll go and pick out the men right away. I think we can make those fellows shut up shop over there."

"Good boy!" he said. "You'll try, all right."

I started away. He called me back.

"This is going to be a bit hot, McClintock," he said, taking my hand. "I wish you the best of luck, old fellow—you and the rest of them." In the trenches they always

wish you the best of luck when they hand you a particularly tough job.

I thanked him and wished him the same. I never saw him again. He was killed in action within two hours after our conversation. Both he and my pal, Macfarlane, were shot down dead that morning.

When they called for volunteers to go with me in discharge of Major Lewis' order, the entire company responded. I picked out twenty-five men, twelve bayonet men and thirteen bombers. They agreed to my plan which was to get within twenty-five yards of the gun emplacement before attacking, to place no dependence on rifle fire, but to bomb them out and take the position with the bayonet. We followed that plan and took the emplacement quicker than we had expected to do, but there were only two of us left when we got there—Private Godsall, No. 177,063, and myself. All the rest of the twenty-five were dead or down. The emplacement had been held by eleven Germans. Two only were left standing when we got in.

When we saw the gun had been silenced and the crew disabled, Godsall and I worked round to the right about ten yards from the shell-hole where we had sheltered ourselves while throwing bombs into the emplacement, and scaled the German parapet. Then we rushed the gun position. The officer who had been in charge was standing with his back to us, firing with his revolver down the trench at our men who were coming over at another point. I reached him before Godsall and bayoneted him. The other German who had survived our bombing threw up his hands and mouthed the Teutonic slogan of surrender, "Mercy, Kamerad." My bayonet had broken off in the encounter with the German officer, and I remembered that I had been told always to pull the trigger after making a bayonet thrust, as that would usually jar the weapon loose. In this case, I had forgotten instructions. I picked up a German rifle with bayonet fixed, and Godsall and I worked on down the trench.

The German, who had surrendered, stood

with his hands held high above his head, waiting for us to tell him what to do. He never took his eyes off of us even to look at his officer, lying at his feet. As we moved down the trench, he followed us, still holding his hands up and repeating, "Mercy, Kamerad!" At the next trench angle we took five more prisoners, and as Godsall had been slightly wounded in the arm, I turned the captives over to him and ordered him to take them to the rear. Just then the men of our second wave came over the parapet like a lot of hurdlers. In five minutes, we had taken the rest of the Germans in the trench section prisoners, had reversed the fire steps, and had turned their own machine guns against those of their retreating companies that we could catch sight of.

As we could do nothing more here, I gave orders to advance and reenforce the front line. Our way led across a field furrowed with shell-holes and spotted with bursting shells. Not a man hesitated. We were winning. That was all we knew or cared to know. We wanted to make it a certainty for

our fellows who had gone ahead. As we were proceeding toward the German reserve trench, I saw four of our men, apparently unwounded, lying in a shell-hole. I stopped to ask them what they were doing there. As I spoke, I held my German rifle and bayonet at the position of "guard," the tip of the bayonet advanced, about shoulder high. I didn't get their answer, for, before they could reply, I felt a sensation as if some one had thrown a lump of hard clay and struck me on the hip, and forthwith I tumbled in on top of the four, almost plunging my bayonet into one of them, a private named Williams.

"Well, now you know what's the matter with us," said Williams. "We didn't fall in, but we crawled in."

They had all been slightly wounded. I had twenty-two pieces of shrapnel and some shell fragments imbedded in my left leg between the hip and the knee. I followed the usual custom of the soldier who has got it." The first thing I did was to light a "fag" (cigarette) and the next thing was to inves-

tigate and determine if I was in danger of bleeding to death. There wasn't much doubt about that. Arterial blood was spurting from two of the wounds, which were revealed when the other men in the hole helped me to cut off my breeches. With their aid, I managed to stop the hemorrhage by improvising tourniquets with rags and bayonets. One I placed as high up as possible on the thigh and the other just below the knee. Then we all smoked another "fag" and lay there, listening to the big shells going over and the shrapnel bursting near us. It was quite a concert, too. We discussed what we ought to do, and finally I said:

"Here; you fellows can walk, and I can't. Furthermore, you're not able to carry me, because you've got about all any of you can do to navigate alone. It doesn't look as if its going to be any better here very soon. You all proceed to the rear, and, if you can get some one to come after me, I'll be obliged to you."

They accepted the proposition, because it was good advice and, besides, it was orders.

I was their superior officer. And what happened right after that confirmed me forever in my early, Kentucky-bred conviction that there is a great deal in luck. They couldn't have travelled more than fifty yards from the shell-hole when the shriek of a high-explosive seemed to come right down out of the sky into my ears, and the detonation, which instantly followed, shook the slanting sides of the shell-hole until dirt in dusty little rivulets came trickling down upon me. Wounded as I was, I dragged myself up to the edge of the hole. There was no trace, anywhere, of the four men who had just left me. They have never been heard of since. Their bodies were never found. The big shell must have fallen right amongst them and simply blown them to bits.

It was about a quarter to seven in the morning when I was hit. I lay in the shell-hole until two in the afternoon, suffering more from thirst and cold and hunger than from pain. At two o'clock, a batch of sixty prisoners came along under escort. They were being taken to the rear un-

der fire. The artillery bombardment was still practically undiminished. I asked for four of the prisoners and made one of them get out his rubber ground sheet, carried around his waist. They responded willingly, and seemed most ready to help me. I had a revolver (empty) and some bombs in my pockets, but I had no need to threaten them. Each of the four took a corner of the ground sheet and, upon it, they half carried and half dragged me toward the rear.

It was a trip which was not without incident. Every now and then we would hear the shriek of an approaching "coal box," and then my prisoner stretcher-bearers and I would tumble in one indiscriminate heap into the nearest shell-hole. If we did that once, we did it a half dozen times. After each dive, the four would patiently reorganize and arrange the improvised stretcher again, and we would proceed. Following every tumble, however, I would have to tighten my tourniquets, and, despite all I could do, the hemorrhage from my wound

continued so profuse that I was beginning to feel very dizzy and weak. On the way in, I sighted our regimental dressing station and signed to my four bearers to carry me toward it. The station was in an old German dugout. Major Gilday was at the door. He laughed when he saw me with my own special ambulance detail.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked.

"Most of all," I said, "I think I want a drink of rum."

He produced it for me instantly.

"Now," said he, "my advice to you is to keep on travelling. You've got a fine special detail there to look after you. Make 'em carry you to Poizers. It's only five miles, and you'll make it all right. I've got this place loaded up full, no stretcher-bearers, no assistants, no adequate supply of bandages and medicines, and a lot of very bad cases. If you want to get out of here in a week, just keep right on going, now."

As we continued toward the rear, we were the targets for a number of humorous re-

marks from men coming up to go into the fight.

"Give my regards to Blighty, you lucky beggar," was the most frequent saying.

"Bli' me," said one Cockney Tommy. "There goes one o' th' Canadians with an escort from the Kaiser."

Another man stopped and asked about my wound.

"Good work," he said. "I'd like to have a nice clean one like that, myself."

I noticed one of the prisoners grinning at some remark and asked him if he understood English. He hadn't spoken to me, though he had shown the greatest readiness to help me.

"Certainly I understand English," he replied. "I used to be a waiter at the Knickerbocker Hotel, in New York." That sounded like a voice from home, and I wanted to hug him. I didn't. However, I can say for him he must have been a good waiter. He gave me good service.

Of the last stages of my trip to Poizers I cannot tell anything for I arrived uncon-

scious from loss of blood. The last I remember was that the former waiter, evidently seeing that I was going out, asked me to direct him how to reach the field dressing station at Poizers and whom to ask for when he got there. I came back to consciousness in an ambulance on the way to Albert.

A VISIT FROM THE KING

CHAPTER VI

A VISIT FROM THE KING

I was taken from Poizers to Albert in a Ford ambulance, or, as the Tommies would say, a "tin Lizzie." The man who drove this vehicle would make a good chauffeur for an adding machine. Apparently, he was counting the bumps in the road for he didn't miss one of them. However, the trip was only a matter of seven miles, and I was in fair condition when they lifted me out and carried me to an operating table in the field dressing station.

A chaplain came along and murmured a little prayer in my ear. I imagine that would make a man feel very solemn if he thought there was a chance he was about to pass out, but I knew I merely had a leg pretty badly smashed up, and, while the chaplain was praying, I was wondering

if they would have to cut it off. I figured, if so, this would handicap my dancing.

The first formality in a shrapnel case is the administration of an anti-tetanus inoculation, and, when it is done, you realize that they are sure trying to save your life. The doctor uses a horse-syringe, and the injection leaves a lump on your chest as big as a base ball which stays there for forty-eight hours. After the injection a nurse fills out a diagnosis blank with a description of your wounds and a record of your name, age, regiment, regimental number, religion, parentage, and previous history as far as she can discover it without asking questions which would be positively indelicate. After all of that, my wounds were given their first real dressing.

Immediately after this was done, I was bundled into another ambulance—this time a Cadillac—and driven to Contay where the C. C. S. (casualty clearing station) and rail-head were located. In the ambulance with me went three other soldiers, an artillery officer and two privates of infantry. We

were all ticketed off as shrapnel cases, and probable recoveries, which latter detail is remarkable, since the most slightly injured in the four had twelve wounds, and there were sixty odd shell fragments or shrapnel balls collectively imbedded in us. The head nurse told me that I had about twenty wounds. Afterward her count proved conservative. More accurate and later returns showed twenty-two bullets and shell fragments in my leg.

We were fairly comfortable in the ambulance, and I, especially, had great relief from the fact that the nurse had strapped my leg in a sling attached to the top of the vehicle. We smoked cigarettes and chatted cheerfully, exchanging congratulations on having got "clean ones," that is, wounds probably not fatal. The artillery officer told me he had been supporting our battalion, that morning, with one of the "sacrifice batteries." A sacrifice battery, I might explain, is one composed of field pieces which are emplaced between the front and support lines, and which, in case of an at-

tack or counter attack, are fired at point-blank range. They call them sacrifice batteries because some of them are wiped out every day. This officer said our battalion, that morning, had been supported by an entire division of artillery, and that on our front of four hundred yards the eighteen pounders, alone, in a curtain fire which lasted thirty-two minutes, had discharged fifteen thousand rounds of high-explosive shells.

I was impressed by his statement, of course, but I told him that while this was an astonishing lot of ammunition, it was even more surprising to have noticed at close range, as I did, the number of Germans they missed. Toward the end of our trip to Contay, we were much exhausted and pretty badly shaken up. We were beginning also to realize that we were by no means out of the woods, surgically. Our wounds had merely been dressed. Each of us faced an extensive and serious operation. We arrived at Contay, silent and pretty much depressed. For twenty-four hours in the Contay casu-

alty clearing station, they did little except feed us and take our temperatures hourly. Then we were put into a hospital train for Rouen.

Right here, I would like to tell a little story about a hospital train leaving Contay for Rouen—not the one we were on, but one which had left a few days before. The train, when it was just ready to depart with a full quota of wounded men, was attacked by German aeroplanes from which bombs were dropped upon it. There is nothing, apparently, that makes the Germans so fearless and ferocious as the Red Cross emblem. On the top of each of the cars in this train there was a Red Cross big enough to be seen from miles in the air. The German aviators accepted them merely as excellent targets. Their bombs quickly knocked three or four cars from the rails and killed several of the helpless wounded men. The rest of the patients, weak and nervous from recent shock and injury, some of them half delirious, and nearly all of them in pain, were thrown into near-panic. Two of

the nursing sisters in charge of the train were the coolest individuals present. They walked calmly up and down its length, urging the patients to remain quiet, directing the male attendants how to remove the wounded men safely from the wrecked cars, and paying no attention whatever to the bombs which were still exploding near the train. I did not have the privilege of witnessing this scene myself, but I know that I have accurately described it for the details were told in an official report when the King decorated the two sisters with the Royal Red Cross, for valor in the face of the enemy.

The trip from Contay to Rouen was a nightmare—twenty-six hours travelling one hundred and fifty miles on a train, which was forever stopping and starting, its jerky and uncertain progress meaning to us just hours and hours of suffering. I do not know whether this part of the system for the removal of the wounded has been improved now. Then, its inconveniences and imperfections must have been inevitable, for, in

A VISIT FROM THE KING

every way afterward, the most thoughtful and tender care was shown us. In the long row of huts which compose the British General Hospital at Rouen, we found ourselves in what seemed like Paradise.

In the hut, which constituted the special ward for leg wounds, I was lifted from the stretcher on which I had travelled all the way from Poizers into a comfortable bed with fresh, clean sheets, and instantly I found myself surrounded with quiet, trained, efficient care. I forgot the pain of my wounds and the dread of the coming operation when a tray of delicious food was placed beside my bed and a nurse prepared me for the enjoyment of it by bathing my face and hands with scented water.

On the following morning my leg was X-rayed and photographed. I told the surgeon I thought the business of operating could very well be put off until I had had about three more square meals, but he couldn't see it that way. In the afternoon, I got my first sickening dose of ether, and they took the first lot of iron out of me. I

suppose these were just the surface deposits, for they only got five or six pieces. However, they continued systematically. I had five more operations, and every time I came out of the ether; the row of bullets and shell scraps at the foot of my bed was a little longer. After the number had reached twenty-two, they told me that perhaps there were a few more in there, but they thought they'd better let them stay. My wounds had become septic, and it was necessary to give all attention to drainage and cure. It was about this time that everything, for a while, seemed to become hazy, and my memories got all queerly mixed up and confused. I recollect I conceived a violent dislike for a black dog that appeared from nowhere, now and then, and began chewing at my leg, and I believe I gave the nurse a severe talking to because she insisted on going to look on at the ball game when she ought to be sitting by to chase that dog away. And I was perfectly certain about her being at the ball game, because I saw her there when I was playing third base.

A VISIT FROM THE KING

It was at this time (on November 28, 1916, ten days after I had been wounded) that my father, in Lexington, received the following cablegram from the officer in charge of the Canadian records, in England:

“Sincerely regret to inform you that Sergeant Alexander McClintock is officially reported dangerously ill in No. 5 General Hospital, from gunshot wound in left thigh. Further particulars supplied when received.”

It appears that, during the time of my adventures with the black dog and the inattentive nurse, my temperament had ascended to the stage when the doctors begin to admit that another method of treatment might have been successful. But I didn't pass out. The one thing I most regret about my close call is that my parents, in Lexington, were in unrelieved suspense about my condition until I myself sent them a cable from London, on December 15th. After the first official message, seemingly prepared almost as a preface to the announcement of my de-

mise, my father received no news of me whatever. And, as I didn't know that the official message had gone, I cabled nothing to him until I was feeling fairly chipper again. You can't have wars, though, without these little misunderstandings.

If it were possible, I should say something here which would be fitting and adequate about the English women who nursed the twenty-five hundred wounded men in General Hospital No. 5, at Rouen. But that power isn't given me. All I can do is to fall back upon our most profound American expression of respect and say that my hat is off to them. One nurse in the ward in which I lay had been on her feet for fifty-six hours, with hardly time, even to eat. She finally fainted from exhaustion, was carried out of the ward, and was back again in four hours, assisting at an operation. And the doctors were doing their bit, too, in living up to the obligations which they considered to be theirs. An operating room was in every ward with five tables in each. After the fight on the Somme, in which I was

A VISIT FROM THE KING

wounded, not a table was vacant any hour in the twenty-four, for days at a time. Outside of each room was a long line of stretchers containing patients next awaiting surgical attention. And in all that stress, I did not hear one word of complaint from the surgeons who stood, hour after hour, using their skill and training for the petty pay of English army medical officers.

On December 5th, I was told I was well enough to be sent to England and, on the next day, I went on a hospital train from Rouen to Havre. Here I was placed on a hospital ship which every medical officer in our army ought to have a chance to inspect. Nothing ingenuity could contrive for convenience and comfort was missing. Patients were sent below decks in elevators, and then placed in swinging cradles which hung level no matter what the ship's motion might be. As soon as I had been made comfortable in my particular cradle, I was given a box which had engraved upon it: "Presented with the compliments of the Union Castle Line. May

you have a speedy and good recovery." The box contained cigarettes, tobacco, and a pipe.

When the ship docked at Southampton, after a run of eight hours across channel, each patient was asked what part of the British Isles he would like to be taken to for the period of his convalescence. I requested to be taken to London, where, I thought, there was the best chance of my seeing Americans who might know me. Say, I sure made a good guess. I didn't know many Americans, but I didn't need to know them. They found me and made themselves acquainted. They brought things, and then they went out to get more they had forgotten to bring the first trip. The second day after I had been installed on a cot in the King George Hospital, in London, I sent fifteen hundred cigarettes back to the boys of our battalion in France out of my surplus stock. If I had undertaken to eat and drink and smoke all the things that were brought to me by Americans, just because I was an American, I'd be back in that hospital now,

A VISIT FROM THE KING

only getting fairly started on the job. It's some country when you need it.

The wounded soldier, getting back to England, doesn't have a chance to imagine that his services are not appreciated. The welcome he receives begins at the railroad station. All traffic is stopped by the Bobbies to give the ambulances a clear way leaving the station. The people stand in crowds, the men with their hats off, while the ambulances pass. Women rush out and throw flowers to the wounded men. Sometimes there is a cheer, but usually only silence and words of sympathy.

The King George Hospital was built to be a government printing office, and was nearing completion when the war broke out. It has been made a Paradise for convalescent men. The bareness and the sick suggestion and characteristic smell of the average hospital are unknown here. There are soft lights and comfortable beds and pretty women going about as visitors. The stage beauties and comedians come and entertain us. The food is delicious, and the

chief thought of every one seems to be to show the inmates what a comfortable and cheery thing it is to be ill among a lot of real friends. I was there from December until February, and my recollections of the stay are so pleasant that sometimes I wish I was back.

On the Friday before Christmas there was a concert in our ward. Among the artists who entertained us were Fay Compton, Gertrude Elliott (sister of Maxine Elliott), George Robie, and other stars of the London stage. After our protracted stay in the trenches and our long absence from all the civilized forms of amusement, the affair seemed to us the most wonderful show ever given. And, in some ways, it was. For instance, in the most entertaining of dramatic exhibitions, did you ever see the lady artists go around and reward enthusiastic applause with kisses? Well that's what we got. And I am proud to say that it was Miss Compton who conferred this honor upon me.

At about three o'clock on that afternoon, when we were all having a good time, one

of the orderlies threw open the door of the ward and announced in a loud voice that His Majesty, the King, was coming in. We could not have been more surprised if some one had thrown in a Mills bomb. Almost immediately the King walked in, accompanied by a number of aides. They were all in service uniforms, the King having little in his attire to distinguish him from the others. He walked around, presenting each patient with a copy of "Queen Mary's Gift Book," an artistic little volume with pictures and short stories by the most famous of English artists and writers. When he neared my bed, he turned to one of the nurses and inquired:

"Is this the one?"

The nurse nodded. He came and sat at the side of the bed and shook hands with me. He asked as to what part of the United States I had come from, how I got my wounds, and what the nature of them were, how I was getting along, and what I particularly wished done for me. I answered his questions and said that everything I

could possibly wish for had already been done for me.

"I thank you," he said, "for myself and my people for your services. Our gratitude cannot be great enough toward men who have served us as you have."

He spoke in a very low voice and with no assumption of royal dignity. There was nothing in the least thrilling about the incident, but there was much apparent sincerity in the few words.

After he had gone, one of the nurses asked me what he had said.

"Oh," I said, "George asked me what I thought about the way the war was being conducted, and I said I'd drop in and talk it over with him as soon as I was well enough to be up."

There happened one of the great disappointments of my life. She didn't see the joke. She was English. She gasped and glared at me, and I think she went out and reported that I was delirious again.

Really, I wasn't much impressed by the English King. He seemed a pleasant, tired

little man, with a great burden to bear, and not much of an idea about how to bear it. He struck me as an individual who would conscientiously do his best in any situation, but would never do or say anything with the slightest suspicion of a punch about it. A few days after his visit to the hospital, I saw in the *Official London Gazette* that I had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Official letters from the Canadian headquarters amplified this information, and a notice from the British War Office informed me that the medal awaited me there. I was told the King knew that the medal had been awarded to me, when he spoke to me in the hospital. Despite glowing reports in the Kentucky press, he didn't pin it on me. Probably he didn't have it with him. Or, perhaps, he didn't consider it good form to hang a D. C. M. on a suit of striped, presentation pajamas with a prevailing tone of baby blue.*

* EDITOR'S NOTE.—The medal was formally presented to Sergt. McClintock by the British Consul General, in New York City, on August 15, 1917.

While I was in the King George Hospital I witnessed one of the most wonderful examples of courage and pluck I had ever seen. A young Scot, only nineteen years old, McAuley by name, had had the greater part of his face blown away. The surgeons had patched him up in some fashion, but he was horribly disfigured. He was the brightest, merriest man in the ward, always joking and never depressed. His own terrible misfortune was merely the topic for humorous comment with him. He seemed to get positive amusement out of the fact that the surgeons were always sending for him to do something more with his face. One day he was going into the operating room and a fellow patient asked him what the new operation was to be.

"Oh," he said, "I'm going to have a cabbage put on in place of a head. It'll grow better than the one I have now."

Once in a fortnight he would manage to get leave to absent himself from the hospital for an hour or two. He never came back alone. It took a couple of men to

bring him back. On the next morning, he would say:

“Well, it was my birthday. A man must have a few drinks on his birthday.”

I was discharged from the hospital in the middle of February and sent to a comfortable place at Hastings, Sussex, where I lived until my furlough papers came through. I had a fine time in London at the theatres and clubs pending my departure for home. When my furlough had arrived, I went to Buxton, Derbyshire, where the Canadian Discharge Depot was located and was provided with transportation to Montreal. I came back to America on the Canadian Pacific Royal Mail steamer, *Metagama*, and the trip was without incident of any sort. We lay for a time in the Mersey, awaiting word that our convoy was ready to see us out of the danger zone, and a destroyer escorted us four hundred miles on our way.

I was informed, before my departure, that a commission as lieutenant in the Canadian forces awaited my return from furlough,

BEST O' LUCK

and I had every intention of going back to accept it. But, since I got to America, things have happened. Now, it's the army of Uncle Sam, for mine. I've written these stories to show what we are up against. It's going to be a tough game, and a bloody one, and a sorrowful one for many. But it's up to us to save the issue where it's mostly right on one side, and all wrong on the other—and I'm glad we're in. I'm not willing to quit soldiering now, but I will be when we get through with this. When we finish up with this, there won't be any necessity for soldiering. The world will be free of war for a long, long time—and a God's mercy, that. Let me take another man's eloquent words for my last ones:

Oh! spacious days of glory and of grieving!
Oh! sounding hours of lustre and of loss;
Let us be glad we lived, you still believing
The God who gave the Cannon gave the Cross.

A VISIT FROM THE KING

Let us doubt not, amid these seething passions,
The lusts of blood and hate our souls abhor:
The Power that Order out of Chaos fashions
Smites fiercest in the wrath-red forge of War.

Have faith! Fight on! Amid the battle-hell,
Love triumphs, Freedom beacons, All is well.

(Robert W. Service, "Rhymes of a Red Cross
Man.")

THE END.

D.
640
M2

**THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara**

**THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.**

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 293 568 2

