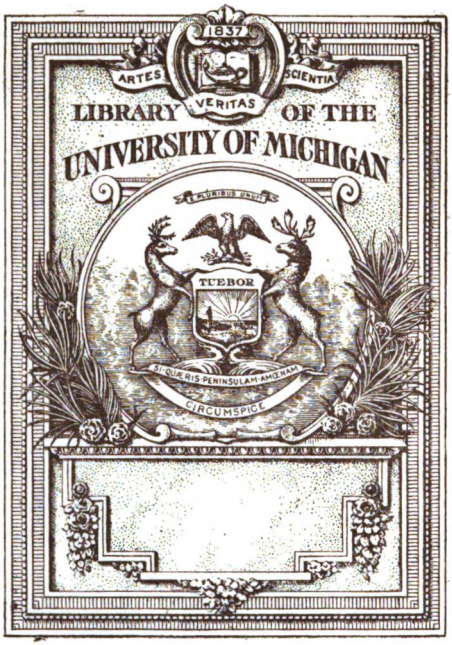

SHELLPROOF MACK

THROWING THE MILLS BOMB

SHELLPROOF MACK

An American's fighting story

BY

ARTHUR James MACK

LATE OF THE 23D BATTALION, LONDON REGIMENT,
H. M. IMPERIAL ARMY

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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TO

MRS. ROSE ESCOTT NORTH

East Leake, Nottingham, England

Who adopted me as a friendless soldier and wrote me the letters of a mother to a son, letters which cheered and made endurable many a cheerless day and night upon the battle fields of France,

This Little Book is Dedicated

FOREWORD

THE things that are set down here are written from the standpoint of the plain private soldier, — one who went as a volunteer, it is true, but who hated the whole vile business of war as any private soldier must, and who was glad when his work was done.

If this book has any value it is because it is a true telling of the things that are, over there, and because it is without what the British Tommy calls "camouflage."

This book lacks, no doubt, everything that would be put into such a story by a professional writer, — the brilliancy of expression and the vividness of narrative; but if it is without those things it is because it is the tale of a soldier and not of a war correspondent.

A. M.

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CHAPTER I

Boyhood

Once, when I was in training in England, a Cockney sergeant came up to me and said:

"Hi sye, rook, wot's yer number?"

Mine was a high one and I started to give it to him slow, "One — seven — four —" like that. He evidently thought I was trying to have him on and got very shirty over it.

"Ow," says he, "so yer one o' them blinkin', swankin' Yanks, are yer?"

That riled me and I came back.

"That's what I am and I can back it up."

"Can, can yer? Let's see yer," he invited.

With that I poked him on the nose. That was a crime of course and I was on the mat with

the company commander the next day. I might have got a lot of wholesome punishment for it and ought to have; but I did n't. The officer was a decent fellow.

"What are you?" he asked. "Irish?"

"Partly," I answered. "But mostly Scotch."

"Ah," he said, "that accounts for it. The Scotch are half argument and half fight. I'm part Scotch myself." And with that he gave me a light punishment.

I have thought since that that officer knew what he was talking about. It's the little bit of Scotch in me that has influenced me many a time through life.

I was born in New York and was christened Arthur James McKay. I retained that name until I went into the theatrical profession in 1906, when I took the name of Arthur Mack, the label I wore when I enlisted in the British Army. But I am getting ahead of my story.

When I was a small boy my people moved to Northampton, Massachusetts, which was

home until I struck out into the world for myself.

My boyhood was pretty much like that of any other American youngster. I was fond of all outdoor sports except swimming and I would drown to-day in six feet of water, — or less.

In spite of my athletic tendencies I was supposed to be not very strong and the fact that I was always small added to the impression. So it happened that my family had it all planned that I was to have a very elaborate education and go into the priesthood.

Right there the Scotch in me asserted itself. Because somebody wanted me to be one thing I straightway decided that I wanted to be the opposite. I settled it in my own mind that I was going to be a soldier. I fancy that if the folks had wanted me to go to West Point I would have insisted upon a profession.

Anyhow, I flatly refused to study in the high school and left. The year following I did

consent to go to Williston Academy, where I devoted more time to athletics than to anything else and made a fair reputation as a runner. I ran fast enough to get beaten against such men as Schick, Hubbard, Piper Donovan and Bart Sullivan.

I did fairly well in my studies at Williston and after one year took the examinations for Holy Cross and Norwich University, both of which I passed. I took the exams for Holy Cross to please my parents; but I knew where I was going. Norwich had, and I think still has, the reputation of being one of the finest military schools in the country. I still had soldiering on the brain.

During the summer before entering Norwich I became a professional runner under an assumed name and was a member of the W. A. Bailey Hose Team which made a world's record for the 300 yards. Hose-team running in those days was a very popular sport in the western part of the State. I competed a good many

times on this team that summer and was speedy on my feet.

More than once during the two years I was in France I looked back upon those footracing days and wished that I could run as fast with ninety pounds of equipment on my back.

CHAPTER II

College Life

In the fall of 1903 I entered Norwich University. On arrival at Northfield I happened to run on to an old chum, one Biddy Burnett, a sophomore. He put me up to all the hazing dodges that I might expect and as a consequence I got off easy on that score. The hazing at Norwich was as bad in those days as it was at West Point and the first year men sure were disciplined by the upper classmen. I was fortunate in looking very much like a former student named Skinny Eaton who had been extremely popular. I was nicknamed Skinny Eaton No. 2 and afterward became Skinny McKay.

Life at Norwich was one of stiff discipline. We had to wear a uniform all the time. The

life was as regular as that in the British Army. I took to it like a duck to water. I fancy the principal reason that I liked discipline was that it was so much fun to break the rules without getting caught. I got to be a past master in the art.

I was the smallest man in the college, but my athletic reputation had preceded me and I was elected manager and coach of the Freshman basket ball team. I put out a crackerjack of a team and defeated the varsity so badly that we finished the varsity schedule.

Along in the spring we had some diphtheria in the college and about fifty men were quarantined on the upper floor of the barracks. The poor fellows were suffering for beer or thought they were. They could n't get out, so they sent for me and told me their troubles from the window. I got a suit-case and went to town, filled it with beer, hired a rig, drove back and tied the load to the end of the fire-escape rope that had been lowered from the barracks.

The celebration led to an investigation and of course I was convicted. I was barred from athletics for a year.

This was a good thing, for I dug in on study and learned a lot that came in handy afterward in the British Army. I learned to take care of myself physically, a thing that is essential to a good soldier and that so few soldiers ever do learn thoroughly. Every man had to care for his own room and make his own bed, besides keeping his equipment clean and well polished.

On Saturday we had to wash the windows and scrub the floors and paint, for Sunday inspection by the commandant, a United States Army officer. At the time I remember that I used to hate that scrubbing and would try every possible way to get out of it; but it was no go. Everybody had to do his bit.

Our military duties consisted of theoretical artillery work, practical infantry and cavalry training and military science. I became pretty solidly grounded in discipline and infantry work

in general and was on the way to becoming a real soldier. In fact I thought seriously of trying for a West Point appointment.

In my third year in college I was reinstated in athletics and was manager of the baseball team. I got into more trouble, incidentally, though nothing very serious, and gradually began to get the notion that I was fed up on soldiering. It is a notion that comes to a man in the army often. And it almost always gets a boy in a military school. The difference is that he can't get out of the army when he gets temperamental, — that is, not without deserting and he does n't want to take any chances of getting shot. He can get out of a military school and he frequently does. I did.

The thing that finally decided me to leave college was this. I had become a member of the Town Dramatic Club and liked it. The fact is that about four times on the stage as an amateur made me think I was cut out for another Henry Irving. I was stage-struck for

further orders. And so at the end of my third year I let the military life go a-glimmering. I quit cold and came to Boston where I studied for a while at the Colonial Dramatic School.

CHAPTER III

On the Stage

My first professional appearance on the stage was with the old Castle Square Company. Howard Hansell and Lillian Kemble were in the leads. Mary Young and John Craig were also in the company and the piece was "Soldiers of Fortune." I finished out the season there and the next fall was out on the road with a second-rate stock company playing the South. At least we started to play the South.

The show blew up in Norfolk, Virginia. We had known it was coming and a fellow named Bean and myself had been dickering with Charles E. Blaney by mail. The day we closed we had a letter from Blaney with the offer of the necessary job. Bean and I were to join one of the Blaney road companies at Richmond two weeks later.

In the meantime Richmond was a long, long way from Norfolk and we were nearly broke. I had just fifty cents; Bean had an old silver watch and no cash whatever. We talked it over and decided that the only thing to do was to jump a freight.

Hoboing was considerably out of our line but we had heard that it was easy enough. So we shipped the trunks by express and sneaked down to the railroad yards. Along in the evening we stowed on a flat car of lumber and some time along towards morning she pulled out. We travelled on that freight, I suppose, about ten miles. When it got pretty light a hostile brakeman came along and routed us out.

"Hit the grit, you 'boes," says he. "Hit the grit and be quick about it."

"Wait until we make the next stop," I suggested.

"Stop me eye," said he. "Hit the grit and do it now." He had a coupling-pin in his hand

and looked like using it, so we jumped. I did n't get the cinders out of my hide for a month.

After that we walked a while and then took to the road. A farmer came along and gave us a ride and we told him our story. He was a good fellow and when we hit a little town he took us around to a little packing-box hotel and introduced us to the proprietor, who was a friend of his.

The hotel man gave us a feed and let us sleep in the stable that night. Next morning he brought around the local station-agent and he heard our tale of woe, too. I fancy they must have wanted to get us out of town, because the agent took us down that night and walked out to a water-tank about a mile down the line and helped to get us aboard an empty box-car. We made Richmond all right but we were frightfully empty. Bean pawned his watch and we ate. Then we hunted jobs.

It would be two weeks before the Blaney Company showed up and in the meantime we

had to eat. It is a habit that grows on one, I notice, and both Bean and myself looked forward to a fortnight of emptiness with scant pleasure. It was one thing to hunt for a job in Richmond and another to find one.

There seemed to be no market for a pair of actors on the bum. So when the watch money was gone we joined the Salvation Army. For the next ten nights we pounded the big bass drum and sung hymns and incidentally acquired a large respect for the Army. They pulled us through. We ate and we slept. And when the Blaney Company showed up we deserted from the Army!

I was with Blaney for two seasons after that, playing with Fiske O'Hara and afterwards with Lottie Williams in "The Tomboy Girl." About this time the moving pictures were crowding things pretty hard and so many companies were going to the wall and so many houses dark that I jumped into vaudeville.

I opened an office as a producer in New

IDENTIFICATION DISCS WORN BY THE AUTHOR DURING HIS SERVICE

These discs are worn around the neck. The one shown on the left is green; the other is red. The green disc is removed in case of death and sent to the War Office

York and succeeded for a while but eventually went broke. After that I went back on the stage again and stayed there until I decided to go over to France.

At the time the *Lusitania* was sunk I was playing in stock in New Bedford. I was talking with the manager when I heard the news and said to him,

"Well, here's my chance to be a soldier again. We can't get out of declaring war on Germany."

He laughed at me and said I was crazy and that we never would get into the war. After a few days I began to think he was right. I read the papers eagerly — read of the German cruelties and the atrocities in Belgium and of the endless call for men in England. Eventually I saw there was no chance of the United States getting in. So I made a quick decision for myself, quit the stage then and there and declared war on Germany. I was going over and I was going quick. The memories of the

military life at Norwich came back and I wanted to get into uniform as soon as possible. So I jumped the train for Boston and the next day was hunting transportation to England.

CHAPTER IV

Training

When I started hunting a way to get across I was, of course, broke as per usual. So I decided to work the horse boats as so many others had done. I shipped without any trouble on the *Cambrian* and sailed June 24, 1915, arriving in London on July 7 after a mildly exciting voyage.

I had shipped for the round trip and was given five dollars cash and board and room at the Sailors' Home on Lemon Street. I batted around a bit and spent the five dollars and then hit the trail for the nearest recruiting office. I had had enough of horses, and anyhow I had come over to enlist so I wanted to get in as soon as possible.

London at the time was full of recruiting stations and there were red arrows all over

the shop pointing the way to the chance to give up life and liberty for King and Country or for the fun of it as the case might be. I followed the arrows to Shoreditch Town Hall and went through the formalities and the examinations. They refused me flatly on account of poor eyesight. My right eye was all right but the left was no good at all. I had always supposed that both of them were good.

I tackled another office in Whitechapel and went thorugh the same thing. Next day I went to an office at 32 St. Paul's Churchyard and told my troubles to the sergeant there. I said I was going to get into the army if I had to use a jimmy and that it was going to take a lot of refusing to keep me out. We went in to the officer and he heard the story without any reservations. He was a good chap, that officer. He put me through the examinations up to the eye test and said I was right enough except that I was light, weighing just under a hundred pounds.

When it came to the eyes he said,

"Now, my lad, on this test of the left eye you cover up your right eye with your hand instead of a card."

I did that little thing and was able to see fine between my fingers. I enlisted under my stage name, Arthur Mack. Three days later I was at Mill Hill Barracks, a member of the 22d Middlesex Regiment, an outfit of bantams. We were a funny-looking crowd. Early in the war the experiment of bantam regiments was well tried out. There was n't a man in our regiment that was over five feet four and from that down. On the whole, though, the bantams never were a success: it turned out that a small man is a good deal more likely than a big one to have other disqualifying troubles. Eventually all the bantam units were distributed to other regiments.

I had been in uniform only three days when a drill sergeant spotted me as one who had had previous military training. He asked me and

I told him all about my three years at Norwich. About six weeks later the sergeant-major sent for me and said:

"Private Mack, I understand that you have had military training before and that you know the duties of a corporal. Do you realize the responsibilities?"

"Yes, sir," I said, "I do."

"Very well," he said, "you are to go up for your stripes."

Now I knew too much about the military game to want to be a non-com and I said so. I told the sergeant-major that I did n't think I should like to assume the responsibility of even a low non-com much less seek promotion. I wished, I told him, to remain a private.

The sergeant got pretty savage over that and made me feel that I had insulted him, the British Army and the King. But I knew what I wanted and what I did n't want and was content to remain just a private. I would n't

have gone higher and have often been glad that I did n't.

Two weeks later I was recommended to Brigade Officers' Staff and reported there as orderly. I hated to leave the bunch of pals I had come to like so well but the job was the cushiest in the army. It let a man out of all training and gave him better grub and a bed to sleep in.

My regiment was shifted about constantly during the five months I was at headquarters, and I saw Aldershot, Borden, Pirbright and several other places.

Then I heard that my regiment was going to France. I asked for transfer back to active service. I got it. But I found that I had missed a lot of training. A short time after my return the men were all examined by the Medical Board for Overseas and I failed to pass.

That was discouraging as I had by this time fully made up my mind that I was going to

see fighting by hook or by crook. I was sent to Harwich in a reserve batt. I had been there just one week when the commanding officer asked for men who had passed their medical examinations and their course of firing. He wanted them as volunteers for the London 23d. I promptly hopped out of the ranks and volunteered, though I was n't up on either of the requirements.

Somebody must have had an eye shut because I got away with it. Next day I was in Winchester and a week later I sailed for France.

Before sailing I had a new equipment which weighed complete ninety pounds. I weighed myself stripped the day I received it and I tipped the beam at just ninety-nine pounds. Some load!

Landed in France at Le Havre, I had nine days more of strenuous drill in specialized lines and then was ready for the front. Incidentally I saw the sights in Le Havre, the Red Light district and the white lights too. That is part of

a soldier's education over there, you know. If he does n't learn to keep his head and behave himself on leave he 's a poor soldier.

The little more than a week of drill in Le Havre ended too soon. Within a few days after that we were within sound of the rumble of the big guns.

CHAPTER V

First Night in the Trenches

We cannot fight,
We cannot die,
Wot bloody good are we?
And when we get to Berlin,
The Kaiser he will say,
Mein Gott, mein Gott,
Wot a very fine lot
To send to Germanee.

I was lying on the floor of a bell tent at the base in Le Havre on a hot day in August. The hoarse voice of the singer floated in on the still air very dismally. He had the tune wrong and he did n't have the words exactly right, and he bore down on the "Wot bloody good are we," as if he relished it.

I got up and peeped through the tent flap. The singer was sitting on an upturned bucket peeling potatoes. His face was about eighteen

inches long and he slewed his mouth around, rolled his eyes and shifted off into another song.

Take me over the sea
Where the Allemand can't get me,
Oh, my! I don't wanner die.
I wanner go 'ome.

That finished me. I had heard both songs before sung better, but they never got under my vest like that, and I knew there was n't any answer to the "Wot bloody good are we?", at least as far as I was concerned, and I knew right well that I wanted to go 'ome.

I ducked out and hoofed it for the C. O., and shoved in an application for discharge from the British Army on the grounds that I was an American citizen.

I was just down from seven weeks in the hospital after being wounded in three places on the same day by shell fragments. I was still shaky and had a silver plate in the top of my head and could feel my brains wobble around, but I had been examined by the Medical Board

the day before and told that I was fit and that I was to be sent back to the batt in less than a week.

This was in 1916. In those days you could n't get a discharge from the British Army for anything less than a leg off; and if you happened to be a good shoemaker or accountant or something you did n't need a leg for, I don't believe they'd let you go at that. It was possible for an American citizen to beg off. I had had a little more than three months in the trenches and was fed up. I had had enough. I wanted, like the fellow in the song, to go home.

I suppose that every rookie goes through the same experience. He strikes a period in his service when he would give anything to get away. He has had enough fighting to be thoroughly scared and not enough to have become a seasoned veteran. It is this period of depression that produces the many songs like the ones quoted above. There was another, of which I can recall only the last three lines.

They were a supplication to the war office and went:

> Send your father, send your brother,
> Send your sister, send your mother,
> But for Gawd's sake don't send me.

These songs were all sung in a spirit of josh, but we meant 'em too. Say what you will, there is a time in the life of any soldier when he wishes he had n't come.

I am mighty glad to read that the American troops are being broken in and given their baptisms gently, so to speak. Back in the old days of 1915, and half way through 1916, the British were so short of men that they had to take raw rookies and shove them in to get used to things as best they could. That spoiled a lot of soldiers. It came near spoiling me.

As a fine example of the way the thing should not be done if it can be avoided it may do no harm to tell something about those first three months in the service.

Probably no chap ever forgets his first night

in the trenches. I'll bet a dinner there is n't one man in a thousand that had one like mine. I had been about ten months in training in England before being sent over to France. That was about twice what most of them were getting at the time. I had been in uniform so long that I'd heard the war talked over from every angle, and had heard scores of men who had come back tell of their experiences and had got so I thought the big show was more or less of a cinch.

When I finally did go over they had me right up at the front without delay, and the batt landed in a place called Fonquevillers, better known to the Cockney as Funky Village. We were dumped down out of a train of toy freight cars five miles behind the lines, late in the afternoon, and marched up to the front. We got into the communication trenches at dark and around ten in the evening I was standing on the fire-step in the front line looking over the top. Coming up there had been a booming of

guns at a distance in both directions, north and south, but we had n't seen a shell burst. A mate of mine named Higgins and I were shown a traverse about thirty feet long and told to stand on the fire-step until relieved, and there we were.

The place was as still as the middle of somebody's melon patch along towards morning. There was n't a gun of any sort, big or little, going off for miles around. We stood a while on the step and "Hig" whispered to me:

"What do we do next, Mack?"

His whisper sounded like an umpire talking through a megaphone.

"Shut up, you fool," I hissed. "They 'll hear you."

That was how little we knew about what to do and how to do it. We stood there without moving until my foot went to sleep and the sweat was rolling down my back.

Then the rats began to come. We had kept

so still that I fancy they thought this bay was theirs. Anyhow, as many as a dozen big ones came scuttling along the trench and along the step. We did n't bother them until two of the biggest got in a row over a bit of garbage or something and squealed enough to make your blood run cold.

"Hig" stood up on the step, whispering, "Shoo, shoo," at the rats, but they did n't pay any attention and had it out. I was afraid the Heinies would hear and come over to stop the fight. But nothing happened. After the rat row we loosened a little. I got down a sandbag to stand on to look over and stared out into the dark. There were a lot of old stumps out there, and after a while one of them moved. Then it did n't move. Then it looked like a horse, and moved again. My throat got dry and the hair crawled on the back of my neck and I itched in seventeen separate places.

"Hig" pussyfooted down next to me and

said, in a trembly voice, "See 'em move, mytie? Le 's give it to 'em."

I held up my hand to him and he sneaked back, but before he went I heard him mutter:

"Cripes, I wish they'd be some noise."

I wished so too, but there was n't. Not a shot of any kind was fired all night long. I nearly went mad half a dozen times, and when it began to get light I was a nervous wreck.

Just as it was graying a little a couple of men came through lugging a dixie of stew and we filled up the tins. I was so glad to see somebody that I could talk to that I was nearly ready to hug the two of them. They growled and said some tea would be along shortly, and went. The tea never arrived.

Before we had a chance to tackle the stew Fritz began to shell us. We'd been wishing for less silence, and, by heck, we got more noise. Out of a clear sky they gave it to us for twenty minutes, — whiz-bangs mostly, and they hit everywhere but in our traverse. One hit in

the next bay and we heard a man yelling in there. We dropped our rifles and crouched under the parapet with our teeth chattering, praying for the end.

When it was all over I found that I'd got my foot into my stew. I did n't care particularly, because I was so sick I could n't have eaten it, anyway. After the strafing was well over we were relieved. I did n't get over that nerve-shattering first night and morning for days. It was a poor way to start a rookie in.

The Funky Village sector was supposed to be a holiday part of the line. It was, in a way. Frequently there would be no shelling at all, day or night, for days, except the regular strafing at breakfast. We got that without fail. After a week or ten days we got used to it and were on the way to becoming veterans.

In the matter of the hardships of trench life Funky Village was a fine prep school for anything they could offer us anywhere else. For a

so-called trench system it was a disgrace to an army that had been in the field learning for nearly two years. When the trenches had been dug they had been reasonably good, but they had been bashed in and there had never been any attempt at repairs. The nature of the ground made the traverses catch all the water there was in that part of the world and hold it. We were up to our knees all the time and up to the middle part of the time. It is a wonder we did n't grow flippers and tails. Hip-boots had not been issued at that time and we just wallowed. We used to cut sand-bags in two and wrap our legs, but all that did was to parboil the skin.

The communication trenches were so deep in water that two men were actually drowned in them. It was impossible to get up hot rations with any pretence of regularity. For the most part we lived on cold stuff with stew and tea when we got it, which was seldom. Water was scarce, except under foot. Drink-

ing water was brought up in petrol tins and would be blue with oil. A good part of the time we drank the stuff out of the trenches, thick as pea soup with little zoos in it. Some humorist stuck up a sign, reading:

Don't Drink the Water You Sleep In

But most of us did it rather than try to worry down the gasolene mixture. It was a queer thing that the bad water did n't seem to make anyone sick. I fancy that we all got kind of amphibious after a bit, healthy like sea lions, and that we could have lived in an aquarium.

You will understand that this was along towards the fag end of the extremely bad conditions on the British front. From the fall of 1916 on, things got better, but it did take the English a long time to learn.

I think it may be fairly said that the superiority of trench construction by the Germans from the beginning was the great reason

why the Huns had it on the British in net military results in the early days.

From the time they dug in the Germans were thorough and careful in their trench building. They went down deep with their trenches and with their dugouts. They were safer all the time than we were. They were dry and comfortable in their sleeping quarters. Their communication trenches were good and they were able to feed their men well at all times. It stands to reason that a man who has slept well and eaten well is worth, setting aside the consideration of personal bravery, as much as two or three men who have slept in muck-holes and who have had cold rations.

Whenever criticism was offered on the subject of bad British trenches and the lack of dugouts the answer always was that they did n't expect to stay in their positions long enough to make elaborate workings worth while. That was not the answer at all. The fact was that the British did stop in bad trenches with-

out going forward for a year, and for two years at some points. The reasons were two. First, the fact that England was not ready when the war started, and that her officers, drawn mostly from civilian life, had to learn. The second reason was that the Englishman is naturally conservative and slow to grasp a new idea, and is satisfied to muddle through.

I can look back on those trenches at Funky Village and see how even a little pick and shovel work in the quiet days when we had absolutely nothing to do would have given us dry dugouts, good drainage, safe traverses and communications, and would have increased our efficiency one hundred per cent if we had n't been lazy or stupid, whichever it was.

Well, that 's all gone by. And I, for one, can rejoice that the American rookie has not to face the bad conditions of breaking in that I had to go against. What we had at Funky was heaven compared with what the Canadians endured at Ypres a year earlier, but it was so

bad that no new troops going in now will ever have to stand up to anything like it.

After that first night, and on up to the first of July, 1916, we were in and out at Funky, having our "rest" at a place called St. Amand, an ex-village consisting of two pubs where they sold slushy beer and vin blanc, and about six whole houses. It was discouraging work.

Sometimes we would have as many as fifteen or sixteen days in the trenches without relief and then, maybe, two days in billets. Over a week in the trenches at one stretch is ruinous to the nerves. At the end of one week a man's nerves get strung up so he gets to seeing things at night, whether he is a hardened vet or not. There was another place the Fritzies had it on us. According to all accounts they made out from the beginning to give the men a regular system of six days in the front line, six days in support and six days in billets. They came back fresh. We did n't.

CHAPTER VI

Over the Top on the First of July

Well, we worried along this way until the first of July, and on that day they pulled off what was supposed to be the big spring attack. All the rookies who had come up with me were on the ragged edge of nervous prostration and the chaps who had been there when we came were nearly as bad.

Our morale was bad. We had got some used to being shelled — just enough so we were able to figure out the mathematical chances of being hit by the next one — and that's a bad state to be in. Most of us had never been under rifle fire in the open or under machine guns, and we were so shaken that we dreaded it. And that's the shape we were in when we went over the top on the morning of the first of July.

We had a fair artillery preparation — enough to batter down their wire and that was all. We went over early in the morning. There was no barrage — and we simply climbed out and went forward on the double. There was no smoke screen in front of us and we were open to the sight of the strongly emplaced German machines.

Besides that we had very few grenades. The Mills bombs had come in only a short time before and had not yet reached us. We had some of the old-fashioned hairbrush and jam-tin grenades, but they were worse than nothing, as the men did n't trust them. Those old jam-tin bombs were sure suicide tools. They were made, as the name implies, of old jam and marmalade cans. You'd light the fuse and then had a matter of four seconds to throw the thing. Once a fellow in my section was getting ready to throw one and a bluebottle fly kept settling down on the grenade to get some of the jam scrapings. The chap kept shaking

the fly off and finally he got the fuse lighted and the fly settled again, and he waited to give the bomb another shake and it went off. He never threw another bomb. The fly got away.

So that's the way we went into the July first attack, without barrage and without bombs. Nothing but rifles and the bayonets. It was eight hundred yards to the German trenches. We crossed it on the double with two rests of about a minute each to catch our breath. The whole attack as far as our sector was concerned was a washout. The division on our left had a mix-up on orders and did n't go over with the rest of us. The result was that we were enfiladed and raked fore and aft.

I was so scared that I was petrified. I remember that all the way across I was praying that I would n't have to use the bayonet or to face the bayonet.

I have read a good deal of tommy-rot from time to time about the German being afraid of

the cold steel. The fact is that any Anglo-Saxon hates it. The Scotch and the Irish like the bayonet. The Englishman hates it as bad as any German. I dreaded it on my first charge, and in all the many months of service after that, and I hate the idea now.

I had that dread topside in my mind all the way across. When we made the German trenches we found no Fritzies there. The Hun was playing it low down and foxy on us. He had raked us all the way across and had quietly abandoned his front line when we arrived. I dropped into a bay and waited there for as much as half an hour. The suspense was just what was needed to give me a let-down and knock out what faked-up courage I had left in me.

I stood there alone, shaking all over, and very badly nauseated, until an officer came along and told me to join some of the men two traverses further down. I moved down and joined them. There was little shellfire and we

were fairly safe from the typewriters. I was just getting a little courage back when a commotion started around the corner in a communication trench, and a second later around the corner came crowding about twenty Heinies. They had come out of a dugout.

They were on top of us in an instant. A big fellow made a thrust at me. I parried perfectly. He dropped his rifle. I made a thrust at his chest. He caught the rifle with both hands and seemed to pull the bayonet into his throat.

And then a strange thing happened. When the steel went into him my head cleared. The lump went out of my throat. My solar plexus stopped squirming. My knees were solid. I let go a glad yell and kicked him off the pin. It broke at the butt, but I didn't care. I clubbed old Sarah Jane and went after the next Fritz, knowing I was just twice as good a man as he.

We polished off that gang in less time than

it takes to tell it. About five minutes afterwards the Germans began to shell us. Lord, how they gave it to us! They had the range, naturally, having just left those trenches, and laid down the shells just where they would do the most good.

Our orders had been to go it on our own and to return to our lines if the officers judged it was getting too hot. The officer in command of our platoon gave us the word and we went back. They enfiladed us on the return. But I never felt another pang of fear through that day.

Out of the eight hundred of our batt that went over that morning just ninety-two responded to rollcall in our trenches that evening. Another hundred straggled in through the night. The attack was one grand washout, but it did one thing for me. It gave me back part of the courage that had been squeezed out of me by my unfortunate early experience.

Three weeks later, on the 21st of July, I was

badly smashed up while standing in a trench. Shells bursting overhead — this was before I became known as "Shellproof" — got me in the head and shoulder and the hand, — of which more later.

They had me in the hospital for repairs, and at the beach for recuperation, and finally, as I have said, I brought up at Le Havre at the base, ready for shipment back to the front.

During the days at the hospital and the beach I had time to think over the weeks in the trenches. And I came to resent keenly the things that had happened to me there. I was disgusted with the British Army. I was disgusted with war. I was fed up on mud and blood and cooties and bad food and the whole blooming show. I wanted to go home.

So, as I have told, I went down to the C. O. and applied for a discharge as an American citizen. The officer was agreeable and filled out the papers and told me I'd have to see

THROWING A BOMB FROM THE PRONE POSITION
The usual position in a raid across No Man's Land

the Camp commander. I found him in his quarters.

He was a middle-aged man with a ready but kind of frosty smile. He heard my case.

"Surely," said he, "you shall have your discharge. But don't you care for the British Army?"

With that little encouragement I opened up and told him all my troubles. I was fed up and said so.

The officer twinkled his eyes.

"Would n't you feel a little better with a bit more rest?" he asked.

I shook my head kind of stubborn.

"Have you killed a German yet?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," I said, and I loosened up again and told him all about it.

"Do you remember how you felt when you got him?"

I thought a minute and then looked the officer in the eye. He smiled, and I smiled.

He picked up my filled-out application

blank and held it out. I took it and tore it up.

"Go back and get another German," he said; and he shook hands with me.

Two days later I was on the way up to the Somme to rejoin the batt for thirteen months more of it.

CHAPTER VII

Mascots

The British Tommy has a lot of qualities that are unattractive and a lot more that endear him to the heart of anybody but a German. He is apt to be rough and uncouth. He grouses a good deal and is suspicious and unapproachable until he knows you. But he is always good-natured underneath and he sure is human.

He has n't the cold intellectual efficiency of the 'orrible 'Un and he therefore insists upon keeping a variety of pets and mascots even if the live stock eats his rations and takes no active part in winning the war.

Any soldier is more or less of a kid, usually more. No matter how old the Tommy is or what he was in peace times he sheds his responsibility when he gets in uniform; he looks

upon his officers as parents or schoolmasters, or both, and spends a good deal of his time trying to get around the entirely wholesome regulations laid down for him by those in command.

One of these rules is the one that mascots shall not be carried. As a general thing the officers shut their eyes at the small animals. If Tommy had free hand a battalion would carry a menagerie with everything in it up to an elephant. Large animals eat a lot of grub and are in the way, which is probably the reason why they are banned. So the soldier has to worry along and bestow his affection on cats and small dogs with an occasional rabbit or guinea pig — anything that will cuddle up and let itself be petted and loved.

As a rule it is hard to keep dogs. The dog is supposed to be man's faithful friend. But it was our experience that the trench pups lived up to the reputation of the house cat. They went where they got the most grub. Another tradition gone blooey through the war!

My crowd never did have but one dog that stuck. He was a tough little fox terrier named Kitchener and he loved rats. We used to get German shells loaded with lyddite, which gave off an awful stink, and smoke out rats for Kitchener. We would put some of the lyddite on pieces of paper and light them and slip them into ratholes. Pretty soon the other holes down the trench would spout rats and Kitchener would have the time of his young life. He got hit by shrapnel at last and went west.

When we were at the support tunnel behind the Bluff Sector at Messines Ridge there was a grand old tomcat whose name was Bill — Old Bill to be exact. Bill was the mascot of the tunnel, not of any particular unit, and he was the first thing thought of or asked for when we came out of the trenches for a rest.

Bill was a tough cat. He was built heavy forward, like a lion, with wide jowls and battered ears where he had fought many a valiant fight with rats and such, and he had a

chronic scowl. He swaggered and did n't care a damn for anyone. So we liked him. Yet Old Bill was as human as any Tommy. He loved to have his belly rubbed, and would rumble a hoarse purr like a whiskey tenor trying to sing bass.

There were cook-houses outside the tunnel at the various entrances. Bill used to make the rounds two or three times a day for his rations and he kept fat. For a long time Bill liked to take a ramble out into the field when it was good and sunny. But one day a shell burst within fifty yards or so of Bill and he lit out for home with a tail as big as a toffee apple. After that he never did go out. We always remembered Bill kindly because he clawed the leg of a war correspondent — a famous one at that — who came down to report the battle of Messines Ridge for a London daily. Bill was undoubtedly an intelligent cat and used good judgment in the case of the newspaper man who, as we found out when we saw the

papers, reported as an eye-witness things that happened seventeen miles away from where he was when they happened. R. I. P. — Bill, not the war correspondent.

Another cat my platoon had was a little she-one, very soft and cuddlesome, that would ride on the top of anybody's pack and make herself at home in any trench or dugout and never groused about the rations. Her name was Vic. Vic got very thick with a chap named Bott and used to follow him around. One night Bott went out on patrol and Vic went along and got lost. Along towards morning we heard her crying out there in the dark and three men risked their lives — it was just before dawn and the Boche shelling was nearly due — going out after her. If that cat had gone west I think Bott would have been shot at sunrise.

Another time we had a goat named Hindenburg. He was allowed by the officers because he did n't require any rations. Hindenburg could butt like blazes. He was that kind of a

goat. And while he was n't the sort of animal you'd care to take to bed with you, he was popular because he was rough and could take care of himself. When we were on the hike he would hop on the top of a limber and ride standing up, taking in the scenery, very interested and independent. Hindenburg got on the crime-sheet when he ate the first leftenant's other shirt. After that the orders were to keep him tied up. He did n't like that and one day he chewed the rope apart and butted the C.S.M., a dignified old swab who was hoping for a commission that he could n't afford. Hindenburg was turned over to the quartermaster and appeared later as mutton at the sergeants' mess. We all hoped he'd poison the cannibals, but he did n't and was said by those who had some of him to be good eating.

There was a Blackpool Cockney in my platoon for a while that swore he had a tame cooty, but I think he was a liar.

I think the strangest pet that I ever heard

of in the trenches was a tame starling. The English starling is about as common in northern France as he is across the Channel. Sometimes they get up pretty close to the lines, but on the whole they don't like gunfire and keep clear, the same as most of the other birds. Down around Funky, though, there was a starling that hung around the trenches regularly and got so tame he would come down and hop along the fire-step in the second line trench. Nobody ever bothered him and he lived well.

Soldiers are kind to animals and birds. They are bound to be, as they take out all their hating on the Boche. And, anyway, a dog or a cat is human in comparison.

CHAPTER VIII

WOUNDS

WHEN I was first in France, before going up to the front and before I had ever heard a shot fired in actual battle, I was sitting one day in a little *estaminet* when in came a British soldier on crutches. He was quite evidently a veteran and I hailed him and asked him to have a drink. He was ready enough. A Tommy never refuses hospitality, particularly if it is liquid.

I wanted some inside information on trench conditions and the sort of thing I was likely to go up against in the next few weeks and I started in asking questions at once.

My first one was that blamed fool query that I came later to hate so and that makes every soldier that hears it want to murder the questioner.

"Have you been wounded?"

Any fool could see that this man had been wounded but I asked just the same. Tommy looked at me with contempt and I hastily ordered another drink for him. Just then another soldier entered. My chap did n't know the newcomer who had his arm in a sling but that did n't matter. He hailed him.

"Wot 'o, mytie. 'Ave a go. The bloomin' rook 'ere's standin' treat."

I ordered "veesky-soda" for the new man, who sized me up with almost as much scorn as the first one. To cover my confusion I asked another question.

"How does it feel to be wounded?"

This seemed to be in perfectly good form and I got my answer from him of the crutch.

"Hit feels," says he, "like gettin' bashed wiv a bally cricket ball."

"Yer 're a liar," said he of the smashed arm, speaking without heat. "Feels like some blighter was stickin' a red 'ot needle in yer."

There followed an argument on the sensations of various wounds. Each man had been hit only once and each was right as to the feeling that he individually registered.

Later on I copped a few myself and would have been able to give a new recruit a whole lot of information on how it feels to get hit with either bullet or shrapnel or to get gassed or to be buried and jammed about with sandbags, which usually counts for a wound; and I could have told him something of the sensations of shellshock, although I don't really qualify on that last, being shellproof apparently, and never was able in my whole seventeen months' experience in the trenches to work up anything more than faint symptoms of shock.

I remember my first wound. Everybody is bound to if it does n't knock him cold. My first one was more painful than any hurt that I received except, of course, being gassed.

My first three wounds were received all on one day and they were not come by in battle.

I never, in fact, was hit by anything in action, — that is, in a charge or a raid.

We were in a front trench one morning when Fritz commenced his regular before-breakfast strafing. I had become pretty well accustomed to this sort of thing at the time and was more or less indifferent to it. I was hunched up under the parapet, along with my mate Higgins. I had my tin kelly pushed back on my head, which was a careless thing to do — but you do get careless over there. A big boy burst in the next traverse and a lot of muck and stones came over and Hig sung out to me,

"Pull yer 'at up on yer napper, yer fool."

Well, I laughed at him but I took his advice; and just as I took hold of the rim of the helmet and pulled it forward a big chunk of shell caught me right on the fingers. Woow! It pinched my trigger finger against the rim of the tin hat and smashed it — smashed it plenty — and jammed the second finger almost as bad. Did you ever get your finger shut in a door or

caught in one of the old-fashioned patent rockers? This was the same thing, only more so. Hig got a first-aid bandage on the hurt, and when the blood began to come back into it she fairly jumped and I howled. It was hurting so that I thought I would find some kind of a dugout and crawl in and nurse it there.

I was going down the trench hunting for shelter when I got my second crack. Zizzz-Whang! Down comes a whiz-bang, which is a choice variety of shell that sounds like that and that you don't hear until it goes off. This one hit so near that it slammed me up against the parapet and I felt a smash on the shoulder about like what the fellow said about the cricket ball. It was just a shocking jolt, numbing but not painful at first. Then after a bit it began to hurt, too; but not anywhere as bad as the hand. That shoulder wound was serious. A big chunk of shrapnel had gone in and ripped a big hole. An officer came up and told me that I'd better get along back to an

aid station as the shoulder ought to be looked after right away. There were n't any communication trenches at that point and it was up to me to go over the top, — that is, to climb over the parados and go to the rear across lots. I did n't fancy it and said so. I could walk all right and did n't see any need of taking any such risk, at least until the shelling was over. However, the hand was hurting so that my judgment was kind of hazy and it was an order really from the officer to go back. Anyhow, I went.

I remember I had gone about a hundred yards and was breaking all records for cross-country running when there was a blinding, stunning crash. For an instant I had a sinking sensation, without any pain and then I did n't know any more.

This last one was a big piece of shell and it pretty near lifted the top of my head off. I never did wake up after that whack until I was miles back of the line in a hospital. Then the

old napper did n't hurt much; but the shoulder was throbbing some and the hand was hurting worse than ever. They operated on the head and put in a nice silver lid, and that did n't bother me any more, although, of course, it was the serious wound of the three. The shoulder got well after some weeks and the hand kept on being bad for months. For that matter I have never had the use of that trigger finger since.

My second time wounded and my fourth hit was with a bullet, and it reminded me of the fellow who maintained so stoutly that a wound was like a hot needle.

This took place one night while on a ration party. About six of us were going back to bring up the grub. We had loads, depend upon that. Tommy is made a pack-horse whenever he goes to the rear. There is always something to go back. We each had buckets in one hand and a case of Mills bombs on the other shoulder. There was one incom-

petent, clumsy beggar in the party who kept shifting his bucket and his case of bombs. Now when a Very light goes up, the thing to do is to stand absolutely still until the light has died down. If you stand still Fritz does n't see you. If you move, he fans you with a typewriter and fills you full of bullets. We kept telling this chap to freeze when a light went up, but he kept taking occasion to shift his load when a Very was floating overhead, and the Boche spotted us.

The first burst of bullets drilled me clean through the thigh. It did n't hit the bone; and it did feel exactly like a hot needle. I kept on walking for about three steps. Then I dropped the bucket and dragged a little. Then down went the Millses and I dragged some more. Then I went down myself.

That cute little hole in the leg did n't pain me any to speak of, after the first "burn"; and it only kept me in the hospital two weeks.

The human body sure will stand a lot of

punishment at times. Of course where there are so many men being hit every day things happen that anyone would have said before the war could n't happen.

We had in our batt a negro. Blacks were not common in the British Army — that is, outside of native units. I used to josh the Tommies and fill them up with fairy tales about this and that; and I instructed them on that old tradition about a negro's head being harder than a white man's. Only I stretched it and told them that a bullet would bounce off the black man's skull.

Well, it happened that this coon got creased along the scalp two or three times without getting hurt enough to send to the rear and the men had got so they believed his napper would turn anything. After a while he got one straight through the top of the head. The bullet went in at the top of his forehead and came out of the back. It must have pierced his brain, if he had any. And he lived. That

is, he lived for three days; and I think if he had n't got spilled out of an ambulance he would have pulled through to convalescence.

Another queer thing in the way of war hurts is shell-shock. Some men seem to be shell proof — like myself. I have seen a man lifted and thrown over into the next traverse and half his clothes taken off by a shell which must have burst right beside him; and there was nothing the matter with the fellow. On the other hand some are so sensitive to the jar of shells that they get shell-shock if one bursts within a hundred yards.

Shell-shock is, of course, merely a form of paralysis. In the early days of the war it used to be the custom to execute any man who deserted under fire or, rather, who showed cowardice and ran, disobeying orders. For that matter, it is the custom now, only they are more careful to prove the case, because it was found that a good many men with slight shell-shock and apparently all right,

really had no control over themselves. Their legs would work all right but the brain did n't, and they were as apt to start running to the rear as anything else. They were n't cowards. It was simply that the telegraph system of the nerves had been shocked out of commission and they could n't make their feet behave.

After all, when you figure it all out, mere wounds are the smallest part of war. I would rather be in the front trench taking my chance with the whiz-bangs any time than ten miles to the rear, making roads or lugging ammo.

The percentage of chances of being hit is small. If you are hit it is likely to be a cushy one that you can swing Blighty on. Or it may be a quick one that will snuff you out like a candle and send you west without your knowing it. Either one is good. The percentage of wounds that are painful and crippling is very, very small.

Anyhow, it is the chance you have to take. It's a great life and you can't weaken.

CHAPTER IX

My Nickname and How I Got It

Last Christmas Eve, just after I got home to America, I was sitting with a bunch of fellows and one of them said,

"Come on, Mack. Tell us a nice cheerful Christmas Eve story about the trenches."

It was a large order and it could n't be done; for Christmas eve in the trenches is rarely a pleasant occasion. Fritz sends over too many Christmas presents. To the rear there may be good food and merriment and rejoicing of a sort, but not up there in the front line.

I have spent one Christmas on the firing line and it was not pleasant. There is very little Christian spirit in the trenches at any time, and rather less on Christmas Eve than at any other season.

Still and all, the British Tommy is cheerful always. He finds the heart to make light of his troubles when they are the heaviest. So I am going to set down the thing that happened to me Christmas Eve, 1916; and if it reads like the story of a railroad wreck it has at least the merit of being true and absolutely without *camouflage*. And I am glad that I was able on that night to accept the happening in the spirit of irrepressible good nature that is the outstanding characteristic of the London Cockney.

Without wanting to get over-personal I think I may say that I am a true Cockney. When I left the United States I was an American, born and bred here. When I enlisted in London they told me that I was an Irishman. After two years with the 23d Battalion of the London Regiment I found I was a Cockney of Cockneys; and I suppose I shall remain so until American life remodels me again.

Well, to resume. When I began, all hands

insisted that there must have been something happen to me on Christmas Day or on the night before and that I ought to tell it. Which I did. And I am setting down here the yarn that I told then of how I came by my nickname in the batt where I was known to officers and men as "Old Shellproof."

December, 1916, our batt was lying up at Dominion Camp, near Popperinghe, about eight miles behind the lines and about six miles from Ypres. We had been on this sector ever since October, when we had been moved up after the Big Push (that's the battle of the Somme, you know). During those months we had been in and out from the trenches at Hill 60, taking over for a week and then coming out to the Dominion Camp billets for a week of rest.

Along about the nineteenth or the twentieth of December rumors began going around that we were to go in for Christmas. We had been in billets for only five days and there

was the usual grousing. There is no place like the army for rumors. The average battalion has got the average sewing circle beat seven ways for gossip. You can hear anything that you want to listen to; so when the bad news came we all hoped for the best and trusted to luck that there might be nothing in it. This time it happened to be right and rumor pedlers had the real story. On the morning of the twenty-first we got orders to take over Hill 60 for ten days, to be followed by ten more days in support.

The weather was just like spring in New England, warm and sticky, especially sticky, with mud up to the knees in most places and up to the ankles everywhere. We spent the whole day cleaning equipment and grousing. We had one old fellow in my platoon named Tuffnell who had been in the service from the beginning, and who had never had a leave. I call Tuffnell old. He was forty; and that is well along for a soldier. He had just had

bad news from home, and thought sure that he would get a furlough for Christmas. But he did n't and was well discouraged. It's the way of things in the army. There is a lot that seems like injustice, but it is all for the great cause, and a chap has to take it with a grin. Old Tuff found it hard, and he could n't help showing it.

The rest of us kept more cheerful than we had any right to be, and there was a lot of joking and horse play when we fell in at six o'clock for the eight-mile hike. It is a queer thing about Tommy that he smothers his grouch and starts joshing the minute he gets in action, no matter how cross he had seemed a little while before. There was a lot of talk among us about the turkey dinner we would have in the trenches, and some cheerful betting that some of us would never eat another Christmas dinner in the line or out.

According to custom we got away by companies at about fifteen-minute intervals. We

marched this way until we got to the outskirts of what had been the city of Ypres, where we broke up into platoons and went along that way until we hit the duck walls, about two miles from the front line, where we went single file.

I have been through Ypres many times and never got entirely hardened to the frightfulness of war as shown by the desolation there. Here was a town of at least 30,000 or 40,000 people one great hopeless ruin. Judging from the remains of the old Cloth Hall and the Cathedral and of the many churches it must have been very beautiful; and here in two short years the labor and art work of centuries was reduced to broken junk.

After passing Ypres and getting on the duck boards on this particular night we were supposed to go quietly, as Fritz was busy and the shells whistled overhead all the time, and the typewriters were sending over plenty of bullets; we were still in a mood for kidding,

however, in spite of the danger, and every few minutes somebody would fall off the boards with a clatter of equipment and all hands would holler, "Hurroo! There goes Clubfoot Dean."

Clubfoot was one of those fellows that fall over their own shadows in the daytime and can't keep their footing at all at night. He was a nuisance. Nobody wanted to march behind him, because every time he went down the fellow behind would pile up too. It was worse to march in front, because he always made out to thump the man ahead when he took his header.

We used to threaten to shoot Clubfoot and wished him all kinds of bad luck; but he was dangerproof and never seemed to get hurt by bullets or anything else.

Well, in spite of old Clubfoot, we got up to the front trench and relieved the other batt. We tried to pump them as usual, as we wanted to know who were in front of us—the Prussians,

the Bavarians or the Saxons. As usual we got mighty little information beyond saying that it had been very quiet and to look out for the snipers. It was always the way. When you are being relieved you are in a hurry to go. If the Germans get on to the fact that a change is taking place, they will make it a point to shell blazes out of the approaches and the fellows going out get it good. So they want to go quick and they have n't any time to swap lies with the relief.

Still and all, the chaps taking over are entitled to some information as to the particular enemy they are going to fight. It makes a great difference. The Prussians are nasty fighters. I mean by that that they keep at it night and day and don't seem to have any sense of trying to make things easy for both sides.

There's no reason why a fellow should n't be reasonable even if he is at war. I have heard it said that the Prussians are the best

fighters in the German army. I, personally, don't think so. When they come to close quarters they will fight until there is no hope, then they quit.

Now the Bavarian is sort of a decent, gentlemanly bird, with some sense; but he'll go a step further than the Prussian when he is at close quarters, and will keep on scrapping when there is *no* hope — like a Frenchman or an Englishman or a Jock or a Canadian. He's just that much better than the advertised Prussian.

Your Saxon, now, he's another breed of cats. He is a big, good-natured, blond beggar, and he is perfectly willing to lay off the sniping and the nasty work any time and be friendly. We were in one sector several times where the trenches were only thirty yards apart.

When the Saxons came in they would let us know it, and all hands would start doing the brother act. They knew they could trust us and we knew we could trust them. A lot

of them could speak English, and they would hop up on the parapets unarmed and shout across to know if we had any fags. Then both sides would start joshing.

There would always be some of the Saxons who knew more about London than the men did who came from there, and they would swap yarns about the places they both knew. Once I remember all of us got so interested over an argument as to how long the war would last and which side was going to win that we almost came to blows.

One of the officers put a stop to it by going out between the lines — this, in broad daylight, mind you — and telling the Saxons that if they did n't get down he would order them fired on. On the whole, they were good, friendly fellows, and we liked them.

I remember about the time that Rumania entered the war; they had it before we did and told us all about it. When Bucharest fell they shouted the news across to us and we

called them bloody liars. There was a little bad feeling for a day or two and we did n't let them put their heads up. So they began to stick up signs telling us what boobs we were. We all had a shot at the signs.

One night some of us sneaked over with a piece of old wire cable we had found and hitched it on to the Saxon barbed wire. Then about fifty of us got hold and gave a heave all together. We pulled up a section of the wire and it made an awful noise, and the Saxons cut loose with everything they had in the way of machine gun and rifle fire. I fancy they must have thought there was half a battalion or more out their fussing with their wire. Next morning they saw what had made the disturbance and we joked them some more. They took it in good part.

One time someone over in the Saxon trench got an old cornet and started playing toot — a toot — toot, toot. After a while he just played the first part and the Saxons finished

off the last two toots vocally. Then we joined in and tooted, too. We kept it up all one day like a lot of kids, until the officers came around and put a stop to it.

Well, this time I'm telling about there were no good-natured Saxons against us — there were Prussians. The fellows we were taking over from told us to be careful of the snipers. We did n't need to be told that, as we had been on this sector before and knew just how bad the snipers would be if they were Prussians.

I have to hand it to the Prussian snipers for bravery. They were as bold as brass, and as a common thing would get out between the lines at night and stop there in the daytime concealed behind dead bodies or in shell-holes or wherever there was cover and then put at us. As a rule I think that these snipers were officers.

On several occasions they even got through our lines and hid to our rear and sniped at us. Think what nerve a man must have had

to do a stunt like that! He was nearly sure to get caught and not a chance for life if he was taken.

Another nervy thing they pulled quite often was this: A German officer would dress in an English officer's uniform and deliberately come over and drop into our trenches and stroll along asking questions of the men. Usually he would wear the R. E. uniform, and would be some man who had been educated in England, and who was more English than the English themselves in manner and speech.

The very boldness of it made the scheme successful. They got away with it as a rule, too. I have known of at least six cases of the sort in my sector, although I never actually saw but one. I remember one chap who was caught. He was taken before a lieutenant named Barrett. He greeted Barrett cordially with "Ah, Lieutenant Barrett, I believe. I had a shot at you a night or two ago and came jolly near doing you in."

"How do you know my name?" asked Barrett.

The German laughed.

"Really, old chap, you must n't ask," he said. "That's my business, you know."

Then he went on to tell about killing two officers some time before, giving their names and the time when they were killed. It all checked up. This officer was taken to the rear and probably shot, although I don't know about that. His courage and coolness certainly merited something better. The bravery and willingness for sacrifice is not all on one side in this war.

When we got into our front trench and tried to get settled down for the ten days of discomfort we found things bad. The trench was knee-deep in mud and water, and the water was cold. The dugouts were better than most in that part of the line. It was a farce to call them dugouts, at that. They were only head and shoulder shelters. I am

fortunate in being short, for I could almost always find an extra-size shelter that I could get into, legs and all, and be fairly comfortable.

Things were quiet for the next three days, with only a shell or two coming at intervals. We spent the time writing letters to the folks at home, telling them what a fine Christmas we were having and all about the big feed that was planned. As a matter of fact we were in for bully beef and bread and tea, but there was no harm in letting the people who were worrying about us think that we were due for turkey and plum pudding.

My platoon was on duty in the front line from 7 A. M. to 8 P. M. No union hours over there, you see. The rest of the time we spent in the shelters.

It was pretty quiet, as I have said, but we felt a little bit leary of Fritz. We expected him to send over his Christmas presents before the holiday was past. It is a habit of the beastly Boche to select special occasions for his con-

tributions of explosive hardware. I never knew it to fail but once.

On the Kaiser's birthday in 1917 we had it all doped out that the Heinies would celebrate by strafing us with all they had. We got ready by building special parapets and sandbagging everything that could be protected in that way. The Prussians were against us and we had it figured that they could n't resist the temptation. They fooled us, and for the whole day and one before and one after they did n't send over a shell.

On this Christmas Eve Fritz did n't disappoint us at all. He was right there, living up to his reputation. For about four o'clock in the afternoon he started his show. There were five of us sitting on the fire-step in the bay talking when Captain Trembard came along on inspection of rounds. Mr. Trembard had only been out a few weeks and was due to become a very popular officer. He was a kind, cordial chap who seemed to take a

personal interest in the men, and was nowhere near as far away as the average captain.

He came along and passed a few remarks, asking if we were trying to make ourselves comfortable, and then he wished us a Merry Christmas and moved down the traverse. He had hardly turned the corner of the bay when the first shell burst directly over the trench. It did Captain Trembard in. I ran down and found that he had gone west, hit fair in the stomach with a big fragment.

I ran back and got up on the fire-step and hugged the parapet along with the others. Other shells came over and they had the range right. We humped ourselves up with our heads down and our arms over our abdomens, trying to make ourselves small. You will understand that when a bombardment is on the men simply have to stand by and take it. There is not a thing to do but hope and wish them away.

After giving us a ten minutes' strafing they

let up a bit. We, too, loosened up and moved about some. A mate of mine named Livins and I were sitting on the fire-step. Howard was standing on the step and Tuffnell and Court were standing in the trench when the shell came over that fixed our clocks. It must have been a big boy, because there was a terrible crash and the whole parapet for the space of at least twenty feet lifted and came in on us. I found myself buried up to the neck, but I had raised my hands and they were sticking up in front of my face, although my arms were under. I was packed in as neat as you please.

Now getting buried by a shell-burst is not an unusual thing. It happens to thousands of soldiers. Nearly everybody that comes out of the big show alive has been buried wholly or partly. I was not uncomfortably crushed and naturally began to claw about and try to get my arms free. I'd have got completely out only I was saved the trouble.

I may have been digging for two or three

minutes when I heard another shell coming. You can hear them go overhead with a long thin "sque-e-e-e-e-e." You instinctively duck your head, though you know it's not going to do any good. I ducked this time, sticking my nose into the mud.

And then she smashed. I don't know whether it hit in front or behind; how near it was, or how big. All I knew was that there was another crash, which somehow seemed to come from below, and I oozed up, up, up out of the ground. "Oozed" is the only way I can express it. I could feel myself trickling up through the mud and then suddenly I fetched loose and flew. I must have gone up ten feet and I came down all spraddled out but on my feet. I promptly sat down.

I was a little dazed but not much and began to laugh. Must have been a little hysterical, I suppose. I sat for not more than a few seconds and then deliberately got up. I did n't have a scratch.

I did n't have a sign or a symptom of a shell-shock. I said to myself, "Mack, old top, you ought to get Blighty on this." And I tried to imagine that I was dumb or paralyzed or something. No use! I was as good as new.

It was a case of in again, out again. I had been buried under by a shell, which should by all rules of the game have done me in, and had been boosted out again by another that should have pulverized me.

And no harm done. I took a look around and saw the trench all bashed in and legs and arms sticking out here and there, and then I shook the reefs out of my legs and fairly flew to the aid post in the rear. I got a couple of stretcher bearers and some shovels and went back. The shells by this time were going over to the second line and we worked like beavers.

Livins, who had been close beside me, was alive but blinded and badly shell-shocked. Poor old Tuffnell, who should have been on his way to Blighty by rights, had gone west

without a scratch or a mark on him, killed by the concussion. Court and Howard were both gone, too. I was the only man left in my section.

Out of the forty-two men in my platoon there were only two left untouched besides myself. My experience attracted a lot of attention and various medical officers said that the impossible had happened. I was christened right then and there "Old Shell-proof," and I suppose I have lived up to the name; what with the silver skylight in the top of my head, the numerous holes in various parts of my body and considerable excess weight in the way of shrapnel fragments, to say nothing of having been filled up — as I shall tell you later — with the latest and most fashionable thing in the way of German kultur, mustard gas — and I am alive.

I am no bloomin' Hercules, but with any kind of luck I hope to get into good enough shape with a little rest to go back over there

and help finish up the job that I have helped start.

So there you have the cheerful tale of a Christmas Eve. I had my head between the jaws of death and pulled it out just in time. Our batt was so badly cut up that they pulled us out, what was left of us, and sent the 24th in to relieve us, much to their disgust, as they had planned their Christmas dinner in the safety of the support trenches.

That was where I had mine. It consisted of bully beef and suet pudding, and it tasted jolly good. There was plenty of it, as there were only three of us left to eat what had been provided for forty-two.

CHAPTER X

Rehearsal

In September, 1917, when I was in a hospital in England recovering from an overdose of German mustard gas which I had inhaled before Passchendaele, someone was good enough to send me a copy of the *Boston Post*. That paper was sure fine reading, although it was nearly three months old. It was dated June 8 and spread across the front page in big letters was the announcement of the beginning of the battle of Messines Ridge and the blowing up of Hill 60 with a million pounds of explosive.

Perhaps I read the account of the Hill 60 episode with more interest because I had been concerned in the preparations for the battle of which it was the opening gun.

There had never been, I suppose, up to that

time, and, of course, there has not been since, such elaborate preparation for a battle. For more than two years, or ever since the spring of 1915, the Germans and the British had been facing each other along the Hill 60 sector and neither side had gained a yard.

My division had been holding the Hill 60 and the Bluff Sector to the right of the hill since October, 1916. We had been in and out during all that time, taking over for ten days, or, sometimes, a week, and then for a like time in supports and after that in billets to the rear. We had got to know the place pretty well. Too well! I fancy that the General Staff had come to hate the sight and name of Hill 60. Anyhow, when the big attack, known as the battle of Messines Ridge, was planned, the most important point in the line to be taken was Hill 60.

The situation at the hill was unique. The German and British trenches paralleled each other, with British front line cutting into the west side of the hill.

The surrounding terrain close-up was fairly level and the hill stuck up like a giant wart perhaps a hundred feet high, nearly round, and perhaps five hundred yards across. The hill was, then, in No Man's Land, with the Hun trenches on the other side. But strangely enough the hill was occupied by the Germans, — that is to say, they did not occupy it on the surface of the ground; but they had run tunnels into the side of the hill and had fairly honeycombed the whole place with galleries and shafts. Thousands of their soldiers lived in these tunnels. On the top of the hill there had been a forest, but all the trees had been stripped of branches and were now merely splintered posts and stumps. The German snipers used to crawl up on the side of the hill and hide in the long grass and behind the wreckage that had been the wood and pick us off. This was one of the things that made the sector especially dangerous.

Just to the right of the hill the lines bent to-

gether, and at one point were no more than thirty yards apart. Something more than a mile to the right the Yser Canal crossed both lines and No Man's Land at right angles. Along the bank of the canal ran a low ridge, also at right angles to the trenches. This ridge had been tunnelled lengthwise by our forces and was used as a support trench and for sleeping quarters. It accommodated three thousand men.

Now, here was the situation. As much as a year previous to the battle of Messines Ridge our sappers had begun to run tunnels under Hill 60. The preparation for blowing it up had begun as far back as that. But on the other hand the Germans had sunk deep shafts and had run under the lines to the long tunnel which we were using as a support, and the time was approaching in June when they would be ready to touch us off and send us up in the air. These mining operations were the most extensive in the history of warfare.

The rehearsals of the men began in March and they were as elaborate as the mining.

About thirty miles to the rear there had been prepared a great field which was an exact replica of the German front. Also a large number of photographs had been collected by our airmen, showing every detail of the German positions

During April and May our division had two goes at this rehearsal business. I remember that when we went out for the first one there was a good deal of excitement among the men, as it was clear to anyone that something big was coming off.

We were marched for fifteen miles back of the lines and were there loaded on the match-box cars — funny little freight cars about half as big as ours — and after a bit we brought up in a little town in northern France, where the training field was located. This field of ours was only one of I don't know how many. When you consider that the Messines Ridge

battle extended over a ten-mile front, perhaps more, and that every man on that front was as carefully rehearsed as he would have been as an actor in a drama, it will be understood that there must have been some scores of these fields. There must have been thousands of carefully instructed officers as teachers.

I know that we were duly impressed with the importance of what was coming off before we began. The billets at X. were better than usual. As a rule the billets of a batt are selected by advance agents, the quartermaster sergeants, who go ahead when the troops are on the march and secure the quarters necessary. There is always keen rivalry for the best quarters to be had in any town, as it is necessary to use farm buildings and someone always has to put up in old chicken coops and sometimes in a lately used stable. At X. our whole batt was extra comfortable. We had our sleeping quarters in big, clean barns, full of hay. Most of us made a practice of going into

the mows and burying ourselves for the night. The roofs were tight and we slept dry and clean and there did n't seem to be as many cooties as usual. The cootie, as everybody knows by now, is the common body louse, the soldier's worst enemy.

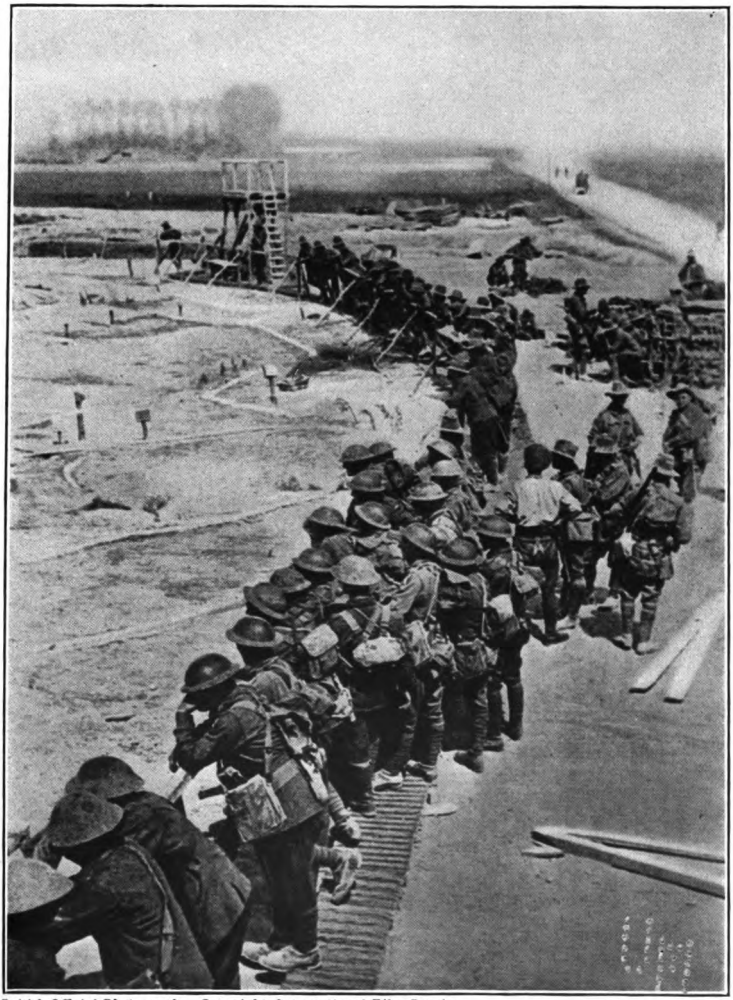
There were a good many orchards all over the place and we spent a good deal of the time when we were on our own, loafing in the shade. On warm, dry nights it was a common thing for whole companies to sleep under the apple trees, sheltered only by little tents made of our waterproof sheets.

On the whole we had it cushy on that ten days' training. Each morning reveille was at 6:30, breakfast at 7, and at 8 parade in full fighting order to the training field two miles away. Here they put us over the jumps by battalions. The duplicate of the German trenches was laid out on a mile-square field, with every detail exactly as we would find it when we went over. A platform surrounded

the field and here and there were wooden towers from which every detail could be seen. We would spend the entire morning up to one o'clock, going through extended formations and the study of objectives of each company.

Getting through at one o'clock made it a short, cushy day, but we made up for that by the care with which we learned every move. The first thing in the morning we would line up and study the terrain. An officer would point out each strong point, each spot where machine guns would be likely to be emplaced, each separate traverse and every extra dangerous bit of ground.

Then the companies would be put over the ground examining every inch of it. After that we went over again in exactly the order we would go in the attack. On certain days we had afternoon rehearsals. This consisted of studying photographs. We would gather by platoons in a big barn, and the officers who understood the airplane pictures would go over



British Official Photograph. *Copyright, International Film Service.*

A Duplicate of the German Trenches

them for us. These photographs were about two feet square. They would hold them up against the wall and point out this, that, and the other point and cross-examine the men. Shortly we had that terrain down so fine that every man could go to his own place with his eyes shut.

Every man knew his objective, how he was to reach it, how fast he was to go, what he had to go through to get there, what he was to do at each stage of the advance. He knew just how things were going to look when he went over. Almost, it is no exaggeration to say, he knew just where his feet were to be set down on each step from the beginning to the end of the show. The only thing that could not be reckoned with was shot and shell.

Like rehearsing anything else most of the men got letter perfect in a few days; but there were some, as there always are, who were stupid and who needed an awful lot of work to get the things into their heads. Two or three such

men in a platoon may queer the whole game and are dangerous. The blockheads in a rehearsal of this sort nearly drive the officers mad.

On the whole, however, the rehearsals went smoothly enough. And I think that the excitement and interest, and the afternoons on our own, conditioned the men to a point of keenness that proved valuable when the time came for the big attack.

We played football or cricket almost every afternoon. At least the other men did. Personally I never could get up an appetite for cricket. British football I never could get used to. They always put me in as goal tender. When I saw the ball coming I would grab it and start on an end run. Then there would be a row. I used to try to get the gang to play baseball, but they could n't see it any more than I could see cricket.

I was the only American in my batt and I continued to be a good deal of a curiosity to the Tommies throughout my service. The

opinion is solidly grounded in the British mind, it seems to me, that Americans are all swank. They think that we are bluffers, braggers and hot-air merchants.

They used to delight to get me started on the size of things over here.

"Sye, Shellproof," somebody would call out, "'ow big is the blooming Stytes?"

Then I would start in and tell them how you could drop England down in the middle of Texas and lose it, and they would look at each other and grin.

Then somebody would say, "'Ow abaht 'igh 'ouses, Mackie?"

Whereupon I would tell all about the Woolworth Building.

This always brought the same frank comment.

"Shellproof, yer a blinkin' liar. Could n't never be no buildin' fifty-one stories 'igh."

You could n't beat them. Tell 'em the plain unvarnished God's truth and they'd swear it

was swank. At that they were good lads and true, and honest comrades, brave and kind.

Americans, as I have said, were a curiosity in our batt. And that was odd, as there were said to be so many in the army. I remember running across one that proves the truth of the often-repeated statement that "it's a small world."

When we were marching back to the front after our first rehearsal, we had halted by the roadside for the regular ten-minutes-in-the-hour rest. Another batt passed us going the other way.

A young lieutenant eyed me as he passed at the rear of his men and then came back.

"Is n't your name MacKay?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," I said, saluting and standing at attention. "It used to be."

"Did n't you," he went on, "used to live in Northampton, Massachusetts?"

"I did sir," said I. "And who, may I ask, are you?"

He laughed and said: "I am Clyde Baxter."[1]

You could have knocked me down with a feather. When Baxter was a two-year-old baby I had lived on the same street with him. I was ten and they used to give me a dime to wheel Clyde out for the afternoon. Later, when I was fifteen or sixteen, I remember him as a youngster of about eight, and that was the last I ever saw of him until he hailed me by the roadside in Flanders.

For old times' sake Baxter tried to get me transferred to his regiment and promised to get it cushy for me; but it never came off. Baxter was afterwards reported missing and so far as I know is either dead or perhaps a prisoner in Germany. I don't know which is worse.

[1] I have given this man's name as Baxter, which is n't it at all, for this reason: any American who fought with the Allied forces was regarded as a *franc-tireur*, that is, as an unauthorized fighter, and to be regarded as a spy and executed as such. This would not be the case now. But at the time Baxter enlisted he was a neutral, and if he were a prisoner now in Germany and it became known that he was with the British before the United States entered the war he would probably be shot.

In May the batt had twenty days in the trenches and in support, before coming out for the second rehearsal. The greater part of that twenty days was spent in trench raids and patrol work, as there was need of all the information that could be had as the time came on for the big attack.

I did not take part in any of the raids. As a matter of fact I never took part in but one trench raid in all my seventeen months of service in the trenches. Right here I want to say something about trench raids and such stunts and volunteers for them. Every now and then I read something about some fellow who volunteers for special and dangerous duty as a habit. I never saw one of those men myself. The man who says he volunteers more than once for trench raids and that sort of thing either misses the truth or is a most extraordinary person. I think that nearly everybody does volunteer once; and then he finds that once is enough. After that he does his

duty as it comes to him, and unless he is a fool for fighting he does n't go about hunting trouble. I know that this is contrary to the accepted ideas of gallantry and heroism; but it is the truth.

All the trench raids that I have ever read about have been large successes. The only one that I was ever in was a flat failure. I am going back and tell you about it. It will only take a minute and it does illustrate a point of British discipline that shows very clearly what makes the British Army great.

This raid took place away back in the early days of 1916. The lines were about five hundred yards apart. The customary orders were given out to cross over into the German trenches and take prisoners and do all the damage possible. We sneaked across with twelve men and one officer, a lieutenant. The Fritzies had three lines of wire outside of their trench, narrow lines not more than six feet wide and perhaps ten yards apart. There had

been no artillery preparation and it was up to us to get through the wire without making any noise and to get back if we could. We managed to get beyond the first two lines of wire and would have got through the other but through some miscarraige of orders our own machine guns and light artillery opened up on us.

We hugged the ground, but not quick enough, and three of our men clicked. Worse than that, the lieutenant, who was just getting through the wire, got tangled up with one leg caught in a loop or something; anyhow he could n't get loose and we could n't pry him out, try as we would. The Germans had got "windy" by this time and were sending up lights. So it was plain enough that the raid was all off. The officer ordered us to go it on our own and to get back as best we could. He was to be left behind. After the custom the non-com detailed a man to stop with the officer on the chance that he might do some good and

get the lieutenant loose before daylight. This is always done when an officer gets in a position where he cannot move. He must n't be left alone. A man has to stay, no matter how hopeless the situation. It is rough on the man, but it is part of the game.

Well, we quit the lieutenant and the man, and worked back across No Man's Land, and made it into our own trenches without any further casualties. About an hour later, just before dawn, the man who had been left came crawling in. He had deserted the officer. The lieutenant never was heard from, and was probably either killed or taken prisoner. The man who deserted him was promptly executed.

But to get back to the trenches. After ten days spent in the front line and ten more in supports, we were moved back again to the little town thirty miles to the rear where the rehearsal field was. They gave it to us good on this dose of getting ready. It was hard work all the time, morning, noon and night.

It got so we could do every move in our sleep. Besides which they gave us the regular "physical jerks," that is, the setting-up exercises without rifles, in extra sessions.

The word went around that the big attack was to come off the tenth of June. There was the regular amount of gossip and a thousand different rumors as to what was to happen and on how wide a front the offensive was to be made. It was always the same way. The rank and file knew as much as old Haig when anything was to come off. The only difference between headquarters and the men was that the men knew so many things that were n't so. In general, though, pretty nearly everything of consequence seeped down to the men in one form or another. The trouble was to sort out the true from the false.

On the Messines Ridge attack the powers at the head of things fooled us purposely. They drilled the idea into us that the attack was to come off the tenth of June and every

man had that notion firmly imbedded in his mind. There was a good reason for this. The German secret service was very active. They, no doubt, had spies behind our lines and perhaps in the very army.

Now the mining situation was, as I have said, peculiar. Both sides were playing awfully close. Hill 60 was full of high explosive placed by our sappers. And lower down in the hill the Germans had mined and had no doubt placed more or less dynamite.

Also, as I have said, they had come across under our support tunnel. These mining operations cannot be kept secret by either side for long. The Royal Engineer officers are listening all the time. They have an instrument of the nature of a microphone, a jigger that is stuck down in the ground and a kind of stethoscope affair to put to the ears. With this they can hear the slightest tap or scrape. After a good deal of practice they get so they can tell whether digging is going on and how

far advanced the mining processes are. When the enemy begins bringing in boxes of explosive that is betrayed, too, by the changed sound. If the enemy is nearly ready to set off his mines and the R. E. officers detect it, why, of course, our men are ordered from the vicinity. The trick is to wait until the last possible moment. It is shivery business trying to outguess the Heinies on this sort of thing.

Well, on this Hill 60 business we were going close to the limit. The engineers had been listening to the digging under our support tunnel and they knew that the Germans had nearly finished bringing in the boxes of high explosive — that they were almost ready to touch her off. Which would have been a disaster.

This support tunnel which I have mentioned was an interesting piece of work and one of the neatest ever constructed in the British lines. In fact it was worthy of the best efforts of the Germans in construction for the

comfort of the men. The tunnel ran back from the front line right in the heart of the ridge for about six hundred yards, a hole four feet wide and high enough to let a man stand up. Then for about four hundred yards it was nine feet wide and eight feet high, and on each side there were tiers of double-decked beds, leaving a little alley between about a yard wide. Running down at each side were short galleries, also furnished with the double-decked beds. The whole place was lighted with electricity. It had been built by Canadian and Australian engineers and was perfectly safe from shell-fire except around the edges, where a shell would come through now and then, but not enough to worry about. The place held three thousand men and kept them dry and comfortable and safe and ready for an instant charge when the time came for that charge. The delicate part of the situation was that the Germans could send up that tunnel with its three thousand soldiers any

time they thought best. We learned after the battle of Messines Ridge that they had planned to touch us off on the night of the ninth. You see the widely spread information that we were to blow up Hill 60 and start the attack on June 10 had by some mysterious method reached the Germans; and they were planning to beat us to it by one day. It was uncomfortably close figuring either way.

But we outguessed them. On the night of June 6 my batt was brought up from the rear and quartered in the tunnel, and about eleven o'clock the order went around that the attack was to come off the next morning at exactly 3:10. We had fooled Fritzie by putting the show forward three days from the time originally given out.

The artillery preparation had begun in a mild but continuous way ten days before, and had been gradually increased, until on the night of the sixth, when we came up, it was one gigantic throb of sound after another, riding

down the wind. Although we knew that the attack was slated for 3:10, I think that most of us slept well. I know that I did.

At three o'clock somebody waked me. All hands were sitting round waiting, waiting and wondering how much of a crash the million pounds of ammonal under Hill 60 would make. It will be remembered that Lloyd George heard the explosion one hundred and thirty miles away in London. We were only a mile and a half away, and we were n't at all sure that it would n't stun us, even sheltered as we were.

We all held our breaths as 3:10 approached and kept our eyes on the wrist watches. On the tick the hill went off. There were just two very heavy rumbles and the tunnel and the ridge over it rocked like a boat. A man who had been standing in the alley in front of my bed tottered and grabbed as a man will on a rocking elevated train. I felt the cot move under me as much as two or three inches. It

was all over in a matter of seconds and was disappointing. And then the order passed and out we all crowded to the exits to be ready to go over in the charge at 3:15, which was zero.

After the battle of the Ridge it was found that the Germans had completed the mining under our quarters and had their ammonal in and connected up. It will always be a mystery why they did n't set us off. I am fully satisfied that they did n't, for when I go west I want it to be in the open with the blue sky overhead. I was sorry for the thousands of Fritzies who had been pulverized in the blowing up of Hill 60.

CHAPTER XI

Messines Ridge

The big explosion that destroyed Hill 60 on the morning of June 7 broke the tension and brought us all up on our toes. As the last rumble and quiver died away and the world stopped rocking under our feet we all picked up our rifles and trooped out of the support tunnel and into the newly made trench called Rennie Street, which had lately been dug; it was about three feet deep, parallel to the front line trench and about a third of a mile behind it. The end of Rennie Street touched the support tunnel.

It was just light when we got out and into the trench. It was one of those misty mornings so common in Flanders, with promise of fair weather overhead, but with a thin haze over everything. Still and all, we could see to almost any distance well enough. Away off there to

the left and in front, where Hill 60 had been the night before, there was a yawning pit. The hill was gone. It seems unbelievable, but that great hill was, so far as we could tell from where we were, completely gone.

Out in front and between us and the front trench the ground was reasonably smooth but sloping upward a little. The artillery preparation had been going on for ten days and was now at its height. Shells by the thousand were squealing overhead from our guns in the rear. The Fritzies were sending back a lot, and the open field we had to cover was getting most of them, or that's the way it looked from Rennie Street.

Everybody was looking back over the terrain toward Ypres, expecting the tanks to come up. It had been rumored all along that the tanks were to take part in the attack, and a good many of the men who had never seen them in action were curious. Once on the rehearsals we had run across a squadron of the land ships coming

up to the front. I had gone into the battle of High Wood on the Somme with the first of the tanks and recalled how easy they had made things there, and sure hoped that we were to have the mechanical monsters with us at Messines. But it was n't to be. The tanks did go into this battle, but farther down the line. It was said afterwards that the ground was too rough at Messines and beyond, and that there was too much mined area to make it worth while to take the chance with the big crawlers.

We squatted in the three-foot ditch and waited for zero and the whistle that would take us out and over, and hoped that nothing would get us before we started.

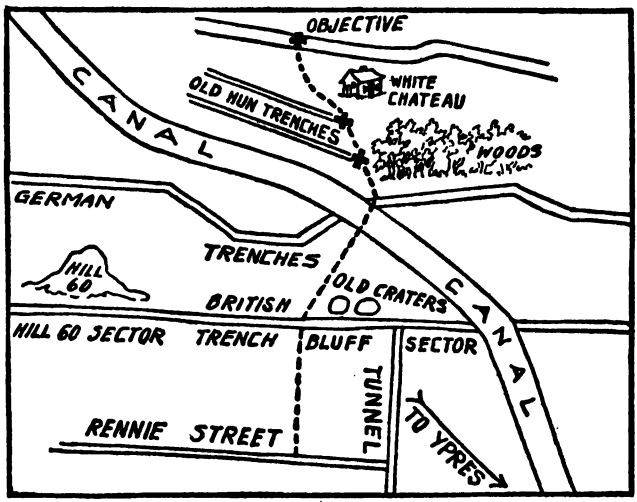
That's one of the things that I noticed over there. When I was going over in an attack my mind seemed to run to hopes that I would n't get it in the early stages of the game. I was n't wishing for anything later on, either, but I somehow seemed to have the idea that it would be a waste of my time if I got hit at the begin-

ning of the show. Same way about the other fellows. I pitied a man a good deal more if he was hit when we first went over than I did some chap that went west late in the day. It sort of felt as though the chap that got his early had n't had a chance to do his bit. Funny how a man's mind runs on things like that.

I think perhaps I'd better put in a little map with this story. I am not much of an artist, but a rough sketch will serve to show where we went on that day of the opening of Messines Ridge. This is the description of a hard day's work that we had been getting ready for for months, and the locations will be clearer to the reader with a map. The distances shown in the sketch are not in the correct proportion — not drawn to scale, that is — but they do show general directions.

My company occupied the part of Rennie Street near the support tunnel. We were n't there long, but it was time enough to work up a cordial dread for the slow march we had to

make across the shell-swept open to the trenches. It is the horrible part of any prepared long advance that it goes so slow. There is so much



Sketch-map drawn by the author, showing the relative positions in the advance from Hill 60 at the Battle of Messines Ridge. The dotted line shows the course covered by the author's company.

waiting under fire and so little chance to get at the enemy and have it over with.

We saw the smoke barrage begin in front of our front line at about a minute of zero. This

was a curtain of shells that shook out great lumpy clouds of sooty black smoke in front of our men and effectually screened them from rifle fire and machine guns. That is, it concealed them from the enemy, but as the smoke barrage works out the enemy only had to pump his lead into the cloud low down to be effective enough.

At zero, that is at 3:15, we saw the front waves, two of them, go over from the front trench and follow the barrage. About three minutes later we got our orders and out we went.

We had left our packs behind and were flying light. We had each two bandoliers slung across our shoulders, a haversack with two days' rations, a water-bottle and the rifle slung across the back. We carried six bombs each in our pockets.

Just before we went over I lit my pipe and started the march forward with my hands in my pockets about the way I would if I was strolling

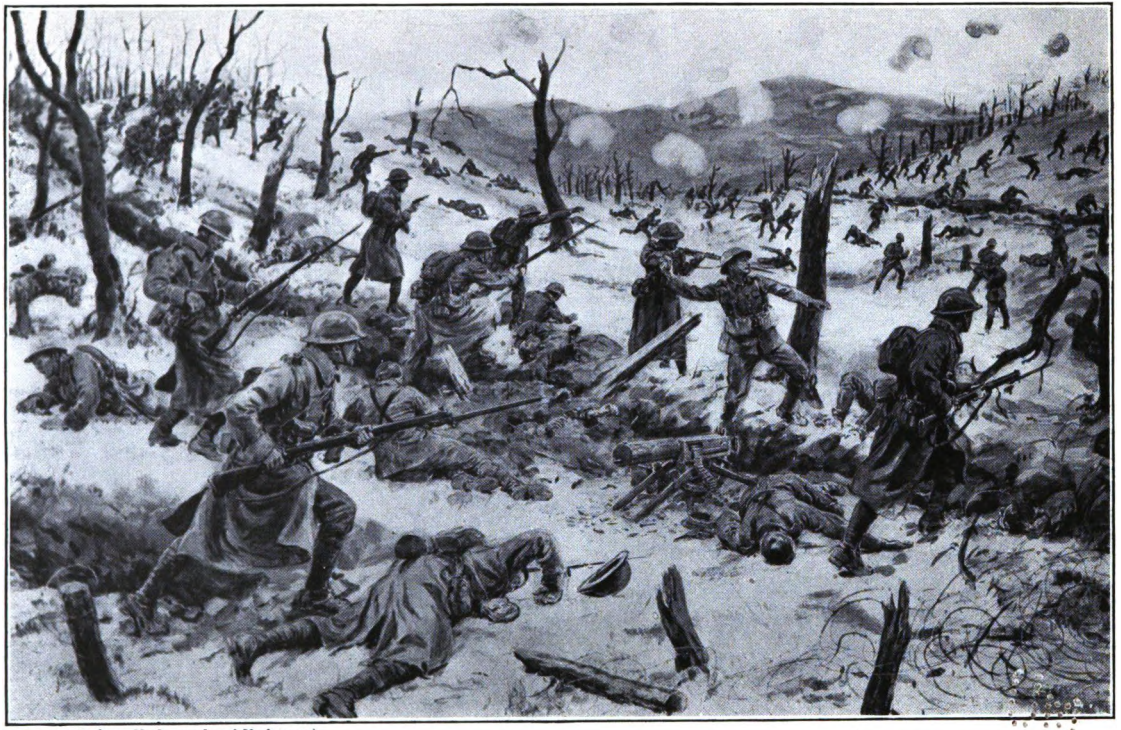
across Boston Common on a bright Sunday morning. This attitude of unconcern was n't swank — it was n't what the papers call bravado. I lit the pipe because I never smoke cigarettes, and I put my hands in my pockets because there was n't any other place to put them. As a matter of fact I was scared stiff and did n't think for a minute that I would get across the first two hundred yards of the advance. I said so between my teeth to a mate of mine named Baggot, who was keeping touch with me at my left. "Baggsie" was another bantam. He had enlisted with me and was smaller than I, being only five feet two inches. Baggot was so short in the legs that he never could get pants to fit. The smallest size would kind of ooze out over his putties and slop around in wrinkles down near his ankles. He was always hitching them up. Baggot was a pipe smoker, too, and when I started to growl he grinned at me and puffed his little black clay and says:

"Cheerio, Macksie! T' 'ell wif th' shells. So I keeps th' cutty alight and th' trousies up, wot do I care?"

And that shows that it's a fine thing in times of action to have something to keep your mind off the danger.

We paddled out across those five hundred yards that lay between us and No Man's Land, and I'll swear that we did n't go more than a mile an hour. We reached our trenches and stopped there a while, unslung the rifles, fixed bayonets, and then went along over. In the German trenches we found nothing but dead Fritzies and several squads of prisoners, each twenty or thirty guarded by a lone Tommy. On from there we slewed around on a right incline as per the instructions learned in rehearsals and hit the canal.

This was about fifty feet wide and there was no bridge. We hesitated for a bit on the near side because we did n't know how deep the water was and there was a lot of bodies in it.



Photograph from Underwood and Underwood.

Open Fighting at Messines Ridge

There was an argument of a few seconds among the officers as to whether the place was fordable. And then in we went.

Colonel Kemble went down at this point, hit in the stomach by a shell fragment. Two stretcher-bearers carried him off to the rear and along with him two more officers who had gone down. The colonel was very popular with both officers and men. He was much more democratic than most English officers. Perhaps this was because he had been before the war the principal of one of the largest private schools in England. I am inclined to think that he knew soldiers because he knew boys, for the Tommy is only a grown-up kid when you come right down to facts.

We sloshed into the canal, and I thought before I reached the far side that I would n't make it. The water was up to my armpits, and when I was in the middle I began to wish that I was more than five feet three. We made it across all right, and as we clambered up the bank we

ran slam-bang into a galling machine gun fire. Off a few hundred yards to the right and up a slight rise were the remains of an old wood. There was a lot of fairly big stumps and some piled-up wreckage of smashed trees, and every spot in this tangle had a typewriter, and they were simply spewing bullets at us. For some reason the British troops from the right of our line, who were supposed to have come up and silenced this bunch of Huns in the wood, had not arrived, and the Heinies were free to give it to us good and plenty.

We started to charge the wood, but our officers chased us back, and along we went on the route that had been laid out for us in the battle plans. You see, we could n't vary from the schedule, no matter what came up; and we walked through that rain of bullets with our heads down, cursing the luck and the orders that would n't let us strike back.

The activity of those guns in the wood cost us a good deal before the day was over. Just

beyond the wood we met a lot of our wounded going back. They had to go through the machine gun fire, too. At the top of the canal bank they were perfect marks, and as the barrage smoke was lifted the Germans simply took their time and slaughtered the returning wounded. There must be hundreds of reported missing men resting in the bottom of the Yser Canal at the point where our batt crossed.

Beyond the wood we ran into a heavy German shell-fire. There was supposed to be a double line of German trenches here, and it was in the orders that we should rest in them for a short time before going on. Baggot and another chap and I had fallen behind our company, and when we hit the trench we tumbled in. There were a good many dead and wounded Germans there, and some of our men, also dead. The first wave had evidently had a good deal of a job in taking this place.

The three of us hunted up a dugout that was serviceable and crawled into it. There were

three dead Germans in there and we shoved them out and fell on the floor exhausted. None of us was able to talk. We had come not more than three-quarters of a mile and had n't run a step, and yet I was panting and wheezing. But I was hanging on to the old pipe. Baggot had his, too — the stem of it. A bullet or something had carried away the bowl. I remember his taking the bit of clay stem out of his mouth and looking at it very silly and saying over and over to himself, "Gawd lumme. She's gone. She's gone." And then he'd giggle.

We lay there in the dugout quite a while — I don't know how long — and after a bit pulled ourselves together some and had a drag out of the water-bottles. There was an awful din of smashing shells and the scream of others going over, and there was a wounded German out in the bay that kept hollering from time to time. As we got our wind back and worked around into a little more sane frame of mind we began to talk about getting on. We all of us knew we

had n't any business stopping where we were, but we did n't want to get out of the shelter. We were trying to convince ourselves that we had a good right to stay when a couple of shells hit right near us — judging from the sound, in the same traverse — and a lot of mud came down the stairs. With that we crawled out and started to hunt up the rest of the company.

Out of the trench we ran into another hail of bullets. They were knocking up the dirt all about and I'll swear that I felt several graze my legs. We could n't see a single German anywhere to shoot at, and could n't make out where the fire was coming from. Probably the bulk of it was from the wood which was now behind us and to the right.

We fell into a shell-hole after a very few steps and lay low. Then some wounded came along and told us that our company was in a stretch of trench about sixty yards ahead. We got out and legged it. Baggot never got there. He went down hit in three or four places, the

worst in the shoulder. We dragged him into a shell-hole and left him. I never saw him again, but afterwards heard that he came through and got Blighty on the wounds.

My other mate, Cowles, and I made the trench and found our company there. They told us that the casualties had been light so far. That did n't seem reasonable after what we had been through, and I asked a sergeant what was meant by light. He said we had lost about twenty per cent.

We had still eight hundred yards to go to make our objective and we soon were ordered out to start again. This time we got a shell-fire that was worse than anything else I saw over there. At least half a dozen shells struck so close to me that I was staggered by the shock and yet was n't scratched. Men seemed to be going down by scores. Two more officers fell, leaving the company in command of a second lieutenant. Still we kept on and soon found ourselves approaching the White Château.

The White Château was a country place surrounded by a little park which still had some of the trees standing. The house was a big one painted white and over it flew the Red Cross flag. In rehearsals we had been told that this place was a Red Cross station and that we were to let it strictly alone. A detail from the last wave was to take it over and guard it. As we came up to the Château we split and were going by on each side when the house began to belch machine gun fire.

How anybody managed to live through that fire I don't know. It was at short range and there was a lot of guns. Right here we disobeyed orders. We did n't pass the Château as we had the wood back by the canal. Not we. Led by the little officer man, who was a gallant lad, we turned as one man and made for the Château. We charged without orders right up through the remains of the little park and up to the house, and began heaving bombs through the windows.

I came up on one side along with six or seven other chaps. I remember chucking two bombs through a window, and when the explosions came off, another window, which had been closed and unbroken before, heaved out and came away from the casement bodily. Then a sergeant yelled to let up on the bombs and hollered: "Now, then, up with you two little fellers. Pitch 'em in, lads." The men grabbed me and one other and heaved us up and into the window. With my hundred pounds' weight, and a boost by a pair of big huskies, I simply floated up and lit on the broad window-sill.

The inside of the room I landed in was a mess. There was a machine gun upset near the window and a lot of bodies all about. I stood there staring through the smoke for a minute, and then stepped into the room carefully and easy, right up on my toes, with the rifle poised all ready to stick the trusty little old pin into anything that moved. A Hun over there in the

corner rolled over and held up a good arm and slobbered out, "Mercy, kamarad."

Then I yelled, "Come out of that. Come out, ye blankety blank Boches." I cussed real cordial for a minute or so, and then a door opened slowly and out sneaked three Germans, whining "Kamarad," with their hands up.

Well, we cleaned that Château. They did n't make a tap of resistance after we got inside, and we harvested forty-odd men and four or five officers. The officers were all in the cellar, and they had a perfect telephone system to other parts of the line. Upstairs in the tower there was a regimental sergeant-major with telephones leading down from his lookout to the cellar. There were two huge red crosses painted on the white roof to keep off the airplanes, and the cross was painted on all four sides of the house. There cannot be any doubt that the Huns had used this place for observation under the protection of the Red Cross for a long time. There was nothing about the Château to show that it

had ever been used for a hospital. It was a clear case of treachery and the use of the Red Cross for a military blind. We left a hundred dead in the Château besides the prisoners, but their loss could n't have been a tenth part of what they had inflicted on us through their dirty work. It's this kind of thing that will win the war for the Hun — if the rest of the world lets him win. If he does win, here's one American citizen and believer in world democracy that will go away to the head waters of the Amazon or some such place and bury himself in the jungle to associate with the decent beasts.

After cleaning out the Château we might have stayed there without danger, as the German batteries evidently had orders not to shell the place and nothing was coming down within a hundred yards. They had the range perfect, as was shown by the way the shells fell all around the Château and did n't land on it. Well, we could n't stop there, as we had to make our objective, which was still about three hundred

yards away. So we got out and went for it. Half that distance was under heavy shell-fire. I made it in approximately thirty seconds. Nobody timed me, but I am confident that I broke all records for the three hundred yards, either professional or amateur.

I fell into the trench and sat on the fire-step puffing at the old pipe like a steam engine. She was out, but that did n't make any difference. Somebody ran up and said:

"Mack, you 're hit. Get that tunic off."

I looked and found that I was covered with blood all down the left side. I began to get faint and imagined that my shoulder pained me. After a while I peeled out of the jacket slow and easy and there was n't a scratch on me. I never did know where that blood came from.

After a short rest we all turned to and began to consolidate the trench and to turn it around. The traverses were in good shape and wide, and about all we had to do was to transfer the sand-bags and put in a new fire-step. The shell and

machine gun fire was still heavy, and there were scores of airplanes flying very low. Some came down so near that we waved to the pilots and yelled to them and they answered.

After we had the trench tidied up we had breakfast. We were all as hungry as wolves. I had a tin of cold bully beef and a chunk of rooty — that's trench lingo for bread — and found an onion snuggled down in the corner of the haversack, and, believe me, that meal tasted good.

We had to stand to all day for the expected counter-attack, but it did n't come. Along around dusk a funny stunt came off and I had the pleasure of seeing the only German I was ever sorry for. We were well consolidated and were keeping a sharp lookout over the parapet when suddenly out of a shell-hole about twenty yards in front there jumped a German soldier who started to leg it for the German lines. He had a sandbag over his shoulder. Our one officer shouted to the fellow to stop, but he

kept going and about twenty of us cut loose at him. He went down in a heap and, still hanging on to his precious sack, crawled into a shallow shell-hole. The lieutenant was a good deal worried about that bag and rather thought that it must contain papers of some kind.

After dark we sent two men out and brought the Fritzie back. He had more holes in him than a colander, but he was still alive and he still hung to the bag. We had to pry him away from it. The lieutenant opened the sack with large expectations of valuable documents and pulled out — you would n't guess it in a thousand years — just two bottles of seltzer water.

It happened that our officer spoke German and he cross-examined the Fritz. The fellow said that he was an officer's servant and had been told to save that soda water, and he had done his best to obey orders. We could n't help being sorry for the simple-mindedness of the poor beggar, and we could n't help admiring his nerve in trying to do his duty as he saw it. He may

have been one of those men whose minds are just big enough to hold one idea at a time. There's a lot of them that way.

For that matter almost everybody does queer things in the excitement of battle. And nearly everyone has the experience of seeming to lose sense of time and proportion.

In this day's work at Messines Ridge that I have just told, one thing comes back to me as a profound mystery.

We started on our advance at 3:15, as I have told. We went forward about a mile and a half. We stopped perhaps ten minutes at the front trench, ten more in the German trench, maybe half an hour in the German dugout and about an hour at the White Château. We arrived at our objective at nine o'clock. In other words, it had taken us four hours' actual marching to traverse a mile and a half.

As I look back on that day it seems to me that nearly every move is clear. I can remember many trifling details; but to save my life I

cannot account for that four hours. It might well have taken an hour to make the mile and a half march. But what about the other three hours? What was I doing? How were those hours occupied? I don't know.

Another thing that puzzles me is that when the day was over I had not fired one single shot from my rifle. But my bombs were gone, and I know that at the White Château I got enough Germans for a mess.

CHAPTER XII

Discipline

In the British army the discipline is probably as strict or stricter than in any army in the world. The French have nothing like it. Possibly the old French Foreign Legion held its men with a harder hand. Discipline is safely seventy-five per cent of an army's effectiveness. Men who obey without question stay put and don't give ground when they are licked. Give them intelligent officers and there can be none better. Discipline is what makes the British Tommy great.

The punishments for a military crime are very severe. Any violation of military orders or regulations is called a crime; and a careful list of these is kept which is called a crime-sheet. I am proud to say that I was discharged with a clean sheet. Of course I violated rules

many times, but was lucky and did n't get caught. I have already told of one crime I committed; but that was under provocation, and while I might have been given Field Punishment No. 1 the officer was a good fellow and let me off with three days C. B. (Confined to Barracks.)

On active service a man is liable to get extreme punishment for what seem little things. In fact it does n't take such a lot to get him shot. Field Punishment No. 1 is bad enough and is dished out frequently. This consists of being confined to the guard-room and, for two hours each day, being tied to the wheel of a limber, — spread-eagled. This is called crucifixion.

In the early days of the war the death sentence was common, as a general thing being inflicted for disobeying orders. In a good many cases officers used bad judgment and thus actually murdered their men. That is what it amounted to. I recall one case when

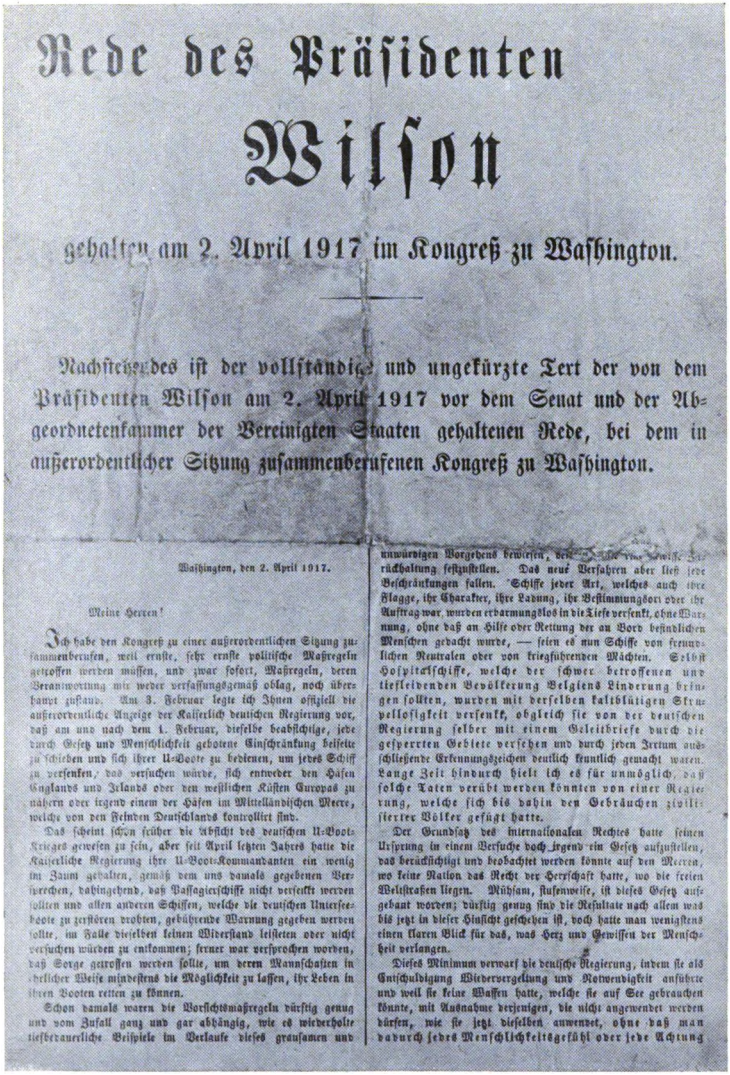
we were being shelled and our wires were being knocked to pieces. It was broad daylight. An officer came along and ordered a man to go out to repair the wire. If the officer had known anything at all he would never have given the order. The man came back at him.

"It is sure death to go out there now, sir. I don't think I ought to go."

The man was put under arrest and a few weeks later was shot.

I knew of one case of a man in the York and Lancaster Regiment who had deserted and made his way to England. How he got across was a mystery. The man's own wife gave him up to the police and he was returned to the regiment for court-martial. He had no defense whatever except that he had been a good soldier with a clean record before that and he was found guilty and sentenced to death.

One of the firing-squad told me of what happened when they took this man out to shoot him. As he was being marched out from



Rede des Präsidenten

Wilson

gehalten am 2. April 1917 im Kongreß zu Washington.

Nachstehendes ist der vollständige und ungekürzte Text der von dem Präsidenten Wilson am 2. April 1917 vor dem Senat und der Abgeordnetenkammer der Vereinigten Staaten gehaltenen Rede, bei dem in außerordentlicher Sitzung zusammenberufenen Kongreß zu Washington.

Washington, den 2. April 1917.

Meine Herren!

Ich habe den Kongreß zu einer außerordentlichen Sitzung zusammenberufen, weil ernste, sehr ernste politische Maßregeln getroffen werden müssen, und zwar sofort, Maßregeln, deren Verantwortung mir weder verfassungsgemäß obliag, noch überhaupt zustand. Am 3. Februar legte ich Ihnen offiziell die außerordentliche Anzeige der Kaiserlich deutschen Regierung vor, daß am und nach dem 1. Februar, dieselbe beabsichtige, jede durch Gesetz und Menschlichkeit gebotene Einschränkung beiseite zu schieben und sich ihrer U-Boote zu bedienen, um jedes Schiff zu versenken, das versuchen würde, sich entweder den Häfen Englands und Irlands oder den westlichen Küsten Europas zu nähern oder irgend einem der Häfen im Mittelländischen Meere, welche von den Feinden Deutschlands kontrolliert sind.

Das scheint schon früher die Absicht des deutschen U-Boot-Krieges gewesen zu sein, aber seit April letzten Jahres hatte die Kaiserliche Regierung ihre U-Boot-Kommandanten ein wenig im Zaum gehalten, gemäß dem und damals gegebenen Versprechen, dahingehend, daß Passagierschiffe nicht versenkt werden sollten und allen anderen Schiffen, welche die deutschen Unterseeboote zu zerstören drohten, gebührende Warnung gegeben werden sollte, im Falle dieselben keinen Widerstand leisteten oder nicht versuchen würden zu entkommen; ferner war versprochen worden, daß Sorge getroffen werden sollte, um deren Mannschaften in ehrlicher Weise mindestens die Möglichkeit zu lassen, ihr Leben in ihren Booten retten zu können.

Schon damals waren die Vorsichtsmaßregeln dürftig genug und vom Zufall ganz und gar abhängig, wie es wiederholte tieftraurliche Beispiele im Verlaufe dieses grausamen und unwürdigen Vorgehens bewiesen, bei [illegible] rückhaltung festzustellen. Das neue Verfahren aber ließ jede Beschränkungen fallen. Schiffe jeder Art, welches auch ihre Flagge, ihr Charakter, ihre Ladung, ihr Bestimmungsort oder ihr Auftrag war, wurden erbarmungslos in die Tiefe versenkt, ohne Warnung, ohne daß an Hilfe oder Rettung der an Bord befindlichen Menschen gedacht wurde, — seien es nun Schiffe von freundlichen Neutralen oder von kriegführenden Mächten. Selbst Hospitalschiffe, welche der schwer betroffenen und tiefleidenden Bevölkerung Belgiens Linderung bringen sollten, wurden mit derselben kaltblütigen Strupellosigkeit versenkt, obgleich sie von der deutschen Regierung selber mit einem Geleitbriefe durch die gesperrten Gebiete versehen und durch jeden Irrtum ausschließende Erkennungszeichen deutlich kenntlich gemacht waren. Lange Zeit hindurch hielt ich es für unmöglich, daß solche Taten verübt werden könnten von einer Regierung, welche sich bis dahin den Gebräuchen zivilisierter Völker gefügt hatte.

Der Grundsatz des internationalen Rechtes hatte seinen Ursprung in einem Versuche doch irgend ein Gesetz aufzustellen, das berücksichtigt und beobachtet werden könnte auf den Meeren, wo keine Nation das Recht der Herrschaft hatte, wo die freien Weltstraßen liegen. Mühsam, stufenweise, ist dieses Gesetz ausgebaut worden; dürftig genug sind die Resultate nach allem was bis jetzt in dieser Hinsicht geschehen ist, doch hatte man wenigstens einen klaren Blick für das, was Herz und Gewissen der Menschheit verlangen.

Dieses Minimum verwarf die deutsche Regierung, indem sie als Entschuldigung Wiedervergeltung und Notwendigkeit anführte und weil sie keine Waffen hatte, welche sie auf See gebrauchen könnte, mit Ausnahme derjenigen, die nicht angewendet werden dürfen, wie sie jetzt dieselben anwendet, ohne daß man dadurch jedes Menschlichkeitsgefühl oder jede Achtung

German Translation of President Wilson's War Message of April 2, 1917

Taken from the body of a German soldier at Messines Ridge

the guard-house to the brick wall in the rear the Colonel appeared on the scene. The man was placed and they pinned a piece of paper over his heart. Just then the Colonel stepped out and ordered the squad to order arms. Then he had the man marched up to him and said,

"Private Blank, tell me how you got back to England and I will give you a reprieve and try to get you a commutation."

The man thought for a moment and said,

"I can't do it, sir. It will get some other chap into trouble."

The Colonel ordered him back to the wall. And after the man had been shot he said to the firing-squad,

"Men, look well on this poor fellow. He was a soldier and a man. It is heart-breaking to lose him in this way. But remember, this is discipline."

There was a man in my batt who had gone out at the beginning and who had served right through to the Battle of Messines Ridge. He

was as brave as they make them. But just before Messines, while we were on rehearsals, he deserted. He had been shell-shocked and was not responsible. After deserting he went directly within a day or two and gave himself up. He was placed under arrest and was under guard during Messines Ridge. The batt did so well in that fight that out of consideration for the other men and to avoid the disgrace that would attach to the batt he was let down light with Field Punishment No. 1. As soon as he had served that out he went straight off and deserted again. Now anybody should have known that there was something the matter with him; but they tried him and sentenced him to death. Before the execution he got a rifle from the sentry at the guard-house and committed suicide.

Discipline! It is the greatest thing in the world for the soldier. It means that he has to shine his buttons when there is no need of it except that it makes him think of obeying

orders and keeping up *morale*. He shaves under difficulties for the same reason. And he does a hundred other things for no reason that is apparent but that make him obey instinctively.

Discipline and *morale* win battles and stave off defeat.

CHAPTER XIII

HOLLEBEKE

I WONDER how many people who have been reading war books in general have noticed that writers usually tell the stories of victory, rarely of defeat. And yet when you come right down to cases, there is nothing more thrilling than hanging on and putting up a losing fight against odds. There is nothing that the British soldier does so well or that he likes so well. It is the thing that makes him great. And it is a thing that he has had to do oftener than ever appears in the official *communiques*.

Looking back on my own experience, I think that the hammering that the Fritzies gave our batt — and several others — in the counter-attacks after the Battle of Messines Ridge would have made the average rookie

think that war was hell with a few man-made trimmings and no glory whatever.

We had a good long rest after Messines; and God knows we needed it. When we were ordered back into the line there was the customary grousing, as we had expected to be transferred to an easier sector. Tommy always thinks that the particular place he happens to be in at the time is the hardest on the whole front; and he always expects to be shifted after a rest; and if he isn't he grouses to his own satisfaction and to the amusement of his officers, who know that he would kick, anyhow.

This time we were ordered up to the town of Hollebeke, or what had been the town. The first night we moved up to within about two miles of the lines and then lay in shell-holes. That night it rained cats and dogs. We had no shelter whatever, but wrapped ourselves up in the overcoats and the waterproof sheets and just settled down in the soft mud. Waterproof sheets as issued in the

British Army are waterproof until they wet through, which is in about an hour of good, hard rain. After that they serve splendidly to keep the moisture in. We were saturated when day broke. It was bright and clear after the downpour and we began to steam. Pretty soon everybody was parboiled. And the cooties were nibbling. I don't think a soldier is ever as uncomfortable as when he is moist and warm. His hide seems to soften up so the cootie can get his hooks in. We found we were likely to stop in those holes for the greater part of the day, so most of us stripped to the waist and had shirt-hunts and got dried out some. It was here that I introduced the anti-cootie method that for a while was popular with our fellows. It was simply to turn the garment inside out after the cleaning out of the seams during the shirt-hunt. The theory was that the animal would walk himself tired getting from the outside to the inside. Most of the chaps said, however, that the cootie had such

an appetite after his long trip that he bit all the harder.

It was interesting to look over the surrounding country that day from the shell-holes. This was the same ground that we had fought over on the seventh of June. When we had last passed over it, shot and shell had been falling thick and fast and most of us had never expected to pass that way again. It looked different now. During our little rest to the rear the engineers had been busy and roads had been constructed and reconstructed. On any advance the bringing up of good roads is of the utmost importance, as supplies and ammo and the big guns have to be got up immediately or it is impossible to hold against counter-attacks.

We could see the White Château away off there in front and to the right — the place where we had cleaned out the treacherous Hun from his hiding-place behind the Red Cross flag. A wide and very good road led

up to the Château. The remains of an old German light railroad led away from where we were to this new road. Just after sundown we started for the front, following this old rail and eventually hitting the main road. It was bright moonlight. Things were comparatively quiet all along the line. On the way up we passed several fatigues cleaning up, and several carrying parties going out after grub or ammo.

They told us that Fritz had been very meek for some days and that it was nearly time for a savage counter-attack. In fact such an attack was expected at any moment. Just our luck to run into a jam like that! We had been in the thick at Messines and here we were coming back to take the punishment on the counter.

"It's good we've got a navy," says one fellow.

"Wot th' blinkin' 'ell's the use," says somebody else. "We got to fight the whole

bloomin' war, that's plain." And then someone struck up "Pack up your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag." An officer stopped that, and the rest of the trip we just groused under our breaths.

Not a shell came over until we were nearly up to the Château. Then at Oak Dump they came, good and plenty. The first one burst near me and killed two men who were elbow to elbow with me. We tried to get into artillery formation and scattered. Shortly we were all over the place and had lost touch with all our officers. But nearly all of us knew the way up to the front, and all through the night we straggled in by threes and fours.

The front line was in the town of Hollebeke. This had been a considerable place before the war but it had been battered into powder. No semblance of a wall was standing. Even the cellars had been filled in and levelled off with fine crushed débris. It was possible to make out the outlines of the streets and some

of the larger buildings, but that was all. Hollebeke, when we found it, was a name — a signboard.

The trench was a good one, new and dry. For a bloomin' wonder someone had done a good job of trench-building. There was no parapet of sandbags, but the ditch was deep and well drained and the fire-step was solid and at the right height.

There was the customary lack of dugouts — nothing you could really call more than a head-and-shoulder shelter.

The rumor went around that first night that there was almost certain to be a German counter-attack within a few hours. There was some reason for expecting this, for, although Fritz had been somewhat tame, he had a victory to his credit that heartened him a lot.

It had happened in this way. During the time that our batt was out resting the British had tried an attack in front of Hollebeke that

had been a complete washout. Not only had it been a failure but it had been terribly costly.

The Germans seemed to know every move that our troops were about to make, their objectives, the number to come to each point, and so on; and they had met the British at every point with perfect preparation.

The reason for this was disclosed to the men officially, — that is, each batt was paraded and a statement was read as issued from headquarters. This was it.

Two days before the attack a sergeant named Phillips from a Welsh regiment had been taken prisoner by the Germans. When the attack came off a German officer was taken prisoner, and on him were found documents giving every detail of the proposed attack and the statement that the information had been furnished by the man Phillips who had disappeared. Now it was not known whether or not Phillips was a deserter or whether he had given up the information under torture, or

what. It was enough that he had given the information. And the story was read out to us as a warning.

I do not mention this occurrence to give the impression that it was a common thing for inside plans to be betrayed by men in our ranks. It was not. As a rule a British soldier will suffer the worst kind of third degree before he will give up. It simply shows how easy it is for a man to ruin the plans of his superiors and play into the hands of the enemy.

It can readily be seen what a disastrous thing it might turn out to have alien enemies in our army. I personally believe that in a great nation like ours, which is really a conglomerate of many nationalities, we should examine very carefully the record, the ancestry and the sympathies of every soldier, high and low.

Our first night up at Hollebeke we were under a heavy bombardment which continued through the next day. Our casualties were

quite heavy. It was clear that the attack might come off at any minute, and all hands had to stand to all the time. We had to keep a sharp lookout all the time for gas, too, and the officers were watching the wind every moment. In preparation for the attack an extra large number of machine guns had been brought up and were emplaced both on the parapets of the front trench and in the supports. The artillery to the rear had the range marked down and were ready for the signal to begin to pepper Fritz when he started to come over.

We felt sure enough that we could stop him, but the waiting, humped up on the fire-step under the parapet, was wearing. Along about half-past four the bombardment increased to a terrible fury and held so for half an hour; then the shells began dropping to the rear and in the supports and we saw the Germans coming over.

It really was a magnificent sight. They

were Bavarians, big, husky, heavy-set lads, and they came in mass formation, four deep. Our rockets went up and before they were well on their way we were dropping shells into them and over them. They came forward in a great gray wave at a double, heads down, rifles at the hip.

We cut loose with a hellish machine gun fire and every man was on the fire-step, going through the "mad minute" — that is, a rapid fire of all the cartridges your rifle will hold; and some of the men were so excited that they jumped up on the parapet yelling,

"Come on, you blighters, come on!"

They came. We had no wire up and it looked as though they might come right on through. But the shell-fire got them early. Great gaps opened up in the close-packed line. These filled and they came on again. The machines ripped into them and laid out windrows of dead.

Our officers walked up and down the crowded

trench — we had every available man on the fire-step — calling,

"Stick to it, boys! Hold 'em and give 'em hell."

I think that as the Fritzies came nearer we almost wished that some of them would get to us. The strain of waiting and watching that advance was so great that a fight hand to hand would be a relief. Very few got to us. Their lines were so broken when they were nearly up to us that the greater part of those still on their feet either turned and ran or dropped into shell-holes.

The few that did reach us were smothered as soon as they dropped into the trench. The men jumped on them like terriers on a rat and hacked them to pieces. The only damage they did was with the few bombs they managed to lob over just before they got to us.

When the attack was over the ground out in front was strewn thick with the dead and wounded. From then up to dark we amused

ourselves picking off anything that moved. Our own casualties for the day were eighty-six.

During the next five days we had to stop six of these attacks. Twice they got into our trench and there was some brisk hand-to-hand fighting. Personally I was fortunate enough to avoid this. I hated the bayonet then as always, and had no relish whatever for mixing it with a big Bavarian weighing two or three hundred pounds.

On the whole we held them better than we had any right to expect during those five days; for they did sure hammer us with big shells night and day. When we were not standing to, waiting for an attack, we were repairing the bashed-in parapets and cleaning out the traverses. There was no rest. The rations could n't be got up with any regularity. Casualties were heavy every day. They were wearing us out.

But we held on until the artillery went back on us. On the last night, about eight

o'clock, they came over again. It was very misty and nearly dark, anyway. We could just see them as they surged up out of the murk of fog. We sent up our rockets for the artillery fire, but none came; and the Huns came plunging across, unhindered except by our machine gun and rifle fire.

They did n't seem to mind that, and they came with a cheer, a hoarse, guttural, all-together "Hoch!" or whatever the word was, that sounded like the lions in the Zoo at feeding time. It must have been plain to our officers that we were not able to hold that trench against that charge. In any event we did something that the British seldom do.

While the Germans were still halfway across No Man's Land, the order came to fall back into the support trenches. A few picked men who had had their emergency orders before stayed to cover the retreat, and showered the Germans with hand-grenades as they came up. In five minutes it was all over.

Back in the supports we got the machine-guns set up in the communication trenches and rested snug. We had fallen back a hundred yards. The Huns had what they had been trying for, for nearly a week. And they were satisfied and happy. All that night we could hear them cheering and singing; but they were n't ready to make the attempt to come any farther.

When we fell back I had found a good-sized shelter, and as I was off sentry-go I crawled into it and slept. Along about four I crawled out and it was raining hard — a cold, wet rain that soaked right through. An officer came up a few minutes later with a corporal and the rum ration.

"Boys," he said, "we are going to be relieved tonight."

A glad growl went around.

"But," he said, "before we go to the rear we are going over and take that trench back. We start at five. The artillery will open at zero minus five. Pass the order."

Well, there was another growl not so glad; but it sort of trailed off into an interested cheer, not very loud, but sincere. We hated the first thought of going back to the attack; but we hated worse to have the relief come up and find that we had been unable to hold.

We had a triple rum issue all around and at five sharp we went over and up the communication trenches. The Huns stayed and fought well for a few moments; but our shelling had been well directed and effective. When we attacked, our guns threw a barrage across behind the Germans about forty yards out in No Man's Land. They had to stop and fight, whether they wanted to or not.

For a few minutes after we piled into the trench, it was a regular Donnybrook Fair. There was no room to use a bayonet. At one point Germans and British were packed in so close that they were biting each other. I happened to be behind a tall fellow named

Blake. My head came about up to his middle and he made a nice defense for me. I remember sticking my rifle between his legs and prodding at a pair of high boots that looked German. Then I fell down and someone trod on me and pushed my face in the mud. I thought I was in for slow death by smothering but I got free after a bit, and when I came up for air it was all over.

The German resistance had been keen for a little while, but it had stopped very suddenly. We took a lot of prisoners; but our own casualties were heavy. The batt lost, as nearly as I can remember, about thirty per cent of its effectiveness in those six days. The Germans must have lost four times as many as we did. And when it was all done we were right back where we had started from. Neither side had gained an inch.

As we went out that night after the relief had come up I could n't help thinking how foolish and useless and expensive it all was.

Going out I heard a fellow named Scribner grousing to his pal. He said a whole lot.

"Wot 's th' bloody use?" says Scrib. "We comes up an' we gits killed and we falls back, and we comes up and gits killed some more, and 'ere we are in th' same old plyce wif nothin' done. Wot 's th' blinkin' use?"

CHAPTER XIV

Rest

I suppose that the thing that the soldier in active service over there looks forward to most and relishes most when he gets it, is rest, — REST, spelled all in capitals. The reason Tommy likes rest so well is that he never gets any. As a rule, when they move you out of the trenches and send you back for a spell of recuperation they find a few light chores to do in the way of making roads or breaking stone or lugging ammo. When you are in the front line there is n't much to do but wait to get killed and wish you were in the rear. At the rear you think you 'd rather die quick than work yourself to death. There's no real rest in either place.

Once in a trench-rat's age, though, somebody somewhere gets careless or gets the orders

balled up, and a batt is pulled out and put on its own for a week or two.

That happened to my batt along toward the end of last July. We had had nearly fourteen months in the Flanders mud — some of it in the French mud, which tasted just the same and stuck just as close — and there was tumultuous cheering when the word went around that we were going back to a place called St. Omar for six whole weeks. Nobody believed it, but we were glad just the same. And it came true.

This St. Omar burg must have been named after this Omar Khayyam chap that wrote the dinky little four-line verses about wine, women and song. Anyhow, it was that kind of a place.

Our billets were at a suburb called St. Martin, about fifteen minutes' walk to the town. We were almost entirely on our own, having only two hours' parade in the morning, and then being free until 9 P. M.

St. Omar had been a town of perhaps 20,000

people in peace times, and was 30,000 now, with soldiers and war workers of various kinds. It had a pretty park in the middle of the town with the Hôtel de Ville and the Cathedral on two sides, and any number of cafés, estaminets, theatres and movie houses. Everything was wide — wide open up to eight o'clock. After that everything was shut up tighter than Boston at three in the morning. During the open hours the main idea of St. Omar seemed to be to entertain soldiers. The military authorities approved, and even tried to get an order from the French, keeping the cafés open until nine o'clock. We were given unlimited money — within reason — and were allowed to draw three months in advance. They showed us the town and told us to fly to it. We flew.

I don't mean by this that we indulged in any wild orgies. There was nothing in the world to prevent a man from getting as drunk as a lord if he wanted to, or to plunge into the wildest dissipation. But it did n't work out that way.

This is as good a time as any to say something about the much-advertised vice and corruption that the soldier is saturated with — according to some well-meaning but badly informed investigators. The red light district of St. Omar was wide open and free to the soldiers of all the nations. There was nothing in the world to keep the soldiers out of the houses of prostitution, and yet the number of men in uniform who went into the restricted districts was smaller than anyone would suppose.

This was due to the admirably organized French supervision. The women of the town were kept in their own places and were forbidden to solicit. If a soldier went into the district he did it in cold blood and usually with a sober head on his shoulders.

I have heard since I returned to the United States a good deal of irresponsible talk of the prevalence of disease in the armies. In all my experience of nearly two years at the actual

front, going in and out of French towns with large bodies of men, I have known of very few cases of carelessly contracted disease. I would venture to say that the diseases of promiscuity are less prevalent in the British Army at the front than in civilian life. Soldiers are n't any little tin angels, but they are taught to be clean; discipline reaches them in their conduct while on their own, and as a rule they are temperate, either through inclination or because they have to be. In either case the result is the same. They are in no danger of falling into any wild degeneracy.

St. Omar did n't really have much that we did n't get close up behind the front. Up there we had our beer in the canteens, and vaudeville at the Divisional Follies, and games and movies and music at the Y. M. C. A. The grub, too, was as good as it was in town.

The difference was this: Bacon and eggs tasted better if you could sit down to a table and eat with a knife and fork, and did n't have

to clean up the dishes afterwards. It was luxury to come out of a movie show and sprawl around on a bench in the park with no place to go and nothing to do but watch the people go by; or to sit at one of the little iron tables at a sidewalk café and sop up citron and soda and just loaf.

REST. That was it. The only thing lacking was a chance to sleep in a bed. After you get out of the trenches there's nothing quite like getting between clean sheets and stretching out and wiggling your toes. It's almost worth being sent to the hospital for. Well, we did n't get any beds at St. Omar. We kipped on stone floors. But we sure did loaf to the last limit.

Of course this could n't last the promised six weeks. No such luck. At the end of a fortnight we had orders to pack up and hike. It was back to Belgium — worse luck. We never wanted to see Belgium again, and wished it had never been on the map. The grousing over

that move back into Flanders was near mutiny; but it did n't do us any good.

We marched five miles, took a train, marched some more and fetched up outside Ypres, where we spent the night. Next morning the officers came around and spilled the bad news. We were to go in reserve at Swan Château, behind a Scottish division which was to go over the top at Passchendaele. If they were successful we were to go back to St. Omar. If not, we were to take their places and carry on.

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REST. THAT WAS IT. THE ONLY THING LACKING WAS A CHANCE TO SLEEP IN A BED

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CHAPTER XV

Back to the Front

We left for Swan Château about nine that night, and after about an hour on the road ran smack into a new form of strafing — an air raid! I don't know whether it was because it was new to me or what, but it certainly got me windy. It was dark, and before we knew it there was a flock of planes right down on top of us. We could n't see them, but they were so low that we could hear the engines humming like bees, and the anti-aircraft guns began to go off. We had just passed a number of ammunition dumps, and we knew that was what they were after. Also we knew that if they hit the ammo we would go with it.

Led by the officers we left the road and beat it across the open fields. Then the first bomb landed a couple of hundred yards back toward

the dumps. It must have lifted out a chunk of Flanders as big as a freight car, because mud and stones showered down around us. I had seen one of these bombs, unexploded, in another place, and did n't want any dropping near me. They are pear-shaped, with an iron tail like the feather of an arrow, to make them fall straight, and they weigh sixty to seventy pounds.

We scattered across the open, running at top speed — away from the ammo dumps. A minute later another bomb went off on the road which we had just left. I happened to be looking over my shoulder and saw it go up with a great red flare and a ground-shaking "boom."

Then they commenced dropping all over the shop. The noise was terrifying. The anti-aircraft guns were barking — yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, BOOM — that would be a bomb — yap, yap, BOOM — and over it all the vicious heavy hum of the low-flying planes. It may

be because it was new, but everybody had the sensation that each bomb was hunting for him individually.

When the rumpus was over — it lasted maybe ten minutes — the batt was scattered all over the landscape. It took two hours for the officers to round us up and get on.

We made the Château about three in the morning. Our quarters here were good. The dugouts — if you would call them that — were above ground, built out of corrugated iron against old ruins, and sandbagged on top. We were there four days with nothing to do. It was n't safe to go about much, as a few shells dropped near every day. There was a lot of our heavy artillery there, and we used to lie in the sun watching the big boys send over their messages, but mostly we stuck to the dugouts.

On the fifth day news came back that the Scotch attack had been a washout, and that we were to go up that night and take over in

a new sector in front of Westhoek near the foot of Passchendaele Ridge; two days later we were to go over the top and take the objective where others had failed.

We spent the days putting all our unnecessary stuff in our packs, which were to be left behind. I had a lot of souvenirs, some of them things I had been packing around for a year, and I little thought that I should never see them again.

We sent an officer and two men ahead in the morning to pick the best way to Railway Wood, but they never returned, as all three were killed by a shell. We started out at nine in the evening, without knowing exactly where we were going.

Going up the road we could see shells bursting ahead of us in large numbers, but we hurried, because we wanted it over. And we walked right into it. I was plugging along with six other men, one a mate of mine named Higgins, who had been my pal for nearly two years,

and another chap named Bott, that I thought a good deal of — both of whom I have already spoken of — and four stretcher-bearers that I did n't know by name. A shell burst right in the middle of us. I was thrown down and rolled into the ditch and half knocked out.

Just as I was getting up — shellproof still, for I was n't marked and not badly shaken — another smashed in the same place. I saw two of the stretcher-bearers who were just getting to their feet go down, and I lay low a while longer. Then I got out and looked. Poor old Hig had gone west, smashed to bits. Bott had an arm off and both legs smashed and looked to be dead. The four stretcher-bearers were all dead. Strangely enough, I afterwards ran across Bott in England. He still had the arm and one leg missing, but he was otherwise able-bodied. So you see a man takes a lot of killing.

Well, after I had counted what I supposed were the dead I lit out across lots towards

where I could see some old tree stumps. I wanted cover and wanted it bad. I was going at top speed when I went into an old trench. I turned upside down, spun like a pinwheel, hit the water head first and started to try to swim. I got my feet under after a bit, and my head was still a yard or so from the top and water up to my armpits. So I knew it was an old German trench. No Britisher would ever dig so deep. I fished up the rifle and tried to climb out.

No go! Too slippery. So I started to flounder along the trench. I had only gone a little way when I ran into a man who covered me with an automatic and called to me to halt. I did. It was my company platoon officer. He didn't say how he came there, but I suppose the same way I did. We got out of the trench and found what was left of the company. The shells were flying over by now, and we plodded along without further trouble until we found our place in the line.

That front line! It was a throwback to the old days at "Wipers," when the Canadians were living like muskrats, or even to the days of 1916 at Funky Village, when our own batt was wishing that they were mud turtles. However, there was no kick coming, because there was an excuse for it this time.

During 1917 the British had been pounding on pretty fast and there had n't been much chance to dig in; but nobody cared. We were on the way to Berlin.

The Boche had discarded trenches in this part of the line, too, but he only did it because he had something better — the pill-boxes. I'll tell about them in just a minute.

Our line was a narrow trench about four feet deep and two wide, with only a thin parapet of sandbags and no communication trenches. We tumbled in and wedged ourselves down into the bottom of this crack in the earth. We were some surprised when we were told that we were not to occupy this trench, but

were to move out into some shell-holes a few yards in front.

It was still dark when we took over the holes. From four to eight men were assigned to a hole. Our orders were about like this: "There is a hole out there with four men in it. Ten yards out. Take your rations and run for it at the word. All ready now. Carry on."

Carry on we did. The hole I drew had the prescribed four men in it, and they left without waiting to argue the toss or even for a lull in the machine gun fire, which was awful. The bullets were cracking and squealing overhead in a torrent that let up for a few seconds now and then, but on the whole might be called continuous. We had ducked across in one of the quiet spells. When day broke it was easy to see why the men we had relieved had been in such a hurry.

Those holes were absolutely the most pestiferous spots that I ever saw. The new pill-boxes were established in a row at a point about

three hundred yards away, and were raking us. In the daytime if you stuck a finger up they would take the top off. I lay in my first shell-hole two days and saw only the gray, wet sky overhead, and once during a short lull in the fire I peeped and had a glimpse of a torn and tortured terrain of mud, with here and there black stumps, and over there in the mist the low yellow wafers that we knew were the pill-boxes.

The smell in these holes was dreadful. There were hundreds of bodies all about, lying unburied in the muggy August warmth. Bluebottle flies by the million settled over everything and bit like Jersey mosquitoes.

When we went into the holes we took with us rations for two days. Each man had two rashers of bacon, about two pounds of cold roast beef and a half loaf of bread. For each four men there was a tin of jam, a tin of condensed milk, two cans of baked beans, plenty of tea and sugar, and a Tommy's cooker. We

had our water-bottles filled and took along a petrol can with two gallons of water. The cooker was a spirit-lamp affair for making tea and frying bacon.

We had no overcoats, and while the days were warm and sticky and sickening, the nights got awfully cold. Two days were as much as any man could stand in these places. Lying there all day looking up at a gray sky and breathing the foul air, soaking in the filthy mud and unable to move about at all, was enough to put the huskiest Tommy nearly out of business.

When we were relieved, at the end of two days, and went back into the support trenches, about ninety per cent of the men had temperatures of over a hundred and were out and out sick. Scores wanted to report sick, but the M. O. was at Railway Wood, and it would have been impossible to get back there, so we had to stick it out and go into the holes again a day later.

BACK TO THE FRONT

We were to go over the top on the morning of August 21, and we did, four battalions of men, more than half of whom were fit subjects for the hospital.

CHAPTER XVI

Taking the Pill-Boxes

This was not a big battle. There were, as I have said, only four battalions engaged on our side. The affair was more or less of an experiment. The pill-boxes were a new German defensive and had never been thoroughly tried out. We were the goats. The little forts were to be given a chance to rake us and see how we stood it.

It had been proved pretty clearly already that the boxes were the most effective defence ever devised. They were simply fortified shell-holes.

Now, for some strange reason, shells rarely strike twice in the same place. We had found that out when we were lying in the holes. Shells would burst all about us, but only once in a hundred times would there be a direct hit over an old hole.

It follows that if you fortify an old hole so that it takes two or more hits to dislodge the machine gun that you have placed there, why, your machine is going to be in commission and dangerous even under an extraordinary heavy and well-directed shell-fire, and is going to be a hard thing to take.

Well, on this attack, our orders were very simple. They were to go over and take those pill-boxes. That was all. The boxes were in a row about three hundred yards away. They were in groups of five, about ten or fifteen yards apart, and then a gap of perhaps fifty yards with a section of sap or trench.

Our artillery commenced slamming them the night before and kept it up hard and fast up to 7:30 in the morning, when we were to go over. About seven I took a look through the periscope and studied the terrain out in front. It was level and muddy and pitted with shell-holes, and away off there the white steeples of Passchendaele showed dim against the haze. To

the rear and to the left and nearer, the jagged, black ruins of "Wipers" broke the skyline.

In the foreground the low boxes were spitting fire regularly, unharmed after a night of it. Shells burst all around them, tossing off lumpy clouds of gray smoke with daubs of red flame in the middle, and up above airplanes circled ready to chase the Boche fliers if they should come out to take a hand.

This was our first go at the pill-boxes, and in our sick and discouraged condition we fully expected a washout. The four of us, in our hole, had no officer with us, but we arranged our tactics ourselves. Two of us were to bomb the box through the gun slots. And two—I was one of these—were to go around to the rear, where we assumed there would be a door, and prod the outcoming Boche in his tenderest parts.

The fact is we did n't any of us expect to get halfway across. About five minutes before zero—starting time—our artillery laid down a smoke barrage in front of us. When we went

over we could n't see the boxes and they could n't see us. It worked beautifully. They raked the ground with the machine guns, but they were shooting in the dark. The mud was kicked up all around us for a hundred and fifty yards, but nobody was hit. We advanced slowly behind the barrage. Halfway across, Jackson, one of the bombers, copped his, a piece of shell that took his head nearly off, and he pitched forward beside me, face down. We did n't stop.

Then the barrage raised and we found that we were right on top of the boxes. I saw Green throw a bomb, but it did n't go in the gun slots, and bounced off. The third man and I dropped on our bellies to get under the gun fire and crawled forward rapidly. Green threw a couple more bombs which went over. By this time I was right under the box and I pulled the pin out of a bomb with my teeth and reached up and dropped it in. It seemed to be the only way and it did for the Boches

inside. We ran around to the rear and there was a great groaning and yelling inside for a few seconds. When we crawled in the door there was one dead German and two badly wounded. The two wounded died immediately.

Now about the construction of the pill-boxes. They were made of standardized concrete blocks of keystone shape, that is, wide at one end and narrow at the other. These blocks were grouted together with a rich cement mixture and the walls were about thirty-six inches thick. The structure went down under the ground about five feet and stuck up about two feet. They had three window slots about four inches across, that is, up and down, and ten inches long. These were on three segments of the front, and behind each slot was a machine gun on a tripod. The top was flat reinforced concrete. There was a little door in the rear and a communication trench running right up to it.

Experience showed later that it took two or three direct hits from good-sized shells to put one of these contraptions out of business. And, as I have said, it takes uncommonly good gunning to lay two shells down in one place, much less three, so they were effective against anything but main strength and awkwardness, a charge with the bayonet and the bombs. We had been unexpectedly successful in taking these first ones. Later, I understand, when the Germans got the knack of ranging their machine guns through the slots the slaughter in taking the pill-boxes was terrible.

One advantage they had over trenches — and it was a great one — was that the boxes could not be turned around after they were taken. In preparing a pill-box for a counter attack the only thing to do was to sandbag the back door, which left only one fire-opening over the top of the sandbags.

We held the positions we had taken until ten that night, when we were relieved. During the

day we had a good chance to examine the pill-boxes, and we made some startling discoveries.

There were two or three cement-mixers around the place and a considerable number of cement bags. These cement bags all bore the marks of an English firm. A German officer who was taken farther down the line in the attack made the statement that the cement which was used in the pill-boxes had been in England less than three weeks previous to the day we captured them.

An investigation was started in England immediately. I heard later that this inquiry was in progress in London not later than August 25. It was proved that large shipments of cement had been sent to Holland with the alleged understanding that the material was to be used in repairing the dykes.

The Dutch consignees admitted that the material had been sent into Belgium for the German Army. Moreover, it was common gossip that the firms shipping the cement

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A Short Rest in an Advance

either knew that the cement was destined for the German Army or were in a position to know that it might and probably would be. The investigation made it perfectly clear that there were British firms who were so mad for war profits that they were willing to furnish the materials for death devices which would certainly be used for the slaughter of English soldiers. This cement deal opened up phases of profiteering that were appalling. Apparently there are people in any country who will sell their souls for a profit.

The amazing part of this transaction — to me — was what happened later. Along in October I was in England, having been gassed and sent to Blighty to get well. I was convalescent and was wandering around London seeing the sights. One day I was leaning over a bridge across the Thames watching three ships loading with cement. Naturally the thought of the pill-boxes popped into my head. I called down to a sailor who was loafing on

deck and asked him where he was bound. Holland! Two months after the exposé of the pill-boxes England was still shipping the material to Holland for the destruction of her own soldiers! Oh, well! What's a Tommy more or less?

As for me, I'm heartily glad that I never had occasion to go against the pill-boxes again. Relieved that night, we had no casualties going back. The Boche was seemingly discouraged and on his good behavior.

We reached Railway Wood at eleven o'clock, had hot tea and three spoonfuls of rum, dropped on the ground in the dugouts, and in five minutes every man was snoring.

I was so tired that I would have slept even if I had known what was coming to me a week later, when I was properly gassed.

CHAPTER XVII

GASSED

AFTER our stunt in cleaning out the pill-boxes we were due for two days' rest at Railway Wood. For a wonder we got it. Must have been a mistake somewhere. The dugouts there were good and dry and safe, being in a tunnel under the embankment of the Ypres-Roulers railroad, and were big enough to hold thirty men each. They were connected by passages to keep the men from going outside, as this section was being shelled all the time. So all we had to do was eat and sleep and play cards and write letters by candle-light. I had received a Boston paper a day or two before, and read the thing through and back again and inside out, down to the ads and the death notices. So did everybody else. Tommy is quite as interested in American newspapers as in his own.

He thinks we are a bit queer, but he likes to read about us.

Rations at Railway Wood were still cold and we had to do our own cooking, the same as in the shell-holes. I got to be an expert at boiling water. The forty-eight hours' rest passed before we knew it, and at ten on the night of August 24 we went up to the line again. It was quiet this time, with only an occasional shell coming over, and we made it without casualties.

We expected to occupy the pill-boxes we had taken, but found that the company that had relieved us had fallen back to shell-holes about fifty yards from the boxes. So we rolled into the mud again and settled down for another two days of the horrors. The place smelled worse than before.

The hole I drew was too small, and there were four of us in it. We got busy that night and dug some little saps so we could sit down and stretch without lying on top of each other.

About five the next morning Fritz started his regular daybreak strafing and we were glad of the saps.

The next hole to ours was bashed in and a chap named Lawton had his shoulder ripped away. He lived through it and was carried out that night.

During the day the wind was just right and six times Fritz sent over gas waves. He gave them to us every two hours on the tick. We had the respirators on most of the time. The Boche was playing a game. He knew that we were in a place where it would be impossible to get up new helmets, and that the chemicals in any gas mask will last only so long. No doubt he drenched us with mustard gas that day in the hope that by night many of us would be wearing played-out respirators and would be easy victims. It worked. He bagged quite a number.

That night orders came up for a patrol of twelve men to be sent out to have a "look-see"

in front of the German lines. When we had taken the pill-boxes the Boche had fallen back to ordinary trenches several hundred yards away. He had wires in front, and we wanted to get some line on whether he was preparing for a counter-attack on the boxes. So we were told to go out without rifles and armed only with four bombs apiece and a persuader.

A persuader is a club with a loaded and nail-studded head. You side-wipe a Boche under the chops with it and it crushes his nob like an egg-shell. We did not blacken our faces as usual, as it was very dark. We were to spy out the German positions and take prisoners if we could do it without making a noise.

We left at ten o'clock. We were really each man on his own. Shells were falling here and there, and for half an hour we lay in holes. We wanted all the cover we could get. Then we went forward.

I had been out maybe an hour and was a hundred yards or so in front of the pill-boxes when

GASSED

I got a sniff of gas. They were giving it to us again after a day of it. I hurried into the respirator. Soon I got a little dizzy. I knew what was wrong. The chemical in my mask was worn out. I was getting gassed and knew it was time to light out for home. I headed back and my brain began to spin. Immediately all sense of direction went out of me. I fell over one body and on top of another. I clawed him over, hunting for his gas mask. There was n't any. The mask on the next body was slit, and that on another man had the tube broken. I gave it up and staggered away, with no idea of where I was going. Presently I fell into some wire and hung there. The barbs clutched and clung at my puttees and trousers. I found myself too weak to get out and slid down into a crouch, hopeless and waiting to die. My breath became terribly labored. I fought for each inhalation, dragging it up in great, rasping, gurgling gasps. My eyes stung terribly, and the tears streamed down my face and went salty into my mouth.

I slobbered. I got the taste of mustard in my nose and in the back of my throat, and my palate stung and swelled.

I weakened rapidly. But finally I summoned the strength to drag off my helmet for air. No use. It was worse in the open. I sickened and tried to vomit, but could n't, retching and heaving until I hung limp in the wire with my face crushed down in the cruel barbs.

I did n't lose consciousness and was still fighting for air when I heard a man say:

"Don't move, damn you. Who are you?"

I pulled together all the life that was left in me and muttered in a voice that sounded strangely loud and that made my eardrums ache:

"British soldier."

Then I slid out of the world.

I came back to it as they were dragging me out of the wires and heard them say that they were from the Somersets and were out on patrol, and that I was in German wire.

"Lucky devil," I heard someone say. "He'd a' copped it in another hour when it got light."

"Lucky?" says another chap. "I'd say 'd done better to go west wif a souvenir in 'is napper. It'll be 'ell for 'im wif all that gas in 'im."

It was. During the next few days I agreed with the second fellow and wished that I had copped a bullet instead of the gas.

I fainted again. When I came out of that one I was at a first-aid station and someone was forcing a bitter drink through my teeth. I was fighting for every breath. Two stretcher-bearers loaded me on a stretcher and started down the road towards Ypres to the field dressing-station. This was the same road where we had been shelled coming up, and as daylight came on we caught it again. Two or three big ones hit right in the road ahead of us, and they lugged me over to an old trench, the same one where I had met my platoon officer in the night.

While here I suffered so terribly that I wanted

to die. I prayed for a shell to do me in. The strangling, drowning sensation and the racking effort for every burning lungful of oxygen was simply tearing me to pieces. I tried to stop breathing, but nature fought against my will, and I kept on the painful gasping.

My eyes were burning and the water was running from them and my nose. I begged the bearers to take me down to the dressing-station, and the brave fellows finally lifted me out and started down the road, disregarding shell-fire.

When they landed me at the dressing-station, a good safe place in the basement of an old building, they pumped me full of oxygen, and after that I was able to breathe. My linings still burned and smarted terribly, but with the oxygen feeding the lungs the struggle for breath was less hard.

The M. O. tagged me: "Gassed. Serious. Lying." That meant I was a stretcher case. After an hour they took me out and loaded me

into an ambulance with three other stretcher cases. Sometime along in the forenoon we arrived at the C. C. S., outside of Popperringhe.

The Casualty Clearing Station is where they sort out the wounded. A complete record is made of each case and the Red Cross nurses at these stations have it hard. There are, of course, a good many deaths and a lot of tough cases that cannot be moved for a considerable time.

This station at Popperringhe had about a hundred big marquee tents and some huts. Thousands of casualties of all sorts went through every week, and all the wards were full, as a rule. This was my fourth time under the Red Cross flag and I had always felt safe there, but this first night at Popperringhe gave me a new experience that showed that there is no safety anywhere from the Hun. About 9:30, when I had become fairly comfortable with morphine and oxygen, and was almost able to doze off I heard the soft, punky "swish-pung" of the

anti-aircraft guns and knew that there was a raid on.

I remembered the bombing I had been under a few days before and was scared a-plenty. I was lying here helpless and they were no doubt getting ready to drop bombs on us. And yet it did n't seem possible. It was n't human. A patient in the next cot called out to the nurse:

"Is it an air raid, Sister?"

And she very coolly answered:

"It is. But don't get excited. They may not hit us."

She hardly had the words out of her mouth when — "whang-bang," two heavy explosions, seemingly just outside the hut. The ground shook and the canvas sides of the hut bellied in with the shock. I was unable to get up and see the effects of the raid, but I heard all about it and a number of the wounded were brought into my hut.

The Boche had deliberately bombed the station, and those two explosions had killed twenty-

six and wounded forty-five men. Of the twenty-six killed fourteen were Germans who were being treated by our Red Cross.

This crime was deliberate and no mistake, as the C. C. S. had been on this spot for three years, and the Red Cross flag was flying on all sides and was painted on the top of every tent and hut. A wounded German officer said it was reprisal because the English had fired on a German Red Cross train a few days before. This was true. They had. But only after the observers had discovered that the Huns were using the train to bring up reserves. This reprisal illustrates, I think, the German view of fair play. Anything that is to their advantage is fair. Anything that is to their disadvantage is unfair. The will to win is so strong in the Hun that he loses all sense of honor, fair play, decency, pity, reason, and everything else that goes to make up a human being. They are a nation gone mad.

I was at the C. C. S. for nine days and had a

hard time of it. I suffered with my lungs for four or five days and then got a little better, but the gas had nearly put my eyes out and all the mucous surfaces were raw — nose, mouth, and, the doctor said, 'way down inside me, lungs, stomach, and so on. I had to wear blue goggles and a shade and expected to go blind.

At the end of nine days I was coming along pretty well and wanted to sit up. Judging from former experience I expected to be sent back into the line as soon as I got my feet under me, but the M. O. thought differently. He tagged me: "Phthisis and debility. Serious. Lying." And the next day I was carried on to a Red Cross train which came right into the camp. There were a thousand patients aboard. We did n't know where we were going, nor did the nurses.

Every man had a package of fags and an orange, and the nurses made us all comfortable. After a slow ride of five hours we brought up at a place called Étaples.

There are a number of hospitals here, and I landed in the British Hospital No. —. The Red Cross people sure did make us comfortable at Étaples, as everywhere else. I got better very fast and was feeling so good that I was more than surprised one day when the M. O. came around and said:

"Mack, I am going to send you on a little trip."

"What kind of a trip?" I asked.

"Blighty," said he.

Well, say, I nearly had shell-shock. I was glad enough to get Blighty, but was feeling so good that it did n't seem possible. However, I was worse than I thought, and the Doc knew it.

I was now a walking patient, but the tag on my coat was the same. After another slow ride we hit Calais and were loaded on a hospital ship and got under way immediately. On the way across we were escorted by four torpedo boats — another precaution against the humane Hun, who loves to sink a thousand wounded as well as

anything he knows about — and we all had to wear life belts. We crossed in two hours and spent the time cussing the Germans, eating one large, luxurious Red Cross dinner and looking for the coast of England.

The docks were crowded. So was the station. So were the streets. It is one of the things that the English seem never to lose enthusiasm over — greeting the wounded when they come back. It is one of the things the Germans can't understand. I have been told by people returning from Germany that the wounded are kept away from Berlin and the larger centres of population because the sight of many casualties would discourage the folks at home. It works the other way with the British. When they read their casualty lists or see their crippled men coming back they get mad clean through. The sight strikes no fear into their hearts. Every wounded man they see puts a new determination into their souls, and they are just so much more eager to go out and win. The Englishman may be

stupid and slow. But the harder you lick him the stronger he comes back. He never knows when he is beaten. As a New Orleans doctor who took care of me at Chatham said:

"He's the fightingest fool in the world."

The mob at Dover was roped off so they could n't get at us; but how they did cheer! It made me glad that I had been over and done my bit. I had been away for seventeen months and had been through hell and repeat, and had n't expected to see Blighty again. It sure made the lump come up in the throat and the tears come into the eyes — that reception at Dover.

Another short ride in a Red Cross train landed us in Canterbury. Another reception here. We were loaded into ambulances, and on the way to the hospital people rushed into the streets and threw flowers to us. The ambulance I was in, a "Tin Lizzie," broke down and I walked the last half mile to the hospital.

I was in Canterbury for six days and had a

chance to visit the Cathedral, after which I was shifted to Chatham. I was beginning to get fed up on this moving around. There was the same red tape and formality of registration at each new place. I imagine a weak patient would get all worn out. As it happened, this was my last move.

At Chatham I fell into it cushy. When I went into the Medical Office I saw the M. O. sitting back to me at a desk. He had on an American service hat. I motioned to him and whispered to the sister:

"Yankee?"

She said yes, and I whispered:

"I'm another."

She fairly shouted:

"Oh, Lieutenant Coleman, here's a Yankee!"

The lieutenant jumped up and grabbed me by the hand and nearly pumped my arm off. He had been there only ten days and I fancy he was lonesome. He quartered me in the best hut on the grounds in the flower garden near his office.

I had been there only two days when I had a relapse and was in bed for more than a week. Doctor Coleman used to come in and sit on my bed in his off hours and we would swap yarns about God's country and talk about places we both knew in Boston and in New Orleans, where he came from.

While at Chatham I had several automobile rides out in the country and was invited out to tea quite often. There were concerts in the auditorium twice a week, and life for the convalescents was pretty pleasant. For that matter the men in bed had a better time than they had ever expected to see again. It was almost worth while getting wounded. We got the best of everything in the way of fruit and tobacco and the nurses were very kind.

Visitors did a good deal for us, too. Opinion was about equally divided among the Tommies as to whether visitor's day was a blessing or a nuisance. Most of the men hated to be put on exhibition and to have to answer questions.

I myself thought it was a lot of fun. Some of the answers that a wounded soldier shoots back at an impertinent visitor are sharp and to the point.

There was a little Cockney in the next bed to me who had had the end of his nose nipped off by a bullet. He had n't any too much to begin with, and he was sore about it. His face was all plastered up. Also he had an abdominal wound that kept him on his back.

One day an old lady, one of those well-meaning, inquisitive, aristocratic dames, came in. She had a huge, high-bridged nose, one of those beaks that are so common among the British upper classes. She evidently liked to stick that nose into other people's business. Anyway she went up to Tommy and said:

"My good man, where are you wounded?"

Tommy thought that the plaster on his face was answer enough, and he grunted.

"Come, my good fellow," says the old lady. "Tell me where your wound is."

Tommy looked up with contempt in his eye.

"Lady," he says, "if the bullet 'it you where it 'it me there would n' be nothing left of you."

Visitors always ask two questions, and we always try to have an answer ready for them.

The first is: "Are you wounded?" which is a fool question to ask a man who is in bed in a hospital. The second is: "Did you ever kill a German?" That is a natural enough question. I have yet to meet a person that does n't ask it, but it gets tiresome.

They told a story at Chatham about an Irishman who was approached by a lady visitor with the customary question. She gushed, "Oh, my poor man, are you wounded?"

"No, ma'am," said Pat. "I was kicked be a cootie."

That did n't faze her a bit.

Back she came with, "Did you ever kill a German?"

Pat shook his head.

"Shure lady," he said, "I don't know. But I

kin tell ye this. Jist before I cops this crack on the nob, Micky Flinn says to me, says he, 'Shake yer bay'nit, Pat. Ye've a brace of Boches hangin' to it.'"

She slammed the door on the outside.

The sick soldier is up to as many tricks as a school boy, and he gets away with them because you can't punish him much. One that we used to put over on our good sisters was a fair crime. We ought to have been ashamed of it, but we were not.

When the nurse was taking temperature at tea-time somebody would sneak his thermometer out, stick it in the hot tea and run up a beautiful temperature and then slip the glass back under the tongue just before the sister came back.

Then she would fuss around the villain for an hour or so and usually he'd get chicken for supper.

One of our medical officers was a tall, young Englishman with an eyeglass, one of those stage

Britishers that you don't often see in real life.

One day he stuck the thermometer in the mouth of a young Welshman. It happened that the soldier was sucking on a piece of ice at the time, but he did n't say anything and rolled the glass around where it would get good and cold.

When the M. O. held the thermometer up to the light he let out a surprised gasp.

"My word!" he said. "My word, me good fellow! If this bally glawss is right you've been dead since the battle of the Marne."

And yet they say that Englishmen have no sense of humor. To my mind it is what carries them through. It is what will carry them through. The Cockney private and the aristocratic officer each has the good sense to take his hardships lightly and to joke at danger. It helps make the Englishman hard to beat.

As a comrade in arms the Englishman is good enough for me; and, while I was as ready as the next one to take my discharge after doing

my bit in the war, I never in my life regretted anything more than having to leave the British service.

A year before I had tried to get out. This time they put me out. Lieutenant Coleman looked over my record and said that he thought I had done enough for the Allied cause, regardless of physical condition. Then he X-rayed me and said I had to go whether I wanted to or not. They gave me my discharge papers with pension on the 26th of October, 1917.

Three days later I was in civilian clothes and a month later was in the U. S. A. Well, I have fooled them on the weak lungs. For some reason the air of Boston has agreed with the old bellows, and they have been getting stronger every week.

If I get to feeling any better I am afraid I shall get that darned fool longing for the trenches and get into khaki again under the Stars and Stripes.

CHAPTER XVIII

Shells and Slang

One of the first things a newcomer to the British Army notices is the slang, or "lingo," as it is called. It really almost amounts to a new language, especially to a Yank. A good part of it is in common use among the English lower classes, but it is Greek to an American.

In writing this book I have tried as much as possible to avoid the use of trench vernacular that would not be understood by the reader, and for that reason I set down here some of the commoner expressions and their meanings.

Tommy is particularly apt in his names of the different kinds of shells. A whiz-bang, for example, is just what its name implies. It goes off with that kind of a noise. The whiz-bang comes over without any noise whatever; but just before it hits it goes "whizzzz"

and then, of course, "BANG." A "pip-squeak" makes that kind of noise coming over, with the same general kind of a bang at the end. "Crumps" are almost any kind of high explosive shell, and nearly all of them say "crump" when they land. A "Minnie" or minnenwerfer is a German trench-mortar. It is about as big as a milk-can and comes over on a high arc, tumbling over and over like a football, and is plainly visible. It is not dangerous — that is, the flying pieces of the case are not bad; but the minnie tears a huge hole in the ground or in the parapet of a trench, and it is unhealthy to be very near one when it explodes. The minnie talks to you when it comes. It starts saying very distinctly, "I'm coming for you, for you, for you, for you." At night it leaves a trail of sparks. Altogether the minnie is the politest of the German shells.

One of the worst shells the Hun uses is the 5.9, or the five-point-nine, better known as a "coal box." This emits a huge cloud of black

smoke and makes more noise than any other shell. Almost any shell of any calibre can be heard whistling as it comes. For that matter they whistle as they go. We get so we can distinguish between those arriving and those going from our own guns.

The "toffee apple" is an English trench mortar, a round ball with a piece of pipe attached. I don't know how it looks when it is arriving, having never been on the receiving end. Our "flying pig" is similar to the minnie, but weighs a hundred pounds and penetrates the ground very deeply before exploding.

The Mills hand grenade is the latest and most efficient of the new bombs. Formerly, in the first stages of the war, the British grenades were a hand-made affair, fabricated out of a jam tin and some explosive, wired on to a stick. They looked like a hairbrush and were so called. The Mills is a lemon-shaped grenade weighing about two and a half pounds. Its case is cast iron, scored with deep creases so

that it will break into about fifty pieces. It has a lever running from the top down one side. This is held in position by a pin with a key ring at one end. When the bomber is ready to throw the Mills he grasps the bomb, holding down the lever with his fingers, and pulls the pin either with his left hand or with his teeth. When the bomb leaves the hand the lever is thrown up by a spring and the bomb is exploded after four seconds by a mechanism released by the lever.

The rifle grenade is about the size of the Mills but cylindrical and similarly creased. It has a rod which sticks into the muzzle of a rifle and is projected by a blank cartridge. It will carry more than a hundred yards. For some reason we found that the German rifle grenade was comparatively harmless. They used to make a point of lobbing them over at the latrines, which in some mysterious way they knew the locations of. It was embarrassing to be engaged in a shirt hunt and be driven out

HERE ARE THE TROPHIES — A GERMAN BOMB AND A GERMAN HELMET

by grenades. It is the German idea of a joke.

Machine guns are called by Tommy "typewriters." The German ones make a noise like the typewriters used in a newspaper office. The British machine guns are of two types mainly, the Lewis and the Vickers. The Lewis is light and is used from the front trench. The Vickers is a heavier rapid firer and is usually emplaced in the support trenches or somewhere to the rear.

At close quarters Tommy uses a persuader or a knuckle knife to render the Fritz napoo-fini. A persuader is a short club with a studded head. A knuckle knife is a short dagger with a hilt that covers the hand serving for brass knucks. Napoo-fini means finished — dead — absent. When a Tommy is wounded he "cops one." The one may be a "Blighty" one, which is a wound that will take him to England — Blighty. The British rifle is usually termed by Tommy a "barndook." Nobody

knows why. A bayonet is a "pin," for obvious reasons. His helmet is a "tin hat," which he wears on his "napper."

Flares or star-lights, commonly known as "Verys," are a greenish-white light sent up to illuminate No Man's Land. When one goes aloft anyone who is out there stands stock still, and can rarely be distinguished as a man unless he moves.

Coming down to food, nearly everything has its new name. Bread is "pan." Bacon is "sow-belly," unless it is very lean, when it is "lance corporal bacon." Tea is called "char." A stew comes up under the name of "scow," and the dessert, which is infrequent, goes as "afters." The near hash of supper is called "rissoles." Bacon fat is "gippo."

Tommy "kips" — that is, sleeps — in a dugout or runs to a funk-hole to avoid "clicking it." You "click" or "go west" if you die. You also click a hard job or you may click a "souvenir," which is a bullet. After

you die you are said to be "pushing up the daisies," or you are "a landowner in France," or you have "the wooden cross."

If Tommy goes to the hospital he is cared for by a sister. All nurses are "sisters" and all chaplains are "sky pilots" or "Holy Joes." A staff officer is a "red cap" and the medical officer is an M. O.

CHAPTER XIX

Back to Blighty

When a soldier is in training his main ambition is to get over to France and to get into the trenches. After he has been over there twenty-four hours he thinks of nothing but getting back to Blighty. Aside from the fact that the trenches are the worst places in the world and anything is preferable, the passionate desire of the Englishman for England is based, I should think, on the very human trait of wanting the thing that is hard to get.

It is sure hard to swing Blighty once you get across the Channel. A wound is the only thing that takes a man back and sometimes that doesn't. Theoretically when a man has served from eighteen months to three years he is entitled to ten days' leave if he can be

spared. Usually he can't be spared. And so Tommy spends the most of his time talking about Blighty and how badly he wishes he was there; and the pubs he will visit when he gets the leave that never comes; and the gels he will make love to; and the swagger grub he will eat, and all that sort of thing. I heard so much of it that I was almost as anxious to see London as a native.

I had had only a day or two to look about before I enlisted and had n't seen much. So when I was discharged from the hospital at Chatham in October, 1917, and had eighteen days to wait for my discharge from the army, I took the first train for London to take in this much-talked-about heaven of the Tommy.

I got me a room near Tottenham Court Road and started in to see the sights. London under a camouflage of October fog is not a city to impress the sightseer. I spent the days going about and seeing the things that a tourist thinks that he ought to see; and nights

I did the theatres and music halls from one end of the big town to the other.

After two weeks of watching the night life of London I gathered the impression that England as represented by its capital is suffering terribly under the strain of the war.

I found that the places of amusement were crowded every night. People were trying to forget; and in trying they drank too much, spent their money recklessly, and were as a whole dangerously near a breaking-point of hysteria. Women smoked cigarettes publicly and continuously. Men back from the front plunged into dissipation in their brief holiday, on the principle, perhaps, that this might be the last time and that since life was to be short it should be merry. People laughed easily and at nothing, and felt silly and guilty after they had laughed and took another drink.

No! London is not an attractive place in war time. Well, you can't blame the Londoners for anything they do or don't do. Late in

October I experienced my first air raid, and after it was over I felt that anyone that had that sort of thing to look forward to as a daily possibility was entitled to get as full of Haig and Haig as he could hold, and good luck to him.

I had been to a picture show, and as I came out about nine o'clock I found the streets full of people who were running here and there and shouting a good deal. It was pretty dark and the automobiles dashing around tooting their horns made a terrific din. I did n't know what was up until I came across a policeman under one of the few hooded street lights. He had a sandwich board on him saying, "TAKE COVER."

Down the road I saw a mass of people pouring down into the Goodge Street underground station and I lit out for that place fast. Just before I got there I heard the anti-aircraft guns begin to go off. I stopped for a minute and listened.

Yap — yap — yap — went the Archies. And then away off there on the edge of the town, BOO-O-O-OM! Just like that. A bomb of course. I did n't waste any time. I ducked down into that underground station like a rabbit into a hole. I don't fancy air raids. They give me the fantods. I have written about being bombed from airplanes at the front and in the hospital. I had the same feeling here that each bomb was going to seek me out as a personal victim; and the deeper I got down in the ground the better I liked it.

On the platform, which was larger and deeper under ground than in the American subways, I found as many as two thousand people. They were packed in and stood there patiently waiting for the trouble to be over. I stayed until eleven o'clock and then went up to the street. The anti-aircraft guns had stopped, and I supposed that everything was all right. I strolled around for a while and was not far from Piccadilly Circus about half-past eleven

when the anti-aircraft guns began barking again, and before I had a chance to hunt cover two bombs fell in Piccadilly not three hundred yards from where I stood. I'll take that back. I was n't standing. I was hitting the high places one-fifth of a second after the first ear-splitting, earth-shaking crash. When the second bomb lit I was making faster time than I ever did in the old days on the Bailey Hose Team or on the track. I did n't know where I was going, but I was on my way; and soon I found another tube entrance and went down it on my ear. I stayed there until the Boy Scouts sounded "All Clear" on the bugles.

The first thing in the morning I visited Piccadilly Circus to see what had happened. It was a plenty. The bombs which had been dropped from Zeps had hit the curbing. There were two holes that you could have put a street-car into. All windows had been smashed for hundreds of yards around. It was reported that fourteen people were killed. As a matter

of fact there must have been scores of dead. I snooped around there all day, and that night I found a woman who had been one of the first on the scene who said that she knew that at least thirty had died.

As showing the force of the explosion of one of those sixty-pound pear-shaped bombs, here is what happened to the front of a hotel which was directly opposite the landing-place of one. The revolving door was torn out of its sockets and carried back a hundred feet along a corridor, sweeping up seven people who were in the way and killing them all. I can endorse the statement of anybody that a Zep raid in London is far from pleasant. I went through six while I was in London.

On the day my discharge came I strolled into the Union Jack Club where I knew the clerk and was known by him to be a Yank.

"Well," he said to me, "what do you think of London?"

"I came here to see your sights," I told

137846 INFANTRY 23rd 1847 6.10.17

Army Form B. 2079.

WARNING.—*If you lose this Certificate a duplicate cannot be issued.*

Certificate of discharge of No. 702734 (Rank) Pte.

(Name) MACK. Arthur James.

(Regiment) 23RD BATTALION LONDON REGT

who was enlisted at St. Pauls Churchyard.

on the 10th July 1915.

He is discharged in consequence of Para. 392 (xvi) K.R. No longer physically fit for war service

after serving 2 years 109 days with the Colours, and ✓ years ✓ days in the Army Reserve.

(Place) London

(Date) 26th October 1917

Signature of Commanding Officer: MAJOR FOR COL Infantry Records

*Description of the above-named man on London 26th Oct. 1917 when he left the Colours.

Age 40

Height 5 ft. 4 inches

Complexion Sallow

Eyes Grey

Hair Brown turning Grey

Marks or Scars, whether on face or other parts of body.

*Should agree with the description on Character Certificate, Army Form B. 2067

(A7715) Wt. W16565/M1858 200,000 3/17 D.D. & L. Sch. 46. Forms/B 2079/11

N.B.—*Any person finding this Certificate is requested to forward it, in an unstamped envelope, to the Secretary, War Office, London, S.W.*

143 798

THE AUTHOR'S CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

After a service of two years and one hundred and nine days

him. "Ever since I have been here the visibility has been low. I went out to have a look at the Nelson Column and can't see the top half of it for the smoke. I have n't been able to see across the Thames since I came. Nights I can't see three feet ahead of me.

"Somebody told me that Petticoat Lane was one of the sights of London. The day I was there I saw three old Janes buying fish and a guy selling plate polish. Nothing more exciting than that. I've seen your Zoölogical Gardens, and I find that the Bronx Park has them faded. When you get your haircut you never shave your neck and the hair hangs down your back. Three minutes off the Strand and you can hear the sparrows talking on the roof. No, brother," says I, "I'll leave little old Lunnon for those that love it. Me for Boston, Mass."

And with that I went out and bought my ticket for God's country. Blighty may be all right for someone who is used to it. To me

it was a way-station to the U. S. A., where I am going to stop until I get the chance, if they will let me, to go over there and fight under the STARS AND STRIPES.

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