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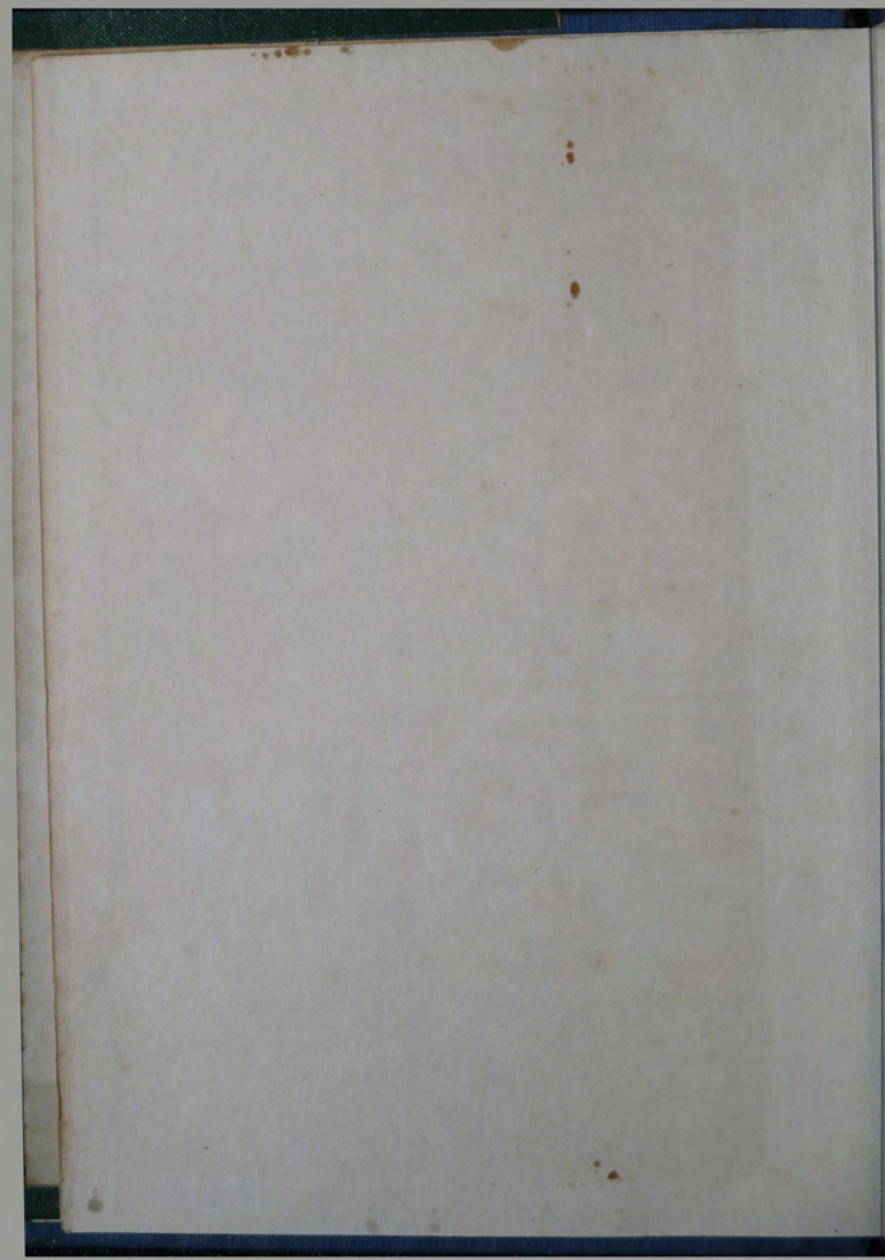
.. Mr B. A. Norman.

on

..... April 1975.....

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## OTHER WAR FRONTS

*Each containing many Illustrations in Colour.*

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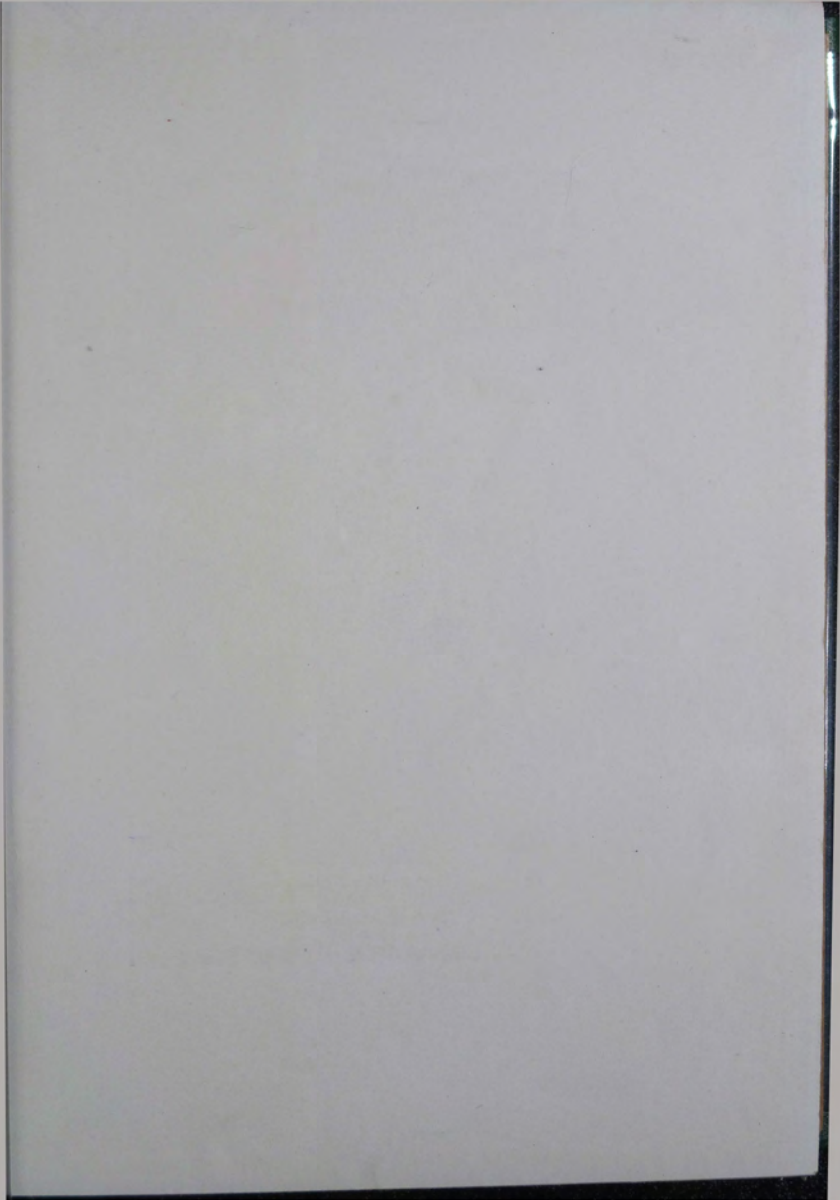
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THE CANADIAN FRONT  
IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS

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THE  
CANADIAN FRONT  
IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS

EDITED BY  
THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO  
RALPH FREDERICK LADD, LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

CANADIANS ENTERING MONS ON ARMISTICE DAY

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IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS

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INGLIS SHELDON-WILLIAMS

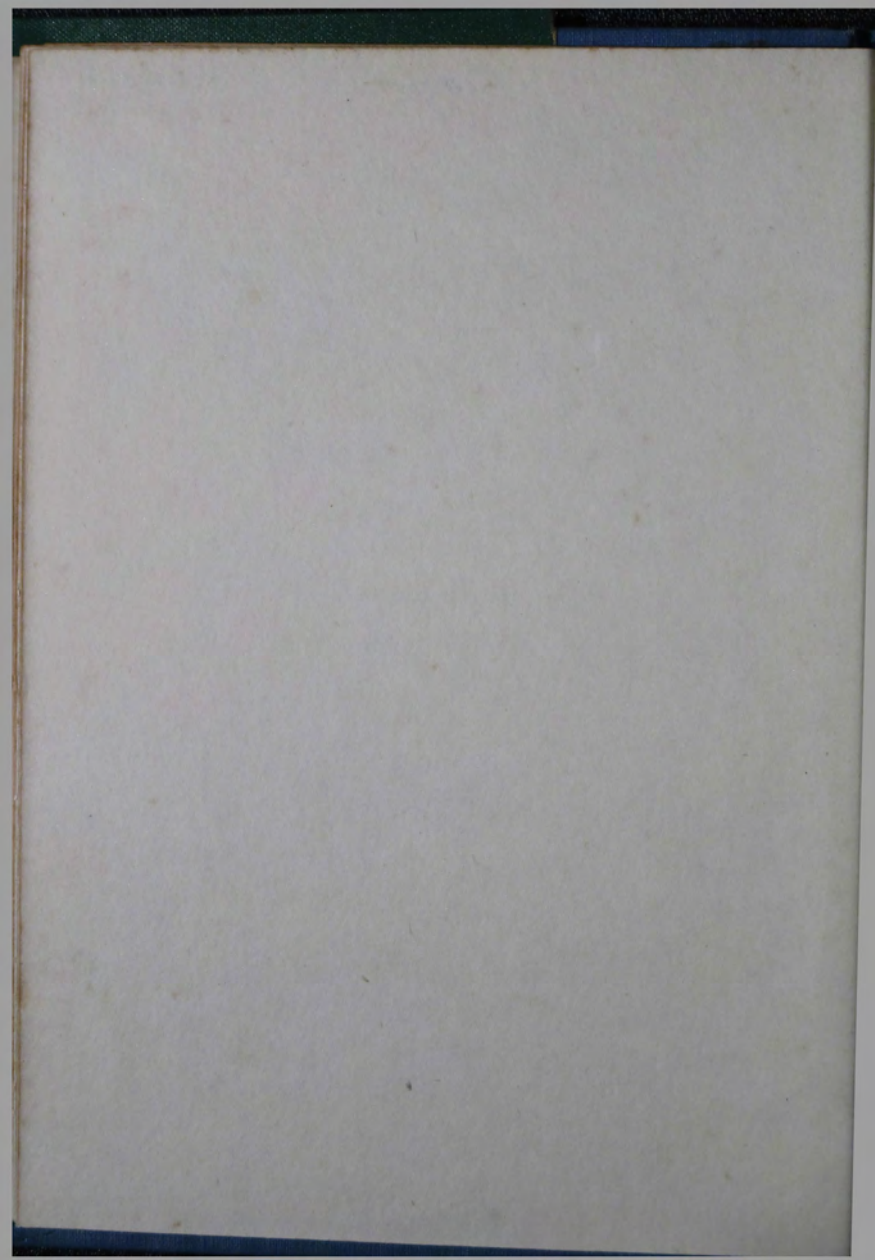
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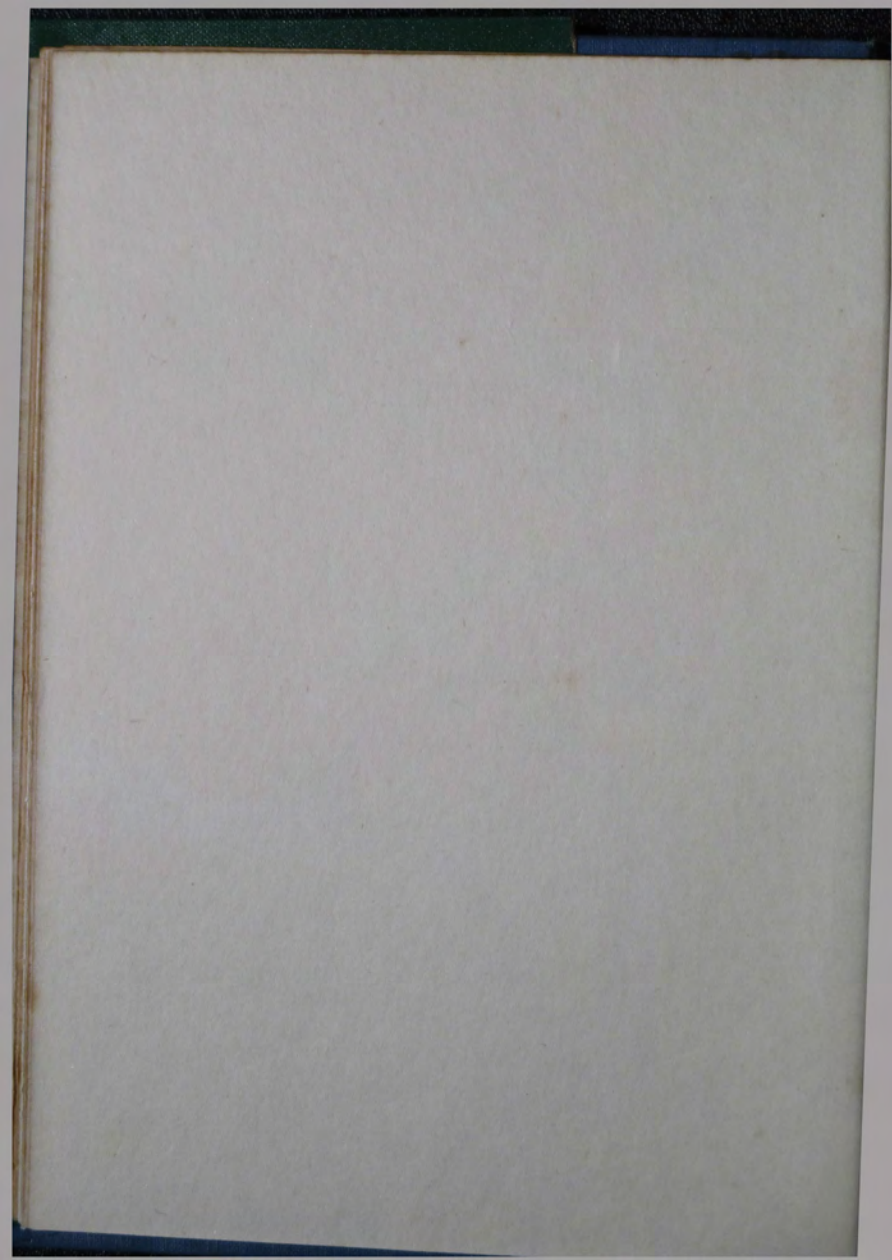
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TO  
H. H. F.



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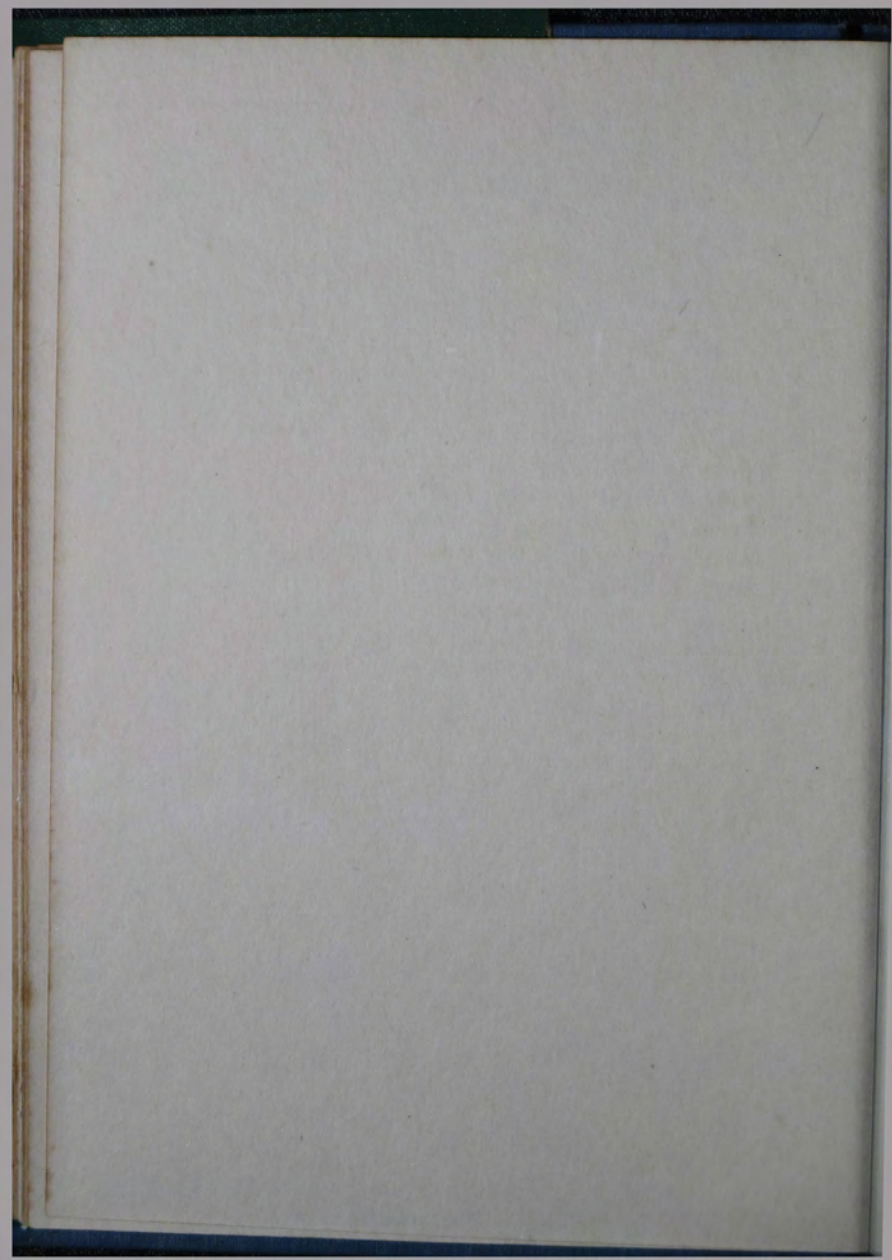
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## ARTIST'S NOTE

*THE artist wishes to take this opportunity of acknowledging to the Committee of the Canadian War Memorials the privilege of having been their guest with the Canadian Forces in Flanders, France and Germany during a momentous period. It is also by their courtesy that he is able to include with these drawings the design of the mural painting representing the entry of the Canadian Forces into Mons on the morning of Armistice Day.*

*To the facilities accorded to him by the Canadian War Records he owes whatever in these pictures may bring back to the Canadian soldier old times of stress and comradeship.*

*To the C.O., officers and men of the 8th (Winnipeg) Battalion, the Canadian Light Horse, and the 2nd Motor Machine Gun Brigade he desires to tender sincere thanks for his experience of cordial hospitality, assistance and good fellowship.*

LONDON, 1920.



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By INGLIS SHELDON-WILLIAMS

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## THE CANADIAN FRONT IN FRANCE AND FLANDERS

### I

It has been said that there is a romance about a great battle separate altogether from its history and from its influence on the destinies of nations. Such romance must, and does, surely then attach to a great war which envisages countless engagements, and instead of a single picture is a trooping panorama of life and death, light and shade. And no man to whom was granted the privilege of taking part in the conflict now ended, and having eyes to see and ears to hear, and the wit to understand a little of that which passed in review before him, can have emerged quick from such experiences without bearing about him in his soul, if not visibly, wisps of the trailing cloud of glory.

This volume is an attempt to tell briefly of the

romance, humour and atmosphere of the Great War, or that portion of it in which the Canadian Army took a hand. There is no pretence at entering the lists with historian and statistician. In the first place, there is not the scope to catalogue with justice to all and partiality to none the things done by the several units of our army of knight-errantry, now dispersed to the confines of a great dominion. Nor would it be possible for one man, obsessed by the duties of moment and moment, and embarrassed by the very opulence of activity filling his field of observation, to record events in the sequence and with the lucidity possible to those watching from far off. These, with the War Office at their elbow, and pigeon-holes and reference books at reach, can and will, one doubts not, give to posterity that cool, detached résumé by means of which our grandchildren will balance the books of the Great War. If the latter should find in such a work as this, sidelights which may help to illumine their task or pastime, it is all the writer can ask or expect.

And I would not have those later generations think, or judge from what they read here, that we who essay to tell of the things we saw, do so lightly. We know that we tread on holy ground.

If, here and there, the ineradicable humour of our race—which in the last event has saved us whole, as it always will—demands portrayal, it is because, without that humour, the picture would be a sorry nocturne in reds and blacks, grand perhaps, but too massive for everyday contemplation, and, moreover, ethically untrue. The gods gave us the good gift of laughter, evoked even in what may seem undue season, and with that gift in one hand and courage in the other this nation and its brothers went on to victory.

The Canadian Corps, I think, as much as if not more than any of the great fighting units, unnerved its enemies and endeared itself to its friends by reason of those linked qualities, and if laughter and gallantry find equal recognition in these pages it is because of the compulsion to tell truly, or at least as one reads the truth, of an organisation on which the French have bestowed the motto :

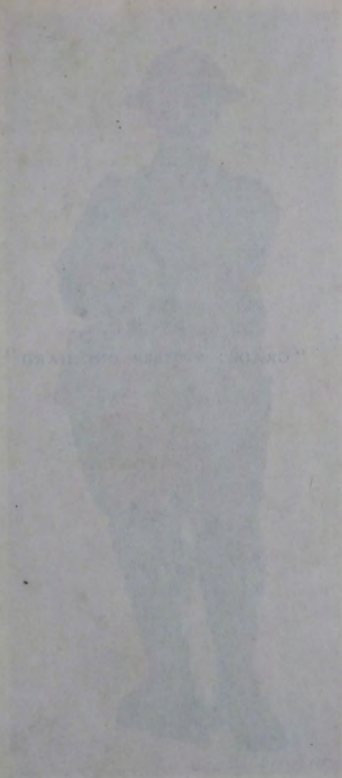
*Toujours vainqueur, jamais vaincu.*

“ ASSEMBLY.”

That great army of volunteers, to be known as the Canadian Expeditionary Force, came into being the moment Germany threw down the

gage. If it did not indeed leap full-armed from the Jovian heads at Ottawa, but had need for drill and parade in a nondescript panoply of shirt-sleeves and straw hats, its soul was caparisoned *cap-à-pie*, and "slacks" and "cow-breakfasts" were more grateful housings in August of 1914 than tight tunics and service caps. We did not guess then how large the Army must become as time went on, but were able to despatch, virtually at once, in answer to the Empire's call, an earnest of what was to follow. The blue shoulder-strap of the First Contingent, and the "jam-pot" of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, are not so common a sight to-day, when men for occasion re-don the khaki, as to take second place to any decoration or badge. They speak for themselves, and are, indeed, more articulate in most cases than the modest wearers. Whatever men of the later divisions experienced and saw, they must for ever give precedence to the men of Ypres, that second battle of the name which had no parallel in the war, before or after. It was then that the Canadian Army that was, set the standard for the Canadian Army that was to be, and if the latter has on countless occasions worthily lived—and died—in conformity with that high demand,





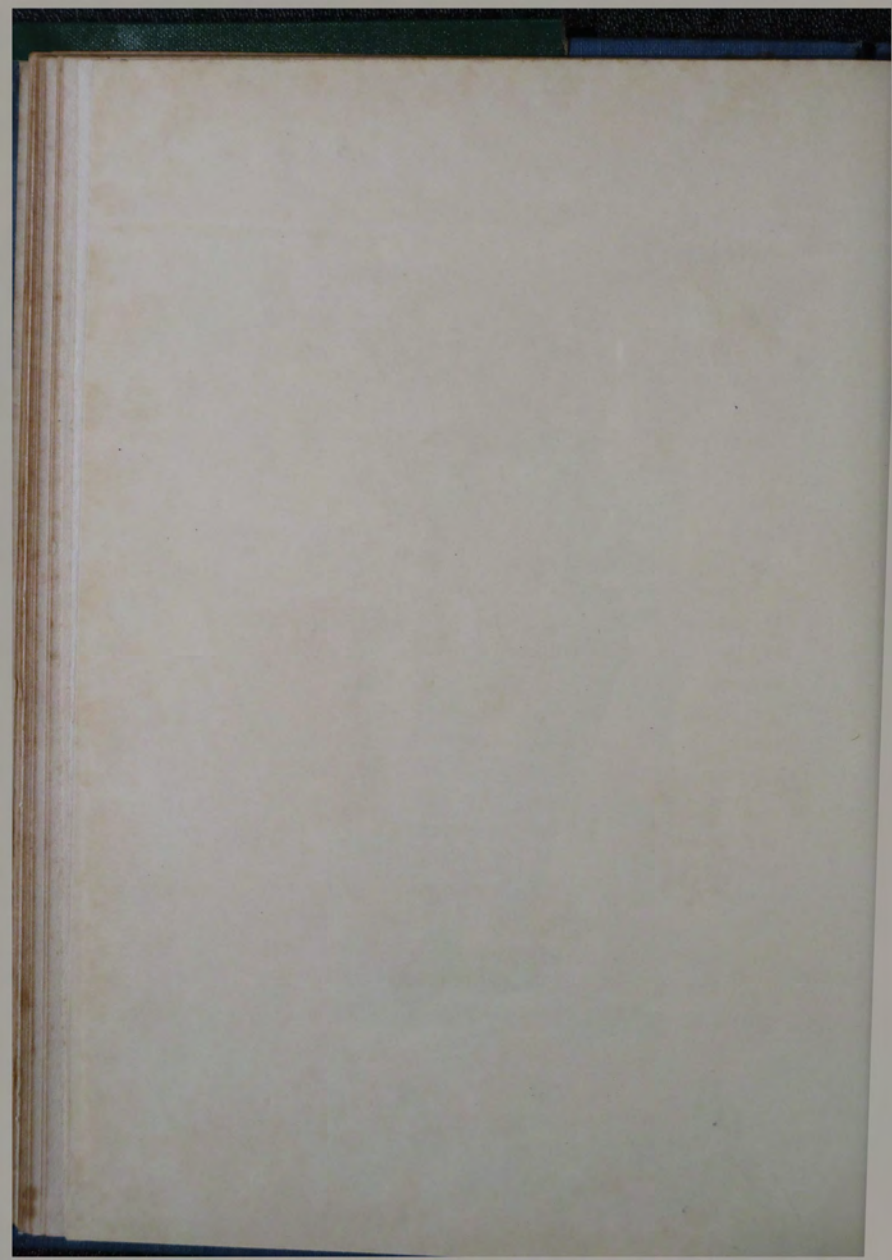


## THE CANADIAN FORCE

page. If it did not indeed keep full speed from the Jordan heads at Ottawa, but had need for drill and parade in a nondescript company of thief-slaves and straw hats, its soul was experienced cap & pie, and "slacks" and "cow-breakers" were more grateful belongings in August of 1916 than light tunics and service caps. We did not guess then how large the Army must be before time went on, but were able to despatch, virtually at once, in answer to the Empire's call an earnest of what was to follow. The blue shoulder-strap of the First Regiment, and the "barrel" of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, are not so common a sight to-day, when men for occasion read on the khaki, or to take second place to any decoration or badge. They speak for themselves, and are, indeed, more articulate in most cases than the modest westerns. Whatever men of the later divisions experienced and saw, they paid for over six precedents in the men of Tyne, that second battle of the name which had no parallel in the war before or after. It was then that the Canadian Army that was set the standard for the Canadian Army that was to be, and if the latter has no outstanding incidents, such as lived and died—through exactly with that high demand.

"GRADE: NUMBER ONE HARD"





it has never excelled those berserk days. So we allow the blue shoulder-strap to talk—when it will—and hold the floor for a space, though, like most old soldiers, it had nearly faded away before the days of peace. Here's to its memory, which will never fade, as will not that of the "Princess Pats," of which glorious band there are credibly alleged to be only nine survivors existing. If so, I am proud to have met eleven of them !

In all, the Dominion of Canada raised for service overseas more than half a million men. Of these, 80 per cent were fighting personnel. With the First Division and the P.P.C.L.I. already in the field, the Second, Third and Fourth Divisions were in turn enrolled and given a rough - and - ready — but withal, wonderfully thorough—training, as quickly as the machinery of the Militia Department could work, and always in time to meet the urgent demand from the front.

By August 1916 the entire Canadian Corps of four divisions, the biggest in the Allied Forces, was in the field, and the Great Adventure of the Somme was shared in by every man able to take a place in the front line. The intention to raise

a Fifth Division was abandoned, and wisely. The nucleus of this, which would have necessitated the formation of a second Army Corps, was thrown into the existing Corps in 1917 and 1918, with the exception of the Artillery, the "purple patches," which retained its identity and came into action in the summer of 1917. From then on the guns distinguished themselves for marksmanship and gallantry in a manner which showed that had the entire Division taken the field as a unit it would have won laurels equal to those of its elder brethren.

It became necessary to resort to conscription in those dark months which preceded the triumphant Hundred Days. One need touch on this but lightly. It was regrettable but imperative; as little ado was made of the urgency as possible, and it stands to the everlasting credit of the volunteers that the conscripts were absorbed so unostentatiously as reinforcements to tried units, that their arrival hardly called for comment, and it became the worst of "form" to cast compulsion in a man's teeth. Once in the ranks, these men did their duty as gamely as any, and I know of no instance where discredit was brought on the Army by one of them. Enough that, in most cases, they



had their good reasons for standing aloof so long.

As a Corps, the Canadians were attached in turn to one or other of the armies of the British Expeditionary Force. In this way there was born a fraternity which will develop into one of the strongest links binding Canada to England. We began to know the "Imperials" (as we called them) well, and to welcome "relief" the more when we learned that it was to be made by some brigade or division whose expertness at that ticklish job was proven. In the same way we were hilariously welcomed and hospitably entertained—so far as the nakedness of the land permitted—by many a battalion of "Jocks" or "Geordies," whom we came to know and appreciate as well as the men of our own brigade; and the "bloomin' Canadian" never lacked a cheery word from his confrère of London, Staffordshire, Argyll or Kent, and even the rather clannish "Aussie" found time for any "Canada" who might pass his way.

"LONG DRESS."

There was, I am afraid, a freedom about our "discipline" that left the British Tommy aghast.

Not that essential discipline was lacking. Far from it. We observed the essentials, but often disregarded the non-essentials, as *we* looked at the matter. It really amounted to a difference in psychology; that was all. One could see another difference, which left us in turn aghast, in the French Army, where the Gallic demonstrativeness seems to breed a free-and-easy family relation between officers and men in no way subversive of true law and order, but entirely foreign from a British view-point. It is reflected faintly in the French-Canadian battalions, second to none for bravery and implicit obedience to orders under fire, but casual at best in the observance of the ritual between officer and man.

The Canadian soldier's sense of discipline is a rather fine mixture of self-respect and independence without effrontery or cockiness. I don't think we ever *quite* learned to salute. Certainly not as they would have us do it at Chelsea, Pernes, and other terrible places which are the apple of the martinet's eye. Of course we *could* do it, because we could do anything if we knew it was necessary and really seemly, and a little better than most, but we preferred or unconsciously exhibited a certain friendliness in

our "compliments," quite unresented, I am sure, by any sound man sporting "pips," crown, or even more gorgeous shoulder encumbrances. In fact, from my own experience, I always found generals dear things, and often much more approachable than "stars" of the first or second creation, at least until you had snuggled up a little with the latter on over-bright duck-walks or squabbled with them about the right turning in a tangle of trenches.

Yes, we certainly did hate non-essentials. In the "bull-ring" at Ruelles, the Havre training camp, we on occasion drilled with, or were pitted against, the British drafts. They were the pink of propriety, silent and alert, while we, the "mob," drove our hard-bitten instructors to dumb madness by our dislike of regimentalism. But we could hold our own with anybody, Imperial pick, over the assault course, in gas-masks or without, and never minded a casualty or two in the "wood" or at the last trench. Withal, we were clean where cleanness matters, even if we refused for a week at a time to "spit and polish," yet for a formal parade could turn out and go through the stunts as if we had been doing the movements for years instead of weeks.

In a word, we were "there with the goods" when the goods were wanted, and would no more let our officers down on the parade ground, when it was really important, than in the field.

But we certainly were a riot sometimes.

So large a part, if for so short a time, did the training camp, "rest" camp (save the mark!), pool, or whatever it may have been, play in the career of every one of us, that I shall have more to say about it further on. Without it we should have been no good when it came to the scratch. And if we hated it, we only apparently shirked or evaded its more tedious and trying concomitants. The event has proved that the Canadian soldier, an intelligent and thinking animal and not a machine, chose for his make-up all, or nearly all, that was required to prove him fit, self-reliant, and a man of his hands when it came to a real assault course, with Heine and Fritz in place of chunks of long-suffering sacking and riddled "plates."

"STAND EASY!"

From the very nature of the fighting throughout a large part of the War, it was inevitable that the "foot-slogger" should bulk largest in the







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"Heaven East!"

From the very nature of the fighting through-out a large part of the War, it was inevitable that the "foot-slogger" should bulk largest in the





public eye. All the sister branches of the Service touch their caps to the infantryman who for so long bore the brunt of the fighting, took his medicine as cheerily as his rum, and carried on along the lines of the brief but violent schooling with which he had been so effectively crammed. That the cavalry units climbed down and for four years nobly did the work of line battalions redounds to their imperishable honour, and I think it was almost as great a joy to us as to them when they came into their own at last in the great drive. Few of us had hoped ever to see such battles in modern warfare as were fought to a splendid finish round Amiens, and as successfully, if they were a degree less spectacular, along the Drocourt-Quéant Line, the Canals du Nord and Sensée, and from Cambrai to Mons.

Inured as we were to the undoubted tedium of trench warfare, it had become an axiom that this nibbling process would go on to the end, with spasmodic ebullitions of open fighting. But the months of August, September and October of 1918, gave us a new heaven and a new earth, with our cavalry a familiar feature of the battlescape, our own Air Force flecking the blue, and, if our Tank Corps was organised too late to enter the

field as a homogeneous factor, there were enough Canadians attached to tanks as machine-gunners and as infantry in co-operation, as early as Amiens, to give us a family interest in the animals.

The brilliant affair at Cambrai, directed by the Canadians' own Byng, in November of 1917, had indeed given a chance to "boot and saddle" and for the tanks to "do their damndest," and again in the following April, our cavalry and Motor Machine-gun Brigade helped to stem the German tide near Villers-Bretonneux; but the world had to wait many a dark month for the full vision of things then seen but darkly, months all the more trying for the Canadian Corps because its rôle was for long that of watching and waiting.

"FALL IN!"

I have said that the Canadian Army came into being the moment Berlin unmasked. To say this is to be less than accurate, for the day before Germany declared war on Russia and invaded helpless Luxemburg, the heads at Ottawa were already in conference completing plans for mobilisation. On August 3, again twenty-four hours before Great Britain issued her ultimatum, we had begun the enrolment of volunteers



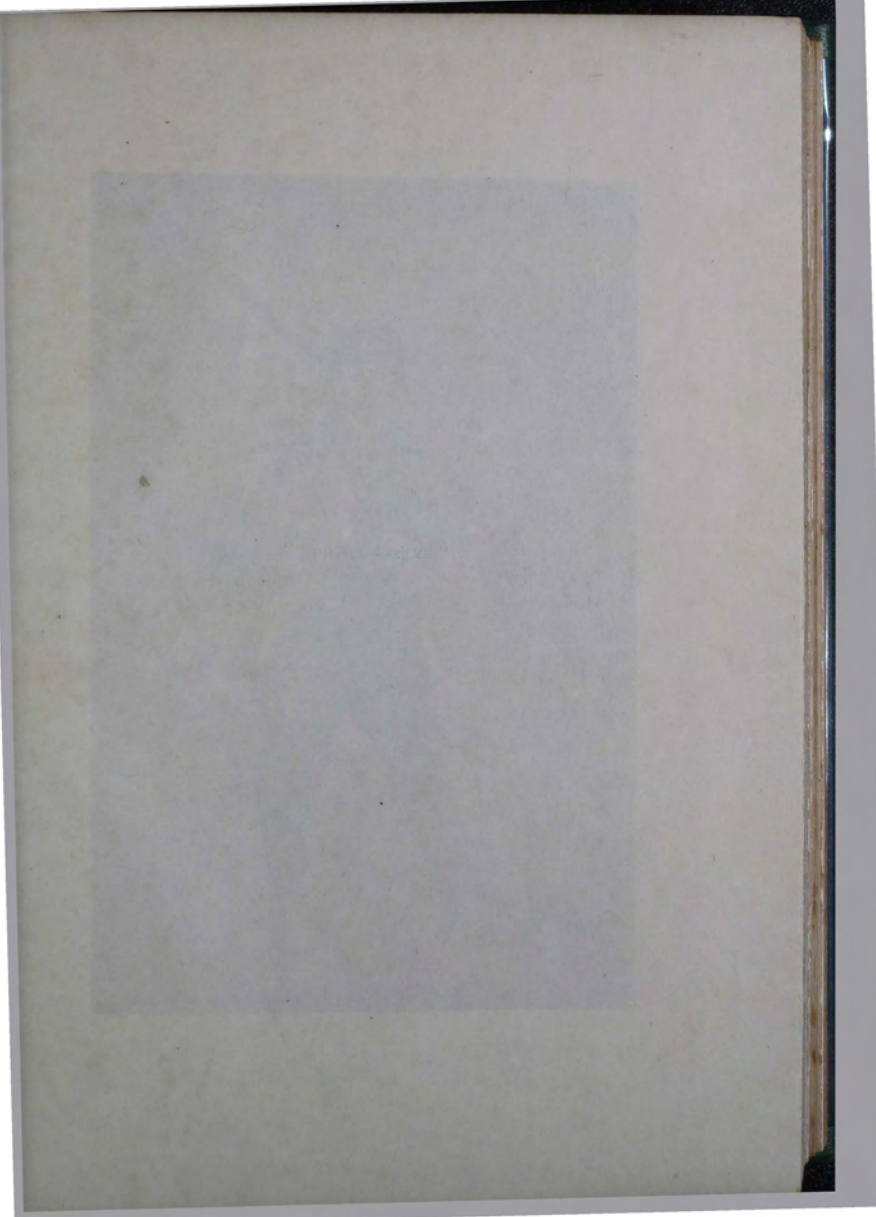
Ottawa discussed ways and means, regarding war as a certainty; and the Port of Quebec was declared under martial law as a measure of protection. The official call for troops was promulgated throughout the Dominion on August 5, and the first enlistments were proudly announced from Winnipeg within twenty-four hours.

So was born the First Contingent, that hardy band which swarmed to the colours from east and west and north. On the tranquil farms and busy rivers of Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime Provinces, on the homesteads of the Prairies, and in the mines and forests of British Columbia, men "left all" for the cause of Right and Freedom; and even the distant Yukon disgorged its thousands, inspired by a brighter and better lure than that of gold. And they came, most of them, as they stood, and how they might, walking if no faster means of transport offered. In those days the recruiting office could, and did, pick and choose, and many a man who eventually served was refused a coveted place in the First Division or "Princess Pats" for causes which by no stretch of imagination or argument would have secured him exemption, had he sought it, in later days. There was more than one instance of a

worthy patriot who had walked a hundred or even five hundred miles from some lonely cabin in the far west or north in order to get in touch with the hurly-burly, being turned down for *flat feet* when at last he presented himself, while disqualification of sturdy, trained out-door men because of a missing molar or a distorted little finger was an everyday disappointment.

So the First Contingent was, I suppose, as fore and fit a body of men as ever gaily marched to the wars, free from spavin or wind, and without spot or blemish—in physique at least.

It was less than three weeks after the declaration of war that this, Canada's first offering to the Empire of red blood and brawn, left Winnipeg for Valcartier Camp, and a month later it sailed overseas. The picture of that gallant armada and its convoys has been painted more than once by masters of the brush and pen, and if we did things differently and (literally) with less *splash* later on, when the "sub" was on the job, that was our loss and cause of envy. Thirty thousand strong with eight thousand of horse riding the high seas! Philip of Spain would have pattered yet more "*Aves*" than on another historic occasion, had he seen the sight.



wealthy people who had walked a hundred or two miles unaided under their own heavy robes in the far west of north in order to get in touch with the early-early, being turned out for the first time at last he presented himself, while disqualification of study, trained outdoor men because of a missing molar or a discolored little finger was an everyday disappointment.

So the first thing was, I supposed, as far as it was a body of men who were really wanted to the very first from which to select, and without spot or blot—

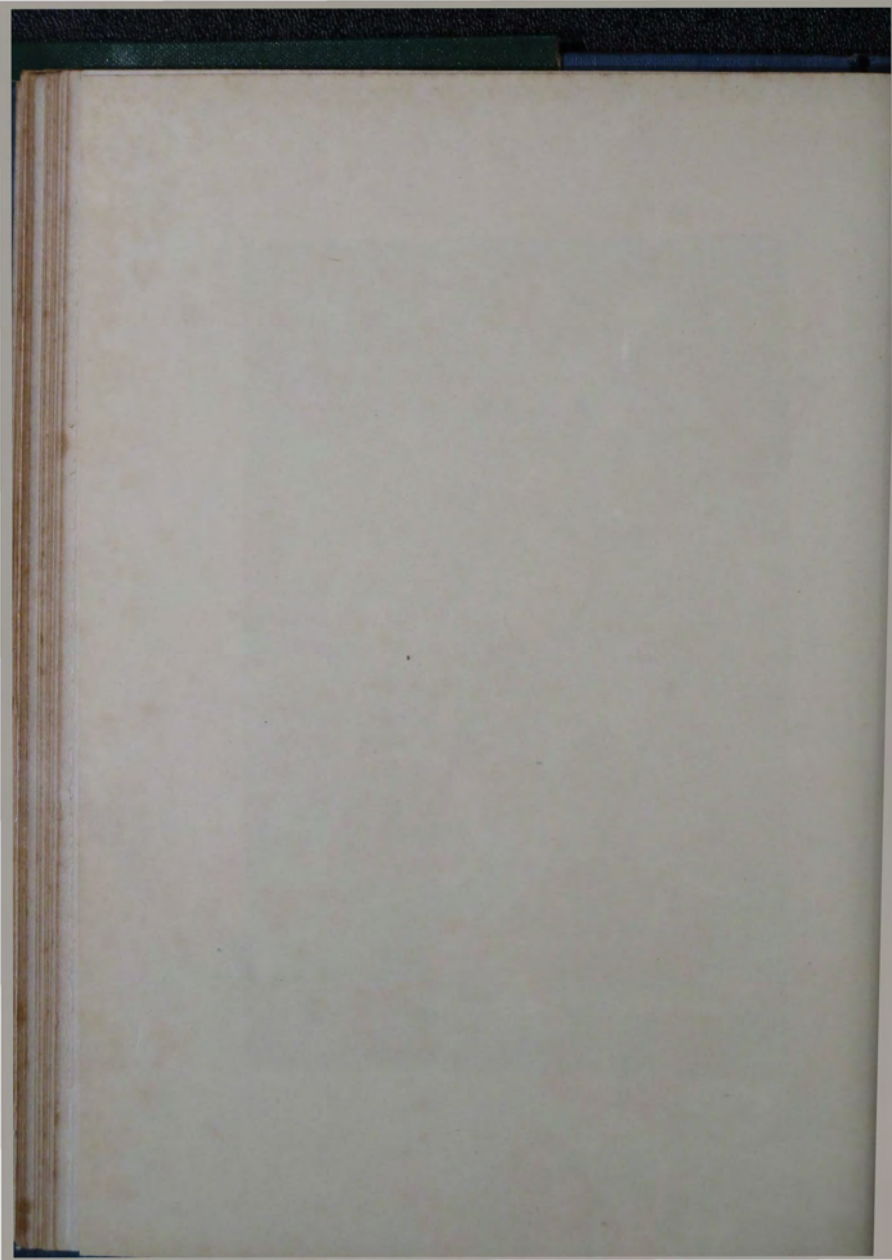
“EYES—RIGHT!”

It was less than three weeks after the declaration of war that the Spanish fleet, off to the Empire of the East and across the Atlantic for Valencian Gulf, and a month later it sailed overseas. The purpose of that great armada and its career has been passed more than once by students of the North and South, and if we did things differently, and perhaps with less effect, what is what we “saw” was on the job that was not less than some of our. Thirty thousand strong with eight thousand of horses riding the high seas. Philip of Spain would have preferred not to go. “What” was the last of his historic mission. Had he seen the light.









But ere the glory of Flanders fields, of poppies red and crosses white, must come the ordeal of Salisbury Plain for these fighting men eager to get at the foe. The Contingent arrived in England on October 16, about the hour when French—with the thinnest line that ever made good a forlorn hope—was clinging tight to that very Ypres front which was to become a legend and a saga for the First Division and all the Corps. The training in England was severe, but the conditions of living were worse, that cold and rain-drenched autumn and winter. Small wonder that many men stretched their none too frequent leaves to the limit of elasticity, or indulged in furloughs officially unauthorised altogether. Suffice it that they always came back, and, when the Division debarked at S. Nazaire on the 9th of February following, every man answered the muster except a few whom illness or death had evacuated.

What did England think of us Canucks at first, I wonder? She had seen isolated Canadians before, but I suspect that the word often conjured up memories of Mayne Reid, thoughts of camp-fires and bears, bucking bronchos and whimpering coyotes; a vision of trackless forests unreadable

by any but Boy Scouts, and, of course, everlasting snow. How far the first arrivals of the Canadian Army went to disabuse the minds of the average Englishman or woman of these deep-rooted convictions, I don't know; but, I think, no great distance. There is still an air of interest at some evidently surprising proof of sophistication on our part, which leads one to surmise that we remain ear-marked "wild and woolly," and that if we are not we ought to be. I am sure they like us best that way. It is horrid when the fairies flit, and even your grown-up tries to retain some illusions. So I acquit the First Contingent of any serious attempt to pervert this naïve and quite delightful creed of the average English person of both sexes in regard to ourselves, the more so because we seem to have retained our popularity in the Old Country. Whether this is because we are what we are, or because we have successfully kept the English believing us to be what we are not, does not matter. We have certainly not done ourselves any harm over there, and, if we have not educated them to a different way of thinking, we have taught them all to be our very good friends.

## YPRES.

The van of the Canadian Corps underwent its baptism of fire at famous "Plug Street" a week after H.Q. was established in the Hazebrouck-Caestre area, and, while its first major operation was not pulled off till April 22, in the intervening weeks it had already proved its mettle and the value of its rigorous training, in support; the artillery fired their first shot at Neuve Chapelle, and the "Princess Pats" were engaged at S. Eloi, where the enemy had succeeded in breaking the line. Attached at the beginning to the First Army, the Corps was allotted to the Second Army early in April, and moved to the Steenvoorde sector, relieving the 11th Division of the French Army.

From now on Canada was in the thick of things. The "Salient," already an arena soaked with British and Prussian blood, was to see what stamp of man Britain's greatest dominion had sent into the lists. Brother Bosche had chosen an auspicious moment, as he thought, for the introduction of his gas surprise to the notice of a disgusted civilisation, and perhaps imagined he would put the fear of Kaiserdom and its deity into these strangers to European battlefields.



How well our men stood the test is history. The Second Battle of Ypres will be the synonym for unexampled, almost foolhardy daring so long as there is a god of battles. The German experimented two days before his second vicious attempt to break through to the Channel ports, and was at least successful with this new and infamous engine of war so far as the sector on our left was concerned. The 45th (French) Division retired, but the Bosche triumph was short-lived. The Canadians, entrenched at Langemarck, filled the gap and the following day counter-attacked, at the same time extending their front from 5000 to 9000 yards. Touch was regained with the French on the 24th, and in the interim we had recaptured the guns unluckily lost by our allies. The loathsome waves of poison continued to swamp our lines whenever the wind was in the right quarter for the enemy, but despite the enormous casualties, and the entire absence of any antidote or preventive at that time, the Corps fought gallantly on until, for a time at least, the plague was stayed.

Do we not all remember the horrible casualty lists of that week, when every third name was that of a relative, friend, or acquaintance, and all



Canada mourned yet rejoiced because of her hero dead ?

Ypres, scarce one stone of which stands upon another, is perhaps the supreme memorial to an outraged world's vindication of its sense of right. And I think that to Canada it means more than to any other nation which fought for freedom, and won. To those forerunners of ours it was permitted to see the city, when they first took post, almost as it had been for three centuries, serene in a mellow semblance of peace that hardly took note of the imminent menace. When they were at last relieved on that bloody sector, the devastation was little less complete than it is to-day, at least in the heart of the city. The Cloth Hall, the most perfect example in the world of secular Gothic architecture of the flamboyant school, was a ruin, dying if not yet dead, all its wealth of ornament, cusp and pinnacle, painted window and heraldic roof, crushed to dirty, smouldering fragments, and its mural pageantry wiped away.

To me the great square is always a memory of ironic sunlight prying into the presence of a raw sorrow, a Peeping Tom indecently uncovering each wound of what was once the Cathedral, and playing hide-and-seek among the stark bones of

the *Salle des Halles*. I never saw it except under these conditions, with the added pleasantry of Hun high-velocities hurrying tardy columns into a hideous shambles. But perhaps in time the touch of the sun will mellow to something more benign and paint this cenotaph of how many thousand souls in colours less crudely naked, so that though it remains for all time as it is, yet shall it be translated, deified.

I do not think that in this day and generation, this era of shorter hours and more pay, the world should attempt to "restore" such grave and reverend ruins as Ypres, Rheims, Arras and their kind. Better to let them rest. It was love that reared them, not shillings and pence. Princes spiritual and temporal were their almoners, and master craftsmen devoted their lives to the making of them, each to his niche, his window, his finial even, or his gargoyle. Union Labour's substitute would be a sorry sham. *Requiescant in pace!*

"BREAK OFF!"

Did space permit one could ask nothing better than to follow the senior divisions step by step through the first two years of the War, those

years of tedious trench operations, of attrition and counter-attrition, of patience and pluck, of laughter in the face of death, and making the best of a rather horrible life. But, as has been premised, this volume does not pretend to a categorical and statistical chronicling of the Canadian Corps' doings in detail. We are all human, and nod at times, and one trembles to think of the vials of wrath awaiting a would-be historian who lauded the *Blankth Brigade* and ignored the *Umptieth* in his conscientious and breathless pursuit of an army's itinerary of more than four years. Moreover, I have a painful impression that there may exist some retro-active kind of law of *lèse-majesté*, which can follow the quondam wearer of khaki into the haunts of mufti did *Colonel Dash* get a "mention" which should have included *General Dam*, and that the ignorant or careless perpetrator of the hiatus may be haled before an amphibious kind of court-martial, in which the presiding officer is garbed chiefly in a silk hat and one of *Wilkinson's* brightest. Therefore, I think it best to follow the lead of the Press during the greater part of the War, smudging a censorious "*Hush!*" across names and numbers which the less prudent and more

garrulous half of me might wish to divulge. In this I take, too, a leaf out of the book of a certain O.C., who argued that in recommending nobody for decoration after a show he was decorating his entire unit. His contention was that to cite one man and not the other ninety-and-nine or so was to make goats of the latter, whereas his entire flock had bitten the Bosche quite grievously. Thus was virtue its own—and only—reward. So one may plead that the Corps as a whole did its job so well that, if there were one or two people—I never heard of any—who behaved other than in a smart and soldier-like manner, they are negligible, and to give special mention to all the others—and one could not leave anybody out—would be to convert a desultory gossip into an Army-cum-Birthday Honours List.



## II

1915.

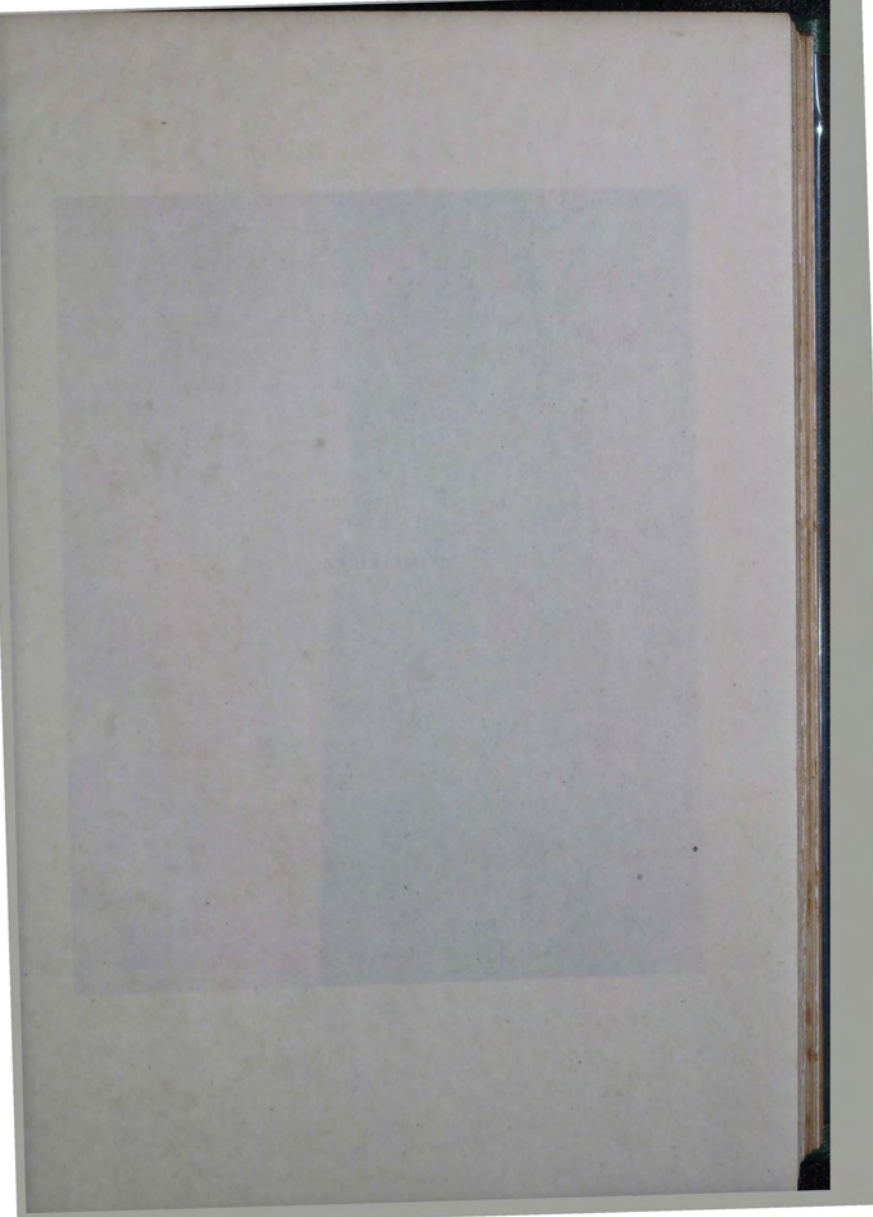
THE year 1915 from the date of the Second Battle of Ypres was chiefly remarkable, so far as the Canadian Corps was concerned, for being the most trying and indecisive period in its history. True, it was illuminated by "flares" which in a measure were as dazzling as operations the results of which were more effective and lasting, but in the main it was a time of reciprocal testing of strength, with the advantage still greatly on the side of the enemy—in weight of shell, consolidated position and fighting personnel. We suffered severely, but we were learning all the time, and if the fruits were not harvested then it was only because the harvest was postponed to a fuller and riper season.

From S. Eloi to Loos was the principal theatre of operations, and many a hamlet and village lying between those points has earned a historic name, thanks to the bickerings more or



less bloody which reduced them to grass-grown hummocks of brick and stone. Festubert and "The Orchard," Givenchy, Cuinchy, Hulluch, La Bassée, Messines—these are names to conjure with where veterans of our Grand Army forgather. To the south the Vimy area was undergoing the ordeal which converted it into the scarred and pock-marked land later to be redeemed by us, and thousands of gallant British and French were pouring out their life-blood in the effort to storm the slope. Mont S. Eloy's ruined monastery, relic of the Franco-Prussian War, and so entirely in harmony with the discordant landscape which it commanded, was the rallying-point again and again for unfettered carnage, and the entire campaign was rapidly becoming an appalling devastation. Thus it was that, later, the Corps was operating largely in a territory devoid of life, as life should be; a Golgotha of shattered villages, riven fields, crippled woods and choked streams. A civilian was something to look at twice, with suspicion; a whole roof a miracle.

Loos, of tragic memory, was the culminating disappointment of an indecisive summer. Whether the mistakes were made in the programme or in the execution of the unsuccessful











campaign to break through the German lines is not to be canvassed here. Certainly the result was little short of disastrous in the immediate loss and in the sequent temporary influence on the general situation. Nothing could have been more disheartening to the Allies and more calculated to raise the enemy *moral* than this winding-up of a season's operations, with winter coming on and an inevitable three or four months of digging in among rats and lice and mud and general misery. I doubt whether even at the time of the great German push two and a half years later, the prevailing feeling of depression was more acute, but the Army and the people at home weathered the storm, and I do not question that the former, in despite of its hardships and perils, recovered the quicker of the two from the flatness which for a time was so pronounced.

With the New Year Canada girded up her loins and said "Enough of this!" Old plans were scrapped and the situation was faced, a situation of which the most prominent feature was the certainty that the War would last for some years. The decision to enlarge the Army was arrived at, and the raising of 500,000 men was authorised.

Hope, never more than sick, sat up and took notice, and the recruiting offices, now less pernickety than in 1914, were even more busy. Munitions as well as men were needed, and plants were established with the rapidity of mushrooms, while at the same time the Dominion was able to lend to the Old Country a few of the pennies her thrift had accumulated.

As a widely-read American journal aptly remarked—in those days Canada stepped from the ruck of narrow-gauge colonies and became for all time a broad-gauge Power.

“SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL.”

The spring of 1916 found the Corps occupying much the same area as during the greater part of the previous year, but cheered by the assurance of a steady provision of reinforcements and shells, hardened by its trials, and trained by experience to a pitch of efficiency already recognised by the most exacting of the Higher Command. In the last week of March we proved that we were “Downhearted? No!” by smashing, in co-operation with Imperial divisions, the German salient at S. Eloi. It was an omen. The air was full of rumour, talk of a general advance—

that dream of every officer or man worth his tot of rum ; and though the Corps was not invited to open the ball at the verification of that dream, it returned south in ample time to write its name several times indelibly on the programme of the Somme Soirée.

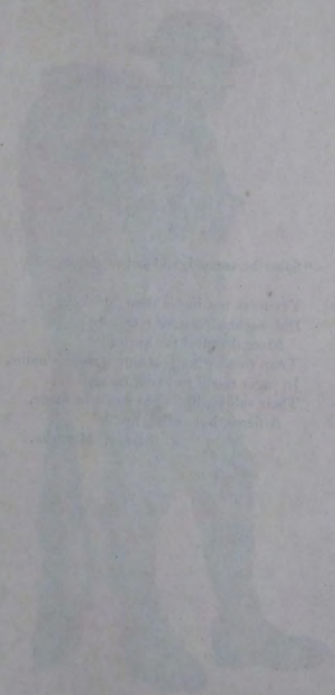
The Canadians moved back to the Salient in the early summer, and found it a cheerful hot-bed of snipers, whom it educated to the knowledge that two can play at almost any game. In return it introduced to the notice of the enemy a quite fresh pastime, that of raiding, but found Brother Bosche unteachable in spite of many lessons.

The sport of raiding was, I think, the most popular form of outdoor recreation in which the Canadian soldier indulged—partly because it appealed so specially to the type of man preponderant in the Army, and partly because he so unquestionably excelled at it. It evoked the attributes of athlete, hunter, trapper, scout, and all-round good “sport,” on which the Canadian prides himself. It, moreover, possessed that touch of whimsy which was its crowning grace. The element of surprise is always intrinsically funny, even when in a *milieu* far from essentially comic. Such astonishing things were

raided, from haughty and insulted headquarters to demoralised cook-kitchens. Heine could never see the fun of the thing, and his own attempts at reprisals were faint-hearted and disgustingly amateurish. The element of surprise persisted throughout the war, and it was seldom the enemy was not caught napping.

The raid was only secondarily designed to take prisoners or to put the Hun to sleep. We never liked prisoners, anyhow. If at all recalcitrant, or even merely feeble, they are an incubus when returning on a dark night across No Man's Land, with the "wind up" at your back and your own machine-gunners tossing up as to whether you are the raiding party coming home or a bunch of enterprising Fritzies paying a call. Besides, rations only just go round, and your German can eat. So prisoners were not popular with us, though I confess to an æsthetic dislike of removing them in—comparatively—cold blood because they bore one. It's too much like shooting a sitting bird, and though indulged in pretty often by officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, was never voted quite the thing. After all, if one didn't want them, it was much kinder to oneself and them to leave them cosily in their own







added, from thought and insulted headquarters to demoralized cook-kitchens. Heine could never see the fun of the thing, and his own attempts at exploits were half-hearted and disgustingly unenterprising. The element of surprise permeated throughout the war, and it was seldom the enemy was not caught napping.

The raid was only secondarily designed to take prisoners or to put the Hun to sleep. We never had a prisoner, anyhow. If at all successful, it was even more of a failure than the first.

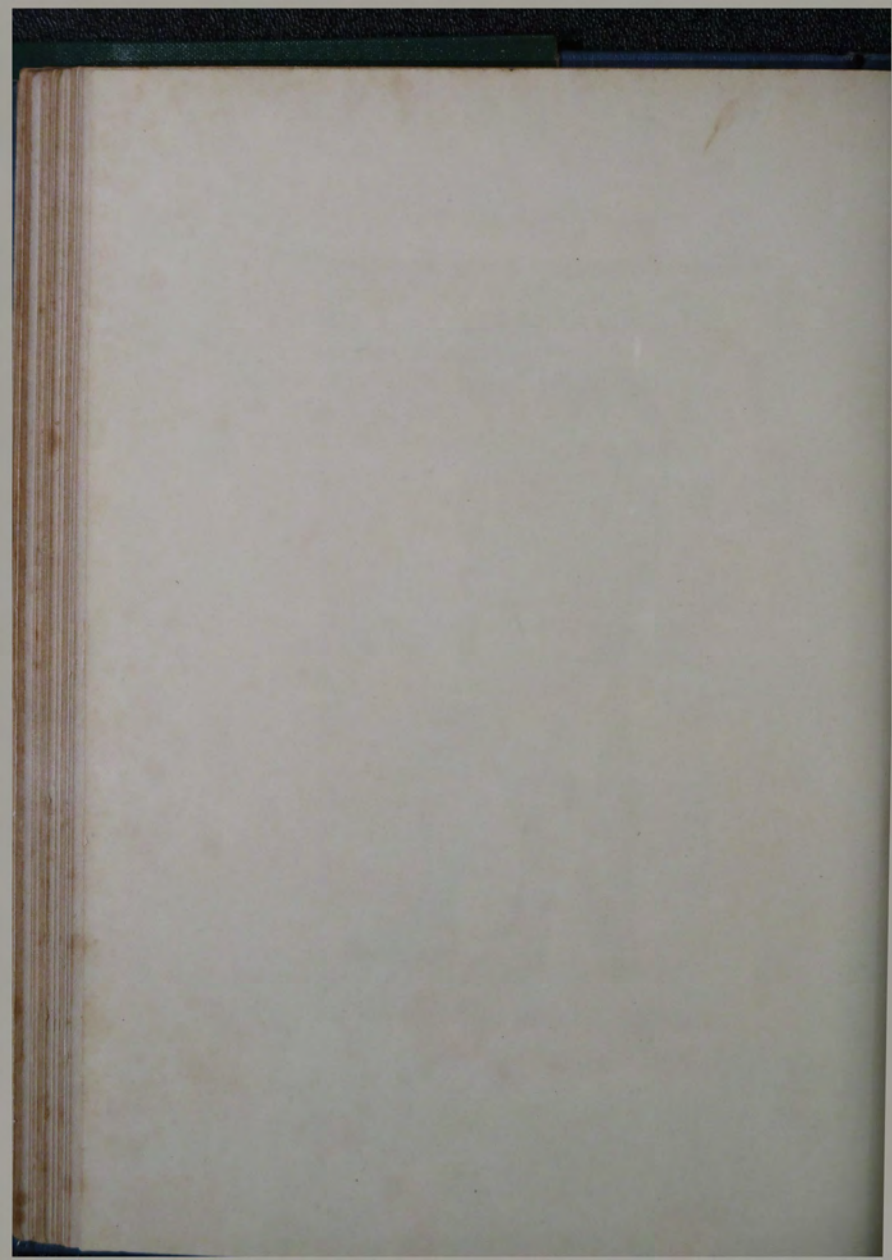
"Sober he seemed, and sad of cheer

Yet deem not in his thoughtful eye  
Did ought of dastard terror lie;

More dreadful far his ire  
Than those who, scorning danger's name,  
In eager mood to battle came,  
Their valour, like light straw in flame,  
A fierce, but fading fire."

SCOTT, *Marmion*.





trenches for their pals to chant "Morgen Roth" or the "Hymn of Hate" over, than to drop them untidily among the barbed-wire.

Whatever may have been their custom before, there were several units which quite suddenly took a rooted objection to the Hun as a guest, and refused to entertain him any longer. Their reasons may be illustrated by a sample case, when a battalion of my own brigade found two of its runners in a German dug-out which had fallen into our hands. The poor lads had nothing to say, but were nevertheless eloquent. The unpleasant details of their going west I decline to enlarge upon. "Seeing one's dead" was quite enough to cure any unit of a "Mother's Darling" attitude toward would-be prisoners.

Of course, prisoners—a few—were useful, and in themselves partially embodied the *raison d'être* of a raid. It was information we wanted. The "I" branch is insatiable, and an intelligent, complaisant prisoner was good for Intelligence. Even the obstinate ones would soften and become talkative under the ministrations of the "third degree," as employed by Staff people thirsty for news. The method adopted by one G.S.O., now at last famous after many years of officially



unrecognised merit — *we* appreciated him — seemed to me always the most efficacious because so delightfully human. A tongue-tied captive would receive a little smack on one side of his square head—this “I” tipped the scale at fifteen stone—followed by one on the other side to restore his balance, and immediately after “field comforts” in the shape of a stiff “snort.” I understand the system never failed, and the succeeding day’s “secret and confidential” report announced with subdued and modest gratification that a Bavarian or Saxon or some such thing of the —*th Company of Minnewerfers* had said so and so and was judged to be both intelligent and credible.

So a little chat like this would open whole vistas of light on the situation across the way. We learned from the man’s badges where such and such a battalion was and, therefore, that a known division was spread out in front of us, with much bigger things to be inferred from these, while from the prisoner’s induced remarks it could be gathered how, why and where certain movements were taking place, reliefs and so on, the *locale* of ammunition dumps and rendezvous for rations; and if he was a really conscientious



Hun he would have a map on him, painstakingly and neatly marked, as is the Hun way.

Some of the above details could be gleaned by using one's eyes and ears without inviting a Fritz over to tea at all, but a good, well-educated one, anxious to rise in his profession and not too badly scared, was generally worth the fag of prodding over.

#### THE SOMME.

In the chilly dawn of July 1, 1916, when the bulk of the Fourth Division was moving up by details to the butts at Lydd, Hythe, and other of the Shorncliffe area training camps, the rattle of their rifles was echoed by the diapason of the guns across the Channel. It was the prelude to the Great Adventure, and to most of us the first intimation that the advance had begun. How high were the hopes built on that overture, and more thrilling day by day were the stories of "our special correspondents," with their details of new tactics and fresh strategies; of barrages and open fighting, of village after village falling before the impetuous onslaught of the Allies; of the birth of the tank.

"Lucky beggars," they used to call the

new division when it was doing finishing school in France. "There's nothing left for you to do but kill the Bosche. He's done and it'll be all over by Christmas. But mind you kill him!"

I know that one tried, and thought then that he succeeded in visualising what was going on just a few score miles away in Artois, and I know now how quite completely the most graphic pen fails to convey a true picture of battle. As I remember it, one imaged a terrain swarming mile on mile with a *mêlée* of men, hand to hand in the death-grapple, and marvelled that from such a pandemonium an eye-witness should succeed in educing any decisive and tangible event, and calmly add two to bloody two and make a realistic four of it. But if imagination fed the pens of the special correspondents to a large extent, they served the purpose of infecting their readers with an enthusiasm of admiration and a thirst to be in it with the others which a more veracious but colder version would have failed to inspire. And certainly there were crowded moments when the colour could not be spread too thick, when the stage was thronged to the wings, and sector after sector ran riot with the joy of battle.

Great days, canonised with the trumpet names of towns and villages erstwhile unknown to fame, but thenceforth to be red-lettered in the calendar of glory.

From Albert, astride the gossiping, boisterous Ancre, the tide of victory was flowing eastward steadily when Canada plunged into the conflict. Albert, whence the Leaning Lady and Her Babe looked ever silently toward Bapaume, and by Their tragedy of beauty beautified even the hideous basilique which throned Them—that ugly red-brick edifice with its façade of gaudy pigments and gilt; toward Bapaume and the lance-thrust of the road thereto, already rusted with the blood of farmsteads and hamlets wounded unto death, shivered with breathless blows.

There are many of these horrible straight roads, grim pointers throughout France and Flanders for the march of four years' history, but none, I doubt, so horrible and ruthlessly straight as that which lies between Albert and Bapaume. I suppose that once it was a cheery highway, resounding with the gossip of market-women and the clatter of sturdy hoofs, but in our time it was a *via dolorosa* by day and night. It had then no beauty that men should desire it.

Its *pavé* and metalling were pitfalls ; its one-time sentry poplars threw maimed limbs across the hurry, or with their stark, truncated torsos became an aiming mark for the masked guns in Lupart Wood, and no kind abiding-place ; to right and left grinned the scar of battered trench, and the rubble of homes twice violate frowned on our going.

But the trumpet names ! Always gracious in their sounding, but athrill now with a new bugle note. Contalmaison and Pozières, with the foul mire of mud between ; Thiépval, so long in dying ; Courcellette, where the men of French Canada lived again the traditions of the ancient seigneuries ; Grandcourt, Eaucourt and Warlencourt ; Martinpuich, a fragment of desolation ; Mametz Wood, imperishable though dead ; Le Sars and Flers, and the mellow memory of Destremont.

One may count them by the canto, these aforetime roundelays in warm brick and sun-kissed timbering, now chaunties breathing the acrid breath of red blood and redder courage.

It is generally conceded that the weather was for the greater part of the War in favour of the Germans, and at no time was this more apparent



STILLAM

Its post and infalling were pitfalls; its one-line sentry poplars threw unjoined limbs across the hurry, we with their stark, truncated torsos became an aiming mark for the masked guns in Lupart Wood, and no kind abiding-place; to right and left grinned the scar of battered trench, and the rubble of homes twice violate frowned on our going.

But the trumpet rushes! Always gridois in their scuffling, but all at now with a new eagle note. Centulmaison and Pomerex, with the foul mine of rust between; Thiépyal, so long in dying; Courcelles, MAMETZ the town of French Canada lived again the treaders of the absent vegetation; Grandcourt, Savoyart and Warden court; Marégnich, a suggestion of desolation; Barre Wood, whose woods though dead; Le Sax and Yver, and the mellow memory of Desprement.

One may count them by the canto, these affectionate cronies, by warm brick and sun-baked masonry, now chaunties breathing the acid breath of red blood and rider courage.

It is generally conceded that the weather was for the greater part of the War in favour of the Germans, and at no time was this more apparent







than during the second stage of the Battle of the Somme. Had natural conditions proved more favourable to the Allies the War might have been appreciably shortened, but from early in October onward the attack had to contend with the "clutch of circumstance," as well as with the cunning defensive tactics of the Bosche. Persistent rain converted the country into a morass, and, uncomfortable as Fritz must have been in his well-built dug-outs behind Le Sars and Pys, his misery was as nothing to ours who had to advance as best we could over a fallow of mud as bad as anything even Northern France can produce. Special qualities all its own had this mud: an adhesiveness equalled only by that of a much-advertised mucilage; a clinging tenderness which refused, like Ruth, to leave us; a wetness which would shame Niobe. Small wonder a brake was felt on the wheels of progress, and that operations were brought to a close even with the dregs of the autumn battle whispering at the gates of Pys. This town was already under shell-fire. Miraumont, Puisieux, Irlès and Grevillers, the Achiets, Petit and Grand, in fact all the closer defences of Bapaume itself were included in the orders for a major operation of

which the details were complete to the smallest item, when it was declared a "wash-out"—in more senses than one—and the Corps was relieved by the "kilties," who took over the task of digging in, and in due course, when the long frost came, stampeded the Bosche another score or two of miles. But the story of that drive does not come within the scope of this volume.

Despite all this welter of mud and misery, the last bays of Regina Trench had fallen. Not at the first attempt, but after pitiless assaults in which we paid a big price. With it should have gone the Quadrilateral and Gallowitz Trench and the whole intricate ganglion of which these were the nerve-centre, but it was nothing less than the achievement of giants to do what was done in the circumstances. The approaches to that Mecca of heroism were approaches only in name. Better to travel overland, if one might, than attempt such runnels of filth as the sunken road through Courcelette and thence across Death Valley; Colt Alley, or the "O.G.'s"; gruesome corridors of mortality in fine weather, with ill-buried Huns filtering through the parapet, or telling a credible tale of their restless sleep beneath the floor; with intermittent duck-boards to trap the booby;

with wire overhead and wire underfoot, where the ever-zealous signaller had squandered his reels like red-tape ; with " potato mashers " and other playthings of the former occupants, primed for the enterprising hobbyist in lethal weapons ; with shell-holes. Sinister by-ways enough under an ironic autumn sun, but beneath the weeping skies of early winter, trickling sloughs of despond, where it was hard for the cheeriest to find a laugh.

Overland was not so bad, if risky, and one's preoccupation was to dodge the whizz-bangs which the Hun distributed lavishly in those days, even where but one or two gathered together, chasing uneasy pedestrians with rapid but erratic marksmanship to such cover as was available. The waste of German metal was most distressing, and the outlay quite incommensurate with the bag. I don't think the Bosche was ever as good a shot as we were. But undoubtedly he annoyed us, especially if we were in a hurry and not in love with trench accommodation.

### III

#### "MARK TIME!"

So the Corps went into winter quarters for a few weeks in the Bruay area, and spent most of the time when it was not making its first advances—later to prove so eminently successful—toward acquaintance with the *demoiselle de ville*, in removing Somme mud from its clothes and equipment. At all too frequent intervals brass hats would have us out to see how we were getting on, and give us well-meaning advice on the subject, but I'm sure we still wore the mark of the beast when, just before Christmas, we hiked for a new front. One was thankful in those endless days of marching, both to and from "rest," for hard, grey, frosty weather, though the one-night stands in barns, chicken-coops and pigsties were not very conducive to sleep. But there was a thrill in seeing women and children again (there were one or two "civvies" sneaking about Albert, but they made you think



of furtive rats), and I expect some of us will never forget the church-bells of S. Pol, as we trailed through that hospitable city, though I remember also that the smell of what I swear were pancakes was what actually brought the tears to my eyes. How good, how homely the little farms and cottages looked after the Somme, and how one dreamed of white, if coarse, sheets; of *café* and *encore café*, with perhaps a lacing of cognac or benedictine. But I know we over-ate at Bruay rather than over-drunk. The famine in sugar and such things was only looking in at the window then, and "*pâtisserie*" was something more than a gilded mirage over a shop-front.

Ah yes! "Christmas pay," with *gâteaux* at *dix centimes chaqu'*, and not too terrible champagne at five francs, made those few days at Bruay, despite parades, inspections, physical jerks, and close catechism of animated blankets, a "swell dish."

"CHANGE DIRECTION LEFT!"

A new front and novel conditions. These the Corps faced just as the snow was beginning to powder the ruins of Ablain S. Nazaire and the dirty *pavé* of Camblyneuil, with Christmas close

at hand. Though the Vimy area is only distant from that of the Ancre by some score of miles, it seemed a different country altogether. I suppose this was largely due to the fact that after the extreme flatness of the land round Albert, the Ridge and its flanks gave us a near horizon sentimentally more comfortable though actually more menacing. Moreover, for the winter our programme was mapped out as an elaborate defensive scheme, with an established "home" of sorts at least for a few weeks, and while we were glad of their success we did not envy our confrères who were busy chasing the Bosche over the slimy area we had sublet to them.

We all knew a little of the history of the Ridge and of the gallant British and French who already had found graves there, and guessed too that in due season the order would come through that on such and such a night the Division "will attack and take"—well, Vimy Ridge or any portions of it, as seemed good to the high muck-a-mucks in the interests of a new plan of campaign.

I always liked that unquestioning, unqualified, unmistakable "will" in battle orders. It was never for a moment taken into consideration that we would fail to take. I don't think we ever

did, at least in anything big. I suppose we had our off days like anybody else, as on an occasion in front of Regina Trench, and in the gas fiasco of March, or in the following summer at La Coulotte, days succeeding which Intelligence was conspicuously brief in its reports on the operations, though full of promises of "more in our next," which were not usually kept. But we have the word of the greatest among us that the Canadian Corps never retired and never lost a position which it had once consolidated. And we may take that substantially as no idle boast. If there were minor mishaps, affairs not altogether as clean-cut as we could wish, in the main I believe we lived up to the rather flamboyant pose mentioned as having been presented to us by our admiring Gallic allies.

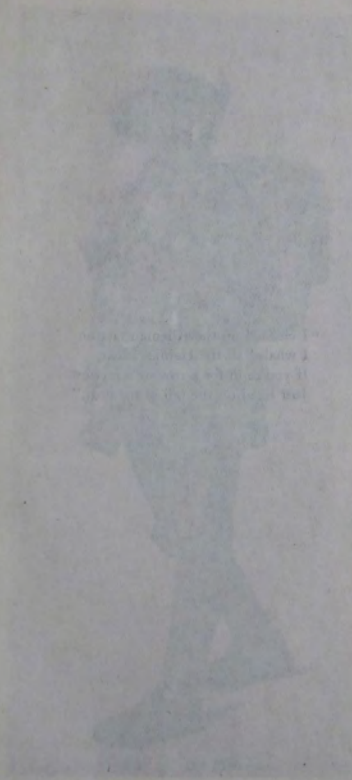
Perhaps a good deal of it was luck, but I think more than 50 per cent of it was good management. For the latter, from this time on at least, credit is here accorded in full measure to the much-maligned Staff. The victory in which the winter in front of Vimy culminated was certainly a feather in the cap of the "red-tabs," and they didn't do all their work back in dug-outs by any means. The successful finale was the result of

months of the most careful preparation, of which at the time we saw and suspected little, as was intended, and pending the outcome of which we were busily employed in harassing the gentlemen looking down on us from the high ground commanding every road and funk-hole as far back as Château de la Haie.

I said that Brother Bosche was profligate of ammunition on the Somme, and I think he must have decided to economise by the time we moved to Vimy. Here he specialised in S.A.A. rather than big stuff, and seldom went further than spraying with his "Emma Gees" the duck-walks leading up to the Ridge. At any rate, it was a shock to our sense of good soldiering when at last *we* stood on the summit of the Ridge and looked back on what had so swiftly become hinterland, to see how effectually the Hun might have picked us off one by one all through the long winter nights and the snow-white days, and how entirely he had failed to take advantage of his opportunities.

But here again perhaps psychology stepped in. I am sure that the enemy often withheld his hand because he was essentially a slothful, soft-lying beast, and, if avoidable, didn't care about stirring





months of the most careful preparation, of which at the time we saw and suspected little, as was intended, and pending the outcome of which we were busily employed in harassing the gentrymen looking down on us from the high ground commanding every road and funk-hole as far back as Chateau de la Huke.

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"I cleaned up the Alleman faction

I whaled all the Heinies afloat,

If you're in for a row or a raction

Just tread on the tail of me coat."

It was a shock to our ears, and we were surprised when at last we stood on the summit of the Hoge and looked back at the sea. Had we really become hinterland? Or was this essentially the Hoge might have picked us off one by one all through the long winter nights and the snow-white days, and how entirely he had failed to take advantage of his opportunities.

But here again perhaps psychology stepped in. I am sure that the enemy often withheld his hand because he was essentially a clothed, soft-shy beast, and, if possible, didn't care about dying



J. Schmitt: Illustration. Nr. 10. 1918.





up a hornet's nest. You will recollect, too, that we were not the first to shake the plum-tree of Vimy Ridge, and that our predecessors had only succeeded in bringing down very rotten fruit. Perhaps the Bosche laughed at us. Or else he was smitten with madness, that same paranoia which overtook him in front of Paris, again at Ypres, and in less measure on countless other occasions. There seems no other way of explaining his refusal to make the utmost of his chance when the dice were loaded in his favour. One cannot ascribe all his aberrations in this respect to the Angels of Mons, but I'm not at all sure in my inmost soul that there wasn't always and in all places an Influence working for us—I mean the cause of the Allies—quite foreign to anything over which the War Office or all the Chancelleries of Europe have control.

I think this idea became for many of us—though we never spoke of it—a real religion which bucked us up and gave us a glorified Dutch courage, and moreover filled the vacuum caused by disappointment in what used to be called Religion, as a guide. I have no intention of casting disrespect on the Churches, but am merely endeavouring to articulate my own rather inchoate

feelings, and interpreting, I think, the thoughts of some others.

I imagine that the War itself and the conditions which surrounded our daily lives, the possibility of death at any moment and the need of dying as decently as might be, bred in us a kind of mediæval paganism which substituted picturesque symbols or legends, partly of our own creating, for the cut-and-dried "mother's knee" business which had sufficed our souls in less spacious days. We had, in short, reverted, because of and as a result of the business in hand, to a primitive state of mind which opened the door to a sneaking regard for the miraculous, and at the same time demanded something greater and grander, more ceremonious, in the shape of a Presence than what the best-intentioned and often very courageous padre had to offer us, or than we had accepted automatically hitherto.

This mediævalism of view-point did us no hurt, I protest. It was more in the picture than the Sermon on the Mount, loving-kindness and meekness, and in spite of its flavour of paganism admitted half-ashamed visions of entirely conventional and quite suitable entities. There were, as we know, some splendid old militant saints,

not to mention a quartette of archangels who seemed more at home in battle-harness than when hung with harps and haloes, and from these the paladins of knight-errantry, at least in their inspirations, were not far removed. So, an unconfessed belief in the near neighbourhood of some such trusty pal as might embody a choice blend of Michael and S. George, with a pinch of Joan of Arc, need not be considered too heretical a makeshift in the shape of spiritual companionship in very unorthodox times.

#### VIMY RIDGE.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge was fought and won with an artistic finality strikingly in key with the natural conditions that framed it. Of all the great engagements carried out by the Canadian Corps it was the most vivid in the attributes which would have appealed to the brush of Verestchagin. He alone of modern painters could have done justice to the sheer brutality of its *mise-en-scène*.

The attack was launched as part of the general British offensive east of Arras, and was aimed at depriving the enemy of observation of the valleys running south-west from the Ridge, at the same

time securing for us a commanding view of the plains to the north and east.

The front entrusted to the Corps extended from the Arras-Lens Road, about a mile north of Roelincourt to a point in our support line 1000 yards east of the Souchez, a distance of some 7000 yards. One British brigade was attached to our right centre. The objectives included the whole of the high ground of the Ridge and were deepest on the right.

Easter Sunday, the eve of the battle, was fine and sunny, and as we moved up from billets in Bouvigny, Gouy Servins, Maisnil Bouche, Villers-au-Bois, and the wooded camps round Château de la Haie there was no omen in the lovely sunset of the elemental storm which was to break in unison with our barrage at dawn. All was peaceful to the eye, as unit by unit took its way in ordered leisure up the slopes and spurs which are the talons of the claw-like Ridge. The little Carency and Souchez babbled clear and tranquil, heedless of the red morrow that should dye their shallows. From Cabaret Rouge the way was by more devious paths, trench and duck-walk, and in silence. As gloaming turned to dark the cunningly-masked tunnel entrances



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thus securing for us a commanding view of the plains to the north and east.

The front entrusted to the Corps extended from the Arras-Lens Road, about a mile north of Hockcourt to a point in our support line 1600 yards east of the Scarves, a distance of some 7000 yards. One British brigade was attached to our right center. The objectives included the whole of the high ground of the Ridge and were deepest on the right.

Easter Sunday, the eve of the battle, was fine and sunny, and we moved up from billets in Bourguignon, **FRONT LINE** Bouche, Villers-au-Bois, and the Bois de la Haie. From the Bois de la Haie there was no view in the lovely sunset of the distant scene which was to break in cannon with our barrage at dawn. All was peaceful to the eye, as night by night took its way in ordered silence up the slopes and spurs which are the ridges of the clay-silt Ridge. The little Carney and Scarves bubbled clear and tranquil, heedless of the red mortar that should dye their shallows. From Cabaret Rouge the way was by quiet German paths, trench and dug-out, and in silence. As gloaming turned to dark the conspicuously-marked tunnel entrances







gaped before us, and silence gave place to babel.

Wonderful in their work and in their secrecy had been the Engineers. For months they had delved underground till the web was spun which was so certainly to assure the undoing of the enemy. The tunnel system ran sheer into and up the Ridge, to open at the very feet of the Germans when "Zero" hour struck. "Tottenham," "Cavalier," "Souchez," and many more, some wide enough for four men to walk abreast, others floored with steel, they made speedy and clear—though strait—the way to the "lid," and if, apparently, an almost hopeless jam in the height of the show, were so efficiently controlled and so well equipped with signs and plans posted on the dripping walls that delay at any time was reduced to a minimum.

Through these subways, be it remembered, passed every man of the tens of thousands who played a part in the battle, and many had to traverse their tortuous depths again and again, relieving and being relieved, on urgent errands, with the wounded and the dead. Well-lit, when one realises what they were, it is obvious that they were no Mid-way Pleasaunce. Time or labour

had not been wasted in the cutting of resting-places in the stubborn rock, and whatever a man's business, though it were to stay at a given point, to "move on" in one direction or the other was imperative. Sleep, in the rare moments throughout the hectic week when sleep might have been possible, was so only if one stood flat against the wall and risked what the M.O. would probably have dubbed a "self-inflicted wound" from rifle-butt, water-tin or bulging ration-bag.

It was strange, there in the bowels of the earth, to greet for a moment a friend you had not seen for months, and perhaps thought "gone west"; to get a glimpse in a gust of candle-light of a face you knew well but could attach no name to till remembrance returned a week later. Stranger still, to make close friends with others whom you had never seen before and would never see again.

Meanwhile, as night wore on, the historic Easter Monday was dawning to snow and wind and rain. Hard by the exits the Hun was making himself snug against the weather. As usual when our big shows were on the *tapis*, he was quite familiar with the broad outlines of our programme. But in his astuteness he over-

reached himself this time. Had the promise of Easter Sunday held and Monday been fair, he would have been ready for us, standing to in every trench. But with the change in the weather he assumed there would be a change also in our plans, a postponement at least. So we caught him napping his soundest, and for this occasion the elements, foul as they were for us, were fouler for him. The storm drove before us, hand in hand with that of our making, and in the face of the Germans or of so many of them as faced us.

It was a nicely-planned affair, and the execution was on a par with the Staff work. Our barrage, which opened at 5.30 A.M., involved a gun to every 25 yards of the Bosche front, and was regular as a clock and as sweet as a sewing-machine. Nothing human could stand against it, and, combined with the gale, it sent the Hun helter-skelter for cover, smashing his forward positions and converting his support lines into a morass. It is no exaggeration to say that the ground at the crest of the Ridge and for roods behind it looked, and possibly still looks, like nothing so much as a rich plum-pudding before it goes to the boiling. One might not place

a hand between shell-hole and shell-hole and fail to touch the lips of both. The famous "craters," relics of an earlier campaign, and vaunted strong-points considered impregnable, were turned inside out once more and the reek of cordite might have been the fumes from another Etna. These craters lay in a chain along the whole front of the enemy's defences, on which he had expended considerable labour and skill during his two years of occupation, and which included also an extensive and intricate trench system, heavily wired, with numerous fire and communication trenches, deep and elaborate dug-outs, caves and tunnels, emplacements and redoubts.

If the preliminary play of the artillery—in connection with which it is timely here to acknowledge that of the Lahore Battery, our trusty pals and ever to be named with the victories of the Canadian Army in 1917—was masterly, the heroism of the infantry and their ancillaries the machine-guns was magnificent. With the drift of the snow, they passed over, wave on wave, casual in seeming, without undue haste, to the job in hand; did it, and consolidated, while the succeeding wave passed through and over



them, and behind the moppers-up halted here and there at their grisly task. The enemy sniper was doing signal service for his side, it must be admitted, and made things lively for us where the mopping-up had been slovenly or where a unit had lost touch and left a gap. But in the main the programme was carried out to the letter, and hour by hour the work was taken up and finished, clean-cut and punctual to schedule. Within the first twenty-four hours the Corps had captured the whole of the Ridge, with the exception of a small portion of Hill 145 and the "Pimple"; our patrols had pushed forward through Farbus Wood; and the Light Horse had penetrated to Willerval on the other side of the railway embankment.

For so many months had the Ridge obsessed us, screening all beyond it except the shaft-head of Fosse 6 and glimpses of distant *cités*, that it was almost a shock to gaze into the Promised Land less than an hour after our strafe began. There at last lay the vast saucer-country which stretches from Vimy Ridge to Douai Ridge, with Lens in its lap. So simple a country to read, after the complex contours, the spurs and re-entrants of the western slope, that we thought

it but a matter of days before Lens and Douai also should fall to us. Vimy and Petit Vimy were ours by nightfall, and Givenchy—not that Givenchy already inscribed on Canadian banners, but the dreadful city of ghosts where men gasped themselves to death in ineffectual masks under a drenching dose of poison worse than their own—Givenchy lay silent and horrible at our feet; the streets of Liévin and Angres were a-clatter with the flying heels of the Hun, and already our outposts were nearing Thelus Caves. After a mighty struggle Hill 145 fell on the Tuesday afternoon to the “Fighting Tenth” Brigade, widening the road for the torrent of pursuit, and the German retirement became a rout.

The section of the German defences round Hill 145 was exceptionally strong, and the enemy fought to retain this vital point with greater determination and higher courage than he displayed at other parts of the front.

The famous “Pimple,” a small but strongly-fortified hill just inside the German line south of the Souchez River, succumbed to a planned attack on the Thursday, April 12, after fierce hand-to-hand fighting with the German Guards.

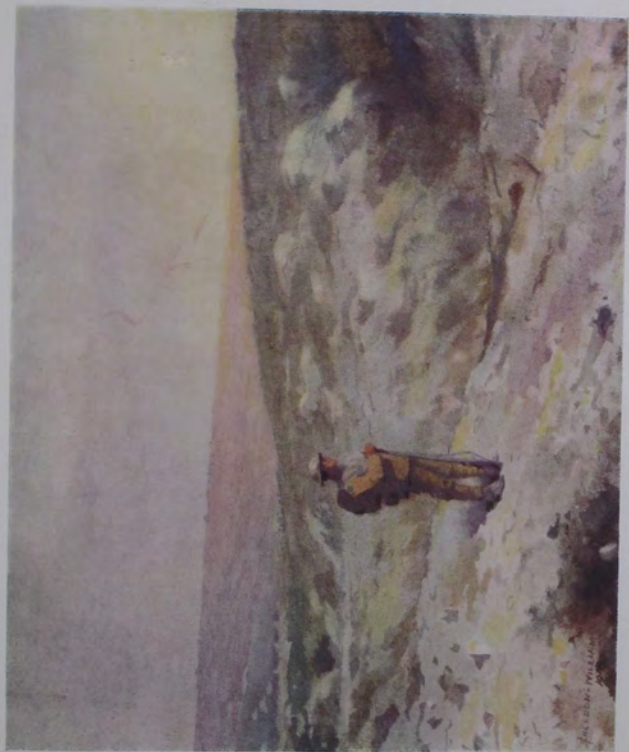
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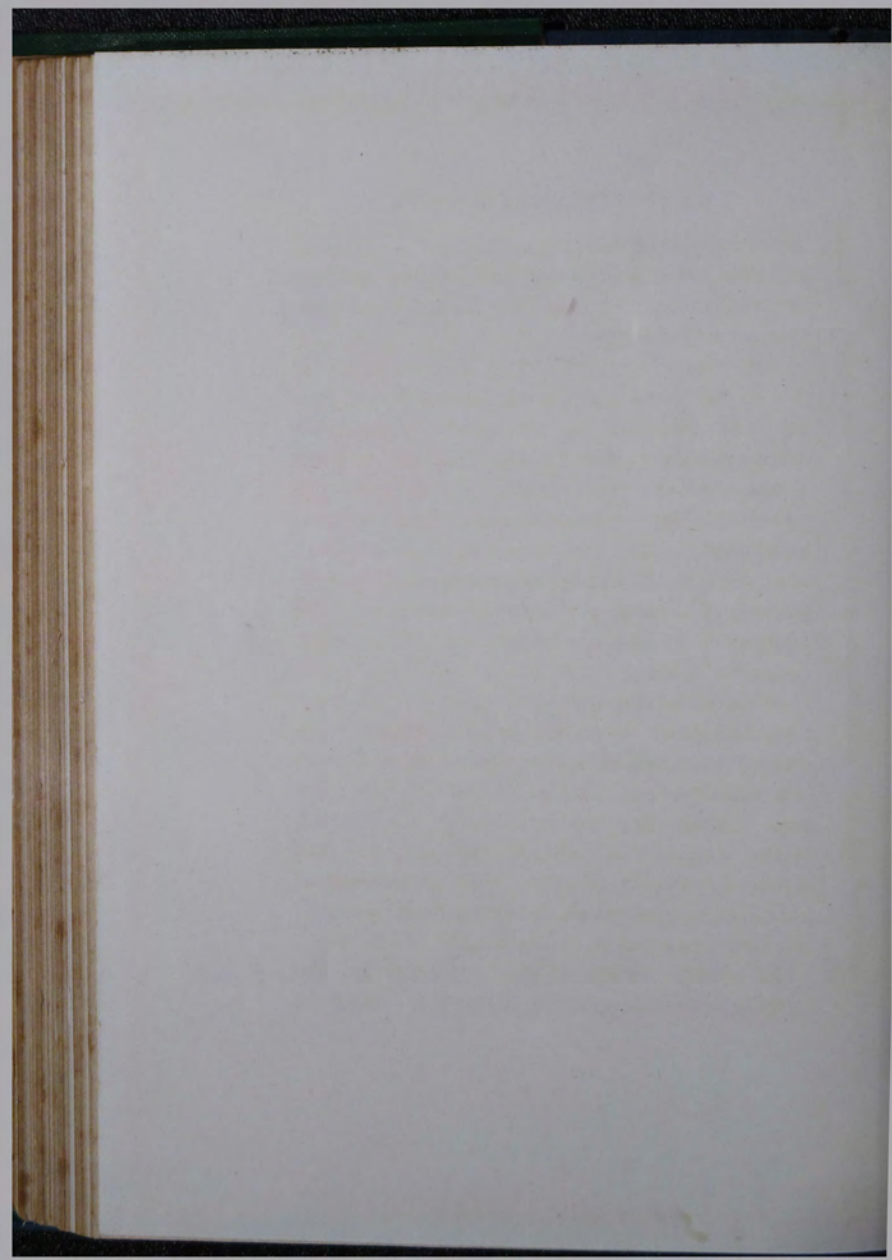
it but a matter of days before Lens and Arras also should fall to us. Vimy and Petit Vimy were ours by rightfall, and Givenchy—not that Givenchy already inscribed on Canadian banners; but the dreadful city of ghosts where men gaped themselves to death in infected masks under a dripping dose of poison worse than their own—Givenchy lay silent and horrible at our feet; the streets of Liévin and Angres were a-clatter with the flying heels of the Hun, and already our outposts were hearing Thomas Carver. After a mighty struggle Hill 145 fell on the Tuesday, April 10, 1917, the "Tenth" Brigade, winning the road for the onward of victory, and the German retirement became a rout.

The attack of the German defenses round Hill 145 was exceptionally strong, and the enemy fought to retain this vital point with greater determination and higher courage than he displayed at other parts of the front.

The German "Pillbox," a small but strongly-fortified hill just inside the German line south of the Soudan Trench, succumbed to a planned attack on the Thursday, April 12, after fierce hand-to-hand fighting with the German guards.







The enemy thus lost his last observation point, and gained for us control of any position on which he would have to concentrate for a counter-attack on the Ridge.

So, from Monday's dawn till midnight of Friday the battle raged, and we only turned over our new positions to the relieving Imperials when drunk with the job and the need of sleep. Throughout the week, with us had raged the storm, at times at blizzard strength, so that hourly the toil had become harder, and snow and mud made every step a purgatory. But we were masters of our fate, filthy but triumphant, and had scored as signal a victory as ever crowned Canadian arms.

With relief complete we trickled "home" how and when we could, careless of when we arrived and grateful for any snack from a way-side cook-kitchen, Y.M.C.A., or canteen, but more than all for the "Ruby Queen" or "Oro." Burly rough-necks, stiff as concrete with the accumulated mud of days, had to be dragged on to lorries, too weak or sleepy to heft themselves to the dropped tail-boards.

In addition to the capture of the Ridge, the Corps secured a total of over four thousand

prisoners, including 87 officers, together with 63 guns of all calibres, 124 machine-guns and 104 trench-mortars. Our losses were remarkably light in proportion to the results. The enemy's retreat did not halt till he had reached positions out of observation from the Ridge.

The Battle of Vimy Ridge was hailed throughout the Allied countries as being, in conjunction with the battle on our right round Arras, the most decisive engagement of the War to date. It was that, I think. It imperilled the German hold upon the French industrial districts. The hinge of the great double doors stretching northward to La Bassée and south to Arras, we oiled it effectually, and swung wide an entrance to at least the ante-room of Germany. It was a door that was never closed again, though the enemy might have pushed it to in April of 1918 had he possessed the pluck to face us. We were disappointed that for months we had to cool our heels in that wide waiting-room where Lens stood sentinel, when we had thought Vimy the signal for a relentless, unceasing "push" that should carry us through to Douai and beyond, with Cambrai, Valenciennes and Mons in sight. But that was not to be yet, and few of those who fought at the



Ridge were permitted to fight through to the redemption of the cities.

#### THE LURE OF LENS.

Though the Battle of Vimy Ridge itself came to an end within the week, the aftermath of pursuit and digging-in occupied several days, and in some respects this period was far more trying than had been the great engagement. As was his habit after a bad beating, the enemy was excessively peevish and seemed to have more guns in operation than ever before. But during our short interval of rest the weather had again changed and summer conditions replaced snow and mud. So life was very well worth living, and we could afford to laugh at Brother Bosche.

It was, too, such a complete change of surroundings which our good fortune had provided us with. After a winter in the Bajolle Line, with occasional excursions to the Servins or the Château, it was joy to lie on the firing-step and bask in the sun. That eastern slope was so delectable already, with the woods bourgeoning, the spring flowers wreathing each shell-hole, and the swallows nesting in the parados above our dug-outs. Out over the country-side we looked

to a new horizon which we hoped soon would be ours, the further rim of the saucer, and at last Vimy lay behind us.

Most men know for their sins Gouy Servins, and its sister hovel-villages, Grand and Petit Servins. That winter there were a few civilians pursuing the nimble franc in the pea-soup streets, and steadily growing wealthy—as riches count in that part of France—on the foolish Anglais and Canadien, but showing no sign of it in their sordid lives and dingy rags. The line, even Bajolle Switch and the Chalk-pit high up on the Ridge, or a fragment of a Souchez cottage, was salubrious quarters both for comfort and company compared with “Hen-skin Villas” or such other winter residence as was the habitation of unlucky wights left “out,” with a poor apology for elevating female society at the corner *estaminet*.

The new advanced sector, then, was Paradise after the winter of our discontent. Petit Bois, the Bois d’Hirondelle and other copses dignified by the name of wood, with their bravery of vernal green, framed pink villages which, at a distance, seemed unspoiled. If the woods shrieked at night with the flight of shrapnel and H.E., and columns of coral dust rose against the midday

sun from those same villages crumbling into fragments of brick and mortar, one might at least walk dry-shod under God's good sky and wonder at the flowers which refused to be discomfited and at the birds which sang in the moonlight even in the sinister Cité d'Abattoir. I never heard them do that before, and suppose it must be one of the topsy-turvies of war, bizarre enough. To hear the twitter of swallow and starling and thrush while shell-fire makes "an awful rose of dawn" hours before one's watch says that dawn should break, is a weird experience and a bit of a slap at man's muddling way with the Divine plan.

There is a coral necklace of villages all the way from the Ridge to Lens, the white string of road and trench unbroken save here and there, but the beads strewn recklessly about the green floor. Some were humble communities of workmen's cottages, uniform and not very beautiful, but others, such as one saw the remains of in the Cité du Petit Bois, were more pretentious, half-timbered and stuccoed, and even in ruins told that once they had been sweet and peaceful homes, with here and there demesnes of size, high-walled and gated. Kitchen-gardens and flower-plots still struggled against choking weeds

and the deadlier shell-fumes, pathetic in their defiance of this reign of hell.

The months of May and June wore away in a series of little battles for small objectives which we had expected to mop up in our stride *en route* to Lens. The generating station and the "Triangle" cost us much in the first weeks after Vimy, and little La Coulotte was an expensive nut to crack for all the kernel there was at the cracking.

But step by step we were nearing Lens, and already its outer defences were falling. For long we had refused to use our artillery against the city, owing to the known presence there of thousands of French civilians working in the mines for their taskmasters, but for all the benefit they eventually gained we had better have abandoned such counsel of perfection from the first. On our flanks villages and towns of size were in the British grip by the end of May, and the cordon of khaki, gathering as it went, flung behind it such treasure-trove as Neuville S. Vaast, once a City of Pleasure but now as Sodom and Gomorrha; Thelus and its labyrinths, Roclincourt and Farbus and Bailleul in the south, to Maroc, Bully-Grenay, Les Brebis, and



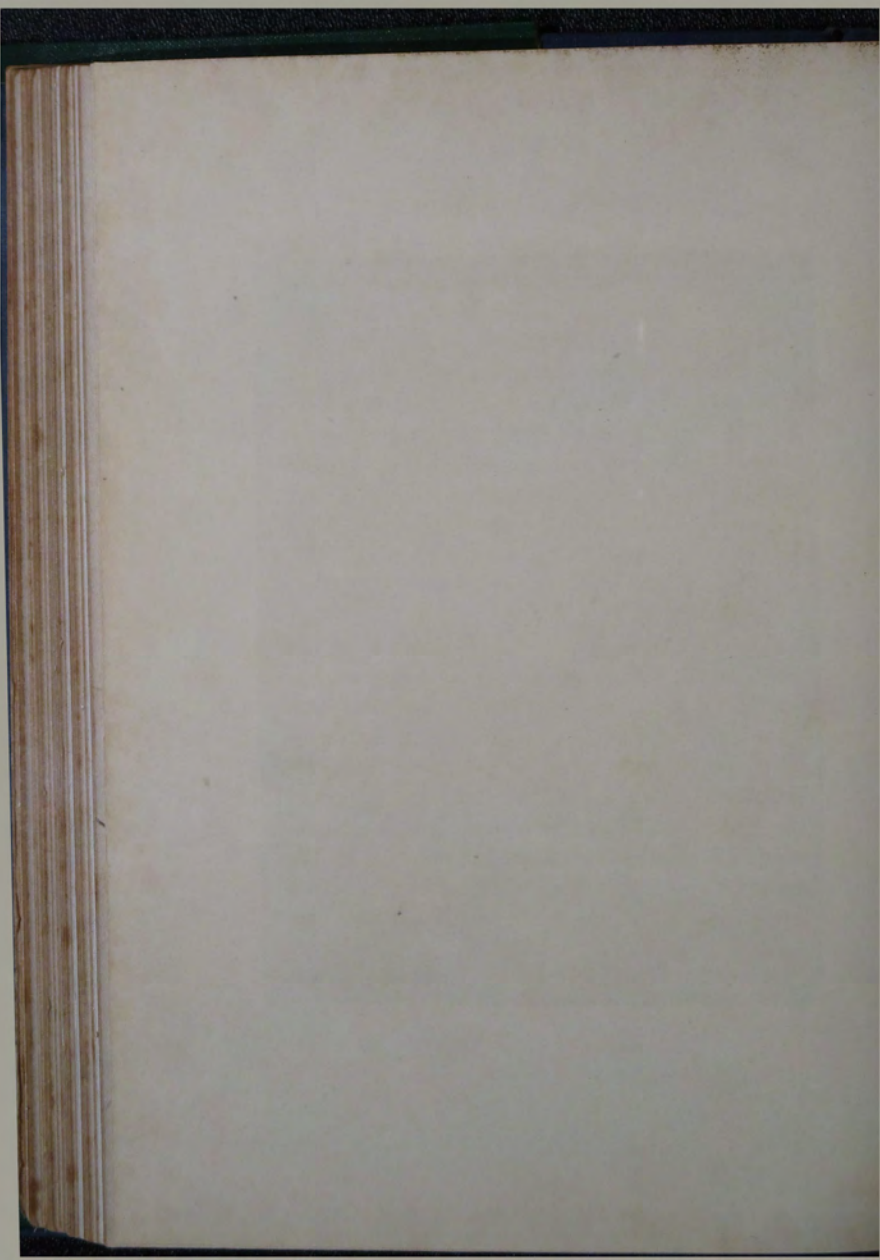
W. J. L. J. J.

and the deadlier, self-sufficing, pathetic in their defence of this realm of hell.

The months of May and June were away in a series of little battles for small objectives which we had expected to mop up in our strike against Lens. The generating station and the "Triangle" cost us much in the first week after V-day, and little Le Coudette was an expensive nut to crack for all the brutal force was at the cracking.

Day by day we were clearing Lens, and already its outer defences were falling. For long we had striven to use our artillery against the city, owing to the **RATIONS** shortage there of thousands of French civilians working in the mines for their sustenance, but for all the bluntness they eventually gained we had better have started with our cannon of position from the first. The big French villages and towns of the west of the British gap by the end of May, and the capital of the north, gathering as it went, were behind a new frontier-wave as Neuville St. Vaast, once a City of Pleasure but now as Sedan and Bourguignon, Fribourg and its hinterlands, Roubaix and Fribourg with Halluin in the south, to Marco, Wall, Genoy, Les Buis, and







La Couronne to northward. We were steadily encroaching by the end of June on the girdle of *cités* which guarded the vitals of Lens proper, and on the 25th drove the enemy from the first-line trenches on the outskirts; Avion and Méricourt were No Man's Land, and Loos was ours. Weekly we picked up furlong after furlong of the great Lens-Arras Road, simplified the trench system at the Red Line and consolidated in a complete and systematic manner, bent on adding Lens to our laurels before summer waned.

“REST.”

The Canadians indulged in “Corps Rest” in July, and the Hersin-Compigny area became the centre of a tremendous training-ground, on which was laid out a replica of the enemy defensive system in front of Lens, as portrayed for us by our flight observers. “Over the tapes” was the programme daily, and, heartened by the magnificent and spectacular feat of British arms on the Messines front, men worked themselves into trim for a renewal of the struggle for our own pet objective.

There was much enforced idleness in the line, but none at “rest.” Up forward a man must

needs go warily and not indulge too lavishly his keenness for work. Enough that he did what he had to do promptly and well. For hours and even days, on a "quiet" front, he might do virtually nothing but stand his guard or fire a few rounds from his Lee-Enfield or Vickers-Maxim; for the remainder of the time lying doggo and improving his mind with draw-poker or crib or converting iron rations into something edible over a refractory "Primus." So he was not always superlatively fit when he returned to billets, and that paradox "rest" was designed for the express purpose of getting him back into condition, above and beyond rehearsing his next little stunt in the trenches. Early morning parades, P.T. and barrage drill might seem piffling to the fellow who for days and weeks has been cohabiting with some unpleasant form of possible death, but that they were necessary was proved over and over again by the results. Polishing brass, moreover, and shaving every day whether you wanted to or not, was putting into concrete form that excellent abstraction, *moral*.

Training in the field differed materially from training in the back areas. In most cases those under schooling in the latter were recruits to all

intentions and purposes, and a stiff kindergarten curriculum they had to face. Training in the field was a "refresher" more or less on the spot, with the idea of "refitting," as I have said, incorporating also new stunts which experience or mistakes had thrown into the spot-light. Men were no longer treated as little children to be bullied or hustled in a salutary way, but adjudged thinking, intelligent beings, and as a rule were given a chance to develop any special bent to which they had shown a tendency. For example, it is true maps were a rarity even at the end of the War, and aerial photographs and "mosaics" treasures to be hoarded as souvenirs by the lucky few into whose official possession they came. But maps there were, and, though jeered at by the majority, in the hands of an efficient "reader" they became of tremendous help to a section or gun-crew. I know, though, of nothing to which the maxim that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" applies so aptly as to a road or trench map, particularly the latter. They are superb walking-sticks, but rotten crutches. Put all your weight on one and it lets you down with a thud. Use it as a rather illegible finger-post, or to confirm your visual observation, and it becomes a

very present help. But, above all things, if you are leading a tired mob, *don't* pull it out at a cross-roads if you do not wish your ears to burn at caustic witticisms and soulful groans from the rear. Many a good, self-reliant officer has ruined his reputation with his men and lost their confidence on a dark night by "flashing" a map to make his own assurance doubly sure.

While on the subject of training, I must not forget the special schools which beautified the back areas and were the temporary homes of promising N.C.O.'s, "officers aspirant," and Simon Pure officers needing a "refresher." They covered all branches of the Service, some being specially devoted to artillery or machine-gunnery, and others to "general purpose" infantry tuition. They were a home from home—and a long way too. Of the nature of the O.T.C. schools in England, they were near enough to the whirl of things to supplement the ordinary, sufficiently hard curriculum with items even more strenuous. And they worked miracles.

There is no man more satisfied with his own way of doing things and more contemptuous of anything savouring unduly of "parade" than your seasoned N.C.O. after a continuous year



or two in the line. I have seen platoons of these at C.O.'s parade the first morning after "school" opens. Dirty rifles, loose belts, unkempt hair, "shunning all over the parade ground," dragging their feet at a syncopated 80, chatty and scratchy. And I've seen them a week later. O little tin gods of Chelsea, can you beat it? Their feet were as the feet of one man, and that a good one; their eyes came round with a "click"; emery-paper and "khaki blanco" shrieked their advertisements, and never a flicker at the "As you were!"—the everlasting "As you were!" which damned their finished movements.

"As you were!" will be found inscribed on the heart of many a departed Adjutant and R.S.M. I have never known either of these demigods content with the first essay at a movement. Ten platoons may come to the "Stand at ease!" or "Shun!" with the unified stamp of an enraged mastodon, but—is the Regimental pleased? Not so, not so. "As you were!" he shrieks, and "Why can't you do it together? Rotten!" And they do it again—rottenly. "That's better," says the Sergeant-major.

Of course we got used to their tricks and their

ways. You gave it up as hopeless ever to appear with a rifle other than in "a filthy and disgusting state," but if you polished well behind the rear-sight slide and inside the piling swivel, you'd get off with a reprimand; yet a drop of oil on the bolt or a zealous superfluity inside the magazine meant Orderly Room. As for your boots, it was a court-martial matter, one soon learned, to have them laced other than "four across and three diagonal," and if it was Friday the 13th and in marching on to the parade-ground at 120 a quarter-inch of boot-lace trickled in agony below your puttee, you were coldly asked why you persisted in strolling all over the camp with your boot-laces hanging round your heels; on your account entirely your platoon was stigmatised as the foulest and most disreputable gang of incapables that had ever disgraced the holy and white-washed precincts, and—you heard all about it again from the platoon later.

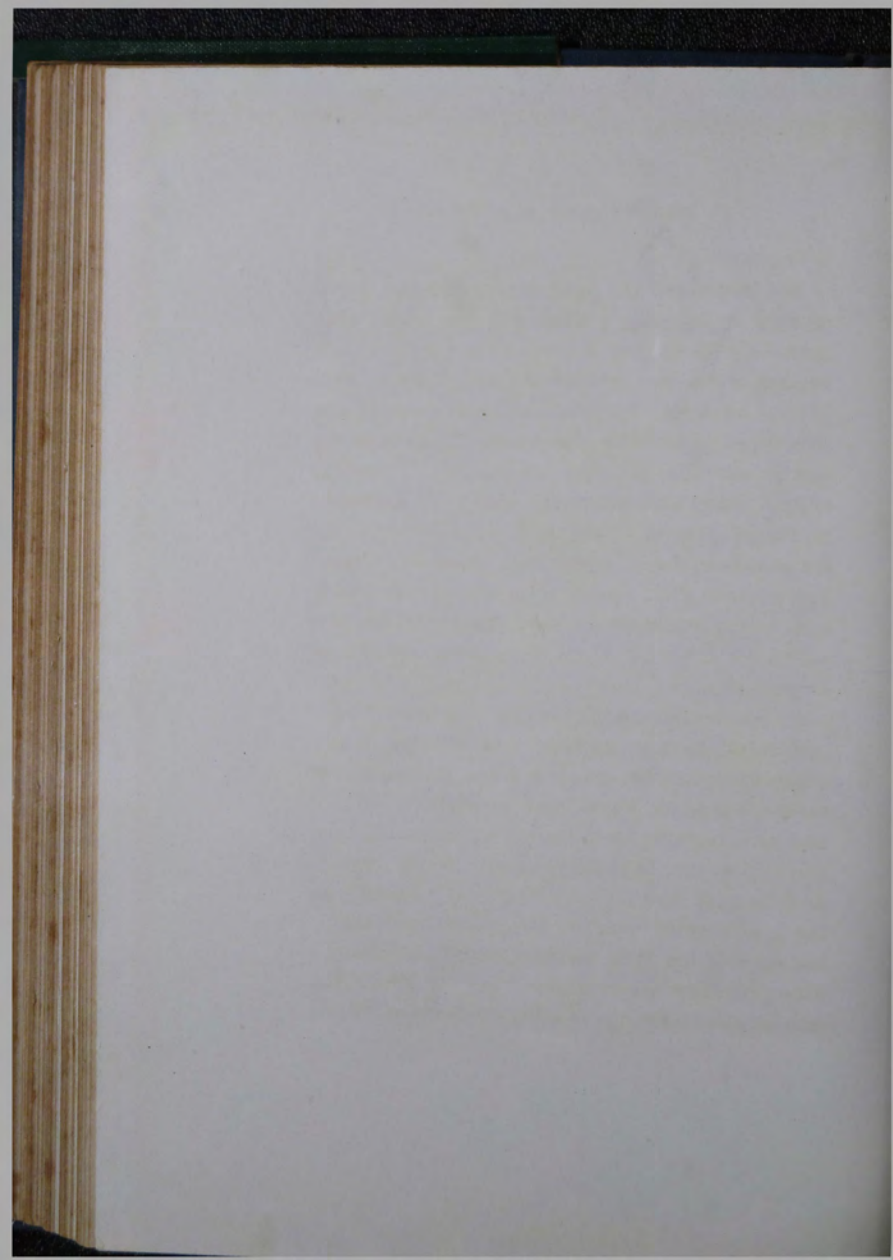
I suppose it was good for our souls. It certainly smartened us, and always came to an end in time to prevent *pukka* men being converted into monkeys. But—better the Somme and Paaschendale rolled into one putrid horror than an unlimited course of "school."



#### GENERATING STATION, LENS







## HILL 70.

We re-entered the field during the last week of July, left-closing a short pace on Lens. Our immediate front now included the northern and western outer defences of the city. From Hill 70 to the Green Crassier our line described a crescent—"a horn on the wings of the morning and a horn on the edge of the pit." And it hugged closer and closer the *cités* of S. Laurent, S. Pierre, Jeanne d'Arc, and S. Theodore. At the southern horn, below and under full observation from the Crassier, a steady whittling process began while plans were maturing for the storm which swept the enemy from Hill 70 on August 15.

Though often cited as a major operation only incidental to the protracted Battle of Lens, which occupied the entire summer season as far as the Canadian Corps was concerned, Hill 70 was more decisive when judged by its results than many a show covering a wider front, and is deserving of equal recognition. We feinted on the south with one of the most spectacular barrages of the War, and distracted the enemy's attention from the northern point till it was too late for him to put up an effective defence. True,

he fought bitterly, and the First Division had a very heavy casualty list to tell of its heroism that day. But the capture of this mound—for these so-called “hills” are little more, yet their slightly higher contours give greatly increased observation over the flatter neighbourhood—enabled us to look down on and command with our guns the northern parts of Lens, and drove the enemy from the streets into the cellars of the suburbs. The shattering of the city had now begun in earnest, and with nice aiming marks visible in the more congested quarters and by this time also within machine-gun range, it was rapidly becoming an inferno.

Hill 70 surmounted, ensued some weeks of that “hot stuff” which, because it is not a set piece, cannot arrogate to itself the title of battle, but which, in many respects, is far more trying to those engaged, and is productive daily of signal achievements by individual units or brigade fronts. The Green Crassier, which remained long inviolate, was of the greatest value to the Hun, as from its cindery slopes he could command Hill 60, which we held, Liévin, and the southern and south-western *cités*. Our communication trenches were under perpetual



enfilade fire, and he gas-shelled the open as often as the wind was suitable. Night after night minor operations were launched at the complicated trench system behind S. Theodore and S. Pierre, and too often the ground gained was incommensurate with the loss of personnel.

But all this had been foreseen, and the Corps well knew the price it would have to pay in advance for the prize at which it aimed. It was hard luck that the enemy should have had time to dig in at Lens during the weeks we were covering the intervening miles between that city and Vimy, and the only recourse was to make him as uncomfortable as possible. This we did. An occasional reconnoitring expedition into the purlieus opened one's eyes to the Bosche state of mind, and there was the less risk attached to these jaunts of inquiry because the Hun was not showing himself more than he had to. The sniper seldom invited recrimination at compound interest by opening fire, though it was an easy mark to pick a man off at, for instance, the embankment, and easier still on the charnel-ground, wide and empty to the sky but for the three-days dead, which gaped between S. Theodore and S. Edouard.

Meanwhile the enemy's heavy artillery pounded away on a set programme at points well known, and avoided, if possible, at certain hours. There was always one charm about Fritz's gunnery, and that was its cultured and mechanical regularity. Barring the vital need of being at a certain point at a certain moment, a man could more or less depend on a clear road at given hours and knew when to take an alternative route. Another thing you discovered about the Hun shelling quite early in the game was that the safest way was to walk—apparently—into it, at the same pace at which you were proceeding about your lawful occasions when he opened up, and to follow your original line. If you began to hurry he would elevate a little; if you decided to dawdle he would elevate a good bit more, jumping the point you would have reached had you continued at your original pace. If you thought it a good idea to fetch a compass, he thought it a good idea to switch a degree or two right or left. So, at the worst, your chances were even if you kept straight on, and you generally found by the time you reached the ground to which Brother Bosche had been paying his attentions that, though there were a good

many new holes to negotiate, he had moved away back of you or a hundred yards to your flank. And, as we all know, a shell never hits in the same place twice—or not often.

So, too, there were certain pet aiming marks of the Hun which it was well to avoid at specified hours. Any man who knows Liévin will remember how at 9 *ak emma* and 4 *pip emma* daily our friend would bang away at the sturdy old White Château till he hit it, and then shut up. And I don't believe he ever depressed half a degree, because, had he done so, the comparatively flimsy Red Château a stone's-throw away would now be the mausoleum of several consecutive H.Q. families, who were wont conscientiously to time the pills by their wrist-watches and greet the "outers" with loud cheers.

A quaint creature of habit, our Fritzie.

#### IV

##### BY PLUMER'S WISH.

IN the first week of October, Lens was at our feet and we maintained then and still believe that the attack for which the plans were complete would have given us the city. Seldom had operation orders leading up to a proposed push been so all-embracing in their scheme, and the smallest detail had been attended to preliminary to "Zero," the hour of which was actually known to a few of us. Positions for advanced ammunition dumps had been pricked off on the map, and even the devious routes by which the mules and other means of transport would work up with the advancing columns had been carefully gone over on the ground by picked scouts. No Man's Land in front of the Red Line, Saskatoon Trench, Partridge and the connecting links, as also the debatable country covering the further confines of Avion, were now

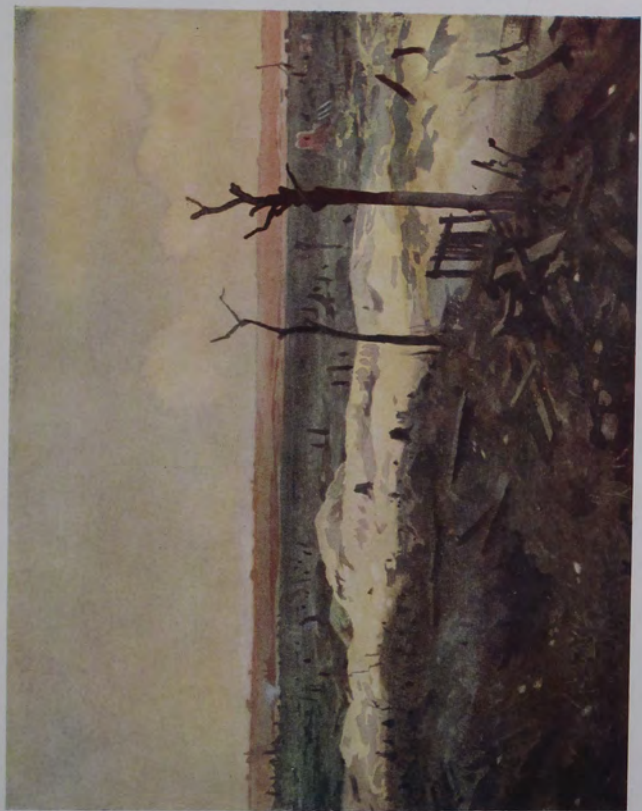


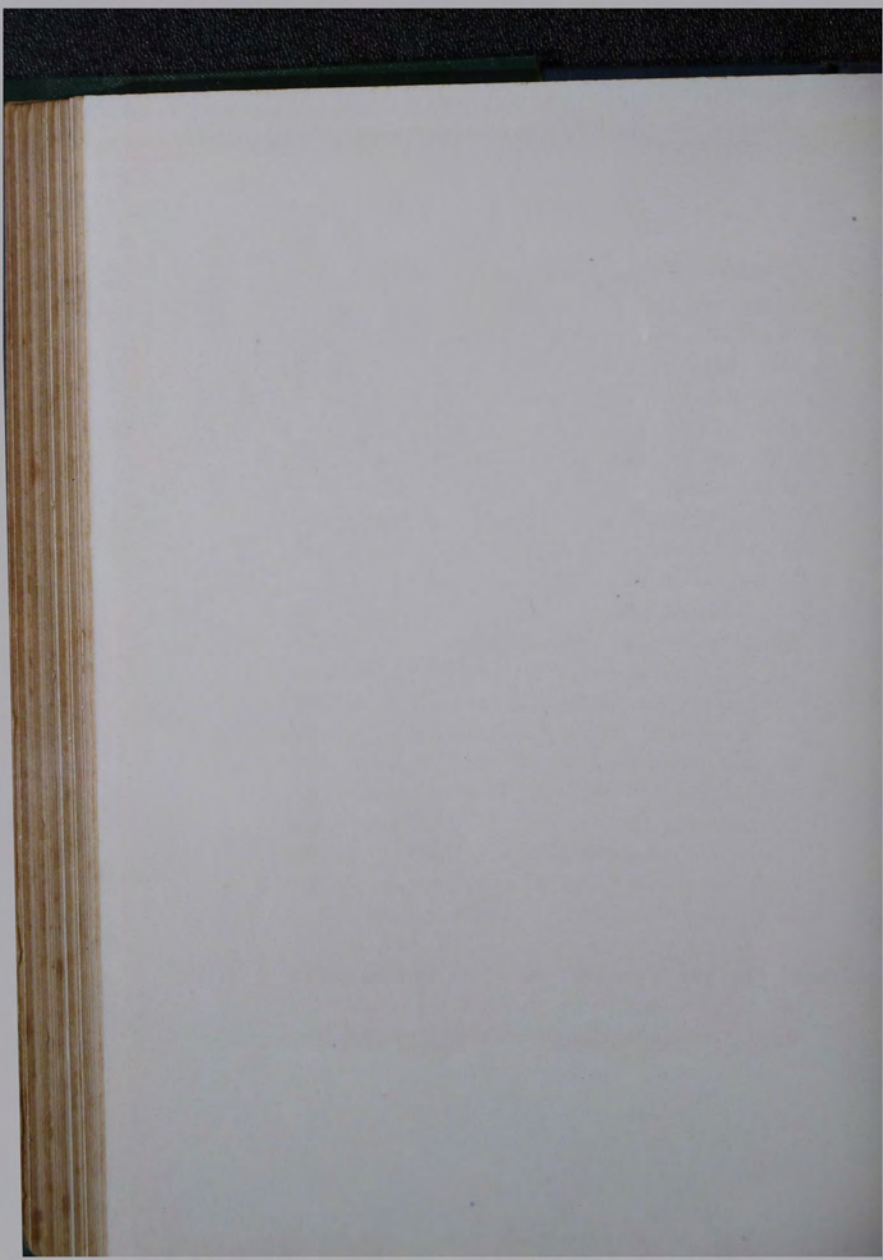
ALBION, N. H.

#### IV

##### By FLUKE'S WING.

In the first week of October, Lens was at our feet and we maintained them and still believe that the attack for which the place was completely well known as the city. Seldom had operations before leading up to a proposed push been so all-embracing in their scheme, and the smallest detail had been attended to preliminary to "Zero," the hour of which was actually known to a few of us. Positions for advanced ammunition dumps had been picked off on the map, and even the devious route by which the water and other means of transport would work up with the advancing columns had been carefully gear over on the ground by picked scouts. St. Mary's Land in front of the Red Line, Richmond Trench, Partridge and the cresting line, as also the debatable country covering the further confines of Avion, were now







familiar to us by night and day. The enemy was in our grasp. To the northward the crescent was curling in from Hill 70, and at the other extreme our outposts were in touch with the enemy posts behind Aconite. We were sure of it this time, and only awaited the final operation order in which we would be told to "attack and take"—Lens.

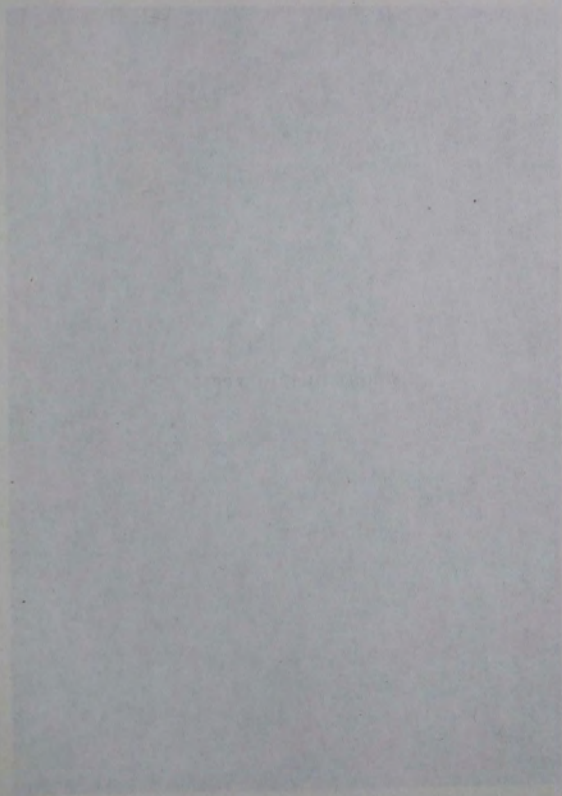
On the morning of October 5 we learned that it was a wash-out.

It is needless to emphasise the immense disappointment, qualified only by the rumour that the Corps had been chosen to move at speed to the Salient and wring the heights of Paaschendaële from the enemy. A flattering invitation, we allowed, but we did hate to leave our own pet job incomplete, and on the eve of finishing it up handily at last. However, Plumer had asked for us, and fame said that Plumer had never lost a battle. So, as the world knows, we went up and took Paaschendaële for him, and returned to the Lens area at Christmas to begin our work all over again.

The Canadians are proud of Paaschendaële, but how we loathed the place, and Imperials and Anzacs will join, I know, in that hymn of hate.

Still, we were tickled that we had been asked to help score a victory there, where so many men just as good as ourselves, no doubt, had met bad luck.

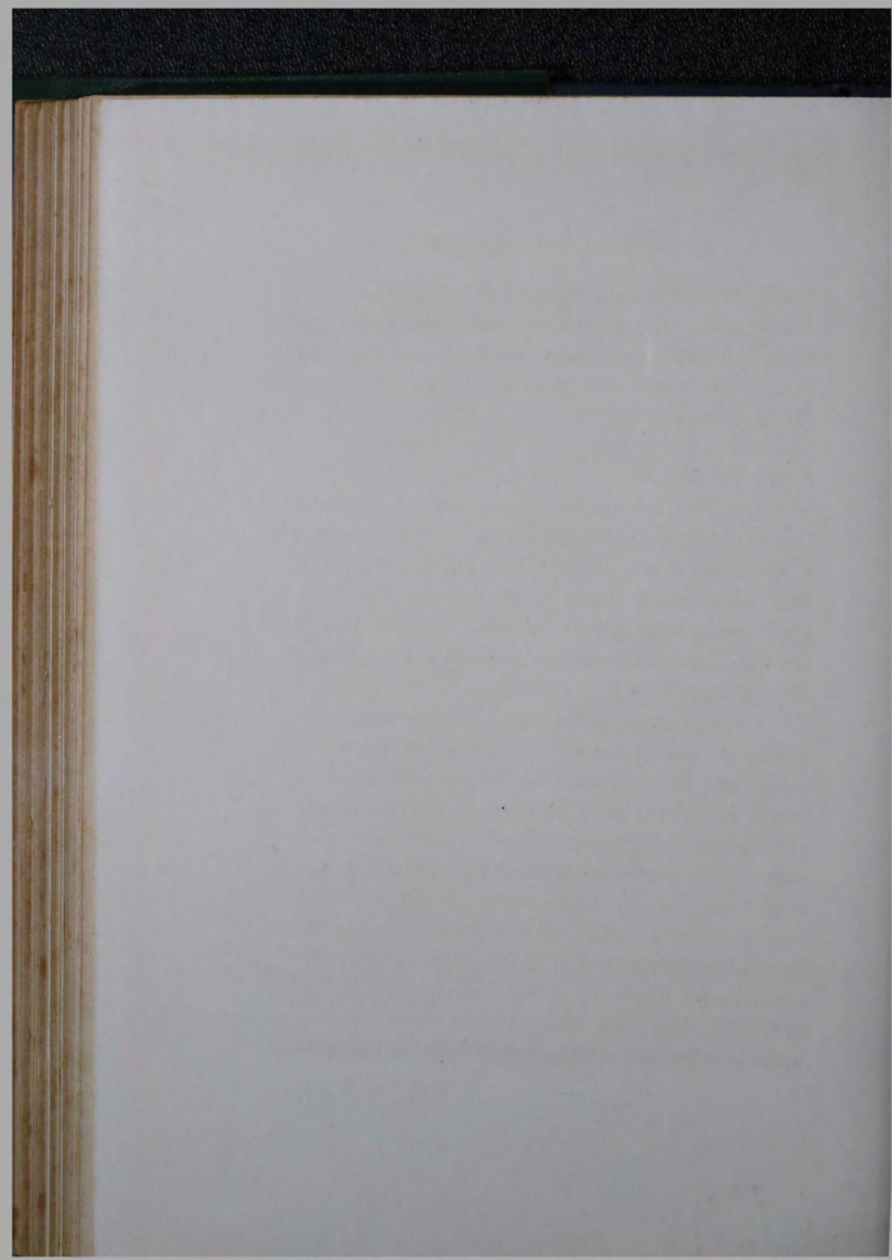
Whoever says we were forced into undertaking the job, lies. We, officers and men, would have resented it in no measured terms had our Commander-in-Chief denied Plumer his wish, and to say we only went because we had to is a slur on the Corps, and could only emanate from stay-at-homes who know nothing of the vital heart of things out there. It was the same circle of timid arm-chair critics (they need not have bothered to be timid on *our* account) who in the spring of 1918, when Paaschendaele fell again into the hands of the enemy, whimpered the "I told you so" chorus and deplored once more the expenditure of life in the great victory six months earlier as so many good men thrown away. They were blind to the obvious. Had we not taken Paaschendaele in 1917 the Bosche would have taken not only Paaschendaele but—*Ypres*, in 1918. *Ypres* may be only a rotten, echoing shell of its past and of small strategic value in itself. But it is what it stands for, and the moral effect had it at last fallen into the enemy's hands would have been so tremendous as to add increased vigour to his



MOONLIGHT IN YPRES







giant offensive, and prolonged the war a year. Paaschendaele was but a little obstacle to the enemy in 1918, but it was just big enough to stay him in his stride and save Ypres, and, perhaps, the Channel ports.

#### PAASCHENDAELE.

There was one comfort about Paaschendaele (just one), and that was that the Bosche detested it as much as we did. Dante would have given it an honourable place in his collection of hells. Fewer men were killed there by steel and shell than by mud. It was the original and authentic Slough of Despond.

Any one can appreciate what kind of an undertaking it was to move the Corps northward *en masse* and at the maximum of speed. Through Northern France and Flanders we cluttered the highways and byways, and got a day's rest only when it was impossible to move. The achievement was hardly beaten for expedition and management by the famous forced march on Amiens the following August. But there were, I think, no mistakes in the latter, while I feel confident there were at least one or two misreadings of maps and confusion of units on the road

to Ypres. I can see still an ancient windmill in the Hazebrouck area. We said "good-bye" to it at 6 o'clock one morning. But it was a case of "Say 'Au revoir' but not 'good-bye,'" for it was still there at noon. In the intervening hours we had contracted acute vertigo or wind-millitis from watching our shadows go round and round. We marched twenty-eight kilometres that day, so says my diary.

However, we got to Ypres all right, the last lap by lorry along rather pretty lanes, to emerge on the road close to the hospital. A lovely morning, with the shells breaking in the Grand' Place, a few hundred yards away, quite like the pictorial press. The "Aussies" weren't sorry to see us. "Ain't it a Ba-a-stard, Canada!" was their characteristic greeting. "You'll do it all right."

It was my first look at Ypres since I was a small, unappreciative schoolboy, but there was not much time to compare it with what Baedeker had to say about its pristine glories. We trailed through the Grand' Place, past S. Martin and the Cloth Hall, and turned up the road toward Potijze, while high-velocities picked off single men, whole platoons, and loaded lorries with beautiful impartiality. I recollect a despatch-rider



and his mount encountering a splashy end just as we passed the Cathedral doorway. And a gorgeous sun smiled down on it all.

A high-velocity—big stuff, I mean, not a whizz-bang—is the most demoralising thing. A man has one chance in ten to avoid a shell which comes, but none in the case of a shell which only arrives. There was ducking and dodging in the column, but we didn't double round that corner.

Relief of the Imperials and Anzaes was completed during the first day and night, Sunday, October 21—we always looked for trouble on a Sunday—and the Corps took up its position on the bumps and hummocks of mud which separate the so-called "beks." The latter were sluggish fluids, only to be distinguished from the surrounding terrain because they crawled.

Sole access to the front lines was by the Zonnebek Road, which fingered off at intervals into mutilated bath-mat tracks. These, to the honour of the Engineers, were repaired and extended hour by hour, but at their best were only better than the miry ground itself. Some of these terminated, or pretended to, at pill-boxes, one-time cottages most of them, converted into strong-points with masses of concrete, and com-

paratively good cover, but splendid marks for Fritz, who, of course, was on intimate terms with all of them. "Levi Cottage," "Hambourg House," "Tyne Cot"—in such wise were they designated, and perhaps at one time their ghosts were garlanded with roses and honeysuckle. Their decorations at the date I write of were chiefly boxes of S.A.A. and unpleasantly extinct Huns. We used the one in considerable quantities and had no time to remove the other.

It took us a week to clear Paaschendaale itself of the enemy, and he still retained a precarious foothold at Moorslede. But we shifted him from all of the nominally high ground. There was some good scrapping in front of Beecham Wood and Abraham Heights (you knew they were woods and heights because it said so on the map), and the group of pill-boxes round and including Belvue was the stage of a pretty tussle.

Our mastery of the air was peradventure taking a journey during our stay in the Paaschendaale area, and in the few days' interval of "rest and recreation" at Potijze, S. Jean, and other health resorts between Ypres and the line. As a matter of fact our flyers were, most of them, well over the line somewhere in Germany, doing

worse to the Hun than ever he was to us. But he was certainly busy. Not content with following ration parties and small bodies of reinforcements up and down "K" track, "Jack and Jill," "No. 5," and the rest, he made hay while the moon shone and brought over specially conducted parties from Kulturland, with their suitcases full of bombs. You simply could not sleep for the noise of the things. I counted 500 one night (October 31, I think, when the moon was full and Londoners were keeping us company as victims to insomnia) before I could command well-earned slumber in a bivouac. One lay so deep in the mud that it required a direct hit (only one) to get a man, and it was extraordinary how little live-stock, men, horses or mules, the Gothas would bag in that congested area of emergency camps. They would "drop tail-boards" and only give a blighty to the dun-coloured pride of the transport, or marshal a squadron of the best against the moon, precipitating "by numbers" among a half-battery at the word of command, and only score sleepy curses.

Humour was at its lowest ebb at Paaschendaale, I think, but the very horrors had their whimsies. There was a pill-box on the Zonnebek

Road near the station, much affected by brigades for H.Q. Fritz knew and loved it well, and it was about the most sultry spot on a sultry high road. From it one could, in moments of comparative leisure, the while the Hun was "bumping" on the concrete overhead, watch life and death slither by in full panoply, with extra bad quarters of an hour when so frightful was the shelling that even ammunition had to hold its horses. The tracks were nasty, but safer than that brick-paved road, where one stood as good a chance of death from the hoof of panic as from enemy fire. I saw a shell land almost under a man in a hurry and hoist him thirty feet in the air; he came down with his legs "going through the motions" of running, landed on his feet and continued without breaking step for the hinterland. One laughed, and it was good to be able to laugh. A pal of mine salvaged of marmalade, one pot, small, regulation issue, and after sampling it ditched it with his greatcoat above a bunk in the pill-box. There were at that time at least 234 persons, ranging from generals to "spare parts," occupying this eligible and important messuage. Somebody requisitioned the greatcoat, all unaware of the sting. I vow that within



half an hour every individual of the 234 was a nauseating mess of Dundee stickiness.

I have mentioned "Jack and Jill" track. It crossed the Hannebek *en route* to Levi Cottage. In the small hours one night I encountered on its fragments two horses, or, to be accurate, one was on it, standing by his mate while the latter floundered withers deep in the reeking filth. There were some hiati in the track—by no means constant factors either, thanks to the Hun marksmanship—and the Hannebek, though a miserable apology for a water-way, was good to negotiate by something solid, were it no more than a teetering 6-inch plank. Those poor beasties had traversed the putrid stream and all the lapses of the bath-matting, to die together, adding two more to the dreadful hirsute growths with which the battlefield was rank.

Many a man died at Paaschendaale who would not have done so but for the mud. A misstep on a track was a serious matter. To be thrown from it, slightly wounded and partially disabled, meant slow suffocation in the ooze. One saving grace had this cesspool. It minimised the effect of the shells. The harder the ground the wider the fan-radius of the explosion, and vice versa.

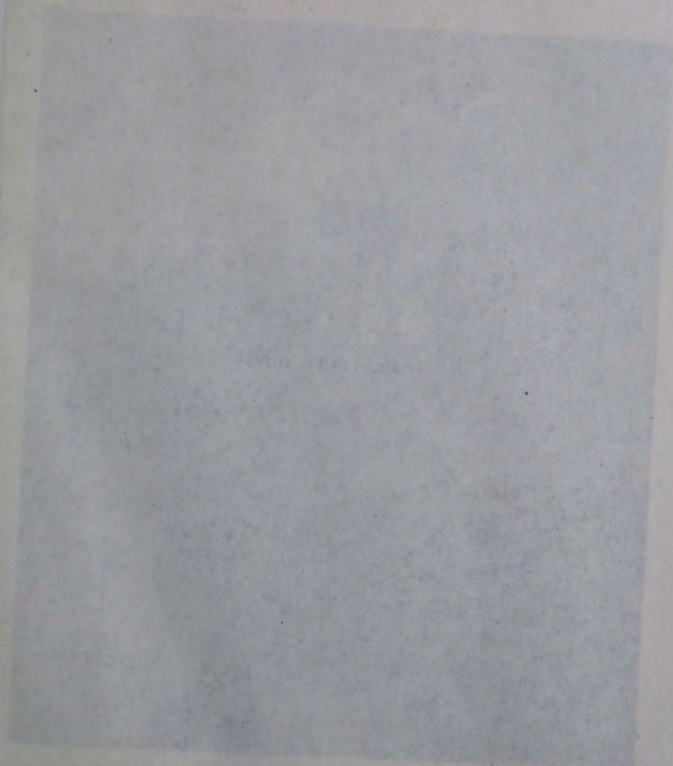
Many of the enemy's lethal love-letters went "plop" into the terrain with nothing but a column of putrescence to follow.

The Corps devoted four weeks in all to the task of clearing the neighbourhood of the enemy, and did it thoroughly. We would have liked to follow him down the slopes and chase him over the lowlands, but we had him where we wanted him, in the acutest misery and with a minimum of observation. Moreover, the artillery always said that what he sent over was exceeded as three to one by our stuff. I hope so.

So ended the dun epic of "Passiondale," for thus we renamed it as the Old Contemptibles renamed "Wipers." And how much more significant is our rendering of the name, significant of all it epitomised, both for the living and our many gallant dead. The Flemish peasant may mouth his "Paaskendaele"; we, who re-made the map, will know it as the "valley of passion" so long as memory lasts.

#### THE CANADIANS AT CAMBRAI.

Though the Canadian Corps did not as such take part in the brilliant but abortive Cambrai affair, being engaged in winding up its business



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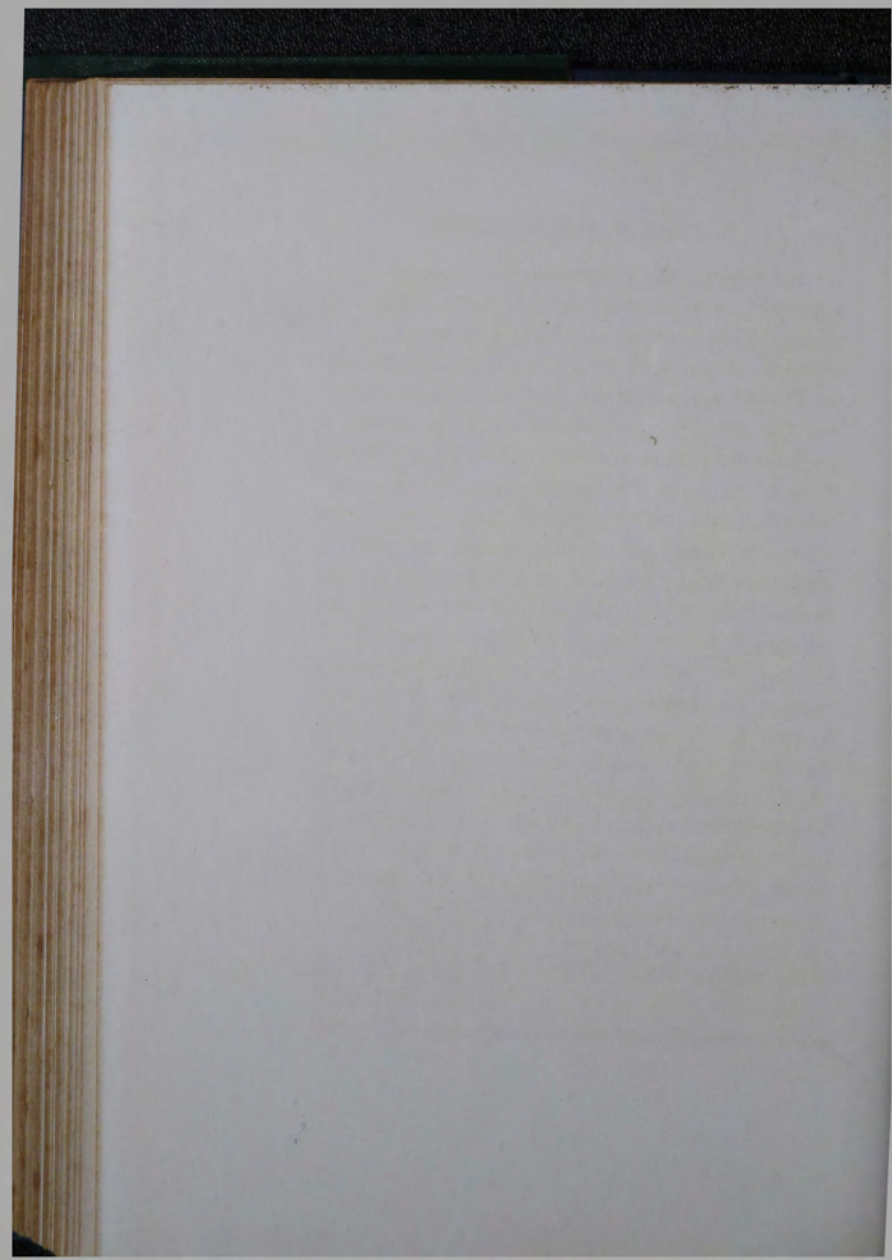
So ended the "Paskendisle," for this we renamed it as the Old Contemptibles renamed "Wyers." And how much more significant is our rendering of the name, significant of all it encompassed, both for the living and our many gallant dead. The Flemish peasant may mouth his "Paskendisle"; we, who remember the camp, will know it as the "valley of passion" as long as memory lasts.

#### THE CANADIANS AT CAMBRAL

Though the Canadian Corps did not as such take part in the brilliant but abortive Cambal affair, being engaged in winding up its business







on the Salient, the Dominion was worthily represented by a handful of cavalry, notably the Fort Garry Horse. General Byng's army made a surprise attack with tanks on November 22, and was only prevented by lack of reinforcements from putting the seal of success to as gallant a dash as ever won the admiration of the world. This is no place for controversy, or asking the question why reinforcements failed to arrive during the forty-eight hours in which the enemy was stunned and supine. Suffice it that they did not, and the Hun, in a series of counter-attacks, regained all the lost ground from Sir Julian's weakened force. It was essentially an affair of cavalry and tanks, and in its closing phases was further worthy of note because of the part taken by the pioneers and railroad troops in checking the German back-wash. Though a failure so far as permanent results were concerned, the Battle of Cambrai of 1917 was for every man engaged a crown of glory, and nothing but honour attaches to Byng and his army.

“HOME” AGAIN.

We had inklings as early as November that Brother Bosche was busy on a change of “plan,”

and that the General Staff was developing a stupendous push for the eleventh hour, to save his face, to stem the tide of discontent and unrest at home, and at all costs to wring victory from what seemed inevitable if yet distant defeat. But the Corps had milled through a hard-working year in which it had not disgraced itself, and with Paaschendaele taken it went into "rest" once more for a month. There was much need of refitting. The mortality on the Salient had been huge, and, too, a scheme for reorganisation of the several branches of the Service which was put into partial effect in the early spring following, had to be matured.

Winter quarters were established in the pretty country round Marles-les-Mines. The units were comfortably billeted there and at Camblain-Châtelaine, Auchel, Floringhem, Lozinghem and other near-by villages. The programme of "refresher" work was not too severe, and on the whole we put in a very pleasant three or four weeks, living on such fatness of the land as could be bought for love or money. If we hoped for Christmas in billets, however, we were once more doomed to disappointment as at Bruay the year before. Almost on the same date we moved once



again into the line, back to our pet Lens front, but this time rather to the right with the Méricourt area our field of modified activity.

In giving dates for the Corps' minor operations and "rests," it must be understood that, touching the Corps as a unit, they are approximate. One division may have entered the line or been relieved a few days before another; and to divisional "rests" the same pertains, as it naturally would in regard to battalions or even companies, only half the strength often representing a unit in the line on a "quiet" front. But for the big operations, it can be taken that the dates given apply to the entire fighting personnel of the Corps.

It was not a very agreeable stunt, that one round the New Year, as the weather was at its worst, with intermittent snow, and the trenches and dug-outs were in a deplorable condition. Moreover, Fritz kept his guns going and ploughed the ground up industriously day and night, so that walks for pleasure were for every reason conspicuous for their absence. However, if life was a bit dirty and dreary, there was a great deal smaller percentage of death, both sides following a policy of "mark time."

"Mark time" was, indeed, in the air, and the general feeling that something big was brewing and was likely to boil over as soon as spring made big operations at all feasible, kept one keyed up despite the tedious and rather uneventful tour of duty.

January made way for a fair February and still we lingered round Lens, and March found us engaged in harassing its inner defences. This was at any rate more lively and interesting work than that in the open round Avion, Méricourt and Liévin. We were now strongly entrenched in the suburbs, occupying good positions in the *cités* of S. Pierre, S. Laurent, and S. Emile. The weather continued fine, with almost a foretaste of summer, and we would have welcomed a more protracted stay in the ruined but still quite habitable houses which were our quarters, or rather their fortified cellars communicating in an endless subterranean chain, the work of the far-seeing usurper. To keep out of observation was easy now we were right under his nose, and neighbours in the same street, so to speak, though his trick of dropping his card in the shape of a "flying pig" was the sort of thing one would expect from such a person.

It was about this time that we developed the gas doctrine to its highest pitch of modish culture. We had the expert assistance of some Americans, full of beans and promising to end the war in ten days. Well, we didn't do that—nor they either—but we assuredly made the heart of Lens suffer from palpitations and enlargement of the aorta. Your American is nothing if not thorough, and the samples who co-operated with us rounded off all the little do-funnies of the plan with a perfection foreign to our "good-enough" ideas. The Hun never divulged how sick he was as a result of the spraying he got the night of—I think—March 22, but it is on record that we launched the greatest and most successful gas attack of the War against his flank just at the moment when his giant offensive was jumping off. So, even on that "tag" Brother Bosche saw a skeleton at the feast, and it's good to remember that the Canucks dragged it in. We had another large supply ready for him, labelled "Zambuk," when we got an hour's notice to upstakes and trek because of urgent family affairs elsewhere.

## V

### THE GERMAN PUSH.

THE pot had boiled over. Fritz was running amok from Arras to La Fère and had broken the Allied line.

Against a fifty-mile front held by the British and French Armies, the Germans began this most stupendous attack of the War on Thursday, March 21, 1918. The plan appeared to be to break a way between the two armies at Amiens. The problem for Great Britain was which course to pursue—to stand alone and defend the Channel ports or to stand with the French. For the moment the enemy was succeeding with every blow he struck, the whole weight of his armies on the Western front being thrown into the scale, and principally against the British. We stood firm, if elastic, and the Bosche was stopped. But only after three months of heart-breaking resistance.

At the time the attack began the Canadians



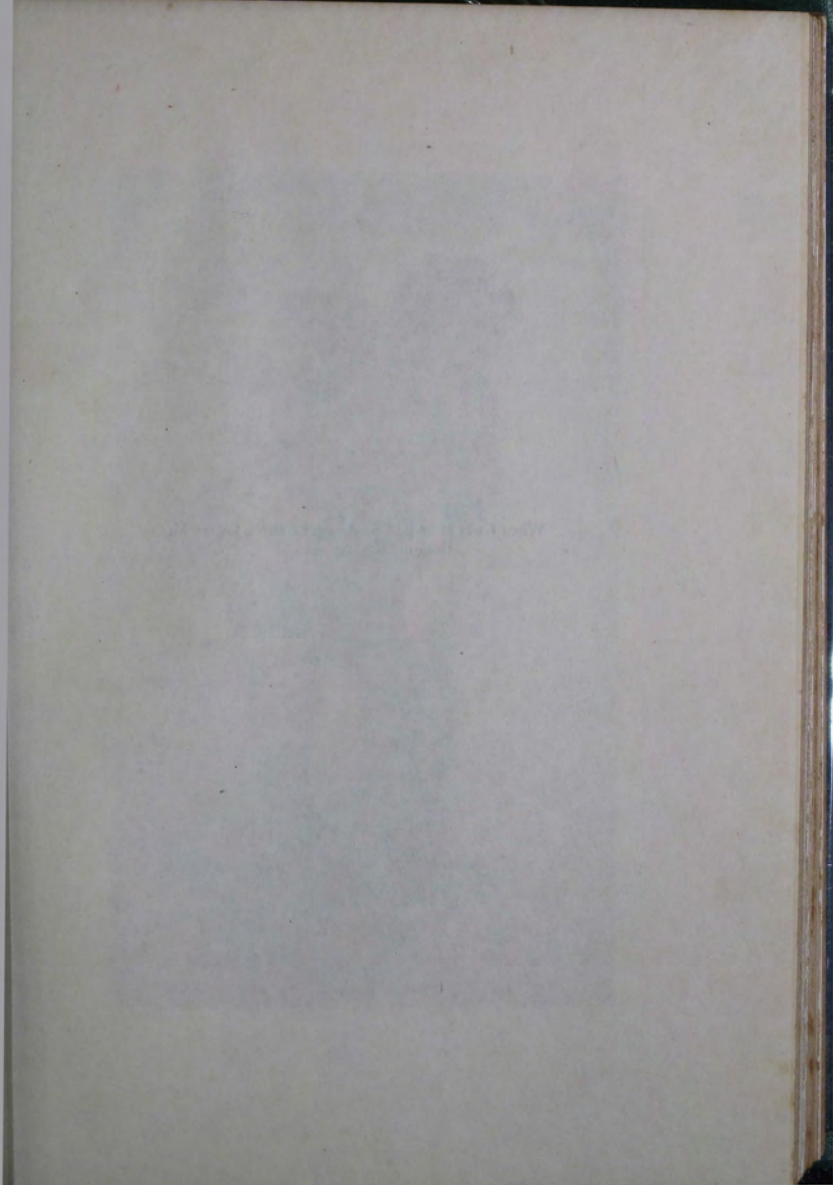
were holding 35,000 yards of trench, nearly a quarter of the entire British line. What form their assistance took in this, the greatest crisis of the War, will be developed.

On March 28, Paris being then under fire from long-distance guns, when every American soldier in France had been placed at the disposal of Foch by General Pershing to help in stemming the Hun advance, the Canadian Corps shifted its front a degree nearer the centre of trouble and took up its position opposite the right flank of the invading millions. As we moved hurriedly south on Good Friday morning, word filtered through that the enemy had won more than a thousand square miles of territory, but that for the moment his advance had halted. That seventy-five devout worshippers had been killed in a Paris church by "Big Bertha" was an incident, the horror of which only dawned on us when we had time to breathe.

One does not readily forget such a move as that we undertook on the night of the 28th-29th. In the ordinary course of events we were to have been relieved twenty-four hours later, and the situation stood at that till 5 o'clock in the afternoon of the 28th, when "rush" opera-

tion orders came through, bidding us shift immediately for parts unknown. If we were in a frenzy in the line, with a hundred things to do in less than that number of minutes, the condition of things at base round Les Brebis and Maroc can be dimly imagined. I surmise that much treasured spare kit and many hoarded souvenirs were ditched for all eternity, and several grey hairs were added to the heads of Quartermasters and Orderly Room staffs. But the order was, in effect, to drop everything and "get,"—so we "got."

Like little bears, we had all our troubles before us and expected them to be big ones. The Imperials who relieved our particular mob were full up with stories of what was going on to the south with the prospect of the tidal wave reaching our front at dawn, and the battalions we relieved at our new positions were in the same grimly garrulous mood. In no assembly of men does rumour fly so far and so fast as in the army. You will realise that the retirement in progress in the Amiens area was hasty at best, and I suppose very few people, however high up, could gauge the situation with any accuracy. So tales of all kinds were told, and every tale was











believed till capped by a better or more sensational one. We looked for a hot time that night or the next at latest, and in the long run took it philosophically, but all the same did not delay in the girding up of our loins or become careless in the details of scrip and staff.

From this chaos it emerged in due course that our new stamping ground was Arras and its immediate defences. At the moment, Fritz was about three miles from the city: I may remark incidentally that he never got any nearer. The Corps spread itself abroad on the face of the land from Lens to the other side of the Scarpe, which, by the way, at Arras, is a pretty little river. There we settled down as we had settled down a hundred times before and—held the line.

That was actually what the Canadians (I exclude a few, to be referred to later) did during the big German push. It promised to be a tremendous job, but fizzled out as a picnic.

Why?

Because the Hun declined to push on our front.

It would be invidious, bombastic, swank, and a number of other things unbecoming and abhorrent to the well-known modesty of the Canadian soldier to quote the reason generally

given for Brother Bosche's refusal to come over and make mince-meat of the Corps. We had—being, as hinted above, modest and unassuming men-at-arms—made up our minds that he would certainly try to do so at least, and I recollect, so far as my own unit is concerned, quite touching scenes when we marched out of our temporary camp near Ecurie on Easter Saturday, *en route* for our new sector in front of Gavrelle. Even that composite of Aberdeen granite and kail-yard pawkiness, the storeman, waved us for the one and only time on record what he evidently intended for a last tearful farewell.

The Corps marched in, dug in, sat down and—nothing happened. Nothing, that is to say, beyond the everyday incidents of trench life—a plethora of shells, perhaps (for this occasion) a more generous ration of gas, and erratic sniping, these being the bills receivable; while we paid our debts in the shape of a harassing series of raids and like petty annoyances.

We had been keyed up to be “last ditchers,” to sell our lives dearly, to be a forlorn hope and all sorts of glamorous things, and here we were once more—same old mud to make the same old positions in; same old causeries at the dirty



cross-roads what time the wheels of the ration chariots tarried: in a word, all the pleasantries of a quiet front. Rather a jar, wasn't it?

Meanwhile the enemy had renewed his offensive near Amiens, but had failed to penetrate the line. We heard rumours of all this but nothing reliable, and hoped the push would "right incline" and give us a share of the fun. Surely the Bosche would make a snap at Arras!

#### A HAPPY HANDFUL.

It was something to know that at least a handful of us were *in medias res*, and had shown courage and prowess equal to anything manifested by Canadian troops during the war. The Canadian Cavalry Brigade and the 1st Canadian Motor Machine-Gun Brigade had been flung into the broken sector between Villers-Bretonneux and Montdidier, and there had such joyous experiences as were the envy of all of us. The dashing work of the cavalry, operating part of the time on horseback and part on foot, is on record as living up to the finest traditions of crack British squadrons, while the "Emma Emma Gees" made themselves useful in a thousand ways. One must reckon not only the skill

and devotion of the Vickers gunners themselves, but the heroism with which the drivers handled their cars, utilising their mobility to the limit of its capacity, and enabling the gun-crews to hold and disperse enemy horse on no less than three critical occasions. When the cars were abandoned the gunners carried on, under the direction of that resourceful, valiant and energetic officer, Major M——, as units, each man packing not only his gun but belted ammunition slung round his body. Thus they established numerous small but nasty and inconspicuous strong-points, shifting from cover to cover as the enemy drew in and taking their toll of square-heads before each move. As the normal use of the Vickers requires two men at least for the tripod and gun with anywhere from three to six more for ammunition feeding and odd jobs, it is apparent that what these heroes were doing was something quite out of the run of manual of instruction, but the only feasible thing under the novel exigency.

The Bosche infantry respected our machine-guns—as, indeed, we always respected theirs, but not to quite the same extent—and established an emergency “S.O.S.” system of flares for the

occasion. When they were held up by one of our wasps, they would send up a green rocket and leave it for picked "Sturmtruppen" to go ahead and smoke our man out. This done, the "all clear" red flare would spangle the blue and the Kaiser's Bodyguard or Angels of God carried on once more.

Canada should be extra conceited about that little bunch of joy-riders.

#### OUR "QUIET FRONT."

And we continued to hold the line. Incidentally we were doing sentry-go over the sole remaining coalfields of Northern France, and again one asks why the Bosche did not attempt to break through. In the words of a Canadian soldier whose high position rendered him capable of judging better than any:

"The Bosche never was a superman. On many occasions he could have broken through the Allied line if he had had enough nerve. ('Guts,' my dear General, 'guts.') Time and again the German Army let big opportunities slip by. Individually the German soldier is brave and just, determined, and willing to die, but his actions in some of the campaigns can be hardly explained."

The Germans could have recaptured Vimy. One break in our line between Lens and Arras and the Corps would have been compelled to fall back from the pronounced salient which best describes our then front, back, back to the villages on the western slope of the Ridge, back to the gates of Château de la Haie itself. Surely the Bosche knew this. And yet he never attacked.

If April was quiet with us, it was not so in the south. After failing to penetrate the line near Amiens a second time, and with the British and French Armies still one phalanx, the enemy shifted the weight of his attack a little and devoted some attention to Ypres, breaking through on that front synchronously with his third attempt at Amiens. He skipped us and, with the heights of Kemmel and Mont Cat in his hands and our salient becoming more hazardous daily, still he refused to join issue.

So we held the line.

#### ARRAS.

Even Arras failed to tempt Brother Bosche from his wariness. I have said that at the beginning of his offensive he was only about





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#### ARRAS.

Even Arras failed to tempt Brother Boche from his watchpost. I have said that at the beginning of his offensive he was only about







three miles from the city. At any hour the attack, which never developed to anything worthy the name, was expected.

The old city was a queer place in those days, and a quiet. I stole a few hours during the first week of April to run over and pay it a call, thinking with good grounds that it might be for years or it might be for ever that a Britisher would have to wait for another chance. As a matter of fact most of us know it pretty well by this time.

I do not think I should describe Arras as spoiled, in the sense that Ypres is. It had, that Easter week when I saw it first, been knocked about a bit, but it was at its worst stage then, and by far the larger part of the city remained intact, especially the northern residential portion. The iron and glass of the great railway station were twisted and splintered, and emergency bridges over the Scarpe replaced the more pretentious ones that had been wrecked. The Hôtel de Ville is certainly a ruin, with few remnants of its beauty remaining, but the stately Gothic cathedral is not in nearly as bad a condition as would appear at first sight. This illusion is caused by the fact that the roof has fallen in almost *en masse*, and is—or was—strewn about

the floor of the nave and transepts, while there were gaping fissures in the stone paving itself, revealing ghostly glimpses of the crypt. But the lovely columns remain almost intact, and many of the fine painted windows were saved before the shelling was at its worst. The débris lying about gave the impression of irreparable damage, but, as I have said, the beautiful original lines of the edifice remain. Many of the statues still stand, and the side altars are unhurt, and were, when I saw them, piled high with fragments of tile and paving bearing names or initials of good Roman Catholic soldiers. Even at that date every precaution was being taken against souvenir-hunters, and the most infinitesimal fragment of stained glass was jealously guarded. I think the Bishop's Palace adjoining, remarkable for its hoary cloisters, showed more signs of injury than the actual Cathedral.

The Grand' Place, ruined though it is in part, is to my mind something that lingers in one's memory of Arras more lastingly than the Cathedral or Hôtel de Ville. Its wonderful effect of space is enhanced by the charm of the arcaded Renaissance buildings that girdle it. Each house is the same as its neighbour, yet has each an

individuality all its own. Sometimes because of a slight variation in dimension, either of height or width; sometimes thanks to a nuance of colour peculiar to one and duplicated in no other; again because of a detail of ornament richer than any near by—because of all these semitones and chromatics of architectural harmony the scene is relieved of any sense of monotony. As the Grand' Place at Brussels is a marvel in its crowded wealth of carving and gilt, so that of Arras claims pre-eminence because of the austerity and breadth of its scheme.

There is a spell about Arras, too, indebted to no special gem of architecture, but, I think, to its architectural *ensemble*. The soul that breathes in age-old brick and stone is made manifest. The city was very, very quiet the day I speak of. Here and there the red badge of the First Division or the blue housing of the French military police emphasised the stillness of a spacious boulevard or the gloom of a mediæval close. Apart from these, and the distant crash of the guns, there was a brooding hush. One forgot that while he looked and listened a Uhlan might jingle into view at the end of the street. Rather he dreamed of the days when that oaken

door crouching beneath its heraldic hatchment clanged to behind My Lord the Vidame and his train; there, where the frowning archway holds finger to lip and looks askance into the dark entry it guards, echoed again the shrill "*A moi! A moi!*" and from the narrow street where the top-most stories whisper across the kennel debouched the partisans, on their lips "*A Guise!*" "*A Montmorency!*" while the death-sob strangled in the ring of steel on steel. And as darkness fell a shadow athwart the cobbles became some luckless tribute to "*the mercy of the King,*" and the flicker of a furtive candle was a flambeau held to Monsieur, bound for his lodging after picquet and Rhenish.

Yes, it has an atmosphere all its own, that noble old city, overfull with the long-shed blood of lords spiritual and temporal, the one as nimble as the other with sword and dag. The Moyen Age will never die at Arras, though modern Europe battle many a time round its gates, and the tourist trudge its narrow streets and wide-flung market-places with renewed zest and a keener scent for its latest confirmation of blood.



## VI

### DARK DAYS.

IN order to give a clear idea of the situation when the Canadian Corps reassumed an energetic rôle and was given a chance to make its mark on the Hun, it is necessary to outline roughly the progress of the enemy during the early summer. It will then be possible, also, to grasp how the Allies, both on the Western front proper and in the Italian campaign, imperceptibly toughened the resistance they offered till the day came when they could take the offensive.

At the end of April the German opened the second phase of his attack, both north and south of the Canadian front, and broke through in the Amiens area and on the Salient. May was a bitter month of herculean effort to stem the assault, the proportions of which were such that the last week found the Bosche in possession of the Chemin des Dames, after a smashing 40-mile drive from Vauxvillon to Rheims; Soissons had

fallen, and the pillage of Château-Thierry signalled the return of the blond beast to the Marne. At Rheims the situation was not so black, for the enemy was stopped at that point, and so sturdy a block, moreover, did our American Allies put up that though in occupation of Château-Thierry he was unable to cross the river, and by the close of the first week of June he was driven out of the beautiful spot which he had defiled and ravished according to the best traditions of Kultur.

And now the impetus of the rush was beginning to wane. Though he began a fourth gigantic drive on a 29-mile front between Montdidier and Noyon on June 9, the enemy made small headway.

Meanwhile the time had been reckoned ripe for Austria to attempt a twin blow against Italy, and the junior partner of the Central Powers began a great offensive on a 30-mile front, only to be driven back across the famous Piave by a mixed Allied army of Italians, British and French. In fact the Austrian drive was a fiasco almost from its initiation. Less than a month later, on July 2, the Italians made a notable gain in the Asiago region, capturing 2000 prisoners, and on the 6th, aided by the French, they began an

offensive in Albania, the Austrian army withdrawing after the loss of thousands of men. From this time on her Ally was a hindrance to Germany rather than a help, and a source of perpetual embarrassment and bickering in the Central camp.

The presence of American troops in the line was by now a felt quantity; both in weight of men and metal, and in moral effect. Blooded by their success at the end of May, Pershing's "doughboys" were a force to be reckoned with, and their victorious and heroic campaign in the Argonne is a fine chapter of the war. They were to have the honour, ere long, of sharing with France in the great kick-off that opened the last period of the four years' struggle.

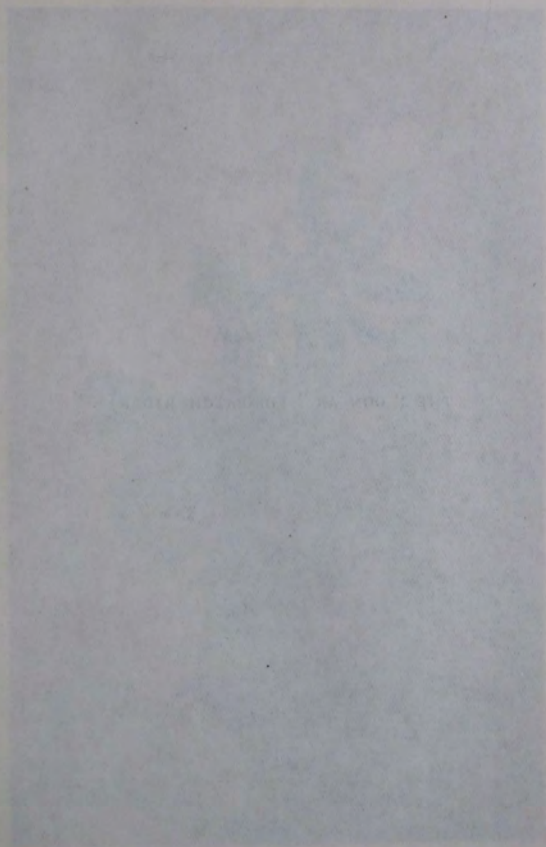
On July 15 began the fifth and final phase of the German offensive, with an attack on a 65-mile front between Château-Thierry and Massignes which was checked almost as soon as it opened, the enemy gaining a negligible four miles. All the lost ground in front of Château-Thierry was regained by the Allies, and though the following day the German succeeded in crossing the Marne at points, he was again checked east of Rheims.

On July 17 General Foch was able to announce to the world that the enemy was held at all points.

#### THE RÔLE OF THE CANADIAN CORPS.

Throughout this phase of the conflict, trying enough to our Allies fighting just to the south of us, indeed on either flank, the Canadian Corps was undergoing a trial perhaps even more nerve-racking. For virtually three months we were at "stand-to." During a part of the time we were engaged, it is true, in the usual job of "holding the line," praying that the Bosche would give us an excuse to make a stab at him, but for the rest in intensive training. Kick against the pricks we often did, wondering why we were not moved into the thick of things, and forgetting, I suppose, that had we moved the Bosche would in an hour have attacked the sectors which we should be handing over in good faith as a "quiet front" to troops less tried. For the greater part of July we were once more holding the long front stretching from Lens to Arras, this tour of duty succeeding two months of the most restless "rest" it had ever been our lot to experience.





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### THE ROLE OF THE CANADIAN CORPS.

Throughout this phase of the conflict, trying enough to our Allies fighting just to the south of us, indeed on either Bank, the Canadian Corps was undergoing a trial perhaps even more nerve-racking. For virtually three months we were at "stand-to." During a part of the time we were on the job of "holding the line," praying that the Germans would give us a chance to make a stab at him, but for the most a passive training. Kick against the pricks we often did, wondering why we were not moved into the thick of things, and forgetting, I suppose, that had we moved the Germans would in an hour have attacked the sectors which we should be holding over in good faith as a "quiet front" to keep him tied. For the greater part of July we were once more holding the long front stretching from Lens to Arras, this time off duty succeeding two months of the most restless "rest" it had ever been our lot to experience.







Not that our "training" and "refreshing" at this time were all work, nominally at least. Though "Réveillé" at 4 A.M., with drills of all sorts from 6 till noon, made a long day, the afternoons were usually given up to work of a different kind: sports of many descriptions, baseball, football, athletics, with an occasional lecture to remind us that our play-time was actually part and parcel of our training. The culminating function at Tinqués, where gathered on July 1 not only all the nabobs of the Army in the field, but every man who could secure leave from duty, sounded the keynote of all that the preceding two months had been intended to do for us. The presence of our Royal Governor-General, of the Premier of the Dominion, and of many other dignitaries, military and civil, set the seal to the significance of the occasion, and the undercurrent of the speeches ran all in the same vein. There had been a cause and a good one for our programme of apparent innocuous desuetude, and we were promised results sooner perhaps than we expected.

How grave was the task set aside for us had worse come to worst we do not know certainly, but can guess much. Foch was well aware of

our existence. The fact that for three months we were under standing orders to move anywhere at an hour's notice speaks for itself. I think myself we were pledged, if need arose, to a forlorn hope, and in our very annihilation would have placed the last and an immortal wreath round the name of Canada-in-arms.

But our high calling was two-fold. In the fulness of time, when, and if the tide turned, we would be called on—as in the event we were—to become the spear-head of the offensive which was to convert the succession of German victories into utter defeat.

Thus our training was standing us in good stead whatever rôle it was our luck to fill. That the Corps would as one man have laid down its life did things so fall out, is as sure as was the superb triumph which was destiny's gift to us.

General Currie has said :

“ When the (German) drive was at its height there were some people, probably, who were concerned and even despondent. Probably they expected that we would adopt defensive tactics, and that we would train to hold off the Germans without attempting to make any counter-blow ourselves. But it was just the reverse—we

planned an offensive on our own account. We entered the war to win, and no war was ever won by defensive operations. You have got to meet your foe and grapple with him in the open. Well, we prepared to fight, and we did not waste much time preparing. But the training that we did was made to count for the most."

There we have the gist of it. We were training our hardest all this time to take the offensive in some form, either in the shape of one bitter blow in a crisis hurriedly thrust upon us, or as an organised attack worked out to its last detail when our hour was ripe.

Yet, despite the words quoted above, we know now that nothing was certain—save the determination to fight to the last whatever fate had in store for us—as late as the middle of June. It had, in fact, been planned that we should engage in only one more battle and then dig in—such as were left of us—and wait for the advent of the complete American Army in the spring of 1919 to finish the war. But the developments of July changed the aspect of things entirely, and when the time came to strike the Canadian Corps was put into the front of the line.

As demonstrating what the Higher Command

and the other armies thought of us, and how well understood was our attitude of seeming passivity, I cannot do better than quote here the words of Sir Douglas Haig :

“In all the dark days of this fighting—and God knows they have been dark enough—I have had one comforting thought, that we still had the Canadian Corps. I knew we could never be beaten until the old Corps which had never failed had been put out of the fight.”

Can we ask any better guerdon than this ?

#### THE HUNDRED DAYS.

On July 17 Foch said the enemy was held at all points.

On the morning of July 18, the French and American Armies hurled themselves against the enemy, capturing eighteen towns between Soissons and Château-Thierry and advancing six miles.

Thus was launched the great Allied offensive.

The vane had veered, and never again was it to swing back to a quarter favourable to Germany. The numbering of the Hundred Days had begun, those Hundred Days which, though the date of the Armistice counted rather in excess of their total, saw the Hun brought to his knees.



The history of war records no other such amazing *volte-face* on the part of fortune. Once the Allies were able and determined to grasp winged victory, it required less than three months to unseat the evil which had dominated the world for much more than three years. His army emasculated, his "plans" trampled on, his gains wrested from him and his *amour propre* a derision among the nations, the enemy escaped utter annihilation only at the expense of his national pride. Day by day throughout the hectic Hundred we drove him back and back, beating him at every point at his own game; giving him no moment to breathe; forcing apart him and his partners, and breaking them piecemeal, until, crushed and deserted, the Hun sued for mercy on the very threshold of the Fatherland.

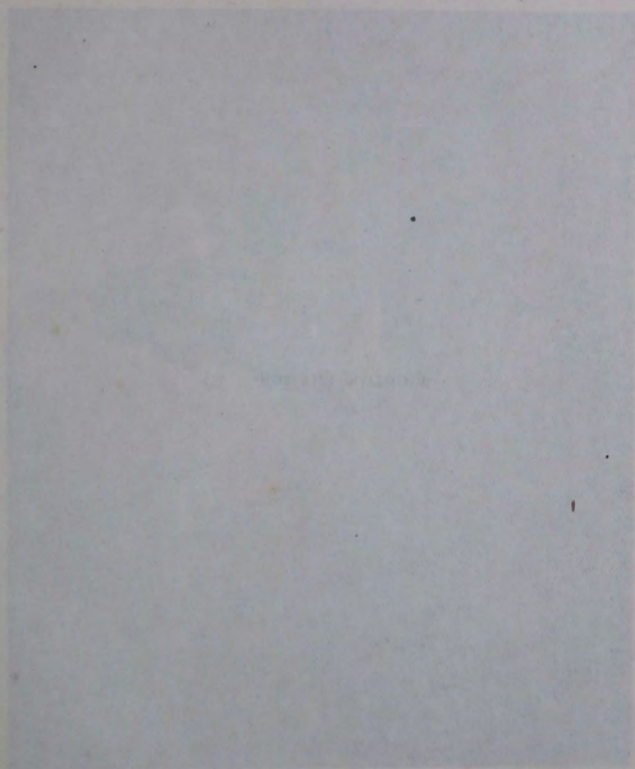
Ah! but it was good to live through that century of dazzling suns, and good I think it must have been to die.

From the very beginning we were so very sure of the end. There was no doubt, no questioning, no hesitation. The only problem was where and when to hit him next in order to hurt him most. I do not believe, in retrospect, that we felt any lack of faith in the good times that were

coming even in the bad times before the Hundred Days. There, on the spot, perhaps we could not envisage the situation as a whole in the way that caused some fears and depression at home ; at any rate the universal feeling was one of watching for the change, not of doubting if there ever would be one. So we sprang to the call when it sounded, never less down-hearted, and grateful for the alteration in the kind of work we had to do.

Not that they weren't hard days, those Hundred. Fritz is an infernally good walker, and there was little rest for his pursuers. To keep in touch with him after the first week or two was one of the big problems, and a very serious one in military tactics. But if we now and then lost him for a day or so, a spurt soon brought us again in range, and we harried and hustled until life was to him a burden and death delectable.

You must know, too, that he put up a stiff resistance at times, and proved himself a good soldier in retreat. His "sacrifice" posts were often nothing less than heroic, and many a bad hour he gave us with his machine-gun wasp-nests, pledged it would seem to stick it out to the last gasp. And for long he had full advantage of a



coming even in the bad days before the Hundred Days. Then, on the spot, perhaps we could not envisage the situation as a whole in the way that caused some fear and depression at home; at any rate the universal feeling was one of watching for the change, not of doubting if there ever would be one. So we sprung to the call when it came, never less down-hearted, and grateful for the alteration in the kind of work we had to do.

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You must know, too, that he put up a stiff resistance at times, and proved himself a good soldier in retreat. His "harsh" posts were often nothing less than heroic, and many a bad hour he put us with his own gun was spent. He pledged it would come to the end of the line. And for long he had felt advantage of a







highly-developed transport system, and was able to feed his guns and make it hot for us even after his infantry had become an obstacle of small account.

It was on August 8 that the Canadian Corps entered the arena. It came the moment it was called and never left it again till the "blue flares" went up. The record it made for itself, fine as was that of every army in the Allied drive, cannot be excelled. Amiens, the Drocourt-Quéant line, Bourlon Wood and Cambrai—these are the gems that glow brightest in the diadem then won by Canada, and their mounting was the fine gold of valour. How, too, we "redeemed the cities" is a tale in itself, while the capture of Mons in the hour of final victory was the poetically just climax to an unhalting triumph.

It is as well here to outline the course of the Hundred Days, from the initial victory on July 18 to the closing hours, in order to illustrate how and when the Corps dovetailed with the operations of the British and Allied troops.

On July 19 the Franco-American offensive was continued with a further two-mile gain, the United States Army being only a mile from Soissons, and any doubt as to the gigantic nature

of the push was dissipated. On the 21st the attack was widened to a 60-mile front, and the following day the French reoccupied their old front line in the Champagne region, and the Allies closed in on the enemy's Soissons-Rheims salient, seizing many vital points. Violent German counter-attacks proved abortive, and the French were soon in control of all the great roads leading towards Amiens. In the last week of July the Allies secured every advantage during terrific fighting on the Marne front, and crossed the Ourcq.

On August 1 the push was renewed with fresh zest, and half-a-dozen important positions fell into our hands; Soissons was retaken on the 2nd, and by this time the enemy was retreating on a 36-mile front. Fismes was captured on the 4th, and the Vesle and Aisne Rivers were crossed, with huge enemy loss. By the close of the first week of August, the enemy was being steadily forced back on three sectors, and the time was ripe for the blow which was to free Amiens from the threat of thralldom.

That blow was struck at dawn on August 8, and the first day of the battle, with the Canadians in the van, we drove eight miles deep into the enemy front. The Hun retreated in haste, aban-



doning great quantities of war material, and in spite of an attempted rally on the 13th was signally defeated. On the 14th the Germans withdrew their line north of Albert, synchronising with another Canadian victory north of Roye. By the 18th, the Corps had advanced 15 miles since the beginning of the Amiens show, and on this date the enemy was thrust back another 2000 yards on a 4-mile front in the Lys sector.

On August 20 the French opened a new drive with an average gain of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles on a 15-mile front near Soissons, retaking twenty villages.

From now on the Allies struck blow on blow at every point of the German line, giving the enemy no time to rest or revise his plans, and leaving him hopelessly puzzled as to where to attempt a stand. From Arras to Soissons his losses daily were enormous; Monchy-le-Preux and other towns on the Scarpe falling to the Canadians, and villages by the score to French arms on the Somme. Allied troops reached the right bank of the river on the 29th, and the last day of the month found the Hun in retreat along the entire front south of Bapaume.

September opened with the smashing of the famous Drocourt-Quéant section of the Hinden-

burg line by British and Canadian troops, and the recapture of Peronne, Bullecourt and Norval, with the German in headlong flight. Thirty villages were taken along the Ailette River in a gain of four miles; Ham and Chauny fell, and by the end of the first week the enemy was worsted at every point along the whole 150-mile front, with British troops once more in occupation of the line evacuated in March.

By the middle of the month Germany and Austria were making tentative efforts to secure a peace which would be no peace, for they still held much of their stolen territory. The success of the Americans in levelling the S. Mihiel salient, and the victorious progress of the French in the S. Quentin sector, combined with the unlooked-for revival of the Serbs, affected, in the face of the monotonous tale of British victories, the *moral* of the Central Powers markedly, and their offer of settlement was obviously genuine so far as it went.

But Foch said—" *Pas encore,*" and drove on.

By this time the plans for the taking of Cambrai were matured, and, striking just when the French further south had won several miles in the new Champagne offensive, and the Serbs had re-entered their own country in triumph,

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General Haig launched his attack on the famous city.

The Canadian Corps on September 27 captured Bourslon Wood and Bourslon, and in conjunction with Imperial divisions swept on and enveloped the long-sought prize, our outposts entering Cambrai on October 2. It finally fell to us on the 9th, and so, from Cambrai to S. Quentin, the vaunted defences of the Hun were smashed, and upon the parapets of the Hindenburg Line we sat down ready to dictate terms.

For the last lines of the great "system" were crumbling before us. Le Cateau, of "Old Contemptible" memory, was in British hands once more; La Fère and Laon had fallen, and by the middle of the month the huge drive across Flanders had begun and was already nearing Ghent, with the enemy in retreat on a 40-mile front, his flank resting on Holland. Ostend, which King Albert entered on the 17th, Zeebrugge, and all the other Belgian coast towns were in the Allied grasp, and the *débâcle* became complete when, on October 24, British troops swept the enemy before them in a great battle from the Sambre to the Scheldt.

On October 31 Turkey capitulated unconditionally, and Austria sought and was granted

an armistice by Italy. Germany stood alone, if standing it could be called. Her shrift was short. On November 4 and 5 Haig struck what was in effect the death-blow in North-Western France, defeating twenty-five divisions, and, with Lille, Denain, Valenciennes, and many another city, town, and village which had been captive to the Hun since the first days of the war, redeemed at last, we drove on to the crowning glory of Mons which it was ours to give back to France and to the memory of our immortal kinsmen of '14 as the "Cease fire!" sounded.

So ended the Hundred Days.

"FORWARD!"

Somewhat breathless has been our pursuit of the Allies in their odyssey. But to do justice to those spacious days would require a volume larger than this modest chronicle in its entirety, and in the telling the part played by the Canadians would necessarily have suffered partial eclipse. It is their star which guides us, and to it we must devote the major share of our attention, leaving to others the story in detail of their brothers-in-arms.



So far as the Corps is concerned, the Hundred Days divide themselves into three great chapters—Amiens, the Drocourt-Quéant line, and Cambrai. In addition to these ponderant chronicles there is to record the massing of the army when the word was given to move—too astonishing an achievement to be relegated to an incidental paragraph. And lastly, there remains to write the *envoi*—the aftermath of the greater battles, when we cleaned up and burned the stubble and chaff and were able to declare the harvest home.

I think that all Canadian children should know the story of those wonderful days. Nearly every one could boast a father or brother as having a share in the victory, or as having done loyal service during the years that led up to the climax. Many of these fathers and brothers can themselves tell the story or parts of it; many again are too far away. It is especially to the heirs of these last that the opportunity should be given to understand how they gathered their glory and why they did not return.

I have shown in an earlier chapter how at the end of July the Corps was chiefly concerned in the task of holding the Lens-Arras line. Quiet throughout the German push, it was still com-

paratively so when the orders to move were issued. Many of our bases were then lying at and round Roclincourt, Ecurie and Neuville S. Vaast, and in the neighbouring camps, and I remember it was a comfort to spend one soft-lying night at Madagascar Corner before starting on the great trek. On August 1 the entire Corps was in movement. The indomitable but utterly exhausted 51st Division had relieved our particular bunch the day previous on the front opposite Willerval and Bailleul-sur-Berthaut, and tickled they were to learn we could honestly turn it over to them, with all trench stores, as a "quiet" front. I believe our promise was made good and they really did have a decent time.

"MARCH!"

The early stages of the move on Amiens gave no indication of the forced marches which were to make historic its last 60 or 70 miles. Lorries and trains carried us by the usual roundabout route to the Abbeville area. That terrible peregrination! which often has given us a tantalizing glimpse of the Channel, only to lose it again and drift away on the weird mechanism known in war-time France as a railway. I am sure the

most dismal memories of many of us are associated with a filthy box labelled "*Hommes 40*," and as able to accommodate two score as the Black Hole was to entertain its unwilling guests. There were always half a dozen more to be piled in at the last minute, with the Plimsoll mark lost to view. We lay on and under each other, snarled and snapped and sometimes fought, throughout the long nights. Periodically the lower strata would revolt and the whole mass of miserable humanity upheave, thrusting under foot among muddy equipment, fragments of rations, coal-dust, and what was once straw, those who had too long been top dog. Happier he who marched a score of miles than the traveller of half that number in a box-car on the *chemin de fer*.

A bit jaded, but the more ready to use our legs, we were decanted at last. A "stand-to" rest of a day represented the merciful interval before moving east by south in column of route. I never saw Amiens, which I regret, for our orders carried us below that city into the pretty Luce River country, not far from Villers-Bretonneux and its near memories of a different move.

The forced march of the Corps was made entirely under cover of darkness. So far as

possible not a soul stirred on the roads between sunrise and dark, though occasionally day had broken before a belated column would dribble furtively into camp hastily pitched in village and woods. But these exceptions were not apparently noted by the Bosche air observers, or, if they were, were not regarded as of any significance. We "spoofed" him utterly. That is a historic fact. Not only did we steal on him like a thief in the night, but even succeeded in giving him good cause to believe us bound elsewhere. The Staff allowed the rumour to circulate that the Corps was going into Belgium to attack. In fact, so finished was the ruse that a battalion of infantry and a few cavalry and machine-guns were actually sent north while the main body moved south. It is said that two French liaison officers, usually pretty close to those high up, were misled like everybody else and went north. King Albert wrote to Foch asking why Canadian soldiers were being sent into Belgium to open an offensive without his being notified. General Currie's own A.D.C. did not know the plan, which of course was withheld from the individual soldiers, who were not aware that they were going south until they were well on the road. For once, too, the



*estaminet*, that fount of often quite astonishingly veracious advance intelligence, was at fault.

Altogether it was a brilliant bit of strategy, and was crowned by our representatives up north "accidentally" allowing an odd few prisoners to escape and talk at the top of their voices as soon as they reached their own lines. No wonder Brother Bosche hated the Canucks, his distaste magnifying his enumeration of Corps units to the strength of about three armies, including no less than twenty-six machine-gun battalions. We *must* have been mobile.

Well, we marched and marched and marched some more, and sometimes we sang. I don't recollect anybody giving tongue, except incidentally, to "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," which somebody comments on as a significant outburst. The more common chanty was—more common, and the back view of some company commanders' necks was a shocked old rose. Still, boys will be boys and soldiers soldiers. And there were all the old favourites which had dogged our steps from the training camps of Canada, chiefly by the mouths of babes and sucklings. It *is* significant that we sang on the way to Amiens. Your old stager seldom sings on the march. It's the

stamp of the rather raw recruit, and he soon sloughs the habit. His pack sees to that.

We marched and marched, and lost our way and found it again, sometimes on jolly nights of stars, the eastern sky a false Aurora Borealis with the fanning searchlights; sometimes on dingy, drizzling, drenching nights, when the intermittent irritant of someone's flashlight, wildly probing an unintelligible finger-post, was the only *lux in tenebris*, and that a cause of offence.

And on the morning of Wednesday, August 7, we climbed into the Bois de Boves, about ten miles from assembly point.

The Bois de Boves had been occupied as a camp for some time, and when we found it that place was the original Augean stable, converted *al fresco* and still patiently waiting for Hercules. I will not enlarge minutely upon the filthiness of it. Ordinary animal untidiness is excusable and not necessarily nauseating. This was not the ordinary animal, "beasts that perish" kind, and obviously not the smallest attempt had been made to secure cover from weather, not to mention the most primitive kind of comfort. We are pretty casual ourselves, but can at a pinch do wonders with an odd plank and a rusty scrap of

corrugated; and as for the Bosche, he will run you up a rough-cast villa and put a pretty name on the front door while you wait; but our predecessors were no home-builders, nor, be it said, were they British.

That wood was an excellent place to get away from, and we did it. Incidentally, in the early hours of the night of August 7-8, Fritz lost the chance of his life. He had us all—the entire Canadian Corps—there under his hand in a potty little *bois* perched on the top of a hill. True, it was “hellish dark and smelt like cheese,” as Mr. Jorrocks’ henchman would have agreed, but the last quality itself, one would think, should have attracted all the carrion Gothas in the Vaterland. But he never got on to our spoor, and we stumbled our way out of the corruption soon after nightfall and hiked for assembly point on the Amiens-Roye Road. Here we lay on the grass in God’s clean open, cold perhaps, but still able to get a few hours’ sleep before the tanks did their best to run over us in the false dawn.

## VII

### THE BATTLE OF AMIENS.

THE tanks began it.

Have you ever wakened in the half-light before dawn and, with shreds of dreams still hanging on the heels of consciousness, discovered a platoon of mammoths (male and female created he them, not to mention the whippets) pouring down on you? (They do pour, the tanks.) If not, you've missed an experience—an unpleasant one. Small blame to the Bosche that he had no time for the things. Us they only ran over more or less by accident and as over other obstacles animate and inanimate. They smeared the Hun flat of malice aforethought.

The tank never gave you the impression of being in a hurry, so it arrived "unexpected like." And it could turn on a dime. It was also distinguishedly ugly, with a winning way.

It poured down on us that early morning as



we hastily scrambled from under our ground-sheets and odd sandbags, and after it and all round it swarmed the infantry in co-operation, Lilliputian in the grey light beside their mechanical Brobdingnag. A swath of mangled and mashed equipment and rations and rum-jars made an untidy wake in the rear of the land armada, but there was only one casualty of a more grave nature.

The tank achieved its apotheosis at Amiens. The début of its grandsire on the Somme in '16 was startling enough, but the monster of '18 was a much more sophisticated engine of war than its forebear. Both in mobility and armament its education and equipment had been attended to according to the latest wheezes, and the perfected mastodon of the Amiens show was not more than recognisable as a distant cousin of the derelict which did its share in making the Bapaume Road an obstacle race. Even the tanks which did service at Paaschendaele till stalled in the mud were a far cry from the finished article.

There was one *souvenir de la guerre* that I always coveted. No! not a tank. But its simulacrum, a stage beastie in lath and canvas,

painted like the Lady of Babylon in all the horrors of camouflage. It would probably have knocked down small enough to go in one's pack, but in the inflated state it proved an attractive decoy for our Fritz.

Canadian machine-gunners, in default of the Tank Corps which came into being too late to take a part in the war as an official unit, represented the Dominion in several of the tanks which went into action at Amiens, or were carried in them to establish strong points in the enemy's territory till the infantry could get into touch. They did gallant work, and many of them met their end two or three miles inside the German lines. Their task was the most perilous and devoted of the battle, and being in the nature of an experiment, albeit a signally successful one, was resultant in a heavy casualty list.

The tanks moved into action while our airplanes dropped bombs from above, and for reasons given below scored as complete a surprise as on the first occasion they terrified the Bosche on the Somme. It was the natal day of our Royal Canadian Air Service, and throughout the engagement our flyers, both individually and in squadrons, established records of which any

bird-man of the long-established air services might have been proud.

The surprise effected by the tanks and airplanes in co-operation was in this wise. The noise of the bombs dropped by the latter resembled the rumble of the tanks, and prior to the battle they were dropped into the enemy lines for several nights in succession until the Germans got accustomed to them. On the morning of the assault, as the tanks moved forward the Bosche thought that the racket was the familiar ejaculations of bombs dropped from planes. *Hinc illae lachrymae!*

The Canadians advanced in the first day of the Battle of Amiens 14,000 yards. The first wave went over at dawn after the tanks, and soon after sunrise the walking wounded were already trudging cheerily back along the Roye Road, their mouths full of the way we were making the Bosche hump it, and of cigarettes, chocolate, and biscuits handed out gratis by the promptly established Army Chaplain and Y.M.C.A. canteens. Long before noon the second line had reached the line Hangaard—Demuin—Domart, which had been in German hands the night before. They mopped up as they went, but there was little

to do. The enemy in any strength was miles in advance.

Most of us camped that night in the exquisite woods which make that country—in summer at least—one where a man would willingly stay a while and “heal him of his wounds.” Here and there under the trees were excellent replicas of biergartens, green tables and chairs, wine-flasks (empty), and many other comforts of the German home. We were in a decent area at last. And it was halcyon weather.

I have remarked elsewhere that the Battle of Amiens was of a type which no modern soldier ever expected to see. We are familiar with the kind of thing in old-fashioned story-books and in stirring paintings such as Lady Butler delighted us with, but in these days of long-range guns, trench warfare and complicated tactics, to have a part in such a show was to live back into the times of the Crimea or even the Peninsular War.

Picture a country of undulating hill and valley, of little hamlets with their church-spires “bosomed high in neighbouring trees,” of chattering rivulets, all warmed and gilded by the August sun. Into this *mise-en-scène* project an army in being—foot, horse, guns and baggage. Shut



your eyes and ears to the anachronistic touch given by the planes and tanks, and lo! the panoply of battle as it was a century ago. There the infantry unhurriedly deploys along the skyline, "going over" in their inimitable free-and-easy but controlled fashion; here a squadron of cavalry forms up, ready to move to yonder knoll where a sister squadron is galloping into action; a battery of field artillery breaks from the trot as it swings through the copse on your left and opens fire as you watch on the enemy post behind the church which was holding up our advance. All this in the picture—or panorama, if you will. Not lacking even was that group dear to all battle-painters of the Victorian era—the general and his staff gauging the situation from horseback and consciously unconscious of obtrusive shells. And the impedimenta of an army on the move were not missing from the canvas—the baggage-wagons and échelon limbers and cook-kitchens, so comprehensive and rapid had been our progress in pursuit of our friend the foe.

It was sheer joy to have the horses with us again—lance and sabre and the jingle of accoutrements which we had thought obsolete as the days before trenches were. They introduced at last

the dash and glamour which seldom illumine the work of the foot-slogger, and though mowed down in squadrons by the enemy guns, they had their delectable day at Amiens, and it was not in vain.

It was a puzzle to "find" oneself those first few days and nights. So in haste was the movement that inevitably touch was lost on occasion between units in co-operation, and brigade and divisional headquarters had a trick of flitting to parts unknown while you turned your back; maps were scarcer than usual even, and the country was a *terra incognita* to most of those engaged.

The advance by the Corps in the first twenty-four hours was the greatest made in so short a period by any army during the War. So it is not difficult to grasp how in the air most units were as to their *locale* by the time they had chased the Bosche the other side of Méharicourt on the line designated as the objective of the whole campaign, and reached in less than seventy-two hours.

If the area was in a pretty fair state of preservation when we arrived on the scene it rapidly deteriorated under the ministrations of Fritz's retiring guns and busy planes. The

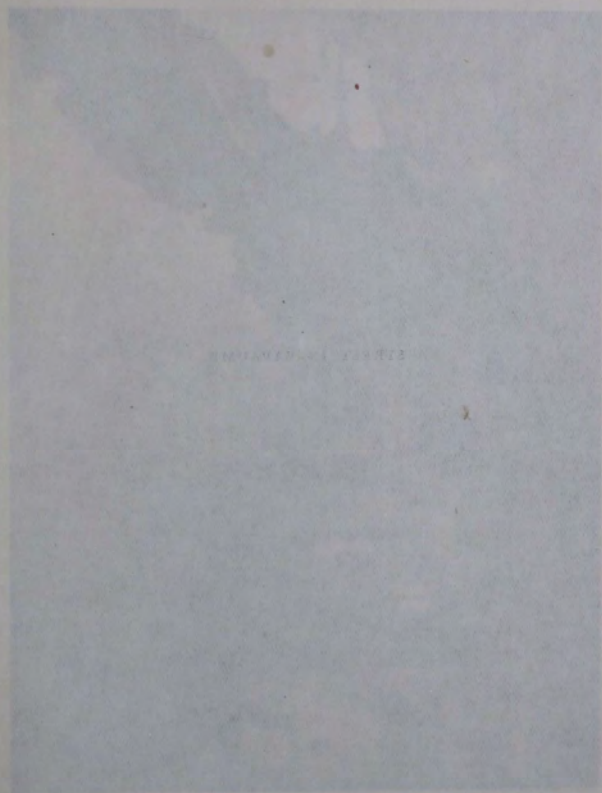
biergarten atmosphere soon made way to the familiar wrack and ruin, for though we captured, and the enemy was compelled to abandon quantities of his heavies, his lighter guns did some highly estimable strafing.

The German machine-gunners deserve special citation for bravery in those days. Whether they had been given orders, on pain of death anyhow, to stick it to the last, or whether they were—as believed—men picked for their indomitable pluck and devotion to duty, I do not know, but they assuredly won our admiration. It was no figurative seeing it out to the bitter end. They did so in all actuality, and though—when caught alive after having inflicted severe punishment on us—they seemed to think that a "*Kamerad!*" washed out all differences of opinion, nevertheless, up to the moment of forced surrender they served their guns like heroes. One gunner and his No. 2, whom the gods had, I suppose, made mad, pumped religiously away at an advancing tank till the latter strolled over them and squashed them quite flat.

Our line stretched at the end of the third day from north of Lihons along the Rosières line to the other side of Méharicourt. The Hun was trying

to make a stand here, and so far and fast had he travelled in his flight that despite our most earnest endeavour we had not been able to prevent him effecting a measure of consolidation. Meanwhile we had thoroughly cleared him off the country east and south of the Luce, and were in possession of all the villages which dotted the lovely champaign, including Maucourt, Fouques-court and Méharicourt. Rosières was ours, Vrély and Caix, Beaufort, Harbonnières and Le Quesnel, and all the country lying on either side the Avenue de Marmites where the big gun-pits are. The Germans lay thickly about the cluster of hamlets of which Chilly is the centre, and further north evidently meant to make a stand at Chaulnes. So in front of these we sat down to smoke them out. Inter-divisional relief gave some of us breathing space for four days, during which we went back and lay in the woods near Caix, and occupied most of the time not devoted to sleeping and basking in the sun in getting the hang of the country. It was strange to think we were operating along that very Villers-Breton-neux-Montdidier line which had seen the retirement of the Allies a few months before. It must have been a very different place in the spring, and





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probably had at that time of year as few charms as the Ancres area just to the north. One could not reconcile his memories of Albert and the Bapaume Road with the paradise that surrounded us here, I have never seen the Bapaume Road except when mud is in season. Perhaps it becomes almost human under conditions more complaisant.

At the conclusion of the second phase of the battle the French relieved us. They, natives, seemed as much at sea in regard to the geography of the country as ourselves, and in their characteristic way had much more to say about it. I know they got horribly lost, and as a result one bunch was distressingly gassed and pilled. But their high spirits remained unquenched by such little disagreeables, and the "horizon blue" invaded the atmosphere with a jauntiness that made our own philosophy a dour taciturnity by contrast.

There are on this front a number of minor landmarks to which it is wise not to pin too sturdy a faith. "Two trees," "Nine trees," "Lone tree," and such, they had a trick of parading on the map and reporting absent to the view. Or the army cartographer in his

urgency to bring the map up to date would count nine trees when there were eleven, or get a wrong line of observation on "Two trees," and overlook a third lurking behind the others. So these landmarks were delusive at best, and I think it was a fabled "*arbre à chandelle*" which caused a serious commotion in the ranks of our gallant Allies. There it was on the map as plain as a slag-heap, but some time or other we or Fritz had got its number and, I expect, blown it out, candlestick and all.

It was evident from many signs that the British troops had put up a stiff resistance during the German push. The little clumps and copses had often been converted into tidy God's acres by the enemy, and the dates on the trim crosses all read March and April of the current year. By the end of our tour of duty we had perforce contributed several of these quiet corners to the picture, which the shells seemed of set purpose to avoid. And there were some emergency ones, such as a shattered tank that had taken cover in the wood in front of Maucourt. On its brazen brow it bore two names supplementary to the "*Mars*" bestowed on it at its christening. "*Ada*" and "*Gladys*" smiled at me in coloured

chalk, and the boy who had not forgotten them and loved them both, but not more than his tank, lay decently buried at the age of nineteen beside his latest sweetheart.

We were a good deal more *au fait* with the country during the last part of the battle, and knew our line from Lihons to Chilly without depending too much on the map. The fine days and moonlight nights gave plenty of chance for reconnoitring, and we soon learned just how far it was reasonably safe to go through Chilly and along the roads leading to Punchy and Hallu which the Hun still held. The highway at that point saw a good deal of desultory fighting, and felled trees for barricades made convenient cover for observation of the sulky Hun, and from the intermittent sprays of machine-gun bullets. Our troops quartered in Maucourt and Méharicourt, and in the trenches round Lihons, were shelled generously, while bombs and gas-shells kept things lively at night. So we badly wanted to push Brother Bosche out of that front. However, as we had reached the old Somme front, a formidable stronghold, it was considered unwise for us to attack further in the shape of a pitched battle, and we turned over the front on Sunday,

August 25, to the French, who in due course carried the position and forced the Hun back another few miles.

We had completed the work for which we hustled south, penetrating 15 miles into enemy territory, and relieving Amiens from all further fear of aggression. We were now needed to form the spear-head in another advance, its object being nothing less than to break the Hindenburg Line, acknowledged to be the key to the whole German defence.

#### BACK TO ARRAS.

The Drocourt-Quéant Switch was considered the strongest section of the tremendous Hindenburg system. With that broken the Germans' back was broken. The Hindenburg Line had been bragged about for so long that it had assumed a mythical claim to impregnability. Though a much tougher proposition than some we had encountered, it proved in the final event no more impregnable than Vimy Ridge or Regina Trench.

In the new movement the Canadian Corps again formed the spear-head of the advance. We set the pace and the time, and while our immediate objective was the famous line of



defence, we knew that, this once surmounted, we would go on to the Rhine. The Australians were on our left wing and the French on our right, while the British forces again fronted the more northern sectors. All these armies had to conform to our plans and progress. It will be seen, therefore, that the commission given us was an onerous one.

In front of Arras, as far as the Canal du Nord, there were five trench systems, the famous Drocourt-Quéant Line being one of these. Each system was strongly fortified, and it was impossible for the cavalry to assist the advance. Even the tanks found the country difficult, so that the fight depended almost entirely on the infantry and guns. We were entering territory which had been in German hands for nearly four years. The tactics employed at Amiens could not be applied at Arras, but the Arras advance could not have been made if the enemy had not been hurled back from Amiens. That victory opened the door for advances all along the line to north and south.

Our move northward was rapid enough, if lacking in the strenuous features which made the march on Amiens a record. There was less need

of secrecy, for one thing. This was going to be a ding-dong affair with all cards faced, and no concerted element of surprise. We knew the Bosche's weakness and he knew our strength. So there was little to hide.

On our way out of the Amiens country we bivouacked for a few hours in the woods on the banks of the River Luce, and then by train and lorry hit the trail for Arras, now a much more pleasing place than it was in April. Many of the civilians had returned and opened house, and the whole area surrounding and in front of the city was a vast encampment.

#### THE CAPTURE OF THE DROCOURT-QUÉANT LINE.

But we were given small chance to enjoy the comforts that were now procurable in the shops and cabarets of Arras, and, as a curtain-raiser to the *coup de théâtre*, gathered in well-named Monchy-le-Preux and the neighbouring villages without undue expenditure of life and ammunition. This effectively cleared the way along the Cambrai Road, and opened up observation of the system which it was our intent to snap in two.

Monchy fell on August 26, and was the signal

for the general advance of the Corps. It was recognised that, advance where we would on the Western front, the Drocourt-Quéant Switch would have to be broken down before any other successes could be taken full advantage of.

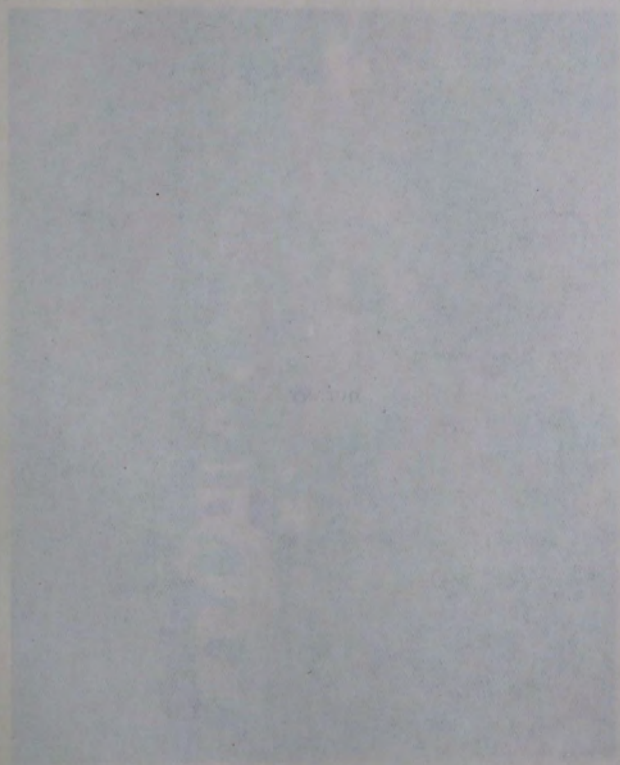
We struck just east of where the little Cojeul, an affluent of the Sensée, meanders across the Arras-Cambrai Road. The Hun was waiting for the blow and used every means to stay the shattering attack of the Corps. On the evening of Sunday, September 1, the great highway was congested with infantry and artillery pushing into action when the enemy concentrated his heavy guns on this main artery, in the hollow below Vis-en-Artois. First lighting his stage with incendiary shells, he rained high-velocities on the mass of men, horses and mules, his marksmanship leaving nothing to be desired. It was an inferno, a picture painted in the lurid German colours, and one which those who were there and escaped from scathless will never forget. The road an inch deep in dust, ascending in smothering white clouds from the trampling feet and roll of wheels; the after-glow, fading, and suddenly eclipsed by the fires which without warning sprang to devilish life on either hand,

and kindled the cutting at the crest of the hill into a furnace-mouth ; the gaping ruins of Rémy, Haucourt and Vis-en-Artois flung for an instant into knife-edged relief ; then shell on shell among the plunging columns.

It was an occasion when the intrepid Canadians ducked.

We smashed the Drocourt-Quéant Line to splinters, but it was no work for babes. The attack opened at 5 A.M. on September 2, and by nightfall we were 3000 yards beyond the line. The notorious defences went down piecemeal, but the Bosche was petulant at losing what was virtually his last stranglehold on Northern France, and seldom have his guns interpreted his venom more faithfully. In spite of them, and with the help of the cunning counter-battery work of our artillery, the Corps thrust through to the banks of the Canal du Nord, reaping villages and second-line trench systems as it went. It captured 4500 prisoners and several batteries of guns in the first day, and added Sailly and Etaing to its bag ; Dury with its chalk-pits and their flying stairways ; Saudemont and Rumaucourt, Eterpigny, Recourt and Ecourt St. Quentin, and the stretch of country to the south embracing





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We smashed the Decourt-Quéant Line to splinters, but it was no work for babes. The attack opened at 5 a.m. on September 2, and by nightfall we were 3000 yards beyond the line. The notorious defences went down piecemeal, but the Bouche was petulant at losing what was virtually his **QUÉANT** stronghold on Northern France, and seldom gave his guns interpreted his words more faithfully. In spite of them, and with the help of the cunning counter-battery work of our artillery, the Corps thrust through to the back of the Canal du Nord, reaping villages and second-line trench systems as it went. It captured 4500 prisoners and several batteries of guns in the first day, and added Sully and Etaling to its bag; Dury with its chalk-pits and their flying stairways; Soudemont and Ruminowick; Eterpigny, Haumont and Éclair St. Quentin, and the stretch of country to the south embracing







Cagnicourt, Bullecourt of memorable encounters, and Quéant itself.

The capture of the Drocourt-Quéant Switch has been given precedence in this account of the Battle of Arras because it was the culminating objectival phase of the operation. The two chapters which prepared the way for it were, however, only less important, and were characterised by the same dash and gallantry which distinguished the decisive blow. Monchy-le-Preux, as I have said, fell to us and the Scottish division attached to us, on August 26, and by nightfall our line ran east of Guémappe, Monchy and Rœux, over three miles from the kick-off. Ruinous heaps that were once Neuville Vitasse, Wancourt and Marlière were also in our hands, in addition to hundreds of prisoners and quantities of guns and stores. Orange Hill and the height of Monchy had been a boon to the German as observation points on the Vimy country, and both of these were wrested from him.

On the 27th we crossed the old German front line from Greenland Hill to Fontaine-les-Croisilles, and reached ground that had been in enemy hands since 1914. After stubborn fighting Telegraph Hill, Rohart Factory, Vis-en-Artois,

the Bois du Sart and the Bois du Vert fell before us, and we were advancing steadily along the great Cambrai Road toward Drocourt-Quéant Switch, all the time beating off spasmodic counter-attacks and under a rain of enemy shell.

Rémy, Haucourt, Jigsaw Wood and Hatchet Wood were gathered in the following day, a French-Canadian battalion distinguishing itself and living up to the traditions of Courcellette in a gallant affair on the Fresnes-Rouvroy line, and on the 29th a body of Canadian and English motor machine-gunners and cyclists pushed ahead 1500 yards on a 3000-yards front near Pelves, captured Victoria Copse and Bench Farm, and cut to pieces a Bavarian unit which attempted a counter-attack.

The second stage of the battle opened on the 30th, the day ending with the Canadians on the edge of the Drocourt-Quéant Line after hot fighting along the Fresnes-Rouvroy front, and the capture of Eterpigny Wood. So, on the morning of September 1 the entire Corps was in action, ready for the big event.

By September 4 the final objective was reached and our line established on the west bank of the

Canal du Nord. To our credit for the entire Battle of Arras stood 10,000 prisoners, 97 guns, over a thousand machine-guns and trench-mortars, five trench systems taken and eighteen enemy divisions put out of commission.

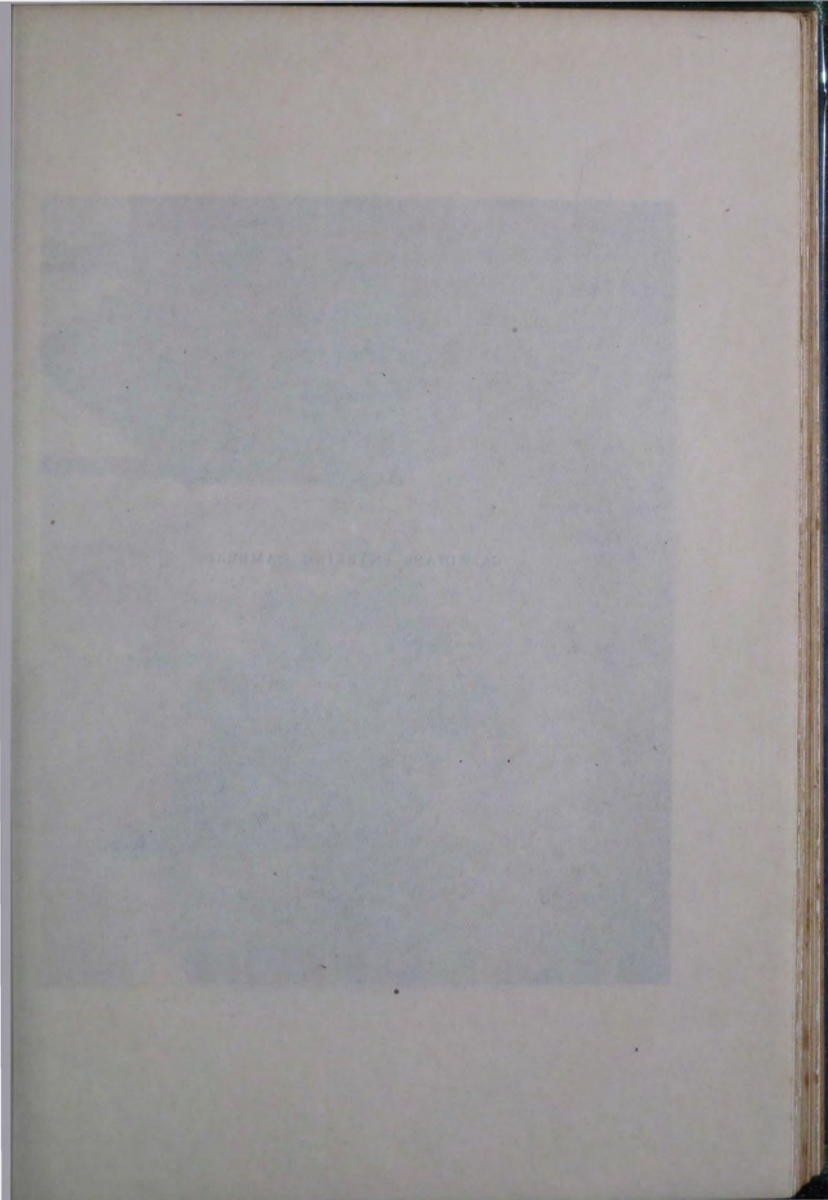
It was realised that the Canal du Nord with its embankments and barbed-wire entanglements was an obstacle that would demand systematic negotiation before we could thrust at Cambrai. Several days were needed as an interval of pause in which to canvass means of fording the Canal, and so, content for the moment with what it had done, and in sore need of reorganising, the Corps settled down to perfect its plans for performing the "hat-trick."

I could wish it were possible to itemise the units which, where the entire Corps lived up to its noblest records under very desperate conditions, might be cited for special gallantry and efficiency in the breaking of the Hindenburg Line. It was a hard job, and I have used one incident in order to illustrate the nature of the opposition which was encountered during this battle. It was titanic work all the way through; a hot chase, with almost superhuman obstacles, after an enemy who was rapidly being brought to bay.

Every man engaged and now alive knows that he took part in a victory as decisive in the fullest and most significant meaning of the word as any won during the splendid Hundred Days, and a victory which was not earned cheaply, but at enormous cost to us in labour and life. But I know that the price, even the supreme one, was paid willingly and gladly. One saw too many men die smiling in those days and nights torn from the calendar of hell; too many groping, a joke on their lips, at the threshold of death, not to realise that though we must still march and fight, fight and march perhaps for months, the vision of the sure end blinded all ranks to the nightmare of probable personal dissolution before the culminating triumph.

The victory of the Drocourt-Quéant Line, or Second Battle of Arras, was a crowning vindication, if such were needed, of the system that had raised and trained, and the spirit that had proved the Canadian Corps, and the world knew that the young army which at Cambrai was once again to be in the van, was fit and able to take rank with those round whose names hang the haloes of heroic centuries.





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#### CANADIANS ENTERING CAMBRAI

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## VIII

### THE CANAL DU NORD AND BOURLON WOOD.

By the autumn of 1918 the Canadian Corps had learned all there was to know about war. It set about the taking of Cambrai in no amateurish way, and put a polish on the thing which made its earlier achievements look rather crude in retrospect. As far back as Vimy the Staff had earned encomiums by the excellence of its organisation, but we had learned many things in a hard school since Vimy. We had been educated largely by our mistakes. And, while profiting by these, we had also taught ourselves greater adaptability to and a completer grasp of newer conditions than in the early days. We had learned what to go out and look for ; what to take infinite pains over, and what to bother about not at all. The victory of Cambrai was the achievement of an army which knew its business from butt-plate to fore-sight.

And there were factors about the Cambrai undertaking which were intensely interesting to any man who took a wholesome pleasure in his temporary profession. True, we had negotiated the Hindenburg Line as such, but behind that iron bulwark itself, the old front line proper, there lay a vast and complicated system of defences which invited as much pluck as, and more intelligence than, the vast trench which bore the famous name. There were the support trenches and all the paraphernalia of obstacles to which the Bosche had been able to devote much time and loving care; the barbed wire alone, sometimes in segments of 60-foot depth and écheloned in the most puzzling way, was a problem which only astute scouting could solve. Our artillery, needless to say, assisted literally at this solution, but only after it had been put *au courant* with the general scheme of distribution by reconnaissance aerial and terrestrial.

The artillery of the Corps had by now reached the acme of efficiency. I expect many an officer cherishes among his souvenirs a copy of the barrage map prepared for the Bourlon Wood engagement. It was a clear, concise chart of the fire to be laid down; one could point to the

ground where every shell would land. And be it said that those shells *did* land on the particular spots assigned them. This was demonstrable at any time during the battle as we moved forward and took up the ground which the Bosche had been invited to vacate. There was a trimness about the work of our guns at this epoch and throughout the remainder of the War which could only have been achieved by men who were masters of their weapons.

There was another map, a copy of which is also tucked away in my map-case and will always remain there. It presented the Canal du Nord, which was just in front of our jumping-off line, from north of Inchy-en-Artois to below Mœuvres—that village the cemetery of which was the stage for the immortal heroism of a corporal's guard. Blocked out on the chart, as lying astride the canal and swarming eastward to Bournon Wood, was the ascertained strength of the enemy in detail—Prussian Guards, Bavarians, the pick of the flock. It was easy with this help to trace out for oneself the limits of the assigned objectives and the boundaries of the areas apportioned our divisions and the Imperials on our right. On a scale of 1 in 20,000, the chart

allowed of individual marking-up of such points of importance as came within the duty of the possessor. This was of paramount value where the prime obstacle of the Canal was concerned.

It may not be a matter of common knowledge that the Canal du Nord is not a completed waterway. Designed as a common carrier through this rich region of Northern France, it was still under construction when war broke out. During his freehold tenure of the area the attitude of the Hun toward the Canal had been destructive rather than constructive, at best negligent. Thus it was that the channel where it had been excavated was in worse condition for crossing than if it had been a continuous stream. There was water for appreciable stretches, but at frequent intervals there were muddy or even dry spots, which, owing to the height of the embankment on either side and the decay or wilful smashing of artificial means of crossing, were a worse nuisance than would have been a constant depth of water known and provided against. Therefore, although the Canal in the area we were attacking over lay well within the German line (at the nearest point to our jumping-off trenches in the Hindenburg system it was two or three hundred yards in

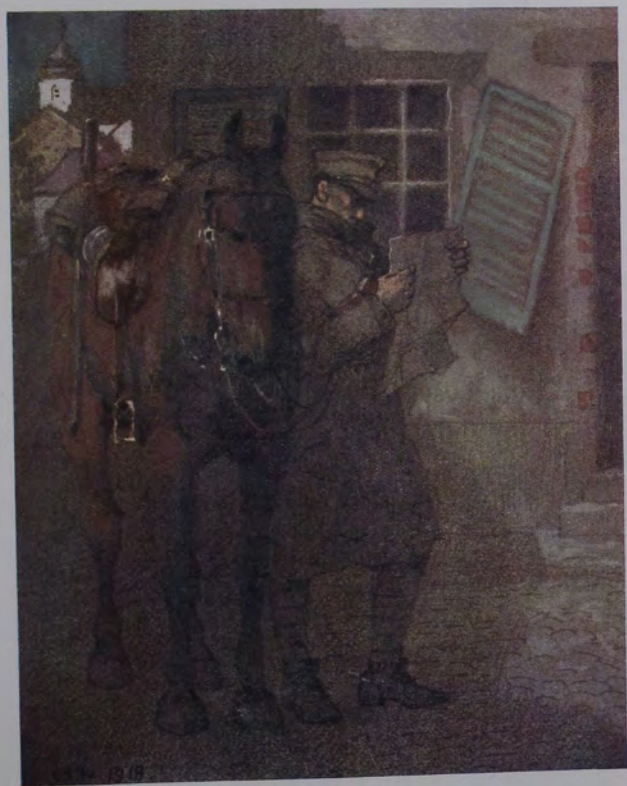


THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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MAP-READING BY MOONLIGHT







front of us), it was necessary to ascertain all that was possible as to means of fording. A ford for infantry and even light guns is a comparatively simple matter. A ford for "heavies" and all the weighty accessories of an army on an offensive move, accessories which are only second in importance to the executive in winning a battle—a ford for such a purpose demanded attributes which made it difficult to locate. And yet, so searching had been the reconnaissance in the few days before the show, and carried out even in the enemy camp (much of it, of course, by aeroplane observation), and so rapid and masterly was the work of the engineers who followed on the heels of the battalions, that within a few hours of the first wave negotiating the Canal it was possible for even the heaviest of short-range batteries to take up positions in the hollow between the Canal and Bourslon Wood.

In red and blue, on the map I speak of, are marked the degrees of fordability of the Canal to the yard. Yes, we crossed our "t's" and dotted our "i's" before we tackled the Cambrai business.

Bourslon Wood, extending some twelve miles from west to east, and eight from the Bapaume-

Cambrai Road north to Bourlon village, was also a feature of the battle-ground which required gauging to a nicety. It stands high, as altitude ranks in that country, and might have proved, had we not grasped the necessities of the case, a more difficult bit of ground to wrest from the Bosche than it proved. Here again, not only had thorough reconnaissance spied out every copse, spinney, roadway and littered trench, but we took the precaution twenty-four hours before the kick-off of drenching the wood with gas. And our gas was *some* gas by September of the last year of the war. This contributed a certain added peril in the traversing of the wood when we reached it, but most of the gas had evaporated except in the pockets, and it had proved a most efficacious way of displacing Fritz, who must have felt very sick indeed.

While the crossing of the Canal du Nord and the capture of Bourlon Wood and village were preliminaries only to the assault of Cambrai, they constituted a battle in themselves. The site we were fighting over had been the scene of other battles, not least of these the famous dash for Cambrai ten months previous. That it was no easy country to take had been well proven, but

we had, as I have shown, minimised many of its difficulties by careful reconnoitring, and we had the advantage, moreover, of what was learned on the occasion less fortunate in its outcome than ours was to prove.

The Corps began its move into the new front from the campaign ground about Arras in the last week of September. The whole operation was methodical, systematic, deliberate. The programme was written up to "God Save the King," and provided for every contingency. We knew our ground to a rood; we knew the strength of the enemy to a platoon. We only had to go in and take the one by driving out the other.

Our jumping-off area was the Hindenburg Front and Support Lines. It was approached via Croisilles, Bullecourt, Quéant and Prouville. Croisilles was once a place of some size. To-day it is remarkable only for the Gargantuan effigy of a woman, which by some freak of fate yet stands where the roads to Bullecourt and Vis-en-Artois cross, with arms outstretched towards Germany and draperies still defiant in their gaudy hues. Where the little Hironnelle flows toward the Marquion Switch and with Inchy and the

fortressed Hindenburg Line for cover, the army halted for the two days' "*assembly*" preparatory to "*zero*," and added the finishing touches which gave perfection to an already almost perfect plan.

There was certainly something awe-inspiring about the Hindenburg Line, quite irrespective of the name and the legends that frowned over it. It was no ordinary trench; rather a succession of bastions. The word "dug-out" ill defines the tremendous concrete structures which at regular intervals heaved themselves from subterranean depths to battlemented parapets. One realised now more fully than during the breathless breaking of the Drocourt-Quéant Line how stupendous had been that achievement. With time and opportunity to wander round and probe the Hun's defences, it was matter for astonishment that he should ever have been forced to abandon his cherished stronghold. Once for all any question as to German invincibility was settled.

Meanwhile we were adding our own little touches to the scenery. White tapes laid everywhere along the "lid" pointed the way for this battalion and that to its assigned ford or jumping-



off point, and it was difficult to force a passage through many sectors of the trench for the light guns with their piled ammunition which seemed to materialise in an hour and parade themselves, nose at parapet, at intervals of a few feet. No secrecy about this battle; cover and *camouflage* and masking went into the *oubliette* and the guns lined up side by side with the Lee-Enfields and Vickers.

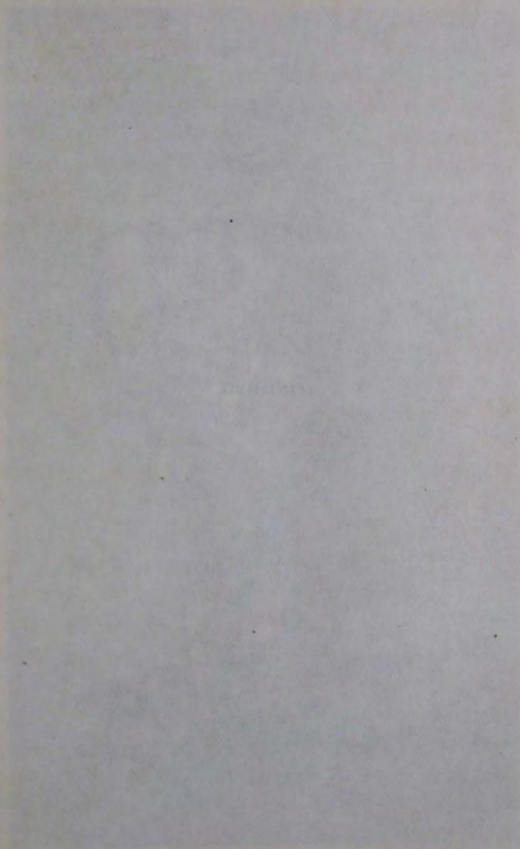
#### THE CAPTURE OF CAMBRAI.

We went over at dawn on Friday, September 29. The counter-barrage of the enemy greeted us on the very crest of the Canal banks, and in the semi-darkness and mud (for the weather had changed to a dirty drizzle in the night) the scramble up and down one bank, across the bit of ditch assigned to your unit, or another if it were handier, and up again to the summit of the eastern bank, was seemingly inextricable confusion. But the Canal was crossed and the extensive barbed-wire entanglements on the further side (fortunately much dissipated beforehand by our guns) were torn through ere the sun was up, and the dash across the open toward Bournon Wood was in full swing. The Quarry

Wood, a thickly-treed hole north-west of Bourlon, was the scene of desperate fighting ere the Bosche gave up what was really a strong position; but up the rising ground beyond, on to the big wood, and down into the village our battalions swept, while the Prussians and Bavarians, the pride of the German Army, gave up the ghost, surrendered at discretion, or proved better sprinters than we were.

As usual, the Hun fell back fast enough to consolidate pretty strongly, and on a line across the great Arras and Douai Roads. In the narrowing triangle behind Raillencourt, Saily, Haynecourt and Epinoy, now in our hands, he effected a stand that took some battering before we could shift him, and from it he launched several bitter counter-attacks.

In this phase of the battle it was our job to form part of the enveloping movement which was an important essential of the tactics in the final assault on Cambrai, and the hottest scenes of the engagement were staged along the line Douai-Cambrai. But by this time we were already treading on the skirts of the city, from Fontaine Notre Dame in the south to the northern suburbs, which our patrols entered on October 2.



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Though the German was not finally crushed out of the city till the 9th, Cambrai was won a week earlier.

The importance which attached to Bourlon Wood and the high ground to the north and north-west of Cambrai was shown by the number of divisions which the enemy employed and the violence of his counter-attacks during the first two days of October. The mission assigned the Corps during the later stages of the battle, that is, subsequent to the capture of Bourlon Wood, was protection of the flank of the Third and Fourth Armies in their direct thrust at Cambrai. In their advance the Canadians seized all the high ground extending along the Cambrai-Douai Road, and captured the towns of Sains-le-Marquion, Oisy-le-Vergère, Neuville S. Remy, and Tilloy, in addition to those previously enumerated.

How stiff was the task assigned the Corps may be judged by the fact that in the operation of the First, Third and Fourth Armies thirty-six enemy divisions were engaged against them, and twelve of these—supported by eleven machine-gun units—were met and defeated by the Canadians. Occupying the flank as it did, the

Corps faced both enfilade and frontal fire the entire time. The enemy fought stubbornly once he had made a stand, and the capture of hundreds of machine-guns testified to the strength of his position.

When we entered Cambrai the damage done appeared negligible. But the Bosche had adopted his favourite plan of leaving a lot of little things behind him, and by nightfall of October 3 the city was a smoking ruin. Explosions at frequent intervals soon after the expulsion of the bulk of the enemy told of incendiary bombs with time-fuses attached, and hourly increasing conflagrations ensued. The Bishop's Palace, the Hôtel de Ville and other public buildings, were blown to pieces, while only the half-ruined chancel of the cathedral and its belfry tower remained when the destruction was checked.

So fell Cambrai.



## IX

### THE SPOILS OF SIXTY DAYS.

CAMBRAI had fallen—and the Canadian Corps had fought the last and greatest of its great battles. There was still a month of hard work before it, but this would mainly consist of treading on the heels of the flying foe, with a few major operations to relieve the routine.

It has been said in some quarters that there was needless waste of life by the Corps in this, its most spectacular feat. I do not think so. It is true the total Canadian casualties during the last three months of the War were in excess of 46,000. But when it is borne in mind that the Corps was responsible for the defeat of one-quarter of the entire German Army, and when it is estimated what it cost to beat the other three-quarters, the Canadian casualties cannot be considered disproportionately high.

The Corps, to which were attached the 32nd

Division for the Battle of Amiens, the 4th and 51st Divisions for the Battle of Drocourt-Quéant or Arras, and the 11th and 46th Divisions for the Battle of Cambrai, encountered and decisively defeated in the period extending from the beginning of August to the beginning of October, forty German Divisions. The total of prisoners taken in the two months was 28,000; of guns, 500, and of machine-guns, 3000, with a huge quantity of stores of every kind.

More important still is the list of towns and villages seized from the enemy. There were seventy of these, representing 175 square miles of territory.

I do not believe that any man in the Canadian Corps felt that the price paid was too high.

“ON THE DOUBLE!”

Short breathing space had we after the victory of Cambrai before we must again “hit the pike.” Brother Bosche was retreating ever faster and faster, and touch had to be kept at all costs. “*Hustle the Hun!*” was the watchword. He was disintegrating, and the process must not be allowed to slacken. The Central Powers issued their appeal for an armistice on October 6, and

by the 12th Germany was known to be on the verge of complete surrender. The terms dictated by us would be in ratio with the degree of her exhaustion.

We did take a few days off, chiefly to allow of reinforcements reaching us. And we needed them—the reinforcements. Lying back on the Hindenburg Line once more, we counted our losses, and filled the gaps as quickly as possible before moving again into the Arras area for final refitting touches. Thence, in the second week of October, we launched our last drive, determined on as big a bag as possible before the close season for Hun birds began.

This last month of the War was assuredly a war of movement. We were perpetually on the go, and never could travel too fast to keep up with our friend. Towns, villages, woods, churches, fosses—they flitted past us day or night as telegraph-poles flit by a railway-carriage window; and, like the wires, the way was up and up and down, down and up.

But the scene was changing at last. We were on the verge of the occupied territory in which the Germans had held the natives prisoner; either they had not had time to fly or had been

deported wholesale from other areas to form a central slave-market. The change was startling, and revealed an aspect of war which was a novelty to us all.

It was, too, a bizarre experience in the first days of the drive to find empty save for ourselves country which only a week or two before we had known surging with the crowded incidents of great battles. To travel again down the Cambrai Road and glimpse over one's shoulder the knoll which is Monchy; in the middle distance the ruins which are Dury, Eterpigny and Saude-mont. To halt at Baraille, within a stone's-throw of Marquion Switch; Marcoing and Inchy direct south, and ahead the little hell of Raillencourt, Sailly and Haynecourt. To "billet" a day at Sauchicourt Farm and see from a new standpoint the now quiet village at the mouth of a sunken road which is Oisy-le-Vergère; north of it Arleux, once a town of size. We were counting our hatched chickens, while keeping well trimmed the lamp that would incubate the next batch.

From this familiar region we struck steadily north-eastward, bent on the taking of Denain as a *bonne bouche* only to the *pièce de résistance* of



Valenciennes. Crossing how or where we could the great railway embankment that is another tattered link between Douai and Cambrai, we scrambled into the twin towns of Aubigny and Aubencheuil-au-Bac, once more fording our old battle friend the Cojeul, a few paces from where had swung an iron bridge blown up by the Bosche rearguard a few minutes before. We pushed him out of that pretty tree-trimmed nook and swept him before us to the lowlands of the Escaut, carrying Fressin, Fechain, Monchicourt, Emerchicourt, Aniché, Auberchicourt, and many another town and village as we went, with little to hinder us but the lonely sacrifice machine-gun posts which marked the enemy wake like mines in a sullen sea.

#### THE REDEMPTION OF THE CITIES.

On October the 18th we were in sight of Denain, and it required two days to take that one-time prosperous industrial town from the Bosche and hand it back to France.

Denain was the first of the French cities inhabited throughout the war, on sufferance, by French people, which it was our fortune to release from bondage. Many more were to be

so unshackled on our road to Mons, but I think this place will have a niche of its own in our memories. The situation was, as I said, such a novelty to us, and even more so to the poor populace. None of us will forget the welcome which greeted us at Denain, typical as it was of that enjoyed throughout the triumph. It was touching in a sense too deep for mere surface emotion, and it embodied, I can well imagine, the "Te Deum" which was rising each day more jubilantly from the great hearts of France and Belgium.

Besides those two days needed to oust the usurper from his hold of the city, there were many warm hours devoted to clearing him from the environs, and from the difficult bottom lands along the Canal de l'Escaut. The Bosche made a frantic stand here, and one hard for the infantry to dislodge. Valuable and increasingly heavy work as the machine-guns and trench-mortars had done throughout the war, it was signal service which they rendered in the cleansing of those suburbs and swamps. The "Toc Emmas" covered themselves with glory in the job of making the enemy strong-points untenable, and once Fritz was jarred loose from them he was

THE LANCING, NOVEMBER 4, 1918

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tackled in the open by the happy infantry. Some pretty hand-to-hand, rough-and-tumble affairs made each day memorable. It was very near the dying gasp of the enemy, and his last moments were punctuated by several galvanic kicks.

Lille had fallen or was in the act of doing so while we were busy round Denain, and many another historic scutcheon was being wiped clean of the bar sinister of four years. Our eyes on Valenciennes and our dreams of Mons, we kept our hands busy in releasing intervening towns and villages—Thiant, Maing, Prouvy, Rouvignies, Wavrechain, Famars, Aulnoy and many another, while our artillery pounded at the gates of the great city.

#### DAYS AT DENAIN.

Denain had seen none but hostile faces since the first months of the War. Denain had heard none but the guttural tongue, an enforced and brutal palimpsest on its own. The men of Denain asked what the uniform of a French soldier was in this War. The children of Denain chattered a horrible hybrid—“*nisht goot*,” “*des schoen*” and the like. The women of Denain chattered not at all.

Every Canadian was a blushing hero. He must perforce "process" the streets, hung with paper flowers and embarrassment. He must kiss the children, all of them, and as many of the women as he could. He must shake hands with and perchance be kissed in turn by *vieux marcheurs* who spent solicitous hours trying to understand and be understood by this young conqueror who could if he would tell them so much about a war very different from their dreams of '71.

We sang in those days. We had to, even on the way to shift a noisy obstacle from a church steeple or some filthy Hun remnant from the gas-laden cellars of Maing or Rouvignies.

*Il ne faut que rire.* So callous were the people to the horrors of war as they had known it, so transported by the charms of war as we introduced it to them, that mumbling citoyens and hot-eyed citoyennes, babies clinging to their skirts, would lead us to some spot where they knew a sniper was lurking, and a flicker of enemy machine-gun bullets down the street only set them gabbling and made more importunate their demand that we eject "*ce sale-là.*"

They gave us all they had—if we would take it, and would take nothing in return, though I



think many a baby in Denain wears a martial badge to-day, by reason of whom some of us for a season went abroad a ragged-tailed army. But the children never asked for them. They only looked their longing.

That grand old man, the Curé of the Sacré Cœur, from the steps of the high altar—which we had helped him replace—told his flock that if ever a Canadian soldier entered Denain each one of them was to give up his or her bed, even though they had but one. There were two of our “brutalised soldiery” among the congregation, young sinners with not a good mark on their sheet but that for pluck, and I fear they will never blush for their peccadilloes as they did under the concentrated gaze of some four hundred hero-worshippers.

The women told us more of the four years of bondage by their silence than by words. A strange numbness gripped them, a trance, which, on rare occasions, belched forth a flame of wrath and shame, soon quenched in its own white heat.

On Sunday, October 27, there came to town the Prince whom we all loved and whom all Canada has since learned to love. His place it was to receive the thanks of the citizens of

Denain for her redemption by the soldiers of Canada, and in turn to join in the thanksgiving to God at the first service held in the doyen church of S. Martin since the German entered the city. One needed only to watch that lad—he seemed little more—as in his own shy, friendly way he played his royal part so charmingly, to understand how he had earned none but good words during his long and honourable service in the War, and why, wherever he went, he would win hearts and always have them in his keeping. He stood at the base of the monument erected to Villars—strange whirligig of time! that an English Prince should so stand where a great marshal of France had checked the advance of Marlborough—and took the salute from the veterans of the Franco-Prussian War, and from us, the veterans of the greatest War that has been, and there with his boyish grace added, I think, one golden rivet more to the buttress that stays the Throne.

#### IN THE LAST DAYS.

British outposts entered Valenciennes as early as October 22, but the city was not actually taken till November 2. Weary of the to-and-fro

THE LAST DAY  
OF THE YEAR

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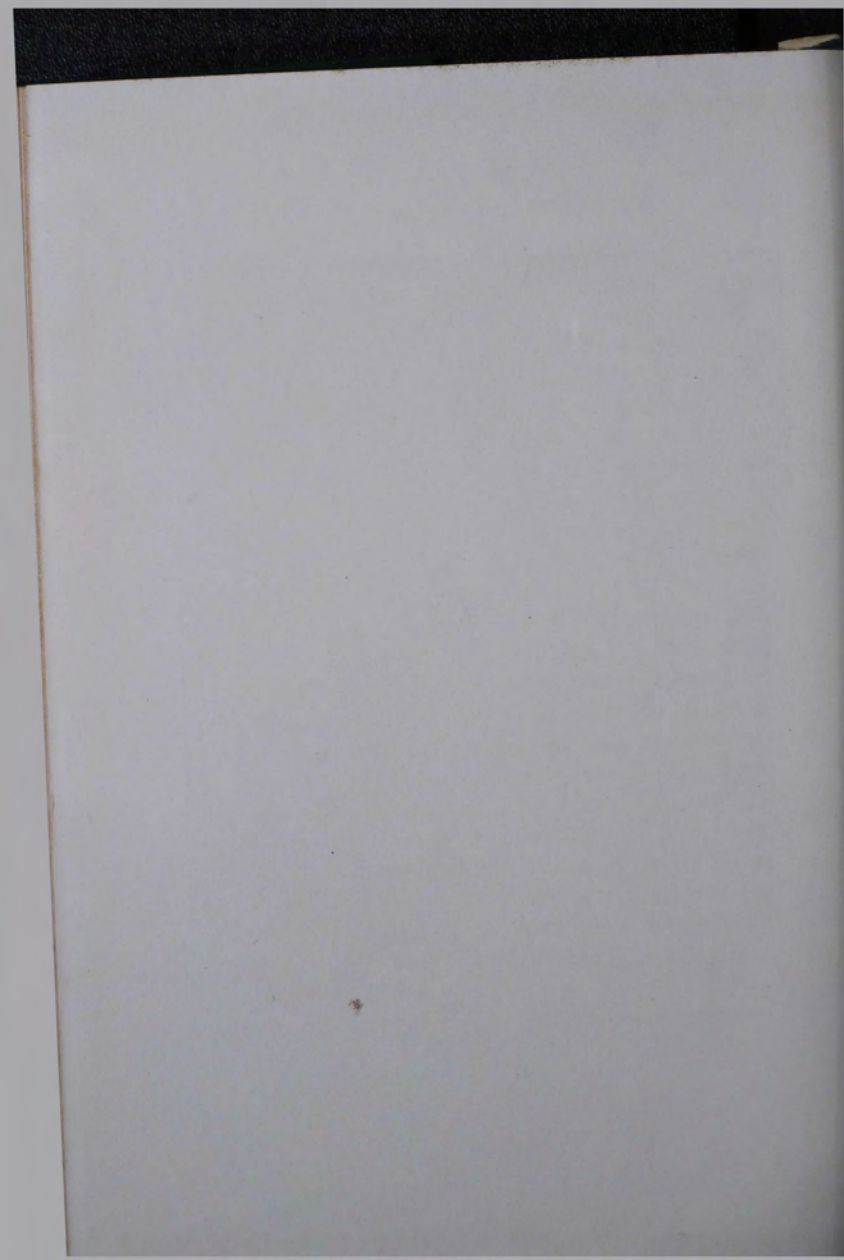
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action along the Escaut, the Higher Command ordered a major operation of the British and Canadian troops for November 1, and in the succeeding twenty-four hours following on one of the fiercest bombardments of the War, we drove the enemy from his strong positions south of the city, and on the following day completed our work.

The ground, much of it swamp, between Château de Prés and Valenciennes was one horrible litter of German dead. Our barrage had been laid down with the utmost precision, and through S. Léger, Poirier and Aulnoy its area of destruction was so accurate it might have been set with a rule. What our guns had omitted to dispose of was settled piecemeal by bayonet and machine-gun, the Bosche, moreover, coming over in droves to give himself up. There was no need to guard these willing prisoners. Their dead were an object lesson, lying in every gutter of the suburbs, and I fear they were so left for many days. We had to push on, cementing the victory of Valenciennes and making all tight to north and east.

The work was growing easier every day. The enemy was now utterly broken and his resistance

fragmentary. Rumours of an armistice were on every tongue, and the betting in the messes was all in favour of actual, if not nominal, peace by the following Sunday.

The assurance that a cessation of hostilities was imminent was met with mixed feelings. We felt, as did all the armies, that the Allies now had a downhill pull on Brother Bosche, and that, given but another fortnight or month, we could grind his face in the mud so deep he would never want to look the sun in the eye, much less seek a place in it.

How far this may have been the truth very few, apart from the Generalissimo, are in a position to say. I have heard it alleged in quasi-authoritative quarters that the German was not nearly so down and out as most of us surmised, nor we as strong, and that had we refused the armistice we might not have been in a position to finish the War till after another spring offensive. The Bosche is certainly a "downy bird" with phoenix-like powers of resilience, and perhaps he was not in such dire straits as we thought, at worst not *in extremis*.

I do not believe there was any pusillanimity in the minds of our leaders, based on a distaste



for further costly bloodshed not absolutely imperative. The history of the Hundred Days puts this theory out of court. And better another month of even much hotter fighting than we had reason to anticipate than a recrudescence of war within a measure of years. We must assume that those in the best position to judge, judged wisely in calling "Time!" when to most of us it seemed that we could envelop what was left of the German armies in a greater Sedan, were we but given the chance.

Meanwhile, this digression leaves us still on the road that points north-east to Mons, skirting the great Forest of Raismes. Mons! I think every man in the Corps hoped he would be given a place in the show that would inevitably liberate to Belgium the spot hallowed by the traditions of the little British Expeditionary Force of 1914.

Mons fell to the Canadians on the morning of Armistice Day, November 11.

That the capture of this town should crown a victorious war was one of those sublime touches of fate, which fostered in some of us the idea of a beneficent influence working for our cause, and concerning which I have already ridden

my hobby. It was such sheer poetic justice. And I read no qualification of that justice in the fact that it was the high prerogative of Canadians to put this finishing touch to the War. Your quibbler in psychology will protest that British (Imperial) divisions should have had precedence in entering a place the name of which is the synonym for a series of rear-guard actions more splendid than any victory. But, as I see it, the event was a sign and a symbol of the blood-brotherhood between Englishmen and Canadians which takes no account of shades of race, a brotherhood in which England and Canada become one and indivisible.

The fall of Mons was the death-knell of Kaiserdom. It was also the carillon that heralded a free and democratic Empire's consummation of union.

There is another (a minor) point about the taking of Mons which has been fruitful of argument, not without acrimony. It has been charged to the door of our Commander-in-Chief that he sent the Corps in to attack Mons on the morning of November 11, that is to say, at an hour when the Armistice was virtually *de facto*, if not *de jure*. The truth is that the operation orders for the

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED STATES

my lobby. It was such sheer poetic justice. And I read no qualification of that justice in the fact that it was the high prerogative of Canadians to put this finishing touch to the War. Your quibbler in psychology will protest that British (Imperial) divisions should have had precedence in entering a place the name of which is the synonym for a series of rear-guard actions more splendid than any victory. But, as I see it, the event was a sign and a symbol of the blood-brotherhood between Englishmen and Canadians which takes no account of shades of race, a **FORMAL OCCUPATION OF MONS, NOVEMBER 15, 1918** because one and indivisible.

• The fall of Mons was the death-knell of Kaiserdom. It was also the verifion that heralded a free and democratic Empire's consummation of union.

There is another (a subtle) point about the taking of Mons which has been fruitful of argument, not without verifion. It has been charged in the ears of our Commander-in-Chief that he sent the Corps in to attack Mons on the morning of November 15, that is to say, at an hour when the Armistice was virtually *de facto*, if not *de jure*. The truth is that the operation orders for the





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taking of the town were complete on the previous evening, and read to the effect that we were to enter Mons that night as soon as it was dark. The operation began at the time ordered, and although the Canadians did not actually, owing to circumstances, enter the town till 3 o'clock on the morning of November 11, this was two hours before the Armistice was signed. The Armistice was not signed till 5 o'clock on the morning of November 11, and *until it was signed nobody knew it was signed*. All ranks were under standing orders to continue fighting as though peace were a twelvemonth distant, and to take no heed of rumours, official or otherwise. By the terms of the Armistice all hostilities were to cease at 11 o'clock in the morning. They did so cease. *But not till then*.

We knew Brother Bosche.

That there were many casualties on our side in the last hours of the War is to be regretted, but only goes to prove that the German soldier intended to continue fighting till he was ordered to stop. His last flash was a plucky one, and proved him a better man than his superiors at Potsdam.

But I gather that when he definitely knew the

document was signed and sealed he was a better pleased person than even ourselves.

Thus, in the grand sense, ended the Great War, with the Canadian Corps, by grace of the generosity of its Allies and kinsmen, and by virtue of its proven valour, in the van to the last.



## X

“DISMISS !”

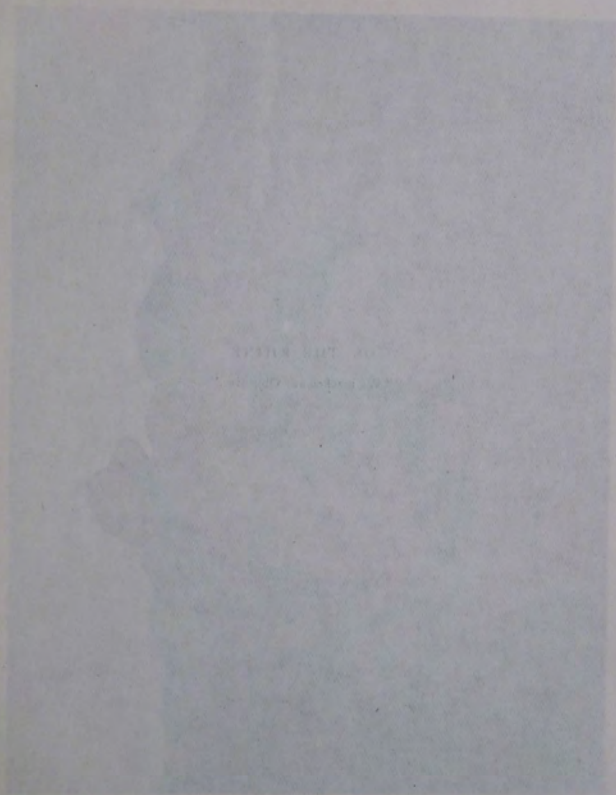
I WONDER if, after all, it is the big things that count, even in war. We often remember them and the dates they glorified because they are ear-marked for us by some incident trivial in contrast. We know that such and such phase of a battle occurred on this day or that because our brain pigeon-holed under the same date a fragment of comedy or tragedy which, like a little candle in a spacious room, serves to light the bonded warehouse of our memory.

So it is that, while chronicling the great events that came within our knowledge and radius of vision during the years of battle, at our elbow gathers a shadowy throng, rudely nudging us and whispering in our ear; a swashbuckler crew in rags of gold and tatters of red and sable, clean white and dingy drab, camp-followers to the grand army of dreams we would fain muster in orderly column of fours. And they will not be silenced,

these parti-coloured hangers-on, with their "Do you remember?" "That was the day when—" "You can't forget me!" till perforce we turn for an hour to the half-gods and let the Olympians go.

I know that, while telling as best I might this tale of the Canadian Army and its deeds, my subconscious self has been busy at those dusty little pigeon-holes and giving half an ear to the swaggering, coaxing, pleading little brethren. If that other part of me has sometimes edged its way to my pen and insisted on narrating its small personal happenings and opinions, I shall, I hope, be forgiven by most of my readers. For in the long run our experiences were the same in the mass, if differing in detail, and the written word of a minor incident, quite foreign, it may be, to the occasion which it recalled to life, will often, perhaps, blow somewhere on fast-cooling embers and kindle a sympathetic flame of remembrance.

In this immediate aftermath of war we do not, where two or three are gathered together, talk much. The perspective is still too short and we are yet overshadowed by the largeness of the history it was ours to make. Some of us, over-conscious of the events that touched us, are uncomfortable, *gauche*, as in clothes too roomy for



these parti-coloured hangings-on, with their "Do you remember?" "That was the day when—" "You can't forget me!" till perforce we turn for an hour to the half-gods and let the Olympians go.

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#### ON THE RHINE

"We reached our Objective." For in the long run our experiences were the same in the mass, if differing in detail, and the written word of a minor incident, quite foreign, it may be, to the occasion which it recalled to life, will often, perhaps, blow something on fast-cooling embers and kindle a sympathetic flame of remembrance.

In this barren aftermath of war we do not, where two or three are gathered together, talk much. The perspective is still too short and we are yet overshadowed by the largeness of the history it was ours to make. Some of us, over-conscious of the events that touched us, are uncomfortable, *pinch*, as in clothes too roomy for







our wearing. As we shake down to the commonplace and the story of the four years mellows to a saga in which we lose our identity and to which we listen as to a legend of minstrelsy in the "once upon a time," we shall, perhaps, let our tongues wag pleasantly: not, I think, of high and sounding deeds, but of the very small things of interest to us which were the weft and woof of the gorgeous tapestry. Yet, though we do not tattle of it, the design and its splendour we shall not forget.

The soul of a man is very shy and we shall "fight our battles o'er again" in the exchange and mart of little day and night memories. In the vernacular, we shall "swop lies," and in the swopping reveal much of the truth. It will be wholesome; some of the truth will be of the "home" variety and none the worse for that. We shall live again in the wide times, and slough much of the narrowness that comes with peace and plenty.

There was scant opportunity to be small in those days. We were in too great a hurry, engaged on business too urgent, to allow our souls to bother over little things. A remarkable fact was the almost entire absence of fighting in

the army—I mean, of course, the internecine sort. At times a careless overdose of “vin blink” or a tot of rum too burdensome for the bearer precipitated a healthy little “scrap,” but I seldom saw such an one carried on as a “morning’s morning.” All was forgotten and forgiven between “Lights out” and “Réveillé.” When you and your adversary are expected to devote all your attention to blacking Brother Bosche’s eye, it is sheer waste of time and muscle to engage in civil war, so you agree quickly. Besides, it’s rotten to think that the fellow whose mortal coil was indistinguishable from the landscape after that H.E. hit the parapet last night was nursing a grudge against you when he reported at the Heavenly Orderly Room.

The Corps was, on the whole, a singularly happy family. There was only one unpardonable sin—“cold feet,” a rare complaint, and one of which the patient was often cured by time and familiarity. There was also this element of generosity among us: let a bit of a funk make good and it was a complete “wash-out” on his gloomy past.

Courage was a very common thing, the commonest virtue of all. It was difficult to under-



stand a man being other than plucky when it was the fashion, and danger was accepted as a ration far less emotionally than grub.

We led a healthy life, and the food, when one considers what Londoners were suffering in 1917 and 1918, for instance, was as the feast of Belteshazzar. Bully and biscuit were plentiful—of course, but there were other things, and even up the line fresh meat was usually to hand every other day.

The ration-dump was the line's Rialto. There all the gossip of the day was exchanged while we waited for the limbers, G.S. wagons or lorries, or, in hot spots, carrying parties. Of course during a big operation supply was an uncertain quantity, but it was really rather a miracle how eventually it got through to us somehow or other. An eighth wonder was the steady arrival of bread, semi-fresh. I believe the little "Waacs" baked it down at Boulogne or some other coast town. Anyhow, it seldom ran short, and two consecutive days of "hard tack" was something to grouse about.

I suppose that, for the greater part of the fighting season, life and money were the cheapest commodities current. One thought not at all

of the first and of the second only in terms of cigarettes, chocolate, biscuits and candles. The fortnightly pay, not princely when considered as a sum of money, served all our simple needs. We could send out to the canteens for these, and if we had anything left in our pockets when we got back to the villages it was dedicated to a bottle or two of well-earned champagne and "stoot." (Shades of Guinness !)

Yes! life was cheap too. It was held on such a skimpy tenure ; it weighed so light in the balance of things. One soon grew thick-skinned on the subject, both personally and vicariously, and felt a shock only when a man who had shared parcels and blankets with us for months went west hurriedly. That *did* bring it home to you, and set you wondering if Fritz had also pulled your number out of the grab-bag.

The little white crosses were just features of the landscape—perhaps useful landmarks. I know now that they were often full of pathos. Such lonely clusters of them as dotted the country between Vimy and Lens. They looked very tranquil, tired almost, like those who slept beneath, and I suppose one thought a bit more of them than normally those drowsy afternoons

in the summer of '17 when there was "nothing doing," and all that saucer-land seemed for a few hours

Muted, as when one with wounds  
Lies in a room dressed soberly  
With lavender and dymity.

We did not elaborate our "cold *hic jacets*." They were simple and sincere, and told with brevity all there was to tell. We lack the outer warmth of our Gallic friends who raised most cheerful memorials, decorated with colours and badges, and of course "immortelles."

Far be it from me to "sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the deaths of kings," but talking of graves makes one think of churches, and it would be hard to make a prolonged stay in Northern France without having churches thrust upon your notice. In the first place, from the soldier's point of view, they were such admirable aiming-marks. That sounds rather brutal, but respectful sentimentality toward outward symbols was necessarily one of the things that went into the discard. It often occurred that a church was the only point for miles ahead the bearings of which were accurate on the map. From that ruined steeple or tower, therefore, we

could get the hang of the surrounding area, and at the same our artillery could bang away with some prospect of gauging the accuracy of its range. Obviously, too, when a church was our near neighbour we gave it all the respect of keeping an appreciable distance.

They were undoubtedly well built, those village churches. Some of them have become famous in the War, as they never hoped to be in ante-bellum days, and still raise their battered heads in pride and despite of shells of every calibre. Such an one was Ablain S. Nazaire, which every man who thought he could handle a pencil has portrayed or caricatured. And there were many others less known than that of Ablain which better repaid a visit: Sauchy-Lestrée, for example, its western end a pile of stones, but the fragments of windows and frescoes in the chancel still a glow of colour; Dury, with graceful oak carving lying all about the riven floor; Fressin, a husk but for the priest's room and crypt where brazen vessels and cloth of gold glimmered through their shroud of dust; Caix, an exquisite relic of Norman architecture; Mer-ville, the loveliest gem of all. These were worth a risky call at any time, even when the Bosche



guns were venting their spleen on them. Of some of the great cathedrals I have already spoken. Their beauty—or the tragedy which makes them beautiful, this is common knowledge.

I am sure we all ought to have been “as happy as kings,” considering what a “number of things” the War was full of. Did ever Mr. Brock of pyrotechnic fame achieve such masterpieces in fireworks as illumined the Somme? There have been a few attempts to do justice on canvas to a skyline when the Bosche had his “wind up.” But they fall far short of the reality. The enemy specialised in this line as he specialised in all, and our flares were feeble farthing squibs beside his gorgeous Roman candles, Catherine wheels, silver sprays and multi-coloured rockets. And the show was always so easy to turn on. We had our fingers on the tap. A “mad minute” in one of our front-line bays and whoosh! up the whole wide world *vis-à-vis* would go in fiery chromatics. Toward the end of the War the balloon or parachute flare was perfected, and hung in mid-air for a distressing number of minutes for the unfortunate caught in its radius, and to stand still or “submerge” was the only way to avoid a spatter of S.A.A.

We became, of course, so familiar with these set pieces as to despise them merely as a nuisance, and it was seldom anybody not on duty would surrender a precious five minutes of sleep for a dead-head seat at the show. And yet I can quite imagine painters rhapsodising over the Somme nocturnes as quite the most priceless thing in war stuff. I'm afraid we never appreciated our privileges.

There was the search-light too. These in the latter days, when the aerial thoroughfares were congested with Gothas and our own bombers, were something quite special in pretty stunts. I remember a night during the forced march south of Amiens when the Bosche had thirty-two ghostly fingers dancing "up the middle and down again" from horizon to zenith. Some miles away from us though they were, they made a Great White Way of the second-class road we were stumbling over, and properly grateful we felt. I assume that our patrols and bombers were engaging all of Fritz's attention in the advance area and drawing a red herring across our trail.

During this same show, when we were resting for a day or two in the woods, our own search-lights opened upon a fleet of Heine bombers which

were smelling us out. As soon as one Gotha was entangled in a spot-light three or four fingers would close in and lace him up tight. And up these fingers which were lanes of light flashed stars and constellations yet more dazzling—shells and bullets from our “Archies” and machine-guns—till in a swift but sullen flame of hell proud Lucifer returned to his wallow.

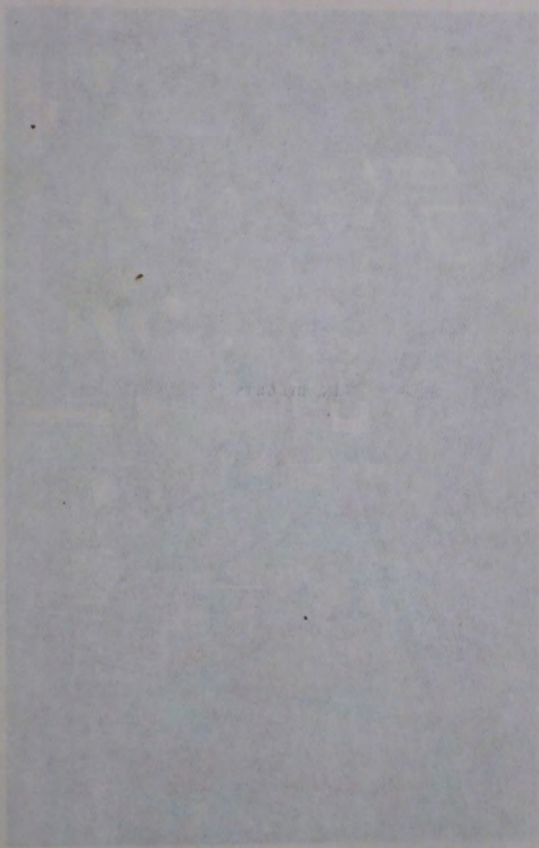
Aircraft and their antics early became a commonplace, but there were occasional stunts that stood out as something extra special. We were naturally more familiar with the doings of enemy planes than of our own, except the plucky little 'buses doing patrol duty. Our own big stuff was usually busy over the other side of the line. But now and then our crack flyers would take an hour off and “exercise” up and down the flat country, gambolling like kittens, as I have seen them along the Arras Road, a bare two hundred feet from the ground.

It was when visibility was good and all our observation balloons were bobbing along the horizon that Brother Bosche used to enjoy jam on both sides of his bread. Nothing, unless it were dropping pills on hospitals, seemed to appeal to his sense of humour more than to prick those

certainly humorous bubbles. I have seen the same flyer take the wind out of as many as four in an afternoon. One could not but admire such pluck and determination. A specially able chap at this job spoilt his good-conduct sheet with us one day over Carency by shooting at the observer of his last bag as he emulated Zaccheus in his parachute. I suppose the Bosche thought it was in the game, but his idea of cricket wasn't ours. He was brought down himself a few minutes later by two of our planes that had sneaked up on him from behind a cloud, and when he landed had his face well smacked. He only got off with his life because his other work had been really sporting.

Death was a thing of many odd aspects, of infinite variety. The dead at Vimy in the snow-storm struck one as so extraordinarily like the living. But they rested, while everybody else moved on. They would sit on the edge of a shell-hole in an easy, negligent attitude, or pose with an arm outstretched and an alert, surprised look on their faces. I never saw dead men so *instantly* dead as I saw them there. They became wax images graven by a master. And they were everywhere, for Death was very busy at Vimy.

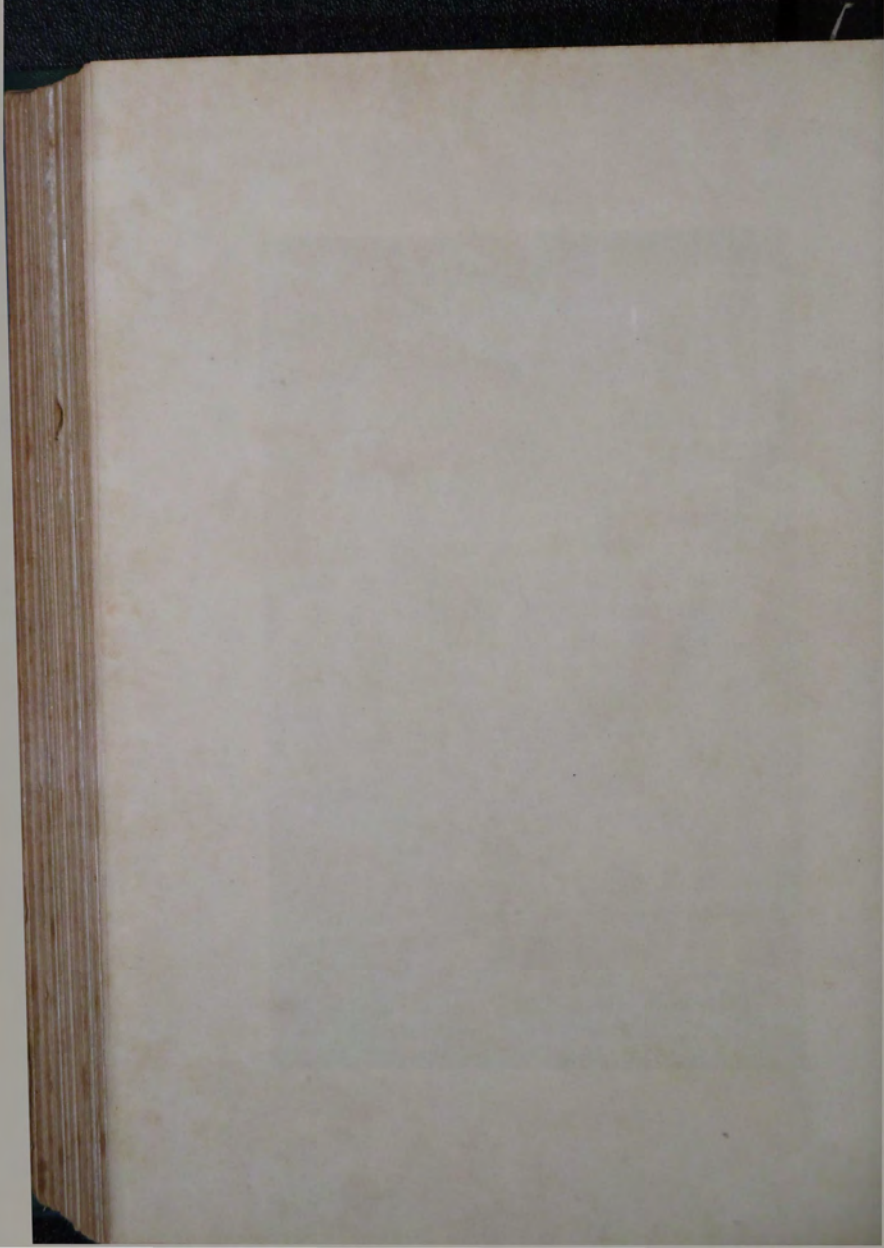




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As a dramatist Death was wont to create a finished masterpiece. We had a dog in our company loved by all, and nominally owned by two of the "mule-skinners." He would follow his own limber, even when of the fighting échelon, through hell's gates. (And let me here, in pardonable parenthesis, present my compliments to the mule and his master. Never was more sterling, inglorious, gallant and unsung work done than by those pernicious heroes and their drivers. I hate a mule within a sector of me, but I am only giving some high official a chance to do the right thing before memorialising the Government for a monument to—the mule.) On the Cambrai Road one night the column was heavily piled, and the first sighting shell collected two mules, two drivers and one dog. They were the quintette of friends who had stuck together for three years and more, and in death they were not divided. "Lion," the dog, fell with a paw on the off-mule's neck. He was buried between his driver pals, and on the cross raised to him, as to the other two, there was nothing in the terse tribute to tell that he was other than a soldier and a man.

Wounds were accepted, as all the world knows,

in a mixed spirit of *Te Deum* and *Nunc Dimittis*. They meant Blighty in all probability; at the worst a spell of white sheets and other luxuries at Étaples or Boulogne. A sergeant pal of mine was always bemoaning the hard luck that never brought him "his." I can see him still, sunning his naked torso on the firing-step of Click Trench, examining his shirt and bewailing his fate. He loved shells. Said, "They can't hit you, you know." At Paaschendaele he was sent out of the line as too valuable a life to be risked, he being witness in a pending court-martial. He retired in dudgeon to Company base, only to have his right arm shattered the next day by a Hun bomber. Though he now depends entirely on his left hand, he is a prosperous, happy citizen, with "crumbs" and fussy battery commanders forgotten and forgiven. If he recognises himself here I hope he will also forgive—but not forget—me.

Hospital—I was lucky (or unlucky?) enough never to know one—seems to have been a pretty cushy place. I do not suppose that the work of our Red Cross both in the field and in Canada was beaten by that of any army. It is to be hoped that some day a volume will be written,

by one who knows, on the devotion of the nurses and doctors ; but no mere words can express what the army thought of them.

I think it was not the danger so much as the monotony of life as it had to be "carried on" at the front which made the chances dependent on a wound so welcome, without regard to the risks. To get away from the eternal khaki at any cost also had much to do with it. For months we might see nothing else. Even the travesties in the shape of civilians in the back areas were a momentary refreshment after a long spell in the line.

It was not, of course, till in the days of the Armistice that we had an opportunity to appreciate the charms of the French and Belgian villages ; villages, I mean, which had not passed under the hammer of Thor. There is much talk of restoring the devastated areas. I hope that this will be done in a loving spirit : that the old lines will be retained and only "modern conveniences" introduced. These, I suppose, *are* needed, and yet the aborigines thrive on conditions which would be death at the first whiff to the crank on hygiene. The "rectangular stink" has been immortalised by the premier

graphic humorist of the War. But it requires no immortalising by a foreigner. The native will see that the midden has its place of honour at centre stage so long as French and Belgian peasants retain their national integrity. Round its sacred odours live long and die happy the family and its domestics, its kine, pigs and poultry, and no heirloom of oak, pottery or brass is closer in line for canonisation than the "dolorous sniff."

We learned to like the people of Belgium passably well. The French peasantry and townspeople, aside from rare opportunities on a Paris leave or a run down to Nice, and during the march from Denain to Mons, we had no great acquaintance with. I do not count in any seriousness the unfortunate débris that was occasionally encountered in the area behind the line. It was not quite human, and only inspired pitying disgust. Thrifty and filthy, it was just part and parcel of a *milieu* of mud. And only in the later days did we come to know the peasant of Flanders, and the Walloon. Protracted dawdling sojourns in villages and small towns threw us much on the mercy of the inhabitants for society, and I think that in return



we gave most of them their first taste for generations of what can be called life. We occupied their "villas" and châteaux and cottages in a friendly mob, accepting cheerily what they could give us; ate and paid for all their vegetable gardens and poultry yards, with a special eye for any kind of "choux"; taught them poker while they taught us picquet; elbowed the male "civile" into corners at the village dances and became fiancé afresh as regularly as our meals; and made lasting friends to whom many of us, I believe, write in dog-French when nostalgia lifts its head. Brussels, Namur and even Antwerp and Ostend gave some of us a taste for metropolitan Continental life at this time, and the Boulevard Anspach was the frank trysting-place for khaki and coquetterie so long as the Corps dallied in its home-going. A few had the opportunity to sample life at Cologne, Bonn and elsewhere across the Rhine, but so rigorous were the regulations that "fraternising" even with somebody else's sister was an unpopular game. The First and Second Divisions formed part of the Army of Occupation and had the mixed pleasure of spending some months in Germany.

I have said little about the movements of the Canadian Corps subsequent to the Armistice because, from that time, we considered ourselves not soldiers but very badly treated and home-sick vagabonds, without a "front" and whom nobody loved. "*I—want—to—go—home*" was the universal plaint, and we resented the alleged necessity of kicking our heels on the Continent when we should be back in "God's country." I allow that reasons were many and plausible why certain of the divisions should be held back for a limited time (combined with the shortage of shipping to carry us home), but I think that more harm was done to many men during the unconscionably long six months spent in doing nothing than they suffered in all the years of the War. Money was plentiful, drink was plentiful, if dear; "love" was plentiful and took the place of life as a cheap commodity. That the Canadian soldier behaved on the whole with great self-restraint, and only in a few instances spoiled the fine record we had built up for ourselves, is more to his credit than to that of those who had the management of demobilisation in their hands. I speak, of course, as one of a "mob" which, on the whole, disappointed

gloomy prophets and conducted itself in an exemplary and patient manner under very irksome conditions, though labouring under a sense of gross injustice and exposed to many temptations, especially in the cities.

In our travels, even during the busy days of hostilities, we had glimpses of many cities, and often in circumstances which fixed a place in one's mind though he might fail to recognise it as the same on a later and more leisured visit. Havre we most of us knew from one aspect, that of its cluttered wharves. Some from two. I have a vision of a starry night and of a mixed column of "draft" swinging along the road from Ruelles. We sang in those days—I think I have said that only recruits sang—and "There's a Long, Long Trail" will always recall a city spread like a jewelled carpet of black velvet beneath me. Do you know the great twin *escalier* that drops you into Havre from the landward side? Five hundred odd are its steep stone steps, and to me it will, in spite of the bodily burden of our packs and equipment and the mental burden of what was before us, always be the thing that sets Havre in a place apart.

We sang, we poor beggars fresh to the game,

with all the horrors of war rubbed into us ahead by the cruel kindness of bull-ring instructors ; we sang on our way to the hell of box-cars and a French railway. Chopin, Grieg, Mendelssohn, where are your laurels when the fighting man finds his solace in " Keep the Home Fires Burning," " Pack all your Troubles " and " Roses are Blooming in Picardy " ? The writers of these hackneyed, stale effusions, anonymous so far as we were concerned, could move us and lift us more surely with their homely notes than all your classic masters. We are a primitive race, and swiftly revert, however sophisticated superficially, to the primitive in joy and sorrow. To us there was more of the " pep " we needed in one " rag-time " or sickly sentimental lyric than in ninety - and - nine fugues and symphonies. The concert parties, permanent and itinerant, knew this and catered wisely to our needs. Their bill of fare was strictly topical, and cheap old " gags " and hoary " patter songs," so be it they had a bearing on our lives, were never wearisome. Not that these entertainers worked up no new stuff. They put on some excellent material, much of it imported from the London halls ; a good deal of it they " created " and so well that



in turn the halls were glad to use it and make London laugh.

Yes, we needed our entertainments light as froth, and took that craving with us even on leave. What man, however of old time devoted to the classical and heavy, wasted one night of his precious ten or fourteen on the Opera or the "legitimate"? The Palladium, the Alhambra and their kind knew us well, for our souls demanded "bubble and squeak" after the strong meat which was our daily pabulum on the other side. So in our visions of actual food we dreamed of pastry, whipped cream and sugar-plums.

S. Pol stands for pancakes. These are the golden aureoles that crown that sainted city. Not that I ever ate a pancake in S. Pol. But I *smelt* them there the first time I was hurried through, and on subsequent visits with greater leisure found the place abounding in that kind of hospitality. Pancakes we did have at Bruay, and much other indigestible but delectable fodder.

You will realise that in this respect, too, we reverted to the primitive. Not so much to savagery—there is nothing savage about a pancake—but to the stomachic demands of our schoolboy days, when mixed pastries, followed

by sardines, topped off with strawberry jam and washed down with "champagne cider," formed a repast we would not have exchanged for the broiled nightingales and sunny Falernian of the "*arbiter elegantiarum*," or to "drink the Libyan sun to sleep" with Cleopatra over her pearl solution.

It is one of the ironies of fate that we should return home to find pearls less costly than pancakes.

Rouen means no more to me than a barbed-wire enclosure and a peep at the towers of what I suppose was the Cathedral. G.H.Q. was established there then, and we riff-raff had to spend our stay in the city in nothing less than durance vile. My soul was only comforted by the charming voice of the Englishwoman who fed me at the canteen.

Boulogne is checkered gold and black. You sped on golden pavement to the leave boat and you crawled up a black, ice-sheathed hill to a frozen camp when you returned. *Et c'est ça!*

Which reminds me of the liberal education we secured in the French tongue during our Continental tour. Many of us never got any further than "Voulez-vous promenade avec moi

CLAYTON B. FORT, JR., KANSAS

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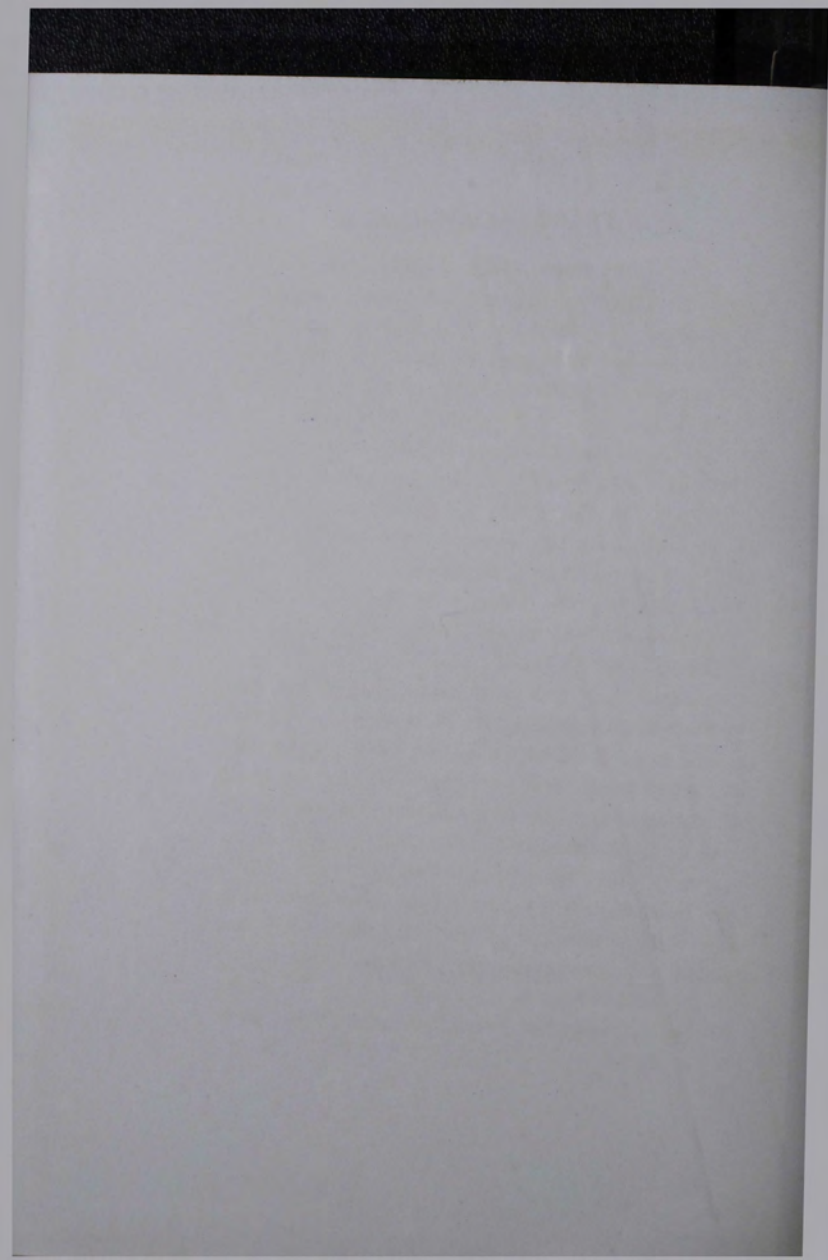
Boulogne means so more to me than a barbed-wire enclosure and a peep at the towers of what CITADEL AND PONT DES JAMBES, NAMUR Q. was established there then, and we still had to spend our stay in the city in nothing less than *durables* wine. My soul was only comforted by the chafing voice of the Englishwoman who fed me at the canteen.

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Wash reminds me of the liberal education we secured in the French tongue during our Continental tour. Many of us never got any further than "Voulez-vous promenade avec moi







ce soir ? ” but some achieved quite a respectable mastery over the language. We would carry on protracted conversations and always seemed to satisfy the ladies, though we must have run some awful risks. Fortunately they're a broad-minded race. They need to be when “*aimer*” can mean either lukewarm liking or passionate adoration, the exact degree only to be determined by an expert. On the whole we got along *beaucoup bien*, picking up the idioms with a facility which did not attend the learning of irregular verbs, but I always noticed that a tactful colloquialism went further with a Frenchman than the most polished effort at erudition.

Namur gave a few of us an insight into the history of the War in its earliest stages. Liège made a great fight of it, but Namur gave up the ghost at the first shell. The civilians blamed the officers, not the common soldiers. Whoever was at fault, Namur has a hefty citadel looking down on the Meuse, and it would have taken the Bosche quite twenty-five minutes to bowl it over. So I think it a pity the town let Liège get all the honour and glory.

Brussels means a good many things to many of us. Chiefly amazing prices. There is a

restaurant there which belongs to me, also its orchestra. I bought them for 42 francs. I know I did because, beyond the premises and the violin, 'cello and piano, I only had an omelet with two "oofs" in it, a dessert-spoonful of *pommes de terre frites*, two *gâteaux* (strictly *assortis*) and an awfully *petit verre* of sherry. It was quite a pretty restaurant too. Rather rococo. Some day I shall go and claim it.

But I'll forgive M—— (I have his name and address safe) because of the sheer joy of the Grand' Place and S. Gudule. If ever I am condemned to live in one spot all my life and am given my choice, I want a tent in the middle of the Grand' Place, please, with all the picture post-card sellers shut up in my restaurant where they'll soon lose their ill-gotten gains. I am to have one privilege—to "exercise" round the corner each morning and look at the façade of S. Gudule. I won't even ask to go in.

It is the opulence of its Gothic architecture which fills the eye in the Grand' Place. From its four-square wealth of "groined roof and pinnacle, stone steeped in miracle" one might not take a detail but the ensemble would suffer. If there is loophole for criticism in its lavish



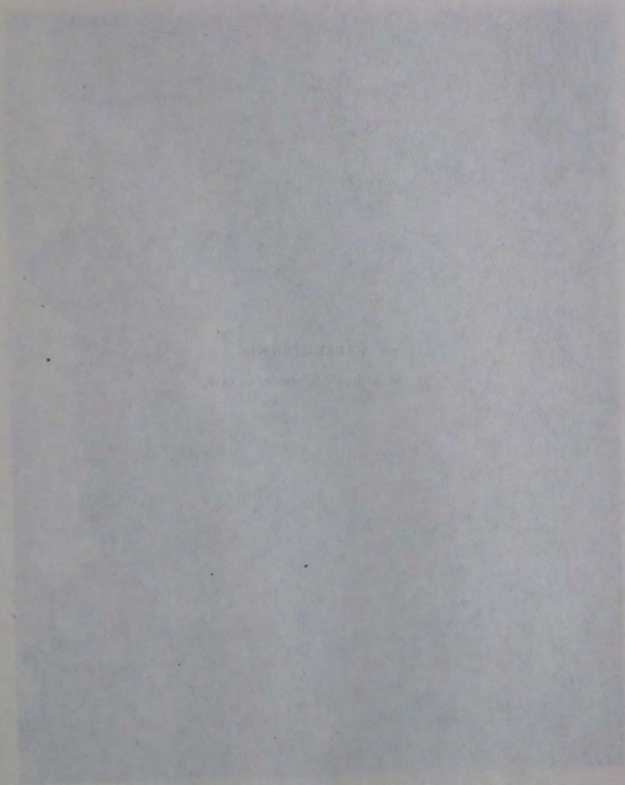
completeness it may be found in the impression that here is a stupendous toy. But a toy in the grand manner ; to be played with only by royal fingers : when "le roi s'amuse." And he a king of "faerie," great and good, fitting lord of that

house of a king  
Throned in a sunlit square

which fronts the Hôtel de Ville ; less flamboyant this than the glittering Maison du Roi, for his chief minister must be a little lower than the sovereign, and nicely observe the laws of sumptuary, as in their turn do the great Guild houses clustered like courtiers and merchant princes on the right hand of the throne. Substance, and a proper apprehension of their exact status and precedence of dignity speak in every inspired line of them, yet to each pertain attributes which stamp it as different from its fellows, lest the august assembly should parade the servile uniformity of the lackey.

The Old World, even that small part of it which they saw, gave the men of the New World the atmosphere of history which is still in the making out here. I think that for the most part they breathed it with some measure of satisfaction and with an increasing intelligence.

The *estaminet* and the picture palace did not at the last monopolise all their hours of recreation. They were at least in a receptive mood towards things faintly understood by the time they left the influence of the dim old centuries. I have seen men chaffering in shops at Hazebrouck, Arras and Valenciennes over bibelots, the beauty of which was a closed book to them before the War, and which I can only assume they had learned to appreciate because of the aura of the ancient towns. The atrocious *magasins de souvenirs* with their monstrosities designed specially for the beguilement of the "easy" Canadian or Australian, fell into disrepute; even the battle-field trophy, the Bosche helmet, buckle, automatic or bayonet, became a drug in the market, and the peasant women were pestered to put a price on their morsels of pottery, copper and pewter, heirlooms through the generations. There is probably in many a Canadian home to-day a candlestick, even a crucifix or two, which was polished for unnumbered Saturdays in some Flanders cottage. You could buy them for a few francs or you could not buy them for any money, so diverse were the degrees of reverence in which these relics of the past were held by



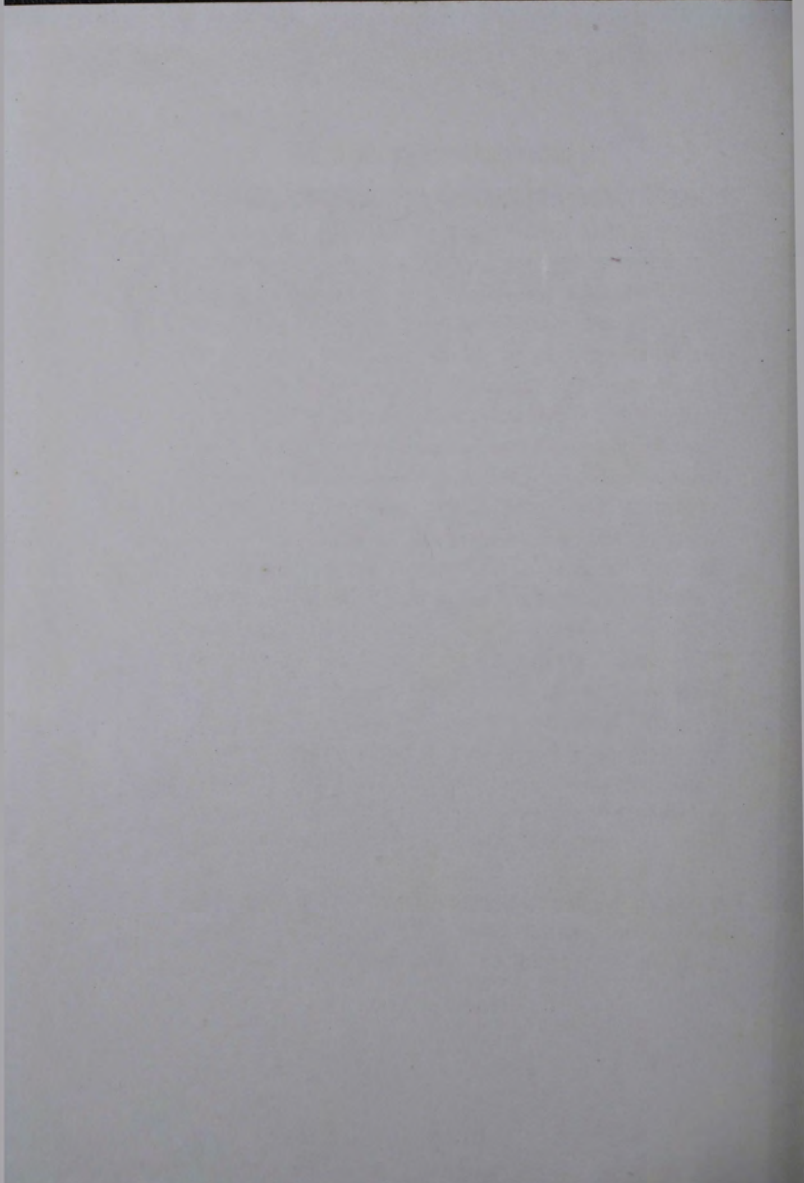
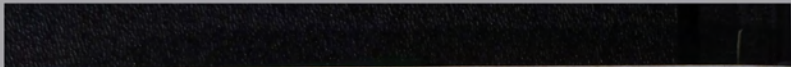
The educated and the picture palace did not at the last monopolize all their hours of recreation. They were at least in a receptive mood towards things faintly understood by the time they left the influence of the dim old centuries. I have seen men chaffering in shops at Hazebrouck, Arras and Valenciennes over bibelots, the beauty of which was a closed book to them before the War, and which I can only assume they had learned to appreciate because of the aura of the ancient world. The atrocious *magazines d'occasions* with their "antiques" designed specially for the bourgeoisie of the "easy" Canadian or Australian, fell into disrepute; even the battle-axe trophy, the *Bouche helmet*, buckle, automatic or bayonet, became a drag in the market, and the peasant women were pestered to put a price on their pieces of pottery, copper and pewter, handed down through the generations. There is probably no man's Canadian home to-day a crockware, even a crucifix or two, which was polished for one's grandfathers' Saturdays in some Flanders village. You could buy them for a few francs if you would not buy them for the money, or choose some the degree of reverence in which these relics of the past were held.

#### VALENCIENNES

Mons Road, November 9, 1918.







their owners. For most of us these mementoes, though of small intrinsic value, whether bought in the populated areas or salvaged in the demolished zone, bear their ghostly labels, recalling days of *dolce far niente* in a pastoral commune or grim moments in the field.

Dreams and ghosts! I think the years to come will be threaded with dreams of the years that have gone, busy though we be in the matter-of-fact of life. We cannot ever forget those crowding hours which crushed a lifetime into each of the wonderful days. Dreams of Ypres and the Salient; of the Somme and the Bapaume Road; of Sanctuary Wood and S. Eloi; Amiens, Cambrai, Lens and Vimy. And each is a ghostly finger-post, pointing to others back along the trail we trod—*souvenirs de la guerre*.

I labelled this chapter "Dismiss!" but my caption has, I fear, a strong flavour of the Merry Monarch's death-bed, and my readers will complain that the inexorable "As you were!" sticks it to the very end of parade. If I have caused any "fidgeting in the ranks" I ask forgiveness, as I do for anything written which may have caused the smallest suspicion of offence. I have at least, as I premised in the beginning, tried to

tell of the Canadian Corps and its life-work in terms which show partiality to none, justice to all. There are few to whom was vouchsafed the privilege of a "fighting ticket" in the Corps from its birth to its scattering. Where my knowledge is not first-hand I have sought reliable founts of information. For the rest, I have told the thing as I saw it, not always very clearly perhaps, but as truly as I could, having used such opportunities as were given me to the best of my ability. I realise the privilege which invests the writing of this story; much more, the prerogative which gave the material for it.

There is no one of us, no matter how modest his rank, who played his part in the great army to the work of which this book is devoted, but is the better for his experiences. Many "found" themselves, even at the eleventh hour. The War owes us nothing; to it we owe much. Manhood, tried and proven; friends, "*grappled to our souls with hooks of steel*"; knowledge of self and our fellows which might not be won in the idleness of peace.

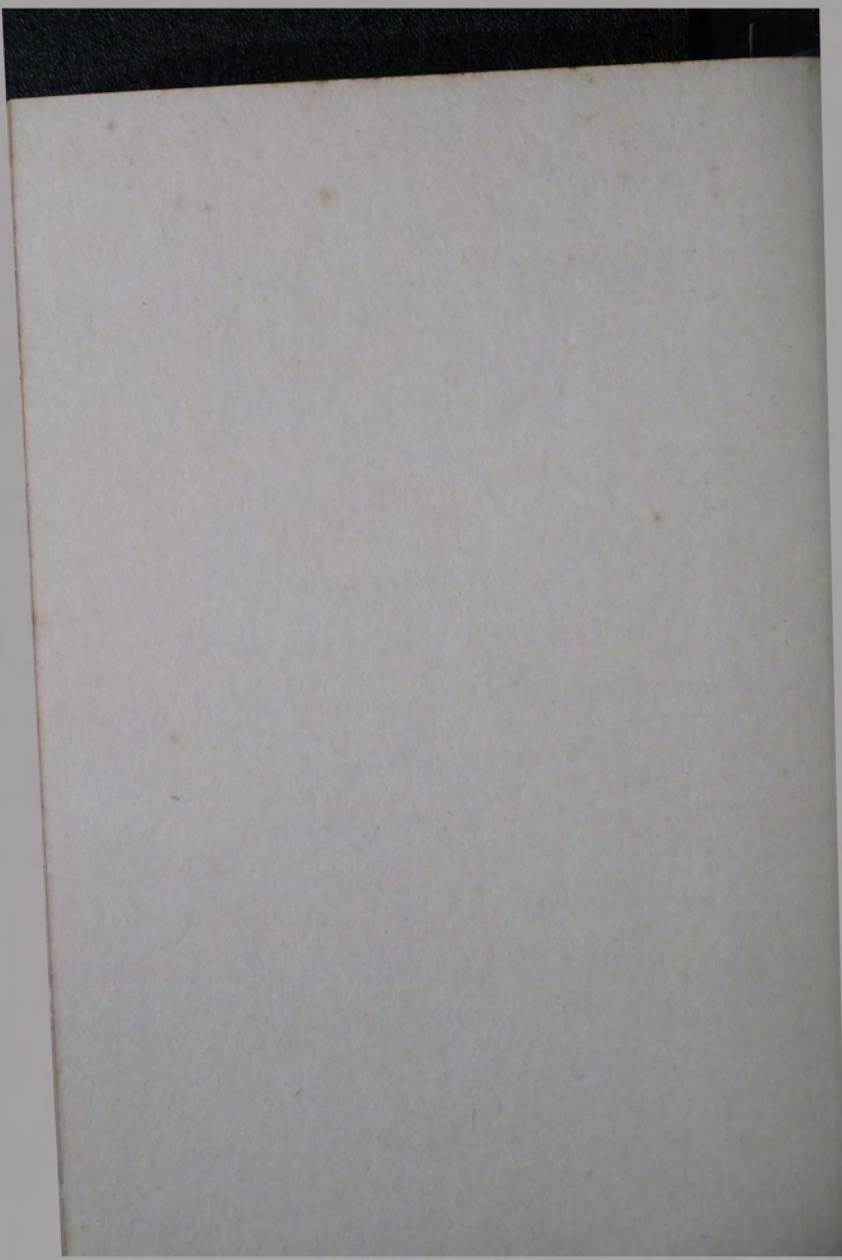
To-day the Army is broken into its component atoms, but I know it remains an army in soul if now no longer corporate. Its spirit is still one,



and is dedicated to right and freedom in peace as it was in war. The centripetal power of *esprit de corps* will invoke the loyalty of every man when Canada needs him, just as surely as her greatest Dominion is at the Empire's beck when occasion arises. The aftermath of war is no less a crucible than war itself, and the heat no less fierce because the white glamour of battle is overpast. The Empire, Canada, Great Britain herself, face jeopardies which will tax the courage and brains of all in the encounter; mistakes will be made and misunderstandings arise; treachery and venality from within and without will essay to disturb the councils of the leaders, but, in the final event, I think that we shall build upon the iron foundations which our armies have laid a commonwealth which no storm can shake, no enemy undermine.

For, to paraphrase the English poet who was a fighting man at heart—

the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find us unafraid.  
It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll :  
We are the masters of our fate,  
We are the captains of our soul.



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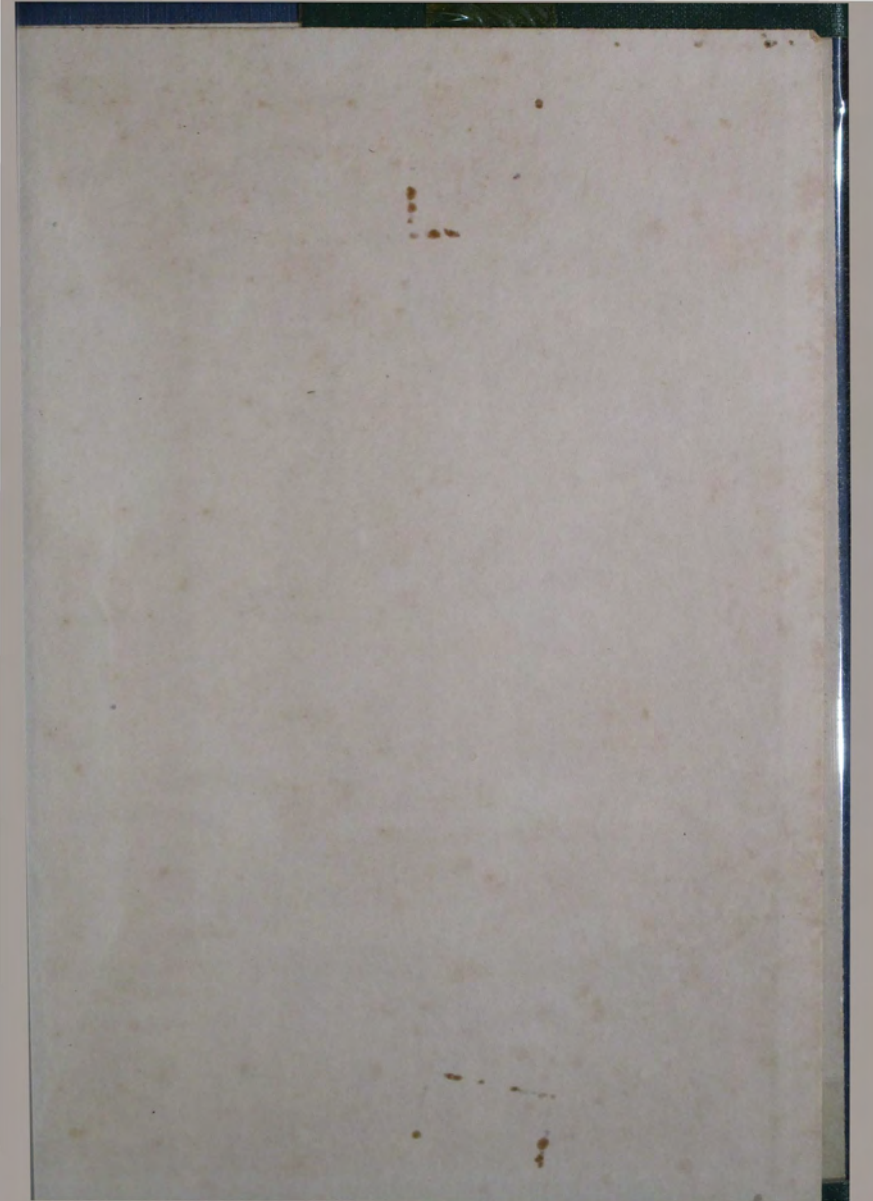
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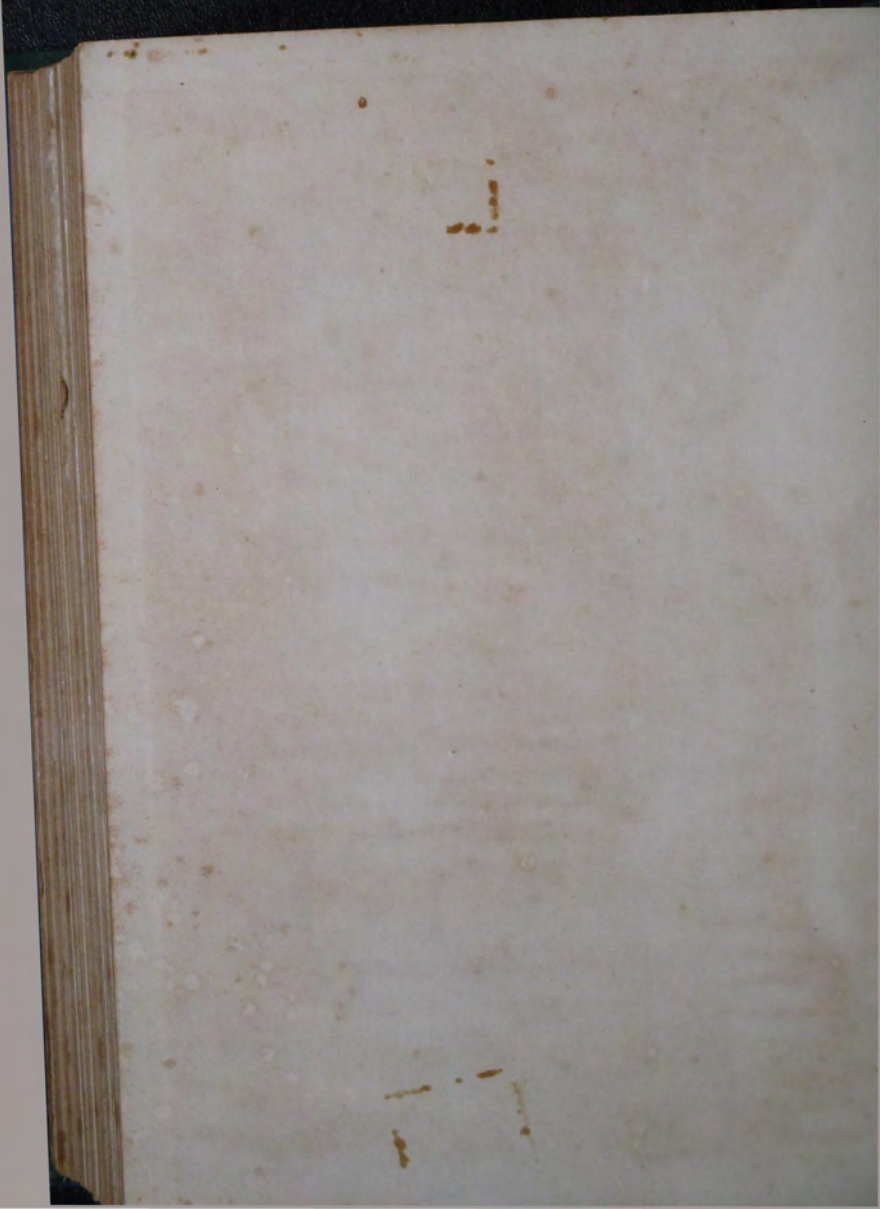


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