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PREFACE

The Great War has brought forth many golden deeds of individual bravery, and some of the more representative and popular exploits are gathered together in the following pages. While it would not be fair to characterize them as the bravest deeds, yet we may well rank them as among the finest examples of personal courage, devotion to duty, and self-sacrificing service that the war has produced. That all who read the following pages may be thrilled with a deeper sense of the matchless heroism displayed on land and sea and in air by the men of our breed, and be stimulated to better lives and worthier service, is the object of the writer. He has aimed at telling in these simple, straightforward chapters the undying stories of the heroes who have won the Victoria Cross in the Great War, and believes that for young people in particular the stimulus gained by reading these tales may be of permanent value in life. It only remains to add that while much of the material has been gained from the columns of the Press, some of the stories have been written from independent sources, some from material supplied by the heroes themselves. A number of the incidents narrated here appeared in serial form in the *Vivid War Weekly*, published by the Amalgamated Press, Limited, to whom the writer acknowledges his best thanks for permission to make use of certain portions.

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SERGEANT O'LEARY AT LA BASSEE

CHAPTER I

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST V.C.

Every one is familiar with the little bronze Maltese cross, to gain which the brave soldiers and sailors of the British Empire will readily risk life or limb.

The famous Victoria Cross was instituted by Queen Victoria on January 29, 1856, after the termination of the Crimean War. The medal is of little intrinsic value, but it stands for so much. In the centre is the Royal crown, surmounted by the figure of a lion, and below, on a scroll, are inscribed the simple words, "For Valour." For the Navy the ribbon is blue, for the Army red. On the clasp are two branches of laurel, and from the clasp the cross depends, supported by the initial 'V.'

It would be an interesting task to describe the wonderful deeds that have been done in bygone years by the brave men who have been awarded this cross, but the object of the author is to tell the fascinating stories of heroes who have won the V.C. in the greatest conflict of the nations in all history. Concerning each of the many brave soldiers and sailors whose deeds in the Great War have won them the coveted distinction a thrilling story might be told, but to do this would be to fill a volume larger than is desirable for popular reading. The author has therefore confined his attention to outstanding typical instances of valour, and from his narrative it will be seen that men of all ranks, of every service, and from all parts of our great dominions have won the right to be included in such a list.

When the Kaiser launched his legions against neutral Belgium, with the object of overwhelming France ere turning to smash Russia, he little expected that his act of infamy would bring him so little gain. The British people, always peace-loving, always ready to cultivate friendly relationships with all men and all races, could not remain pacific when they saw treaties torn up

as mere "scraps of paper," and small nations trampled under foot. Britain reluctantly but unflinchingly drew the sword to uphold the right, and in so doing stood as a lion in the Kaiser's path. Not only did the people of Great Britain and Ireland spring to arms to uphold the nation's honour, but immediately war was declared our Colonies loyally and generously came to our aid. It was the War Lord's foolish dream that the scattered British Empire, of which he was so jealous, would never stand together in a great world-crisis. He imagined that the ties that bound the Colonies to the Motherland were frail and would be sundered by the blast of such a storm as was now to test them. Herein he was mistaken, as we all know. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and our Indian Empire rose, one and all, to the occasion.

Nowhere was patriotism more intense than in Australia. This Colony raised thousands upon thousands of soldiers, paid for them, and sent them to fight the Empire's battles wherever they were needed. Early in the war an Australian contingent captured German New Guinea, and the Australian Navy destroyed the *Emden*. Meantime a great host sailed in many transports to help to guard Egypt against an expected attack of the Turks. Among them was Lance-Corporal Jacka, whose great deed in winning the V.C.—the first ever awarded to an Australian—is now to be described.

Whole chapters could be written about the exploits in general of these famous Colonial troops. They are splendid fighters. They are men who have been used to a hard life. Many of these 'six-footers' come from the back-blocks, and you can see from their contempt of danger, their swinging walk, their healthy appearance, that they have been accustomed to an outdoor life, where dangers and hardships have been ever present. Lance-Corporal Jacka is of this type, of whom it has been said: "They are not the sort to stick at anything, and have not been accustomed to red-tape and orders. If an officer is not handy, they will act without one. And with all their strength and daring and dash, they are tender and gentle to women and children."

After a spell of useful work and training in Egypt the Australian and New Zealand contingents were shipped to the Dardanelles. The history of this campaign cannot be attempted here, but a few particulars may help readers to understand the thrilling story we are to relate.

When war broke out between the Allies and Turkey the passage of the Dardanelles became closed to our ships. Constantinople and the Black Sea can only be reached by sea through this narrow waterway, and Turkey found it an easy task to close this, for the straits are narrow and the land forts on both shores very powerfully armed. To have an open line of communication with our brave Ally Russia became of paramount importance. Accordingly an expedition was undertaken by sea, in which some of our best and most powerful warships were dispatched to batter the land forts. It did not prove possible for the war-ships to force the Dardanelles, and it became obvious that, in support of the naval operations, there would have to be a landing of troops. If we could land on Gallipoli, the peninsula on the European side of the Dardanelles, and attack the forts from the land, then our ships might be enabled to penetrate the narrow waterway and reach Constantinople. Unfortunately some time elapsed before the troops were landed, and in the interval the Turks, aided by their German masters, made the narrow Gallipoli peninsula well-nigh impregnable. Nature has been kind to the Turks, for the whole peninsula bristles with hills which make defence easy and attack difficult. It will therefore easily be seen that the Gallipoli campaign was an arduous and dangerous undertaking.

But nothing daunts the British. When once we have made up our minds to do a thing we push through with it. The greater the difficulties the greater our determination. And it was a very determined army that attempted the landing on the shores of the Gallipoli peninsula in the April of 1915. We have not attempted to tell the full story of this historic event—one of the most glorious in our military history. What we are concerned with

here is the work of the Australians, and Lance-Corporal Jacka in particular.

It was arranged that the Australians should land at a point between Gaba Tepe and a place known as the Fisherman's Hut. While the Turks had made serious preparations to resist at the former place, they were not so prepared at the latter. But when they became aware of the landing—they were desperately engaged elsewhere in trying to repulse the magnificent British troops at Sedd ul Bahr—they dispatched a force to meet the dashing Australians at the Fisherman's Hut. It was all in vain: the hardy, determined men of the Southern Cross were not to be baulked. With a heroism and dare-devilry that has made them for ever famous, they scaled rocks almost perpendicular, clinging with might and main to what supports they could, which were very few. Foot by foot they gained a firm hold, reached the more level ground, and rushed the trenches of the Turks. Many heroic deeds were done on that day, and all ranks fought with superb courage. Fighting continued for days, as the Australians strove to consolidate the positions they had wrested from the Turks with such magnificent bravery.

Then the fighting settled down in places to trench warfare, such as our troops in Flanders had already experienced for so long. Each side dug itself in, and bombs were used as well as rifles and machine-guns, for in some places the trenches were very near. Sometimes we rushed the enemy's positions, at others the Turks attacked ours, only to be driven off with terrible slaughter.

Lance-Corporal Jacka's life-story is not much different from that of thousands of his brave comrades from Australia. He is a townsman of Wedderburn, in the county of Bendigo, and previous to the outbreak of war was employed in fencing work for the Victorian Forestry Department. He is the second son of Mr. and Mrs. Jacka of Wedderburn, and celebrated his twenty-second birthday a few days before reaching Egypt. He comes of a patriotic family, for both his brothers are with the Colours.

Lance-Corporal Jacka belongs to the 14th Battalion Australian Imperial Forces, and his V.C. was won during the night between May 19 and 20, 1915, by a deed which has been described as "the most valorous in the whole Gallipoli campaign," and which has resounded not only throughout Australia, but the entire Empire. He was stationed at this time with the Australian troops at a place known as Courtenay's Post, some distance inland from where the landing near Gaba Tepe took place. The spot was a strategic one; it had the advantage of commanding a good stretch of the enemy's positions. The brave Colonials fought hard to retain it, as the Turks came again and again in superior numbers to wrest it from our men. Then the enemy attempted to do with bombs what they were unable to effect with the bayonet, and in this partially succeeded. The men of the 14th Battalion were in the thick of the struggle, and were compelled to retire, all but a few, who continued nobly to hold a short section of a trench. Even these were soon afterward driven out by the bombs, and only a wounded officer remained; he was in sore straits and called for help.

"They have got me!" he cried above the noise and fumes of the bombs. "The Turks are in the trench!"

Leading into the fire trenches are what are known as communication trenches. Lance-Corporal Jacka happened to be in one of these, and, hearing the officer's cry, instead of rushing immediately to his help, he decided to render aid in a more daring and thorough fashion, which is just what all who know him would have expected. Long days of solitary toil in the Victorian forests, where everything has to be improvised and a man develops qualities of resource and courage, had made Jacka ready in brain and hand. He argued that if he could get behind the Turks, who had gained an entrance into the trench, he might not only save the officer, but achieve a little victory all by himself. The plan was as daring as it was full of risks. But the hardy Australians are made for 'forlorn adventures, and that he was doing anything out of the ordinary never occurred to Jacka, as with swift feet he rushed from the communication trench into

a part of the fire trench as yet unreached by the Turks. Even this was a dare-devil exploit, for the gallant fellow was in great peril for a few minutes from the Turks' rifle fire at close range. He was not out of danger until he had landed safe behind the traverse which provided the necessary shelter. Here he was safe, provided the Turks remained where they were. Had they swarmed at that moment over the top of the parapet, as they would have done had they known that the trench was almost empty, it would have gone badly with the intrepid lance-corporal. The truth was, the Turks were afraid to come round the traverse, not knowing exactly how many of their foes might be waiting to give them a warm reception. They knew Jacka was there, but did not believe he was alone. One can picture the scene—the tall young Colonial, his face bronzed with the suns of three continents, his eye flashing, his strong arm ready with rifle either to shoot or to thrust, and the enemy waiting round the corner, as it were. For quite a time the situation underwent no change, and the young soldier held up the Turks.

It is now necessary to note what had happened to the rest of the men while all this was taking place. The word had gone back: "Officer wanted."

A gallant officer, Lieutenant Hamilton, started to run up the communication trench through which Jacka had also passed. He could see the Turks jumping into the main trench, and whipping out his revolver he fired rapidly at them, until, seeing the flash of his revolver from the parapet, they shot him in the head.

Another officer was sent from the rear to take charge. He too bravely advanced up the communication trench, and was about to enter the fire trench when Jacka shouted:

"Look out, sir, the Turks are in here!"

The officer looked, but could see none, although he knew it was one of his gallant men who had hailed him.

Something must be done if the trench was to be saved, so he called out to Jacka:

"Will you charge them if I get some men to back you up?"

Back came the ready and ringing reply: "Yes, sir."

Meanwhile the officer's platoon had been quickly following him up the communication trench, and almost as soon as Jacka's "Yes" was heard they were at the officer's heels. Turning to his men the officer called for volunteers, adding: "It's a tough job. Will you back Jacka up?"

The men would all have volunteered, but the three leading Australians immediately signified their willingness, one of them answering the officer: "It's sink or swim: we will come, sir," and they at once went forward. It is interesting to note that these three and Jacka were all Bendigo men, and it must have been very gratifying to the hero that in the supreme moment of his life he was backed up by comrades from his native county.

The soldier who was leading had no sooner put his head round the corner of the trench than he was hit in three places, and fell back, blocking the trench.

Jacka, as we have seen, had aimed at high prey. He wanted nothing less than the capture of the unwelcome Turks. When he saw that his comrade had fallen, and his body filled up the exit to the narrow trench, he knew that if he could get round to the other side of the main trench opposite the spot where his comrade lay he would have the Turks caught in a trap.

This plan he put into instant operation. He leaped out of the fire trench into the communication trench, swiftly made his way round, and reached a portion of the trench just behind the Turks a moment after some bombs had been thrown. Jacka's plan had worked well. Caught like rats in a trap, the Turks were speedily placed out of harm's way by the stalwart hero, who was as ready with his rifle as with his brain. They put up a sort of half-hearted fight, but were no match for the man in front of

them. It was one against seven, but in rapid succession Jacka shot five, and bayoneted two.

When his comrades found him Jacka was sitting in the trench surveying his handiwork, a cigarette in his mouth, his face flushed with the exertions he had just put forth. To the officer who was with the men he laughingly said: "Well, I managed to get the beggars, sir."

He was cordially greeted and congratulated by his comrades, who had no words sufficient to express their wonder at his deed. It is a big thing to take one Turk prisoner, or kill one at close quarters. But Jacka had accounted for seven stalwart foes, although one of the bayoneted Turks was only wounded, and was taken prisoner. This amazing feat showed as cool daring, as ready resource, and as skilful handling as any individual feat in the war. If one looks for a parallel case it would be the amazing deed of the famous Sergeant O'Leary, V.C., at Cuinchy, in France.

Lance-Corporal Jacka's single-handed deed in Gallipoli made him the hero of the day when it became known, and it is not too much to say that in winning the V.C. he has done more than anything to bring home to the Empire the solidarity of our cause. The granting of the coveted reward to a member of one of our Colonial contingents is another link in the already strong chain which binds the Colonies to the Motherland.

In Australia Lance-Corporal Jacka's deed was hailed with unbounded delight, and every one was proud of the Commonwealth's gallant son. In addition to the good wishes and well-deserved praise showered upon him, Jacka has received the £500 and a gold medal promised by Mr. John Wren to the first Australian to win the Victoria Cross. These gifts will naturally be welcome to the hero, but they will not mean so much to him as the little bronze cross inscribed with the magic words, "For Valour."

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST AIRMAN TO DESTROY A ZEPPELIN

Little did people dream when the Victoria Cross was first instituted that one day it would be conferred for deeds of daring in the air. War in the air was unthought of in those days. Originally the bronze cross was intended to reward gallant deeds performed by our soldiers and sailors, but with the march of science has come another arm of service, and to-day airmen ascend into the sky and fight the enemy there with rifle, machine-gun, and bomb. As so many gallant deeds are now done in the air it is only fitting that the Victoria Cross should be awarded to those who show conspicuous bravery or perform some extraordinarily brilliant exploit in that element.

Of our famous airmen who have been awarded the coveted distinction during the war, the first to receive the V.C. was Second Lieutenant Rhodes-Moorhouse, who, unfortunately, did not live to enjoy his well-earned honour. He died of wounds, after dropping bombs on the railway line near Courtrai.

The second of our aviators to gain the V.C. was Flight Sub-Lieutenant Reginald Alexander John Warneford, of the Royal Naval Flying Corps. He did not live long to enjoy his honour. For a little time after his great feat he was the most talked-of hero in the world; then he met with a fatal accident, and an aviator of splendid skill and dauntless bravery was lost to his country.

No more daring aerial feat was performed during the war than that of Lieutenant Warneford, who on June 7, 1915, single-handed, attacked and completely destroyed a Zeppelin in mid-air at Ghent. His splendid and unique deed proved that the much-vaunted German gas-bags are not invulnerable. Before describing this Zeppelin-smashing exploit, let us note a few particulars about the early life and career of the airman.

Lieutenant Warneford was born at Cooch-Behar, India, in 1892, though his family have long been established in Wiltshire. He could claim military connections, for his grandfather, the Rev. T. L. J. Warneford, was Chaplain to the Forces in India under Sir Donald Stewart, and his mother was a daughter of the late Captain Alexander Campbell, D.S.O.

Reginald Warneford was brought to England when a boy, and attended the Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School. He graduated in the merchant service, and then joined the British India Steam Navigation Company. In 1913 he transferred his services to the P. and O. line, and was appointed to H.M. transport Somali. When war broke out he decided to come home from India, as he said, to "do his bit." On the voyage to this country he was in charge of an oil boat, which was wrecked on the South American coast.

At first the future Zeppelin-smasher decided on a military career, and actually joined the Sportsmen's Battalion; eventually, however, he transferred to the Air Service. His progress as an airman was regarded as extraordinarily rapid, and his certificate was obtained in a little more than a month.

It is said that Warneford's career in the mercantile marine was of great service to him during his period of training at Hendon. The qualities so indispensable to an aviator—coolness, resource, daring, ignorance of fear, rapidity of decision—had all been tested during his previous sea service.

On February 25, 1915, he obtained his pilot's certificate, so that by the time he accomplished his great deed he had been a recognized member of the Flying Corps for a little over three months. During this period Warneford was with our forces on the Continent, doing useful work and gathering experience for the great opportunity which was to come to him.

It should be borne in mind that from the beginning of the war our airmen were anxious to challenge and meet the German Zeppelins. These huge airships have never been used in legitimate warfare. They prefer to steal over sleeping towns by

night, and drop bombs which wreck houses and cause fires and loss of life. Such warfare is sheer murder, and these fiendish raids on unfortified places have aroused the just indignation of the whole civilized world. As these raids grew more frequent, our airmen decided to seek out the bases where the monster murder-ships were housed and drop bombs on them, and, if possible, waylay them as they returned from their piratical trips.

With this object in view, Lieutenant Warneford, with two other airmen, set out at day-break on June 7, 1915, to bomb the Zeppelin sheds at Evere, near Brussels. This was the occasion on which, according to a reliable witness, the joyous Belgians stood on their roofs and sang their National Anthem as they witnessed the damage done.

After seeing the terrible effects of his companions' bombs on the Zeppelin sheds, Warneford, who had reserved himself and his ammunition for further and bigger adventures, proceeded alone on his journey of airship-hunting. At 3 A.M. he perceived on the horizon, about midway between Ghent and Brussels, a Zeppelin flying fast, at a height of about 6000 feet. This was the supreme moment in the young airman's life for which he had so ardently longed, and, mounting higher in the air, he made for his prey with exultant heart.

"When I was almost over the monster," said Lieutenant Warneford, "I descended about fifteen yards and flung six bombs. The sixth struck the envelope of the ship fair and square in the middle. There was instantly a terrible explosion. The displacement of the air round about me was so great that a tornado seemed to have been produced. My machine was tossed upward, and then flung absolutely upside down. I was forced to loop the loop in spite of myself."

This alarming experience failed to daunt the pilot. He had been trained at sea and in air to be prepared for any emergency. He kept his head, or would have perished then and there. Even in the whirl, he admitted afterward, he could not

help feeling a thrill of honest pride at seeing his victim falling to earth in a cloud of flame and smoke.

Then, by a sort of miracle, his Morane monoplane righted itself. Warneford was ready, and coolly looked about for a safe landing-place, as he was forced to descend owing to an empty petrol tank. He selected a lonely spot, and glided to earth none the worse for his aerial thrills.

Once on the ground he discovered that he was in the enemy's country, or rather in a portion of Belgium in German occupation. This did not disturb him much, but he decided, after getting his tank filled again, to make off before the enemy could approach. When next he came to earth it was in the Belgian lines, and all danger was past.

To appreciate fully the thoroughness of Warneford's work, it is necessary to relate briefly what exactly happened to the Zeppelin. In his upside-down flight the airman had noticed his victim in flames. The spectators below, who had thus the most imposing aerial drama of the war to witness, saw the burst of fire caused by Warneford's sixth bomb spread until the whole Zeppelin was enveloped in flame and smoke. They held their breath as they saw the burning monster crash down on to the famous nunnery of Ghent known as *Le Grand Béguinage de Sainte Elisabeth*. The flaming mass set fire to the buildings. Terrible scenes followed, for Belgian women and children refugees were also within the nunnery.

Not one of the Zeppelin's crew survived, and the men's bodies were flung in all directions. The fire caused in the Convent accounted for the death of two brave nuns, and a heroic Belgian lost his life while attempting to rescue a little child.

For days afterward the mournful Germans were engaged in gathering up the fragments of their destroyed Zeppelin.

Within thirty-six hours of his splendid achievement the King conferred on Lieutenant Warneford the Victoria Cross, a record in connection with this coveted award. His Majesty

telegraphed to the airman his hearty congratulations, and concluded by stating he had pleasure in recognizing his 'gallant act' in the manner mentioned. His mother was immensely proud of her son's distinction. "I always believed my son would do something big," she said.

But the satisfaction felt by his countrymen at the hero's success, a satisfaction the more intense because of the detestation of the use to which Germany had consecrated her Zeppelin fleets, was soon to be turned to mourning. After his splendid exploit at Ghent, Warneford spent a few days with his chums in the Flying Service in Paris. He was feted royally, and had a warm reception, living for a week in a blaze of glory.

On June 17 Warneford proceeded to the Buc Aerodrome, Versailles, and made an ascent in a Maurice Farman biplane with an English lieutenant. Then he made a second flight with Mr. Needham, an American journalist. Those who watched this flight state that the machine was flying at an altitude of about 600 feet. Suddenly, to their alarmed eyes, it seemed to rock, the wings met, and it crashed swiftly to earth. When the falling aeroplane was about 250 feet from the ground, Lieutenant Warneford and his passenger appeared to throw themselves from it. The spectators, horror-struck, rushed to their aid, and found the famous airman still breathing, but grievously injured. His companion was killed on the spot. Warneford's friends did everything they possibly could to save his life, but he died in a motor-car on the way to the British Military Hospital at Versailles.

The whole world was deeply affected by the untimely death of one of its most brilliant aviators. The pathos, the tragedy and the triumph of his short life was eloquently expressed in these moving words by a French writer: "He had braved Death in full battle; Death takes his revenge when he is thinking only of the smiles of life, and slays him. Not long since he cleaved the firmament like a radiant atom, and smote the Goliaths of the air; now he lies a lamentable victim, he who had confronted the storm, killed by a breeze!"

CHAPTER III

THE DEATHLESS EPIC OF 'L' BATTERY

One of the most heroic episodes of the early war was the dauntless stand at Nery (near the French town of Compiègne) by the famous 'L' Battery, Royal Horse Artillery. This splendid incident caught and held the public imagination, and well it might.

The opportunity to perform a heroic deed of this particular nature was only afforded in the earlier stages of the great conflict, when the fighting was in the open.

While all the men of 'L' Battery showed great bravery and skill, three of them exceptionally distinguished themselves and were awarded the coveted Victoria Cross. No three heroes of the war deserved it more. They were, Captain Bradbury, Sergeant-Major George Thomas Dorrell, and Sergeant Nelson. Their heroic stand at Nery has been described as a 'deathless epic.' The story we give below will prove how fitting is this description.

'L' Battery took a notable part in the great battle of Mons, and underwent some terrible experiences. From the very first our superb gunners were hard pressed. The Germans brought into the field a vastly superior force of men and guns. With these they were able to defeat our gallant little army. The honours of the battle of Mons, however, did not rest with the Germans; for what credit can be claimed by a big bully who is able to overpower a little boy? Although our army was forced to retreat from Mons it inflicted terrible punishment on the Germans, and our gunners, outnumbered and hard pressed, gave an excellent account of themselves. In pluck and skill we were superior to the enemy, and the whole world rang with praise when the full story of the battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat became known. It is not necessary to enter here into the details of this historic

fight, but we may mention in passing that when the duel of the guns was at its height British and German shells struck each other in the air.

When the general retreat was ordered, 'L' Battery continued fighting. Its work was to cover the retirement of the main army. On August 31, 1914, it had experienced a particularly severe handling from the German artillery. Late in the afternoon it was ordered to retire to Compiègne, and early in the evening reached a field at Nery, which is near the former town.

Darkness had begun to fall, and the officer in command of the Battery decided to spend the night in the field. He was under the impression that the enemy was some distance away, and that his pursuit had slackened. The men were thoroughly exhausted after the heavy day's fighting and sorely in need of rest. The horses were equally done up after the furious riding of the day. Sentries were posted, the horses were fed and watered, and very soon most of the Battery's heroes were wrapt in sleep. It should be mentioned that the 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays) accompanied the artillery and occupied a field opposite. The road there formed a deep cutting, and, later, proved a valuable haven of refuge for the survivors of the Battery.

At half-past three in the morning the men of 'L' Battery were awakened. They rose from their bivouac in the field, rubbed their eyes, wondering what the day would bring forth, and how many of them would be alive at evening; for the retreat was still in progress, and they realized that the Germans would give them no rest. They were ordered to prepare for an immediate march, but could not start until certain instructions were received. Sergeant-Major Dorrell told off a number of his men to water the horses of the right-half battery. Every man was at his post, ready for any emergency.

About 600 yards away was a ridge supposed to be occupied by French cavalry, which was also engaged in the work of covering the retreat. Owing to the cutting of the telegraph

wires, or from some other cause unavoidable in the terrible stress of the retreat, the expected order to continue the retirement failed to reach 'L' Battery, and meanwhile the French cavalry, unknown to the Battery, retired from the hill. A thick mist prevented this fact becoming known to the British. 'L' Battery had received explicit orders to proceed to their present position and remain there until further instructions arrived. All they could do was to see that the guns were limbered up, ready to go on at a moment's notice.

Suddenly the mist began to clear, and soon the officers, looking toward the ridge, were amazed to discover that the French cavalry were not there. It did not require much reasoning to convince the officers that the Battery was in danger, for the main body of the Germans could not be far off. Confirmation of their fears was soon forthcoming, for a few minutes later they were startled to observe Germans occupying the ridge, and simultaneously a shell fell plumb in the very centre of the Battery.

Dorrell was the first to make out a number of guns on the hill, and gave vent to an exclamation of surprise. He, like the rest, had believed that the French cavalry were holding the important and dominating position. It transpired subsequently that the French cavalry had left their position in the early hours of the morning, and that a strong force of Germans, with ten field guns and two Maxims, had, under cover of the mist, advanced and occupied the hill. They had so placed their guns that the Battery was almost surrounded. The officers at once, without showing the least excitement, quickly gave the necessary orders. Hardly had they done so than the German guns opened at point-blank range a fire that, to use Dorrell's own words, "was nothing more or less than murderous." The heroic little band, as they stood there exposed to the storm of shells, were not in the least afraid. Their only concern was the knowledge that they had been trapped.

British soldiers are always prepared to meet any and every emergency, and certainly on this occasion 'L' Battery

maintained the glorious traditions of the Army. Officers and men showed wonderful bravery and coolness, although all realized from the start that they were in a very precarious position, and that death was very near.

Gallant Captain Bradbury called above the awful din for volunteers to get the guns into action. Every man of the Battery responded. This hero was the life and soul of the little party as long as he was unwounded. Three guns were unlimbered and got into action. But so murderous was the fire at the 600 yards' range that numbers of our men were shot down at once. It should be mentioned that the Commanding Officer of the Battery, Major the Hon. W. D. Sclater-Booth, was placed *hors de combat* early in the fight, and consequently the command had devolved on Captain Bradbury.

No words can describe the terrible confusion that resulted from the German fire. The little band of men had been taken completely unawares, and, despite their coolness and bravery, were unable to do much in face of the terrible rain of shells. One can scarcely realize the scene. Some of the horses bolted at the roar of the first guns, others were struck down and lay on the ground neighing and floundering. Of the six guns all but one was soon useless, and this received severe handling.

A young lieutenant had succeeded in getting it to work, and when Dorrell arrived on the scene he found brave Sergeant Nelson in charge, although he had already been wounded. Our brave gunners were determined to give the Germans the full benefit of the one gun. Had you asked either Dorrell or Nelson why they continued the unequal fight, they would have replied that so long as one gun remained and there were shells to feed it they must not give in. This is the unwritten law among British artillerymen. They were British soldiers fighting 'with their backs to the wall,' and our men never fight so superbly as then. Firing with marvelous rapidity, they were able to silence gun after gun of the Germans, although shot and shell literally rained about them.

It was an amazing feat. This dauntless little band of gunners had abolished the odds against them, and it was now one German gun against one British gun. Our gunners had been splendidly supplied with ammunition by Gunner Darbyshire and Driver Osborne, who deserve their share of the glory. Both acted like real heroes and performed their work with utter disregard of the storm of shot and shell. The whole place was, in the words of one of the survivors, "a living hell," yet the little group of determined men stuck to their posts, coolly and without fear.

Up till now three brave officers had directed operations. They were, Captain Bradbury, and Lieutenants Campbell and Mundy. When they were struck down the command fell to Sergeant-Major Dorrell, whose one gun, like the little *Revenge* of old, fought on magnificently against overwhelming odds. When Captain Bradbury was lying on the ground, his life quickly ebbing, he begged to be carried away so that his death agony—he was suffering terribly—should not interfere with the working of the gun. A noble end to a noble life! A nation that breeds heroes like Captain Bradbury will never die.

To a less dauntless spirit than Dorrell's a feeling of utter helplessness would have followed upon the deaths of the three officers. But Dorrell was of the stuff of which heroes are made, and his stout heart did not quail although by now only four men were left to fight the gun—Nelson, Darbyshire, Osborne, and himself. Turning to Sergeant Nelson, who was by his side, he cried above the screaming shells: "Let's stick to the gun! we can hold out a long time yet."

Hardly had he spoken than a shell came whizzing into their midst which wounded all four men. Gunner Darbyshire and Driver Osborne, despite their wounds, continued to fetch ammunition, and nobly seconded the splendid work of the two brave sergeants. But there is a limit to human endurance, and Darbyshire and Osborne became thoroughly exhausted, and were compelled to rest. Only two men now remained to work the gun. Both were wounded, Sergeant Nelson the more seriously, and he was rapidly becoming weaker. After every shot the brave

fellows crouched behind the shelter of the steel shield of the gun to escape the Maxim bullets. One can picture this crisis of the 'L' Battery survivors—the two brave sergeants serving their gun, now become very hot, their ammunition rapidly running out, both wounded, yet refusing to give in, while around them shells fall in quick succession, and bullets whiz dangerously near.



THE TWO BRAVE SERGEANTS.

Suddenly the German fire ceased. Our men had won the unequal contest, and finished one of the bravest deeds of which there is record. Dorrell and Nelson, however, had no intention of stopping. They had silenced the enemy; they also wanted to defeat him. So, crouching and staggering, weak and faint, they served their gun until they had to stop from lack of shells—they had exhausted their ammunition.

The reaction following this strenuous conflict was natural, and Dorrell, as he sank to the ground, did not know whether to laugh or cry. His strong nerves became for the moment weak and his purpose irresolute. He roused himself to action again. The Germans had a strong force of infantry as well as guns not far off, and it would have been a tame ending to such a splendid morning's work were he and his wounded comrades

taken prisoner. He decided that the best plan was to make for the shelter of a haystack not far off where a number of the wounded had already sought refuge. Accordingly he organized the removal of the men lying around the gun, and all safely reached the haven of refuge.

One curious feature of the famous 'L' Battery fight was that the Germans, although in overwhelming numerical superiority, made no effort to advance. This fact struck Sergeant-Major Dorrell very forcibly, for he says: "During the time we had been fighting there had been no attempt made by the Germans to advance, and I shall always think they were sorry for themselves. They thought we should run, but we didn't."

While this amazing fight had been in progress the Bays, who, as already stated, were near by, kept up a galling rifle and Maxim gun fire at the German position, and this fine cooperation naturally helped the men of the Battery. Their magnificent stand had been seen from the main British lines some distance away, and before the firing died down 'L' Battery of Royal Horse Artillery came galloping to the rescue and got their guns into action. The least wounded of the survivors sprang to their feet and cheered wildly. Those who were not able to rise waved their hands. Dorrell went out to meet the relieving force, and helped to direct their fire on the enemy's position. The Germans gave our reinforcements a couple of rounds and then retired, leaving their guns in our hands.

The relief force now turned its attention to the guns of 'L' Battery, to which Sergeant-Major Dorrell led the way. A number of cavalry horses accompanied the men, as all the Battery's horses were dead or wounded. Skilful hands soon repaired our guns, changing the wheels where required, and effecting various other temporary repairs. All the guns, including the famous one used by the heroes, were brought out of action. Not one was lost, although all bore marks of the severe handling they had undergone in the historic fight.

"It amounted to just this," said Sergeant-Major Dorrell, summing up the incident in a letter which appeared in the columns of *The Daily Telegraph*, "we had had a fierce fight, a glorious fight, and we had beaten the Germans after having the flower of our battery placed *hors de combat* at the very first onslaught. The whole of the ten big guns of the Germans were left by the enemy as they had used them in action, and they were captured by our forces. I could not tell you all the brave things that were done that day, how two wounded men collected their wounded comrades and brought them back to cover, of how the Bays' officers and men alike stuck to us through it all, never once yielding an inch of ground, for that would be a long story."

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT DEEDS OF CORPORAL HOLMES AT LE CATEAU

Corporal Fred W. Holmes, and Battalion the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, won the coveted Victoria Cross at Le Cateau on August 26, 1914. He carried a wounded man out of the trenches under heavy fire, and later assisted to drive a gun out of action by taking the place of a driver who had been wounded.

Holmes was born in populous Bermondsey, where, in Abbey Street, his parents still live in the same house that saw the birth of the hero twenty-five years ago.

In addition to shedding lustre on his native Bermondsey by winning the V.C., Holmes has honoured it by gaining the *Medaille Militaire* of the Legion of Honour, France's chief military decoration. This was awarded for gallantry during the fight on the Aisne in the following circumstances. Holmes saw a platoon of French struggling against heavy odds, whereupon he dashed over the river for a machine-gun, carried it to the platoon, and turned it on the enemy, with such effect that the German pressure was immediately relieved.

The story of how Holmes won his V.C. is a thrilling chapter in the records of this war of heroic deeds.

The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry were in the thickest of the fighting at Mons, and in the great retreat that followed they helped with might and main to uphold the honour of Britain. At the little colliery town of Warmb they received a severe shaking from the enemy, but gave as good as they got. It was after the warm engagement at this place that the brave fellows, footsore and tired, but still cheerful, tramped many weary miles to the famous battlefield of Le Cateau.

It is not necessary to describe the glorious stand made by our troops here, but only to mention a few facts, without knowledge of which Holmes's great feat would be unintelligible.

Orders were given to entrench, and the men set to work with zest, glad of the change from the continuous retreating. The task accomplished, the regiment then lay down in the trenches, while the booming of the German guns grew ever louder.

At dawn of August 26, the great day, memorable for ever in our annals, there was suddenly a fierce bombardment from the enemy's artillery. According to Holmes, "We could feel the breath from their guns. It was awful." The gallant Yorks stuck to their trenches, firing incessantly and with unerring aim. They had been told that French troops would reinforce them, but as the day dragged on no French appeared. The British artillery kept up a hot fire from behind Holmes's trench, which suffered the proverbial discomfort experienced by the unlucky victim who is placed between two fires.

Late in the afternoon the Yorks received orders to retire; to have remained longer would have meant annihilation. The troops retired in small sections, Holmes remaining with five men to the last to cover the retreat of the others.

Holmes was actually the last man to leave the trench. No sooner had he climbed over the parapet than he met the full brunt of the enemy's fire, which by this time had become fiercer than ever. He had seen many of his comrades drop to earth, but his brave heart was undaunted. Suddenly, when he had proceeded a few yards from the trench, he felt his boot clutched and heard his name called.

"For God's sake, save me, Fred!" said a feeble voice.

Holmes paused. There at his feet, unable to move, was one of his chums, his knees shattered by shrapnel. Holmes had only a brief moment for reflection. To delay meant certain death. The problem was how best to help the poor fellow. To take him back into the trench was the quickest way out of the difficulty,

and the easiest. Had he done this the Germans would soon have discovered the wounded man, and in all probability would have put an end to him, in their usual callous and brutal way. Holmes quickly dismissed this plan and decided upon the nobler and more dangerous course. He determined to make a dash with the wounded man to our lines, trusting to Providence to reach them in safety.

He stooped down and gently took the poor fellow in his stalwart arms. He confesses that this in itself was no light task, since his chum weighed twelve stone. Exerting his full strength Holmes slung the man across his back. His only thought now was how to escape the bullets. All around him were the British dead and dying, heroes who had done their bit in the great battle.

A slight drizzling rain was falling; it made the ground slippery, so that when Holmes resumed his dangerous journey he had the utmost difficulty in avoiding treading on the men who were at his feet. With infinite care he succeeded in reaching more open ground.

After proceeding about one hundred yards he paused to take breath, for the burden on his back was a heavy load. At this stage his companion began to complain that Holmes's equipment hurt him. Holmes gently laid the man down and removed the equipment. Knowing that he might have to make a long journey before he could reach assistance, he decided at the same time to drop his pack and rifle.

The next few hundred yards were the most difficult, for a fierce hailstorm of bullets and shells raged around. Holmes could hear them whistling as he staggered painfully along. Had he not been possessed of a splendid constitution he must have given in, but he was determined at all costs not to give in. So he continued on and went doggedly forward, with clenched teeth and grim countenance.

On the way he came upon a wounded officer seated on the ground, his head between his hands. The officer looked up as he heard Holmes approach, and when he saw what the hero was

doing suggested to him to leave the man with him and look after himself. Holmes, having once set his hand to the noble work he had undertaken, was in no mood to relinquish it, and after resting for a little while bade the officer good-bye and continued his perilous journey. Yard by yard he plodded steadily along. Then a difficulty of another sort arose, one not easily surmounted. The poor fellow he was carrying began to lose heart. Holmes, although in terrible mental anguish himself, had to cheer him all the weary and dangerous way.

Slowly but surely he made progress. Half a mile, then a mile was passed. Holmes took another rest. Then on again, until he came to a church flying the Red Cross. The Germans were shelling this, so he picked up his chum once more and proceeded to another village, where at length he was able to deposit his charge in the careful keeping of the British Red Cross.

In all, Holmes carried his chum three miles, and every inch of the way was attended by danger from the enemy's fire. It was certainly one of the most unselfish of the many courageous deeds which it is the purpose of this book to record.

In order to rejoin his battalion Holmes had now to make another dangerous journey across a fire-swept zone. His road lay past a hill, at the bottom of which was a British 18-pounder quick-firing gun. The horses were quietly grazing; the gunners and drivers lay around dead. Near by was a trumpeter, a lad of seventeen, who was wounded. This lad shouted that the Germans were coming. Holmes looked round and saw that the enemy were surrounding the gun. Now, the British soldier has ever had a fondness for guns, and will die rather than let one fall into the enemy's hands. It was in this spirit that Holmes now performed his second marvellous act of heroism.

Placing the trumpeter on one of the horses, he yoked the team to the gun, then thwacked them with a bayonet he had picked up, and swung into the saddle. The Germans were all around; some actually grasped at the reins. Holmes shouted to the horses, and they rushed madly forward. One after another he

bayoneted the nearest Germans, while bullets whistled by his ears. The horse Holmes rode had its right ear shot off. For eight miles the terrific ride went on until the rear of a British column was reached and all danger passed. The poor trumpeter had fallen off in the furious rush.

At Lille, on October 13, 1914, Holmes received a shot in the leg which necessitated a stay in hospital in France and later in England. When sufficiently able to stand the fatigue, he was given a reception worthy of royalty by his native borough of Bermondsey. He was the man of the hour, and all sections of the community united in honouring the gallant fellow.

A procession was formed from the station to Bermondsey Town Hall, where Holmes was presented with an illuminated address and a purse of white Bermondsey leather containing £50, this sum being a part of a fund which later reached over £250. The hero of the hour rode by the side of the mayor in a carriage. Bands formed part of the procession, which included Boy Scouts, National Reservists, wounded Belgians, and others. It was an occasion unique in the annals of Bermondsey.

When decorated by the King, Corporal Holmes was taken to Buckingham Palace in a motor-ambulance. "It was quite simple," he said afterward. "I was taken in, I saluted, the King then pinned the Victoria Cross on my breast, and he said to me: 'I thank you very much for your gallant conduct for which this V.C. is awarded.' He shook my hand, and I came out."

CHAPTER V

THE UNDYING STORY OF CAPTAIN F. O. GRENFELL

In this chapter it will not be out of place to pay a well-deserved tribute to the brave British officers of whom Captain Grenfell is a conspicuous type. We all believe that the British officer has no equal, and we love to recall his many gallant deeds and chivalrous acts in this and former wars. The chief characteristic that appeals to the British soldier is the coolness of their officers in a tight corner. A soldier has described how his captain when leading a charge stopped to light his cigarette, although shells were bursting around him. Such fearlessness has a great effect upon our men. Time after time an officer has been hit, and in spite of his suffering has continued to direct operations and cheer his men on to victory. The best affection and loyalty exist between the British officer and his men, and the latter will follow their leader anywhere.

Tommy tells us he loves his officers because they are 'sports,' which is his expressive way of indicating their bravery and considerateness. Our officers never ask their men to do what they are not themselves prepared to do. Wherever danger lies the officer is present leading his men, and encouraging them by words and actions. The German soldiers are driven by their officers—ours are led. Herein lies one of the main reasons for the superiority of the British Army.

For young readers no finer example of pluck and chivalry can be imagined than the great deeds and heroic death of Captain Francis Octavius Grenfell. His story is one to cherish and profit by, and it is safe to predict that the noble life of this hero will ever stimulate young hearts. Grenfell stands for the best type of the British regimental officer, as soldier, gentleman and sportsman; while his enthusiasm for the cause, his splendid

bravery, and untiring devotion to duty make him an ideal hero for young and old alike.

Captain Grenfell was the first officer in the British Army to win the Victoria Cross in the war. He gained the coveted reward on August 24, 1914, almost at the commencement of the British fighting in Belgium. In the official announcement of the award it is stated that he showed gallantry in action against the unbroken Germans at Andregnies, and on the same day gallantly assisted to save the guns of the 119th Battery, Royal Field Artillery, near Doubon.

Captain Grenfell's career may be briefly described. He was the eighth son—hence his middle name Octavius—of the late Mr. Pascoe Du Pre Grenfell, of Wilton Park, Beaconsfield, and a nephew of Field-Marshal Lord Grenfell. He was born on September 4, 1880. He received his education at Eton, the cradle of so many brave soldiers. It is a well-known saying that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, and in view of the present war we may alter the saying and remark that many a hard-fought victory in France, in Flanders, and in Gallipoli was won at the famous English public school. Grenfell was at Eton from 1894 to 1899, and as a schoolboy excelled in sport. He was in the College Eleven in his last year, and was Master of the Beagles. His brother, 'Rivy' Grenfell, who died a hero's death in France, was Whip at the same time, and they played an important part in the building of the present kennels.

On leaving Eton, Grenfell decided to be a soldier. He received a commission in the 3rd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders (Militia). Two years later he was gazetted second lieutenant in the King's Royal Rifles. With this famous regiment he served in the South African War, when he received the Queen's medal with five clasps. In 1905 Grenfell joined the 9th Lancers, the regiment to which he belonged when he won his V.C., becoming captain in 1912. During the intervals of soldiering he devoted himself to polo, at which he was the best player in the country. Along with his brother 'Rivy,' Captain Jenner, and the Duke of Roxburghe, he won the polo championship.

We have described elsewhere the great retreat from Mons. This battle was fought on Sunday, August 23, the Lancers rendering valuable service along with other cavalry units. A party of the 1st South Wales Borderers had been trapped in a neighbouring village and surrounded by a brigade of Uhlans, but were saved by the timely arrival of the Lancers and the Scots Greys, who put over a thousand of the Germans out of action in six hours, charging them through and through. During the retreat on the night of August 23 the 9th Lancers were continually in action. Our gallant little army was struggling desperately to escape from the superior force of Germans, who gave it no rest, and our cavalry was ordered to charge the enemy—to delay, head off and harass him as much as possible. Sir John French, in his dispatch of September 7, 1914, said that "The fine work done by the cavalry in the further retreat assisted materially in the final completion of this most difficult and dangerous operation." In this arduous work the Lancers were always to the fore.

Lancers are mounted soldiers carrying lances. They were introduced into European warfare by Napoleon, and adopted by Britain in 1815. Two forms of lance are used in the British Army—with staves of ash and bamboo respectively. The German lance carried by the Uhlans has a staff of tubular steel. There are many regiments of Lancers. The 9th—to which Grenfell belonged—is known as the Queen's Royal, and dates from 1715. Its battle-honours are numerous, and include the Peninsular War and the Indian Mutiny (in which they gained twelve Victoria Crosses). The 9th Lancers accompanied Lord Roberts on his famous march to Kandahar. At Klip Drift, near Kimberley, during the South African War they made a great charge, similar to the one we are about to describe.

The 12th Lancers also date from 1715, and rode through Napoleon's finest cavalry at Waterloo.

During the famous charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman a brother of Captain Grenfell's was killed. On this occasion the regiment gained three Victoria Crosses.

The 9th Lancers, which fought at Andregnies, where Captain Grenfell performed the first of the exploits which brought him the V.C., lived up to its past record, if it did not actually surpass it. The main body of our army was very hard pressed on the day following the opening battle at Mons. The German guns caused terrible execution. The German infantry came on in dense columns—like peas thrown out of a sack, as one soldier described it. Veterans who had fought in South Africa said the German fire was the worst they had ever experienced—that the South African War was a picnic compared with the terrible conflict in which they were then engaged. Orders were given to the 9th Lancers to charge the enemy in order to relieve the 5th Division, which was very hard pressed.

The Lancers immediately went into action: they were let loose, as it were, at the German guns, and, although all knew they might be going to certain death, not one of the gallant men faltered. They sang and shouted like schoolboys as their horses thundered over the ground. They treated the charge in the spirit of sport. These dashing cavalymen, as they rode straight at the German guns, presented one of the finest sights of the whole war. There has been little opportunity to engage in cavalry charges since. Grenfell rode at the head of his men, encouraging them by his coolness. One who took part in the charge has said that our hero was the life and soul of the squadron, shouting the loudest, always in the front, setting an example to his comrades by his fearless riding.

At first all went well. Few of the Lancers had fallen, and the dashing cavalymen were looking forward to a real fight at close quarters with the German gunners, who were playing such havoc among our troops. The men were in excellent spirits, although they knew their danger.

Suddenly a murderous fire from the enemy pulled them up. Grenfell's cheery voice rose above the awful din of bursting shells, urging his men to continue the charge. They recovered, and followed their leader. Then the enemy's fire became hotter. It was like riding into the jaws of death. Twenty concealed

German machine-guns rained death on the horsemen at a distance of not more than 150 yards. Even then the gallant 9th did not waver, for they were led by a hero. Standing up in the stirrups and brandishing his sword Captain Grenfell called to his men to ride straight on. They cheered and obeyed: it now seemed as though nothing could stop this wild charge. Both men and horses had become infuriated.

Grenfell himself seemed to bear a charmed life, while all around him empty saddles told their terrible tale. He did not come through the charge unscathed, but his wounds were not serious.

The Lancers continued to sweep forward until finally held up by the enemy's barbed wire, cunningly concealed in the long grass. The German trap had succeeded. To proceed farther was impossible, and in order to escape total annihilation the gallant horsemen reluctantly turned their horses' heads and rode back. Of the 9th Lancers not more than forty came out of the ordeal.

While this charge of the 9th Lancers, which has been likened to that of the famous Light Brigade at Balaclava, failed in its object, it will live for ever in our military annals. It proved to all the world that the British cavalry was as dashing and brave as in days of old, that in it still lived the fearless gallantry of the Scots Greys who charged Napoleon's Guards at Waterloo, led by their officers shouting "Scotland for Ever." All were heroes in this desperate charge at Andregnies, but the greatest was Captain Grenfell. He came out of the action the senior officer.

Grenfell's second great exploit, on the twenty-fourth day of August 1914, was equally as brave as that we have just recited.

When the survivors of the 9th Lancers rode off the field they found themselves at a place called Doubon. Captain Grenfell, although not seriously wounded, was greatly in need of rest, but this was denied him through his self-sacrificing devotion.

He had espied a railway embankment, and quickly made for it with the men under his charge. When they arrived at the shelter they found a number of men of the 119th Field Battery, which had been put out of action and abandoned. There was the danger of the guns being captured by the enemy and turned against our men. It had been a great day for our artillery no less than for the cavalry. This battery had been in action earlier in the day with the object of delaying the German advance and relieving the terrible pressure on our harassed infantry, who were being driven back from Mons by superior forces. The 119th Battery had given and received a terrific fire. One German battery had been silenced by our heroic gunners, who were afterward attacked by three of the enemy's batteries from different directions. The unequal contest was very fierce while it lasted. All the brave gunners had been killed by shrapnel, and the survivors of the battery were ordered to seek safety.

Up till now it had been found impossible to attempt the rescue of the guns. They remained exposed to the German shells and would have been captured but for the gallantry of Captain Grenfell. A brave officer of the 119th Battery, Lieutenant Geoffrey Blemell Pollard, who had been trying to devise means to save his guns, came to where the Lancers were resting, and put the matter before them. Would they assist him to get the guns away?

Captain Grenfell, who happened to be a little distance off, had heard the lieutenant's request. He carefully climbed to the top of the embankment, surveyed the position, and returned. He had seen that the Germans had now captured the guns.

Grenfell then determined upon a bold course. He had made up his mind to get the guns, regardless of the cost. That he, who had that morning been right into the jaws of death, should again be willing to face fearful odds shows the sort of stuff he was made of. He was a real hero if ever there was one.

Turning to his men he quietly remarked, "We've got to get those guns back. Who's going to volunteer for the job?"

Hardly had he done speaking than two dozen Lancers had given in their names. They did not need to be told that Grenfell was to lead them—they had been in the charge with him and knew that he would not send others to do his work. They would have followed him anywhere.

Grenfell led his little party of troopers into the open. Bullets were flying around, shrapnel was bursting near. "He was as cool as if he was on parade," said a corporal who took part "He said to us, 'It's all right, lads, they can't hit us. Come along!'"

Captain Grenfell rode his men right into the hurricane of shot and shell. Every few minutes they stopped for breath, then on again. Advancing at a rapid rate they reached the guns. So unexpected was the charge of Grenfell's squadron that the Germans, taken by surprise, fled in panic. Grenfell gave quick directions; rapidity of action was essential, for the Germans in the rear of the guns were pouring in a rapid fire. One gun was safely man-handled out of action. Grenfell was not the man to leave a task half-finished, and, braving the shells, he galloped back to the guns. By the time he reached them some of the battery's horses had been brought up, and Grenfell assisted to hitch them to the guns. This done, the latter were galloped off the field. Not one gun of the 119th Battery was lost, and most of the wagons were recovered. Only three men were hit during the rescue operations. Thus ended one of the quickest and most gallant gun-saving exploits of the war.

Later in the day Captain Grenfell was wounded. A bullet struck him in the thigh, and two of his fingers were injured. He was brought back from the firing-line, and an ambulance was sent for.

While awaiting the ambulance a motor-car dashed along. "That's what I want," said Captain Grenfell. "What's the use of an ambulance to me? Take me back to the firing-line." He entered the motor-car and went back to fight.

Captain Grenfell was twice invalided home, but on each occasion curtailed his rest in order to get back to the firing-line.

He was killed while in command of the left section of the 9th Lancers on May 24, 1915. The Germans had broken through the line, but Grenfell held, and in the words of his Commanding Officer, Major Beale Browne, "saved the day."



"INTO THE HURRICANE OF SHOT AND SHELL."

Thus died one of the greatest heroes of the war, a soldier to his finger-tips, a born leader, and a true British gentleman. His devotion to his regiment made him one of its greatest assets, and the men adored their gallant captain. As he had lived, so he died—fighting for the Right in the service of the country he loved so well.

In his will, dated May 6, 1915, Captain Grenfell bequeathed his Victoria Cross to his regiment—"to whom the honour of my gaining the V.C. was entirely due, thanks to the splendid discipline and traditions which exist in this magnificent regiment."

CHAPTER VI

PRIVATE GEORGE WILSON, WHO CARRIED OFF A MAXIM GUN

War is no respecter of persons. Fame and death on the battlefield come to rich and poor alike. The most illiterate private stands as great a chance of distinguishing himself as does the aristocratic and cultured officer. This has often been demonstrated during the present conflict, as the pages of our book will amply show. One of the many humble heroes in the ranks is Private George Wilson, who has made for himself a name that will not be forgotten. He is a Scotsman, and his native country is very proud of the fact that he is 'of the people.' He is to every Scot what Sergeant O'Leary, V.C., is to the Irish—the type of national valour. Ask any native of Scotland, who is their most representative V.C. hero, and he will at once say 'Geordie' Wilson. This does not mean that Wilson's deed surpassed all others, but that it caught and held the public imagination.

Private Wilson was selling newspapers in the streets of Edinburgh up to within forty-eight hours of the declaration of war. He is twenty-nine years of age, well set-up and fair, and a typical Highland soldier. He joined the Army ten years ago, his regiment being the famous Highland Light Infantry. He served part of his time at the historic Edinburgh Castle, under the shadow of which is now his home. After serving three years with the Colours, Wilson went into the Reserve, and had just completed seven years as a reservist when he was called back to his regiment. During part of the period he was in the Reserve, Wilson worked in the coal-pits at Niddrie.

Then he again took up the selling of newspapers, an occupation he had followed before enlisting at the age of seventeen. Many an evening paper has he sold to the soldiers outside the Castle, and few who saw him at this time could have

foreseen that a few years later all Scotland would be ringing with his amazing exploit in France in the greatest war in history.

There are many stories told about 'Geordie' by the newsboys of Edinburgh, who were delighted when "one of us did for eight Germans," as one of them put it on hearing the news. Wilson was always a 'good pal,' always willing to give a helping hand. He once stopped a runaway horse in the Lawnmarket, Edinburgh, and his sister, on hearing of this brave act, said he ought to have the V.C., little dreaming that he would one day write to her from France to announce that he had actually been recommended for the great prize.

A very serious illness he went through is still remembered by his chums. They thought at the time that he would not leave the hospital alive. He pulled through, however, and lived to make Scotland proud of him. It is said that Wilson remarked to a friend before leaving for the Front that he would not return to Scotland if he did not bring back the Victoria Cross.

In a letter to his sister, he wrote:

"I am recommended for bravery for capturing a machine-gun and going into the German firing-line and shooting an officer and six men, and turning their gun on them, and carrying in a mate of the King's Royal Rifles who was riddled with bullets." This was his own modest way of describing his great deeds. In another letter to his sister, Wilson, who is one of a family of eight orphans, wrote: "If it's God's will I will return quite safe and sound back to bonnie Scotland beside my ain folk . . . I am both meek and humble, God's my only Saviour." The latter letter reveals the modest, noble fellow as possessing the typical Scottish virtues—love for Country and family, and deep religious feeling.

A man of his regiment once referred to Private George Wilson as a 'rough diamond.' The description is the highest compliment that can be paid to him—he has shown himself to be a soldier to the finger-tips, daring, impetuous, and absolutely fearless. His blunt speech is another characteristic, as will be

seen later; he does not stand upon useless ceremony or consider convention when there is stern work to do. One account of his V.C. deed states that Wilson went into the wood to capture the German gun after being expressly forbidden by his officer to do so. This is exactly the thing he would do, knowing the permission was denied out of consideration for his own safety.

After the battle of the Marne, the Germans retreated in hot haste to the River Aisne, pursued by the Allied armies. Before each side settled down to trench warfare it fought for positions, and the British advanced and retreated. During one of the retreats the Highland Light Infantry, supported by the King's Royal Rifles, acted as rearguard, and with wonderful doggedness contested every inch of ground.

On September 14, 1914, the Highland Light Infantry reached Verneuil, and hastily dug themselves in. The pressure of the enemy was, however, very severe, and to relieve the situation a party of sixteen men, under the leadership of Sir Archibald Gibson Craig, charged the Germans, only to be swept away by the fire of a machine-gun in a wood. This gun commanded the trenches, and matters began to assume a very serious aspect.

Meantime Wilson, who was in the trenches, had been using his powers of observation. His sharp eyes detected the enemy moving among the trees in the wood already referred to. He at once informed his officer that he could see at least two Germans. The officer could not credit this, but, as Wilson persisted in his statement, he levelled his field-glasses and at the same moment was struck down with a mortal wound.

The men who were standing around were deeply affected, for the dead officer was greatly beloved. Wilson set his teeth, and, taking careful aim at the enemy in the wood, he fired and one of the Germans fell. Wilson raised his rifle a second time, a second shot rang out, and the other German fell. This success excited the hero to further action and he sprang forward to seek more targets. His companions, more cautious, cried to

him to come back. "It's no use; there's a machine-gun there!" was their warning.

Wilson was in no mood to study prudence. He dashed forward, his bayonet fixed to his rifle, his finger at the trigger. On he went, heedless of the risk he was running, until he came to a hollow. In this sheltered position he saw eight Germans all armed, and in their midst two British soldiers whom they had taken prisoner. Not in the least daunted he shouted: "Come on men! Charge!"

He had calculated that the Germans would think that he was the advance-guard of a body of Highland soldiers, and, true enough, the enemy flung up their hands, while the two prisoners found themselves at liberty. Thus one man by his amazing audacity had captured eight Germans and set free two of his comrades. By this time his cautious companions had ventured out, and Wilson shouted to them to assist with the prisoners.

Wilson now acted impetuously for the third time that day. Not content with the heroic exploits already accomplished he wanted more. His companions were amazed to see him dash off. Again they called to him to stop. This time he paused for a second to shout, "What is it?" They cried, "Look!"

Wilson turned and saw a sight calculated to unnerve the bravest soldier. The Maxim gun in the wood had commenced once again to deal out death. His comrades were falling in large numbers. As his companions were dashing to cover, Wilson asked if they could not seize the gun. Being told that this was impossible, Wilson reflected for a moment, then turning to a private of the King's Royal Rifles who was nearest to him, coolly remarked: "Mon, I'm angry wi' yon gun—and I'm gaun to stop it!"

Having said this he made for the wood. To reach the gun he had to crawl and dodge amid a perfect hurricane of bullets which was being directed on to the British position. The rifleman to whom Wilson had spoken followed, and shortly overtook him.

Very soon the two men were discovered and the rifleman fell badly wounded.

Wilson now proceeded alone and managed to dodge the bullets by dashing from haystack to haystack. All the while he was inwardly raging. He remarks that the sight of the brave man on the grass spurred him on. He was determined to reach the gun and put it out of action, if for no other reason than to avenge the poor rifleman. He did not pause to reflect that some might have characterized the undertaking as dare-devilry; all he thought about was how to silence the murderous gun.

He reached another haystack, leveled his rifle, took careful aim, and the German behind the Maxim fell dead. Wilson's shooting that day was unerring. Another German took the place of the dead man and started a stream of bullets. Wilson exposed himself to make sure of his aim; his rifle clicked, and a second operator fell. A third man started to fire the gun, only to meet the fate that had befallen his predecessors. A fourth and a fifth and a sixth German fell. Wilson's shooting has been described as uncanny, and to its deadly accuracy the hero owed his life. Had he missed once, the operator at the Maxim would no doubt have speedily riddled him with bullets.

Wilson waited for a few minutes after the sixth man fell. Then having come to the conclusion that the gun's entire crew had been killed, he crept forward to secure his prize. A German officer rose in his path. Wilson remained cool at this alarming development. The German fired point-blank, but luckily missed, and Wilson quickly bayoneted him. This was the narrowest of Wilson's many escapes, for the officer's bullet had all but grazed his head.

With the Maxim in his possession, Wilson's troubles, far from being over, started afresh. He had gained the prize for which he had risked his life, but was not to be allowed to retain it undisputed. Wilson observed a large number of Germans approaching. Instead of losing heart and beating a speedy retreat, the brave Scottish hero instantly slewed the gun round and

opened fire. He worked the gun as skillfully as he had handled his rifle, mowing down hundreds of the enemy. He was fired at by the German artillery as well as by the infantrymen, and as the place became unpleasantly warm, Wilson decided it was time to advance to the rear. He estimates, however, that he fired 750 bullets, and accounted for about 300 of the enemy before he was forced to desist.



WILSON MOWING DOWN THE GERMANS WITH THEIR OWN GUN.

The Scottish lion reached the British lines unscathed, notwithstanding the shells that continually burst around him. Then the terrible strain he had endured told on his strength and he fainted. On recovering, his first words were, had the gun been brought in? Being told that it had not been fetched, he said nothing, but staggered up, and again went out to face the shells. He soon returned carrying the Maxim gun on his shoulders.

"There's the gun, sir!" he said, saluting his officer.

Even this did not satisfy him and he must needs go to fetch the ammunition, which he succeeded in bringing back. It really seemed as though he was bent on tempting Fate. Having successfully accomplished his purpose, and, incidentally, achieved the greatest individual feat of bravery in the war up to

that day, Wilson remembered the comrade who had started off with him, and without a word to anybody of his intentions, faced the shrapnel yet again. He found his pal still living, though riddled with seventeen bullets, and dragged him to the trench, where he died the next day. "Thank God you got the gun," were the poor fellow's last words to Wilson.

Later in the campaign Wilson was an inmate of one of the hospitals in France. One day there was some slight commotion in the ward. Presently Private George Wilson became aware that something unusual was happening. A little procession was approaching his cot. In the centre was one with a kindly face, wearing a full-dress field uniform. The officer was, somehow, familiar—where had he seen him before? Then he remembered—it was His Majesty, King George. He recognized him from photographs he had seen. The King was on a visit to his brave troops in France. He came to Wilson's side, and, pinning the Victoria Cross on the hero's breast, remarked warmly that he had done the bravest deed ever accomplished on the battlefield.

"If there's such a thing as two V.C.'s," His Majesty is reported to have said, "you have earned them. You're not a very big man, but you have a very big heart."

That January day there was no happier man in the British Army than Private George Wilson, the ex-newsvendor of Edinburgh.

CHAPTER VII

CORPORAL DOBSON OF THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS

The British Army is justly proud of its famous regiments of Guards. They have been described as the backbone of its infantry, and well do they deserve the title. A magnificent stand by the Guards on a hard-contested field has often saved the day. Future historians of the great war will do ample justice to the great deeds of the Coldstream, Grenadier, Scots, and Irish Guards. Each regiment has gained one Victoria Cross or more, and some of the deeds of valour were performed in circumstances of especial interest which entitle them to space in these pages.

One of the most popular heroes of the Guards is Frederick William Dobson, of the Coldstream Guards, who displayed 'conspicuous gallantry' at Chavanne, on the Aisne, September 28, 1914. At that time he was a private: he was afterward promoted to lance-corporal, and later to full corporal. The home of Corporal Dobson is at North Shields, where he formerly worked as a miner, a typical Northumbrian calling. When he left the coal mine Dobson joined the famous Coldstream Guards, a regiment which derives its name from the little Border town in Berwickshire, where it was formed by General Monck in 1650 from two of Cromwell's regiments. Later the name of the 2nd (Cold-stream) Foot Guards was adopted.

Corporal Dobson enlisted in 1906, and served for three years in the 1st Battalion. Then he returned to his former occupation, being employed at Backworth Colliery, near Whitley.

On the outbreak of war Corporal Dobson rejoined his old regiment, becoming attached to the 2nd Battalion, with which unit he proceeded to France. He landed at Havre on August 13, 1914, and from the first saw thrilling service. His battalion was one of many famous units that composed the original British Expeditionary Force. The latter was a marvellous body of fighting men, thoroughly prepared for any emergency. The men composing it presented such a smart appearance that the enthusiastic French people cheered the long line of khaki heroes as they marched through their towns and villages singing "Tipperary "on the way up to Mons. As trained soldiers they have never been surpassed: they were the picked troops of Europe, and among them the Coldstream Guards were conspicuous.

Before describing Dobson's great deed we may note a few facts about his life and work at the front prior to the battle of the Aisne.

From Havre his regiment went to Badincourt, whence they marched to Fesny, being inspected on the way by Sir John French. On the memorable Sunday of August 23 the Coldstream Guards arrived at Mons. For a few days Dobson's battalion rested. Then they marched forward, when Dobson got his first sight of actual war; he passed the first lot of British wounded being brought down from the terrible battle of Mons, which was then raging and in which he was about to participate. His regiment were soon in the thick of the fighting. Shelled out of a cornfield that night as they lay asleep, their gallant major formed up his men and marched them off in quiet order to a position which they gallantly held for a whole day. Dobson, along with the rest of his comrades, was disappointed at the order to retreat. They wanted to stand and fight, but their commanders were wiser. Then came a further retreat which brought the Guards into the famous town of Landrecies. Here Dobson got his first opportunity of closing with the Germans. "We were at grips," he says, "and we let 'em have it."

The retreat continued to Le Cateau, the famous breeding-ground of heroes. Here the Coldstream Guards, along with those doughty fighters, the Irish Guards, 'stuck it ' while the guns were being saved. By the time the retreat had ended at the Marne, Dobson considered that in eleven days he had covered 232 miles. Then came the sudden and dramatic change. Almost within sight of Paris, the French and British armies drove the Germans headlong back to the river Aisne.

At a little place called Chavanne Dobson formed one of half a dozen volunteers who shifted a barricade erected over a canal by the Germans. This was effected by cool daring, for throughout the operation the enemy had a machine-gun trained on the locality. During the greater part of his sojourn on the Aisne, Dobson was fighting in the trenches, for it was at the battle of the Aisne that both sides, finding progress impossible, started to dig themselves into the ground. Thus commenced the trench warfare which was to continue so many weary months on the West Front.

The incident at Chavanne was merely a precursor of the more thrilling deed at this little village which was to make Corporal Dobson famous.

The morning of September 28 was very misty. Three men of Dobson's battalion had been sent out on patrol duty, and when the haze cleared found themselves in the open about 150 yards from the German trenches. The Germans immediately opened a heavy fire. One of the patrol was successful in regaining the British trench, although he was hit in the arms and received five bullets in one leg. His comrades fared worse. One man was struck down at once, while the other's bold dash for life was soon checked and he, too, was hit and fell. Captain Follett saw what had happened to his men, and called for a volunteer to go out and bring in the wounded men who were lying helpless in the open.

"I volunteered," says Dobson, "and went out, although heavily fired at, but I had made up my mind to get at him."

Dobson, therefore, in volunteering left the safety of his trench for what appeared to be certain death, as the Germans were continuing their heavy fire. He showed no fear, however, but coolly crept over the parapet and crawled through the mangels in the field in front. He got safely through this field, but when he reached the open and raised his head to take his bearings the Germans saw him and fired. This warning made him cautious, and he 'ducked' his head, but not before he had noticed the exact spot where one of the patrol was lying. How to reach the man was the problem that now presented itself, for every time that Dobson raised his head the Germans poured a volley of bullets in his direction. Dobson says he argued with himself, and thought of one plan after another. Time was passing, and he realized that if he did not reach the fallen man quickly he would bleed to death. Our hero used his head as well as his arms and legs. He concluded at length that his best plan was to lie still on the ground in order to induce the enemy to believe that he was dead—struck by one of their bullets—and then to make a dash.

It was a hazardous proceeding, but fortunately the plan succeeded, for as long as Dobson lay still on the ground no further shots were fired. After several minutes' rest Dobson, having nerved himself for the great undertaking, leapt to his feet and making a desperate dash succeeded in reaching his man. He was shocked, however, to find that the poor fellow was past human aid. Of the two men who had been struck down he had missed the wounded and risked his life for the dead. The former was lying nearer our trenches and had not been seen by the hero. Before leaving the fallen soldier, Dobson took as many particulars as he could from his papers, etc. He tried to get possession of his rifle but could not, as the dead man was lying on it, and to raise him up would have been to court death from the vigilant Germans. Dobson says it is nothing short of a miracle how he regained the British trenches. He crawled back with his head toward the enemy as this lessened the target; it was a good thing he did so, for if he had crawled the other way he

would have been shot through the head; as it was he received a bullet through his heel.

When he reached the mangel field Dobson waved his hand to let his chums know he was safe. They saw the signal and risked raising their heads. They peered at him over the parapet, and encouraged him to make the final spurt to safety. Climbing over the parapet as coolly as if he had just returned from a stroll, Dobson went at once to his Major and reported what he had done, giving the name and other particulars of the dead soldier.

The officer listened to the hero's story. He then asked Dobson what had happened to the other man, and it was not till then that Dobson realized that two of his comrades had been lying in the open.

The brave Tynesider reflected for a moment. He had just escaped death, and to venture out again would in all probability mean losing his life. Then he thought of his comrade lying in the open field at the mercy of the Germans, perhaps slowly bleeding to death. His mind was soon made up. Turning to his officer Dobson very quietly said that he would go out again and endeavour to bring in the stricken man. The officer, struck with the Guardsman's superb gallantry, decided that he would do all he could to make the journey as safe as possible. He gleaned from Dobson some important particulars about the range of the German guns, then arranged for the British artillery to play upon the German positions. Thus Dobson was covered during his second journey, which, all the same, was exceedingly risky.

Corporal Dobson adopted exactly the same plan as before when he proceeded on his second life-saving exploit. Creeping out of the trench, he crawled cautiously among the mangels, taking every care to conceal his movements from the Germans. He peered around and at length discovered the exact place where the wounded man lay. Then he braced himself for the final spurt and succeeded in wriggling his way to the stricken soldier. In dragging the man to our trench Dobson had the assistance of Corporal Brown, who, he says, "was brave, and

never showed the least fear." This generous tribute is characteristic of Dobson. He wanted his chum to get some of the praise for the rescue work of that September morning. Corporal Brown was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, but did not live to hear of this honour, for he died three days before it was officially announced.

In a letter written to his wife Dobson spoke very modestly of what he had done: "I only took my chance, and did my duty to save my comrades. It was really nothing, but I shall never forget the congratulations and praise I received from our officers, my comrades, and our Brigadier-General."

As will be remembered it was in response to Captain Follett's request for a volunteer that Corporal Dobson went out to rescue the wounded man. Lady Mildred Follett, the gallant officer's wife, received a letter from her husband in which the latter described Dobson's brave deed. She at once wrote to Mrs. Dobson, the hero's wife.

"You will be glad to know," she wrote, "that your husband is very well, and has behaved with great gallantry.

"I am sure this will make you very proud, and I do congratulate you on having such a gallant soldier for a husband, and it will give you confidence for the future to know that he is under Divine protection and will come back safely to you. I know how trying this time is.

After the battle of the Aisne Dobson fought in many other historic battles, including the terrible first battle of Ypres. About this time he actually had a spell of twenty-three days in the trenches without being relieved. Names that will live for ever in our annals—Givenchy, Festubert, La Bassée—were also notable in his experience, for at each place he saw hot fighting. He was wounded at Givenchy when helping to make a dug-out, and was invalided home.

When it became known that he was in London, King George expressed his desire to pin the Victoria Cross on the

breast of the hero of Chavanne. Then ensued a search to find the hero. As an officer put it, "We just managed to catch him." Corporal Dobson, who was in mufti, was hurried off to the regimental head-quarters, supplied with full-dress uniform, and conducted to Buckingham Palace, two officers of the Coldstream Guards accompanying him.

CHAPTER VIII

A GALLANT CAMERONIAN'S THRILLING RESCUE IN A DEATH-ZONE

"I clenched my teeth and said to myself I would stick it." This thrilling sentence came from the lips of Glasgow's popular hero in describing the great adventure that won for him the coveted honour. He was referring to his rescue of an officer whom he snatched from the jaws of death. The hero is Private Henry May, 1st Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), who won the V.C. at La Boutillerie on October 22, 1914. He voluntarily endeavoured to rescue, under very heavy fire, a wounded man who was killed before he could save him, and subsequently, on the same day, carried a wounded officer a distance of 300 yards into safety while exposed to very severe fire.

Private May was born in 1885 in the historic Barony Parish. On leaving school he became a mechanic, and in this capacity worked in the mills of Messrs John Brown & Co., of Adelphi Street.

Then the Army called him. He wanted a more active and adventurous life, and accordingly enlisted at Hamilton in 1902. The regiment he chose was the Cameronians, whose history is closely bound up with Scotland. It was originally the 26th Regiment of Foot, raised among the 'hill men' in 1668 and employed soon afterward in restoring order in the Highlands during the troubled days of the Covenanters. May proceeded with the 1st Cameronians to South Africa at the conclusion of

the Boer War, and laughingly admits that his only fighting experience there was taking part in some manoeuvres at the Klip River. He served for three years, and after returning to civilian life was a tenter in the factory of a firm of muslin manufacturers at Rutherglen Bridge, Glasgow. He was within a fortnight of the expiry of his time as a Reservist when he was summoned to rejoin the Colours in August 1914. Private May, it is of interest to note, is a member of the Fairbairn United Free Church, which gave considerably over ninety members for active service.

Private Henry May saw very varied experiences at the front. He was in the great retreat, and at Le Cateau his regiment had the honourable and dangerous task of taking up a rear-guard position. The complete story of his hardships during these arduous days would provide thrilling reading. For over 100 miles the Cameronians marched without rations. They had to subsist on what they could pick up on the way. For ten days May was 'missing,' wandering alone, narrowly escaping capture. When the British army moved from the Aisne to Flanders, the Cameronians tramped a great part of the way, usually by night. From a little village near St Omer they entrained for La Boutillerie, where May was to win the V.C.

These were critical days toward the end of October 1914. The Germans were bent on hacking a way to the Channel ports, and the Cameronians had been ordered to La Boutillerie at express speed to fill a gap in the line and stem the torrent of on-sweeping Germans.

On October 22 May's section was ordered to occupy a ditch, a vantage-point not to be despised when a properly constructed trench is not available. A ditch well-manned may prove a formidable obstacle in the path of the enemy.

It was essential that the Cameronians should hold the advancing Germans, and their officer skillfully conducted his section into the ditch. Meantime the muddy fields were swept by bullets, and each man had to follow the officer very carefully, 'ducking' his head and crawling. Once in the ditch the 1st

Cameronians settled to real business, and prepared to guard the stronghold to the last man.

After a time the Germans made a furious onslaught. This was the occasion when the Kaiser's crack corps exposed themselves with reckless bravery in their futile attempts to hew a Ray to Calais. There is a limit even to courage, and eventually the ditch became too warm for the Cameronians. In view of the large numbers opposed to them it was deemed necessary to retire, and it was during this retreat that Private Henry May performed the first of the two deeds of gallantry that won for him the V.C.

One of the Cameronians went out at the wrong end of the ditch. Before his comrades could call to him to return he had been shot down. The officer, grieved to see one of his brave lads exposed to the merciless fire of the enemy, cried out:

"Boys, there's one of our men down! We can't leave him to the Germans! Who will fetch him?"

Private May jumped to his officer's side, and, in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone, said:

"I will go, sir."

Then he shouted: "Come on, boys!" and with some of his comrades following he leaped out of the ditch.

May was the first to reach the wounded man. He lifted him up, one of his mates assisting. Just as they were starting back to our lines a German bullet struck the poor fellow, and he fell back lifeless in May's arms. More tragedy was to follow; the comrade helping May was next hit. He, too, dropped dead. It had been a narrow escape for May, and he was profoundly impressed by the miraculous incident—two bullets killing two men at his side and missing himself.

Thinking that he must be shot if he continued his way back to his company, May resolved to stay where he was, and sell his life dearly. He dropped over the two dead bodies,

deciding to fire from behind them at the advancing enemy until his ammunition was finished.

While thus engaged Private May heard a noise at his back.

"Looking round," he says, "I saw it was my officer, Lieutenant Graham, that had dropped. I knew then what my duty was. I thought I would try and assist him. I am sure every other man in our platoon would have done the same as I did. He had been so kind to us. On our marches, when we were without rations, he would buy biscuits and chocolates, and send them to his men."

Despite the severe fire to which he exposed himself May rushed to the fallen officer and started to drag him toward shelter. Another Cameronian was nearby, and May shouted to him to give a hand. Between them they dragged the officer an additional few yards when once again the brave fellow assisting May was shot down, though this time he was not killed.

A third soldier, named Bell, came on the scene, but he, too, received wounds in the leg, ankle, and wrist, and was forced to crawl back to the ditch. By now May did not doubt that he bore a charmed life. He could only breathe a prayer of thanksgiving as he reflected on his marvellous deliverances. He was determined that his lieutenant should be carried to safety if he should be spared.

The officer, lying wounded, realized the imminent danger May was incurring, and whispered faintly:

"For God's sake, leave me, May!"

The order only worked in May a deeper obstinacy.

"I clenched my teeth," he said, "and said to myself I would stick it since I had managed so far. I saw a little shelter some distance away which I thought I would be able to take him to. Then another man crept up to his assistance, and for the fifth time in succession Private May escaped while a comrade was

shot. This time the man at his side was struck in the wrist, the bullet shattering the arm up to the shoulder.

It was now dark, and May was alone with the lieutenant. He began to think that his own 'number was up'—as he afterward put it, for bullets were still flying plentifully around. He therefore exerted himself for a supreme effort. With difficulty he got the officer into his arms, and struggled through the darkness to a place of shelter which he had noticed some distance away. He was totally unable to make out the Cameronians' lines, and trusted to luck to carry him to safety. The shelter was a little hollow, and, although not quite free from the sweeping fire of the enemy, was safer than the open.

As May gently laid Lieutenant Graham down he was rewarded with the remark, uttered in a low voice: "Thanks, awfully, May."

He replied: "Oh, it's nothing, sir! I think you will do all right now."

When daylight arrived the two men were seen by their own battalion and speedily relieved. To his annoyance Private May discovered that the exertion he had made would have been sufficient to bring the wounded officer right among his friends had he only known the direction to take. The British lines, he found, were but a few yards distant, and he had carried the lieutenant 300 yards. Private May later had the satisfaction of knowing that his officer made a good recovery. Although entitled to a well-earned rest after the exertions of the night, May desired to return immediately to the firing-line. As it happened there was no room for him in the front trenches, and he was sent into billets in a village behind.

A little over a week afterward he was again in the thick of the fighting, and received a wound in his cheek. This necessitated a spell in hospital, which was followed by a visit home, in time for Christmas and New Year with his family, a pleasure richly earned.

CHAPTER IX

THE DRUMMER BOY WHO TOOK COMMAND, AND DRAGGED A WOUNDED COMRADE TO SAFETY

When the V.C. was awarded to Drummer Bent the official account cited no less than three separate instances of his conspicuous bravery. Each deed was deserving of the soldier's highest honour, so that Bent may be said to have thrice won the Victoria Cross, and he is thus an outstanding figure even in our gallery of golden deeds. Although only a drummer-boy he was mentioned in dispatches three times within a fortnight. First he twice took ammunition to comrades in an advance trench. Then he dragged a wounded man to safety under heavy fire. His third deed was to assume command of a body of men after his officers had been shot down.

Drummer Spencer John Bent belongs to the 1st Battalion the East Lancashire Regiment, and, like all our heroes, he is very modest and does not care to say much about the gallant deeds which won the prized reward. Before his soldiering days he had spent most of his life in Suffolk, where he lived with an aunt from a very early age.

On the day that he first attracted attention—October 22, 1914—the East Lancashires had been in the trenches about a month. On the right of Bent's station was a small advance trench, with six men and a corporal in it. "We came to hear," says Bent, "that they were short of ammunition. I was in the big trench, removing the earth which a 'Jack Johnson' had thrown up."

An officer came along very anxious as to the sore straits of the lonely corporal and his men. "Who'll take up some ammunition?" he asked.

Bent thought he was just the man for the job. He reasoned within himself thus: "I am the only fellow doing nothing, and I might as well volunteer." Buglers and drummers, it must be understood, are generally non-combatants.

Drummer Bent accordingly went forward on his perilous journey through a heavy shell and rifle-fire. He took about 400 rounds to the corporal, who said that he and his met would 'hang on' all night.

Two days later Bent undertook to repeat his service. "Perhaps the fire this time," he says, "was a bit hotter. Still, I got across to our chaps again, even with some rations, which I took 'on my own.'" Through Bent's splendid bravery our men were enabled to hold that advance trench without the loss of a single man.

These two feats in themselves deserved the V.C., but in Bent's case they were preliminary runs, as it were, for the even greater exploits he was to perform. The day after, his platoon sergeant dropped a hint that he was recommended for a medal. Bent laughed, thinking that he was joking, and answered: "Yes, we'll all have V.C.s yet!"

At the beginning of November, during the terrible struggle known as the battle of Ypres, the East Lancashires were in the trenches. They had been sorely pressed for days, and as they breakfasted they asked each other what the day would bring forth.

One of their number, Private McNultry, having finished his breakfast, had to go out of the trench, and on returning he was struck in the stomach by a German bullet. It seemed to our men watching from the trench that the poor fellow must be killed, for it was clear from the earth flying up around him that the enemy, lacking all humane feeling, were firing at the wounded man. Bent remarked that some one ought to go out and help McNultry; the reply of those standing near was: "Why not go yourself?"

Bent knew that to attempt the rescue he must risk his life, nevertheless, to the amazement of his comrades, the gallant drummer slipped over the top of the trench.

In making his way to the stricken man, Bent used some strategy. To make it difficult for the Germans to hit him he moved forward on a zig-zag course. They did not fire at him while he was advancing, but no sooner had he reached McNulty and started to raise him gently by the shoulders, than they fired a regular hurricane of bullets. Luckily none hit him, although he slipped and became unnerved for a minute. But the shock speedily passed. He happened to be near the walls of a ruined convent; just as he slipped several bullets struck the wall and a piece of plaster struck Bent's left eye. At first he thought he was wounded, and put his hand to his eye to rub the blood away. He was overjoyed to discover that only the skin was grazed.

By this time Bent decided that the position was too warm and that it was necessary to make a move if their lives were to be preserved. He was in a difficulty; if he got Private McNulty on to his back and thus carried him, the Germans would make good practice at so conspicuous a target. Suddenly he resolved on a novel plan. If it was impossible to stand up he would save his comrade lying down. Bent lay prone on his back, hooked his feet under McNulty's arms, and, using his elbows, dragged him inch by inch to our trench, which was about twenty-five yards away. It was a thrilling rescue, and must have tried even the strong nerve of Drummer Bent, for the progress was slow and all the while bullets were whistling in the air near enough to be unpleasant. When he got the wounded man to the trench Bent continued to act heroically. He himself went for a doctor and stretcher-bearers, and did everything he could for the wounded man. Still not satisfied, Bent, on the same day, rescued other wounded men who were lying exposed in the open.

Bent's third feat was not less daring than those already enumerated. Where it differed was in its importance and in its effect. The V.C. is awarded not only for rescuing a comrade, but for any military acts which reflect great presence of mind and

coolness, and are followed by important consequences. Bent's achievement at Le Gheer on the night of November 1-2 was certainly fraught with vital consequences, as we shall see.

The fighting here was very severe, and the brave khaki lines were sorely put to it to hold their own, for the massed legions of the enemy were determined to break the British front and capture Calais.

On this memorable November night some one had passed the word down the line that the battalion was to retire, and there had been much confusion. Many of the officers had been struck down, others were away rallying different sections who were in difficulties, sergeants, too, were killed, wounded, or separated from their men in the confusion.

The men had left the trench, but Bent had remained behind to search for a French trumpet which he greatly prized, when suddenly a man appeared and fell sprawling on the bottom of the trench.

The sight of the stranger did not daunt our hero. Bent resolved that the man should get no farther. In a moment he had covered him with his rifle.

"Who are you?" he boldly asked.

The answer was unexpected, for he fully believed that the mysterious figure silhouetted in the darkness was an enemy.

"For heaven's sake, Bent, stop this retirement and get hold of the men!" The speaker was Sergeant Waller, who told him that the order for retreat was a mistake.

Bent at once prepared for action, as plucky and as self-possessed as an officer.

He jumped out of the trench and cried to the retreating men, "Come on, boys, carry on now and play the game!"

Just then an officer came up. Bent told him what had happened, and was ordered to be sure and get the men back, while he, the officer, went after others. In a very short time the

drummer had got all the men back to the trench in safety. For a couple of hours he acted as their leader, and the brave force stuck to it like heroes until C and D companies came up, when the officers took command.

At early morning the Germans evidently thought that our men had left the trench, for after a bombardment they came on in a confident and aggressive manner, actually doing a sort of goose-step. Our fire was withheld until the enemy was about 400 yards distant, when the Lancashires let him have it. Hundreds of the Germans were mowed down, very few getting back to their own trenches.

Had it not been for Bent's gallant and skilful action the trench would not have been held, and its loss would have involved further important consequences.

Some time later Bent was passing three weeks of convalescence in the village of Witnesham, near Ipswich, when a telegram from a local officer was brought to him: "Heartiest congratulations on obtaining V.C.," it ran. The brave fellow was taken aback. "Well!" was all he could gasp. Later, in a blacksmith's shop, some one showed him a daily paper; only then did he realize the truth—that he had been awarded the coveted V.C.

Bent was one of three V.C. heroes awarded an inscribed gold watch by the Musicians' Company, and he received an award of £50 offered by Mr T. Curtis, an Ipswich resident, to the first man from that city who should obtain the V.C.

CHAPTER X

LIEUTENANT MARTIN LEAKE, THE MAN WHO WON TWO V.C.S

Before describing the heroic deeds that won for an army doctor his second Victoria Cross, let us note a few facts about medical work at the Front. A number of army doctors have gained the coveted distinction, and it is sometimes said that every member of the Royal Army Medical Corps deserves it. The latter, although popularly regarded as a regiment, is really a department of the Army. From early times surgeons accompanied the Army in the field, but it was only in 1897 that the various units of our Military Medical Service were co-ordinated and given the now familiar name—Royal Army Medical Corps. Army doctors became officers with regimental rank. In our Army they are classed as non-combatants, and are unarmed.

When an engagement develops, a Field Ambulance is set up 2000 yards from the firing-line, and officers and orderlies proceed to within two yards of the firing-line and set up a Dressing Station.

Many doctors go into the actual zone of fire. Some have been killed and many wounded while bravely helping to rescue fallen men. The army doctor is beloved by the soldiers, who have pet names for the Corps, such as 'Linseed Lancers,' 'Poultice Wallopers,' the 'Pills,' etc. Without waiting for the stretcher-bearers to bring the wounded down to the Dressing Station, the army medical officers often go to the stricken soldiers, inject morphia where the man is in agony, render first-aid, and in many cases help to carry our gallant soldiers off the battle-field. It was for work of this kind that the hero we are about to describe won his V.C.

The rare distinction of twice receiving the V.C. is borne by Lieutenant Leake, of the Royal Army Medical Corps. This doctor-hero won the V.C. on May 13, 1902, in the Boer War, and again in the present campaign. As no man, however, can actually wear two Victoria Crosses, the second award is represented by a Clasp. Only one other Clasp had been awarded at the date when Lieutenant Leake received the honour; he shared the distinction with Lieutenant-General Sir C. J. S. Gough, K.C.B. Of course the Cross has many times been awarded to an officer or soldier for more than one act of bravery.

Lieutenant Leake is about forty years of age, and one of four brothers, another of whom, Captain W. M. Leake, is also serving in the British Army in France. His elder brother, Captain Francis M. Leake, who was captain of the *Pathfinder* when she was blown up, was later given command of a flotilla of destroyers.

After leaving Westminster School, Lieutenant Arthur Martin Leake became a student at University College Hospital, eventually being put in charge of a hospital at Hemel Hempstead. Then the South African War broke out, and the young doctor heard the clear call. He resolved to throw in his lot with the first regiment that would accept him. Hence he proceeded to the seat of war with the Hertfordshire Yeomanry, and later drifted into Baden-Powell's Police, in which he saw a good deal of service.

The story of his first V.C. is soon told. While the engagement at Vlakfontein was at its height Leake attended a wounded man under heavy fire from Boers posted within a hundred yards of the place where he was at work. It is the doctor's instinct always to save life, and Lieutenant Leake faced the deadly bullets with fearless courage, and brought the wounded man to safety. Later he was thrice shot while trying to place a wounded officer in a more comfortable position, but would not give up his work until he was utterly exhausted from loss of blood. Even then he refused to take water until eight other wounded had been satisfied.

After the Boer War he returned to England, and settled down for some time in the sleepy old-world town of Ware, in Hertfordshire. But the call of the Army again reached him, and he obtained a commission in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He went to India, where he remained as a doctor in connection with one of the railways until the Balkan War, when he joined the Serbian Army.

A friend, who first met the 'double V.C.' hero in the Balkans, says:

"I was struck by the reticence, the modesty—I had almost said the shyness—of the man, for I knew, though not from himself, that he possessed the great decoration for valour. Somehow I associated with the possession of the V.C. stalwart physique, overflowing animal spirits, volatile energy. Lieutenant Leake justified not one of these descriptions. He is a thin, spare man, well under the medium height, with fair hair, a light fair moustache." The writer goes on to say that his friend is a pleasant and lovable companion, simple and unaffected. This is the type of character common to all our V.C. heroes.

At the conclusion of the Balkan War Leake returned to India. In September 1914 he rejoined the Army with the rank of lieutenant. Since gaining his second V.C. he has been promoted to captain, and, later, major.

This quiet-spoken, modest doctor-hero won his V.C. Clasp at Ypres. If you search the official accounts of this decisive and sanguinary engagement, you will not find the name of Lieutenant Leake. He rescued no guns, killed no Germans; yet the deeds for which he received the coveted award were as heroic as any of the war. There was nothing of the spectacular about his heroism, but it was superb all the same.

Throughout the campaign Leake showed conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty. His splendid services culminated in the period October 29 to November 8, 1914. During this time was fought the terrible battle of Ypres, one of the most critical of the whole war. The Kaiser had set his heart on taking Calais, and

hurled his massed legions against the British lines, with the fierce determination to break through at all costs. Again and again the pick of the German army tried to hack a way to the Channel port. It was in vain; the dauntless khaki line barred the road.



A THRILLING RESCUE!

The fighting was particularly severe near Zonnebeke, the little Belgian town north-east of Ypres.

For days the battle swayed. Our casualties were very heavy, so that the medical units had their hands full day and night.

Lieutenant Leake was in his element. At night he would go out even to the enemy's trenches to succour the wounded. German snipers were active, and the riflemen in the trenches were on the alert for the men who should dare death for their wounded comrades. But again and again Leake ventured out on his errand of mercy. When he had reached one of our wounded his medical skill enabled him to relieve the sufferer, after which the stricken man was helped back to safety.

It was for a series of heroic feats of this nature that Lieutenant Leake won his V.C. Clasp. The official account mentions that his deeds were performed during a period from October 29 to November 8, near Zonnebeke, and that he showed "most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in rescuing, while exposed to constant fire, a large number of wounded who were lying close to the enemy's trenches."

Many of our heroes have received the V.C. for rescuing one of their comrades, facing heavy odds in so doing. Lieutenant Leake rescued 'a large number.' His was not an isolated deed of heroism, but a succession of noble and dangerous feats. All our Red Cross workers expose themselves in tending the wounded, from the highly-placed officer to the humblest stretcher-bearer; it testifies, therefore, to the surpassing merit of Lieutenant Leake's work that he should have been so signally honoured.

CHAPTER XI

HOW BRAVE BANDSMAN RENDLE RESCUED A WOUNDED OFFICER

The Victoria Cross has been awarded to men of practically every branch of our Army. Cavalrymen and artillerymen have gained the distinction as well as engineers and army doctors. The largest number of V.C.'s have gone to the infantrymen, and a proportion of these have been won by soldiers who are not classed as combatants. The army bandsmen, whom we have seen in times of peace marching with their regiments, stirring every heart with their martial music, have often acted heroically in battle; not a few have earned high praise for their services, while the one of whom we are now to read has secured the coveted Victoria Cross. Bandsmen usually act as stretcher-bearers at the front, but although classed as non-combatants they have on many occasions emulated the cooks and camp attendants at the first battle of Ypres. They have taken

a hand in the fight and helped to stem the torrent of advancing Germans. The brave army musician, whose great achievement is narrated here, however, was not decorated for any such belligerent deed, his heroism was displayed in more trying conditions.

Bandsman Rendle was born at Exeter, and as a boy, both at school and play, gave much promise. He was always to the fore when pluck and resource were needed, and was regarded by all his comrades as a lad of fearless character. After leaving school Rendle joined the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, a famous regiment which has many deeds of daring to its credit, and while serving with this regiment he saw much fighting in the Boer War.

On the outbreak of war in 1914, Rendle's regiment was sent at once to the front, and his great opportunity found him at the little village of Wulverghem on November 20.

"There is really nothing in it," he explained, when asked to describe his bravery, for he is very modest. The British were facing fearful odds, holding their line against massed attacks of the Germans, who were making frantic endeavours to break through. Rendle had been in the trenches for many weeks, and saw, in his own words, "sights enough to move the heart of a stone."

They were disagreeable days, for the weather at that time of the year is severe. Mist, rain, and damp sorely tried our gallant lads, as, day in and day out, they held their position. The enemy's artillery had made a special target of the trenches in the neighbourhood of where the Cornwalls were posted, and many casualties occurred.

As a bandsman it was Rendle's particular work to succour the wounded, but he was determined to do more than his bare duty. The sight of so many brave fellows struck by the deadly shrapnel moved him to pity and to forgetfulness of self. Again and again he was told to "come down" when he had ventured out of the trench to take a wounded man to the rear.

On November 20, the enemy subjected the Cornwalls' trench to a particularly severe bombardment. Two shells pitched into it, and blew ten men to pieces. They also ruined the front parapet, and the earth fell in and filled up a section. Matters were looking serious, for the Germans, having discovered that they had made a breach in the trench, poured into the gap an unending stream of shot and shell. This breach was five or six yards wide, and it had the effect of isolating one-half of the trench from the other.

The events immediately leading up to Rendle's heroic deed are as follows:

Lieutenant Colebrook, a young subaltern, was wounded on the afternoon of the 10th in that part of the British trench which was cut off from the communication trench, and lay on the ground unable to move. When he had somewhat recovered he asked for Lieutenant Wingate. To go to his friend meant crossing the exposed part of the trench, but Wingate fearlessly made the journey and escaped the bullets which the Germans were raining on that particular place. He was able to help and comfort his friend, but decided it was quite impossible to attempt to have him removed until dark, as there was no way of getting him across the exposed gap, upon which the enemy continued to send an unceasing stream of machine-gun bullets. Later on the enemy's fire slackened, only to start half an hour after with redoubled fury. Two shells whistled overhead, a third fell right in front of Lieutenant Wingate and smothered him with mud. This, he thought, was getting too warm, and he called out that the wounded officer must be taken away. At this point he was summoned to another part of the trench.

Bandsman Rendle had seen the terrible danger to his officer, and the third shell decided him. His bravery was not of 'the sudden' character. Many heroes acting on the spur of the moment have performed miraculous feats without counting the cost. Others have calculated all the chances and then gone out to face death deliberately. To the latter category of brave deeds Rendle's belongs. He well knew the terrible risks but did not

flinch. Setting his teeth and placing his life in the keeping of Providence he started forth.

His own account, stated in modest language, conveys some idea of the heroic nature of his deed.

"Lieutenant Colebrook," he says, "lay in an isolated section, wounded in the thigh, the main artery being severed. When Lieutenant Wingate and I got to him, we bandaged him up. The Germans were firing all the time with shell and machine-guns. To get Lieutenant Colebrook back, I started digging a shallow burrow with my hands, as I lay on the ground."

All the time he was doing this Rendle was in imminent danger. Every time he moved in the act of throwing away the soil, the Germans fired at his head, which became an excellent target. Rendle's purpose was to remove the earth that had fallen into the choked-up part of the trench, in order to make a safe pathway through this to the trench beyond. With feverish haste he tore at the loose soil. His nails were bleeding and his hands cut, but still he went at it heedless of the bullets which flew around. One almost grazed him, yet he never stopped. Another fell in front of him sending up a cloud of dust that nearly blinded him.

Suddenly a shell dropped nearby and partly choked him. It was clear that the lieutenant must be got away without delay, or both of them would be killed. The officer was too weak to stand, and to carry him was out of the question. There was only one way, and Rendle seized upon the idea and put it into instant practice.

His novel and daring plan was to get the wounded man on to his back and attempt to crawl to safety. He gently raised Lieutenant Colebrook a few inches from the ground, made him place his hands round his neck, and edged him on to his back. Then with consummate coolness and daring he started to worm his way to the trench from which he had started.

Crawling on his stomach, with the wounded man clutching him tightly, he advanced inch by inch across the dangerous gap. The bullets fell around, but luckily none found their intended billet. As he crept nearer and nearer to his goal, Rendle could feel his heart thumping against his ribs, while the groans of the wounded officer increased his anxiety. How he survived that perilous journey he does not know, but he never thought of giving in. He had made up his mind that he would save the young subaltern, and nothing was able to deflect him from his stern purpose.

So crawling slowly and carefully across the danger-zone, with the officer on his back, this brave bandsman eventually succeeded in reaching the section of the trench where he would find help and safety.

After this all danger was past. Rendle delivered his precious freight to the Red Cross detachment, and went back to his comrades to receive their congratulations upon one of the most heroic rescues of the war.

"We have Rendle's name in for distinction," wrote Lieutenant Wingate in a letter home, "and if you see his name among the V.C.s, you will know what he got it for."

Later in the campaign Bandsman Rendle received an injury to his sight caused by shell-fire, and was sent home to a hospital in Exeter, where his wife and two children live. It was in this hospital that he received the glad news that his name was upon the coveted list, and nurses and wounded comrades vied with one another in congratulating the hero upon his V.C.

A further token of the esteem in which he and his brave deed were held was the presentation to Rendle by the Worshipful Company of Musicians of an inscribed gold watch. Two other musician heroes were honoured in a like fashion. The presentation to these was made by the Lord Mayor of London in the historic Mansion House, but Rendle's gift was forwarded to him, as he was not sufficiently recovered from his wounds to be present.

CHAPTER XII

THE IMMORTAL DEED OF SERGEANT O'LEARY AT CUINCHY

Without doubt one of the most popular V.C. heroes of the war is Sergeant (later Lieutenant) O'Leary, of the Irish Guards. His great exploit at Cuinchy stirred people's imaginations as few other, although equally heroic, feats performed by our magnificent soldiers have done. O'Leary became the most talked-of man in the world when the story of his great deed was made known. Poems were written about him, and he received an ovation in London such as kings might envy. This tribute, however, was not more than the brave Irish Guardsman deserved, for with his unaided strong right arm he captured an enemy position, and of ten Germans who stood in his path he killed eight and took the remaining two prisoners. "His prowess at the Cuinchy barricades," says a writer, "has put the deeds of the Three Musketeers in the shade, for in comparison to O'Leary they are drawing-room heroes." A famous author, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, has said: "No writer of fiction would dare to fasten such an achievement to any of his characters, but the Irish have always had the reputation of being wonderful fighters, and Lance-Corporal Michael O'Leary is clearly one of them."

There is a story told of O'Leary's childhood that is worth relating.

Twenty years ago a little fair-haired Irish laddie was playing outside a neat, comfortable-looking cottage in Macroom, about forty miles from the city of Cork. He was charging imaginary foes, stick in hand, with so much vigour that the plump hens scuttled to cover, and entrenched themselves. His mother came to the door of the cottage:

An' what is it ye are doin' now, Mike? she asked, with a smile.

And the curly-haired youngster replied: "I'm a sodger."

Twenty years later the same mother stood outside the same cottage door in Macroom listening to the almost unbelievable story of a messenger who had dashed from Cork city by motor-car. Her son—her Mike—had gained the V.C.! As she heard of how he had killed eight Germans and taken two trenches unaided at Cuinchy, of how the world was ringing with the immortal exploit of Sergeant Michael O'Leary, V.C., the brave woman nearly broke down. "Glory be to God! May He preserve my brave boy!" was all she could gasp. The hero's father, a man well over six feet and of powerful frame, was also strongly moved. His words, also, were few: "I wish I was by him,—it must have been a beautiful sight."

O'Leary has had an interesting career. He was born at Macroom in September 1890. Before becoming a soldier he served the British Empire as a bluejacket, being attached to H.M.S. *Vivid*. Then the Army called him, and he enlisted in the Irish Guards at the age of twenty. He had not long been an inmate of Caterham Barracks, where he proceeded for his early military training, before he earned the respect of his comrades. The incident, vouched for by a drill-instructor at Caterham, gives an insight into his temperament.

Some of the rougher element among the Coldstream Guards were skylarking, and a mere youngster was being very unfairly tormented. O'Leary was present, and his blood boiled to see the lad so roughly handled. His interference led to 'a scrap' with the ring-leader, who got a well-deserved thrashing. When the fight was over O'Leary shook hands with his opponent and invited him to coffee in the canteen. From that moment he became very popular, not only with his own comrades, but with the Coldstreams. He is still remembered at the depot for his sunny disposition, his Irishisms, and his rollicking manner. He was often heard singing:

Mickey was a soldier bold,
Mickey died to save the colours.

After serving his three years with the Irish Guards, O'Leary went into the Reserve. For a time he helped to tend his father's stock on the little farm in Co. Cork; later he proceeded to Canada and served with the North-West Mounted Police.

He had served in this force about twelve months when war broke out, and was one of thousands of Reservists who rushed to rejoin the Colours in August 1914.

When O'Leary was sent to the front in November 1914 the military situation was a difficult one. All around the La Bassée district fierce fighting had raged since October. The 1st Battalion of the Irish Guards, in common with other regiments, now experienced the severities of the trench warfare. At the end of January they were stationed near the La Bassée brickfield, and the Germans were subjecting them to a withering fire. Notwithstanding that they had excellent cover, both in trenches and behind stacks of bricks, the bombs thrown by the mortars cost us dearly.

On the last night of January the enemy's fire was particularly hot, and it was decided that our trenches were too expensive to hold. But before evacuating them our men were ordered to storm the enemy's position. This took place on the morning of the first of February, and one can well imagine how welcome the historic command, "Up Guards and at 'em," must have been to an adventurous and bold soldier like O'Leary.

In order to prepare the way for the assault our artillery commenced one of the fiercest bombardments of the war up till then—nothing to be compared with the later sustained cannonades at Neuve Chapelle and Loos—but nevertheless very powerful. It is said that the boom of the big pieces of artillery and the detonation of their shells were audible twenty miles away. Our guns fired at the brickfield with such terrific intensity in order to demolish what had become a regular bastion in the German lines, also to break down the barbed wire entanglements

in front of the German trenches, and to thoroughly demoralize the enemy before our men stormed the positions.

No. 2 Company of the Irish Guards was ordered to keep up a hot rifle-fire. This was to make the Germans keep under cover, no matter how much they wished to escape from our artillery. The diversion also caused the enemy to expect an attack from this direction, with the result that he concentrated his fire on the trench occupied by No. 2 Company.

Then No. 1, O'Leary's Company, which was on the left of No. 2 Company's trench, was ordered to charge. The Irish dashed over the parapet with a yell, their bayonets fixed, and rushed at the enemy in fine style. The distance they had to cover to reach the German positions was from 100 to 150 yards. The men were very eager to be at the enemy after their long spell in the trenches, and went for their foe at racing speed.

O'Leary soon outstripped his comrades. His Irish blood was up. "You would laugh if you saw us chasing the Huns and mowing them down," he wrote to his parents.

He rushed on like one possessed, never looking behind to see if his comrades were following. A railway bank rose in front of him. He cleared it, and went on. There was long ago a famous outlawed chieftain of Muskerry, Art O'Leary by name, from whom he is doubtless descended, and Mike O'Leary must have inherited some of the outlaw's wild spirit, for, heedless of risks, he dashed toward a strong barricade held by the Germans.

O'Leary paused at a little mound and looked around. In front of him was a deadly machine-gun, trained on the trench occupied by the second company of Irish Guards. As already explained, their work was to deceive the enemy and the manoeuvre had proved successful. Their rifle-fire had prevented the Germans from showing their faces, and they had not seen that the British were racing toward them.

When O'Leary reached the mound the Germans became aware of their danger and immediately prepared to turn the

machine-gun upon the advancing First company. It was a critical moment in O'Leary's life. On his coolness and bravery depended not only his own life, but also the fate of his comrades. Another moment and the deadly stream of lead would be directed full upon them.



SARGEANT O'LEARY AT LA BASSEE.

O'Leary did not hesitate; he took deliberate aim with his rifle at the gun's crew, five in number, and one by one they dropped as his unerring finger pressed the trigger. His bold move in a supremely dangerous situation had been successful. The machine-gun was his. The lives of his comrades were safe. For an ordinary man this marvelously brave deed would have sufficed. But O'Leary was no ordinary hero. The exploit he had just performed whetted his appetite for more.

Another barricade farther on had caught his eye. With amazing audacity and dare-devilry he bounded toward it. The Germans there had seen O'Leary's daring exploit, and were prepared for him. As before, the young Irishman remained calm and collected. Aiming deliberately he "got his blows in fust," and killed three more Germans. The two remaining had no stomach for the 'mad Irishman.' They promptly raised their hands, and O'Leary at once went forward and secured them as his prisoners.

O'Leary confessed afterward that his second great exploit was a hazardous one. He had no bayonet at the time and had to trust solely to his marksmanship. His rifle was loaded with ten rounds, and eight of the bullets found a human billet. When the last two Germans surrendered he had no ammunition left, and had they not been demoralized by his sudden and audacious attack single-handed, the issue would have been different.

To sum up, Sergeant O'Leary, by his superb daring and amazing skill in shooting, had killed eight Germans, captured a machine-gun, taken two Germans prisoner, and carried two strong positions, from which the rest of the attacking party would have been heavily fired upon. Some one has said that this exploit was thoroughly Irish in method and execution, and that O'Leary deserves to rank as one of the greatest heroes of modern warfare.

Describing what happened afterward, Company-Quartermaster-Sergeant J. G. Lowry, of the Irish Guards, says:

"O'Leary came back from his killing as cool as if he had been for a walk in the park, accompanied by two prisoners he had taken. He probably saved the lives of the whole company. Had that machine-gun got slewed round, No. 1 Company might have been nearly wiped out. We all quickly appreciated the value of O'Leary's sprinting and crack shooting, and when we were relieved that night, dog-tired as we were, O'Leary had his arm nearly shaken off by his comrades."

When on furlough O'Leary was feted and cheered as no V.C. hero has been. He received a splendid welcome in Cork and in his native village. The greatest day in his life, however, was June 26, 1915, when Londoners turned out in tens of thousands to acclaim him in the streets. To honour him the London Irish organized a demonstration in Hyde Park, at which over 60,000 persons were present. O'Leary drove from the Strand to the Park in an open carriage, cheered all along the route by thousands of admirers.

In due course he proceeded to Buckingham Palace to receive his V.C. from the King, and he was honoured by the presence at the ceremony of the Queen, Princess Mary, Queen Alexandra, and Princess Victoria. After his Majesty had shaken hands with the hero of Cuinchy, the other members of the Royal Family did likewise. O'Leary left the Palace a proud man, though he afterward protested that he "didn't know what all this fuss was about."

In addition to receiving the V.C., O'Leary was given a commission in the Connaught Rangers. He is one of the very few British soldiers who have been decorated by the Czar of Russia for conspicuous bravery, and, in addition to the V.C., wears on his breast the Russian equivalent—the 3rd Order of St George.

CHAPTER XIII

TEN HEROES OF NEUVE CHAPELLE

The little French village of Neuve Chapelle gave its name to the first of the great battles fought by the British Army in 1915. In point of numbers engaged, it was a vaster field than that of Waterloo, although in this gigantic conflict of the nations it ranks as a minor battle. The British troops then, as ever, displayed the utmost bravery, and it was through no fault of theirs that Neuve Chapelle did not rank as a decisive battle. The village is south-west of Lille, which the Germans wrested from our sorely-tried troops in the autumn of 1914 after the exhaustion following the first battle of Ypres. The town is a great railway centre, and the seat of France's cotton manufactories. It was one of the tragedies of the war that Lille and the surrounding district passed into the marauding hands of the Huns.

With Neuve Chapelle we had to yield the more advanced village of Aubers; thus the Germans held the high ground surrounding La Bassée and were able to secure themselves from a flank attack on Lille.

The battle of Neuve Chapelle lasted three days—March 10, 11, and 12, 1915. It was our first big engagement since the terrible fight for the French coast towns in the preceding October and November. Throughout the winter our heroic men had been fast in the trenches, and as the spring of 1915 approached they looked forward longingly to the great advance which they, as well as the people at home, believed would be made. That a great movement was contemplated by the British commanders is proved by the battle of Neuve Chapelle, although the advance did not then carry us far.

Many heroic deeds were done on these three days; all regiments fought with valour, but a number of our men

distinguished themselves above all others, and ten of these gained the Victoria Cross. Before describing the great deeds of these heroes, however, it is necessary to indicate the general plan of this battle, which cost us many valuable lives.

The preparations for Neuve Chapelle were carried out in the utmost secrecy and with amazing thoroughness. An excellent account was given by a writer in the Weekly Dispatch, from which we quote:

"Sir John French sat in his head-quarters, the nerve-centre of the British Army, watching the carrying out of each move as one might study a chess-board. The telegraph wire and the dispatch-rider told him all he wanted to know. They told him that the vast concentration of troops behind the Neuve Chapelle lines, which was one of the essential features of this plan, was being conducted in the absolute secrecy necessary to success. No German Taube or aviator came near enough for reconnaissance; otherwise the movement of masses of troops north and south of the British front would have warned the enemy that some big move was impending, and he could have made his dispositions accordingly . . .

"The concentration of both guns and men took place behind the road which connects Fleurbaix with Neuve Chapelle—the Rue Petillon. The reinforcements of men were arranged in billets six miles behind the British trenches. They included the 7th and 8th Divisions, part of the Canadian contingent, Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, and part of the Indian corps, with whom were several British regiments—in all some 50,000. Though no battalion from Kitchener's new army figured in the concentration, our new recruits were well represented, having supplied considerable drafts to most of the regiments.

"The concentration of guns followed the line of an arc, so that the full fire could be directed on any particular area. They were placed so closely together that there were no fewer than 350 machine-guns, 4.7 guns, and howitzers on a front of 2000

yards—a concentration of artillery which history had never before witnessed in such a restricted sector. Even the extraordinary German artillery concentration in the attack of Warsaw was outdone in point of close massing."

It is said that rehearsals of the plan of attack took place behind the lines. Every company commander closely examined through his field-glasses the position which his men were to assault, so that when the hour for advance came he would know exactly what to do.

The battle opened at 7:30 a.m. on the 10th March by a powerful artillery bombardment of the enemy's position. This bombardment had been well prepared and was most effective, except on the extreme northern portion of the front of attack.

At 8:05 a.m. the 23rd (left) and 25th (right) Brigades of the 8th Division assaulted the German trenches on the north-west of the village. At the same hour the Garhwal Brigade of the Meerut Division, which occupied the position to the south of Neuve Chapelle, assaulted the trenches on its front.

The Garhwals and the 25th Brigade carried the enemy's lines of entrenchments where the wire entanglements had been almost entirely swept away by our shrapnel fire. The 23rd Brigade, however, on the north-east, was held up by the wire entanglements, which were not sufficiently cut. It was in completing this unfinished work of our guns that several of our men gained the V.C., as will shortly be seen.

Meantime the artillery was bombarding Neuve Chapelle, and at 8:25 a.m. the advance of the infantry was continued, and the 25th and Garhwal Brigades pushed on eastward and north-eastward respectively, and succeeded in getting a footing in the village.

After being held up in front of the enemy's wire entanglements for some hours, the 23rd Brigade, thanks to powerful artillery support, was also able to move forward, and

by 11 a.m. the roads leading northward and south-westward from the eastern end of the village were in our hands.

On the following day, March 11th, the attack was renewed by the 4th and Indian Corps, but it was soon seen that a further advance would be impossible until the artillery had dealt effectively with the various houses and defended localities which held up the troops along the entire front. We made efforts to direct the artillery fire accordingly, but owing to weather conditions, which did not permit of aerial observation, and the fact that nearly all the telephonic communications between the artillery observers and their batteries had been cut, it was impossible to direct our fire with sufficient accuracy. The result was that when our troops which were pressing forward occupied a house here and there, they suffered from our own artillery fire, and had to be withdrawn.

Unfortunately on the third day of the battle the same unfavourable weather conditions prevailed, and hampered artillery action. The 4th and Indian Corps most gallantly attacked the strongly fortified positions in their front, but they were unable to maintain themselves permanently in those which they succeeded in capturing. However, most of the objects for which the operations had been undertaken had been achieved, and the British offensive came to an end.

Most of the ten V.C.s were won on the 12th, a day chiefly remarkable for the violent counter-attacks, supported by artillery, which were delivered by the Germans. Thanks to the gallant work of our bomb-throwers these assaults were all repulsed.

The great deeds of individual bravery which are now to be described well illustrate the difficulties under which our men had to fight at Neuve Chapelle. The Germans had constructed barbed-wire entanglements in front of their trenches, and it was in breaking through these that several of our heroes gained their reward. Others performed prodigious feats with hand grenades, for in places the fighting was adapted to this revival of an

ancient mode of warfare. Where the Germans could not be dislodged by rifle-fire or bayonet, the hand bomb proved efficacious.

* * * * *

Of all the Neuve Chapelle heroes the most popular is Sergeant-Major (later Lieutenant) Harry Daniels of the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade, who, with his comrade, Corporal Noble, who also won the V.C., did a magnificent bit of wire-cutting under a terrific shell-fire. The story of these two heroes makes thrilling reading.

Sergeant-Major Daniels is known to his intimate friends as 'Dan V.C.,' and from his sunny disposition has been referred to as the 'Smiling V.C.' His exploit has well been classed as one of the finest of the war. Daniels himself, referring to the occasion, said later: "Neuve Chapelle was just hell. I suppose if I hadn't got the Cross I'd ha' gone under the turf."

Daniels is a native of Norfolk, having been born at Wymondham. His early youth was spent mostly in Norwich, and in that cathedral city the future hero went to school. There does not seem to be anything outstanding in his school life; he was an ordinary boy, fond of fun, and always of an adventurous disposition.

His life in the army has been successful; when he won his V.C. he had reached the highest non-commissioned rank. For nine years he saw service in India, then he came home with his regiment, and went to the front in November of 1914.

During the severe winter months he did his bit along with his comrades in the trenches, and, like all our splendid men, was greatly rejoiced when, about the beginning of March, it was rumoured that something big was to happen, that the long-expected advance was to take place.

There had been a great concentration of our guns, the object being to pound the enemy's trenches and positions and to destroy the intricate barbed wire in front. The infantry was then

to finish off what remained of the Germans after the terrific bombardment. But things do not always turn out as expected, and the artillery failed in certain places to completely break down the barbed wire.

The 2nd Rifle Brigade had gone through the hottest of the great battle, and on March 12th, having pressed through the village of Neuve Chapelle at the point of the bayonet, had entrenched themselves.

In front was a mass of wire, twenty-five to thirty yards deep. In height it varied from a few inches to five feet. Only the ground fifteen yards immediately in front of the trench was clear.

This wire had to be cut at any cost, for the Germans had massed only 300 yards away. Word was given to advance and capture a certain wood. Two companies of the 2nd Rifles got up and dashed at the wire, hoping to break it down by sheer weight, but the German machine-guns were too deadly, and the attempt had to be given up.

Then the B and D companies were ordered out.

Daniels had seen the terrible losses incurred by the other companies, and boldly told his company commander that the men could not advance until the wire was cut. For answer he was ordered to get the wire cutters to work at once.

Daniels gazed at the formidable wire entanglement; he knew that death awaited those who attempted to cut it down. But the more the danger the more eager he was to be one of those to make the attempt. Something had to be done—the wood must be taken at all costs, and the network of barbed wire barred the way.

At first he thought of selecting a number of men for the task; then, realizing the awful risk, changed his mind.

He had remembered his chum, Corporal Noble. The two men had been inseparable on all the dangerous duties of patrol

work at night. "The best chum I've ever had, the bravest man I've ever known!" was Daniel's tribute to his friend.

"Come along, Tom!" Daniels cried above the storm of bullets. "We must go."

They got a pair of wire-cutters, then shook hands, and went forth on their heroic adventure.

Lying on their backs, they started their stern task. Happily both reached the wire unscathed, although the machine-guns were spitting furiously. They attacked the lower wire and managed to break it.

Then ensued a race with death, the like of which it would be hard to equal.

It was a contest between quick, strong hands with a pair of wire-cutters and hundreds of German rifles and machine-guns. Lying on his back, Daniels cut all the low wires. Then he raised himself and cut those higher up, known as 'breast wires.' As the snap of his cutters sounded the bullets whizzed around, yet they failed to touch him. Quicker and quicker he worked, the perspiration pouring from his face.

Then came a few minutes of kneeling, in order to reach the highest wire. This was quickly accomplished, and Daniels was congratulating himself on having performed his perilous task, when a bullet struck him in the thigh.

He lay for five minutes where he fell. Then hearing a gasp he called out:

"What's up, Tom?"

His chum had done his work well, and had stuck to his clippers with as grim determination as Daniels. His voice, very faint, came back:

"I am hit in the chest, old man."

These were Noble's last words.

Daniels now set about saving himself. Near-by was a hole made by a shell, and, rolling over and over, Daniels managed to get into it. This provided cover from the bullets, and for four hours the wounded man remained there in safety. He was conscious all the time, and was able to apply the field-dressing to his wound. Eventually he decided to make an effort to drag himself to the British trench, but he had hardly started upon the painful journey when he was seen and picked up by his comrades.

He had the satisfaction of knowing that the work of himself and his chum had made it possible for our men to advance and capture the wood without the expenditure of many lives.

Sergeant-Major Daniels read the announcement of his V.C. in a paper when a patient at the Hammersmith Infirmary. He was reading the *Daily Mail* at breakfast, and his eye was caught by his own name.

"I lay low and said nuffin," he remarked, "though my heart was beating hard. Then another man who was reading the paper turned to me quite excited. 'Your name's Daniels, isn't it? You're Sergeant-Major Daniels, of the Rifle Brigade? You've got the V.C.' I looked at the paper. 'Yes, I reckon it must be me.'"

The proudest moment in a soldier's life is when the King pins on his breast the little bronze symbol, intrinsically of such little value, but standing for so much.

When Daniels was presented at Buckingham Palace, the King showed great interest in the hero of Neuve Chapelle. "Was there much firing while you were cutting the wire?" he asked. "Yes, your Majesty," Daniels replied, "it was pretty hot." Then the King, ever solicitous for his soldiers' welfare, asked about the hero's wound. Had it healed? "Pretty nearly, sir," Daniels replied. "I am almost well again now." He later commented laughingly on this reply; he quite forgot to say 'your Majesty,' and was ready to kick himself for it!

When Daniels returned to the front he was given a commission in another regiment. It was erroneously reported that he had been killed in action during the great advance at the end of September 1915.

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Two men bearing the name of Fuller have received the V.C. One of these two heroes is Lance-Corporal Wilfred Dolby Fuller, who, by his coolness and splendid soldier-like action, captured no fewer than fifty Germans at Neuve Chapelle.

To note first his life story, we may mention that Lance-Corporal Fuller is a native of East Kirkby, in the Mansfield colliery district. Before joining the Grenadier Guards in 1912 he was a pony driver at the Mansfield Colliery, where his father is employed. He is twenty-one years of age, and was for some time a bugler in the Mansfield Cadet Corps. The first Notts man to win the Victoria Cross, his county was naturally very proud of him, and its appreciation was shown in a fitting manner, as will be seen. A keen footballer, a teetotaler, and non-smoker, he is a member of the Warsop Vale Church Choir and the Mansfield St Lawrence Bible Class.

Fuller is a conspicuous example of the real British patriot, not the type who goes about shouting and flag-waving, but the man who sees his duty to his country, and does it quietly and earnestly. This is proved by his conduct. He was a garrison policeman in London when he volunteered for the front. Had he wished, he could have remained at home, doing useful and honourable work, but he knew the serious nature of the task confronting our Army, and at once left the comforts of the metropolis for the dangers of foreign service.

Fuller's deed at the battle of Neuve Chapelle has been compared with that of Sergeant O'Leary; he did things that no writer of fiction ever dared to put to his hero's credit.

Throughout the battle Fuller was in the thickest of the fighting. He tells how his comrades 'kept up a good heart' in this

terrible and grim conflict. "Several times the Germans dressed themselves up as Grenadier Guards," he says, "and when we got over the parapet to charge them they said they were English. That was a dirty thing to do, and it was not playing the game. They had to pay the penalty."

We have described how the village of Neuve Chapelle had been carried by our men in spirited style. After its capture a lot of work fell to the Guards in clearing the enemy from trenches and consolidating captured positions. Our artillery had so battered some of the German trenches that those of the enemy remaining alive in them were easily captured. Other trenches were not so completely destroyed, and in these fierce fights took place before our troops could clear them.

Lance-Corporal Fuller was in the highest of spirits throughout this great battle. He used his brains to good purpose on every occasion, and particularly when he performed the valiant deed for which he was to be decorated. His eye happened to be on a trench which had not yet been visited by our men. As he looked he saw something which made his heart beat quicker. He observed some German soldiers endeavouring to escape through a communication trench. His soldier's instinct told him that after the great effort made by his comrades, a success bought with much loss, it would not do to let one of the enemy escape. But how to avoid it? A bayonet charge was out of the question.

Lance-Corporal Fuller at this time was attached to a grenade party. The bombs which he used are small shrapnel shells, the case made of serrated steel. They are thrown by means of a bit of rope with a tassel attached to it at the end, and a skilful thrower can hurl them forty-five or fifty yards. The grenade is a deadly weapon for clearing trenches where ordinary rifle-fire is unable to penetrate or the bayonet cannot be used.

Fuller rushed along ahead of his comrades, and, taking great risks, came up to the first man. Quickly he threw his bomb and the German who was leading fell dead. Without pausing for

an instant, Fuller continued to hurl bomb after bomb. The remaining Germans were so cowed that they at once gave in.

Then was seen the amazing spectacle of a young Grenadier Guardsman, who only a few years before had been a Mansfield miner, receiving, quite alone, the surrender of nearly fifty Germans on the battle-field in France.

His action was the talk of the day, and all his comrades, when congratulating him, agreed that he would be noticed for the V.C. In a letter home soon after the battle he wrote: "Look out for good news." Later he wrote: "Barber and I have been recommended for the V.C. Don't you think it an honour?"

On visiting home Lance-Corporal Fuller received the congratulations of his fellow-townsmen of Mansfield. He was escorted to the market-place by the mayor, where he was presented with an address and a gold watch.

The Duchess of Portland shook hands with him, and the Duke of Portland paid him a tribute in a letter.

The Mayor, in reading the official account of Fuller's act, added a very interesting comment. "The Grenadier," he said, "used his grenade with unerring aim and marvellous effect, and certainly justified, if justification were needed, the name of the regiment of which the Grenadiers were so proud."

Fuller's speech was brief and to the point. "I only did my duty," he said. "I am going out again, and I don't mind dying for my country."

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Side by side with Fuller's great exploit must be placed that of the late Private Edward Barber, already referred to. Barber did not live to enjoy the pleasure that recognition of his brave deed would have brought him, for he was killed in action soon after. But for many a long day Barber's gallant fight at Neuve Chapelle will be remembered. He ran in front of a grenade company and threw bombs with such effect that numbers of the Germans at once laid down their arms. When the

company came up, Barber was found quite alone, with the enemy surrendering all around him.

Little is known of Barber's early life. He was a native of Tring, and enlisted in the Grenadier Guards in October 1911. Before he joined the Army he had been a bricklayer's labourer.

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Another hero of Neuve Chapelle who laid down his life fighting for freedom and the right was Corporal William Anderson, of the 2nd Battalion (Alexandra, Princess of Wales' Own) Yorkshire Regiment. This fearless fellow led three men with bombs against a large party of the enemy who had entered our trenches. Seeing the danger he acted promptly and with determination, and so saved what might otherwise have become a serious situation. He first threw his own bombs among the Germans, then, when they had been wounded, those in possession of his three men. Having exhausted the supply of bombs, Anderson resolved to sell his life dearly and at the same time avert, if he could, what he knew was a dangerous situation for our men. He caught up his rifle and opened a rapid fire upon the enemy with great effect. Every shot told, and his coolness is one of the marvels of that terrible twelfth day of March at Neuve Chapelle.

The officer commanding his regiment, in a communication to Miss Dudley, of Port Clarence, to whom Corporal Anderson was engaged, gave the following particulars of this hero's death:

"May I tell you how deeply I sympathize with you over this great loss," he wrote. "I have known him all his service, and so he was the greatest loss to me also. He was one of the bravest men I have ever seen, and the honour he has brought to my regiment and to his country cannot be over-estimated. In your great sorrow, this, I hope, will be some consolation to you. He laid down his life in a most noble cause and in a most noble manner. When I saw him during his act he was untouched, and

the Germans were driven back. I did not see him again, but from what I found out he was wounded later on in the day. I fear he must have been killed, as his pay book was eventually sent to us. We have tried to find out who found his body, and where he was buried, but without success. This has been a sad blow to us, and I know what it must mean to you, but he is at rest now. I am so glad to feel we have got into touch with some one who knew him. We have been quite unsuccessful in our efforts to do this before. I do wish I could give you more cheery news, but I cannot."

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A special interest attaches to another of the V.C. heroes of Neuve Chapelle, Lieutenant Cyril Gordon Martin, of the 56th Company, Royal Engineers, in that he won both this distinction and the Distinguished Service Order during the first year of the war at the age of twenty-two. The son of the Rev. John Martin, Principal of the Church Missionary Society College, Foochow, Lieutenant Martin was born in China. He was brought to England in early childhood, and was educated at Bath College and Clifton. The young officer's D.S.O. was won during the retreat from Mons. With a platoon of Engineers he captured and held a German trench, and although shot through the shoulder and bayoneted through the hand he stuck to his post until relief came.

Lieutenant Martin's wounds necessitated a period of inaction, and he returned to the front to win his V.C. a few days before the battle of Neuve Chapelle. On this occasion he was in command of a grenade-throwing party of six rank and file. Early in the action he was again wounded, but this did not daunt his ardour. He saw how critical the situation was, and with extraordinary pluck led his party into the enemy's trench, although exposed to a heavy fire. By his gallant stand he was able to hold back with bombs the German reinforcements for nearly two and a half hours, until the evacuation of the captured trench was ordered.



LIEUTENANT MARTIN'S GALLANT STAND.

Lieutenant Martin had a remarkable escape earlier in the war. His company was leaving the trenches to attack, and noticing a pair of steel wire-cutters on the ground he picked them up and placed them in his breast pocket, thinking they

might be useful. Almost immediately afterward a German bullet struck the instrument and smashed it, but left the officer uninjured. Had he not placed the cutters in his pocket the bullet would have found a billet in his heart, and he would not have lived to earn the V.C. This is but one of many cases of miraculous escapes which are on record in the war.

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It is pathetic to reflect that five of the Neuve Chapelle V.C. heroes never lived to enjoy their well-won honour. We have noted how Private Barber, Corporal Anderson, and Corporal Noble died at the post of duty, and we have only space for brief reference to the fourth in the sad group, Private Jacob Rivers.

Rivers was born in Bridgegate, Derby, and was thirty-four years of age when he gained his V.C. He first joined the Royal Scots Fusiliers, whence, in due course, he returned to private life and became a labourer in a Midland ballast train. When war broke out he at once re-enlisted and was passed into that famous regiment, the Sherwood Foresters. During the battle of Neuve Chapelle, on his own initiative, Rivers crept to within a few yards of a very large number of the enemy who were massed on the flank of an advanced company of his battalion, and hurled bombs on them. His action caused the Germans to retire, and so relieved the situation. Later in the day he repeated his brave act and compelled a force of the enemy to retire a second time. It was on this occasion that he was killed.

The loss of such men as this hero who single-handed saved a battalion, is part of the price we have to pay for freedom.

Rivers' mother, who resides in Derby, was proud to hear of her son's great exploit at Neuve Chapelle.

"Jake died a brave death," she said, on hearing the sad news, "and the knowledge that his heroism has been rewarded is very comforting. Poor Jake, how proud he would have been."

Mrs. Rivers treasures a relic of her hero son which was forwarded to her after his death. It is the metal box containing front received at Christmas 1914. As is well-known, many soldiers kept the metal box as a memento, and what more convenient place to carry it than the breast pocket! So 'Jake' Rivers carried his, as is apparent from the fact that it had been pierced by a bullet. He must have been carrying it when he met his death. Possibly some men have escaped death by the aid of this box carried in a pocket, but, alas, in Rivers' case it had not prevented the German bullet from piercing the heart of a true hero.

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Among the ten V.C.s awarded for heroism at Neuve Chapelle two were won by officers. We have already dealt with one of these, Lieutenant Martin, and the second officer-hero, who like Lieutenant Martin was already in possession of one badge of honour, was Captain Charles Calveley Foss, D.S.O., 2nd Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment. The story of how he obtained his greater distinction may be briefly told.

The Germans had captured a part of one of our trenches, and our counter-attack, made with one officer and twenty men, had failed (all but two of the party being killed or wounded in the attempt), when Captain Foss, on his own initiative, dashed forward with eight men, under heavy fire, attacked the enemy with bombs, and captured the position, including the fifty-two Germans occupying it. This feat is one of the conspicuous deeds of the war, and the capture of the position was of the greatest importance.

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Hitherto the V.C.s noticed in connection with Neuve Chapelle were rewarded in each case for an aggressive military achievement. The deed of the next hero we are to briefly mention was as heroic as that of the others, but it was concerned, not with taking life, but with saving life and aiding the wounded. The popular idea of a V.C. hero pictures a man going into a hail

of fire to bring in a wounded comrade. This is exactly what Private W. Buckingham did, and he rescued not one but many.

Buckingham has been referred to as 'a lonely hero'; he was left unprovided for at the age of six, his only relative is a brother in the Navy, and the only home he had in boyhood was the Cottage Home of the Leicester Board of Guardians at Countesthorpe. At the age of fifteen he joined the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment. When on furlough after Neuve Chapelle he revisited his old 'home,' and while staying there he read in a newspaper the news of his V.C. award. The Leicester Board of Guardians presented him with £100 worth of War Loan Stock, together with a purse of gold, and in handing the gift to Buckingham, the Mayor said that Leicestershire was proud of the heroic deeds he had performed and the way in which he had sustained the glorious traditions of his regiment.

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The tenth V.C. of this battle was awarded to an Indian soldier. He was not the first Indian to win this coveted distinction in the Great War, but he well deserved the signal honour. His name is Rifleman Goba Sing Negi, 2nd Battalion, 39th Garhwal Rifles, and his deed was performed on the opening day of the battle when, as we have seen, our splendid Indian troops fought with superb courage in face of overwhelming difficulties. Not much can be said concerning this hero, as after the battle no one had the opportunity of questioning him on his gallant exploit or his life-story, for he was the fifth V.C. hero who was killed during the engagement. What we do know is a striking tribute to the bravery and resource of our Indians and to Rifleman Negi in particular. During our attack on the German position he was one of a bayonet party with bombs who entered their main trench, and was the first man to go round each traverse, driving back the enemy until they were eventually forced to surrender.

CHAPTER XIV

OUR CANADIAN V.C. HEROES

The full story of the great deeds of our gallant Canadian troops cannot be told in this chapter. Their acts of heroism are so numerous and glorious that it would require many chapters to do justice to them. The superb stand of Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, the dauntless courage of the Canadian Contingent at Ypres, their famous fight for 'The Orchard' at Festubert—these are but some of the engagements in which our brave soldiers from over 'the herring-pond' won undying renown.

When war broke out Canada echoed from east to west, from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean, with the sound of military preparations. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed, and nowhere in the whole Empire was seen greater eagerness to fight for the Motherland than was shown in the land of the Maple Leaf. Cowboys, trappers, and log-rollers hurried from the Far West to the recruiting offices. Clerks in big towns left their ledgers, students packed away their books, and the pioneer on the lonely trail set out on his long journey to join the Overseas Force. Nothing could daunt these young sons of Empire in their eagerness to fight. Some tramped hundreds of miles and swam rivers in order to be in time to join the first contingent of Canadian troops sailing to Europe. When all were ready, and after the strong, thick-limbed giants had been 'licked into shape,' the Canadian Armada set sail.

It was one of the most impressive sights ever seen. Thirty-two transports left the Canadian shores, carrying some of the finest and bravest fighters the world has known. Many, alas! saw Canada for the last time as the coast-line receded in the distance. The ships crossed the Atlantic in three parallel lines, guarded by British cruisers. A warship always led the way; during daytime others steamed out of sight, watching a wide

expanse of ocean for the possible appearance of hostile ships. At night the cruisers came close to the transports—like a mother-hen gathering the little chicks under her wing.

The Canadians arrived at Plymouth in the late autumn and proceeded to Salisbury Plain for some months' further training. The chief thing many of them remembered in connection with that famous military training-centre was the winter mud!—but excellent practice in shooting and marching and all the various arts of war helped to keep them fully employed. The spring of 1915 saw them installed at the front, where they soon met the Germans face to face.

The first big battle in which the Canadians were engaged was the terrible second battle of Ypres. Defeated in their terrific attempt to break through the Allied lines to Calais in the autumn of 1914, the Germans made an equally futile endeavour in April 1915. They foolishly boasted at the beginning of that month that they would be in Calais by April 24, and it is very significant that the four days, April 22-25, saw their fiercest effort. On the Canadians fell the full brunt of this desperate attack, and during these days three Victoria Crosses were gained.

It was at the second battle of Ypres that the Germans first used asphyxiating gas, thus setting at nought the recognized rules of civilized warfare. By means of this poison gas they were able to penetrate the French line between Steenstraete and Langemarck on April 22. The success laid bare the left of the Canadian Division, which was forced to fall back in order to keep in touch with the neighbouring troops. By midnight on April 22 they had fallen back to St Julien. In the rear of the French four Canadian 4.7 in. guns had been posted, and these had passed into the hands of the enemy. But some hours later the Canadians made a most brilliant and successful advance, recapturing their guns and taking a considerable number of German prisoners. The Colonials suffered heavy loss, but their gallantry and determination undoubtedly prevented disaster. In the words of the official report, "Their conduct was magnificent throughout."

The first of the three Canadian V.C.s was won on April 23 in the neighbourhood of St Julien, a little village some few miles north-east of Ypres, where a battle was fought, one of the series to which the name Battle of Ypres has been given. In the war of to-day, a battle is really a series of battles, so extended is the area of fighting, and St Julien was as determined a battle as Cressy or Agincourt.

With the retreat of the French, things looked black for the Canadians. It left the enemy a clear road to Ypres, the town they had for so long been struggling desperately to enter. Had the Germans been able to reach it, one important step along the road to Calais would have been accomplished, and incidentally the Canadian trenches would have been cut off from all assistance. In this emergency every man of the Canadian Contingent was summoned to hold the Germans back. Those in billets were rushed up to St Julien to relieve their comrades. The worst thing these gallant fighters had to contend with was the poison gas. They watched the wall of green vapour roll out of the German trenches and float toward them. They dipped their handkerchiefs in pools of rain-water, and, tying them over their mouths, waited. The horrible cloud drew nearer and nearer, and behind it the incessant crack of many rifles told that the enemy were advancing. Many of the gallant Canadians imbibed painful draughts of the chlorine gas. Some fell back, others lay on the ground writhing in agony, the rest kept the Germans back with rifle and machine-gun fire. Among the last was Lance-Corporal Frederick Fisher, of the 13th Battalion.

Fisher had charge of a machine-gun and, seeing his comrades in a serious predicament, he gallantly came to their assistance, although he had received enough of the poisonous fumes to make fighting difficult.

A battery of artillery had been forced to retire. Seeing their advantage, the Germans dashed forward and would have killed or taken prisoner the whole of the battery's crew, but for the prompt bravery of Lance-Corporal Fisher. He went forward with his machine-gun, under heavy fire, and got it to work. For

some time he poured a deadly stream of lead into the ranks of the advancing Germans. Shells from their heavy guns made huge holes in the ground all round the machine-gun. Fisher was spattered with dirt, and pieces of shell struck the ground only a few feet from where he knelt at his gun. Nevertheless, he continued firing, heedless of all danger, until he had the satisfaction of seeing his comrades of the battery safely in the rear. He had not only covered their retreat, but caused heavy loss among the ranks of the enemy. He himself came out of this terrible ordeal without a wound, although four brave men of his gun team were lost.

After seeing the battery safe, Fisher went toward the rear, not to escape further danger, but to find four more men to take the places of those who had been killed. Having secured these men, Fisher returned to the firing-line. He knew reinforcements were on their way to take the place of the Canadians who had retired, and solely on his own initiative he went again to the firing-line to cover the advance of these supports. The enemy's shell-fire continued as fierce as ever, but the brave lance-corporal defied death to help his comrades. He had just got his machine-gun into action when he was killed.

* * * * *

On the following day, the 24th, it fell to a member of the 8th Canadian Battalion to carry off the soldier's highest honour. April 23 had been a trying day for the Canadians, the next day was even worse. The 8th Battalion had been in the first line trenches on the 23rd, and, in spite of a very terrible experience of the greenish gas, had held on grimly. This was the battalion which, when the Germans were heard coming on behind the gas, jumped to their posts, although half-suffocated with the poisonous fumes, and in the words of one of their number, "Made their rifles speak out 'No Surrender.'"

On April 24 the poison was again let loose by the Germans, and the most awful shell-fire witnessed at the front was experienced, yet the Canadians held on, determined to do or

die. The Germans had been ordered to take Ypres at all costs, and they came on in dense masses, firing their rifles under the shelter of the gas clouds.

Sergeant-Major Frederick William Hall had charge of a company of men. These, inspired by his noble example, held their ground, although man after man fell dead, victims of the German rifle and machine-gun fire. They proved themselves real heroes, and Hall was the greatest among them. As he urged his men to stand firm in the trench, Hall suddenly heard a call for help. He risked looking over the parapet of the trench and saw a wounded man lying some fifteen yards away. Despite a heavy enfilading fire he rushed from the trench and endeavoured to reach the stricken man. His first attempt failed, and a non-commissioned officer and private soldier who endeavoured to assist him were both wounded.

Hall himself escaped, but the fate of his comrades had not lessened his desire to effect the rescue, and he made a second most gallant attempt. By an almost miraculous stroke of fortune, he succeeded in reaching the wounded man. Stooping down, the sergeant-major quickly and gently took him into his arms and started back. He had just reached the trench, and in another minute would have been safely over the parapet, when he was shot in the head and fell dead. Like his countryman, Lance-Corporal Fisher, he had died on the battle-field for Canada and Empire.

* * * * *

Of the three Canadian winners of the V.C. at the battle of Ypres Captain Francis Alexander Carm Scrimger, the medical officer attached to the 14th Battalion of the Royal Montreal Regiment, alone lived to wear the coveted medal. Throughout the fierce fighting of April 22-25 at St Julien, Captain Scrimger displayed continuously day and night the greatest devotion to his duty among the wounded.

On the afternoon of the 25th there was very fierce fighting, and the brave Canadian doctor had his hands full in

tending the wounded. He was in charge of an advanced dressing-station in some farm buildings. The enemy commenced a very heavy bombardment of the temporary hospital, and the inmates were in imminent risk of being killed. To their agony of body succeeded mental anguish. They were in danger of being again struck by the deadly missiles. Captain Scrimger remained perfectly cool and was able to quiet the fears of his wounded charges. He gave orders for their removal, and went about wholly unconcerned amid the falling shells, assisting the orderlies.

A Canadian officer, Captain McDonald, was standing in front of a stable when he was wounded seriously in the neck and shoulder. Captain Scrimger saw him fall, and promptly dragged him into the building, where he dressed his wounds. Rather than leave the officer to die there, the gallant doctor carried him out and down to a moat about fifty feet distant, where they lay half under water. Captain Scrimger curled his body round the head and shoulders of the wounded man to protect him. They were under heavy shell-fire all the time, and the doctor risked his own life by staying with Captain McDonald. When the fire slackened Captain Scrimger went out to find the stretcher-bearers and brought them back. In a short time they had removed Captain McDonald to the safety of the dressing-station. "No one," says the latter, "could have shown more coolness and courage under fire, and no-one ever deserved the V.C. more thoroughly than he did." To Captain Scrimger's self-sacrifice, Captain McDonald owes the fact that he is alive to-day.

CHAPTER XV

THE TWO HEROES OF HILL 60

Two Victoria Crosses were awarded for distinguished service in the famous struggle for Hill 60. The gallant soldiers who received them were Second-Lieutenant Geoffrey Harold Woolley and Lance-Corporal Edward Dwyer. In order to appreciate their heroic exploits it is necessary first to describe the events leading up to them.

Sir John French has described the fight for Hill 60 as "the fiercest fight in which British troops have ever been engaged." The hill in question was an eminence south-east of Ypres, the possession of which was essential to the British, for it dominated the surrounding country. As long as the Germans held it, this commanding hill afforded them excellent artillery observation toward the west and north-west. For months our men had been preparing to mine it. After much hard work the sapping was complete, the mines laid, and one hundred tons of explosives placed in position.

Saturday, April 17, 1915, was the appointed day for the great event. The explosion was timed for seven o'clock in the evening, and, according to programme, up went the hill—Germans and all. It was like an earthquake. Simultaneously our artillery opened on the spot and poured in shells at the rate of five a minute. At a quarter past seven the infantry attack was launched, and our men were in possession of the ruins. This brilliant mining operation was planned by Major-General Bulfin, and the troops were commanded by Lieutenant-General Fergusson. The regiments employed were the 1st Battalion, Royal West Keats, and the 2nd Battalion, King's Own Scottish Borderers. The attack was well supported by the Divisional Artillery, assisted by French and Belgian batteries.

Then came the second phase—the holding of Hill 60, which was the hardest task of all. It is said that our troops could hear for hours the steady beat of men marching—the German reinforcements were arriving. They came to the assault in their thousands, but as fast as they came our rifle and gun-fire mowed them down.

At dawn next day they renewed their counter-attack, thousands of them surging against the British defences, throwing bombs and hand-grenades. How the fight swayed, how the enemy succeeded in regaining part of the lost ground, only to be turned out of their trenches by the Highlanders with the bayonet—these are now matters of history.

During the next few days the Germans continued to attack fiercely, so much importance did they attach to the position.

A private in the East Surreys, writing in *The Evening News*, gave the following vivid word-picture of the battle:

"The fight on Hill 60 was awful. The Germans used every kind of explosive, from small bombs to shells that shook the ground like an earthquake.

"This went on from four o'clock in the afternoon to about four the next morning. Every German gun for miles around was trained on that hill.

"Some of the German shells were filled with a stinking acid, which blinded one. I would rather take my chance in half-a-dozen bayonet charges than face such an awful bombardment again. The enemy charged four times, but we beat them back each time, and kept the hill until we were relieved next morning."

* * * * *

Special interest attaches to Lieutenant Geoffrey Harold Woolley, for he was the first Territorial officer to win the V.C.

The youngest son of Rev. G. H. Woolley, Old Riffhams, Danbury, Essex, he was educated at St John's School,

Leatherhead, and Queen's College, Oxford. While at the University he joined the Officers' Training Corps. He studied for Holy Orders, and is all but a curate of the Church of England, inasmuch as he was on the eve of being ordained when, at the age of twenty-three, he decided to fight for his country. It is a singular co-incidence that Essex possessed another clerical V.C., for a clergyman of this county won the reward in the Afghan War, where he served as chaplain with the forces.

Lieutenant Woolley has been described as British and unassuming to the core, and a typical specimen of muscular Christianity. He excels at cricket, tennis, and football, and played the greater game of war with all his heart and soul. Notwithstanding his deep religious principles and his connection with a clerical family, this young Briton waived his intentions of entering the Church from a sense of duty to his country.

"My son is a clergyman at heart," said his father. "He never dreamt of being a soldier. But when war broke out he felt that he should throw up everything and go."

Lieutenant Woolley did not join until after the declaration of war. He received his commission in the 9th Battalion London Regiment, popularly known as the Queen Victoria Rifles, after his regiment had been some time in training at Crowborough. With the experience of the Officers' Training Corps to help him, the young lieutenant soon made himself very efficient, and when, in November 1914, the Queen Victoria Rifles embarked at Southampton for the front, he had already become very popular with his men, and shown high promise as a leader. Soon after landing in France the regiment was at the front, near Ypres, where it was usefully employed, chiefly in trench work.

On the very first day that he went into the trenches, Lieutenant Woolley showed his mettle. A hand-grenade was flung into his trench; without a moment's hesitation the young officer picked it up, and before the fuse had burned to the

charge, flung it out. His prompt and plucky act saved not only his own life, but the lives of at least six or seven of his men.



"WOOLLEY HURLED BOMB AFTER BOMB."

On the night of April 20-21 the Germans made a desperate attack on the trench held by Lieutenant Woolley's regiment. The Queen Victoria Rifles fought with a dogged determination not to be excelled by the most seasoned Regulars. Every German gun for miles around was trained on the hill. Some of the German shells were filled with an evil-smelling acid which blinded the gallant defenders. Again and again the Germans charged with the ferocity of despair.

One by one Lieutenant Woolley's superior officers—a major, captain, and a lieutenant—had been killed.

The force under Lieutenant Woolley numbered at the start 150, including some Regulars. As the German attack grew fiercer, he noted how his little company was being thinned. The gallant young officer did not despair. He was in sole command of Hill 60, and he realized that a hard and terrible time awaited them before relief came, but he summoned up all his courage and made up his mind to hold on at all costs. He went up and

down the line calling to his brave men to 'stick it ' and he infused all with his dauntless spirit.

Then came a critical moment.

A particularly fierce onslaught by the Germans had commenced. Guns raked the trench with shells, enemy troops swarmed up, throwing bombs. Lieutenant Woolley moved among his men, giving orders as coolly as if on parade. The already diminished band of heroes dwindled more and more. Lieutenant Woolley knew that the situation was perilous, but he had no thought of giving in. The knowledge that so much depended upon him stirred his blood, and called forth every ounce of his British fighting spirit and powers of leadership.

He organized counter-attacks and led his men in throwing bombs at the vastly superior force of the enemy. Standing on the parapet of the trench, fully exposed to the enemy, Woolley hurled bomb after bomb. His men urged him to seek shelter, but he refused. For some time this amazing contest continued, a handful of British against thousands of Germans. But this little band of heroes by their superb bravery, led by a hero, kept the enemy at bay. When welcome relief eventually came, the company of 150 men had been thinned to 20—14 Territorials and 6 Regulars, a pathetic proof of the dauntless fight put up by our men.

Congratulations were heaped upon the brave young Territorial officer by his comrades as well as by his superior officers. "Without a doubt he saved Hill 60," one of them remarked.

He had indeed acquitted himself nobly and the price was now to be paid, for the hero had to lie up in hospital, suffering from a nervous breakdown as the result of his terrible ordeal.

When the news that Lieutenant Woolley had been awarded the V.C. became known, there was a remarkable outburst of enthusiasm, especially among the Territorials, who were naturally proud that one of their number had received the

prized distinction. In particular, there was great joy at the headquarters of the Queen Victoria Rifles. At Danbury, where his home was, a beautiful village eight miles from Chelmsford, were stationed some 6000 Territorials. "We would like," said one of them, "to carry Lieutenant Woolley shoulder-high from Chelmsford Station to his father's house at Old Riffhams, up all the winding hill paths, for the whole eight miles, with the band playing 'The Conquering Hero.'"

* * * * *

The second hero of Hill 60 is one of the most popular V.C.s of the war. He is Lance-Corporal Edward Dwyer, of the 1st Battalion East Surrey Regiment, who at the time was the youngest soldier to obtain the prized decoration, being only eighteen years of age.

This boy hero took the public imagination by storm, and with the possible exception of Sergeant O'Leary, no V.C. was more noticed on his return to England. He received enough hero-worship to last a life-time. When home on leave Dwyer was bombarded by the attentions of admirers, kissed by women in the streets, and, as he confessed, subjected to greater trials than on the bomb-swept slopes of Hill 60.

There was something romantic about the slim boy of eighteen who proved himself so heroic in the field, and his handsome appearance and jolly ways captivated every one. As his father confessed, with no little humour, "They're making such a fuss that Ted wants to get back to the battle-field for a rest."

Lance-Corporal Dwyer is a native of Fulham, where his parents live at Lintaine Grove. He is still remembered at St. Thomas's School as a lad of sunny disposition and high character.

Before enlisting Dwyer was a greengrocer's assistant. He used to show remarkable diligence in his work, and customers

liked to be served by the methodical, yet smart, young fellow with the pleasant smile.

"Fancy that!" said one who recalled Dwyer in those days, on being told of his gallant deed. "But I always knew the young chap would do something, he seemed to have it in him."

After joining the East Surreys, Dwyer showed the industry that had marked his conduct at school and in business. His officers were quick to note his aptitude for soldiering, and all his chums were impressed by the serious way in which he applied himself to his work.

Dwyer had been fighting in France for nine months when the struggle at Hill 60 provided his great opportunity.

We have already described how the mines were successfully fired and the hill attacked and gained without difficulty.

During the night of the great assault, April 17-18, several of the enemy's counter-attacks were repulsed with heavy loss, and fierce hand-to-hand fighting took place. On the morning of the 19th the enemy succeeded in forcing back the troops holding the right of the hill to the reverse slope, where they hung on throughout the day. On the evening of the 19th the hill was again stormed by our men, and the enemy driven off by the bayonet.

Then came the 20th, when unsuccessful attacks were made on our positions by the Germans.

During a particularly fierce attack Lance-Corporal Dwyer was in a trench on the side of Hill 60, about fifteen yards distant from where the Germans had entrenched themselves. So close were they, in fact, that Dwyer says he could actually hear them "talking their lingo." His section had suffered severely, and Dwyer risked his life by tending many of them as best he could. Some he brought from the open to the side of the trench, leaving the comparative safety of his position in order to save their lives.

Then, later on, he heard some one call out: "The Germans are coming!"

He looked through a spy-hole in the parapet and saw a number of the enemy creeping silently and stealthily across the intervening space between the trenches.

Like the methodical soldier he is, Dwyer had kept a number of hand-grenades, some fifty, all ready to fire.

Thus provided, he gallantly sprang on to the parapet of the trench. The Germans were creeping forward, thinking to surprise the British, but they had reckoned without Lance-Corporal Dwyer. He stood fully exposed to their fire, and threw his deadly missiles steadily and with excellent effect. For five minutes this eighteen-year-old hero stood all alone hurling grenade after grenade at the oncoming foe.

The Germans, led by an officer, showed great stubbornness. Had they known that a lad of eighteen alone was guarding the trench, they would have doubtless redoubled their efforts to capture it.

As cool as if on parade, young Dwyer kept throwing his grenades. He had now sent twenty into the ranks of the enemy; now he had used up thirty. At this juncture the officer leading the Germans was hit, and this loss seemed to damp the ardour of the attackers.

Dwyer, however, began to show the first signs of uneasiness. His stock of grenades was fast running out. He had only half a dozen left, soon these had each found a target. Then in the nick of time reinforcements arrived, and the trench was saved. Dwyer alone had saved the situation. How many Germans he killed he does not know. But he remarked, "I didn't see one go back."

A week later he was in the trenches with his battalion, and the shelling of the enemy had become very fierce. It was the expiring effort of the Germans to recover Hill 60, and during this attack Dwyer was hit on the head. When he was well enough to make the journey home, he went to Buckingham Palace. His Majesty," said Dwyer, "smiled and came forward to me, then

shook me by the hand. 'I'm very glad to meet you,' he said, very quietly. 'You are extremely lucky to have escaped after so daring and plucky an act. I congratulate you on being the youngest V.C. in the Army, and wish you the best of health and all good fortune, with a safe return after the war.' The King then pinned the cross on my breast. He could not have been nicer to me, I'm sure. He was charming, and I wasn't the least bit afraid."

CHAPTER XVI

THE TERRITORIAL WHO SAVED THE SITUATION AT SECOND BATTLE OF YPRES

Sergeant Belcher, allow me to congratulate you on your brilliant performance. You saved the situation." The speaker was the Commanding Officer of the London Rifle Brigade, the scene the vicinity of the battered town of Ypres, and the person addressed, Lance-Sergeant Douglas Belcher, who was the second Territorial to win the V.C. in the war. This young non-commissioned Territorial officer performed a service of the highest military importance by maintaining a position south of the Wieltje-St Julien road during a fierce bombardment on May 12, 1915. Owing to the bold front thus shown, the enemy was prevented from breaking the British line, and an attack on the flank of one of our divisions was averted.

Sergeant Belcher may be regarded as typical of thousands of men who fought in the Great War. A year before he sprang into notice he was pursuing his ordinary occupation of a salesman in the antique department of Messrs Waring & Gillow, never dreaming of winning the V.C. or holding up Germans in Flanders. With the advent of war, like so many more Territorials, Belcher passed quickly from commerce to the battle-field. He is twenty-six years of age, and lives at Surbiton, the well-known residential suburb of London.

Before the war Sergeant Belcher had been a member of the Territorial Force for some years, and won a cup for shooting in 1914 when in the Queen Victoria Rifles. Previous to this he belonged to a cyclist volunteer corps. At the outbreak of war he joined the 1/5th (City of London) Battalion, London Regiment, more popularly known as the London Rifle Brigade.

It is always of interest to know what type of man the V.C. hero was in civilian life, whether he showed promise in his work, or struck those who knew him as a man out of the ordinary. Unfortunately we have, in many cases, very little information on these points, for the soldiers who do great deeds are very often uncommunicative concerning themselves or their early days. We have, however, a tribute to Belcher's worth which has been placed on record by one under whom he worked in London. This gentleman refers to him as a "steady slogger at his work," and, he adds, "you never met a man with less swank. He was always quiet and unpretentious."

Just after he had offered for foreign service some one said, "Fancy Belcher going!" The reply was, "I never thought he would do anything else."

We are told that the hero of Ypres kept fit for his Territorial duties by constant outdoor exercise. Every morning when the weather was favourable he had a bathe in the Thames at Surbiton, and generally swam across the river and back. He also rowed a good deal, and played cricket, but nearly the whole of his spare time was spent with the Territorials.

One day some one to whom Sergeant Belcher was telling his soldiering duties and recreations asked if there were many others like him in his firm. "Oh, yes," he answered, "any number, as you'll see if we should ever be wanted. I suppose the day will come some time when things aren't quite so peaceful as they are now." His prophecy came true, sooner perhaps than he anticipated, and when the terrible war of the nations broke out, Belcher and his brother Territorials were found ready—prepared and eager to strike hard blows for King and Country.

It is interesting to know that Messrs Waring & Gillow possess a rifle-range, and the future V.C. put in many of his evenings there.

We have described in other chapters the terrible second battle of Ypres, and need only mention a few important points here, in order to indicate the circumstances under which Sergeant Belcher gained the soldier's highest honour.

This great battle is notable in many ways. It saw the first use by the Germans of poisonous gas, and it firmly established the reputation of our Territorial soldiers as first-class fighting men. By unanimous consent of the Army, they showed themselves the equal of the Regulars in their coolness and gallant bearing.

The second battle of Ypres went on intermittently from April 22 to May 14. The fierce engagements at St. Julien have been described in the chapter dealing with our Canadian heroes. Throughout this three weeks' battle the enemy consistently held to his plan of driving the British back on Ypres by means of simultaneous pressure from north and east of the salient. Thanks to the superb conduct of our Territorials, together with the Canadians and Regulars, all the assaults failed, although on a few occasions the enemy succeeded in temporarily occupying some of our front trenches.

The London Rifle Brigade, composed of men like Belcher from City offices and stores, won the highest tribute from the General commanding their brigade for its splendid work during these critical weeks. It was a revelation of what British determination can accomplish. These men, who only a short time before had been pouring over ledgers or acting as salesmen, "hung on in trenches battered out of all recognition by the German high-explosive shells."

Belcher had been in the trenches along with his comrades since November 1914. They performed excellent work during the weary and disagreeable winter months, and did not experience a big action until the battle of Ypres. In the early

stages of the great fight the London Rifle Brigade was brought up on the left of the British line, and from the first bravely stuck it—"with their tails well up," as their General put it.

The battle raged with particular violence in the sector between the Ypres-St Julien road and the Menin high road.

The London Rifle Brigade had established itself in an advanced trench between Wieltje and St. Julien. This position the Germans shelled unceasingly, and Belcher received orders to hold it. "I knew I was in for a hot thing," he says. "The breastwork, which was only about thirty-five yards long, was not only cut off from the division on each side, but was nearer the Germans and a target for their fire."

Including Sergeant Belcher there were eighteen men all told manning this advanced trench. They had reached it at three o'clock in the morning amid a hail of German shells. "We were being shelled to blazes," is Belcher's own description.

Few of us can realize what this meant to the brave little party of soldiers. The bursting of a shell at a distance of one hundred yards from a trench is sufficient to shake the nerves of the strongest, but when shell after shell falls in and around the trench the awful feeling produced in our gallant men cannot be imagined. Yet, however trying the ordeal, our soldiers have always remained cool and cheerful.

This was the case on the occasion when Belcher led his men into the trench in the early hours of that May morning, although the ground was torn up every few yards and "looked as if a giant had been over it with a cinder sifter."

From the first it was hot work. Four of the eighteen soon fell, wounded by shrapnel. Belcher himself was hit, but only slightly, in the chin. He had one very narrow escape, for a piece of shrapnel went clean through his cap. Shell after shell struck the breastwork, and the splinters flew so close that the gallant defenders thought their last moment had come.

Belcher had his full share of anxiety. He was not in the least afraid, although he realized that the awful shelling would soon place the whole party out of action. When he had only four men with him, word was sent from the troops on his right that the position was untenable, and that they were going to retire. Belcher's face became very serious when this message was delivered. He knew that if he retired the Germans would speedily seize the whole of the advanced trenches, with very serious results for the men in the rear trenches. Fully counting the awful cost, he made up his mind to fight on. By now his comrades in the other part of the line were actually retiring, and told him to do likewise. Had Belcher followed their example he would have been fully justified in abandoning an untenable position. Belcher refused to do this, because he realized that if he abandoned his dangerous post it would be a serious thing for the flank of his division.

He next got a message through to the rear, which is as dramatic as any of the war. It read:

"Regiment on my right retiring. I am holding on."

Back came the answer. "Good. Hold on."

Inspired by this reply, which lost none of its effectiveness through its brevity, Belcher started to 'hold on.' He rallied the four men remaining with him, and infused into each his own dauntless courage. They seized their rifles and poured forth volley after volley at the German trenches. Their position rapidly became very perilous. The breastwork was torn away in many places by the high-explosive shells. Still the brave men did not waver. They had no intention of giving in, and skipped about dodging the enemy's fire with as much coolness as if at play.

Belcher noticed that the section of trench recently evacuated by the men on his right was not so much damaged as his own portion. He accordingly transferred his little party to it without any mishap. He was the last to reach the new position, and had hardly entered when a high-explosive shell completed the demolition of the section in which they had been standing

only a minute before. The little band of heroes was not slow to give thanks for their marvellous escape.

A fellow-member of the London Rifle Brigade pays the following tribute to the hero: "I happened to be near Sergeant Belcher," he says, "when he distinguished himself, and I marvel how he ever came back. I think he accomplished what not one man in a thousand would have done, and absolutely stuck on for death or glory."

For nine hours Belcher and his dauntless men stuck to their post. The enemy could not advance to capture the trench, for five British rifles rang out incessantly, and to have ventured into the open would have meant certain death. The German artillery could shell the position hour after hour, but until the occupants retired the trench could not be taken.

As the day passed Sergeant Belcher began to get anxious, not that he had lost heart—he was as courageous as ever—but he knew there is a limit to the bravest endurance, and that he and his four companions could not keep up the unequal fight much longer. He was inspired by the knowledge that as long as he kept the enemy from capturing the trench he was safeguarding the flank of a whole British division. Had the Germans known there were so few British soldiers behind the breastwork, the most serious consequences would have followed for our main forces.

This incident demonstrates once more that a handful of British led by a hero are capable of holding up a large force in a serious attack. British pluck and determination never to surrender have often 'saved the situation,' and it was so on this occasion. Cheering his men and sharing their risks, Belcher was the life and soul of the determined stand. He would have died rather than give in, once having declared, "I am holding on."

By this time, however, their endurance was all but exhausted, yet each man filled his magazine, and pulled the trigger, with set face and determined spirit. The rifles became impossible to hold through constant firing; the answering shells caused showers of dust that half-blinded them.

Then ere the position had become absolutely intolerable, reinforcements arrived, and the gallant sergeant and his men were relieved. For nearly half a day Belcher had 'held the fort ' in the face of terrible danger. The relieving party set to work to repair the damaged trench, and their fresh fire, in greatly increased volume, told the Germans that it was fruitless to continue, and soon they abandoned the attack.

When Sergeant Belcher appeared before his commanding officer he was greeted with the words we have quoted above—"Saved the situation!" The hero was amazed to hear such high praise—it nearly took his breath away. He himself regarded his exploit much less seriously, for when he wrote to a friend describing the deed, he said: "It was a bit saucy, wasn't it? Five men—three wounded —holding up the Germans."

Homely incidents in connection with our V.C. heroes are always of deep interest. To the recipient of the coveted decoration perhaps the most affecting experience is his return to his own folks. Sergeant Belcher had obtained leave from the front and arrived at his home in Surbiton tired and travel-stained after his journey from the trenches. A young woman travelled in the same railway carriage and eyed him curiously. She, too, got out at Surbiton, and walking from the station plucked up courage to say, "Excuse me, are you not Sergeant Belcher, the Victoria Cross man?" Belcher admitted he was, and received her congratulations.

At the White City, London, Sergeant Belcher received a stirring ovation, when some three thousand to four thousand employees of his firm presented him with a magnificent silver rose-bowl. "The country owes its freedom, its happiness, and its riches to men like you, and will ever remain grateful to them," said Mrs S. J. Waring in making the presentation. The hero replied that he often thought of his fellow-workers at the front, and "sometimes we'd see the old vans at the front, and we'd think of home and London and all that." He concluded his remarks by appealing for more recruits.

CHAPTER XVII

LANCE-CORPORAL KEYWORTH'S EXPLOIT AT GIVENCHY

The war, as we have remarked, has proved that the Territorials are first-class fighting-men. Before the outbreak of hostilities many people were apt to regard them lightly. Some went so far as to call them 'Saturday afternoon soldiers.' These people were mistaken; the young business men who gave up their Saturday afternoons to drill and marching were not playing at soldiers. They were preparing for a great crisis which, when it came, found them ready. The great majority signed on immediately for foreign service, and very early in the war certain of the Territorial regiments were sent to the front, where they proved themselves equal to the best traditions of the regular Army.

Later in the war many other Territorial units, after having received a large, influx of new recruits and having been thoroughly trained, crossed to France. The second battle of Ypres established the reputation of the Territorials to be regarded as equal to the Regulars in coolness and gallantry. Men who but a few months before had been adding up figures in a ledger in the City or serving customers behind a counter showed that they were the stuff of which heroes are made, and exhibited to all the world splendid fighting qualities. To tell of all the gallant exploits of our dashing 'Terriers' is impossible within the limits of the present volume. All that can be attempted is to single out a few of their most outstanding heroes, and the Territorial whose great deed is here described has earned a place in this select band.

Lance-Corporal Leonard James Keyworth, 24th (County of London) Battalion the London Regiment, popularly known as

the 'Queen's,' was the third London Territorial to win the V.C., and the first so distinguished to die in action.

At the time of which we write Keyworth was twenty-two years of age. A good all-round athlete, he was intensely fond of cricket, and carried his love of sport to the field of battle, where he 'played the game' with wonderful success. He was an excellent fast bowler and fielder, and this prowess, doubtless, helped him in the bomb-throwing which won him the V.C.

Upon the last occasion that Keyworth went out to play cricket before enlisting, he said to his mother, "We shall win." She told him not to be so sure, but he replied laughingly, "I always play to win." Even in the trenches Keyworth was fond of talking about cricket, and never 'bowled' better than on the night of May 25—26 at Givenchy, when his aim was deadly for the Germans.

Although a member of a London regiment, Keyworth was a native of Lincoln, where his parents reside. He was an only son, and was educated at the Technical School of his native town. After leaving he went into his father's tailoring business, but it was never to his liking.

Later he became a clerk in the offices of Messrs Burton, Scorers & White, solicitors of Lincoln. He joined this firm at the time of the passing of the Insurance Act, and his work had to do with the Act. He was so employed when war broke out, and at the time of the great rush from all parts of the country to join the London Territorial regiments he was attracted to the 'Queen's,' with which regiment he went to the front in April 1915.

The fighting around Givenchy has been vividly described by Sir John French, and it is only necessary to allude to this famous battle-name in so far as it concerns the 'Givenchy V.C.'

The 'Queen's' had previously been in action, but it was not until toward the end of May that they firmly established their reputation as fearless fighters and a credit to the Army. Previously, to use Keyworth's own words, "I and my chums had

already been 'blooded' before we were engaged at Givenchy. I mean we knew what it is to be under fire, for we had previously been in the neighbourhood of Festubert in a pretty tight corner."

It was at Givenchy that the 24th made their spirited charge, one so magnificent that Lieut.-Colonel Simpson afterward said: "Men of the 24th, after what you did on Tuesday you can do anything; I am proud of you."

After a hot engagement round about Richbourg, the men of Keyworth's battalion had a spell of rest in billets. Then the order came to pack up, and soon they went swinging along to the trenches. By 6:30 that same evening two companies of the 'Queen's' were charging the enemy's lines.

In front of the 'Queen's' position there was a critical hill to be captured; from its summit and behind the Germans were pouring a deadly stream of machine-gun fire. To charge the position meant traversing the open, and the attack had to be made without any support from our artillery. Yet it had to be done, and the men went at it in fine style. Accompanying them, carrying bombs, was the 9th platoon, of whom Keyworth was one. Keyworth and his platoon went to the left of the hill, the bayonet men to the right. The British attack had been successful, and it was now necessary to prevent the Germans counter-attacking. Crawling up the slope the former came under a terrific enfilading fire, from which only Keyworth escaped.

He said afterward that he had no clear recollection of what he now did. "Things were so hot, so terrible, so dreadful, that we had no time to think coherently."

However, he realized that it was neck or nothing. It was up to him to throw as many bombs, and do all the damage he could in order to save the rest of the battalion.

Hg had crawled up the ridge on his stomach, and was only a few yards away from the Germans. He had a plentiful supply of bombs, and was kept supplied by the men from

behind. Standing up he took careful aim and hurled the first bomb at the Germans.

Then he dropped prone to prepare another missile. Rising again, he threw the second, and dropped once more. For two hours he went on doing this, coolly and systematically. He was fully exposed to the enemy's fire each time that he stood erect on the top of their parapet. The night was dark, but his figure was silhouetted against the sky. "I did not realize that I was fully exposed," he said, "but I was conscious all the while that I was being continually sniped at." He threw from first to last that night about 150 bombs. Every time he took the utmost pains to judge the distance.

His aim was so deadly that at one o'clock in the morning the Germans stopped throwing their bombs.

Keyworth by his great skill and bravery had won single-handed a victory as telling as if he had commanded hundreds of men. He made a counter-attack impossible and so prevented the Germans retaking the positions wrested from them in another part of the line. How many of the enemy he actually accounted for will never be known.

Of all the V.C. heroes Keyworth surely had the most miraculous escape. He was fully exposed to the enemy's fire for two hours, yet came through practically unscathed, although his comrades who set out with him were all killed or wounded.

"Men were shot down by my side," he said. "Still I continued, and came out safe. I only did my duty, but how I came out God only knows."

Once a piece of shell brushed his ear, blinding him with dirt. Later a bullet hit the metal case of a little mirror he carried in his pocket.

It speaks well for the bravery of the battalion that his companions, knowing he was out on the exposed parapet, gallantly endeavoured again and again to bring sandbags up to

him to serve as a protection, but every hero who tried it was either killed or wounded.

When he returned home Keyworth received well-deserved praise, and honours were heaped upon him. His native town of Lincoln rose to the occasion, and showed in no uncertain fashion its pride in the hero who had so honoured it.

At a great demonstration at the Corn Exchange Keyworth was presented with an illuminated address and a purse of gold. The citizens gave him a rousing welcome, and he gave them his views on the needs of our Army in a few words brief and to the point. "It is men, thoroughly equipped in every respect, that is the greatest need just now, and let us have plenty of them. With the men we want more munitions."

While on leave during the summer of 1915 Keyworth spent many days in obtaining recruits. He was thoroughly alive to the need of arousing young men to join the colours, and after a happy and useful period of furlough returned to the front to do further service for his beloved country. He did not live long after his return. He was in action in October, and received wounds from which he died. Lieutenant-Colonel J. Eustace Jameson, writing to Mrs. Keyworth on the death of her heroic son, paid him the following tribute:

"Your son, our comrade, was one of the highest examples of unselfishness and devotion to his comrades and to duty. His name will be enrolled among the bravest of the brave. After he had won the V.C. his one desire was to return to the front to help his comrades. Surely such a splendid and heroic death will help us to get recruits for the battalion of which he was an honoured member."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BRAVEST RESCUE OF THE WAR

The deed of heroism for which Lance-Corporal Angus was awarded the coveted Cross has been described by a soldier who witnessed it as "one of the most brilliant deeds that the world has seen." This is, indeed, high praise, and few who read the story of Angus's heroism at Givenchy will deny that his V.C. exploit ranks very high. Up to the time of writing it was, without a doubt, the finest and bravest rescue of the war.

Lance-Corporal William Angus is a member of the 8th (Lanark) Battalion the Highland Light Infantry (Territorial Force). He was the first Scottish Territorial, as well as the first professional footballer, to win the V.C. Angus was born at Armidale, in the south of Scotland, and the greater part of his life was spent at Carluke, where he received his education at the Roman Catholic School, and afterward, at the age of fourteen, followed in his father's footsteps and worked as a miner.

At an early age Angus became a football enthusiast, and gained a reputation as a noted player. When not working he gave up his whole time to the game. For a brief term he was a member of the well-known Celtic Club, and later captained Wishaw Thistle, giving every satisfaction both as a leader and a player.

Although his father was an enthusiastic Volunteer, and acted as drummer in the pipe band of D Company the Highland Light Infantry, Angus did not take up soldiering until the outbreak of war. The story of how he enlisted is best told in his own words. Our account is taken from the *Weekly Mail and Record*, which well-known Scottish journal organized a fund for the 'Carluke V.C.', to which the Scottish football public generously contributed.

"On the Sunday following the retreat from Mons—'Black Sunday' we call it here yet—a big recruiting meeting had been called at Carluke. I was one of the large crowd of young fellows who attended. After the stirring speeches made at that gathering no fewer than twenty-nine of us stepped forward and joined, and within no time we were off to Lanark for training. The recruiting officer who 'got' me was Sergeant-Major Cavan, of the Highland Light Infantry. I may tell you that he also secured Lieutenant Martin, the officer whose life I was instrumental in saving."

After a period of training at Lanark, Angus, who had already gained his lance-corporal's stripe, went to Dunoon, then to the military station at Ardallow Fort, where he remained until the beginning of February 1915, when he was included in the fourth draft which left Scotland for Flanders.

Angus remarks that he got his 'first smell of powder' in the March fighting which raged in the vicinity of Neuve Chapelle. His battalion was posted on the left of the village, and although it did not take part in any charges, did excellent, if monotonous service in and out of the trenches in that sector. Later on Angus was engaged nearer to La Bassée, and went through the hot fighting at Festubert, where he was first wounded. This necessitated a three weeks' stay at a base hospital. His wound proved to be very slight, and within three days of leaving hospital he had won the Victoria Cross.

Angus rejoined his regiment in the neighbourhood of Givenchy on June 10th, proceeding straight into the firing-line at a spot where the British trenches were only 200 yards distant from the German, and the opposing lines narrowed down to about 50 yards.

The night after Angus's return, Lieutenant Martin, a fellow-townsmen, led a small party of bombers to destroy a German barricade. The attack was carried out with excellent results, but, unfortunately, the enemy exploded a mine. The earth trembled and rose, and Lieutenant Martin was blown bodily into

the air, to fall, bleeding and unconscious, at the foot of the enemy's parapet.

For a time the young officer remained oblivious to everything; when he recovered consciousness he found his left arm held fast in a hole. He determined to make an effort to save himself, and having scraped away with his right hand until he was successful in releasing his arm, he started to wriggle toward the British lines. However, he was soon seen and was shot in the right arm and side. He lay for some time as if dead, and then crawled back to the cover of the enemy's parapet, believing he would be safer there from the German rifles.

The events of the next few minutes were very dramatic. Martin called out to the Germans to give him water. By way of response they threw him an unlighted bomb. They dared not look over the parapet for fear of the rifle-fire from the opposite trench, but they were very anxious to kill the suffering man and they put up a periscope to find his exact position. This our soldiers shot away. Then, anticipating an attempt to rescue the wounded lieutenant, the Germans raised a steel shield loophole, fenced in by sandbags.

Lance-Corporal Angus had not seen what was going on in Lieutenant Martin's sector of the line since this was about a quarter of a mile from where he was stationed. News travels incredibly quick in the trenches, however, and Angus, although unaware of the bombing operations that had been undertaken, soon heard of the terrible predicament of Lieutenant Martin. Thinking that he might perhaps be of service he made his way, accompanied by two others of his section, to the part of the trench opposite to the spot where Lieutenant Martin was lying. As the 'burrow' was eight feet in depth there was ample cover all the way.

Arrived at the spot Angus found much excitement and anxiety. He could see Lieutenant Martin quite plainly. Schemes were being discussed whereby the wounded officer might be rescued. The most feasible plan seemed to be that of a covering-

party to keep the enemy incessantly engaged and prevent them rising in their trenches, while a volunteer went out into the intervening 'No Man's Land' to crawl up to the lieutenant with a rope and attach it to his body. It was hoped by this means that he might be hauled into the safety of the British lines. The success of the plan depended upon preventing the Germans from showing their heads. The question was, who would volunteer for the dangerous mission?

Although the ground to be crossed was only fifty yards deep, it was pitted with shell and bomb holes, and rendered more dangerous by treacherous barbed-wire.

Lance-Corporal Angus did not hesitate; he boldly stepped forward and attached the rope to his body. It was arranged that he should unwind this as he crawled along. When all was ready he slipped over the top of the parapet and started on his perilous journey.

An interesting account of what followed has been given in the *Weekly Mail and Record*, from which some of the following particulars are taken:

Angus found it necessary to crawl very slowly and warily, and to clear a pathway bit by bit. He proceeded thus in order that "if it could ever be begun the return journey might be continued and finished through a comparatively clear lane, free from barb and other impediments which might delay and harrass us."

Angus toiled painfully and slowly over the broken ground, and gradually crept nearer the wounded officer. He was rather surprised that the Germans did not fire. Although the journey was of short duration, it seemed age-long to the brave Scottish soldier. He crawled closer and closer to his goal, all the while clearing away the wreckage in his path, and finally reached the wounded man. Until that moment he had not come within view from the German loophole, already referred to. He had made the journey in safety, but now he was seen by the enemy and became a target for their bombs.

The Germans had dug to within two feet of where Lieutenant Martin was lying, and Angus could hear them speaking among themselves. The officer was in a terrible plight, but although dazed with the pain of his wounds and the horrors of his long watch, he was able to recognize his rescuer. Angus prepared to revive him for the ordeal through which both had to pass. He raised him gently, intending to administer brandy from his flask, when there was a sudden crash and the flask was smashed in his hand. The Germans knew that of the two men one was seriously wounded, and the other had come to save him at the risk of his life, but such is their inhumanity that they threw bombs over their parapet upon them.

Angus decided upon immediate action. To tarry would be to invite death. He told the officer how dangerous it was to remain, and the lieutenant, dazed and sick, nodded that he understood. There was no time to fix the rope. The two men started off, crawling and worming their way, the lieutenant in front, Angus guiding him along the lane he had prepared on the outward journey.

As they left the shelter of the outside of the German parapet the two men came into full view of the enemy. The latter were not slow to profit by this, and two more bombs were thrown at them. Fortunately, neither was hit. The explosions raised columns of dust which hid their movements. Angus was quick to take advantage of this screen, and hurried the lieutenant as rapidly as the latter's weak state permitted. Bullets and bombs came in swift succession, but the two crawled on, anxious to make the most of every moment. One bomb struck Lieutenant Martin in the back. Angus held his breath, thinking his townsman was killed, but, wonderful to relate, he was scarcely hurt.

On they crawled until they reached a depression in the ground. The bombs suddenly ceased. Evidently the Germans had come to the conclusion that the two men were dead as they were unable to see them moving. The distance between the two

trenches was so short that they must have argued that no human being could live in the hail of missiles they had sent forth.

As the two men left the hollow and neared the British trench both began to fail. The lieutenant, especially, was almost exhausted, but Angus guided him and encouraged him, until they were only a few yards from safety. Then Angus got separated from the officer, who in a semi-conscious condition reached the edge of the trench where strong and willing hands grasped him, gently lifting him over the parapet. Angus, meanwhile, crawled along alone, taking advantage of every little hole which had been ripped in the earth by shells and bombs to pause for breath.

Then the Germans recommenced to throw bombs at him. They had seen the officer being lifted into safety and knew that his companion was still in the open. The bombs burst all around Angus, literally by the dozen. "It was a terrible journey," says our hero, "and I don't know yet how we came through the shower of bombs. You may guess how 'near' it was many a time when I tell you that the doctors afterwards discovered forty wounds on me." Most of the hits did no serious damage. "The only fair hit they made," says Angus, "was on my right foot."

The last few minutes of the journey were the most painful for Angus. He was wounded, his strength was ebbing fast, and the bombs continued to drop about him. He exerted himself for the final spurt. His comrades were watching his heroic progress, and greatly helped by sending a hail of bullets at the German lines during the last few yards of his journey. Under this cover Angus dashed for the trench and was safe.

The next few minutes will live long in his memory. The men in the trench danced around him, and struggled for souvenirs. Bits of his dress were snatched away. His waistbelt was secured by a chum, an officer claimed his cap, a French General his badge. No other V.C. hero has received quite so demonstrative an ovation from his comrades.

Angus achieved what was apparently impossible, and he was as self-possessed throughout the trying ordeal as if he had

been in the safety of billets. Whenever Givenchy is referred to the name of William Angus will be remembered.

Immediately after his terrible experience Lance-Corporal Angus was taken to hospital at Boulogne, where his left eye was extracted, this operation being found necessary owing to a piece of shrapnel having lodged in it. Then he was removed to the military hospital at Chatham. While an inmate there he received a visit from Lieutenant Martin, who was by that time recovered from his wounds. This was the first occasion on which they had met since their terrible journey together on the slopes near Givenchy. Later Angus went to Buckingham Palace to receive the Victoria Cross from the King. Learning that the hero's father had accompanied him to the gates of the Palace, His Majesty sent for Mr. Angus, and warmly congratulated him upon having so brave a son.

On reaching Carlisle Lance-Corporal Angus was greeted royally. A striking feature of the welcome celebrations was the presence of the officer whose life Angus had saved. Lieutenant Martin presented the V.C. hero with a gold watch and chain, after a manly little speech. "When I lay on the German parapet that Saturday in June," he said, "my plight seemed hopeless, but Angus, at the risk of his life, came out and saved me. Carlisle may well be proud of him. It was an act of bravery which will rank second to none in the annals of the British Army." At the same demonstration Angus was presented with vouchers for £1000 War Loan Stock. This sum was raised by the inhabitants of Carlisle, members of Scottish football clubs, and other admirers.

CHAPTER XIX

YOUNG NAVAL OFFICERS WHO PENETRATED THE DARDANELLES IN A SUBMARINE

The Victoria Cross, as we have already pointed out, is awarded to sailors as well as to soldiers; the reason why there are few recipients in the former class is not far to seek. Our sailors have fewer opportunities to distinguish themselves; when chances offer they are every bit as brave and skilful as their comrades in the sister service.

Among the V.C.s gained by the Navy in the great war some have been awarded to the brave sailors who fought at the Dardanelles; two of these were conferred on dashing young officers for submarine exploits.

The proud distinction of being the first naval V.C. of the war is held by Lieutenant-Commander Norman Douglas Holbrook, who gained this honour for a conspicuous act of bravery on December 13, 1914. When in command of submarine B II he entered the Dardanelles, dived his vessel under five rows of mines, and torpedoed the Turkish battleship *Messudiyeh*. His exploit has been hailed as unmatched in naval warfare for cool courage and fearless daring. This young officer proved to all the world that our Navy still produces men with the Drake and Nelson touch.

Lieutenant Holbrook had not previously become known to the public. In the Senior Service he was regarded as a promising and able young officer, but this was his first opportunity to show that he possessed superb naval qualities. Doubtless he is one of many able young men of whom the Navy will have just cause to be proud, and of whom great things will yet be chronicled.

Lieutenant Holbrook is thirty years of age, and one of five officer sons of Colonel A. R. Holbrook, a Portsmouth newspaper proprietor, and, at the time of which we write, field officer in charge of the transports and supplies on Salisbury Plain. He comes of a martial family. One brother, Lieutenant-Commander L. S. Holbrook, M.V.O., is gunnery officer of H.M.S. *Devonshire*; the others are in the Army. Lieutenant-Commander R. N. Nicholson, who is on the staff of Sir John Jellicoe, is his brother-in-law.

Lieutenant Holbrook became a midshipman in 1905, was gazetted sub-lieutenant in 1908, and lieutenant in 1909. The latter rank he reached by taking four first-class certificates in his examinations. Three months after becoming lieutenant he was appointed to the *Mercury* at Portsmouth to qualify as a submarine officer, and after serving in various boats at Portsmouth and Harwich, was given the command of A 13, stationed at Portsmouth in March 1913. He was transferred to B II—the submarine he has for ever made famous—at Malta in December 1913.

Writing to his sister in November 1914, a month before his great exploit, he refers to the arduous work of the Fleet during the cold and wet days of winter. "I've just had a shocking week of it," he said. "The weather has been awful. For eight days we have been at it hammer-and-tongs. . . . I've been soaked through to the skin the whole time." These words give some idea of the discomforts undergone by our naval heroes.

Then, continuing, he asks for "wool helmets, scarves, mittens, jerseys, warm underclothing, and sea-boot socks for my crew. The poor souls have no warm gear, and are freezing." The hero of B II is thinking of others. He finishes the letter in breezy style: "Hurrah for the life of a sailor!"

It is not necessary to describe here the Dardanelles operations beyond stating that those in charge of the Allied naval and military strategy of the Great War decided that the forcing of these Straits was an essential part of the general plan of

campaign. The Turkish fleet, if somewhat negligible, was at an advantage. It rode the narrow seas protected by mines.

On December 13, 1914, it was decided that a Turkish battleship, the *Messudiyeh*, would be better at the bottom of the Dardanelles than riding upon its waters. The mine-field and the forts prevented access to her upon the surface. The only other way was under the sea, and Lieutenant Holbrook was entrusted with the perilous task of attempting to destroy her.

It is no reflection on the other great deeds of the war to say that his performance was superbly daring. For to appreciate better the young naval officer's enterprise, it must be borne in mind that in all probability his mission involved certain death.

The underwater navigation of the Dardanelles is made most perilous and difficult by the swift currents which sweep through the Straits, and, striking various projecting points, are turned into eddies and whirlpools. In such conditions, to take a submarine, blind as she is, and feel a way along the bottom of the sea, evading the moorings of the mines, is a task which few would care to attempt.

But Lieutenant Holbrook laughs at danger. He possesses in an unusual degree caution and daring. He has nerves of steel, and when the moment came for setting forth on his sensational deed of heroism he welcomed the call.

Submarine B II was not a modern craft fitted with the latest appliances. She dates from 1905, and her submerged displacement is but 313 tons, as compared with 800 tons in the E class. Her length is 135 feet, with a submerged speed of nine knots, and her armament is two torpedo-tubes.

After proceeding some distance through the Dardanelles, the submarine entered the danger zone. In front were five rows of mines under which the submarine must dive. This feat required skilful handling. Holbrook knew that contact with an anchor-chain of the mines would entangle his vessel's screw and draw one or more mines into contact with her hull.

However, the mine-field was safely passed and the submarine came to the surface for its deadly work. The *Messudiyeh* was seen near at hand. She was an old Turkish warship constructed in the Thames as far back as 1874, and reconstructed at Genoa in 1901; her displacement was 9,120 tons. As submarine B II crept near, the vessel was all unconscious of her impending fate. In another minute the torpedoes had done their work, and the *Messudiyeh* began to sink by the stern.

Now came the supremely difficult part of the submarine's operation. Lieutenant Holbrook had the choice of dashing back the way he came at all possible speed, or carefully waiting and watching for an opportunity to get away with the least risk to his vessel and its gallant crew. He chose the latter course.

Quietly the B II started back. She was eagerly watched for by enemy torpedo craft and by the batteries on either bank. The least sign of movement in the water and the gallant commander and his men were doomed. The way he handled his boat speaks well for the wisdom of those who chose Lieutenant Holbrook for the task. He was daring yet cool, able yet cautious. While he could use the periscope he knew where he was going. But for the most part he had to remain submerged.

On one occasion the submarine was submerged for nine hours. One can hardly realize what this must have meant to those inside.

Mile by mile the intrepid commander guided his vessel back, under the same five rows of mines, until at last all danger was past.

Lieutenant Holbrook's feat was not simply a daring piece of useful naval work. It fulfilled its primary object—the sinking of the Turkish battleship; but it had another result. The effect of striking this blow upon the Ottoman Navy not only impressed the mind of the Turk; it showed to all the world what our underwater craft, handled by adventurous and undaunted

commanders, might achieve if German ships of war would only provide the targets.

The gallant young lieutenant was uproariously greeted by his sailor comrades upon his return. On board H.M.S. *Indefatigable*, Lieutenant Holbrook was presented with a huge imitation Iron Cross by his brother officers, the ceremony being the occasion of much mirth as well as congratulations. It was the Navy's jocular little way of recognizing a brave comrade. A few days later the lieutenant was awarded the V.C.

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The other submarine officer to win the V.C. in the Dardanelles was Lieutenant-Commander Martin Eric Nasmith, whose famous exploit was performed at the end of May 1915, and resulted in the sinking of nine ships engaged on Turkish war service. His vessel, the E II, penetrated the Straits to the very gates of Constantinople, and threw the city into a panic.

There is but little this young naval officer does not know about submarines. He has studied them, experimented with them, and performed with them wonderful feats such as Jules Verne himself never imagined in his thrilling romances. He has brought lasting credit to the new and powerful naval arm of which he is so brilliant a member. He is thirty-two years of age, and the son of a well-known City stockbroker, Mr. Martin A. Nasmith, who lives at Weybridge. From boyhood Lieutenant Nasmith, V.C., was set upon going to sea. On the other hand, his three brothers are in the Army—all captains at the time of which we write.

Our naval lieutenant was educated at Eastman's College, from which he went straight to Dartmouth. His father avers that his distinguished son "was not much good as a scholar, but he has always had a strong inventive faculty, of which he has made good use."

During the sixteen years he has been in the Navy, the 'Constantinople V.C.' has seen many adventures, and to his lot

has fallen a larger share of thrilling exploits than is usual for one so young in the Senior Service. One of his first cruises was with Admiral Lord Fisher, aboard the *Renown*, to which he was attached for four years.

The first occasion when Lieutenant Nasmith came before the public notice was before the War. He was the hero of the A 4, which, it will be remembered, was sunk while a new scheme of signaling was being tested. His pluck and devotion to duty at this time were highly commended by the Admiralty. When the submarine went down, the crew was saved because all kept their heads in the best Navy style, inspired by Nasmith. Two men were insensible at their posts, but the young lieutenant succeeded in reaching them and brought them to safety. For this cool 'underseamanship' the Admiral sent a signal to the Fleet congratulating the young commander on his performance.

The next time Lieutenant-Commander Nasmith came into prominence was during the naval review at Weymouth. He then had the honour of taking King George and Prince Albert for a trip in submarine D 4—a striking tribute to his reputation for skill and careful handling of undersea craft.

Early in the war Lieutenant Nasmith was to the fore in the raid on Cuxhaven. This daring feat by British seaplanes took place on Christmas Day, 1914, and our submarines accompanied the flying men. Nasmith did service on this occasion by gallantly rescuing with his submarine five men from three of the seaplanes which had flown over Cuxhaven Harbour. During the rescue operations a German airship was dropping bombs.

It should be mentioned that when war broke out Lieutenant Nasmith was appointed to the depot ship *Maidstone*, for command of submarine E II. Later he was ordered with other units of our Fleet to the Dardanelles, but it was not until the end of May 1915 that he got his big chance.

It had become essential to the plans of our naval leaders in these operations that some conspicuous attack on the Turkish vessels should be attempted. Our battleships could engage the

enemy's ships whenever they presented targets. But beyond the mine-strewn waterway they could not proceed. The plan decided upon was a daring submarine attack in the Sea of Marmora, right up to Constantinople itself, a distance of 170 miles from the Dardanelles entrance. The attack, if successful, was intended to have important consequences. In addition to destroying hostile warships, it was hoped the submarine would prevent reinforcements coming to the Gallipoli Peninsula by sea, and, further, have the effect of dealing a smashing and decisive blow at Turkey's naval and maritime prestige.

Lieutenant Nasmith was chosen to carry out this plan of dashing up the mine-strewn Straits. He set out in the E II, and performed his appointed task in thorough British style. There was the Drake touch about it—this penetrating to the sacred precincts and singeing the Sultan's beard in Constantinople itself.

Despite the lurking dangers he got his submarine safely into the Sea of Marmora. First he attacked a large gunboat. Then two transports fell victim to his attentions. There were thousands of troops on board these vessels, and the unfortunate soldiers became panic-stricken when their ships were torpedoed. So great was the terror inspired that afterward Turkish soldiers refused to embark. It was directly due to Lieutenant Nasmith's visit to Constantinople that subsequently all the Sultan's reinforcements for the front were dispatched by rail, via Uzunkenpru.

Nasmith from his place of observation had detected further prey. An ammunition ship rode at anchor within reach, and he decided to send it to the bottom. A torpedo was launched and a terrific explosion followed, which told that the intrepid sailor had again scored. The loss of this ship and its contents was irreparable to the Turks. Three store ships were next destroyed by the submarine, while in addition a fourth was driven on shore.

But the tale of Nasmith's exploits was not finished. He had decided to run the gauntlet of fort and mine and make for home, and had passed the most difficult part of the journey when it was observed that another Turkish transport, hitherto unseen,

had come within range. Most men would have regarded the morning's work as quite sufficient without wanting to run further risk. But it was not like Nasmith to surrender so good a prize for his adventurous craft. He at once steered an unerring course for the transport, and neatly torpedoed her. This brought his morning's bag' up to nine.

It is well established that consternation reigned in Constantinople on this May morning. When the noise of the successive explosions resounded through the city the shops were closed and men and women rushed about the streets in terror. The survivors who had been got ashore from the sinking transports added to the confusion by running amok. People went mad; they hurried along shouting and cursing, exclaiming: "The Russians are coming!" All vessels retired to the inner harbour of the Golden Horn. The bridge connecting Galata (on the north side of Golden Horn) and Stamboul was protected by extra pontoons. To this day the name of Nasmith has dread import in Constantinople, for the people now know who it was who gave them the greatest fright of their lives.

The swiftness and unerring accuracy of the raid were amazing. No sooner had an ammunition ship blown up than a transport was seen to be sinking. Guns were fired at the supposed place where the submarine lurked. They were trained at random from Seraglio Point, Tophianeh, and Harem Iskelessi, but very few shells hit the submarine. One managed to make a hole in her periscope, but the damage was trifling.

The hand and brain of Lieutenant Nasmith guided the E II with such skill that the Turks failed to do the craft any serious damage. The sense of lurking danger was very real in Constantinople; those who were there at that time testify to the almost uncanny feeling caused by the rapidity of the E II's destructive tactics. This one little craft made so much noise and damage that many thought that the British Fleet must have arrived. The most serious loss to the Turks was the ammunition ship, for they were none too well supplied with this vessel's precious cargo.

Submarine E II, when returning to its base, had a perilously narrow escape. Retreat lay through a Turkish mine-field. Commander Nasmith had risen just above the surface, when he made the ominous discovery that he had run the bow of E II into the chain that moored a mine. It was a critical moment for Nasmith and his crew. A sudden jar and there would have been a terrible and fatal explosion. He kept his head, and, reversing his engines, managed to elude the threatened danger. After this adventure the little craft crept safely back to the Fleet. Our men on board the warships cheered themselves hoarse, waved caps, and shouted: "Bravo, E II!"

Judged by results, the thrilling exploit of Lieutenant-Commander Martin Nasmith may well be regarded as one of the outstanding feats of the war.

CHAPTER XX

SOME INDIAN V C. HEROES

The noble and spontaneous response of every part of Britain's far-flung Empire during the great conflict has been the subject of admiration and wonder. We have seen how splendidly Australia, New Zealand, and Canada answered the call to service, and how these dominions sent many thousands of brave troops to fight for the Motherland. India, the great Asiatic Dependency, also gave most generous help. Prince and peasant vied with each other in contributing not only money but personal service in order to assure victory for the Empire to which they are so proud to belong.

The military assistance of India has been no small thing. The exact number of troops she has dispatched to the various battle areas cannot yet be stated, but it is known that the Native Army consists of 2,751 officers and 101,085 other ranks. There are also 35,700 reservists, while, in addition, many rulers of the Native States placed their military forces at the Empire's

disposal. To enumerate all the large financial and personal assistance given by India, the hospital ships, equipped and maintained by natives of all ranks, and the other valuable contributions from the same sources, cannot be attempted here. It must suffice to say that these efforts demonstrated the firm determination of all classes and creeds to take their share in fulfilling all the positive duties of Empire citizenship.

The fighting races of India—Sikhs, Pathans, Gurkhas, Jats, Mahrattas, and Rajputs have fought in the trenches side by side with their fellow-citizens from other parts of the Empire. In Gallipoli, as well as in France, the hardy Gurkhas distinguished themselves by their amazing fearlessness, and many stories are told of how these plucky little men, creeping silently out of their trenches by night, with their famous kukri knives in their mouths, have crawled up to the German trenches, and then, with blood-curdling yells, hurled themselves on the foe. The superb Indian cavalry—some of the finest horsemen in the world—was also in France, and it was confidently expected that they would ride through the vaunted German Uhlans when the fighting again took place in open country. The trench warfare, however, did not give the opportunities for which they yearned, ere in December 1915 it was announced that the Indian troops had left the Western Front for 'another field of action.'

The following striking tribute by one of our soldiers to the courage of the Indian troops is worth recording:

"Everybody is wild about the Indians, and the way they behave themselves under fire is marvellous. One day we were close to them when their infantry received its baptism of fire. When they got the order to advance, you never saw men more pleased in all your life. They went forward with a rush like a football team charging their opponents. They got to grips with the Germans in double-quick time, and the howl of joy that went up told us that these chaps felt that they were paying the Germans back in full for the peppering they had got whilst waiting for orders."

He goes on to say that the Indians are very proud of being selected to fight with the British, and behave with amazing coolness under shell-fire. "They make light of wounds, and I have known cases where men have fought for days with wounds that might have excused any man dropping out."

This is the first war in which it has been possible for a native to win the Victoria Cross. This honour was one of the boons granted by the King-Emperor to his Indian subjects at the Delhi Durbar of 1912, and already several brave Indian soldiers have won the coveted reward.

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The first native soldier to gain the V.C. was Sepoy Khudadad, 129th Duke of Connaught's Own Baluchis. He is one of the heroes of the famous first battle of Ypres. On October 31, 1914, the Germans made a determined attempt to break our line at Hollebeke, and the Indians had 'to go through it.'

One of two machine-guns had been put out of action by a shell. The position became serious, for the Baluchis were holding a weak part of our line. Sepoy Khudadad realized the danger, and although he himself was wounded he stuck to his post at the second gun. Something told this hero from the sunlit land of the East that on that day his King-Emperor demanded his services to the last drop of his blood. With true Oriental determination and grim courage he continued to work the gun, although shells fell around him and he was struck by splinters. In the end Khudadad was able to hold up the advancing Germans, and he thus saved his particular portion of the line.

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The second Indian V.C. hero of the first year of the war was also one of the bravest. Naik Darwan Sing Negi, 1st Battalion 39th Garhwal Rifles, gained his reward for great gallantry on the night of November 23-24, 1914, near Festubert.

"The 1st Battalion 39th Garhwalis," says a writer, "are recruited from that portion of the Himalayas lying within territory immediately west of Nepal, known as Garhwal; and Naik, like most of the sturdy recruits drawn from this neighbourhood, spent his boyhood herding his father's sheep and goats on the bleak uplands and glacier valleys, often alone for weeks on end." One would like to know more of the romantic life-story of this hero, but it is difficult to get these silent men to speak about themselves. They prefer to let their deeds speak.



NAIK DARWAN SING NEGI CLEARING THE TRENCH.

One of the fiercest battles of the war took place around Festubert in the La Bassée district. On November 23rd the Germans made a determined attack upon some trenches near Festubert, held by the Indian corps. A counter-attack was organized during the night of the 23rd-24th, as our men were very hard pressed. In this great onslaught the 39th Garhwal Rifles, all hardy warriors like Darwan Sing Negi from the northern hills, took a leading part. They leapt over the parapet with fixed bayonets, their faces set and grim. With irresistible dash they advanced to the captured trenches and drove the enemy off with terrible loss.

Darwan Sing Negi received two severe wounds in the head and in the arm, but refused to give in. He led the way round each successive traverse, and we can imagine the terror he inspired in the hearts of the Germans when they saw this tall, fierce Indian hero, with white turban gleaming in the darkness, his eyes afire, advancing upon them with the bayonet. Although fired at by bombs and rifles at the closest range, nothing could daunt this fearless fighter. With lightning rapidity his bayonet flashed in the air, and German after German fell to the ground. By his splendid courage and powerful arm he practically cleared the trench himself and so saved a serious situation. The fighting went on all next day, but the heroic deed of Darwan Sing Negi on the previous night had averted the worst of the danger. He was decorated by the King just before his Majesty left France on December 5, 1914.

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During the year 1915 three more Indians were awarded the Victoria Cross. One, Gobar Sing Negi, won his at the famous battle of Neuve Chapelle, and the account of his great exploit will be found in the chapter which describes the V.C.s of this engagement.

The next month, April, saw the winning of another V.C. by a gallant Indian officer, whose heroic feat is now described. He was Jemadar Mir Dast, of the 55th (Coke's) Rifles. It is interesting to note that at the time he won his distinction, Mir Dast was attached to the 57th (Wilde's) Rifles. Both the 55th and 57th Rifles are attached to the Indian Frontier Force, which preserves our great Eastern Dependency from attack by turbulent tribes.

The jemadar—a native officer ranking next below a subadar, and corresponding to our lieutenant—had already distinguished himself before coming to Europe to fight for his King-Emperor. He possesses the coveted Indian Order of Merit for gallant services on the Indian frontier while acting as guardian of our northern boundary.

During both battles of Ypres our Indians fought magnificently. At the second battle, when Mir Dast won his V.C., they had their first experience of German asphyxiating gases.

After the enemy's poison-gas attack had made a temporary dent in our line in the Ypres area, Sir John French ordered the Lahore Division of the Indian Corps, to which Mir Dast's regiment was attached, to be moved up and placed at the disposal of the Second Army.

A few days later this corps, supported by British cavalry, were pushed up into the front firing-line. The time had come for the British to assume the offensive. Fighting with the French on one of their wings, the Indians were successful in pushing the enemy back some little distance toward the north. Again the Germans let loose their poison gas, and rendered further advance impossible. Such was the position on April 26th.

The Indians fought with grim determination during their last attempt to carry the German positions. A formidable series of trenches had to be assaulted in order to dislodge the enemy and so relieve the pressure on the rest of the line. Jemadar Mir Dast got his men ready, and was awaiting the order to advance. It had not been found practicable in the limited time to reconnoitre the ground in a satisfactory manner.

Our Indian troops knew that the Germans were strongly entrenched on the opposite ridge. When the order was given to dash from the trenches, Mir Dast found himself detailed off to remain with his platoon in reserve. The others, advancing by short rushes, reached the crest of the first slope without a check, although a number fell by shell-fire. On reaching the crest, however, the line came under a terrific machine-gun and rifle-fire. Whole swathes of men fell as if a scythe had been drawn across their legs. In spite of this, the line pressed on.

Then came the dramatic and awful sequel. The Germans suddenly released their gas. Although the French Colonials were the chief sufferers, our Indian troops were affected by it. The

poor fellows were totally unprovided with any form of protection against this devilish device, and were falling fast, being, at the same time, under a hail of machine-gun fire. No troops could have withstood the terrible conditions, and the line was forced to give way.

Jemadar Mir Dast, from his trench, had seen the oncoming poison cloud, and noticed the retirement of a part of our line. He had one of two alternatives presented to him. Either he must retire in conformity with the rest of the troops, or endeavour to get his men to stand firm and resist the inevitable German attack under cover of their poison cloud. Mir Dast decided to remain.

Under cover of dense volumes of gas and a ceaseless point-blank fire the Germans approached nearer and nearer. Undaunted in the trying ordeal, Mir Dast remained firm, and collected all the men available, among whom were many who were slowly recovering from the effects of the gas. So many British officers had been killed that there was no one left to lead but himself. He therefore assumed command of the forces he had collected, and kept the men together until ordered to retire, all the while holding up the oncoming Germans with rifle-fire.

After dusk Mir Dast left the trench with his small force. During this retirement he picked up many men who were in the successive lines of trenches by which he passed, and brought them to safety.

Throughout the attack the resolute and gallant conduct of Mir Dast was beyond praise. As the little band wended their way to the rear he encouraged each man individually by his cheery words and courageous example. He saw an officer lying wounded, and at great risk went and brought him to cover. A few yards farther on he made out the writhing figure of a gassed Indian officer. In spite of a hot rifle-fire the intrepid jemadar made for him, and, with assistance, got the suffering officer out of the zone of fire. Then a second British officer was observed. The jemadar, heedless of the risks he ran, and knowing every

minute was precious if he himself was to escape the fire and gas, stopped once again to perform his heroic work of rescue.

In this way during the retirement the gallant Indian soldier brought in no less than eight wounded British and Indian officers. He was exposed in doing so to a very heavy fire, and was himself slightly wounded. Had he not shown such conspicuous bravery these eight men would have died on the field. Mir Dast not only received bullet wounds, but was rendered very weak through the effects of the German poison gas.

The gallantry of Mir Dast, as well as the behaviour of the whole division at the second battle of Ypres, added yet another brilliant page to the record of our gallant Indian army.

The jemadar, when well enough to be moved, was sent to England, and while being nursed back to health at the Indian Hospital at the Brighton Royal Pavilion, he received from the hands of the King-Emperor the V.C. he had so deservedly won.

He was much affected by the King's kind and generous remarks, and said afterward that it was the proudest day of his life. "What did I do?—nothing, only my duty; and to think that the great King-Emperor should shake me by the hand and praise me! I am his child."

On the following day Mir Dast wrote home to India an account of his never-to-be-forgotten interview with his Emperor. "This is a great and good Government," he wrote to his regimental friends at home. "Service under the Government is very good. I have been given the Victoria Cross. You come, too, and you may get it."

It was on the occasion of this visit to his wounded Indians that King George made his spirited speech of thanks for their devotion and heroism, and delighted all the wounded, who gave ringing cheers for the head and symbol of the great Indian Dependency of which they had proved themselves such loyal and valiant children.

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The last Indian hero selected for notice here is Rifleman Kulbir Thapa, 2nd Battalion 3rd Queen Alexandra's Own Gurkha Rifles, who gained the distinction at the famous battle of Loos. His regiment was engaged in operations against the German trenches south of Manquissart. Kulbir Thapa was wounded in the attack, yet showed the most conspicuous bravery.

After he had reached the German first-line trenches he noticed a badly wounded soldier of the 2nd Leicestershire Regiment lying on the ground. He at once sat down beside him, and in so doing risked his life, for the Germans were counter-attacking in order to regain their lost trenches. From their second-line trench came a steady stream of machine-gun and rifle bullets, which narrowly escaped hitting the intrepid rifleman. The brave British soldier realized the danger his Indian comrade was incurring for his sake, and repeatedly urged him to save himself. Kulbir Thapa stoutly refused, and remained with the wounded man all day and night.

On the early morning of September 26th the brave Indian decided to make an attempt to save the British soldier. It was misty weather, and this was of great help. Thapa lifted the wounded man and cautiously made his way under the barbed-wire entanglements in front of the German trench. To reach the British lines then was not possible, as he would have had to traverse open ground, and would in all probability have been shot. Noticing a little hole near by, he made for it, and placed the wounded man there in comparative safety. Then he went back to the German lines and daringly brought away two wounded Gurkhas, one after the other, enabling each to reach the British lines.

After seeing his countrymen safe he decided to return and complete the rescue of the Leicestershire soldier whom he had left in the hole. To do this he had to take very great risks. By this time it was broad daylight, and the mist had completely

vanished. Kulbir Thapa, however, was not the man to fear the deadly bullet, and he showed an utter contempt for the missiles which were directed at him from various points. He succeeded in reaching the wounded man, stooped and lifted him in his arms. Thus he braved the enemy's fire and staggered back with his burden to the British trenches, to receive the warmest congratulations for one of the most heroic rescues of the war.

From what has been said it will be seen that in daring, resource, and self-sacrifice the gallant Indian troops proved themselves fit comrades of their brothers from other parts of the glorious British Empire.

CHAPTER XXI

A TROOPER WHO DRAGGED A WOUNDED COMRADE TO SAFETY ON A SHOVEL

The V.C. exploit of Trooper Frederick William Owen Potts, 1/1st Berkshire Yeomanry (Territorial Force) was unparalleled in the war, for he rescued a member of his regiment in Gallipoli by dragging him down a hill on a shovel. This commonplace tool, it has been said, is now consecrated for all time as a life-saving implement.

For nearly fifty hours, between August 21st and 23rd, 1915, Trooper Potts remained under the fire of the Turkish trenches with his severely wounded comrade. His experiences during the long vigil are among the most thrilling the war has produced. Although he could himself have returned to safety, he preferred to risk death rather than desert a helpless chum.

The first Yeoman to gain the coveted distinction, Trooper Potts joined the Berkshire Yeomanry when only fifteen, and was the youngest trooper in England. He was twenty-two years of age at the time of which we are to write. In civilian life he is an engineer in his native town of Reading.

As Potts is one of the many heroes of the arduous Gallipoli campaign, a brief summary of the military situation in the summer of 1915 will not be out of place.

The arrival of reinforcements enabled Sir Ian Hamilton (then Commander-in-Chief) to undertake a flanking movement to drive the Turks from their strong positions. A new landing was effected early in August 1915, the point of disembarkation being the little Anafarta Bay, or Suvla Bay as it is more popularly known. The British troops on landing were able to deploy on a big front, and penetrated three miles inland. Lower down the Gallipoli Peninsula other troops were landed to strengthen the brave Anzacs—as the Australians and New Zealanders had come to be named. This was the occasion when the Anzacs 'fought like lions,' and, along with a battalion of Gurkhas, reached the crest of the commanding Sari Bair height, and saw beneath them the waters of the Narrows. This glimpse of the 'Promised Land' was brief, for the brave men were soon compelled to fall back owing to the non-arrival of supports.

Among the many gallant soldiers who landed at Suvla Bay was Trooper Potts. It had been decided to bombard and attack a very strongly fortified Turkish position near the Bay, stretching from Hill 70 to Hill 112. Previously an attack had been made on the Anafarta Hills, but unsuccessfully. This time a more desperate effort was attempted, the attack being launched on the afternoon of August 21st, after a terrific bombardment by our battleships and heavy land batteries.

The Berkshire Yeomanry had been on the Peninsula about a week, during which time they were employed in making roads from Suvla Bay to Anzac, when they were informed that they were to take part in the attack on Hill 70, or Burnt Hill as our soldiers called it, because of its appearance. In order to reach the hill the Berkshires and other units had to skirt Salt Lake, which at that time of the year was partially dried up. During their advance they witnessed a British division going into action under heavy shrapnel fire. The surface of the ground across which Trooper Potts made his way was composed of sand and

shrubs, while long creepers and grass impeded movement. Added to these discomforts was the awful heat. Owing to the broken nature of the ground the troops had to advance in extended formation, with the inevitable result that they speedily became separated and out of touch with their officers and each other.

Potts states that his regiment was overjoyed at the thought of going into action, after days of uninteresting work along the coast. Moving out from under cover these splendid troops, officered by gallant 'gentlemen of England,' many of whom, until recently, had been leading the life of county squires, were exposed to a murderous fire from the Turkish trenches. The shrapnel had set the shrubs ablaze, and this added to their danger. Advancing by short rushes Potts and his comrades reached the shelter of Chocolate Hill, where they rested for half an hour. Then, as coolly as if on parade, they advanced and formed up behind an infantry brigade in front of Hill 70.

So far Trooper Potts had escaped injury, although experiencing several narrow escapes. Arrived at the bottom of Hill 70 the Berks and Dorsets and other regiments prepared for their heroic charge.

When the order came to advance to the assault of the Turks' trenches the men fixed bayonets, gave a hearty cheer, and dashed up the hill. Not a man faltered, although the enemy poured a stream of shells full upon their ranks. The order had been to take Hill 70 at all costs, and it was splendidly carried out. Trench after trench was stormed, the occupants bayoneted or taken prisoner. Foot by foot the dashing Yeomanry fought their way up. A final desperate charge made them masters of Hill 70. "Over we went in fine style," says Potts, "nothing could stop us—it was a proper sort of charge, for our blood was up."

When about twenty yards on the other side of the hill Potts received a wound in the thigh, which knocked him off his feet. He rose and tried to follow his comrades, but sank down, bemoaning his hard luck. He had sufficient strength and sense to

crawl to a little avenue of shrubs not more than six yards long, where he was forced to lie inactive, safe from shells for the time being.

It was about five o'clock in the evening when Potts received his wound, and not long after he observed his regiment coming back, but was unable to attract the notice of any of his comrades. When he had lain in the shrubs about an hour his strength revived. He was on the point of making a move when he heard some one calling. He started—for the voice was familiar. "Is that you, Andrews?" he shouted. Potts looked round, but could see no one. Just as he was about to shout again he saw approaching a member of the Berkshire Yeomanry, and by a strange coincidence it proved to be Private Andrews, a fellow-townsmen. He had been shot in the groin, and was suffering terribly. He joined Potts, and the two wounded men were forced to remain where they were, for the hail of fire maintained by the Turks made it impossible to move. Even in their sheltered position fragments of shells dropped rather too near them to be pleasant.

About ten minutes after Andrews came in Trooper Potts was startled to hear a groan. He peered into the rapidly-deepening twilight and discovered another British soldier. He was a member of the Bucks Yeomanry and was wounded in both legs. The two men, already cramped for space, moved up to make room for him; every time he moved the Turks fired. The poor fellow was suffering intensely, and he lived only a short time after reaching the shrubs.

During the night Potts and his companion obtained some little relief. There was less danger of being seen, although the deadly shooting of the Turkish snipers made escape impossible. In the morning Potts and Andrews felt more refreshed, for during the night they had snatched sleep at intervals. Nevertheless they were stiff and sore, and it speaks well for their British pluck that neither complained to the other of his suffering. Potts had dressed Andrews' wounds with the iodine he carried on his person, and Andrews in turn applied it to Potts's

wound. Then, as the sun became strong, thirst tortured the two men, and all day long they suffered intensely. At last their suffering became intolerable, and Potts boldly ventured into the open and succeeded in obtaining water from the bottles of men who had fallen. The water put new life into both men and helped them to endure the fierce heat.

On the second night, August 22nd, Potts decided to make a move to a safer place. He argued that if they remained they would die of thirst and hunger, although death might be deferred if they did not venture within reach of the bullets which buzzed all around the shrubs. One bullet actually grazed his ear. Andrews agreed to the move, and, crawling on their stomachs, the men reached another shrubbery some yards distant. They had not been long in the new position when they heard the Turks moving about in the place they had just vacated. Potts describes the awful moment that followed. Each thought the end had come. "We actually shook hands and said good-bye." Here again Potts displayed wonderful coolness and resource, for when he realized how near they were to death he went out and, under cover of darkness, picked up a discarded rifle and some ammunition. Groping his way back to Andrews he cleaned the rifle, loaded it, and prepared to give the Turks a warm reception. But the enemy never came their way, although the two men were kept in suspense throughout the night.

The morning brought fresh anxieties and disappointments. Firing was still going on, and this prevented all hope of a dash to the British lines. Potts had sufficient knowledge of the Turkish snipers' deadly aim to make him cautious. During this day they were spectators of an actual fight in progress. The Inniskillings, whose trenches were not far away, were engaging the Turks, and shells and bullets from both sides fell dangerously near. This day was particularly oppressive, and both men were thoroughly done up.

When darkness fell Trooper Potts made up his mind that in this third night they would make a dash for the British lines, cost what it might. To make the attempt would be far better than

to lie there to die of hunger and thirst, or to be discovered by the Turks. They were then lying in what is known as 'dead ground'—that is, in a hollow on the slope of a hill, so that neither from above nor below could they be seen.

At first Andrews was able to crawl with the help of Potts, but soon showed signs of exhaustion, and was forced to give in. He would have died had not Potts found a way to help him. The young trooper had puzzled his brains to solve the difficulty. To carry Andrews was out of the question.

As he crouched beside his companion he had one of those strange flashes of inspiration which come to all men at some time, often in the most unlikely circumstances and places. He had seen nearby a number of shovels discarded by our soldiers. He now went out and procured one of these, and returning he gently placed the wounded man upon it. Andrews sat with his back to Potts and, with his hands over his shoulders, he grasped Potts's hands. Although he was becoming weaker every minute, Potts braced himself for the heavy and dangerous task before him. Fixing the shovel to his equipment he started, carefully and slowly, to drag his human freight down the hill. The journey was risky as well as tedious, for there was the ever-present possibility that they would be seen or heard by the cunning Turkish snipers, who were always very active by night. Says Potts: "I prayed as I have never prayed before, for strength, help, and guidance, and I felt confident we should win through all right."

One of Andrews's legs was quite useless, and this added to the difficulty of getting him down the hill. As they progressed painfully they were fired at, and had some extraordinary narrow escapes. Potts was forced to stop about every six yards and lie down, owing to his weak state. At frequent intervals he had to replace Andrews's disabled leg on top of the other, letting that one trail on the ground. At length Potts reached the foot of the hill and gained the shelter of a wood. He breathed a deep sigh of relief, for the worst part of the ordeal was over. His prayer had been answered. He rested for about five minutes, then went

forward to look for a path through the wood, leaving his companion seated on the shovel. He had not proceeded more than twenty yards, when suddenly he received a sharp command to 'halt.' His heart almost ceased beating, while tears coursed down his cheeks. He had struck the British lines, and found himself facing a bayonet. Unconsciously Potts was in the greatest danger when he started to walk through the wood—glad to be able to stand upright after many hours of crouching. But Potts's hurried explanation saved his life. The first man to grasp him by the hand was Sergeant-Major Stubbing, 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, who was on night duty. He it was who reported Potts's heroism to the captain, who, in turn, put the case before the authorities.

Meantime the sentry had gone to the trench and brought back several men. These carried a blanket, and accompanied Potts to the place where he had left Andrews. Potts had started his journey about 6 o'clock in the evening and it was now 9:30.

Both the wounded men were speedily conveyed to a field ambulance dressing-station, where their wounds were tended. Potts was invalided home at once, and it was while en route to England that he was surprised by the news that he had been awarded the great prize so dear to every British soldier. He had regarded his thrilling exploit as an ordinary incident, and was startled when he learnt how highly it was esteemed. "You could have knocked me down with a feather," said the 'Shovel V.C.,' "for I never thought I had done anything wonderful."

The V.C. deed of Trooper Potts is the most extraordinary, in its way, of any that we have recorded. The distance he had dragged his wounded fellow-townsmen was, perhaps, no more than three-quarters of a mile, but every yard was slow and painful, as must be apparent from the fact that the journey took three and a half hours to accomplish. Potts was wounded on August 21st, and did not reach the British trenches until late in the evening of August 23rd. All this time he was exposed to the enemy's fire.

CHAPTER XXII

HEROES OF THE BATTLE OF LOOS

The battle of Loos is the name given to the important military operations which took place on the British Front in September 1915. In conjunction with our brave French Ally we made a determined effort to break through the German lines in France. The 'great advance,' as it is called, was only partially successful. In Champagne the dashing French troops progressed on an extended front for a number of miles, and took many thousands of prisoners. The British captured the enemy's first-line trenches, and also took prisoners to the number of some thousands. The advance in each case may not have succeeded according to the hopes of the Allied commanders, but it proved conclusively that the German lines were not impregnable. This great forward movement was the biggest and most important event of 1915 on the Western Front, and many brave deeds were done both by regiments and individual soldiers. On the British side the two outstanding events of the battle of Loos were the capture of the village of that name and the famous Hill 70.

Weeks before this great autumn advance our artillery had bombarded the German trenches, so that by the morning of September 25th—the date fixed upon for the attack—everything was ready for our gallant troops. The barbed wire in front of the German positions had been completely cut by the shell-fire, and our men awaited the order to leave their trenches and storm the enemy's first line. It was part of our plan that the Germans should not know from what direction our main attack was coming. There was a slight rain falling and a light, south-westerly wind—not very favourable for the smoke and gas which our side had prepared to assist in the capture of the enemy trenches. At six o'clock in the morning the gas was let loose. Then at half-past six the magic word 'Go!' rang out. Shouting and cheering, our brave soldiers leapt over the parapet and, with

fixed bayonets, dashed toward the foe. The full story of the great advance cannot be attempted here. Suffice it to say that its chief features were the splendid charges of the 15th (Highland) Division of the New Army and the 47th Division (London Territorials), who captured Hill 70 and the village of Loos respectively. It was very gratifying to find these two units greatly distinguishing themselves in what was practically their baptism of fire.

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During the course of this great battle very many brave acts were performed by our superb soldiers, and no less than seventeen Victoria Crosses were awarded for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, chiefly at Loos, Hill 70, and the Hohenzollern Redoubt. As it is impossible to describe the deed of each of these heroes at length, we can only refer to some of the more outstanding. All fully and equally deserved their great honour, but, as always in such cases, there were certain achievements more picturesque than others. Such a deed was that of Piper Daniel Laidlaw, 7th Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers, which we are now to describe.

Piper Laidlaw is, without doubt, the most popular hero of Loos. His story recalls the famous Dargai incident, when Piper Findlater, during an attack by the Gordon Highlanders on the enemy's positions in an Indian campaign, continued, while wounded, to play his pipes. There is a further similarity in the two cases, for Laidlaw also served on the Indian frontier as a piper—in 1897-98. When the war broke out his time as a soldier had expired, but he patriotically responded to the call and rejoined his old regiment.

On the morning of September 25th the King's Own Scottish Borderers awaited the order to go forward. The Germans had conceived the idea that the main attack was coming from the direction where this regiment was stationed, and rained high-explosive shells upon their trenches. These had the effect of driving the gas we had let loose back amongst our

men. They prepared to rise over the parapet and advance, but were temporarily held up by the gas and shell-fire. Many had fallen and the situation began to look serious.

A young and fearless officer, Lieutenant Young, realized that something must be done to steady his men. He noted that Laidlaw had his pipes, and cried out:

"For God's sake, Laidlaw, pipe them together!"

For centuries the martial skirl of the bagpipes has inspired Scotland's brave sons in war, and Piper Laidlaw on this occasion literally played his comrades to victory. With absolute coolness and disregard of danger he mounted the parapet.

"You see," he said afterward, "I was only doing my duty. A piper's place is always at the head of his regiment. I always led them on the march, and it was right that I should lead them when they went to battle."

Laidlaw started to play the famous regimental march, "Blue Bonnets over the Border." The effect on his comrades was electrical. They dashed out of the trench, gave a resounding cheer, and to the strains of the martial music, dashed forward. They met with a terrible reception; the Germans rained shells into their midst. Many of the brave fellows fell, but the rest never wavered. They continued their furious charge, and as they advanced they could still faintly hear the strains of Laidlaw's pipes. The latter knew the grim task to which they had set their hands, and continued to play. The King's Own Scottish Borderers reached the Germans' first-line trenches, and used their bayonets. Then they went forward.

Laidlaw, after seeing the men well away, started to follow. He was resolved to keep up the fine fighting spirit of his comrades, and played continuously. He changed his tune to "The Braes o' Mar," an old favourite of his, and well known to every Scot. As he went forward playing, the troops were heartened, and pursued their irresistible dash.

Soon Laidlaw was forced to give up the advance. A German shell burst a few yards away. Part of it struck gallant Lieutenant Young, mortally wounding him. Laidlaw escaped the shell, but it hurled at the intrepid piper a section of the barbed-wire entanglements, through which our artillery had blasted a way. This wire cut off the heel of his boot, and a strand passed through the leather and lodged in his foot. He had previously received cuts on the face and hands, caused by fragments of shrapnel.

Nothing daunted, Piper Laidlaw continued to hobble after his comrades, still playing. Then he sank to the ground, and, although exhausted, never let go his bagpipes. Despite acute suffering, and weak as he was through loss of blood; he played an inspiring tune, so that the men in front of him should be encouraged to press forward. While lying on the ground Laidlaw had the satisfaction of seeing his regiment make its way to the third line of German trenches. He played until, overcome by sheer exhaustion, the bagpipes fell by his side.

When he had somewhat recovered his strength Laidlaw crawled back to the British lines amid the dropping shells, where he was greeted by an officer who slapped him on the back, exclaiming: "You have done very well this morning, Laidlaw!" He had, indeed!

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Among those who earned the Victoria Cross for gallant conduct at Loos were a number of officers. Of these we may single out two as typical of the conduct of our leaders on this important occasion. Second-Lieutenant Arthur J. T. Fleming-Sandes, and Battalion East Surrey Regiment, was the fifth member of that unit to win the V.C. in the war. He was twenty-one years of age at the time, and was born at Tulse Hill. He was studying for the Civil Service when war broke out, and obtained his commission after training in the Artists Rifles Officers' Training Corps.

After our men had captured the formidable Hohenzollern Redoubt the Germans made desperate efforts to regain it. The position was very critical on September 29th, when Lieutenant Fleming-Sandes was sent to the Redoubt to take charge of a company. Upon reaching the scene he found that the troops on the right were retiring. They had put up a splendid fight against overwhelming odds, and now, to avoid annihilation, had to go back. Lieutenant Fleming-Sandes' company was much shaken by continual bombing and machine-gun fire, and having run short of bombs they were in a serious predicament. The young officer took in the situation at a glance, and by his coolness and skill was able to hearten the sorely-tried troops. He collected a number of bombs, and to the surprise of those around him fearlessly jumped on to the parapet in full view of the Germans. The latter were only twenty yards away, and the Lieutenant in thus exposing himself courted what seemed certain death. He did not stop to consider his own safety, however, but started to throw his bombs with splendid effect. Having checked the enemy's activity, he was in the act of throwing another bomb when he was struck by one of the German bombs and severely wounded. Still undaunted he struggled to his feet and continued to advance and hurl his bombs till he was again severely wounded.

His amazing bravery had the desired effect. Not only did he help to reduce the German machine-gun fire and bomb-throwing, but he put new heart into his men and saved the situation.

When he returned to London Lieutenant Fleming-Sandes was signally honoured by the Lewisham Borough Council. He was asked to sign his name on the Borough roll of honour, which hitherto only contained two names those of Sir Ernest Shackleton, the famous explorer, and Sir John Knill, Bart., a former Lord Mayor of London.

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The second officer whom we have selected for mention here also distinguished himself at the Hohenzollern Redoubt. This was Captain Charles G. Vickers, 1/7th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters, Territorial Force. He was twenty-one years of age at the time of the battle of Loos, and is the son of a Nottingham Lace Manufacturer. He was educated at Oundle, from which he passed to Merton College, Oxford.

Captain Vickers was an enthusiastic member of the University Officers' Training Corps, and volunteered for service at Oxford, proceeding to the front in February 1915.

None of the "notable tactical points"—to quote Sir John French's words—in the British front was more bitterly contested than the Hohenzollern Redoubt. When on October 13th the North Midland Division was ordered to retake the position, our men advanced from what was practically our original line of September 25th. The Germans, who had recaptured the fortress, had meanwhile restored its original strength.

The full story of how our men fought and won, only to lose again; how they later retook this formidable position, cannot be described here. The fiercest combats raged in the fortified trenches known as 'Big Willie' and 'Little Willie,' and Captain Vickers won his V.C. for a gallant exploit in the latter.

His story is very similar to that of Lieutenant Fleming-Sandes. Most of his men were killed or wounded, and the situation was therefore desperate. Taking his stand on the parapet, with only two men available to hand him bombs, Captain Vickers held a barrier for some hours against heavy German bomb attacks from front and flank. Regardless of the fact that his own retreat would be cut off, he ordered a second barrier to be built behind him in order to ensure the safety of the trench. He continued to hurl his bombs after he had been severely wounded, and his magnificent courage and determination enabled his men to complete the second barrier, which proved a valuable defence.

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Before describing some valiant rescues which gained the Victoria Cross for several Loos heroes, we may briefly refer to the great daring shown by Private Samuel Harvey, 1st Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment, who distinguished himself during a heavy bombing attack by the enemy at 'Big Willie' trench on September 29th. Harvey was thirty years of age at the time, and he was the second Ipswich soldier to win the great distinction which conferred upon his regiment its first V.C. He comes of a fighting family, for three of his brothers are serving in the Army. Although born near Manningtree, Harvey spent practically all his life in the Suffolk town. He enlisted at the age of nineteen at Doncaster, and served seven years with his regiment in India, proceeding into the reserve a few weeks before the war broke out. Private Harvey went out with the original Expeditionary Force, and is one of the veterans of the campaign. He was twice wounded previous to the battle of Loos.

About the middle of September Private Harvey was looking forward to a holiday in England. His regiment was at Bethune, when it was suddenly ordered back to the firing-line, the journey being made by motor-lorry. The men of the York and Lancaster Regiment were disappointed at losing their well-deserved rest, but this quickly passed when they became aware that big things were about to take place. "We longed to be in it again," said Harvey, "rather than going home." His regiment went straight into action, to assist the Canadians, who were surrounded by German bomb-throwers. Certain trenches had been lost, and the men of the York and Lancaster Regiment were ordered to regain them.

A lieutenant of the King's Own Lancasters approached Harvey and asked him if he would show him the way across the open to the bomb stores. Harvey replied he would willingly do so, as he understood more bombs were urgently required by our men. The officer and Harvey presented an easy target for the Germans, but neither was hit. Arrived at the store the two brave men got together a large quantity of bombs and ammunition, and

started to carry their loads to the firing-line. The lieutenant was killed, but Harvey persevered, and got his bombs to the troops. He saw that more ammunition would be required if the 'Big Willie' trench was to be defended against the heavy German attack. The communication trench was blocked with wounded and reinforcements, and so, without wavering, Harvey dashed back across the open, under intense fire, and brought up another box of bombs. This dangerous and brave act Harvey accomplished time after time, and succeeded in bringing up no fewer than thirty boxes of bombs before he was wounded in the head. It was mainly due to Private Harvey's cool bravery in supplying bombs that the enemy was eventually driven back from the 'Big Willie' trench.

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Another private who greatly distinguished himself was Robert Dunsire, 13th Battalion Royal Scots. He enlisted in January of 1915, and when the Royal Scots proceeded to France in July of the same year, Dunsire went in the machine-gun section.

During the early part of the battle of Loos the Royal Scots were in reserve, two miles back from the firing-line, and had an excellent view of the first of the great charges that heralded our advance. Then the Royal Scots moved forward to occupy the old firing-line, proceeding by way of the communication trenches. Dunsire says he saw "great sights" while journeying to the vacated first-line trenches. He passed the wounded being brought down—those who were not seriously hurt, laughing and cheery—also German prisoners in big batches, guarded by a few British soldiers. Having reached the old firing-line the Royal Scots remained there until night, when a further journey was made to the captured village of Loos, where they occupied a trench that had been made along the main street. The Germans started to shell this trench, and Dunsire and his comrades were ordered to proceed to the end of the village, where they fixed the machine-gun on the main street.

Later the Royal Scots were ordered to reinforce the firing-line, and after he had been there some minutes Private Dunsire observed an arm raised over the ridge between the British and German lines. He borrowed a pair of field-glasses, and studied the ground closely. What he saw convinced Dunsire that the raised arm belonged to one of our men, and he told an officer, who gave the order to "Cease Fire!" Dunsire asked for permission to go out and fetch the man. Receiving no response, he coolly jumped up and made a dash to where he thought the man would be lying. Shells and bullets fell around him, but, nothing daunted, he gained the farther side of the ridge and found the wounded man. Gently lifting him on to his shoulders, Dunsire again braved the deadly bullets. He was in full view of the Germans when he reached the ridge, but escaped being hit. Carefully and quickly he made his way back to our trenches, and deposited his human burden in the hands of capable helpers.

Dunsire knew that there must be more of our men lying out in the open, and, as if rescuing wounded comrades under a heavy fire was an everyday performance, coolly risked his life a second time to bring in a man who was even nearer the German lines. "I just trusted all to Providence," he says, "and went out."

When he again reached the top of the ridge Dunsire became a target for a regular hurricane of bullets, and had to crawl stretched at full length to reach the stricken man. The latter was very badly injured, and quite unable to move. Dunsire's task was extremely difficult, for the wounded man was very heavy, and as it was not safe to attempt to carry him just then, the hero had to haul him over the ridge. So near was Dunsire to the German trenches that he could actually see the tops of their helmets, and they kept up a hot fire upon the two soldiers. Having got the man over the ridge, Dunsire went down on his knees and heaved him on to his shoulder. Facing imminent death from the bullets whizzing around him, he then rose to his feet and staggered back to the British lines with the unconscious form on his shoulders.

Dunsire's utter disregard of danger and his noble self-sacrifice made him a hero with all. His colonel came forward and thanked him, with emotion. As he said, "You are a brave lad, Dunsire," there were tears on his cheeks.

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Had we the necessary space at our disposal we might have retold the gallant deeds of each of the Loos V.C.s—how brave Private George Peachment, of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, crawled out under an intense fire to rescue his wounded company commander, Captain Dubs, and was killed while remaining by his side; how Sergeant-Major J. C. Raynes, of the Royal Field Artillery, an ex-policeman of Leeds, rescued his friend, Sergeant Ayres, under heavy shell-fire, and performed another gallant deed at the famous 'Quality Street' position; how Private Arthur Vickers, of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, who tried six times at the recruiting offices before he was accepted, on account of his short stature, on his own initiative went out, under heavy shell, rifle, and machine-gun fire at Hulluch, and cut the barbed wire that was holding up a great part of the battalion. These and the remaining heroes of this great battle deserve equal mention with those above, but our space is exhausted, and here we bring to an end this little book of V.C. heroes.

Of the abundant harvest which has sprung from the native courage of the sons of Britain's Empire on the many battle-fields of the Great War only a few magnificent deeds have been described here. But enough has been told to show that, happily, this generation possesses all the grit, the determination and the endurance which, joined to the capacity for self-sacrifice, have in past ages made the record of the British Army so proud and noble a tradition, and which make glorious even cruel and barbarous war.