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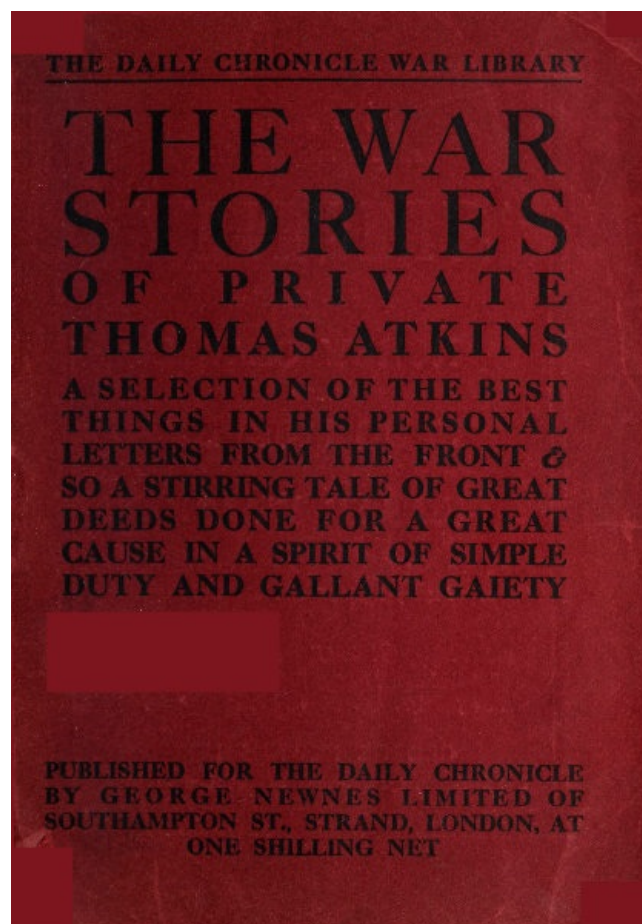
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## **The War Stories of Private Thomas Atkins**



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## THE WAR STORIES OF PRIVATE THOMAS ATKINS

[Pg 1]

*“Are we downhearted?” “No-o-o!”*

THE WAR CRY OF PRIVATE ATKINS.

*It's a long way to Tipperary  
It's a long way to go,  
It's a long way to Tipperary,  
To the sweetest girl I know!  
Good-bye, Piccadilly!  
Farewell, Leicester Square!  
It's a long, long way to Tipperary,  
But my heart's right there.*

THE MARCHING SONG OF PRIVATE ATKINS.

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*Now all the youth of England are on fire,  
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies;  
Now thrive the armourers, and honour's thought  
Reigns solely in the breast of every man.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

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## **"BLOW! BUGLES, BLOW!"**

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*Boot, saddle, to horse, away!  
Rescue my castle before the hot day  
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey.  
Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

ROBERT BROWNING.

You like song, dear Private Atkins, its lilt and its sentiment, and you have been singing your way through battle, on the hills of France and the plains of Belgium. You are really a poet, as well as a first-rate fighting man, though the very idea will make your camp-fire rock with laughter. Well, in your letters from the war to the old folk and the young folk at home, you have written things worthy to be bound in cloth of gold.

You have, in particular, being a natural fellow, written yourself to them, and you are just splendid, singly and collectively. You look out from your epistles with a smile on your lips, humour in one eye and a touch of the devil in the other, and you cry, "Are we downhearted?" "No!" gladly answer we, who have been listening to the news of battle ringing down the street, and for a moment, perhaps, forgetting you and your writing on the wall with the bayonet point.

You do get the red, living phrases, don't you, Private Atkins? "The hottest thing in South Africa was frost-bitten compared with what's going on here." "The Boer War was a mothers' meeting beside this affair." "Another shell dropped at me and I went like Tod Sloan." "Did you see that German man's face when I told him about our victories? Poor devil! He opened his mouth like a letter-box." No, Thomas, you may not be a scribe, but you "get there," especially when the order comes, "All rifles loaded and handy by your side!"

"It's hard, but it's good," is how you sum up your campaigning, and there goes a bottom truth. "You can't," as you say, "expect a six-course dinner on active service," but you would break your heart to be out of it all. "When I am in the thick of the fire a strange feeling comes over me. I feel and see no danger—I think it is the fighting blood of my forefathers." Yes, and when you receive a rifle bullet through the arm or leg it feels "a bit of a sting," nothing more, "like a sharp needle going into me, but shrapnel hurts—hurts pretty badly." You are not, however, going to let mother, wife, or sweetheart know this, because it would worry them.

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You dread to tell them that "when the bullet went in my leg the main artery was severed, and

they are going to take part of it off and leave me a cripple for life." Still harder is it to write: "I am wounded, and do not hope to live; I am going and so cannot come home as I hoped; I send all my love." And then there is an echo of infinity and immortality in the thought, "When a fellow gets shot you never think he is gone, but that he will come back." Someone softly starts singing "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and it runs sweetly along the ranks, the muffled prayer of inextinguishable hearts for a soul in flight.

But "Black Marias" and "Jack Johnsons" and "coal-boxes," as you call the enemy's howitzer shells, are driving along, and you accept them with your usual Atkins philosophy. The gun you know as "Aunt Sally" is flopping her big shells at you; "Calamity Jane" salutes you in odd volumes from miles away, and "Belching Billy" chimes in now and then. "Whistling Rufus," whose shells are smaller, is also in the turmoil, but, being without fear of the big brethren, you merely have a contempt for him. Still, the whole roar keeps you from the hour's sleep you are entitled to snatch, and therefore you gently swear at the Kaiser as "William the Weed," nickname Von Kluck "Old Von o'Clock," and grimly subscribe to the Uhlans as "Ewe-lambs." Always you remain the good sportsman, saying, "Put me a shilling on Gravelotte for the Cesarewitch, if this letter is in time"; or, "Fancy Robins drawing the Palace 1—1. Cheers!"

What was it you said when the doctor was bandaging your shattered knee? That you wouldn't be able to play for Maidstone United at Christmas! You had forgotten the remark. Possibly you had also forgotten that four of you, and rather "bad cases," enjoyed "nap" on the top of a Red Cross motor-lorry, all the way to the hospital. One of you contained six bullets, and he said on the operating-table, "There will be enough to make the missus a pair of earrings." Another of you, a big Highlander, had pleaded not to be taken from the firing line because "I have still some shots left and I can do something with them." "Keep smiling" is your motto; "there's only one winner in this game—roll on, England."

Your gay bravery, your simple tenderness, and your fine humour make an epic, Thomas Atkins, and it is you yourself who write it, all unknowingly. "Tell mother I'm all Sir Garnet, Al." "How is little Dick? Give him a kiss. He must be a great man in this long while. Love to the old lady and write soon"; and then, "I am wading in blood!" "Irene's prayer-book is always with me, although it upsets me to think of her saying her little prayers for me. I have got some French slippers for the children, which I hope to be able to bring to England. They are very quaint—*Bon jour!*" "I parted with my badge to a little Belgian girl who, with her mother, was giving our boys milk to drink. She was just like Dora, and was wildly delighted to get such a souvenir." "If you have not sold Nigger I should like to have a photo of him and the two boys, or Jack and the dog, to show some of my chums." Thinking tenderly of home!

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With tenderness, Private Atkins, you have chivalry; or, as you would put it yourself, you "know how to behave towards a woman." "The Red Cross girleens, with their purty faces and their sweet ways, are as good men as most of us, and better than some of us. They are not supposed to venture into the firing line, but they get there all the same, and devil the one of us durst turn them away." Of course not, my Irish soldier, and maybe it was you who plucked the grapes that a French maiden couldn't reach, and had the surprise and confusion of your life when, in thanks, she kissed you on both cheeks. She knew, with the woman's instinct, that she could fire your chivalry and still trust it. "*Très correct*" is the universal tribute you get in France, and it is a tribute to wear under your medals, next to your heart—a Legion of Honour for the gentleman you are.

You have given your French friends another true taste of yourself in your high spirits, your jollity, your manifestation that the merry heart goes all the day. You have the gift of wonder, which means imagination, and occasions for exercising it, as when the concussion of a shell flung you up into a tree, and your sergeant, missing you and looking around, asked in military language where you had gone! You came down to tell him and couldn't, and thereupon the wonder of the thing seized him also. That incident was of the drawbridge order which links tragedy and humour, for they march together even in the battlefield with you. Serious, nay, grave things may be framing you about, but your eye never misses the rift of humour, and that is good.

There was a shell which lighted on a field kitchen while the master cook was stirring the dinner. It was a near shave for him, but, as he did escape, you mostly recall his rueful appearance as he gathered himself out of the scattered soup. Another of our vignettes is of some cows getting into the battle arena, and of half a dozen infantrymen calmly milking them. "Early doors this way; early doors, ninepence!" you once cried for slogan in a hard charge. When the German searchlights fell on you for the first time, your comment was, "Why, Bill, it's just like a play and us in the limelight." It was the Irish element in you which shouted, "Look at thim divils retrain' with their backs facin' us," adding, about a lucky shamrock supposed to have been given to the Kaiser by somebody, "Sure, Hinnisey, and there'll be a leaf apiece for us when we get to Berlin."

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Your philosophy, Private Atkins, cannot be upset even when a shrapnel bullet knocks a few inches out of your arm. No; your lament is that it carries away a tattooed butterfly of which you were very proud. You date your letters from the "Hotel de la Openaires, Rue de Grassies, bed most comfortable and all arrangements up-to-date." You have your little joke all the time, and so when you meet the Foot Guards on a Sunday you ask them which band is playing in the Park? Now and then the joke is against you, but you only enjoy it all the more, which is the final testimony that you are a true humorist.

Perhaps if the joke singles out overmuch you go "all the colours of the rainbow," a lovable thing, because it reveals your modesty. Otherwise you always are in your element, be the field tented

white or stricken red. You are the complete knight in khaki, self-respecting, proud of your regiment, a lion-rampant of bravery and resolution, tender-hearted for all suffering; and we shall not forget your simple request, "Think kind of a soldier!" How could we when we know that you have a greater song than "Tipperary," although you only sing it silently to yourselves in the dark watches of the night:

*"A little I'm hurt, but not yet slain;  
I'll but lie down and bleed awhile  
And then I'll rise and fight again."*

JAMES MILNE

---

## THE WAR STORIES OF PRIVATE THOMAS ATKINS

[Pg 9]

### I. MARCHING TO WAR

*Fair stood the wind for France  
When we our sails advance.*

MICHAEL DRAYTON.

*Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife,  
To all the sensual world proclaim,  
One crowded hour of glorious life  
Is worth an age without a name.*

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

One pretty French girl had learned only one English phrase, "Kiss me quick." I don't know who taught her, but when she walked up the lines repeating it she soon found out its significance: *Truthful Thomas Atkins.*

#### Keepsakes

The French girls are going mad on getting our cap-badges and the numerals on our shoulders. We have been served with jack-knives, and they want to buy them of us, but we will not part with them: *A Private of the Worcesters.*

#### Want Nothing

France is a lovely country, but the sun has been very hot and trying—almost as bad as India. The roads are lined with apple and pear trees, which are now laden with fruit, and the troops are not in want of anything in that line: *Quartermaster-Sergeant R. Hodge.*

#### "Cheer, Boys, Cheer"

It's enough to give you fits to hear the Frenchmen trying to pick up the words of "Cheer, Boys, Cheer," which we sing with a great go on the march. They haven't any notion of what the words mean, but they can tell from our manner that they mean we're in great heart, and that's infectious here: *Sergt. W. Holmes, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.*

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#### Couldn't Understand!

We never see a paper here; only a French one, and you should see the sport when our fellows try to read one. Everyone has his own way of reading it. The French people are very nice, also very generous. The only drawback is we can't understand them—only just a few words now and again: *Sergt. D. O'Donnell, 2nd Royal Irish.*

#### Those Highlanders

The French people could not do enough for us when we landed at Boulogne. They were principally struck with the Highlanders. They had been told we were the most daring of the British forces, and one woman shouted out in admiration as we marched past, "There go the women from hell." She thought that was the biggest compliment she could pay us: *A Seaforth Highlander.*

## Her "Soldat"

The French people run out with bread and wine and fruit, and press them on the soldiers as they march through the villages. To-day we are camped by a field of lucerne, which is fortunate, as no hay is available. The tinned meat is very good, and we get French bread at times, which is excellent. Yesterday, passing through a village early, I went into a small buvette, and got coffee and some chocolate. The good woman refused all payment, saying she had a son who was "soldat," and I could not get her to take any money at all: *Anonymous*.

## Delightfully Hungry

I have never felt so well in my life, and, my word, I can eat—any time and all times. We get plenty of real good food, and tea or coffee. You will be rather surprised to hear we are served with roast beef, lamb, boiled beef, bully beef, cheese, bacon, jam, marmalade, large and small biscuits, onions, carrots, spuds, celery; in fact, we are living like lords. But we can't get any London shag (that is the worst rub), nor any fag-papers, at least not with gum on them: *Pte. C. A. Porter, Army Service Corps*.

## Dandy Lads

It rained a bit the first day we landed in France, but after that there were sunny days, and grand country to march through, the roads being particularly good. We did our thirty and thirty-five miles a day, and finished up fresh, bar a number who had bad feet and had to be left at the base.... These are the men, I said to myself, who have made Old England the real stuff which never allows confidence to flag in a great national trouble such as that through which we are now passing: *A Private of the Royal Scots Fusiliers*.

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## Flowers and Favours

The British troops met with an overwhelming reception immediately they landed on French soil. People went mad almost, so overjoyed were they to see us, and they begged us to give them pieces of biscuit and small articles as souvenirs. We never wanted for food or anything else among the French. The girls threw us flowers and people gave us wine, and anything, in fact, we wanted. They all wanted to shake hands with us, and we had great difficulty in marching, so surrounded were we with them. When we met the French soldiers—well, that did it. They commenced shouting and singing, and were properly excited at seeing us: *A Private of the Royal Sussex Regiment*.

## Tramp, Tramp, Tramp!

It would do your heart good to see our fellows leaving for the front. Regiment after regiment, thousands of men, march past here every night: Tramp, tramp, tramp! All splendidly fit; sometimes with a band, sometimes singing. A great favourite is "Here we are, here we are, here we are again," also "Tipperary." As I am writing a train is leaving, packed, and the Tommies are singing, "Hold your hand out, naughty boy," all happy. There is nothing on earth to touch our chaps for spirits: *Sapper C. R. J. Green, Royal Engineers*.

## Pat's Mishap

I was unlucky. I fell from a train at full speed. I was picked up for dead. French soldiers came and carried me away for burial. There were some women about. It was, I think, a woman who came up and looked at me and noticed something which made her think I was not a corpse—not yet. It'll take a lot to kill me! So I was resurrected. I'm a good bit broken—something in my back, something in my head. Oh, yes; it's a bad pain when I move. But that'll be all right soon. I don't look bad, do I? *An Irish Private*.

## A Comparison

As regards France in general, they are a long way behind England in so far as trams, buses, etc., are concerned, but the country is simply handsome. There is not a bit of idle land anywhere, for all you can see for miles is nothing but wheat and fruit trees. The houses and villages, I should think, were built years ago. They put you in mind of the old-fashioned pictures of villages you see at home. The people are the most cordial I have seen, and at the present moment they would give you their hearts if they could: *Pte. Talbot, Army Service Corps*.

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## Church Bells

Just got into a big town. Resting here for a few hours, so snatched the opportunity to scribble this. Can hear all the church bells ringing. This is a very nice country indeed. Every bit of land is cultivated and there are tons of fruit of all kinds everywhere. The people here are about the cleanest I have seen. They are all wild with joy to think we are here helping them, and every single one tries to give us something. We get more food, drinks, tobacco, smokes, and fruit than we hardly know what to do with. It seems a bit funny to see the boys going fighting with cigars

on, but it's a fact. Have a pocketful myself at present: *Corpl. Tupper, 4th Hussars.*

### **Invited Out!**

I put on a clean shirt, washed, shaved, and regular brush-up. We arrived at the house, or rather mansion, and were quite out of place, as we thought, walking on polished tiles in the passage with our big, heavy boots. It was a perfect slide. We took a seat by a big, round table, had wine, cakes, tea, cigars and cigarettes. To our surprise, this lady's father was mayor of ----. The lady, whose husband was with his regiment about eleven miles away, sang us two songs in English —“The Holy City” and “Killarney.” It was a perfect treat to have one's legs under a table and drink from cups and saucers. Next day we thought it was a dream: *Pte. Pakeman, Army Service Corps.*

### **Triumphant**

Since we landed here our march has been a triumphal one. Everywhere the people received us with demonstrations of joy. When off duty we are taken possession of by the townspeople and the French soldiers, and fêted as though we had been lifelong friends. It is not uncommon to see British and French soldiers walking about the streets arm-in-arm, and the shopkeepers refuse to take money from our men. We are free to take what we want in the way of fruit or wine, and some of the traders are indignant even if you hint at payment. “Pay us in German coin when you come back from Berlin,” is a favourite injunction. We have no difficulty in making ourselves understood, for a surprising number of the people know enough English to go on with, and men of the French army are always ready to act as interpreters for us. The French troops are delighted at the prospect of having British “comrades-in-arms.” I was surprised to find that the average French “Tommy” is familiar with the names of most of our regiments and our officers: *Lance-Corporal T. Kelly.*

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### **Thinking of Home**

You needn't worry about us. We are more concerned about you at home, and only hope that you are being well looked after in our absence. If we find that our loved ones are not being cared for, we will never forgive those responsible. That's my little “grouse,” done with now, and I can tell of the happy times we're having here: *Anonymous.*

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## **II. THINGS BY THE WAY**

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*Hark! I hear the tramp of thousands,  
And of armèd men the hum!  
Lo! a nation's hosts have gathered  
Round the quick alarming drum,  
Saying, “Come,  
Freemen, come!  
Ere your heritage be wasted,” said the quick alarming drum.*

BRET HARTE.

The French people were like mothers to us, giving us food, money, and wine. It is a pity to see them leaving their homes and having nowhere to go: *Pte. W. Irwan, 1st East Lancashires.*

### **Safe!**

The refugees used to follow our troops, as they knew they would be safe. The French people were very kind to us. They would have given us their shirt if they thought we wanted it. They gave us plenty of bread and cheese and wine and water: *Pte. W. Pallett, 2nd Royal Sussex Regiment.*

### **Perfectly Happy**

I am in a little French village, halted for the day, and with a few chums have found a house that has been left in a hurry all complete with cooking-pots. I am preparing the supper, which smells all right, but you should see the ingredients. I am perfectly happy, as this seems the proper country for me, and I never felt better in my life. I am picking up French all right, but I have not started eating frogs yet: *Pte. T. Green, 5th Lancers.*

### **“Du Pain!”**

My chum and I came into a village one day, and we wanted to get some bread and tobacco. We met a peasant woman in the village, and I said, “Du pain.” She took me by the arm and led me into a house. She opened a door and shoved me into a dark room. I couldn't see where I was, and

### **A Song of a Shirt**

I shall be a handy man soon. Yesterday I washed my only shirt. We were allowed only one with us and one at the base. I have washed it twice a month and used all my soap. Washing is a luxury, but I have managed a couple of good swims. The worst part of yesterday's washing was that just as I had finished wringing it out orders came to move off, and I have been all night shirtless, and it looks as though I shall be a day or two without, because I have no opportunity of hanging it out to dry: *A Private, of Bridlington.*

### **Like Rob Roy**

We are quartered in large caves alongside a château three hundred years old. We occupy three caves, and a large fire is lighted in the middle of each to purify the air and keep us warm at night. The nights are bitterly cold and very damp. Incidentally it is fine to-day, but we have had days of pouring rain—not that it affected our spirits in the least. You should see us all clustered round our fires in the evening, the flames lighting up at times the oval ceiling of the caverns and our faces; we must look like bandits or Rob Roy's boys: *A Lance-Corporal of the London Scottish.*

### **On and Off**

We took turns on outpost duty—twenty-four hours on and twenty-four off. We slept in the open with equipment and rifle, and had to stand to arms an hour before dawn, about two o'clock. The reconnoitring patrols got a feed at nearly every farm or house they passed. We didn't see a sign of Germans all the time, although the Uhlans were only a few miles away. We had a decent time, and the people are the best I have met. They think no one is as good as an Englishman, especially an English soldier: *A Private of the Royal Marine Light Infantry.*

### **A Baby Bunting**

I heard a cry from an empty house, and when I went in I found a baby, about eleven months old, lying crying in its nightgown. I brought the youngster out. It was raining in torrents at the time, and I carried it about five and a half miles. It was crying all the way, and I tried to conceal it from our sergeant, but eventually he said I should be obliged to put it down as we were going into action, so I laid it in a hedge and covered it with some straw, hoping that someone would soon find it and take care of it. It made me think of my own children: *Bombdr. Stoddard, Royal Artillery.*

### **Early Piety**

What struck me most was the number of Boy Scouts smoking clay pipes! They were only about six or seven years old, and they came up to us and asked us if we'd like a chew of tobacco. They seemed to enjoy it too. We were absolutely covered with flowers. All the horses were decorated up. There were some lovely crops of wheat destroyed. You could tell all the men were at the war. The women were in the fields bringing in the harvest. Children seemed pleased to see us, and they would walk along and hold our hands: *Sapper Magridge.*

### **Quiet and Restful**

We are having a very quiet, restful time in an old semi-fortified farmhouse. The enemy has a very strong position directly ahead, and until they are turned out we cannot move. Four motor-cyclists are quartered in an old hen-house, the floor of which is covered with straw; the perches come in very useful as clothes-racks. We are just going to have dinner, consisting of mutton chops (killed last night), potatoes, fried cheese, and bread and jam. We can occasionally get eggs, but otherwise we live on bread and jam and stew made of tinned meat and vegetables: *Dispatch-Rider Schofield, 5th Cavalry Brigade.*

### **On the Quiet!**

I can tell you it is a pucker rough life, for you have to get up as soon as it begins to get light, and it is about one o'clock before we can get down to it. You had better tell dad to volunteer for the war, for it's pucker exciting, and over here there is plenty of wine, for every village we go through the people give us bottles of wine to drink, and our regiment has been very jammy, for all the Germans do when they see you is to shell you or run away, and when the shells begin to hum it is time to gallop. Well, mum, I cannot tell you where I am, as we are on the move every day, and if we did know, it must all be kept secret, for we came out here on the quiet: *Pte. Clapinson, 3rd Hussars.*

### **Sweetness—and Rain!**

This is a sweet place when it rains; you can't get less than two days' rain at a time. I am now



doing mounted orderly duty to and from headquarters, four miles away. It's a rotten ride back at night, through pitch-black country, on your own. I can't say I dislike this country at all. The people treated us well on our way here. They brought out baskets of fruit, bottles of wine, cakes, etc., to give us, all shouting out, "Vive l'Angleterre!" and all the little children walking along the street get hold of your hands and stroke them, as if you were a prize dog or something: *Lance-Corpl. H. E. Forward, Army Service Corps.*

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### **Comfortable!**

We have had a good deal of marching—twenty to twenty-five miles per day—on very little sleep; in bed by midnight and up by a quarter to two. Last Saturday I think was the nearest to purgatory that I have ever been. We marched about fifteen miles, and when we got to — we were kept standing for four hours in a perfect deluge; some of us lay down in the road in about a foot of mud. When the order came to march on again we marched about another mile into a ploughed field and were told to make ourselves "comfortable." It was better in the road: *Pte. R. Williams, Royal Army Medical Corps.*

### **Sucking Eggs!**

The French and Belgians have been extremely hospitable, and wherever we go we have been received most generously—eggs, milk, wine, bread and butter, jam, handkerchiefs, apples, pears, plums, coffee, etc., are among the many gifts showered upon us as we ride through the various towns. Picture us riding along, the great unwashed, and often unshaven, being cheered by crowds of townspeople. I can best compare it to the crowds of long ago when a circus procession came through Wakefield. I have got quite expert at cracking eggs on the front of my saddle and sucking them: *Sergt. Seed, 3rd King's Hussars.*

### **To his Mother**

Well, Ma, I am, above all places, at Paris, and having a real good time, and the reason I am here is that the general had an accident four or five days ago through his horse stumbling and throwing him, and he was sent to a hospital, and naturally I had to follow on with the car to be ready to take him back to the front. Ye gods! it is good to be amongst civilized people again, and be able to have a decent bath, for I might tell you I was getting in a filthy state, having to go without a wash or a shave for sometimes three days on end: you can bet that I made up for it today. This morning I had an ordinary hot bath, and this afternoon, to make doubly sure that all the uninvited visitors were dead, I went to the English hospital and had a sulphur bath; after that a visit to the barber, and I felt a new man: *A Private, of Bristol.*

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### **A Far Journey**

We entrained (our destination unknown) in cattle trucks, forty men in each truck, penned in like sheep, and the only seats were the bottom of the truck. It was awful, to say the least of it, but it turned out rather a pleasant journey, as at every station we came to there were people, both gentle and simple, waiting to give us a cheer, also eatables, such as sandwiches and fruit of every description. It was remarkable to see small banners of the Union Jack in almost every hand, and shouting "Vive English," while the troops replied with "Let the sons of France march to glory," which they seemed to know the meaning of, as they joined in their own language. It was amusing to see rather handsome girls giving kisses to us in exchange for a badge, buttons, etc. They could not converse with us, but they conveyed their meanings by signs, and a common one was curling their moustache and drawing their hand across their throats, which meant we were to kill the Kaiser, to which we answered by showing our jack-knives. It was the same right through the five days' journey; big and small stations alike they fed us, and it was well they did, for we received no rations; we were treated like gentlemen. I got a rosette of the French colours from a lady, which I will treasure. The kindness of these people I will never forget; they looked rather astonished at our accommodation and surprised at our good spirits under the circumstances: *Pte. P. J. Grace, 1st Northumberland Fusiliers.*

### **A River of Joy**

The trip we have just made was tremendously exciting. Although it was night-time when we went up the river, this did not detract in the least from the reception our men got. All the villagers turned out, fired off crackers, and hung Chinese lanterns on the trees on the sides of the hills. This had a very charming effect. Towards midnight, however, a thick fog set in, and we were obliged to anchor till morning. The fog cleared away about 6 A.M., and we found ourselves lying opposite a small village which seemed to be deep in slumber. Not for long, though. Our men began to sing "It's a long, long way to Tipperary," "Rule, Britannia," and "The girl I left behind me." Window blinds went up, windows were thrown open, and people came out on to the verandahs in their "nighties" waving British flags, laughing and cheering and singing. By Jove, it sounded fine. Just imagine, if you can, high wooded slopes on each side, and this little village nestling amongst the trees; the morning mist quickly rising to reveal a bright sunny day, and you have it. One party of girls came down to the river-bank and started singing in return in French, much to everyone's amusement, as it was easy to see they had just tumbled out of bed. The quayside was very busy that day, as a large number of ships were all discharging horses, men,

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guns, and all the munitions of war. The whole of the population turned out, and as our men rode away in a never-ending line one's heart thrilled with pride, so businesslike and smart did they look in their khaki, their bronzed faces giving them the appearance of first-rate old campaigners, and inspiring everyone who saw them with the greatest confidence. I have seen many soldiers of many nationalities, but never soldiers who were a patch on those we are sending across to fight our battles. Good fortune be with them, and God bless them, is all I can say: *An Anonymous Sergeant*.

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### III. THE FRIENDLY FRENCH

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*And, having France thy friend, thou shalt not dread  
The scatter'd foe that hopes to rise again....*

SHAKESPEARE.

*We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother....*

SHAKESPEARE.

I think I owe all my luck to a mascot I carry in my knapsack. It is a beautiful crucifix, given to me by a Frenchwoman for helping her out of danger. It is silver, enamel, and marble, and she made me take it: *A Driver of the Royal Field Artillery*.

#### "A Sport"

When waiting for action we smoked cigarettes and ate apples and pears from the French orchard in which we were situated, while the good old owner—he was a sport—brought us out some coffee at four o'clock in the morning: *A Private, of Cricklewood*.

#### "Coo Naht"

I am making progress with my French, and I am not often at fault. Every time we go out people say "Good-night," even if it is in the daytime, as that is all the English they seem to know. Little children say "Coo Naht"—that is the nearest they can get to the right pronunciation: *Corpl. Fourneaux, Royal Engineers*.

#### So Hospitable!

I was sent out one day with two chaps to search a wood and some houses to see if any Germans were hiding. As soon as we approached, the people (who had been hiding in cellars and other places), when they found we were Britishers, simply hugged us. They brought out eggs, bread and butter, and if we had stopped a bit longer it would have required a horse and cart to carry the things away: *Pte. Gibson, Scottish Fusiliers*.

#### The "Entente"

I have never seen such enthusiasm. Old men, women, and children fight in the streets to get close enough to shake hands with us, or beg a piece of cloth or a button from our uniforms as mementoes of the "Entente," as they call it. At one village the women clamoured for locks of hair from us, and they had to get them. Even the sick are brought to the doors to see us pass: *A Private Soldier*.

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#### Praise Indeed

The French cavalry are wonderful, though we never will admit that they are superior to ours. They never seem to tire. They will keep in the saddle for days without trouble, and are used to foraging for themselves wherever they go. In battle their bearing is magnificent. I have seen a mere handful of them charge twenty times their own number of Germans: *Pte. H. Hill, 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards*.

#### "A Blooming Nuisance"

The French girls are awfully keen about our men, and you should see them when we arrive in any of the towns. They come and link arms with us until they are a blooming nuisance. It's just goodness of heart, and we don't like to be chivying them off, so they usually get buttons, badges, or anything they can beg off us just for a keepsake. We couldn't be better thought of: *Trooper W*.

## **Brave Women**

The French people are very kind. They gave us everything before leaving any one place. They told us to drink as much beer and wine as we wanted and then to turn on the taps so that the Germans could not get any when they came. I think the French women are braver than the men. They brought us fruit into the firing line regardless of the shells and bullets that were flying about: *Pte. T. Lacey, Lancashire Fusiliers.*

## **Only Water Left**

I feel sorry for the poor French. Be thankful you are living in England! We passed through village after village on the march, and there was not a living soul in the houses; doors and windows were smashed open, and everything broken. We passed one house to which the two women that lived in it had just returned after the Germans had passed. As we passed they gave us a drink of water—that was the only thing the Germans had left them: *Pte. Crombie, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.*

## **“Good Sports”**

The French make a lot of us in camp, and when we pass each other in the field, no matter how busy the Frenchmen may be, they give us hearty cheers to encourage us on our way. There's plenty of friendly rivalry between us when there's hard fighting to be done, and when we do get there before the French they don't grudge us our luck. They're good sports right through to the core, and the British soldier asks nothing better from allies in the field: *Lance-Corporal E. Hood.*

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## **“Give You Anything”**

The French are so good-natured they would give anything, even to the last bit of bread in the house, to our people. To us invalids on our way through Paris they gave a good reception, bringing grapes, bananas, peaches, cigarettes, tobacco, and bouquets of flowers. They are thundering good-natured. To our mounted men the poorer classes would also bring out buckets of milk and of water, and the women would come with their aprons full of fruit. They would give you anything: *A British Gunner.*

## **Bearded like Pards**

What strikes you most in this country is the enthusiasm of the people for their army. They have flocked to the colours by the thousand, and I fancy the biggest problem here is what to do with the men when you get them. Our own army looks small beside the French, but it is fit in every way, and we hear its praises sung in strange places. Some of our chaps look queer now that they have taken to letting their beards grow, and you would not know them: *Private G. Busby.*

## **“Fag” Making**

We are always in the thick of it, and we are doing grand work. The whistle of the shells is not exactly Tango music, but still the troops are very cheerful. Most of the time we have had good weather, but just now the rain is a bit troublesome. The behaviour of the French people in the fighting area is wonderful. They are just splendid. It is very difficult to get a smoke here, and when anyone strikes a match it is amusing to see the rush. The British Tommies are getting quite expert at “fag” making: *Pte. Kay, Northumberland Fusiliers.*

## **The Little Children**

The French “kiddies” all love the British Tommy, and would do anything to have a ride on one of our shoulders or hold our hands, and they stand on their heads with delight to receive a cap badge or something as a souvenir. Their bacca, which they call “tabac,” is cruel, and it costs more than English bacca in the long run, as it smokes so quickly and you have to smoke all day to get a smoke, whereas our bacca satisfies us in a minute or two. Their matches are horrible. “Allumettes” they call them, and they are a hundred a penny, and you have to wait half a minute for them to light and get asphyxiated in the bargain: *A Private, from Mons.*

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## **In Hospital**

All the other English wounded were sent to Havre, but somehow I got in with the French, and am here with them now. It is rather awkward, as I only know a few French words, but a French officer who has spent a lot of time in England comes and talks to me, and one of the nurses in another department knows our language and visits me whenever she can. The officer before-mentioned calls me “his Englishman,” and feels how strange it must be; he brings me English books and cigarettes, and looks after me like a father. These buildings are Roman Catholic schools and chapels, and stand in very nice grounds: *Lance-Corporal Eccles.*

## Well Pleased

I have just had mother's favourite potatoes and butter, French wine, fish, and rum and coffee, and apples and eggs to take home. I must say they are very nice people. They will do anything for you. It's just like being in England. The only difference is the language. We can't understand them, and they can't us, but still we have done fine up to the present. You can get plenty of beer, but I would not disgrace myself with that, especially being on active service. I am very pleased with the way the French have treated us. They are good-hearted people. Don't matter whom you see out, they all salute you, and the ladies bow to you. What more could you wish for? *Pte. A. Rogers, Royal West Kent Regiment.*

## "Bonnie Fighters"

One thing, we are safely on the road to victory, without a doubt, and the gallant French army are doing great deeds. The town we are near is properly deserted, for during the day the enemy are shelling the surrounding country, and the villagers go up the hill into caves at daybreak, and go back to town at night. The French folk treat us very kindly, letting us use their wells and buckets to water our horses with, and letting us have anything we want, but the one outstanding difficulty is understanding what they say. Each regiment has an interpreter, and when we want anything in town we have to go to him and he puts us on the right road: *Corpl. Cadwell, Royal Engineers.*

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## "No Germany!"

They are a fine lot of people, the French. They will give the British troops anything. When we march through the streets men, women, and children run to the doors and wave their hands, throw kisses, and all that sort of thing. They are always pleased to see us, and in all cases they have aprons and baskets of fruit of all kinds, which they give us gratis. But the sight that touches the heart is to see the burning home of some poor old peasant, who can ill afford to lose a copper coin. But, believe me, the time is not far distant when there will be no Germany, and all I can say is, "God send it soon and sudden": *Pte. J. R. Coates, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment).*

## No Singing Birds

A curious feature about this place is the almost complete absence of birds. One never hears birds singing as in England. The result is that the earth teems with spiders, etc., on which birds are accustomed to feed. I was on guard at — during the past twenty-four hours, and it was intensely interesting to chat with French Tommies who gathered round our fire. They are frightfully "bucked" when they meet anyone English with whom they can talk. A large number of the H.A.C. speak French. For this reason, if for nothing else, the people here pay us a good deal of attention. They are deadly keen on getting souvenirs. If it is discovered that we have parted with our grenade or our shoulder letters, our leave is stopped. At the place where we landed 5 francs were offered for the letters "H.A.C.": *A Member of the Honourable Artillery Company.*

## Quite Royal!

The nearest approach to our reception in France is like what the King got when he came to Notts. There are hundreds of chaps in England who would give twenty years of their lives to get such a reception as we get wherever we go. I should advise any chaps coming to France to bring a corkscrew with them, because they will get loads of wine given them by the French peasants—they can't do enough for us. And the girls! By Jove, there are some beauties—it's Nottingham beauty over again. Our greatest needs at the present time are English cigs., blankets, and soap. I have only got thirty cigarettes left, and the chaps here will give anything from 1d. to 6d. for a cigarette. They are far more valuable than money. Another thing which is valuable is water. Water is more scarce than petrol. We have to walk about half a mile for water, and then it's not very good. We're not afraid of washing after one another in the same water. I've seen about a dozen wash in one bucket of water.... The French soldiers do look funny in red trousers and blue coats, compared with our khaki suits. Half our chaps are minus badges and buttons, which the French girls have taken as souvenirs—I got a little doll off one girl when we were at Rouen. I might mention that hardly any of the chaps have any money—I've got the large sum of 2½d.: *Pte. F. Smith, Army Service Corps.*

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## IV. THE ENEMY GERMAN

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*Smite, England, to the tramp of marching men—  
The rhythmic heart-heat of a world in pain—  
Smite, hip and thigh, with flashing steel, and then  
Unfurl thy peaceful banners once again.*

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

*Oh, Polly love, oh, Polly, the rout has now begun,  
And we must march along by the beating of the drum;  
Go dress yourself in your best and come along with me:  
I'll take you to the war that's in High Germany.*

OLD ENGLISH SONG.

I have spoken to several prisoners who could speak English, and with no exception they all thought or were told that the British troops were no good at fighting—that it was only niggers we could face. They have got a different view by now: *Sergt. Dickson, Coldstream Guards.*

### **“Mister Bull!”**

The Germans seem to have gone mad entirely, and are running about like bulls in a china-shop, playing havoc with everything that comes their way. Our business is to wait around until Mister Bull gets properly tired, and then we will lead him off by the nose in proper style: *Lance-Corporal E. Twomey.*

### **Not Suited to It**

The Germans aren't really cut out for this sort of work. They are proper bullies, who get on finely when everybody's lying bleeding at their feet, but they can't manage at all when they have to stand up to men who can give them more than they bargain for: *Corporal J. Hammersley.*

### **Christian**

Not all Germans are cruel. On the Aisne I was lying for hours wounded. A German came along and bound up my wound under heavy fire. When he had made me ship-shape he was going to clear off, but a stray bullet caught him, and he fell dead close beside me: *A Private of the Black Watch.*

### **A Doubting Doctor**

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A big German surgeon came to me and said, “You don't like to fight against us, do you?” I replied we did not care whom we fought so long as it was for the good of our country. “But you would rather not fight with us?” he said. “No fear,” I replied, and then he left me saying “Bravo”: *A Captured Corporal.*

### **X-Rayed**

The Germans are bad fighters. They rely on their big guns to do their work. They won't come out to fight you with their rifles.... I have seen three big battles, and got hit in the fourth one. Hard lines, isn't it? I have the bullet in my foot yet, but I must wait for my turn, as there are a lot waiting to be X-rayed: *Lance-Corporal G. Percy.*

### **Took the “Bully”**

We got caught in a wood, where I was wounded. When the fire stopped the Germans came to us and pinched everything we had. We drew five francs the day before, the only pay-day we had had out here, and the beggars stole the lot. They even sat down in front of us and tucked into the “bully” they had done us down for: *Pte. Blissenden, Grenadier Guards.*

### **“Roll on, London!”**

One German prisoner says, “I don't want to fight. Roll on, London.” I suppose he was a waiter in some of the London hotels. Some of them look pitiful sights. They are starved, and when they come here they are all well looked after. They say they are glad it is the British who have taken them. They know the French would not give them much. They have good reason too: *An Aberdeen Reservist of the Royal Field Artillery.*

### **Captured Uhlans**

The Uhlan prisoners created some amusement as they were being marched along, for, as they are not used to marching, and were wearing great jack-boots, it nearly kills them, but they were pushed along by the infantry. While the Uhlans were thus being urged along the Frenchwomen tried to get at them and shouted to the soldiers to cut their throats. Fortunately for the prisoners, they were strongly guarded: *A Gunner of the Royal Field Artillery.*

### **Grave-digging**

We were told off to bury German dead, but we couldn't get through, there were so many, and we sent into their lines under a flag of truce to ask if they would come out and help. They sent a lot

of men out, and they were quite friendly. They were well supplied with cigars, which they most likely looted from some French houses, and they offered us some, which we were glad of: *Pte. Brady, Irish Rifles.* [Pg 28]

### **A Barber in Lambeth**

I went to a village by motor with an officer to dress some German wounded, about forty all told. I was doing two German brothers, and they spoke very good English. One said, "Where are your good people going to send us?" I replied that I thought they would be sent to England, and he said, "That's good. I hope it will be somewhere near Lambeth Walk, for I have a barber's shop there, and then my wife can come and see me": *Pte. Flaxman, Army Medical Corps.*

### **Berlin "Nuts"**

I am writing this on a lady's glove-box. I picked it up here, but how it got here God only knows. These German officers are awful "nuts," and carry as many beautifiers as an actress on tour. They use their gloves for another purpose. They put a bullet or stone in the finger of a loose glove and flick the ears of their men. We found a wounded German who had been a clerk in London. His ears were extra large and were both swollen and skinned by the flicks he had got from his officers: *Pte. F. Burton, of the Bedfords.*

### **"Collies?"**

It's my opinion that you couldn't find greater collies between the seven seas of the world than these Germans, not if you were to walk about for a month of Sundays, with all their bragging and bantering and bullying of the plucky little Belgians, and any Christian might be ashamed to use our wounded the way these sausage-faced German pigs used them. The "parley-voos" treated us right decently from the first day that ever we set foot in their country: *A Private of the Connaught Rangers.*

### **The Track of the Huns**

One of the worst features of the war has been to witness the plight of the refugees in the stricken countries. I have seen many a strong man in our ranks with tears in his eyes when we have passed poor women and children flying from their homes, their only food being that which our soldiers gave them. Every village through which the Germans had passed in their retirement was practically blown to pieces. It is also tragic to see thousands of acres of corn and vines rotting, with no one to gather them in: *Sergt. Walker, King's Liverpool Regiment.*

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### **Got the Guns**

The Germans seem to think that you can catch Irish soldiers with fly-papers, for they just stepped up the other day and called on us to surrender as bold as you like, and bolder. We didn't waste any words in telling them to go about their business, but we just grabbed hold of our bayonets and signed to them to come on if they wanted anything, but they didn't seem in a hurry to meet us. After a bit they opened fire on us with a couple of Maxims, but we just fixed bayonets and went for the guns with a rush. They appear to be delicate boys indeed, and can't stand very much rough usage with the bayonet. We got their guns: *Pte. E. Ryan, Royal Munster Fusiliers.*

### **"Made in Germany"**

The first thing we saw was what looked like a big black screen rolling up and blotting out the countryside. It turned out that the screen was the German motor-cars. I must tell you that they never marched until they got near to the firing line. They filled the cars with men, as thick as they could stick. Then another batch would sit on the shoulders of the others, and a third lot on theirs. Straight, it struck me as so funny the first time I saw it. I was reminded of a troupe of acrobats on the halls: *A Private of the Middlesex Regiment.*

### **"Over the Shoulder"**

They don't like steel, those Germans. I threw three of them consecutively over my shoulder on the point of the bayonet, and the very next moment a shrapnel shell burst right on my rifle. How I escaped with what I've got I don't know. All the shell did was to blow my rifle to smithereens and the tips of my trigger and next two fingers off. The doctor says it's only the tips gone. That's good, as I shall have enough to pull the trigger with again, and if that fails there's the "over-the-shoulder touch," which is more than enough for the Germans: *A Scots Guardsman, at Mons.*

### **No Chocolates**

It is pitiful to see the innocent women and little children driven from their humble homes to trek to different parts of France, literally starving on the road. And when they return they will find that their only shelters have been burned to the ground. I see in the papers that English people have been giving chocolate and cigarettes to the German prisoners, and, I daresay, every comfort

they require. Yet a few weeks ago the same men were robbing, looting, and causing grief and anxiety in this country! Instead of giving them cigarettes and chocolates, English people should distribute the money amongst the wives and families whose husbands and fathers will never return: *Gunner E. Tyler, of Bristol.*

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### **Kill or Wound?**

One of the German soldiers captured by the Lancashires observed, "You shoot to kill; we fire from the hip, and only want to wound." On a German officer who was made prisoner a diary was found in which was entered the advice: "Do not face the British troops when entrenched; their fire is murderous. First sweep the trenches with artillery fire." One of the German methods of finding the range with their big guns is to heap up the corpses of their fallen men, and thus, when the Allied troops advance, their distance from the batteries can accurately be gauged: *A Private in the Coldstreams.*

### **A Lucky Escape**

The devils came into the village and said the poor people were hiding English soldiers. They then set the houses on fire, and I could see the flames coming my way. I managed to get out before the stack took fire, only to run into the arms of three of the Germans. They were as drunk as they could be, and I soon got out of their grips. If two of them are alive their mothers will not know them. But I was caught a little later by two more of them. I thought it was all over with me, when one of them was shot dead by one of our chaps who was hiding. I didn't know he was there, and you may imagine my feelings when he came running to me. We got away, but we should have been riddled if they had been sober: *A Trooper of the 11th Hussars.*

### **False Bugle-calls**

We found the Germans continually sounding our bugle-calls for the purpose of deceiving our men, and one of our worst fights took place at a place I can't tell you the name of, because the Germans sounded the retreat for one of our advanced battalions, and then it was attacked in murderous fashion as it deployed across the open in the belief that it was being ordered to fall back. For a time that threw the whole line into confusion, but we soon got right again, and drove the Germans off in fine style with the bayonet. After that bugle-calls were dispensed with, but the Germans soon "tumbled" to that and took to picking off the dispatch-riders who were sent with orders. In that way it happened that bodies of men never got their orders to retreat or advance, and that's why some of our regiments got cut up here and there: *A Private of the 18th Royal Irish Regiment.*

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### **A Tell-tale Diary**

I found this diary on a German officer we had captured:

July 20: At last the day! To have lived to see it! We are ready. Let him come who may. The world race is destined to be German.

August 11: And now for the English, used to fighting farmers. To-night William the Greater has given us beautiful advice. You think each day of your Emperor. Do not forget God. His Majesty should remember that in thinking of him we think of God, for is he not the Almighty's instrument in this glorious fight for right?

August 20: The conceited English have ranged themselves up against us at absurd odds, our airmen say.

August 25: An English shell burst on a Red Cross wagon to-day. Full of English. Ha! ha! serve the swine right. Still, they fight well. I salute the officer who kept on swearing at Germany and her Emperor in his agony. And then to ask calmly for a bath. These English! We have hardly time to bury our own dead, so they are being weighted in the river: *Pte. Crow, 2nd Seaforth Highlanders.*

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## **V. CAMPAIGNING IN GENERAL**

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*What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away  
Ere the barn-cocks say  
Night is growing grey,  
To hazards whence no tears can win us;  
What of the faith and fire within us  
Men who march away?*

THOMAS HARDY.

It is a rough life, getting food the best way you can, and cooking it all ways. One morning we were cooking some rabbits and the Germans surprised us, so we had to leave quick: *Corpl. Prickard, 11th Hussars.*

### **Wanted a Hat!**

I have lost another horse. A piece of shell caught it, and another took my hat off, so I have a big French sun-hat now for headgear until I can find one lying about somewhere: *A Trooper of the 15th Hussars.*

### **A Day in Bed**

There is one thing I would appreciate as much as anything just at present, and that is a day's sleep in bed. We have not undressed for a month, and a little straw under some cover is considered a luxury: *A Private of M Section, B Signal Company.*

### **Lost!**

If we lay down on the road we fell asleep at once, but if Germans got wind of us they were on top of us before we could get to sleep. We just lived on pears and apples, and eventually fell in with a party of French cavalry, who shared their bread with us: *A Sergeant in an Irish Regiment.*

### **Looked After**

I am in the best of health and am getting plenty of food. We get bacon for breakfast, corned-beef stew for dinner, cheese and jam for tea and supper, plenty of tea and sugar, and at four o'clock every morning a half-quartern of rum, so you see they look after us all right: *Lance-Corpl. Feeley, 1st Dorsetshire Regiment.*

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### **“Have You a Light?”**

We keep a fire or candle going all day and night specially for lighting “fags” and pipes. If on the move we keep a lantern on the go, so if you could send me a good substantial pipe-lighter (I don't care how much it costs) it will be the best turn you have ever done to the army, and I shall be in great demand: *Sergt. Horwell, Royal Artillery.*

### **Don't Know!**

It's fighting and marching every day. There was a majority of us that thought it would be over by this time, but I am afraid that it will last a lot longer than what one thought. We get no news here at all, and we don't even know where we are stationed; they won't tell us anything: *Pte. E. Lawrence, Bedfordshire Regiment.*

### **The Cannon's Roar**

Townsmen who are used to the noise and roar of streets can stand it better than the countrymen, and I think you will find that by far the fittest men are those of regiments mainly recruited in the big cities. A London lad near me says it's no worse than the roar of motor-buses and other traffic in the City on a busy day: *Sergeant-Major McDermott.*

### **Hard Lines**

We had been two days and nights in the rain and were soaking to the skin. My section was told off to hold a farm till we got the order to retire, but to burn it before we retired. I was in a hay-loft setting fire to it when the floor gave way and I was sent flying through to the ground below, and I could not get up. It was hard lines: *Private R. McBride.*

### **Roughing It!**

I am laid on my stomach on a barn floor writing this with the light of a candle I am lucky enough to get hold of. As I write this I can hear our big guns firing; in fact, they fairly shake the place I am in. We are just going to turn into some nice dry straw, and have a well-earned sleep. Talk about roughing it: a man that gets through this can get through anything at all: *Trooper Stephenson, 18th Hussars.*

### **A Sing-song**

Every night round the camp-fire we have our photos out—that is, if we have any—then we have a song. The favourites are “Never Mind” and “The Last Boat is Leaving for Home.” The French people gave us a great welcome when we came here, and they have kept it up in every town and village we have come through: *A Private of the 2nd Royal Scots.*

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### **One Blessing**



We are a rough lot out here, and washing and shaving are things of the past. The roof we sleep under is large—the sky—and the rain comes through very often. Our shirts we change when they wear out. You must not worry too much if there are very long lapses between the letters, as we can't always write. It's a game of dodging shells here. There is one blessing: we get plenty of food, and they are looking after us the best they can: *Sergt. Prout, South Wales Borderers.*

### **Not Worrying**

I'm doing and going as I'm told, not worrying, but taking things as they come. I've slept in barns, wool stores, cinemas, casinos, dock sheds, and for a bit had the stars as a counterpane. The fighting has been very fierce and close; as one pal said, "Oh! ain't it 'ot?" We have been outnumbered, sometimes 10,000 to 2000, but our boys stick to them, and have played havoc with their "mass formations." The Maxims have cut them down like corn, and when we charge with fixed bayonets see 'em run like rats. They will get no quarter from our "mob": *Pte. Bromfield, Royal Engineers.*

### **Scrap Iron**

We were kept on the go for a week, day and night, with hardly a wink of sleep. What we did get was just lying down and dozing off, sometimes in the road, and sometimes in a ditch. We raided a convoy. Bacon, biscuits, sugar, and jam all came to us. The wagons were simply packed up. I think we had about 150 lb. of bacon between four of us. We marched all that night, and in the morning we collected a few sticks and started to make tea and fry a few rashers, when they opened fire on us, and 15 lb. of scrap iron interrupted our meal: *Gunner J. Talboys, Royal Field Artillery.*

### **Not Swept Away Yet**

The other day we were off in pursuit of a body of infantry, and when we overtook them they simply flung themselves down on the ground and let us ride over them. Then, when we came back, they surrendered. Some of them were so dead beat that they could not run away, not even if they had wanted to, and that seems to be true of their men everywhere. Some of them have had their fill of fighting and marching by this time, and I do not blame them, for they got it hot in the fighting with us since the third week of August, when they came along to sweep us into the sea: *A Trooper of the 3rd Hussars.*

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### **From the Hip**

The Germans have a funny way in fighting. Their infantry when advancing fire from the hip and come on in masses, splendid targets for our guns. As soon as one lot gets mowed down the gaps are filled up with fresh men. They are in terrible numbers—about ten to one in some places. Nearly all the men's wounds are shrapnel, and heal wonderfully. Men almost cripples a day or two ago are going on splendidly since being treated here. My worst wound is on the right arm, a piece of flesh torn away, but with good dressing it should heal up well: *Bombardier A. E. Smith.*

### **A Cupboard Skeleton**

Two Royal Irish Fusiliers picked me up and took me to a farm, where there were other three wounded. That night we heard somebody prowling round the farm, and thinking they might be the enemy, the Irish Fusiliers hid in a large cupboard, where they would be able to make a good attack. We hadn't long to wait, and a small party of German infantry came in—on a looting expedition, likely. The men in the cupboard accounted for three, and the others yelled and ran. The farmer and his wife got scared, and they disappeared: *Pte. Cunningham, 8th Northumberland Fusiliers.*

### **Food for Powder**

The impression we got was that the Germans have so many men available at the point where they deliver an attack that, as soon as one body gets tired out or shows signs of losing its nerve under fire, it is recalled to the rear and replaced by fresh men, who are brought up in motors and all sorts of vehicles. The used-up men are then taken away, and very likely they come on again after a rest. That's an altogether new way of fighting, but I fancy the Germans go on the principle that "enough's as good as a feast" in what they get from our rifle fire: *A Private of the Manchester Regiment.*

### **Not Good Shots**

You have read about their famous Uhlans. They are worth nothing. When we have come close to them they have always turned round. We are just wanting to get them to charge. They are very hard to tell from a distance because they are very much like ourselves. I am just getting settled down to it now. If the Germans were good shots I would not be writing to you now, but I must say their artillery fire is very hot. It is that which has found most of our fellows. The people here can't do enough for us. They simply go mad when they see us: *A Trooper of the 9th Lancers.*

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## Adam without an Eden

I got made prisoner along with Sergeant-Major H— of ours. We did not think we should ever see England again, as they made us strip every mortal stitch off our bodies so that we could not escape. At the time they were being hardly pressed by our troops. But in the middle of the night we made a cut for it. We got away, and after wandering about absolutely naked, not even a fig-leaf (a lifetime it seemed, but really about a couple of hours), we fell in amongst a French division of infantry, and they clothed and fed us in no time and put us on the right way: *A Trooper of the Dragoon Guards.*

## The Envable "Terriers"

I read in one of the papers that some of the "Terriers" in England have to put up with the inconvenience of sleeping three in one bed. I feel sorry for them. Some of us would be glad to get a bundle of straw sometimes. There is one thing, up to the present, we have been having plenty of grub and a tot of rum nearly every night, which no doubt you will guess we refuse. We get tobacco issued to us, but are very short of fag-papers. A couple of packets would come in very handy: *Gunner Richards, Royal Artillery.*

## Pea-shooters

At one place we had a surprise attack. We were just getting ready for some food, when all of a sudden shells started bursting around us. I can tell you it was a case of being up and doing. Dixies and tea-cans were flung on one side, our tea spilt, fires put out, and the order given to stand to our guns and horses, everyone to prepare for action. Still, we were not to be caught napping. Our boys only close one eye when we get a chance of a sleep, so you can tell we were wide-awake by the fact that it was a case of do or die. Our gallant boys, the Guards, held them at bay until our death-dealing pea-shooters put them to flight: *Driver Clark, Royal Artillery.*

## Had "To Nip"

Two Germans had a pop at me one day when I was crossing a ploughed field, but they might as well have tried to shoot the moon. I have had some narrow escapes from shells—they were German shells, or I should not be writing this now. We laugh at them sometimes. The Germans don't like steel—although we have not done much in that line. We play on a different line to that. We like to catch 'em napping, and we have done it, too, but, of course, they have had our fellows the same. It would make you laugh to see how we dodge the shells and nip under cover for all we are worth. We had to scatter one night just when I was making some tea. I was just going to put the tea and sugar into the boiling water when bang they came just overhead, and I had to nip: *Corpl. Newman, Somerset Light Infantry.*

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## "Fairly Well"

While I am writing this letter I am cooking the dinner, boiling a piece of bacon we managed to get and potatoes. I have been elected cook on our car. I expect you will say it is just like me to be among the grub. Anyway, we are getting plenty of it now. We get our day's rations every morning—one rasher of bacon, one tin of bully beef, one pot of jam (between five), a piece of cheese, so much tea and sugar, and so much bread, when we can get it; if we have not bread we get biscuits. We get plenty of potatoes out of the fields, and sometimes make what we call bully-beef stew. It is very nice, and consists of bully beef, potatoes, carrots, and onions—all boiled together. Sometimes we get fresh meat, so you see we are living fairly well: *Pte. Calvert, Army Service Corps.*

## Rained on

We struck our tents this afternoon and then the rain came down. It is eight o'clock now and the rain is still steadily driving down. I suppose you imagine that you can picture the discomfort, but I bet you can't. As a help, however, I will give you a few details. We have had to erect the tent in the pouring rain, which means that the floor-boards are soaked, and each one has to find a little dry oasis for himself, and there aren't many dry places left when nine fellows have to be crowded in. Now the tent-cloth is soaked through and little streams of water are trickling across the floor, while miniature cascades are dancing merrily down the walls: *Lance-Corpl. J. W. James, Royal Fusiliers.*

## Quagmires and "Mug Racks"

A German device that is new to me is the making of quagmires in front of the trenches, usually by digging extra trenches a few hundred feet from the real ones, throwing in the loose clay, and then flooding them so that you get a ditch of liquid mud. One day a French infantry detachment was advancing finely against the German position until they stumbled into one of these bogs, and just as they were stuck fast they were treated to a hail of fire. Barbed-wire entanglements are ten times worse than what we found in South Africa. Usually they are hidden away in the long grass, and you don't see them until they catch you in the legs and bring you down. However, we're

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getting up to the dodge. Now we call the wires "mug racks," because it's only the "mugs" who get caught in them: *A Private of a Scots Regiment*.

### **Cave-dwellers**

We are like brigands at large in a cave, but one thing spoils it—that is, these blooming shells. The guns are only from six to eighteen hundred yards off, but we cannot see them on account of their being like ours, so cleverly concealed, and our aeroplanes cannot find them, although if they go over it is ten to one they are heavily fired at, but with them being so high it is impossible to see anything. We, the machine gunners, are rather lucky, as we draw our rations from the cooker where they are at present in the village, and then take them to our house that we have, and where the corporal in charge of the limber stays. He acts as cook, and we have bully stews, marrows, walnuts, turnips, and different things, and plenty of potatoes: *Pte. H. Tesseyman, Coldstream Guards*.

### **Contour Maps**

It is my opinion, although, of course, I have no authority for it, that the German artillery have been supplied with contour maps of the route to Paris, with the ranges marked from hill to hill. Directly they reached an incline and faced us on another they let fly right on top of us straight away. They certainly had not time to find the range by the ordinary methods. I was wounded by a bullet from a shrapnel. It is very poor stuff, and very ineffective. The bullet that hit me ought ordinarily to have gone right through my hand. I lay for about an hour and a half on some corn, with the shrapnel bursting over me all the time. The bullets were absolutely spent, and when they dropped on my clothes they only singed them; others I stopped with my hands as they fell: *Quartermaster-Sergt. Hinton, 17th Batt. Royal Field Artillery*.

### **A Disturbed Dinner**

Two days ago, our troop, consisting of twenty-eight men, was billeted in a farmyard. We were trying our best to make up a bit of a dinner by collecting potatoes, carrots, etc., when a shell struck the roof of the building and set it on fire. Fortunately the only casualty was a wounded horse, although several of the men got shaken up a bit. The only thing that worried us was that we lost our dinners, because I can tell you we had to get out of it quickly—it was a bit too warm for Tommy Atkins. The country here is thick with woods, which makes it very dangerous for cavalymen. We are fighting side by side with the French troops and we get on very well together. Lots of them speak good English: *Pte. Martin, 16th Lancers*.

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### **Petrol Power**

The war is a petrol war. Every thing is done by machinery, and victory is to the man who has the most petrol. One is much impressed by this. The aeroplanes have by now rendered ordinary scouts obsolete. They go ahead of us and find out everything about the Germans. One hears the hum of their engines daily. It was quite exciting at one place when three of our planes chased a very fast German one. One of our fellows put a bullet through his petrol tank, forced him to come down, and made him prisoner. We make war in a most extraordinary way nowadays. The other day — and I met at headquarters and had a cup of tea together during an hour I had off. He said he felt mischievous and would love to have a go at some Uhlan patrols who were only about a dozen miles off. So he jumped into his car and drove off. A few hours later he returned to have a first-class dinner at an hotel near headquarters, having killed a Uhlan and nearly taken two more prisoners: *A Dispatch-Rider*.

### **"Crackers!"**

I expect the Germans thought they had a snip. Their army is very poorly looked after. You can't help feeling sorry for some of the poor beggars—they are almost starved to death, and give themselves up in scores. This war is nothing but an artillery duel, and the country for miles is very wooded, which makes it harder for us, because we cannot see them till we are almost on top of them, and then they have first plunk at us. The Kaiser's crack regiment, the Prussian Guards, went crackers before we were out a fortnight. There was a pretty dust-up. We caught them coming across an open field. We let them come within 200 yards of us, and then we let go. We almost wiped them clean out. It was an awful sight when we finished. Those who weren't killed ran for their lives. I expect they are in Berlin by now: *Private R. Homewood*.

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### **A Near Shave**

I was out with the Austin car convoying three motor-lorries with supplies for a cavalry brigade, when we were pounced upon by a bunch of German cavalry, who took us prisoners, and took everything I had except the clothes I was wearing. All our men, twenty in number, including an officer, were put back to a wall and kept there with an armed guard. I was made to turn the motor round. They put eight Germans in the car, and I had an officer with a revolver pointing at my head standing on the step. They then made me reconnoitre the villages for two hours, looking for the positions of the British troops, which they did not find, but they went mighty close at one

time. Upon returning to the same spot we were put in the middle of a line of German cavalry, about 6000 strong, and taken up a steep hill to a plateau on top. As soon as it became daylight they were spotted by our cavalry and artillery, who made short work of them; but they kept us right in their fighting line to the very last, when they bolted and left us: *Private H. L. Simmons, of Addlestone.*

### **“Poor Old Bones!”**

I look an awful picture. My clothing is torn to shreds. I have lost all my buttons, and it is dreadful cold at nights, but I cuddle up against the horses for warmth. Our horses are terrified, mad, but my two seem a bit at ease when I lie down beside them at night. If I leave them for a minute there is no pacifying them. You would die of laughing if you saw me now. I am writing this across the horse's belly. He is too tired to rise, but he gives me such knowing looks at times. He is a proper chum. He is a grey, and you should see the mess I have made trying to discolour him. He has tar mixed with moss rubbed over him. Every kind of dust and dirt I could get has been rubbed on him. I have to laugh when I look at him, and the officer this morning nearly had a fit. Of course, there is a humorous side to everything. We would never live if there wasn't. The noise is deafening. You can't hear your mate speak unless he shouts in your ear. The bursting of the shells is appalling, but poor old “bones” lies here as if he was in the stable at home. He is dead beat, and so am I, but there is no actual rest here; it is only a lull: *A Private of the Scots Greys.*

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## **VI. BATTLES IN BEING**

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*And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,  
Dewy with Nature's tear-drops as they pass,  
Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,  
Over the unreturning brave,—alas!  
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass....*

BYRON'S: “Childe Harold.”

*For the Colonel rides before,  
The Major's on the flank,  
The Captains and the Adjutant  
Are in the foremost rank.  
But when it's “Action front!”  
And fighting's to be done,  
Come one, come all, you stand or fall  
By the man who holds the gun.*

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

I got a biscuit from Tibby Tennant, and was eating it when I got shot. M'Phail was beside me, and dressed my wounds as well as he could: *Pte. Clark, Highland Light Infantry.*

### **Unexpected**

I will tell you of a cute trick of our gunners. They got a lot of empty wagons and put them in a wood. The Germans, seeing them, thought they were our guns put out of action. They rushed out for them, and our artillery did not half scatter them, killing about four hundred: *Pte. Brown, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.*

### **Turpinite**

I saw some of the effects of turpinite, the wonderful French explosive, used in this war for the first time. I saw a trench full of dead Germans killed by it. They were standing right up in the trenches looking as though they were still alive: *Pte. Thompson, 2nd Dragoon Guards.*

### **Took Off the Roof!**

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I was standing within 50 yards of a house one day when a shell came and took the roof clean off; you could see the cups on the table quite plain; a clean sweep. I counted about thirty shells drop around us the same day in half an hour; we had only two horses and a man shot: *Tpr. C. McCarthy, 4th Hussars.*

### **Lancashire!**

Fellows were being knocked out all round, and wounded were crying for help. Frequently one

would say to his neighbour, "Bill, how's ta gettin' on?" but Bill, who had been as cheery as a cricket just before, was found to be picked off. Our ranks were so thinned that by the time we got within charging distance of the enemy's trenches we had not sufficient men left for the charge: *Pte. Harvey, North Lancashire Regiment.*

### **Up Aloft!**

All our troops blamed the German aeroplanes for the heavy loss which we sustained. It did not matter where we went to try and get an hour's sleep, there would be an aeroplane over us. The Germans dropped a little disc—a sort of long tape—from their aeroplanes, about twenty yards in front of our trenches, and shortly after the Germans would start shelling us. I think it is mostly the aeroplanes which enable them to get our range so accurately as they do: *A Private of the Manchester Regiment.*

### **His Own Back**

We were only 300 yards from a battery of German "death screechers," which naturally opened fire into us, doing great damage. We soon silenced them, though. Worked round their flank and picked off the gunners. Please don't think I am boasting, but I picked off eight. I had a splendid position. I was firing three hours before they hit me seriously. When I was hit I didn't care; my rifle was smashed to atoms by a shell, but I was gloriously happy, having got my own back before being put out of action: *A Private of the Sussex Regiment.*

### **Sleep Through Anything**

The Germans keep firing away by night as well as day, and that gives them a big pull over us, because the men in our lines find it hard to sleep with the continual shelling. Firing from your own lines doesn't affect you in the same way, so that it doesn't keep the Germans awake unless we bombard them. Men without sleep are not nearly so fit for fighting the next day. Not all of our chaps are kept awake. There are some who could sleep through anything: *Gunner Dyson, Royal Artillery.*

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### **"Lucky, Considering"**

My company was advancing on a wood from which the Germans were picking off our men. We were lying down firing, when from the wood was shouted, "Stop it, you are firing on your own men." Someone said, "Cease fire," and we did. Then a very hot fire came at us from the wood. My left-hand man was shot through the stomach, and then my right-hand man was shot through the head. It was a German who had shouted to us. Then a shell, a 96-pounder, burst over us, and a piece of it took away from me a large piece of my left side. I am lucky, considering: *Pte. J. Sullivan, South Lancashires.*

### **Nothing Wasted**

We killed a tremendous number of them, and owing to their massed formation they were practically standing up dead in front of us. It just suited us to be plugging at them. They came on as if they thought they had nothing to do but take the lot of us, but they were surprised to find that they could not do so. The Germans shoot promiscuously, believing that their shots must hit someone. They had not the same chance of hitting us, and rarely attempted to pick out their man before they shot. I should think that in three days I fired between five hundred and six hundred rounds of ammunition, and we did not waste any; every shot was meant for someone: *Private P. Case.*

### **Those Uhlans**

We were attacked by a brigade of German cavalry—Uhlans. We got out of the trenches and prepared to receive their attack. I caught the first horse with my bayonet, causing it to swerve so suddenly to the right that the Uhlan was pitched on his head, breaking his neck, I fancy, but not before I heard a sword whizz past my head. I did not feel at all comfortable. I also caught the second horse, but he got his hoof on my left foot, and I felt something on my chest throwing me on to the ground. What happened afterwards I don't know, as I was unconscious for the next thirty-six hours: *Sergt. Gibson, Sussex Regiment.*

### **Stonewalling!**

The fighting was hard at times, but only really terrible when you were groping about in the dark exposed to heavy rifle or artillery fire without the least suspicion of where it was coming from at the moment or likely to come from next. Later, when we had settled down to the work and could see what we were up against, it was child's play, so to speak, and all you had to do was to lie in the trenches and pick the Germans off as you saw them coming on to the attack. And to pick them off is just like taking shots at a stone-finished wall. You can't help hitting something, and every time you hit you are taking chips off the wall: *A Private of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.*

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## The Way of It

The shrapnel shells of the Germans were bursting over the trenches where we were lying, and I was struck in the foot with a piece of shell, which took the sole of my boot clean off. Five minutes later, when I was trying to help a fellow near me who had been hit in the shoulder, I was struck in the right thigh by a pellet from a shrapnel shell. I fired one more shot after that. I aimed for the driver of a German machine gun and hit him. This was my first experience of actual fighting, and I can tell you it is a funny sensation at first to see the shells bursting near and around you, to hear the bullets whistling by you, but you soon get used to it all. It tries your nerves a bit at first, but you soon get in the way of it: *Private C. D. Moore.*

## Like an Exodus

We of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders took up a position facing a wood where the Germans were in strong force. As they emerged our boys met them with a raking rifle fire, which mowed them down. On they came again, and again with the same devastating result. Their bullets came whistling round us, but we were indifferent, the marksmanship being very poor. The German infantry carry their rifles under their arms, the butts resting on their hips, and they fire as they march. As the enemy poured out *en masse* into the open it was like the exodus from the Celtic and Rangers Scottish Cup final! Man, if they were only three to one we could go through them easily, but when it comes to ten to one, strategy as well as bravery has to be considered: *An Argyll and Sutherland Highlander.*

## A Long, Long Day

I rolled a cigarette, thinking the engagement finished for the time, and was making my way up the ridge ahead of my company to see how far the Germans had retired. I had gone some considerable distance when thousands of Germans reappeared on the sky-line, and of course I had to dash back to my company. Every second I expected a bullet through my back, but I was lucky and was bowled over by one which fractured my right elbow, and I broke my forearm as I fell. The Germans advanced right over me, but after taking all my grub out of my haversack they left me to my fate. I lay there until dark and it was the longest day I remember. The bullets and shells flew over my head incessantly, some only falling a few yards away from where I lay. As soon as darkness fell and the firing ceased the stretcher-bearers came out and got me away. Once or twice I sat up to see what chance I had of getting away, but the dirty devils kept on sniping at me, and I had to lie down again. I could see, however, that the ground was covered with dead Germans: *Pte. Priest, Coldstream Guards.*

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## Every House a Fort

We were standing close to an orchard, and some of us were killing time and quenching thirst by picking apples from the overhanging trees, when the enemy opened fire with their guns and their rifles. We were quickly formed into positions allotted to us, and advanced to the attack supported by the Irish Rifles, who were moving slowly, as their job was to cover our rushes with rifle fire. Our own artillery opened out, adding to the frightful din, and making us think we had been transported to the infernal regions. Soon we reached the village and found the Germans occupying the houses in strong force. Every house was a little fort, and the infantry were firing from the windows furiously, picking us off as we came along. In some houses they had machine guns mounted at the windows with which to sweep our line of advance. On another house a big gun was placed in position, and some of our sharpshooters were told off to pick off the men working it. This they did in a short time, and it was silenced. Seeing that, the Germans attempted to send up a new gun's crew, but they had to pass under fire when they came out on the roof, so that our men lay there picking them off as fast as they showed their heads. That went on for over an hour, but they didn't get their gun manned, for every man who tried it was shot down. After that they gave it up: *A Wounded Corporal.*

## A Gallant Sky Pilot

We had no trenches, all that was available being head "cover," and in some parts there was very little of that. The noise was terrible, while all the time the shells were bursting around. Occasionally when they exploded near us the shrapnel even tore our clothes. The shells, however, which did the most damage were those which burst in the air. While the action was going on we could see quite a number of the German aeroplanes operating above us. Their object was to discover our position, and when they had accomplished this they dropped some kind of powder which burst into flames as it descended and showed their artillery at what places to direct their shell fire. There was a most exciting and peculiar incident in the course of the engagement. An aeroplane hovered above our lines and then darted towards the Germans. Our artillery fired at it, and when the enemy saw it their artillery also attempted to bring it down. The machine came back in our direction, still under a heavy fire, and you can imagine our surprise when it descended amongst us and a young Frenchman stepped out of it. He had been sent to discover the position of the Germans. The frame of the aeroplane was riddled with bullets, but in spite of that fact he made several visits in the course of the evening towards the German lines: *Pte. R. Stobbie, Highland Light Infantry.*

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## The Unexpected

We were in a field when the Germans dropped on us all of a sudden as though from the sky. The first hint we had of their presence was when a battery of guns on our right sang out, dropping shells into a mob of us who were waiting for our turn at the washtub—the river. We all ran to our posts in response to bugles, and by the time we all stood to arms the German cavalry came into view in great strength all along the left front. As soon as they came within range we poured a deadly volley into them, emptying saddles right and left, and they scattered in all directions. Meanwhile their artillery kept working up closer on the front and the right, and a dark cloud of infantry showed out against the sky-line on our front, advancing in formation rather loose for the Germans. We opened on them, and they made a fine target for our rifle fire, which was very well supported by our artillery. The fire from our guns was very effective, the range being found with ease, and we could see the shells dropping right into the enemy's ranks. Here and there their lines began to waver and give way, and finally they disappeared: *A Wounded Guardsman*.

## No Love Lost

It's very little love indeed there is lost between us and the Germans, and when they get to grips with Irish soldiers they don't get much chance of saving their skins. The things the Germans do in Belgium are ten times worse than anything you ever heard tell of in '98, and there's few Irishmen can stand what they've done without wanting to tear them to bits in good, honest fighting. We saw the Irish Guards give the Germans a fine basting at Compiègne, and we were proud of the way they behaved. When they came back to our lines after it was over they had a grand cheer from all of us, and the French troops, who were nearer to the fight and saw it better than us, weren't behindhand in giving our boys a good pat on the back. It would have done your heart good to see the Frenchmen standing up in their trenches and shouting like mad as the Guards passed by. The poor chaps got shy and sick of all the fuss that was made over them. They didn't like the idea that it was their first time on active service and that they were only babies at fighting, and there was many a row in the camp that night over men saying fine things about the Guards, and reminding them of the fact that they never had had any battle honours before that day: *Private P. Heffernan*.

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## "Up, Guards," and at 'Em?

Shrapnel began to burst around us, and the Guards had to prepare to engage the cavalry now creeping closer. Suddenly the cavalry remounted their horses, and came crashing down on our chaps. "Now, Guards!" was all the officer in command said, but his men knew what he meant, and they braced themselves for the tussle. They lined up in the good old British square that has proved a terror to European armies before, and the front ranks waited with the bayonet, while the men inside kept blazing away at the advancing horsemen. They came closer and closer, and the earth seemed to shake and quiver beneath their rush. "Steady!" was all the commander of the Guards said, and he said it in a dull way, as though he were giving a piece of advice to some noisy youngsters who had been making a row. The men answered not a word, but they set their teeth. Then the crash came. Steel met steel, and sparks shot out as sword crossed bayonet. The game of the Germans was to ride down our ranks, but they didn't know that that trick won't work with British troops, and the Guardsmen kept their ground, in spite of the weight of men and horses. The Germans came to a dead stop, and just then they got a volley from the centre of the square. They broke and scattered, and then they got another volley: *A British Guardsman*.

## Clearing Them Out

The Germans held a position on the hills in front of us, and their infantry had trenches just below them. Their shells started to drop on us. We rushed along. We were getting mowed down, but we had to shift them, as the officer said they were there long enough. How they missed me I do not know. We got to about 100 yards of their trenches, when the general passed the word up that the brigade would fix bayonets and charge, taking the time to "go" from the bugle. It was an anxious time waiting for the moment. I said to myself, and a lot more the same, "This is my last rush, but I will fight for my life to the last." The bugle sounded at last, and we made a dash for it. The men were falling each side of me. I was doubled up. We made a bit of a cheer, but it was more like a groan. There was only about half of us got there. When I got to their trenches I made a sort of a dive at it with my bayonet leading, and it stuck in one of them, in the chest. We killed and wounded the lot, but we found that they had a trench running backward, and a lot escaped by that way. We stopped in the trenches a while to get our wind, and we shook each other by the hand, and I said, "I will never be hit after that," and was confident of it. And I thanked God from my heart for being alive: *Pte. Grace, Northumberland Fusiliers*.

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## Steady, Boys, Steady!

Lyddite, shrapnel, common siege, and other sorts of shells were bursting all around us. The fumes from the terrible lyddite were sickening—we were spitting up yellow stuff three days afterwards. Some of the shrapnel bullets hit our chaps pretty badly, but some were harmless. One fell red-hot across my fingers, but its force was expended. Shortly afterwards a big lump of shell plunged into the earth a few inches from my face. Then every other shell that came seemed to strike the earth a few inches above my head, knocking lumps of earth and stones all over me. I

gave up all hope of ever seeing England again, and so did everyone, so I said just a wee fervent prayer, and keeping low down I managed to scribble what I really thought would be the last line to my sister in my pocketbook. Then I remembered that I still possessed half a cigarette, so I managed to strike a match and finish that just as my look-out man saw the German infantry advancing on us about 800 yards away. I can tell you we gave them a warm reception. The German artillery were busy just then trying to drop shells into our artillery, and we gave the German infantry the very best of our attention. Our men simply mowed them down with rifles and machine guns. Still the Germans came on like great waves. My men acted admirably, taking steady aim every time until the fields in front of us were covered with lines and heaps of German dead and wounded: *Serjt. J. Williams, Highland Light Infantry.*

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### **Scared Gun-Horses**

What impressed me most was a battery of artillery under fire. It dashed up to a point that had been marked by a stake with a number on it by the officer who was responsible for allocating the positions. Just as it stopped the Germans, who seemed to have the position to a hair's-breadth, sent shells shrieking around the battery. The horses got frantic and began prancing and kicking out in terror. The drivers held on like grim death, but the poor animals could not be pacified, and at last they dashed off in the direction of the German lines with the guns. The drivers stuck to their posts and did all they could to restrain the mad horses. Meanwhile a party of new men with horses were brought out and dashed off in pursuit. They caught up soon, and rode alongside to get hold of the runaways. It was no use, however, and now they came within range of more German guns, and the shells were bursting overhead, making the poor animals madder than ever. There was nothing for it but to shoot the mad animals, and this was done after some difficulty. Then it was necessary to take out the dead team and put the new one in, while German shells were dropping around. Half of the men were hit, but they meant to stick to their posts, and not all the Germans in the field could have driven them away. Just as they were getting the guns away a party of German infantry came on the scene, but by that time our battalion had moved out to cover the withdrawal of the guns, and we gave the Germans as much as they could stand: *A Corporal, Northamptonshire Regiment.*

### **A Cameron Man**

We retired into a wood, and it was here that I got put out of action. I was struck with a piece of shell, and I fell, thinking it was all over with me. The shell had struck my pack, and I was not injured in the least, but the strange thing was that I could not find my pack. The straps on it had been broken. I then got up, and had not gone twenty yards when I got what seemed like a terrible blow on the left thigh with a big forehammer. Looking down, I saw that my kilt was all blood, and I realized I was knocked out. I tried to get up, but my old leg would not come. I saw my chance and seized it. An ammunition pony came flying past me, and I made one desperate jump at it. I did not look for the reins: I got hold of something, and I was pulled right across an open space between the woods. My God, it was something terrible coming over that open ground. The enemy had been waiting for our advance across it all day. This was where most of our fellows fell. The bullets were dropping like hail, shells were bursting all around us, and it was worse than hell, if anything could be. A few got across, but how many I cannot say, for when I got this length I dropped. I never saw the old pony afterwards: *Pte. Brooks, Cameron Highlanders.*

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### **The Cold Steel**

We fixed bayonets and clambered out, and somehow got together some kind of formation and rushed towards the hedge. All we could see was a few strange uniforms a quarter of a mile away. Away we went, and one of our officers was bowled over straight away, whilst many on my right and left dropped out. We shouted out our slogan, and went at them as fast as we could. At last we arrived with a yell at the ditch where the German riflemen were concealed, and they fired at us point-blank, but not one of us went down. Then we went at them with the steel, and the Germans being six feet below us, they had no chance. When we had each "done" our man we had to jump over the ditch and on towards the German guns. We were running like hell, when all of a sudden machine guns poured into us from both sides, knocking dozens of us over in heaps. The officers gave the word to retire, and we came back at a run. When we came to the trench we had already jumped we found that we had not killed all the Germans in it, and as we passed over it again we were shot at, and my pal was nearly bayoneted. We got back, and did not do much good. We killed a few hundred Germans, it is true, but we lost one hundred and fifty men! The Germans will do anything to get away from the cold steel: *A Cameron Highlander, at the Aisne.*

### **"Is This Death?"**

It was a thousand times worse than being in hell. For six days we were in the same trenches, almost at arm's reach of the enemy. We could only steal out under cover of darkness for a drink of water. It rained all the time; but we had to make the best of it. Every day was the same as the day before—an advance at daybreak and at night; but every time we were beaten back by frightful odds. Each time we were forced back we left hundreds of our men behind, killed and wounded. Then it was the same old command, "Fall back on the trenches." My comrades were constantly falling by my side. Day after day, and every minute during the day, German shells were falling around us like rain. We could hear them coming through the air, and we would lie

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low in the trenches and say, "That is another one that has missed us." But the fatal one came without us hearing it. Thirteen of us were together, and only one lucky devil escaped. When the blow came I thought my head was taken off. I fell on my knees and put one arm up in the air, and said, "Good God, is this death?" I then put my hand on my face, and I felt the flesh, which was so badly torn. But I felt no pain. It seemed dead. I crept along the top of the trenches until I found the doctor who was with my regiment. He simply put a piece of cotton-wool over my face and laid me under a tree, as the firing was too heavy to get a proper dressing on. For five hours I lay bleeding under that tree, and the German shells were still falling about us like rain: *Pte. Kneale, Liverpool Regiment.*

### **Spoiled Their Appetite**

"It's a fine night for the Germans," is what we say when it's so dark that you could not see your finger before you, and it was just on such a night that I was nicked while serving my gun. Just about two in the morning there was a heavy rattle of rifle fire on the hill where our advance men were posted, and soon the whole camp was alive with noise and bustle as the men sprang to arms. We always sleep beside our guns so as to be ready for anything, and in five minutes we were at our posts waiting for information about the range. That came later, and then we began plugging away for all we were able. We caught sight of a mass of Germans swarming up a slope on the right to take cover in a wood there, and they didn't know what we knew. We dropped a few shells into them just to liven things up a bit, and keep them from thinking too much about the Fatherland, but we had to be careful because some of our own chaps were posted in that wood. The Germans kept rushing along gaily, and there wasn't the slightest sound from the wood, where our men were securely posted behind felled trees. Now the German searchlights began to play all around and the air was lit up with bursting shells, so we could see the Germans getting nearer and nearer to that wood. Suddenly the whole side of the wood was one big sheet of flame as our hidden men sent volley after volley ripping through the ranks of the advancing Germans. They were fairly staggered at the suddenness and fierceness of the fire, and before they had time to collect their wits a big body of our chaps were into them with the bayonet. Just when this little show was in full blast the Germans obliged with more limelight, and we saw it clearly. That spoiled the German appetite for breakfast in that part of the field, though from what we heard later there was no doubt that this was the point where they expected to break through, and they cleared off quickly: *A Gunner of the Royal Field Artillery.*

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### **"A Jigsaw Puzzle"**

The Germans came on at a smart pace with the plan of seizing a hill on our right. At the same moment our cavalry came into view, and then the whole Guards Brigade advanced. It was really a race between the two parties who should reach the hill first; but the Germans won easily, owing to their being nearer by half a mile. As soon as their guns and infantry had taken up a position the cavalry came along in a huge mass with the intention of riding down the Irish Guards, who were nearest to them. When the shock came it seemed terrific to us in the distance, for the Irishmen didn't recoil in the least, but flung themselves right across the path of the German horsemen. We could hear the crack of the rifles and see the German horses impaled on the bayonets of the front rank of the guardsmen, and then the whole force of infantry and cavalry were mixed up in one confused heap like so many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle: *A Guardsman, from Compiègne.*

### **"Erin Go Bragh!"**

We are British soldiers, and proud of the name and proud to belong to the great British Empire, but in doing our duty for the glory and honour of the Empire we have always also in our minds to add, if we can, more lustre to the fair name of Erin. Our flag of green with the harp and shamrock and the words "Erin Go Bragh" is now faded and torn, but still loved and cherished. Talking about that dear old flag, I shall endeavour to describe how, at —, when the fate of the day seemed to waver in the balance, when the ruthless enemy by sheer weight of numbers was pressing onward at every point of vantage, that faded flag turned a threatened defeat into decisive victory. On our left were the Munsters, on our right the Leinsters and Connaught Rangers. All were hard-pressed and were about to retire, when suddenly from the firing line one of our comrades rushed out flourishing the old green flag and shouting "Erin Go Bragh." With the blood coursing fast through my veins, I watched with pride and admiration the marvellous effect produced these simple words. With a mighty cheer that seemed to rend the heavens, and that rose and swelled even above the din of battle, those hard-pressed sons of Erin charged down on the advancing enemy with fixed bayonets. The Germans were completely staggered by this unexpected turn of events when victory seemed just within their grasp, but they were given little time for hesitation, for, to slightly alter the words of a well-known Irish ballad:

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*Like lions leaping at a fold,  
When mad with hunger's pang,  
Right up against the German lines  
Those Irish heroes sprang.*

The Germans turned and fled in all directions, completely routed and wholly disorganized. Such

was the effect on the Irish Guards of the sight of their old green flag and the cry of "Erin Go Bragh": *Corpl. Michael O'Mara, of the Irish Guards.*

### **A Midnight Move**

One night when it was unusually wet and miserable and dreary, and some of us had got all the humps that ever were seen on a camel's back, the Assembly sounded, and we were paraded at midnight. We fell in, glad to have something to take us away from our miserable surroundings. We didn't know what the move was when we were marched out into the darkness, but we didn't care much so long as it was warming work. We tramped through weary swamps and soaking wet fields for nearly five miles, and then we were halted near to a line of German trenches, while scouts went on ahead and the remainder of the force was being conducted to its assigned position. Just when some of us felt like having the creeps all over because of the uncanny stillness of everything, a rifle shot rang out, followed by others, and then there was a regular volley. We lay down quickly and tried to peer into the darkness to see something to aim at. There was nothing: and then their artillery opened fire all along the line. Shells kept bursting all over us, and our horses began to get restive. By now the whole of our attacking force was in position, and our artillery opened fire at the points where the attack was to be delivered. The order to advance was given quietly, and we sprang to our feet with right good will. Some of us went down again jolly quick under the German fire, but we kept moving on, and by that time the Germans were losing the range. We were supported by an infantry brigade that had to clear a line of trenches on the right. The four battalions opened out in extended order and pressed slowly towards their goal. Men dropped quickly, dotting the line of advance, but in less than half an hour our lads were ready for the tiger-spring that never fails. The Germans met them with a heavy rifle fire as they climbed the last slope, and when they got to the top they were assailed by twice their number of infantry armed with the bayonet. At one point the line broke, and our lads fell back in some confusion. Reserves were pressed forward to feed the fighting line, and the advance began again. Once more the Germans were too heavy for our chaps, and again they were forced back. They halted for a little to take a rest and then began again. They dashed up the slope like wild cats and closed with the Germans, who were by this time getting tired of it. There was no falling back this time, and though it was very hard work indeed, the whole line of trenches was cleared and the Germans sent flying: *A Trooper of the 15th Hussars.*

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### **A High Ordeal**

I was on picket duty, and it was just after midnight when the men ahead fell back reporting strange sounds all along the front. At the same moment we heard rustling in the bushes close by, and as there was no response to the challenge we fired, thus giving the alarm in the sleeping camp. Out of the bushes the enemy's advanced guard rushed, but we held them in check until we deemed it wise to fall back on the camp with a report of the enemy's strength and disposition. We reckoned there was at least a whole German army corps attacking, supported by endless bodies of cavalry and ten batteries of guns, besides hundreds of machine guns. When we got back to camp we found everything was in apple-pie order for the fight. The men were standing to their arms, and though some of them were cursing a lot at being roused from their sleep and vowing what they would do to the chuckle-headed pickets if it turned out to be a false alarm, they were ready to do their duty like men. They hadn't long to wait for the Germans, who were really close on our heels. On our way back we had heard our artillery open fire and saw the shells bursting along the German lines. At the same moment the Germans, who seemed to realize that their surprise was no surprise at all, opened fire with their artillery right along the front, and their searchlights were playing all round like so many will-o'-the-wisps. Their searchlights were useful to us, because they enabled us to see something of their strength as they advanced. Soon we saw coming out of the inky darkness a long line of white faces, and in response to the quick order we fired right into them. The first line wavered for a moment or two, part of it was blotted out, but the line of reserves behind filled up the gaps and the front line advanced again, seeming not to heed the heavy hail of bullets we were pouring into them. Within about one hundred yards of our trenches the first line of advancing Germans flung themselves flat on the earth, fixing bayonets, while the second fired over their heads, and yet a third line was pushing forward men to fill the gaps of the second line where our fire tore through. Then the first line rose and the second fixed bayonets also. Finally, they all came sweeping forward with the bayonet and threw themselves right on to our trenches. We poured one terrible volley into them as they came on, but all the devils in hell would not have stopped them. Our front ranks gave way slightly before the fierceness of the attack and the weight of men hurled at them, but the recoil was only temporary. We steadied ourselves, and while they were standing still for a moment to take breath and dress their ranks for another rush we went at them with the bayonet and hurled them over the trenches down the hill again. It was in this rush that I got run through with a bayonet, but as I lay on the ground doing my best to forget the pain in the exultation of victory, I saw our lads chase them across country in fine style, and I knew from the cheers all along the line that we were beating them back: *A Sergeant of the Worcester Regiment.*

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*On came the whirlwind—like the last  
But fiercest sweep of tempest blast:  
On came the whirlwind—steel-gleams broke  
Like lightning through the rolling smoke;  
The war was waked anew.*

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S: "Waterloo."

*With fire and sword the country round  
Was wasted far and wide,  
And many a childing mother then  
And new-born baby died;  
But things like that, you know, must be  
At every famous victory.*

SOUTHEY'S: "The Battle of Blenheim."

A daring German spy came into the British lines dressed in the uniform of a Scots Grey. He inquired the whereabouts of the Scots Greys; but his speech betrayed him, and on being stripped he was found to be wearing German underclothing: *Pte. A. Prescott, 1st King's Liverpool Regiment.*

### **A Good Night**

One night when I was out in Belgium it came on to rain, and I went home with a sergeant in the Belgian Lancers and slept in a lovely feather bed, and started off again for my destination after having a good breakfast and a deep drink of rum and coffee: *A Bombardier of the Royal Artillery.*

### **A Far View**

We flew at 5000 feet, and saw a sight which I hope it will never be my lot to see again. The woods and hills were literally cut to ribbons all along the south of Laon. It was marvellous watching hundreds of shells bursting below one to right and left for miles, and then to see the German guns replying: *A Member of the Royal Flying Corps.*

### **Brave Women**

The French women seemed to think that the best cure for shrapnel or bullet wound was a bottle of wine and a raw egg. After the Wednesday fight the women brought hot potatoes and new bread right into the trenches and firing line. I can assure you they are the bravest women I have ever met: *Rifleman Fisher.*

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### **Fatherly**

You would be surprised to see the enthusiasm of the people here. The little kiddies run towards you and put their hands in yours, just like my little kiddies at home. You can see little boys doing men's work. I noticed one chap (he would not be more than ten years old) with a pair of horses, and he was ploughing all on his own: *A Private of the Royal Field Artillery.*

### **Proud Indeed!**

I brought back on my lorry a wounded bombardier, and when the doctor told him that he would have his right leg and an arm amputated he did not seem to trouble a bit, but went on chatting and joking with us as if it were an everyday occurrence. He is only eighteen years old. As they were taking in the ambulance he said, "It's not much to look forward to, but my mother will be proud of me": *Corpl. Hollyer: Army Service Corps.*

### **Wilted!**

With their front files dressed in uniforms taken from the killed and wounded of an English regiment, a German corps attempted to surprise an English battalion. As they approached, the English commander, becoming suspicious, gave the order to fix bayonets, whereupon the Germans shouted, "Nein, nein! Leedle mistake! Ve vos not Shermans; ve vos der Vilts." The British then charged with bayonets and the Germans "wilted": *A Sergeant-Major, of Colchester.*

### **Enjoying Ourselves**

Villages are nearly empty as we come to them, cats, dogs, and a few fowls being all that are left. Doors are open and the dinner things left on the tables, and people crying. There is plenty of fruit everywhere. The people left give one anything, and are very kind to us in every way. We are really enjoying ourselves very much, and take a very hopeful view that the Germans will soon

realize that they have bitten off more than they can chew: *Private G. Brown.*

### **Held Up!**

In a village we passed through the baker was working all night making bread, and all the time he was working the Germans were standing over him with revolvers. At a farm we passed the farmer said they stole thirty of his racehorses. These horses, of course, would be no use to the Germans as draught or saddle horses, and it is not an unreasonable supposition that they were commandeered for food: *Pte. A. Forbes, Gordon Highlanders.*

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### **Not So "Swanky"**

Their prisoners aren't near so swanky as they were at first, when they used to move about as though the British soldiers weren't fit to be seen with. Now they're glad to fall into our hands, and if they see the uniform at all they surrender without further trouble. They've all got Government news-sheets containing all sorts of stories, and they say that these are distributed every day. Perhaps they get them instead of grub, and if that's the case it would account for the half-fed appearance of so many of the prisoners: *Pte. Taylor, Rifle Brigade.*

### **Undaunted**

A few days ago I witnessed a most exciting incident. A French staff officer went up in an aeroplane and the Germans opened fire on him. Shots went wide at first and then all around him. He didn't mind that, but turned about again and once more ran the gauntlet. Then the Germans started again, but that didn't stop him. He turned once more and came back before making off to headquarters with information as to where the Germans were: *Drill-Instructor Anderson.*

### **"Rotten Luck"**

We are all putting up in farms on account of our horses being under cover from the aeroplanes, which have done a lot of damage. The 9th had just got in from a good hard day, when a big shell came into their yard and killed ten men and wounded four. Who would have expected that, after getting away from the firing line all safe? Of course, they might have been stray shells trying to find our artillery. But then it is what you may call rotten luck: *Pte. Robinson, 18th Hussars.*

### **Near Shaves**

I saw some brave things done. "Tanker" Gillespie endeavoured three times, at great risk, to aid a comrade who had been seriously wounded. The first time he got up a bullet grazed his head, and I saw him rubbing it with rather comical grimness, and then seizing hold of his rifle, the barrel of which had nearly all been blown away, and firing; three or four shots at the Germans. He tried a second time to reach his comrade, but again had to duck, and the third time he succeeded, only to find that the poor fellow had died. In returning to his place, "Tanker" was struck by a bullet which took away some of the hair on his head, and he had to retire: *Pte. McMahon, Gordon Highlanders.*

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### **Custom!**

German shell fire is not nearly so effective shot for shot and gun for gun as ours, in spite of all the fine things they claim for it, and where great accuracy in range is necessary they are hopelessly out of it. Their infantry can't stand half the shelling our men will put up with, and they get awfully panicky under fire from our guns. It is a favourite trick of the Germans to keep a battery well masked for hours, and then when our infantry are deploying within range, without the slightest notion of what is coming, the German shells begin to fall round like the autumn leaves. That's very trying to the nerves, or was at first, but we are now getting used to it: *Gunner T. Wall.*

### **Buried and Burnt**

There was one interesting sight I saw as the column was on the march, and that was a duel in the air between French and German aeroplanes. It was wonderful to see the Frenchman manoeuvre to get the upper position of the German, and after about ten minutes or a quarter of an hour the Frenchman got on top and blazed away with a revolver on the German. He injured him so much as to cause him to descend, and when found he was dead. The British buried the airman and burnt the aeroplane: *A Private of the 1st Royal Kent Regiment.*

### **"That Tired Feeling"**

We are now getting into our stride and beginning to get a little of our own back out of the Germans. They don't like it at all now that we are nearer to them in numbers, and their men all look like so many "Weary Willies," they are so tired. You might say they had got "that tired feeling" bad, and so they have. Some of them just drop into our arms when we call on them to surrender, as though it were the thing they'd been waiting for all their lives: *Lance-Corporal T.*

### **Lucky Fellow!**

It was a pitiful sight to see the people fleeing from their homes carrying all they could save. Our soldiers are very kind to them, and give them whatever they can spare—and sometimes more than that. I saw one young woman trying to reach some fruit from a tree which was a good way out of her reach, and, not thinking, I went over and gave her some pears which I had given me. She ate them hurriedly, but before doing so gave me a kiss on both cheeks, which was rather enjoyed by the rest of the troops standing by: *Driver J. Brennan, Army Service Corps.*

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### **So Glad!**

Oh, dear! I am pleased all my good women live in England. Often I see cottage homes a-smoke and in flames. Villages, too! Dogs forlorn, cats despondent on doorsteps. And yesterday I saw three little dots walking along the muddy road with a tiny wheelbarrow. We were, when we passed them, going under cover from a severe shell fire, whilst they were going in the direction whence we were coming. At present we are billeted in the buildings about a huge water-mill. The wooded hills are all around, and the harvests seem all gathered in about here. It is not so elsewhere: *A Reservist of the Beds Regiment.*

### **The Gallant Belgians**

We are doing fine, and have earned the name of the "Fighting Fifth" again. We have heard that some Hindus have come from India to fight, and the public expect great things from them; but you take it from me, no matter how brave, how fearless they may be, they will never equal the brave little Belgian people. What other race in the world could have fought with more courage and determination than they when the German curs burnt Louvain and committed the most dastardly outrages? Who were they who bit their lips to hide their feelings, but who swore that the Germans should pay for it—not in the way the Germans made the women and children suffer, but by good lead and cold steel? The Belgians! *Pte. A. Hayes, of Upper Wortley.*

### **In the Dark**

We had not gone three hundred yards before the Germans fired on us. We were between two farmhouses. We were only about thirty to forty yards off, and we didn't half give it them. We could hear the wounded Germans moaning and groaning, and it was awful to hear. It was dark, and we fired low because we knew that was the best way to get them. Just then a piece of shrapnel came through the peak of my cap and grazed my nose. It was a near thing, but I took no notice of it and kept on firing. The man next to me was then shot dead, and our captain was shot slightly in the head, but he continued to give orders. A piece of my boot was blown away, and I received a piece of shrapnel in my right shoulder, and consequently saw no more of the fighting: *Pte. Brayshaw, Guards Brigade.*

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### **A Bold Battery**

Half the horses of L Battery Royal Artillery got smashed, and we had to bung our poor old tired ones to fill up. Only a few gunners were left, but they stood by firing still and singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Then the Germans charged, and our gunners did a bunk, but not before they had driven spikes into the guns so as to make them useless to the enemy. They said they guessed they would get them back in a day or two, and if they did they could repair them easy enough. The Germans don't know these tricks, and we can do them down any time: *A Driver of the 4th Ammunition Column.*

### **Before the Dawn**

I was given a map, and a message for my company officer. When I had made my way in the dark to where the outpost should have been, I found it had retired. I went to where I saw a picket posted, and noticed a body of men. It was just getting light, and I thought I saw an English officer. I put down my rifle and whistled. They immediately dropped down and fired at me. I dropped into the grass, too, to bluff them into thinking I had been "winged." I crawled through a big turnip field, and heard a general action commencing. I could hear people talking, but not loudly enough to know whether they were English. So I hoisted my cap upon a stick and called, "Hullo, West Kent!" Then shots came in my direction, and, as it was getting lighter, I decided, as the best thing to do, to make for our big guns. I crawled along the ground for nearly two hours, and when I stopped for a short rest a bullet hit my right arm: *Corpl. Drinkwater, West Kent Regiment.*

### **Rescued**

In getting out of my trench I fell back, so injuring my back that I could not move. I lay there, expecting every minute to be my last, but it did not come. I took a bold front and looked over the trench to see what was happening there. I saw that the Germans had taken a sweeping curve to

the right, and I saw the tail of them a long way off. They seem to be driven along by their officers rather than led, for the officers have their swords drawn. I laid down in the trench (my comrades had evidently thought I was shot, as they took no notice of me when I fell back into the trench) for two hours, looking now and again to see if I could see any signs of our men. At last, after nearly giving up hope, I saw a patrol of the 15th Hussars, and managed to attract their attention, and they put me on a horse and carried me to a French hospital in a village: *A Private in the Royal Sussex Regiment.*

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### **A “Jelly Fish”**

I was ordered to remain behind with the aeroplanes, one of which was to go up early in the morning and return, and I was to take reports on to headquarters. The machine had been gone half an hour when rifle fire was heard, and we discovered that a German aeroplane was flying overhead. The officers got rifles, and likewise myself, and stood up to have a shot, but he went away, only, however, to return. We allowed him to get in range and then opened fire. He came over the place where we were lying down. I fired twenty-five rounds and expected to have a bomb dropped on us, when I saw he was done. He made one dive and landed in a heap behind us. On examining him we found twelve bombs, all of which had safety caps and pins attached, luckily for us. He had a lot of papers which I had the honour to carry to headquarters. The fall made him like a jelly fish: *Private A. J. Davis.*

### **Cold—and Hot!**

We had to climb up a big hill, and then through a quarry, so that we were fagged out and wet through before we saw the enemy. When we did get to the top they gave us a good welcome with shot and shell. It was so heavy it dug up the ground in front of us, but we had to go on and try to shift them. I saw some sights up there, with one man down after another. I expected the next to be me, but I had determined that I would keep my end up and do my best, so I kept going on. Well, the long and short of it was that we got to them about tea-time, or what should be tea-time. We found them about sixteen to one, or that is what I thought. We could not shift them, but just as I thought we were getting the best of it someone gave the order to retire, which we did. When we got back we found we had lost all our officers, and nobody could tell who gave the order to retire, and the sun was then sinking. It was in going back that I was wounded. It is not a bad wound, and you must thank God, as I have done, that I got through at all: *Pte. Clare, 1st Royal Lancashire Regiment.*

### **“Knocked!”**

When night came we knew where the Germans were, so we crept out of the trenches and went down to the roadway. No sooner had we got there than a great volley rang out. We were in the midst of it, and knew it was either the Germans or us. So we at them. In the struggle that took place I thought of you and the children. I made a jump at a German, but whether I got him or not I don't remember, for I got such a terrible knock over the ribs. It must have been with the butt of a rifle. You talk about getting your ribs bent. I got mine, and more than that my appendix got first. They thought at first that it was a bullet wound, but happily it was not, or I might not have been here to tell the tale. I was knocked into a “trap” trench about eight feet deep, but I was pulled out and carried eight miles on horseback: *A Private of the Gordon Highlanders.*

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### **In a Château**

Two hundred of us went into a big château, where we were told we would be quite safe, and we sat down to a meal of tea and biscuits. We were just in the middle of it when a patrol of German cavalry scouts discovered us, and as we were eating, a shell struck the roof of the building, smashing it into fragments. Then there was the greatest excitement as the men scurried out of the building. As the shells were getting very busy we lost no time in retreating from that place, and took up our position in a field about 200 yards distant. There were a lot of wounded around, and we were lying on a slightly elevated ridge in the field. We had only been a short time in this position when we saw the Somersets getting badly cut up. We went to the assistance of the Somersets, and succeeded in checking the Germans' advance. We began to go forward and went at them with the bayonet, when they turned and fled. We were just 150 yards away when they packed themselves into motor-cars that were waiting on them and drove off, but before they went we managed to capture five of their machine guns: *Pte. T. O'Dea, Seaforth Highlanders.*

### **“Made Good!”**

Our last action was the worst. Men fell like corn before the reaper. I tell you truly, I never expected to get out alive. The Germans must have lost thousands, but they were ten to one, so we had to retire. The shrapnel and hail of lead and bullets—I see it all now, and I was one of the last to leave the field. I won't say more, only I got a bullet through my right leg, but still kept on twenty yards or thereabouts. I got a great piece of shrapnel shell in my neck—laid me senseless. I came to again, and, as if possessed, ran for my life through it all and “made good.” It's wonderful how you can run with a bullet through your leg. I have not been long at it, but fellows say that they saw more in the last four days than they did in three years in Africa. That's the truth. Ah, well! I'm not grumbling. I'm not disfigured or maimed like so many poor fellows, so let's rejoice

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over all. Some of our engagements lasted thirteen hours, and the last—and worst—ten hours. So tired, must sleep: *A Lance-Sergeant of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry*

### **A "Terrible Time"**

We had a terrible time at Mons, and for four days and nights we did nothing but fight, and I should think the Germans had three men to every one of ours. On August 24 we lost one hundred men in about five minutes. We had a mile and a half to gallop over open country with as many as thirty shells a minute bursting round us. How I got out of it I do not know, for I had not gone 200 yards before a shell burst under my horse and killed it. I was not touched, and I managed, with a bit of luck, to get another horse from a comrade who had been killed. I am sure it was worse than hell let loose, and I think I said a prayer afterwards, but anyway I shall soon be right now. The man who was with me when I was wounded is dead. He died as soon as the search party found us. He was shot twice in the stomach, whilst I was shot in the thigh. I crawled to him when he was dying, but I could not help him as I was in such agony myself. He gave me his papers, and I gave them to the officer when he rode up to us: *Lance-Corpl. Potton, 18th Hussars.*

### **His True Colours**

We had been entrenched two days when a German spy was captured. He spoke English as well as I do, and shouted to me, "I surrender, I surrender; take me prisoner." He was placed in a corner of the trench, seven feet deep, and was guarded. He soon began to chatter, and told us his history in such a plausible manner that we believed him. He told us he had been in private service as a butler in Surrey and Sussex, and also a waiter in hotels at Brighton, Liverpool, and Manchester. The devil actually cried when he pulled out of his pocket the photo of a girl he said he intended making his wife when the war was over if he was spared, and begged we would not take it away from him. He said she was a Lancashire lassie—he could put on the north-country dialect all right—and read portions of a letter she wrote him when he was called up. The traitor gave us a lot of supposed information about the Germans, and pretended to be as wild as a March hare when he spoke of their officers. They were everything that was bad. I must admit I thought the fellow was genuine, and I gave him some of my rations, but several of the others had their doubts. He had been with us three days when he showed himself in his true colours. It was pitch dark, and raining like cats and dogs. He jumped out of the trench and made a dash for the German trenches, but he did not get thirty yards away before he was brought down. The next morning we saw his dead body lying where he fell: *Sapper A. G. Hutton, R.E.*

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### **A Barricade**

We were just about five minutes billeted in the various houses and just stretching our legs when our officer came running in shouting, "The Germans are upon us; outside, everyone." We came out magazine loaded, bayonets fixed, and eager to get a good bayonet fight with them. It appears they do not like it, but we found none; they had not yet arrived. It was 10 P.M. before they did so. In the meantime, the poor people were leaving the town in crowds with as much goods and chattels as they could carry away, and it was well for them, too. It was a dark night when we formed up in the streets, and the lamps but dimly burned. The noises of rifles and field guns were terrific. We rushed to the heads of the various streets, where our German foe would advance. Our field artillery and the Coldstream Guards went out to delay their advance, whilst we stripped off our coats and commenced to tear up the square setts, gather carts—in fact, everything that would build a barricade to keep back our numerous German foe, and we did so under perfect showers of shrapnel shell that fell around us and struck the houses about us, but we were undaunted, and so succeeded: *Private Spain.*

### **Wounded and Waiting**

The order came to retire to a neighbouring haystack. How the bullets flew about! Up I jumped, and up the slope I ran. I soon reduced the distance. Another 100 yards to safety—80, 60, 40, 30, 15 yards. Oh, my left knee! I dropped down flat, with my right arm underneath my body, and my left hand feeling if my leg was still on. An officer ran by shouting out, "Wounded, lie still." I was laid on my chest, and I could see them coming, 200 yards behind me. They did not put their rifles to their shoulders, but fired from the hips. Bullets were spitting in the ground around me. "Should I ever get out of this?" I thought. Something seemed to say to me, "Keep still, and you will be all right." On the Germans came to within 100 yards of me, then 50 yards, then 20 yards, then 10 yards, and there they halted. They were on the slope leading to the stack, and after a short conversation two of them came in my direction. "Now for it," I said to myself. But no, they passed me and went to the top of the hill. My arm beneath my body was paralysed, and I could feel the blood running from my wound. Now and again I could hear one of them shout out, "Hoch, Kaiser!" and I said to myself, "Hurrah for the King!" Then I saw them fall in, and about to turn. Thank God! off they went: *Pte. Wood, Coldstream Guards.*

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*Lay the proud usurpers low!  
Tyrants fall in every foe!  
Liberty's in every blow!  
Let us do or die!*

ROBERT BURNS: "Scots Wha Hae."

*And man, whose heav'n-erected face  
The smiles of love adorn,—  
Mans inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn!*

BURNS: "Man was made to Mourn."

I must admit we were all a bit shaky until we got properly stuck into it, and then you feel in your glory. You forget all fear, everybody full of excitement. You hardly think of your funeral: *Gunner J. Robinson, Royal Field Artillery.*

### **Inconceivable!**

People in England can have no idea what it is like on a battlefield, thousands of dead and wounded lying about with nobody to help them. After my pal and I got hit we could hear the deadly shell on its way, but could not move, and had to lay for some time. My pal had his foot blown off: *Gunner J. Edgecombe, Royal Field Artillery.*

### **Gets Used to It**

I shall never forget when the first shot was fired. We soon got used to it, and I was as anxious to get at them as anyone else. It is awful in action. I saw my two chums shot down beside me, and one of them said with his dying breath, "Kill ten of those German devils for me," and I think I did: *Pte. E. Mead, 19th Hussars.*

### **Gay to Grave**

You must not take too much notice of the reports of the soldiers in the trenches singing as if they had not a care in the world. I heard more talk of religion—and from men from whom you would least expect it—than any popular songs! Some of the sights are simply shocking—you could not talk about them: *Private Pope.*

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### **Encouraged**

It was my first baptism of fire, and I frankly confess that I thought my time had come. It was a nerve-racking experience. I said a prayer to myself. But the fear soon wore away, and I recognized that to save my own skin I must beat the enemy. We were also encouraged by the poor marksmanship of the Germans: *Pte. Gallagher, Royal Scots Fusiliers.*

### **Wondering!**

We saw some terrible sights—women and children cut up—and I shall never forget until my dying day some of the awful things I saw. The firing was awful. I am not much of a praying chap, but I prayed when the shots were coming thick about us. It was maddening to see the fellows shot down right and left, and wondering when it would be my turn: *Pte. Sibley, 3rd Worcester Regiment.*

### **Jubilant**

War! How terrible the word sounds, but our British spirit in us makes us view things from the bright side. I do not mean to imply that the troops do not think it a serious concern—far from it—but all seem quite confident. When under heavy fire there seems to exist a jubilant sort of spirit, each and all steady and ready to sacrifice themselves for the honour of England: *A Private of the Scottish Rifles.*

### **Mad!**

You feel pretty shaky going into battle at first. When you are going along the road and see dead lying here and there and hear the groaning of the wounded you do feel rather queer, but once you see what you are getting at, all that feeling disappears and your one desire is to get at them. In fact, when the bullets begin to fly you turn mad for the time being: *Pte. Lightfoot, Cameron Highlanders.*



## Know nor Care

You don't realize that you are in danger until some of the men around you get knocked over by shells and bullets, but afterwards you have the feeling that you don't care. You know you have to be there, and you don't care a hang whether you get knocked over or not. In a way you are only too glad when you can get to close quarters with the Germans. As to the sensation caused by being struck by a bullet, it is just like being hit by a stone thrown at you: *A Sergeant of the Irish Rifles.*

## An "Infernal Din"

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Artillery fire is the deadliest thing out, and it takes a lot of nerve to stand it. The Germans keep up an infernal din from morning until far into the night; but they don't do half as much damage as you would think, though it is annoying to have all that row going on when you're trying to write home or make up the regimental accounts. The French seem to like the noise, and don't seem at all happy unless it's there. There's no accounting for tastes: *Sergeant J. Baker.*

## Splendid but Awful

The order was given, "Retire! Every man for himself!" It was a splendid but awful sight to see horses, men, and guns racing for life with shells bursting among them. The Germans rushed up, and I lay helpless. A German pointed his rifle at me for me to surrender. I refused, and was just on the point of being put out when a German officer saved me. He said, "Englishman brave fool." He then dressed my wound, and he gave me brandy and wine and left me: *Gunner B. Wiseman, Royal Artillery.*

## How It Happened

How I came to be wounded was like this. I had got my bayonet fixed in some fat German, and I could not get it out in time, and a German officer hit me over the head with the butt of his revolver. Of course I went down for the count, and when I came round I found I had stopped a stray shot with my left foot, so I had to lie among the German dead until it became dark. Then I crawled to the British lines three miles away, and into hospital: *Pte. P. Rourke, North Lancashires.*

## Joe to Bill

You know, Bill, it looked hard to see my old chums mowed down like sheep.... After being under shot and shell for seven hours, Bill, I know what it is to be at death's door. You can bet your hat God answered my prayer, for I asked and He accepted. They were killed on each side of me, and shells were bursting front and back, but none hit Joseph, so that was a Godsend. What do you say? I know what I think, Bill: *A Reservist of the Lancashire Fusiliers.*

## The Stuffing Wrong

"Never say die till you're dead" is the only motto for us in the firing line, for every hour of the blessed day you're expecting to have your head blown off by a German shell, and you wonder how on earth you managed to escape every time it hits something else instead of you. Their shells make awful havoc when they do burst, but it is not so often as you would think. There seems to be something wrong with the stuffing of them: *Engineer Hughes, Royal Artillery.*

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## Guarded!

When you do drop asleep you awaken suddenly and think you are being fired at. Twice now while I have been in battle, the man on my right and on my left has been killed. The last one next to me to be killed was poor ——. He was asking me where the enemy was when he got shot in the arm. Then he got hit in the stomach, and afterwards, poor chap, in the chest. The man on my right got hit, and then it came my turn. It is strange that the same thing should occur twice running. God is guarding me all right: *Sergt. Greeley, South Lancashire Regiment.*

## A Scamper

The whistle has just blown to get under cover as there is an aeroplane up. I have just spotted it. All the fellows are running for shelter so as not to be seen and give the position away. I am inside the car, a covered van body. The shells are beginning to drop very close, so we'll have to make a shift for better cover: they are screaming and howling like some of those funny fireworks, but you cannot see them and don't know where they are going to land any minute. Our guns are firing on the aeroplane, but I'm afraid he is too high for them to reach him: *Driver F. Clarkson, Artillery Transport Service.*

## Causes Deafness

A bullet struck the kit of Corpl. Thompson, of the 3rd Worcesters, and lodged in his canteen.

Thompson gave a grunt and thought he was done for, but when the bullet rattled inside the canteen he just laughed and blessed his luck. It's a funny thing to go into battle for the first time. There we were in the trenches with rain falling heavily all the time, bullets whizzing all round us and shells—death-dealing things—dropping everywhere. The roar was deafening: in fact, I was deaf for a week afterwards, and I couldn't tell what was shouted: *Private J. Sibley*.

### **Twenty to One**

We had no cover, and simply walked into the German army, who were about twenty to one. We bayoneted and charged several times. They shouted for mercy. They can't face steel. I think I was just mad, and the rest were, too, at seeing chums go under. You simply don't think about yourself; all your thought is to get at them. I felt right proud to be a Britisher, especially a Cameron. If I do go under, it will be fighting with a rifle in my hand and like a Britisher; but, at the same time, a few Germans are already my victims: *A Private of the Cameron Highlanders*.

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### **Under Difficulties**

We got into a little hell yesterday and all last night—a proper warm corner. Shells bursting all over and round us and bullets whizzing about all over the place. I had to take one of our wagons right into the firing line. Our captain, who was riding ten yards in front, got blown off his horse. The battle is still raging now. Heaven only knows how it will end up. We cannot hear ourselves speak. My writing is very bad, but you must excuse it as the very ground is shaking. I have to take another wagon right into the firing line in ten minutes' time: *A Corporal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*.

### **Not Troubling**

The Germans are an awful lot of bad shots with the rifle, but they are good with the artillery, and that is where we have suffered most of our losses. There have been very few to speak of who have fallen through rifle fire. To tell you the truth, I do not seem sometimes as though I was on a battlefield at all. I go blundering along as if I was on the dear old sea front at Bridlington, and I find that is the best way, for, as sure as I am living, the less you think of it all the better. We do our best, and trust in God. You need not trouble much about me, for I am as happy here as I am at home. It is no use being otherwise, and it is like being on guard at home: *Pte. C. Gledhill, Coldstream Guards*.

### **The Pictures!**

Every morning we go within 300 yards of the place where the shells are bursting. First you hear the shell whistling about a quarter of a mile away like a Gabriel horn, and the nearer it gets the louder, then it bursts like 120 tyres bursting together. At first it frightened the life out of me. I was digging some potatoes in a garden, and one burst about 200 yards away. I left the potatoes and hopped it—I did the fastest 100 yards on record. When you hear a shell coming it is best to lie flat—it's quite amusing to see everybody drop to the ground. It reminds one of the pictures: *Pte. Noel Withers, Army Service Corps*.

### **Healing Nicely!**

I got shrapnel in the face, and it entered just by my eye and came through my mouth, splitting my face open and fracturing my jaw. Lucky for me my sight is not gone. My face is stitched up and healing nicely, but I'm afraid I'm disfigured for life. The beggars were not content with that—they shot me through the left forearm and fractured the bone. I've got it in plaster of Paris. I am glad to say I am not in much pain now, and I am as strong as an ox. I had to leave everything on the battlefield, including my pipe and the pouch you gave me. Your photo, taken at Paddington, I had in a waterproof case with some more: *A Private of a Field Battery*.

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### **Dazed, but There**

All the officers stood round us the whole time, including one young lieutenant who had only just joined the battery from England, and was under fire for the first time. The captain was wounded, but he stood up and cried out, "Go on, lads! I'm not killed yet." We went on. But another hail of shells came, and the captain fell. We all knew we were in for it; but we cracked jokes as we loaded and fired. One by one the fellows went down. Those left shook hands with one another, and just said, "So long, old man!" My chum at my gun bent down to look through the aperture of the gun shield. A shell came and caught him in the forehead. He tumbled up against me as he fell. Then they got the shells on our limbers. I can't describe the sight as our own shells exploded on the spot. There were only ten of us now. We had never received the order to clear out, and we stuck it dazed: *A Gunner of the Royal Field Artillery*.

### **"A Mad Crew"**

When I read in books or stories of the coolness of men under fire I thought somebody was blathering. But after eight weeks of it, I can say that no book has ever done justice to the

coolness of British soldiers under conditions that would try anybody. The night I was hit we were just leaving the trenches for an interview with some Germans who were trying some of their fancy tricks about our left. As we stood up there was a ghastly shower of bullets and shells bursting all round. Into it we had to go, and as we looked ahead one of our chaps said, "I think we'll have to get our greatcoats, boys; it's raining bullets tonight, and we'll get wet to the skin if we're not careful." The men of "C" Company started laughing, and then they took to singing, "Put up your umbrella when it comes on wet." The song was taken up all along as we went into the thick of it, and some of us were humming it as we dashed into the German trenches. The Germans must have thought us a mad crew: *A Private of the Irish Fusiliers*.

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### **Saving a Battery**

We were sent up to the firing line to try and save a battery. When we got there we found that they were nearly all killed or wounded. Our Irish lads opened fire on the Germans, and you should have seen them fall. It was like a game of skittles. But as soon as you knocked them down up came another thousand or so. We could not make out where they came from. So all of a sudden our officer gave us the order to charge. We fixed bayonets and went like fire through them. You should have seen them run! As the firing line was at full swing we had with us an officer of the Hussars. I think he was next to me, and he had his hand nearly blown off by one of the German shells. So I and two more fellows picked him up and took him to a place of safety, where he got his wound cared for. I heard afterwards that he had been sent home, poor fellow: *Pte. Levy, Royal Munster Fusiliers*.

### **Salt and Cigarettes**

I am writing this under fire. Every now and again a little message from the Kaiser comes whizzing in this direction, but no damage is being done, and we don't worry. Bang! Another message. One of the things I miss more than anything else is a drop of milk for tea. Would give 2s. for a tin of condensed milk. Of course, most of the cattle are moved miles away from any battlefield, and consequently no milk can be obtained. There is plenty of fruit and vegetables. But now and again we run short of certain things. For instance, to-day we have run short of salt, and consequently our dinner was not quite the success I anticipated. We made a stew—1½ lb. of corned beef, potatoes, beans, carrots, and pumpkin. This did for three men. I was the cook. To-night for tea we are having bread, bacon, jam, and cheese; but, sad to relate, I have no cigarettes: *Private W. Rouse*.

### **Like an Electric Shock**

I got five or six bullets in my right thigh. The actual wounding was not very painful—like an electric shock. I fired for over an hour afterwards, then crept to an old barn, where my wounds were dressed. There we had to stay two days under shell-fire. Then they started smashing the place up with shrapnel, knocking the roof on the top of us—without hurting us. We were dragged out. It was night before we could be taken in farm carts to the field hospital. On Sunday the "dirty pigs" shelled that, though the Red Cross flag was flying. It seems to be a favourite game of theirs. We are well away from the fighting line now, our only danger being bombs from airships, which we don't fear. Our biggest risk now is over-feeding. We are quartered in the finest hotel in Versailles. Crowds of French people collect round the gates and send us presents of flowers, tobacco, and cigarettes, which are very welcome. The people here think the world of the English "Tommy," and nothing is too good or too expensive to give him. All they ask in return is a button or a cap-badge "to keep as a souvenir of us": *Pte. Graham, Coldstream Guards*.

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### **Given up Worrying**

One of the coolest things I have seen—and I have seen a few—was an Engineer sergeant and two assistants measuring a piece of the river bank with the tape, and having to lie down every few minutes to dodge shells or extra-strong volleys. The sergeant could not hear some of the figures, so yelled out, "Don't let your voice be drowned by a ---- German gaspipe." I assure you that we think no more of bullets and shells than of a cricket ball sent down by a fast bowler. In fact, I have felt more funk when ---- is in form at the wicket than I have at a shell. This may sound awful swank, but when you have lived among shells and bullets for a month it is a case of familiarity breeding contempt. I believe I am the funkiest, or at any rate the most careful, chap in the regiment, but I have long since given up worrying: *A Private of the Bedfordshire Regiment*.

### **Safe as Houses**

The Germans watched until we halted, and then let fly at us with some shells. They killed about fifteen and wounded about twenty-five. One chap was blown to bits; another got one right through his cheek, and it was terrible to see us after they had bunked. They did not half let us have it. We all lay flat down on our faces waiting every moment for our turn to come. I can tell you I thought my last day had come then. Every time a shell comes it makes a whistle and then a bang, and not half a bang, too. I can tell you it was a relief to everybody, and they would sigh after a bang if not hit. They must have thought we had all gone or been killed or wounded because they stopped for a bit, and then we started to dig ourselves in. Of course we had to dig deep and well underground so as to be out of shell reach. We did not get any more that day, but

the next morning they let us know it was time to get up with some of their heavy gun shells. We only got four wounded then, but I can tell you I thought I had got hit. One dropped about fifteen yards in front of my trench, and it lifted me up and dropped me with such a bang that I thought I was counted out. I felt all over me to see what I had got, but no, I am as safe as houses yet: *Sergt. T. L. Neal, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.*

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### **Stunned!**

What gets at you is not being able to come to close quarters and fight man to man. As a fact we see very little of the enemy, but blaze away at the given range and trust to Providence. For that matter, we see very little of our own fellows, and only know by the ambulance men passing through our lines what regiments are near us. For hours we stick on one spot and see nothing but smoke and something like a football crowd swaying half a mile off. We see all we want of the German flying machines. They are over our lines day and night, and are so common that we do not now take pot-shots at them. The chances of hitting them are about 100 to 1. We hate them, because we know they are signalling the position and range to their artillery, which is awful. The German rifle fire wouldn't worry a covey of partridges, but their shells are hell. I was stunned by one a week ago. It was a queer feeling, and rather pleasant than otherwise. It fell about six yards in front of me, and I felt as if a rush of lime-kiln gas had hit me. I fell forward, and was carried to the rear, but came to in about half an hour, with no hurt whatever, except that I had a tingling in my nose and eyes, and a bad headache all day. Other chaps say the feeling is the same: *Pte. F. Burton, Bedfordshire Regiment.*

### **His Fire Baptism!**

It was the first time I had been under fire, and for the first ten minutes I felt a bit nervous, and so, I think, all of us did; but it soon wore off, and seeing our comrades hit by shell seemed to stiffen us. We could see the Germans lying in their trenches more than 1000 yards away: we could see their helmets, which showed up like a lot of mushrooms. While we were still digging our trenches the enemy began to advance; and some of our cavalry to our rear came through us to attack the enemy. The Lancers, however, were met by a tremendous rifle and machine-gun fire, and mown down; and they retired through us, followed by the Germans, who came on yelling with fixed bayonets. The regiment who were next us on our right digging themselves in, got caught, I fancy, for I saw some of their men tumbling out of their half-finished trenches in their shirt-sleeves without their rifles. We were ordered out of our trenches to meet the advancing Germans, who, firing from the hip, and with fiendish yells, were evidently intending to rush us. They were coming on in dense blocks—blocks which were probably companies—in *échelon*, but when they saw us come out of our trenches with our bayonets fixed they didn't like it, and most of them turned and ran. Some of them, however, came on, and I saw one man single me out and come for me with his bayonet. He made a lunge at my chest, and, as I guarded, his bayonet glanced aside and wounded me in the hip; but I managed to jab him in the left arm and get him on the ground, and when he was there I hammered him on the head with the butt-end of my rifle. I think I had become a bit dazed, for I did not see my battalion, only a few dead and wounded lying on the ground: *A Private of the Yorks Light Infantry.*

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### **Smoke—and Fire!**

We got down a slope in some way, and thought we were practically safe. In fact, I stopped behind the rest to light my pipe, when suddenly from a wood on our right a terrible rifle and machine-gun fire opened; I couldn't for the moment realize what had happened, but when I saw our chaps dropping (whether shot or taking cover I couldn't then tell), I thought it was time for yours truly to drop, which I promptly did. I was, however, all on my own, down among some young cabbage plants, and I couldn't see a soul. Bullets hit up the earth in my face, and the cabbage leaves were perforated in no time. I started to bang away at the enemy for all I was worth, and continued till I had only five cartridges left. I resolved to save these, and expected every moment for the enemy to charge. I am utterly unable to describe my feelings, but you can take it from me I thought my last moment had arrived. It seemed impossible I could be missed by that stream of Maxim fire, but at last, thank goodness! a British battery noticed our predicament. They galloped into position and fired from behind us. The noise of their first shell seemed like a voice from heaven, and as they got range and poured in more shells, the German fire slackened. Then I caught sight of some of our chaps racing for a ditch to my left. I made up my mind to chance it. I sprang up, grabbed my things, and raced for my life. I reached that ditch on the point of exhaustion and fell into a foot of mud and water. What a relief! One of our chaps had been shot dead in the ditch. With three or four others I crawled about two hundred yards till we gained the roadside and temporary safety: *Sapper Clift, Royal Engineers.*

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### **"Punched!"**

I felt as if someone had punched me in the back. A regular Jack Johnson it was, and I went flat on the ground. There I lay for about twelve hours. Then an officer came by and wanted to know where I was hit. I told him, and he said the best thing I could do was to lay there for a bit. Then I found that there was a man on each side of me, quite dead, so I felt quite comfortable with them. Night fell and I must have dozed off, for when I woke up it was stone dark, and I could hear the wounded Germans crying out in agony. I felt like it myself, for I had been lying on my stomach all

the time, and it never stopped raining. I happened to raise my head, and I saw a large fire about 500 yards away, and I thought if I could get beside it I should feel better. I tried to get up, but I could not. In the end I had to crawl over the dead body on my right, and I crawled on my stomach for 500 yards till I came to the fire. When I got there I must have fainted, for when I came round it was just getting light. Then I heard voices. I called as much as I could, and they heard me. I saw it was the Northampton outpost. I had nearly gone off again when they picked me up. When they moved me I knew the bullet had gone through my lung. They took me to the hospital and dressed my wound: *Pte. H. L. Hook, Royal Sussex Regiment.*

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## IX. CORNERS IN THE FIGHT

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### *Deeds*

*Above heroic, though in secret done,  
And unrecorded left through many an age.*

MILTON'S "Paradise Regained."

*Who, doomed to go in company with pain,  
And fear, and bloodshed, miserable train!  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;  
This is the happy warrior; this is he  
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.*

WORDSWORTH'S "Character of the Happy Warrior."

An amusing thing was to hear an officer of the Royal Irish shouting at the top of his voice, "Give 'em hell, boys, give 'em hell!" He was already wounded in the back by a lump of shrapnel, but it was a treat to hear him shouting: *Pte. R. Toomey, Royal Army Medical Corps.*

### **Footsore**

I pinched a German's "bike" and tried to escape, but could not. So some Belgian people gave me civilian clothes, and a Belgian soldier, also a prisoner, helped me through the German patrols, and by a miracle I escaped. I am footsore with walking in a pair of boots three sizes too big for me: *Pte. V. Cohen, R.A.M.C.*

### **Couldn't Miss**

The Germans rushed at us like a crowd streaming from a cup-tie at the Crystal Palace. You could not miss them. Our bullets ploughed into them, but still on they came. I was well entrenched, and my rifle got so hot I could hardly hold it. I was wondering if I should have enough bullets when a pal shouted, "Up, Guards, and at them!" The next second he was bowled over with a nasty knock on the shoulder. He jumped and hissed, "Let me get at them": *Private Whittaker.*

### **What Ho!**

When we copped the German infantry without their artillery we gave them "What Ho!" Our boys were fine marching on, or in the firing line, always happy. One night in the trenches, waiting for the Germans, they were singing "It's a long way to Tipperary" and "Sing something Irish to me," but it was not long when the German artillery sang "Get out and get under." They sent some "humming birds"—I mean shells—over to us and spoiled our concert: *Private P. McGrath.*

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### **Grand Fighting**

We saw some grand fighting between our aeroplanes and theirs. You could see them circle round each other like a couple of fighting cocks—and then one would come down. One aeroplane was brought down with our guns. We had had several pot-shots at it, but they did not take effect. The first shot from one of our aerial guns brought it down, a mass of blazing wreckage. We were told afterwards that the airman got away and was unhurt: *Pte. J. Doolan, Northumberland Fusiliers.*

### **Swept Away**

Near to Cambrai one of our cavalry regiments ran full tilt into a battalion of German infantry. They flung down their rifles and ran for all they were worth, with the exception of one company, whose officers commanded them to stand. They faced round without attempting to fire a shot, and stood there like statues to receive the onslaught of our men. Our lads were bound to admire their iron discipline, but you can't make way for sentiment in war, and our men rode straight at them with the lance. They were swept away, and our fellows took most of the unwounded ones

### **Giving a Hand**

I have to go right up to the firing line, and when I arrive there I have to give a hand at serving the guns. It is dangerous work, but we don't look at it from that standpoint: we only look to make the enemy run. At the first battle in which the British were engaged I got a flesh wound, but was very thankful it was nothing worse, as scores of my comrades were falling all round me. One of our gunners was so anxious to see the enemy that he jumped up to look, and got part of his leg shot away as a result: *A Salvationist serving as a Royal Field Artillery Motorman.*

### **Came Down Dead!**

I saw a fine "scrap" in the air between a British and a German aeroplane. The British airman can move about quicker and has a much greater speed. This is partly due to the fact that the German machines are armoured underneath. The English airman got above the German, and they had a fight for about a quarter of an hour. Our man emptied his revolver into the German, who kept trying to get out of his way, but could not owing to the Englishman's speed. The German then seemed to plane down in good order, but when he got to the ground he was dead: *Pte. Herman, King's Royal Rifles.*

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### **Fisticuffs**

I was in South Africa, and that was a jolly beanfeast to what this is. I have been all day soaked to the skin, standing knee-deep in water. Sometimes all is quiet, then shot and shell come down like rain and men drop out all around one; but we English Tommies know how to shoot, and that is more than the Uhlan does. We came to fists with them once, and we know more about that also. I downed three with my fist, and I believe I stuck four with my bayonet before I got shot. Our officers are simply grand. They work with us, and one pulled me out of the trench when I was wounded and carried me a little way back: *Pte. J. Hesselop, Essex Regiment.*

### **Not to be Shot**

I got hit by three bullets in about a minute. One went through my cap, one smashed the magazine of my rifle, and one flattened five rounds of ammunition in my belt. Nearly all my company wanted to shake hands with me, telling me that I am the luckiest man in the war. I think it was a record myself. They wanted to keep the cap, ammunition, and magazine, but I am keeping them myself to show you when I come home. So you see I am not to be shot with rifle bullets. At least, that is what they say here, and I think so myself: *Pte. W. Hinton, 1st East Lancashire Regiment.*

### **Promoted Corporal**

There is one thing I am glad to say, that I have fulfilled my undertaking by killing I don't know how many Germans, as they fell before me like broken eggs. I was promoted to full corporal for sticking it out in my blockhouse for seventy-three hours without anything to eat or drink, only firing away all the time at the savages, as this is what I call them. I was given a hearty cheer when the General shook hands with me and congratulated me on my pluck, and not forgetting the men that were with me in the blockhouse. There were four killed and myself and two more wounded—seven altogether, so I will say no more, but will write again soon. Give my love to all. Good-bye, from your loving son, Bert: *Corporal B. L. Prince.*

### **Uhlans or Hussars**

Now, directly we see the Uhlans or the Prussian Hussars we make for them. We have galloped for a mile to get at them. Once they drew us on to the fire of their infantry. We were only two hundred yards away when they fired on us, but at the pace we were going very few were hit. At one time we were in line, and then in *échelon*, and after a short hand-to-hand fight many surrendered, whilst others made off, the machine guns accounting for many. The German cavalry have excellent mounts, and the horses appear to be well trained. Somehow the men haven't got the same grit as our chaps. When they hear our yells as we get into the stride, and they see the glint of our swords, they turn pale, and if it wasn't for their officers they would bolt each time: *A Cavalryman of General de Lisle's Brigade.*

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### **Soon be Better**

I was in the firing line, and my mate next to me had one of his fingers shot off and a bullet through his head. How I got hit, I was bandaging his head up. I was caught in the neck just below the jaw, and the bullet came out of my mouth. It knocked all my teeth out on the left-hand side, and went through my tongue and lip. I ran about a mile and a half before I could get it done up. The doctor said I was a very lucky chap to be alive. I can hardly speak or eat. Dear mother, do not let this upset you. I shall soon be better: *Corpl. Emery, Royal Lancashires.*

### **In Luck!**

We were guarding a road where it was expected they would retreat; and they did. The first lot that came along was a Maxim limber. I accounted for the driver about 400 yards away, off the left shoulder, and someone else accounted for his mate, but still the horses came galloping along towards our ranks, so I thought I would try my arm at stopping them. I did, and got well repaid, for I took them into a farm close by, lifted the German wounded off, and went through his kit. I found a clean change of washing—badly needed, for we had not had a change since we left Chelsea—and something more: a bottle of champagne, three loaves of bread, six pots of jam, and a rabbit; so you can bet I backed a winner: *Private J. Stearn*.

### **Mighty Cool**

Both the French and the British troops display marvellous coolness under fire, but I think the biscuit for coolness ought to go to the battalion of infantry of the French line which we found eating its breakfast by the roadside under a heavy German fire last week. In our own regiment it's not unusual to see men playing cards under fire while waiting for the order to advance. I know of a case where one of our chaps was just going to win the trick when the Germans sent along a shell that hit every man of the card party, killing one and wounding three. When one was being taken off on a stretcher he called out, "It was the Germans won that trick": *Private R. Duffy*.

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### **Three Times**

I have had occasion to thank God three times for as many escapes from death. The first was when we were forced back by artillery fire. A shell fell right under my horse, but failed to explode, being probably what is called an over-timed shell. Anyway, it was an escape! The next time was when we were shelled out of a village. My horse was grazed by a fragment of shrapnel and lamed, and a sharpshooter missed me, but the bullet went through my rifle-bucket and flattened itself on the nozzle of my rifle. The third time was when we had a most trying time in a village and were bombarded by eight German guns. The houses were demolished like packs of cards, but Providence looked after us, and after six hours of mental agony we had to retire one by one across a pontoon bridge; the other bridge had been blown up by the Germans: *A British Cavalryman*.

### **A Marvellous Escape**

I was posted in a house, with about twelve others, firing on the enemy, when the house was shelled, and fell in on us. It was a marvellous escape for all of us. I can just remember falling through the roof; but I am more than pleased to tell you I was not hurt—only shaken up a bit. Two days after we had another go: then the shells were bursting all round us; but we managed to get over that with very little loss. We had another go about a week later. My company was ordered to go in a wood to try and capture some German snipers. No sooner had we entered the wood when the bullets started singing all round us. I had one go right through my cap, and it cut my hair; I have still got the hat, and if I am spared I am going to bring it home with me as a memento: *Pte. Marsh, 1st Bedfordshire Regiment*.

### **Warm Work**

The warmest bit of work I was ever in was when I was injured. Some seven or eight of us and about the same number of Hussars were on patrol in a village. We had dismounted, and were talking over matters when quite unexpectedly some shrapnel shells burst over our heads and brought down some of the cottages. Our officer hurried up to us and ordered us to mount and retire. When we had all mounted he shouted, "Gallop away; every man for himself!" I just remember being hit in the left thigh first. At the same moment the old mare seemed to falter a little. The enemy had our range to a yard, and again and again the shells burst among and above us, bringing some of the fellows down, man and horse. Then something struck me in the right hip, but we kept on, and after five or ten minutes' ride we came on our own regiment dismounted for action. I think about seven or eight of us got through: *A Private of the 12th Lancers*.

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### **"Breath-stoppers"**

There was a farmhouse up the hill, and from this a Maxim gun was pouring out a continuous stream of little "breath-stoppers." The British fixed bayonets and charged the house. On the farm were found about a score of the enemy, who made absolutely no resistance. On the contrary they laughed, and were thankful it was all over and that they were safe. On searching the bushes it was found that several of the enemy had taken refuge—some were dead and others wounded. One feigned having been shot, but after being carried down the hill by a British soldier and finding he was safe, he was all right. He confirms the stories that have come to hand from many sources that the Germans fear the British bayonet: *Pte. V. Wells, Worcestershire Regiment*.

### **Ghostly!**

One night we were lying quietly in some woods when we heard the rattle of hoofs all along the road making enough noise to wake the whole dead in all the graveyards of the world. There was a

regiment of the Kaiser's pets, the Uhlans, coming along as lively as larks on a summer morning. We waited for them at the bend of the road, just close to the cemetery, and when we crashed into them I think they imagined we were ghosts. Very tough we were, to be sure, and a ghost that feels for your ribs with a lance at midnight is an ugly customer to deal with. Those chaps didn't half howl with rage and fear when we went into them, and as soon as they could turn their horses they were off down the road like blue murder. We captured half of them, and cut up the rest: *Sergt. Diamond, of the Lancers.*

### **Blue with Lead**

There is no doubt about the personal bravery of the Germans. I saw a file of them coming down a slight hillock, and twenty or so were hit and toppled down over each other, exactly the same as ninepins. The wonderful thing is that any of us came out of it alive. As I looked up from the trenches, the sky was blue with flying lead. After the fighting had gone on for five hours a bullet passed through the lobe of my left ear, and, after scarring the back of my neck, tore a piece off my coat collar, which was up at the time. The same bullet killed the man behind me. I felt myself growing faint, and gave my name and the name of my mother to my mate next to me, and then I seem to have fainted. When I recovered consciousness my mate was dead: *A Sergeant of the South Lancashire Regiment.*

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### **Don't Mind!**

It was butchers' work. We just rained shells on the German gunners until we were deaf and choking. I don't think a gun on the position could have been sold for scrap iron after we had finished, and the German gunners would be just odd pieces of clothing and bits of accoutrement. It seems swanky to say so, but once you get over the first shock you'll go on chewing biscuits or tobacco when the shells are bursting all round. You don't seem to mind it any more than smoking in a hailstorm. Then you get pulled up with a jerk when your mate on the left curls up in a heap. War is rotten, but you can even get used to working in a candle-factory. We hated smells more than we did the Germans: *An Artilleryman.*

### **Not Much Left**

One night after a very hard day in the trenches, when we were wet to the skin, we had lighted fires to dry our tunics, and were at it when we heard firing along our front, and then the Germans came at us like madmen. We had to tackle them in our shirt-sleeves. It was mainly bayonet work, and hard work at that. They were well supported by cavalry, who tried to ride us down in the dark, but we held our ground until reinforcements came, and then we drove them off with a fine rush of our cavalry and infantry. At one point there was a fine race between our battalion and one of the Lancer regiments as to which should get at the Germans first. We were handicapped a bit because we hadn't horses, but we won in the end, and charged right into the German hordes with the bayonet. After that the Lancers came up, and there wasn't much left for anybody else when the Germans were done with: *Private A. Tims.*

### **One More River**

We got our orders early in the morning to get across the Aisne, and we had to turn out early. It was very cold, and there was a heavy rain; but we got our pipes set a-going, and we were all right then. When we got up the river the fun began. There were no bridges, but the Engineers had made some rafts. Six men got on each raft, and with the burden we were up to the knees in water, and we were hauled across to the other side by a rope. When we got to the other side we got it hotter than ever. Some time after this three of us were lying in a field. I was smoking my pipe, and my chum was puffing at a cigarette. The man next my chum hadn't a match, and wanted a light badly, and he got up to get a "touch" from my chum. As soon as he rose the poor beggar was hit with a shell and killed: *Pte. Hamish, King's Own Scottish Borderers.*

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### **A Revolver Story**

In the mad rush through the village Dodds was also shot badly in the leg, and the poor horse, which was carrying us two, was brought down. The result was that the two of us fell helpless to the ground, and we were immediately surrounded by a crowd of Germans, who yelled and acted like a lot of savages. We saw them tearing practically every bit of clothing from one of our poor chaps who had been killed, and in my own case they stripped me of everything but my trousers and shirt. They took from me the revolver that I had taken from a German officer, and one of them was about to strip me of my shirt when a funny thing occurred. I often laugh when I think of it. When I was looking up and trying to think as little as possible about my arm, who should stand above me but the captured German officer whose guard had been killed. He said, "You are the man who took my revolver. Let me have it back instantly." I said that I had not got it, and that one of his own men had relieved me of it. "Then come with me," he said, "and find the man who took it, and I shall have him shot." I went around with him as a matter of form, but I was not having any: *Lance-Corpl. M. Nolan, Royal Scots Greys.*

### **At the Fords**



The fiercest fighting took place when the Germans tried to force a passage of the river at various points. As they came up the fords—every one of which was commanded by our artillery and bodies of picked French and British riflemen—they were galled terribly by the rifle fire, and we kept plugging them with shells as fast as we could. For a while it didn't seem to be of any use, for as one man fell another stepped forward to take his place, but he only struggled on a few yards before falling in his turn before the hellish fire we poured on them. They had evidently made up their minds to get the pontoons into position regardless of cost in lives. The first party got theirs in position nicely, and then came rushing across like a swarm of bees rushing out of their hives to see what was wrong. A shell from a French battery hidden on our left dropped right on to them, and the thing went toppling into the river with its human load, being carried downstream under a heavy rifle and shell fire. The same thing went on the whole day, until we were sick of the sight, and mists of blood were floating before our eyes, and the cries of the drowning and dying men were always ringing in our ears. That was the daily programme as I saw it until I got hit and was sent home. Only at one point did they manage to cross the river, and then they had to face a bayonet charge from the Allies' infantry, who rushed on them with rare joy and hurled them back into the river: *A Driver of the Royal Artillery.*

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### **War—and Peace!**

It was a jolly hot shop. A lot of the chaps of the section of — Battery were wounded. I cannot explain everything, only when those shells were bursting all around us and over us, and the rifle and machine-gun bullets were dropping and whizzing round us, a lot of us thought of home and other things. We had to man-handle our guns out, while the other batteries drew their fire. We had one officer left. We were complimented by the colonel, who repeated General French's and General Gough's orders that they were proud of us for the cool and brave way in which we worked the gun under heavy fire. Our colonel, poor old chap, nearly cried. He said: "Needless to say, lads, I am proud of you too," and he walked away. He could not say any more. I don't want to be in another action like that. The prettiest sight I saw out here was one hot day when we were retreating. We were all paraded, tired and hungry. We went through a little village. At the end of the village there was a little convent, and the nuns in their long grey uniform and white headdress, with crucifix hanging on their breast, were distributing wine and fruit to us as we marched through. They were lovely little women; and the way they came out went straight to my heart. They looked so good, pure, and holy. It is a picture I shall always remember: *Gunner Osborne, Royal Horse Artillery.*

### **Hard Going!**

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I was on patrol duty the other day. I can't tell you the name of the place, but there was a chum of mine, an officer, and myself. We met five German Uhlans going down the road. They were in front of us, so we got on the grass on the side of the road and galloped right on top of them. They saw us when we were about eight yards away. They tried to get away from us, but we were into them. Our officer got the first one with his sword, and as the German fell out of the saddle the officer's horse fell over him. That left me and my mate for the other four. Even then they would not face us. All the better for us. I got the next fellow. I put my sword right through him, and my mate did the same with another. Then we went after the other two. Both of us got up to one of them at the same time, and he got both swords through him. He did try to defend himself, for he got me on the lip with his lance and knocked two of my teeth out and took a piece out of my lip. It was not much, but he will never take any more pieces out, for he got both our swords into him. While we were trying to draw our swords out the last of the Uhlans got off his horse and tried to escape in the woods. I fell off my horse in my haste trying to get up to shoot him. All the same I shot him through the head, and he was as dead as a door-nail when I got up to him: *Private M. Ferguson.*

### **Connaught Rangers**

The dear old Rangers have had their fair share of the fighting. Still, they're ready for as much more as the Germans want, and it won't be our fault if every man of ours that has gone to face his Maker with an unshriven soul hasn't at least a dozen German trash to keep him company. There's a lot of talk about the disloyalty of the Irish people, but, sure, when it comes to the bit, and England needs soldiers to fight for her, she knows she can rely on the Irishmen. There's not a man in the Rangers would let any German trample on the Union Jack, no matter what his views about Home Rule and the need for making England recognize our right to nationality. The Rangers have lived up to their character as fine fighters, and they have been in some very hard scraps, you may be sure. One day we were sent to help a battery of our artillery that had got into difficulties, and was like to be carried off by the Germans. There was little time to spare, as the Germans were pressing hard on both flanks, and there was fear we might be cut off if we didn't get on the move. We rushed at them with the bayonet at the double, and swept them away like the dust goes before the wind. It was hard fighting, and many of us got hit, but our charge made it easy for the guns to be got away in safety: *Private P. O'Hanlon.*

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### **The Best of It**

They were in front of us before we had time to entrench ourselves, and we had to make the best of what cover we could find in a country as level as Glasgow Green. Still, we made the best of it,

and the Germans were far from getting it all their own way. They came on us in swarms, but we sent them back time and again, and if it had not been for their shrapnel we could have been peppering them yet. As it was, we were suddenly alive to the fact that there was a trenchful of them lying quiet just in front of us, waiting to catch us on the retreat, and it was with a demoniacal howl we received the order to charge. It was a charge with the pipes playing for all they were worth, and you could hear the roll of the kettledrums above the sound of the firing. Our men bayoneted all who could not get out of the trench, about 600 of them; and the Middlesex Regiment got in on all who ran. It was a bloody fray, no quarter being asked nor given, and as we returned to our first position we were satisfied that we had given much more than our enemies expected from us: *Pte. A. M'Nally, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.*

### **Charge of the London Scots**

We took up a position allotted to us, and just when we had settled down to it a staff officer came along, and we were told we were going to have a chance of showing whether we were "show" soldiers or the real thing. We could have yelled for joy.... After covering a short distance we were sent across the fields in open order. We found some of our cavalry dismounted and holding a line of trenches quite close to the Germans. Just then we came under fire from the rifles and the machine guns. It was a bit unnerving at first, and some of our chaps didn't like it, but we pressed steadily on, taking advantage of every bit of cover. It was a matter of lying down every few minutes, and then rushing forward a few yards, until we came right up to their trenches. As we got close the German rifle fire ceased almost, and we saw their infantry stand up in the trenches to receive our attack. I must say they struck me as being game chaps, and after what I had heard about their fear of the bayonet I was a bit surprised. We were now near enough to see the fierce glare in the eyes of the enemy as they waited for us. We gave them one great volley and then bayonets were fixed, and in a long line we charged down on their trenches. The madness of that charge I shall never forget. There was no time to think of fear or danger. We were mad drunk with the excitement. The blood was coursing in our veins at express speed, and our only thought was to close in the death-grip with the foe. Some of our boys yelled out "Scotland for ever!" and others were as silent as the grave. Their lines were strengthened at every point, and they made a great stand against us, but we were fresh, and we slashed right and left with a will. They weakened after the first shock, and gradually fell back, fighting inch by inch, but each step we forced them back, their pace became quicker, and then they broke into a mad race for life: *A Member of the London Scottish.*

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### **Beside a Windmill**

The hardest fight, in my opinion, took place around a block of farm buildings, with a windmill in the centre and cattle quietly grazing close by. There was a Franco-British force of not more than 800 bayonets in possession, and near by some British cavalry were posted. Under cover of darkness the Germans made a sudden sweep round the position, threw back the cavalry after a hot fight, and had the little force completely cut off from headquarters. They brought up artillery and began to batter down the walls of the buildings, and when they had made a big gap in the wall of the stable, a battalion of infantry made a rush for it with the bayonet. The defenders stood there quietly shooting down the Germans as they came along, but it was worse than shooting mosquitoes with automatic pistols. They hit many, but there were others behind, and they kept coming on. The defenders fired their last shot, and the building was rushed by the Germans, who simply swarmed in. Into the corner the handful of men went with their bayonets, determined to sell their lives dearly. The Germans stood at the doorway firing into them, and when only three remained standing the Germans rushed on them and overpowered them. From the stable the attack was then developed in like fashion against the rest of the buildings. One of the gables was sent crumbling down, exposing the defenders to a withering rifle fire, and then the roof toppled in with a crash, burying all that were left of the brave men beneath the ruins. Not a man in that building escaped unhurt, and of the whole force engaged in defending the position only twenty were captured by the Germans unwounded. We avenged them finely the next day: *A Private of the Warwickshire Regiment.*

### **Against Big Odds**

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Our machine gun began yapping, but its noise was little better than that of a toy terrier against a brace of bulldogs, and we didn't count much on it. Part of the regiment lay in the trenches firing away at the Germans for all they were worth, but we didn't count much on that either. We knew that the good old bayonet would have to be our mainstay, and so one of the companies was ordered to get ready for the rush across the intervening space. We were out in a brace of shakes, and there was no loitering by the way, for the sooner we got there the easier would it be. Half way across they found our range with the guns, and shrapnel dropped all around. Our chaps were suffering badly, and seemed to get a bit weak in their advance. Nobody could blame them, for it was awful work. The officer in command simply called out, "Remember, men, the Black Watch never wavers. Forward!" That knocked on the head any idea of wavering, and we were off again like a party of merry trippers at the beginning of the Glasgow Fair holidays. We got there in the end, but at a terrible price, and we found the Germans ready for us. We went in without a word or a cheer. After we had driven them off, they were on to us again before we had time to make the position secure. We beat them back, but they came on over and over again. The last time I think it would have gone hard with us, indeed, but for an unexpected diversion. A French

aeroplane appeared overhead and began signalling to a point in our rear. This scared the Germans, who feared a big force was moving to cut them off, and they fell back. Before they had had time to find out their mistake a brigade of infantry arrived to our assistance, and then the enemy cleared off for good. That was one of the closest things for us; and it was a miracle that we pulled through against such terrible odds as were thrown against us that night: *A Private of the Black Watch*.

### **“Nesting” Time**

The Germans took full advantage of the woods. Sharpshooters and even machine guns were posted on the trees, and they did terrible execution amongst our men, who were unable to see them. You approached a wood that appeared quite peaceful and an ideal place for a quiet rest. Suddenly you awoke to the fact that every tree was a fortress, and bullets began to drop all round just like acorns from the trees at home. For an enemy the woods have many advantages, but the disadvantages must not be overlooked. We saw enough of them to bring home to us that tree-fighting is not all a picnic. One day we had reason to suspect that the enemy were trying their trick in the woods on our left. The French artillery opened fire, and as we advanced we found the wood blazing from end to end. From all directions came the agonizing cries of the Germans who were concealed in the trees. They had no hope of getting away in many cases, and simply had to stay in their perches until suffocation brought a merciful end. A few of them did escape, and dashed out to our lines in terror. We ceased fire and did the best we could for them, but that wasn't much. On another day we advanced into a wood that was held in force by the enemy. They were bent on contesting every inch of the ground, and what we had to do was to shelter behind each tree as we advanced, firing at the next where one or more Germans were posted. We had to keep that sort of thing up for a day, and when night fell it was doubly dangerous work. Still, we had to keep at it, and in the end we drove them out. Our chaps and the French are ready to do their share of “nesting” in the trees when it is necessary to resist the Germans, and we have had plenty of that kind of fighting. It requires a lot of courage, and is terribly risky all through: *A Corporal of the Middlesex Regiment*.

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## **X. HIT AND MISSED**

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*There is a victory in dying well  
For Freedom—and ye have not died in vain.*

THOMAS CAMPBELL.

*Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred!*

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*Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them,  
Left of six hundred.*

TENNYSON'S “Charge of the Light Brigade.”

In one of our rearguard actions an officer was saying to me, “I am not good enough to die yet.” He had not spoken the words before he was shot through the brain, and the man on the left had his head blown off by a shell. You know I wasn't severely religious, but I'm inclined to be now: *Pte. Watts, 4th Grenadiers*.

### **A “Charmed Life”**

I bore a charmed life. A bullet went through the elbow of my jacket, another through my equipment, and a piece of shrapnel found a resting-place in a tin of bully-beef which was on my back. I was picked up eventually during the night, nearly dead from loss of blood: *A Private of the Black Watch*.

### **The Seventh Time**

I am all right, but very nearly got shot in a trench by the Germans. I got on my knees to dig a bit of earth to get comfortable when they spotted me. Then about ten shots came in quick

succession. One sent my cap off. Down I got, and jolly quick. This is the seventh time I have escaped being hit: *Pte. Oliver, Yorkshire Light Infantry.*

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### **Making a Hole**

I was standing with a chum, watching the artillery fire. "Look at the smoke," I said to him. A moment later a shell came screaming down, and I was knocked kicking by the suction. My chum simply said, "Lordy, look at the hole," and then I saw I was lying on the edge of a hole made by the shell large enough to bury a horse in: *Pte. J. Charley, East Surrey Regiment.*

### **A Hero Indeed**

When I got hit, I couldn't say how long I lay there, but a chum of mine, Tommy Quaife, under a perfect hail of bullets and shells dragged me to safety and said, "Cheer up, Smiler, here's a fag. I'm going back for Sandy (his other chum)." He never got there. Poor Tommy got a piece of shell and was buried the same night. If ever a hero lived he was one: *Sergt. J. Rolfe, 2nd Batt. King's Royal Rifles.*

### **A Changed View**

We put in some wonderfully effective shooting in the trenches, and the men find it is much easier making good hits on active service than at manoeuvres. The Germans seemed to think at first that we were as poor shots as they are, and they were awfully sick when they had to face our deadly fire for the first time: *Pte. M. O'Keefe, Royal Irish Rifles.*

### **"Oh, Bill!"**

Just as I was hit, I said, "Oh, Bill, it has knocked my foot up. Pick it up for me." He said, "It is all right. Keep still," and he tied something round my leg to stop the blood running. Then the doctor came up. He said, "The stretchers will be up just now"; but as soon as he went away I was making for the field hospital on my hands and knees. I got so far, and was having a rest when the doctor gave me a lift: *Pte. Wilde, Worcestershire Regiment.*

### **"Hell on Earth"**

About midday a German aeroplane, flying the Union Jack and the French colours, came flying down on our positions. We thought it was our own craft, but wherever she dipped the German artillery took range, and as soon as she got up out of our reach they simply poured their shells upon us. Within ten minutes we had five killed and forty-seven wounded, and a number we cannot account for. One shell came blowing my knapsack off my back, and made a hole through my waterproof sheet. It was just like hell on earth: *Pte. A. Fricker, 1st Gloucestershire Regiment.*

### **His Kilt Torn**

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As I was crawling on hands and knees to the base, bullets whizzed around me and shrapnel fell within a few feet. I had my kilt pierced on eight occasions. Everybody who has seen the holes in my kilt says what a marvellous escape it was. I had escaped without any additional scratch, even though I had my gun shattered to pieces in my hand: *A Corporal of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.*

### **"Not Me!"**

Who was going to stop with the transport? Not me! I was sent for a box of ammunition, and was carrying it on my shoulder when a shrapnel splinter struck the box and knocked me down. All our fellows thought I was dead, and one or two came running to me, but I got up all right and went back to the trenches. I had a pop at 'em with a rifle. Ever seen a shrapnel drop? *A Drummer Boy of the Cheshire Regiment.*

### **A Pat on the Ankle**

I had the misfortune to have a pat on the ankle. I was placed on the tool cart, and had a ride with some others who had had a taste of German shells. One of our chaps had a narrow squeak. A bullet took his cap off, and a groove was cut through his hair, but it did not hurt him. It was just the same as if his hair was parted in the centre, for the bullet carried away the hair without hurting the scalp: *Sapper McKenney, 1st Div. Royal Engineers.*

### **Doing Well**

My Dear Wife,—I hope that you have been getting my letters and postcards that I have sent to you since I have been out here. Well, dear, I am sorry to tell you I have been wounded, but it is not so serious as it might have been. I got hit in the head by a piece of shell, and the wound is getting on very nicely up to the time of writing. Do not worry yourself; we are all being treated splendidly: *Pte. A. E. Bell, of the Rifle Brigade.*

## Blown Up!

I picked one chap up who had been shot, and asked for someone to come and help me, and the two of us were picking him up when a shell burst between us. We were blown up in the air, and turned a somersault, and it is marvellous that neither of us was hurt. The chap we were picking up was not so lucky, for he was hit a second time. However, we got him up and took him back to the ambulance. The Germans finally blew down our barricade and everything that was movable, and we retired to the trenches, three miles away: *A Lance-Corporal of the Royal Marines*.

## Disagreeable

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I have had some close shaves. Once I looked up for a second at an aeroplane flying overhead, and a couple of bullets just missed me by a hair's-breadth. One day I was filling my water-bottle at the stream when it was shot out of my hand, and another bullet ripped into my coat and was stopped against the photos of you and the children. Last night in the trenches I dreamt I was back home again and was playing with little Gracie and telling her some stories of the fighting: *Pte. Hamson, King's Royal Rifles*.

## Green Fireworks

I have had the narrowest escape of my life. The horse I was riding got knocked out altogether by a shell, and while I was getting another one to put in its place a shell came and put three of us out of action. I managed to scramble out of it for about two miles, when I dropped unconscious, and the next place I found myself in was a French hospital with enough bandage round my head to make a girl a dress. You ought to see the sight of a battlefield; it is just like the Crystal Palace on a firework day but for the men and horses dropping: *Driver T. Tyler, Royal Field Artillery*.

## Heavy Fire

The second day we were under heavy fire, and we had to retreat; but the next morning we regained the trenches. Then we came under heavy fire again, and it was at this time that I received my wound. "Have you got it, old boy?" said my mate, George Hunter. Only about ten minutes afterwards Hunter himself received in rapid succession five shots in the thigh and groin. He quickly died from hæmorrhage, and lies buried in France. I myself had to lie upon the ground for eleven hours before I was carried to an ambulance wagon: *Pte. Whitehead, Norfolk Regiment*.

## Dead as a Nail

The German had killed several of our fellows before I knocked him over. As they were going through a gate—"piff"—and down they went. We knew by the sound that the rifleman could not be far, and we kept looking out for him, for there were no large bodies of Germans about. At last I saw a flash coming from a tree, and I took two aims at him, and then we saw him swaying to and fro, dead as a nail, but tied with a rope to the tree: *Pte. Jakeman, West Riding Regiment*.

## Stone Dead

We came to a wood that looked as if it had been occupied by the Germans. Sure enough, there was a sentry standing all by himself under the trees with a rifle in his hands. We were in his direct line, so he couldn't help seeing us, but he made not the slightest sound or sign of being put out. We crept close to have a better squint at him, because there was something uncommon in the look of him, and then we saw what was the matter. The poor chap was stone dead: *Corpl. Miller, Army Service Corps*.

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## Kicked

I had the misfortune to get three bullets through my right leg. It feels just like getting a kick from a horse. It's worse if the bullet strikes a bone, but by a bit of luck all three bullets went clean through my leg. They were from a machine gun, and it happened just after we had cleared the Germans out of a wood in order that we might put up there for the night. I was more fortunate in South Africa, when I was serving in the 5th Mounted Infantry, for then I only received a slight shell wound: *Corporal F. Price*.

## Killed Instantly

After the battle the men rested in a deserted village where the one or two inhabitants who remained boiled some eggs for them and provided them with some refreshments. In the deserted shops enough tobacco was secured to make a cigarette each for most of the Cheshires, but they had only one box of matches between the whole battalion. A number of the Cheshires were sitting in a cottage having some tea. The door was open, and a drummer-boy was sitting near. Suddenly a bullet whizzed just past his face and struck a corporal, who was at that moment drinking tea from a cup, killing him instantly! *Private Whitlow*.

## Waited for Them

One night, while we were lying prone behind some earthworks, we heard the sound of hoofs. For a time we could not detect the intruders, so kept quite still. Then a light flickered out in the distance, then another disclosing a party of Uhlans, who, thinking they had the country to themselves, were lighting their pipes. We allowed them to advance, joking among themselves, until they were within close range. Then we gave them a volley. Three were killed, and the remainder, very scared, galloped off: *A Corporal of a Highland Regiment.*

### **A Clover Field**

I got a bullet through my shoulder that put my right arm out of action. I dropped in a clover field. The machine guns were sweeping the hill, and the bullets were cutting the clover tops about six inches above my head. I dare not move, as I would have been riddled, and the whole of the line had gone on. I lay there over two hours trying to get a bandage on my wound. When I heard the guns becoming silent, I jumped up and ran behind a haystack, where I found thirty more men all smothered with blood. We bandaged one another up as best we could, and lay there until dark, when a doctor arrived, and those alive were removed with stretchers. We got some hot tea, the first drop for five days: *Pte. Cundell, Northamptonshire Regiment.*

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### **A Busy Marksman**

When I found I could not walk I gave it up. Just after I got my first view of the Germans. They were coming out of a wood 400 yards away all in a heap together, so I thought as I was done for I would get a bit of my own back, and so I started pumping a bit of lead into them. I stuck there for about three-quarters of an hour, and fired all my own ammunition and a lot belonging to two more wounded men who were close to me—about 300 rounds altogether, and as it was such a good target I guess I accounted for a good lot of them. Then I suddenly discovered I could walk, and so I set off to get back. I had to walk about 150 yards in the open, with shrapnel bursting about me all the way: *Private G. A. Turner.*

### **Bits of Shrapnel**

I was wounded by shrapnel. When the shell burst in the air about 300 bullets flew in all directions. I was hit on the right shoulder. At first it did not hurt, and I continued to fight for about an hour. Then another shell burst, and I got a small wound on my left shoulder and a bullet through my left arm. It was in the forearm, and it came out just above the back of the elbow, and it fractured the bone. I have been under X-rays, and I am pleased to say there is nothing left in either shoulder, but there are little bits of shrapnel left in the elbow: *Pte. W. Struthers, Northumberland Fusiliers.*

### **In the Eye**

While looking over the top of the trench a shell burst in front, and something hit me in the eye. It seemed like a blow from a sledgehammer, and down I went. When I came to about an hour after I found our chaps had beaten the enemy off, though the shells still came over. I had a bandage round my head, also a terrible aching. To improve matters rain started falling heavily, but I could not be moved till daybreak. I was then taken to the nearest field hospital, had my wound bathed and dressed, and then was moved by motor ambulance to another field hospital about ten miles away. I stayed there a day, and again motored some distance to a town, and from there came by rail to this hospital, the train journey taking thirty hours: *Sergt. Guest, Black Watch.*

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### **“Nuf Said”**

I had a bullet taken out of my leg yesterday, and I shall have to have my own back. You see, we were in the field, and the Germans were in the bush, and our officer told us to retire for a few yards, as he could see better cover from the enemy's shot and shell. The first man got up and got back safely. Your humble was No. 2. I got up to go, and one of the Germans took a penalty. “Nuf said!” Final score—One, nil. But, you see, we always play a return match, and it will then be my turn for both points. The Germans are a very big set of fellows, taking them on the whole; but what rifle shots! If the majority of them were in an empty house, they would not be able to hit it, because the bullets would go up the chimney. You may say, “They were good enough to hit you.” But that was more by good luck than by good management: *Private J. B. Coates.*

### **Made Comfortable**

It was about six o'clock in the morning when I received my souvenir. It was almost impossible for a wounded man to get back from the firing line without being riddled. I stayed in the trench until five in the evening. The noise was deafening, shrapnel bursting all over the place and raining bullets. I determined to try and get back to have my wound dressed, and I crawled back somehow, rolled down on to a road, crawled along again for a few hundred yards, and presently got in touch with some stretcher-bearers, who carried me to a doctor. I with many others lay in a barn for two days, and the shells from the enemy's big guns burst unpleasantly near the hospital the whole time. After a two days' ride in cattle trucks we reached a good hospital, where we were made comfortable: *Pte. G. Sims, 1st Batt. South Wales Border Regiment.*

## Couldn't Move

I was really fascinated by the shells, and was not really thinking of anything at all. Suddenly a shell burst over my head and it got me right in the back. I could feel my horse getting lower and lower; I put my hand behind me and felt a lot of hot wet. I wondered if I could get him over the ditch, but just before I got to it he rolled over into it with me. My troop sergeant came and asked me if I could get up. I said, "No, mate, I can't move; I'll have to stop here." Then back came the trumpeter with Captain —, and he asked me the same thing. If I couldn't get on a spare horse they would have to leave me there. I said, "Very well, sir, I'll stop. You had better clear out." I crawled along the ditch to get out of the way of the shells, which were bursting a long time after my squadron had gone to cover. I lay there about four hours in a semi-conscious state, and when I came round I found I had buried my head in the mud trying to get out of the way of the shells: *A Lance-Corporal of Hussars*.

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## "Flying All Round"

The bullets and shells were flying all round, and did not cease until after dark. Then was my only chance to get out. I crawled on my hands and knees to a little inn, and there my wounds were dressed. To-day since I have been in hospital shrapnel has been bursting all round, but the hospital was not touched except for one bullet which struck a window. The bullet that wounded me went into one breast pocket and came out of the other, and in its course it passed through your photo, making a hole in the breast. What a strange coincidence! It then passed through my watch and struck a large clasp knife, smashing it to pieces and driving it through my pocket: *Sergt. E. W. Turner, Royal West Kent Regiment*.

## Got Away

I got an awful wound in the left hip. A shell burst in the trenches close to me, killing five of our chaps; so I had a lucky get off. I had to lie in the trench wounded all day, as the battle was so fierce they could not take me to cover. A few days before this happened I and another of our chaps were captured by some Germans. They took everything I had, even my watch and chain. The escort took us to a barn for the night. We laid down and made out as if we were asleep. We could hear them talking, and they touched us, but we did not move, so they lay down themselves and soon dropped off to sleep. There were eleven of us altogether. Then we thought they were all right and sound asleep, so I seized a German rifle next to me, which was fully loaded, and I touched my mate and we both moved slyly away. I was determined to shoot the first German that moved and make a run for it; but we got away all right and slept the night in a wood: *Pte. Evenden, 1st Coldstream Guards*.

## "Got Me, Too!"

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"Come on now, lads," said our officer, and we went running on as hard as we could. We had got to take the hill, you see, or smash the Germans that were on it. At last we got quite near—not 150 yards from the trenches. I and two pals of mine and two others got behind a hedge and started to blaze away. We lost our sick feeling then. There was one chap got hit in the face with a shrapnel bullet. "Hurt, Bill?" I said to him. "Good luck to the old regiment," said he. Then he rolled over on his back. There was a grey German helmet over the side of the trench with a rifle under it. I let that German have a bullet all to himself. I saw his helmet roll back and his rifle fly up. Then I got on my knees to bandage up a pal, and just as I moved there was a smash on my side. They'd got me, too, and I rolled over and thought I was done for: *Pte. S. Smith, 1st Warwickshire Regiment*.

## A Passing Shell

One day I was in front of my horses with my back to the enemy, just putting on my nosebags, when a shell from somewhere fell between the horses and put the whole six on the ground. I was pulled up in the air by my horse, and he dropped on his back dead. The wheel-horses were struggling, and my wheel-driver was lying dead with his face blown away. I did not get touched, but no sooner did the devils see that their shells were effective than they opened fire with the whole lot of their big guns, twelve in all, and I don't know how many machine guns. The din was horrible, shells screaming and whistling around me, and the pop-pop-pop of the Maxims. I ran round to the gun and tried to get it unlimbered, but the horses were struggling in the wheel harness and I could not move it. Then I felt a twitch in my arm. I saw blood on my sleeve, and the hole where the bullet went in. The use of my arm was gone. I did not know what to do. I dropped down and crawled out of the firing line. Another fellow came along with a wound in his hand, and we sat there talking together till we were picked up by an ambulance: *Driver G. Chiswell, Royal Horse Artillery*.

## Stuck to Him

I was told to go back to the farmhouse and cut the horses loose. I did so. Then God answered my prayer, and I had strength to run through a line of rifle fire over barbed wire covered by a hedge, and managed to get out of range, and then I fell for want of water. I had just about two teaspoonfuls in my bottle; then I went on struggling my way through hedges to a railway line.

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When I got through I saw a man of the Royal Irish with six wounds from shrapnel. I managed to carry him about half a mile and found water; then he was as happy as if he were not wounded. I stuck to him although he was heavy and I was feeling weak and tired. I had to carry him across a big field of turnips; when half way I slipped and we both fell. I had a look back, and could see the fire mountains high. I then saw one of my own regiment, and with the help of two Frenchmen we soon got the Irishman on a shutter to a house and dressed him. We got him away from the village, which was being shelled, and then met a company of Cameronian Highlanders and handed him over to them: *Pte. G. Kay, of the Royal Scots.*

### **Anchored!**

"We're in for it," says I to Tommy Gledhill, my chum. "Anything's better than lying here," said he. "Anyhow, it will warm us up just as well as brandy, and it'll help a few more Germans to a place where they'll not be bothered with chills." Sure enough, it was as hot as anyone could wish it to be. The Germans were in their best fighting form. They came right up to where we were posted, stopping every few yards to fire into us. Then they came for us with the bayonet, and there was as nice a set-to in the muggy downpour as you could ask for. It was ugly work while it lasted. In the soaked ground it was difficult enough to keep a foothold, but if you want a really tough job just try a little bayonet exercise with a heavy German dancing around you trying to jab a bayonet into you if you should happen to slip in the mud. That'll give you an idea of what we came through. "Anchored!" We don't like to be called that at any time, but that morning we were proud when the brigadier called us the old "Stick-in-the-Muds," and I dare say if it hadn't been for the fact that some of us caught the wheeze of anchoring ourselves at least a foot deep in the mud we might have been swept away. As it was, it was the Germans who were swept away, and you might say that they were properly rolled in blood and mud, for when any of them went down in that fight they were a sight for sore eyes, or I'm a horse marine: *A Private of the Grenadier Guards.*

### **Carted to Hospital**

We had not marched more than 500 yards, and got to the outskirts of the town, when we heard a cavalry patrol coming towards us, the officers speaking in French. Our captain immediately challenged in French, and we got no reply. The captain then realized they were Germans, and the order came, "Fire!" The German officers dashed forward and seized the muzzles of the front-rank rifles a second before we had the order "Fire!" and a proper *mêlée* took place. A German slashed one of our chaps' head nearly off. All of them (Germans) were wiped out in a few seconds. After that we fired volleys as they charged down on us, and they never got within 50 yards of us. They brought a big gun, and then it was a perfect hell. The gun was only 400 yards away, and was blazing shrapnel into us. Five times we silenced it. It was hell all night. I was shot, and carted off to hospital. My rifle stopped the bullet, and saved my life, or I should have got it in the chest: *A Guardsman, at Mons.*

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## **XI. ADVANCE AND RETREAT**

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*What rights are his that dare not strike for them?*

TENNYSON.

*Kabul town's by Kabul river—  
Blow the bugle, draw the sword—  
There I lef' my mate for ever,  
Wet an' drippin' by the ford.  
Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul river,  
Ford o' Kabul river in the dark!  
There's the river up and brimmin', and there's 'arf a squadron swimmin'  
'Cross the ford o' Kabul river in the dark.*

RUDYARD KIPLING'S "Ford o' Kabul River."

We had a good time before we started fighting. The French people gave us everything they had—cigarettes, chocolate, grapes, everything imaginable. But it is a different France now the German pigs have burnt all the houses. It does seem a shame: *Pte. A. Wilson, Bedfordshire Regiment.*

### **"NO-o-o!"**

We passed a wounded "Joey," whose face was deathly white from suffering. He opened his eyes as we reached him, smiled, and called out in a faint voice, "Are we downhearted?" We called back a hearty "No!" that must have drowned the noise of the cannon, and then we gave three hearty cheers, just to liven things up: *Pte. T. Ball, Royal Marine Light Infantry.*



## **A Bold Front**

Our colonel was a perfect gentleman, and under his gallant lead the Rangers set a bold front. In the midst of the bursting of the German projectiles his clear, stentorian voice rang out, "Rangers of Connaught, all eyes are upon you to-night. While you have fists and a heart within you charge them. If you don't, never face me in this world nor in the next": *Pte. W. McConville, 2d Batt. Connaught Rangers.*

## **"Shifting" Them**

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I tell you we were like a lot of schoolboys at a treat when we got the order to fix bayonets, for we knew we should shift them then. We had about 200 yards to cover before we got near them, and then we let them have it in the neck. It put you in mind of tossing hay, only we had human bodies: *Pte. G. Bridgeman, 4th Royal Fusiliers.*

## **Dug It Out**

Stormed at all the way, we kept on, and no one was hit until we came to a white house which stood in a clearing. Immediately the officer passed the gap hell was let loose on us, but we got across safely, and I was the only one wounded, and that was with a ricochet shrapnel bullet in the right knee. I knew nothing about it until an hour after, when I had it pointed out to me. I dug it out with a knife: *Private Smiley, at Mons.*

## **"Stand Solid!"**

The captain said, "Get up, men; stand solid." We formed about six deep. Then we gave them the surprise of their lives. We could just see a black mass in front of our trenches, and we let out for all we were worth. We were like devils possessed. I could feel my bayonet go through something soft. Not a German got his foot in the trench. They ran down the slopes like rabbits, and to help them we gave them five rounds rapid: *Pte. D. Hamilton, Royal Scots.*

## **The Dying German**

When I was hit I lay for hours on the ground, and got chummy with a German chap, who had got a nasty sabre cut in the head, as well as a bayonet stab in the kidneys, and was "booked through." He knew his number was up, but he was as cheery as though he were at a wedding instead of a funeral.... Almost the last words he said were, "You'll win this time, and you deserve to win your victory, but we'll never forget or forgive, and some day a new Germany will avenge us": *A Welsh Private.*

## **Disturbed!**

We were having letters and parcels and our breakfast bacon issued out in the trenches when the Germans charged us and captured them. When we took the position again I found my parcel had been opened and the letters had been strewn all over the place. It was an awful slaughter of the Germans, for they were within 20 yards of us and we poured volleys into them. You ought to have heard them yell; it was like a wild-beast show let loose. They came through a thick wood, and that was the reason they got so close: *Pte. Westfield, Worcestershire Regiment.*

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## **"Annie Laurie"**

We were unable to sleep for the pouring rain, and sat at a big camp fire with hot tea and rum. The boys asked me to sing "Annie Laurie," and I was never in better voice. When I finished there were officers, and even staff officers attracted from their billets, who had come over the field in the rain to join in. I need hardly add that they were nearly all Scotch, and "Annie Laurie" after all is to a Scot what the "Marseillaise" is to a Frenchman: *A Bombardier of the Royal Field Artillery.*

## **"Few! Few!"**

We jumped out of our trenches at the command "Fix bayonets, charge!" Only a few of them stood and faced our bayonets, and Lord have mercy on that few! They were actually torn or cut to pieces. Those that ran away halted when they got to the sky-line, and there put up their hands and the white flag. We followed them up, and brought back six machine quick-firers and 324 prisoners. Those we captured had plenty of money, but no food of any kind: *Pte. W. McGillicuddy, Irish Guards.*

## **"Hard Neck"**

There were forty-nine of us out as an advance guard for the regiment, and we were fired on. Of course, we wanted a shot at them, and we advanced, thinking it was a patrol, but we were not long in finding out that it was a whole German brigade we were into. We had to make a fight and check them, and we fairly peppered them for a while. Then we retired with the Germans at our heels. We got down 700 yards off them, and gave them some more; but we had to retire as the

bullets were falling like rain. Fancy 25,000—it was only our “hard neck” that got us out of it: *Pte. A. Kenaway, 2nd Batt. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.*

### **Thank Goodness!**

Just as we were entering the place a shot rang out and our leading man went down, shot through the heart, so all we could do was to turn round and gallop for it, which we did. I can tell you there were bullets flying in all directions. We had another man hit through the thigh, and four horses—two shot dead and two wounded. One of them had four bullets in him and still galloped. We had to thank our lucky stars the Germans are such bad shots, or they would have got the lot of us; and we have had the same luck with their shell fire: *Corpl. T. Askew, 3rd King's Own Hussars.*

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### **The Great Retreat**

In five days we retired from Mons to Noyon, a distance of about 130 miles, fighting day and night, with no proper meals. We had to live on the country. I ate nothing but fruit and turnips. At last I was hit by a piece of shrapnel, which has taken away the use of the toes of my right foot and fractured three or four small bones. At the time it simply felt like a scald, and I marched seven miles before I found my foot was bleeding. Whilst trying to close the men up I suffered a second accident to my foot, a wagon-wheel passing over it owing to a skid: *Colour-Sergeant Barling.*

### **Outnumbered**

Our little lot was waiting for the Germans in a turnip field. We were lying down, and on they came. We let fly, and numbers of them went down. They cracked at us then with their machine guns, and did us a good deal of damage. We were obliged to retire, but there was an off-and-on fight for at least twelve hours. We would get cover and have a smack at 'em, and with their great numbers and our good shooting we did tumble them over. But, my goodness! the numbers did keep coming on, and we had to go back. We advanced and pushed them back, but we were outnumbered again. We fell back, and a crush of us got separated from the rest. There were about sixteen of us, and we found ourselves beyond the German lines: *A Private of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.*

### **“The Old British Way”**

They have a trick of throwing masses of cavalry at our weakest infantry when they are either advancing in an exposed position or in retreat. They tried it on as often as they could, but what they don't seem able to get over is the quick way in which the smallest party of our infantry will turn round and give them the bayonet. At first they came on all swagger, thinking they could cut our men down, but when they began to see what our chaps were up to they weren't so keen on keeping it up. I have seen them coming on with great bluster and bounce until the order “Prepare to receive cavalry” was carried out in the old British way, and then they took to their heels as fast as their horses would carry them: *A Corporal of the South Lancashire Regiment.*

### **Covered with Straw**

News reached our brigade that some of the Germans were making a stand not far in front of us. We at once scattered ourselves in the fields, and then advanced in extended formation until we could see them nicely. We fired a few rounds into them, and they beat a hasty retreat, but not before they had killed seven and wounded twelve. Our colonel was the first man shot, and he died the next morning. After the dead had been collected and the wounded attended to we again got on the move, and I shall never forget how I felt as I passed my dead comrades on the road. They had been laid by the roadside, and their faces covered with straw: *Bandsman T. Woodward, Loyal North Lancashire Regiment.*

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### **Nothing to be Seen**

The disconcerting thing in battle nowadays is that you may be fighting for hours on end and never as much as see an enemy to grapple with. We lay for ten hours with rifle fire dropping around us like raindrops in a heavy shower. The roar of the guns was always there, like the thunder that you hear in a big storm, and you could see one long line of little white puffs of smoke away in the horizon every time the Germans fired. Beyond that you couldn't see anything, and it was only an odd sting in the arm or leg or head from a bullet that made you realize you were in battle: *Corporal of the Connaught Rangers.*

### **“A Horrible Trade-mark”**

I have had two horses shot under me, so you can see my time hasn't come yet. Our men are wonderfully fit and fight like the very devil. We have lost two of our young officers, and I am wearing a pair of riding-breeches which belonged to one of them. I have been sharing a pipe for a fortnight with one of my troopers. Things are going well with us, and we are giving the Germans all they want, and a little more besides. But there are such hordes of men that it's a case of

shooting one line down when along comes another. They are cursed cowards, and will not meet our cavalry in the open. Their shells are our worst trouble; they don't give you half a chance, for you can't see them coming, and they leave such a horrible trademark: *A Squadron-Major of the Royal Horse Guards*.

### **Blown Sky High**

It is not only on sea that the Germans make use of mines. They do it on land. Nearly all the approaches to their trenches are mined for about two hundred yards, and even one thousand yards. One day an infantry battalion of ours, supported by French infantry and cavalry, fought their way right up to the enemy's trenches and were formed up for the last rush, when suddenly the earth under them gave way with a terrific explosion, and the air was thick with bodies blown sky high. Our own men seemed to get very little damage, though many of them were stunned for the time being by the awful explosion. After a time they were re-formed, and swept across the intervening space with a ringing cheer that told its own story. The Germans were ready for them, and they had a hard tussle to clear the trenches, but they succeeded in the end: *A Lance-Corporal of the Lincolnshire Regiment*.

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### **Rescued!**

Several of us got separated from our company at St. Quintin. After tramping about twelve miles we reached a farmhouse. The farmer gave us two chickens, a piece of bacon, and some potatoes, and we were just sitting down to a meal after a long fast when a body of Uhlans came round the corner. We hadn't even time to reach our rifles. They rode straight at us, and one knocked me over. As I got up he turned his horse back and, taking his foot from his stirrup, kicked me in the mouth, displacing all my teeth. After I was taken prisoner I was kicked all over the body. Just as they were marching us off a patrol of British cavalry came on the scene. The Uhlans did not attempt to meet them, but immediately rode off. We were greatly relieved at the turn of events, but I was so badly injured by the Germans that I was sent to hospital: *Private Goulder*.

### **A "Sensational Feeling"**

There came a terrible sensational feeling over me. I shall never forget it. I knew it was the smartest man wins. Off we started at the trot and I was gradually getting confidence, and by the time the charge sounded I felt as if I didn't care. Consequently the "devil-may-care" crowd won easily. Then we had to rally and ride down on them again, as they were about twice our strength, but it was an easier job than the first one, as they were more or less dumbfounded at our madness. Well, at the end of the second run there wasn't one left standing. Oh, I saw one fellow get up and lurch and over he toppled again: *Corpl. Leather, 2nd Dragoon Guards*.

### **"Silence Those Guns!"**

Quite the worst sight I saw was when a big mass of French infantry were advancing to clear the front of our position, where the Germans had been gathering in strength. They were coming along at the double, carrying everything before them, when, without the slightest warning, German batteries posted under the shelter of a wood opened fire upon them with a deadly shower of shrapnel and machine-gun bullets. The long advancing line seemed to contract like a frog does when you stick a pin in it, and it isn't any exaggeration to say that you could hear the shells cutting through their closely packed ranks just like the scythe cuts through the grass. The men went down by the hundred until they opened in extended order. Then they made a rush for the position where the guns were, and though they were galled by a heavy infantry fire, and were attacked by both infantry and cavalry at nearly every step of the way, they ultimately fought their way along and silenced those guns: *A Lance-Corporal of the Royal Irish Fusiliers*.

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### **Playing at Soldiers!**

The Germans came on us like a great mob. They were as close as 100 yards or less in a mango field on several occasions, but we drove them back each time with severe losses. It was hot work, but the boys have plenty of courage. They delight in seeing them come along, for it is great sport to see them running back again when we start to shake them up. They don't seem to have any sore feet. They run back like hares or else they chuck in. Tell any of the boys around that if they want to see some sport and what real fighting is to join and come out to us *and not be playing at soldiers at home drilling with wooden sticks*. Well, I hope you are all well at home. If it be God's will to let us meet once more; if not, dear mother, do not grieve, for your boys will do the best they can to serve our King and country, and by doing what we believe is God's will. Always think kind of a soldier, as I know you do: *Sergeant T. R. Kenny*.

### **Kept the Guns**

A battery advancing against the Germans during one of the hot fights was suddenly pounced on by the enemy from a position we never thought them to be in, and half the men and all the horses were shot down before you could have said the shortest of prayers, and the German cavalry came rushing out of a wood close by to seize the guns. Fortunately some of our own men were near at

hand, and they were quickly formed up round the guns. They fired into the Germans, and drove them back. Then a big body of infantry had a try at getting the guns away, but our chaps tackled them with the bayonet, and for about an hour the fight round those guns was as hot as anybody could stand. The two sides kept swaying each other backwards and forwards like a couple of tug-of-war teams, and then, just for variety I suppose, the German artillery chipped in, and they cut up their own chaps much more than they hurt ours. Finally our infantry got disentangled from the Germans, were strongly reinforced, and with a grand bayonet charge cleared the whole lot of the Germans away from the guns. Horses were brought out and the guns were removed to a point of safety without further trouble: *Pte. T. Molloy, Royal Garrison Artillery.*

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### **Taking Risks**

Our officer asked for a man to go with him to blow a bridge up, so that the Germans could not follow us, and I went with him. All our men had retired. Well, to blow a bridge up we use gun-cotton and a wire fuse. It is safe enough if you take your wire well away, but this time it would not work. The men in running back had stepped on the wire, so we had to go nearer to the bridge and try again. Then it would not act, so the officer said to me, "Go back, Wells." I said, "No, I'll go with you." We were the only two on the bridge, and the Germans were shooting at us, but our luck was in. Well, we both lay down, and I fired ten rounds with my rifle, and he did the same with his pistol, and then it would not work. If it had we should both have gone up with it, so you see what a near shave we had. We made a dive back and got some more gun-cotton, and we were making to have another go when an officer called us back and told us it was no use us trying, so we came back: *Sapper Wells, Royal Engineers.*

### **Broke the Line**

The welcome order to fix bayonets and charge came at last, and we didn't lose much time in getting at them. As we finished the last lap of our race for their trenches they concentrated a fiendish fire on us, but that didn't stop us at all, and we reached their trenches at last with a wild whoop that must have struck terror to their hearts. For the first time in my experience they made a desperate attempt to repel us with the bayonet. Their weight seemed enough to hurl us back, but we stuck to them like leeches, and at last their line began to waver. They were stretched across the trenches in one long line, and when one man fell another slipped into his place. Near the centre we made a break in the line, and then the whole lot gave way, running like hares, and throwing down their arms as they ran. We bayoneted them by the score as they ran, and shot them down in dozens until we were completely used up. Their officers made many attempts to rally them, but it was no good, and those who could not get away surrendered rather than face any more of it: *A Non-commissioned Officer of the Irish Guards.*

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### **A "Hot Shop"**

Where we were posted was a hot shop, and for a week the Germans had been treating us to night attacks. It was long past our time for standing treat in return, and we weren't surprised one night when we were paraded and marched out in the direction of where the Germans had been firing from all day. In the pitch darkness it was slow work, and the men had to be halted every few minutes to enable the guides to take their bearings from the few stars that were overhead. By three o'clock we were resting on a slight slope leading up from a stream, when the scouting parties ahead reported movements in front. A few minutes after that we stumbled right on top of a big body of Germans stealing along as quietly as we had come, and evidently trying a surprise attack on our camp. You can bet your last half-crown that we didn't wait to ask if their intentions were honourable. We just shot right into them, and the ball was opened in fine style. Before they had time to think what was happening, we had fixed bayonets and were charging down on them. We swept them off their feet and right down the other side of the slope in confusion: *A Lance-Corporal of the Cameron Highlanders.*

### **"Talk About Excitement!"**

It was like going to a football match, cracking jokes and singing all the ragtimes we knew. All our fellows knew what depended upon the result, and that only made them the more determined. But it was determination in the best of spirits. And how our fellows did fight, with always a joke handy and utter fearlessness. The Germans looked like a forest approaching, but that didn't daunt us, and our artillery replied to theirs with interest. For hour after hour it was one continuous stream of shot and shell. Their artillery was the best part about them, their individual firing being poor, but our artillery was far better, though their biggest guns created the most havoc among our ranks. Talk about excitement, it was all excitement from the beginning and during the retirement. There was nothing else for us to do. It was a rare hot time. We were working for concentration the whole time, and there is no doubt about it, our orders were the best possible under the circumstances. The Germans were making a mark of us all along, but directly we got our chances we let them have it: *A Private, at Mons.*

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### **Balaclava Style**

The firing suddenly ceased, and through the smoke we saw the German infantry creeping along the fire-scorched grass. They were heading for a stream on which our right rested, and were

coming on with an easy, confident swing, when we got the order to mount our horses, which had been lying ready by our sides all through the shelling. We chased the Germans for about a mile, and cut them to ribbons, and then we ran full-tilt into their cavalry supports, who were drawn up by the wayside in wait for us. The impetus of our charge carried us past them, and they closed up along the road in our rear to bar our way back, evidently thinking they had only to say the word and we would set out for Berlin like so many Sunday-school children out for their treat. This was the first time we had any experience of German cavalry, getting in our way of their own accord, but wonders never cease in war, and we just took it as it came. We charged into them in our best Heavy Brigade Balaclava style, and gave them a fine cutting up. They didn't want very much of it, and soon cleared off into the fields: *A Trooper of the Royal Irish Dragoons.*

### **A Night Surprise**

One night we were moving out to take up a new position, when we suddenly came on a big force of Germans occupying a strong position right across the road along which we had to march. Soon the still night air brought the sound of marching men further up the road, and as the new force came nearer, we found that they were French troops moving to effect a junction with the force we were going to reinforce. The Germans had somehow got wind of the move, and were preparing a little surprise for the French. They were so cocksure about their rear that they had not taken the ordinary precautions, and as we had moved quietly they were in ignorance of our presence within easy rifle shot. Just when they were getting ready for the attack on the oncoming French force the order to fire was passed along our ranks quietly, and we let drive right into them. They were absolutely panic-stricken, and fled in terror along the road, right into the arms of the French. The impetuosity of their rush, and its unexpected character, threw the French infantry into disorder for a time, and when we moved forward the French at first took us for Germans, and were getting ready to fire on us. At great personal risk an officer and two men rushed towards the French force with a white flag and explained things. Then we were all right, and you may believe me we generally are all right: *A Private of the Cameron Highlanders.*

### **No Fight Left**

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A party of the Royal Irish Lancers were out scouting and patrolling one day, when a sergeant-major and a trooper who were ahead came on a long, straggling line of German transport wagons loaded up, and under a happy-go-lucky escort. The Lancers, though they didn't know it, had cut into the enemy's line of retreat. The men were got together quickly, and they moved up the road to where there was an ideal spot for ambushing the convoy. It had to pass over a narrow stone bridge that was commanded by a clump of trees, in which our men were able to take shelter and hide their horses. The escort with the wagons was at least five times the strength of the squadron of Lancers, but that didn't trouble them very much. They waited until the head of the column was straggling across the bridge, and then they emptied their carbines into them along a wide front that gave the impression of great force. The Germans were taken completely by surprise. Their horses started to rear and plunge, and many men and animals went over into the stream, being carried away. The motor wagons could not be stopped in time and they crashed into each other in hopeless confusion. Into this confused mass of frightened men and horses and wagons that ran amok the Lancers now charged from two separate points. The Lancers made short work of the escort at the head of the column, and the officer in command agreed to surrender all that was under his direct control, though he said he couldn't account for the rearguard. When we came up on motors to seize a position for the purpose of heading off the Germans in retreat, we found the Lancers waiting there with all their spoil, and getting ready to receive the rest of the escort in case it should show fight. There wasn't much fight left in them, and they surrendered at sight, giving up the whole supply column: *A Private of the Cameronians.*

### **All Sorts of Sacrifices**

Along the Aisne the Germans made some absolutely desperate attempts to break through our line, and they counted no sacrifice too great to achieve their end. One day I saw a brigade of theirs caught in a deadly trap. There was a gap in our lines between one of our brigades and the nearest French force. The Germans made a sudden dash for that gap under cover of their artillery, and, though they were exposed to a heavy fire that cut deep lines through their ranks, they came steadily on. They had nearly reached their goal when a sudden movement of British reserves on the left brought a fierce attack on the Germans from the rear. At the same time the Germans were fired on from our men and the French on either flank. They had either to continue their forward march, with the certainty of disaster, or turn and try to hew their way out again through our reserves. They chose the latter course, and their artillery tried to back them up in every possible way. Owing to the disposition of forces it was a risky job to keep up artillery fire, and soon the shells began to do as much damage among the Germans as to the British or French. The Germans kept falling back under the double fire, and at the same time great clouds of cavalry came moving out in support of their retirement. The British force taking the Germans in the rear was now in danger of being taken in the rear itself, but reinforcements were hurried out, and our cavalry began the work of pressing back the German cavalry advancing to the assistance of their trapped infantry. Now the air was thick with fighting men, and the cries of the combatants were deafening. The retreating Germans kept moving steadily towards their oncoming cavalry, dropping men by the hundred as they retreated, but just when they seemed to have reached their goal our infantry were on them, and they were hurled against the French

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position on the right. After this there was nothing for it but to cut and run, and what looked to be one of the best brigades of the German army was soon nothing more than a mass of panic-stricken men flying in quest of a hiding-place from the fire by which they were assailed. In their flight they cast aside arms and equipment or anything likely to impede their rush. For half a mile in front of our position there were piles of dead and dying to testify to the terrible execution done by our artillery and rifle fire, and that repulse saw the end of the German attempts to break through our line at that particular point: *A Motor-Cyclist Dispatch-Rider*.

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## XII. IN THE TRENCHES

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*Come the three corners of the world in arms,  
And we shall shock them; nought shall make us rue  
If England to herself do rest but true.*

SHAKESPEARE.

*When the last charge sounds,  
And the battle thunders o'er the plain,  
Thunders o'er the trenches where the red streams flow,  
Will it not be well with us,  
Veterans, veterans,  
If, beneath your torn old flag, we burst upon the foe?*

ALFRED NOYES.

There was a Frenchman hit by a shell, so me and "Smosh" got a stretcher and ran out and fetched him to safety, and the shells were bursting all around us. But we have been lucky enough to miss them up to now. It isn't war out here; it's murder: *Pte. W. Commons, Royal Army Medical Corps*.

### Sniping!

The Germans have some very good snipers, but the Duke's have better. We used to take it in turn to do sniping. It is just like going out rabbit-shooting. You see a German crawl out of his trench, up goes your rifle and over he rolls. Then you say, "That's a bit of our own back for the way you have been treating the French people": *Sergt. Clark, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry*.

### The Bayonet!

One night after a very hard day in the trenches, when we were wet to the skin, we had lighted fires to dry our tunics, and were at it when we heard firing along our front, and then the Germans came at us like madmen. We had to tackle them in our shirt-sleeves. It was mainly bayonet work, and hard work at that: *Corporal Casemont, Irish Fusiliers*.

### A Good Sleeper

There are six of the boys playing cards now, some are peeling spuds for dinner, the rest are having a sleep. We have a hole dug in a bank, and we only get in when the shrapnel gets a bit too close, to get out of sight of aeroplanes, and to sleep, night-times. My chum only wakes up grub-times and when he does guard: *Corpl. H. Smith, King's Royal Rifles*.

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### Those Apples

We are living in trenches here, all merry and gay. We are being shelled by the enemy with shrapnel, but they are not doing much damage at present. There are apple-trees over our trench, and we have to wait till the Germans knock them down for us. You ought to see us scramble down our holes when we hear a shell coming: *Private G. Caley, of Manor Park*.

### Four Feet Down

We are in a trench made by ourselves (patented), four feet down, and covered with sticks and straw, and are quite comfortable for a while, until we move again. We get plenty to eat, as there is any amount of vegetables growing around us, but bread is like gold, so we have to content ourselves with biscuits: *Bandsman Ryan, Royal Irish Fusiliers*.

### Its Billet

My best chum was lying by my side, and we were firing shot after shot. Soon after dusk, when the

firing was not so brisk, my chum asked me for a drink of water, and I had none. I asked, "Why, what's the matter?" He replied, "I think I am dying." I bound him up, but a quarter of an hour later he had gone: *Private Pemberton*.

### **Taking a German**

One big wounded German cried out from the trench in which he laid to a R.A.M.C. man who was at work near by, "Take me from this hell. I will give you all my money." In due course he was taken from the trench (grave, as it really was, because of the heaps of dead lying in it), and was finally removed to a place where I was lying: *Bandsman Boyd, 2nd Welsh*.

### **Another Rocket**

We have been living the life of rabbits, for we burrowed ourselves in trenches, and here we remained for over fifty hours. It was an exciting and not unpleasant experience. The bursting of shells overhead was continuous, and it became monotonous. To the youngsters it was an awful experience in the earlier stages, but even they became so accustomed to the roar overhead that they raised a cheer each time shrapnel and shell spoke, making such remarks as "There's another rocket, John": *Pte. C. Harris, West Kents*.

### **Too Late!**

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The Germans don't seem to care how much ammunition they waste. They kept blazing away for nine solid hours at a position which we had left the day before. When some of us visited the abandoned trenches after they had discovered their mistake we were astonished to find the ground covered with bullets that had done absolutely no damage. If it wasn't for their artillery I really don't know where they would be, for they are little use at any other form of fighting: *Private Edward Strong*.

### **Might Shake Hands**

There are times when if you stuck your head out of a trench you could no more help being hit than you could expect to escape drops of rain if you went out on a wet day without an umbrella. You will not be able to see a German when darkness comes, but next morning you will find that the trenches have come so close, owing to the exertions of the two sides, that you could reach out of yours and shake hands with a German—that's if you wanted to. When things get so close as that there's nothing for it but to set to and shift the beggars a little further along: *A Driver of the Royal Artillery*.

### **A Football Talk**

You musn't run away with the idea that we all stand shivering or cowering under shell fire, for we don't. We just go about our business in the usual way. If it's potting at the Germans that is to the fore, we keep at it as though nothing were happening, and if we're just having a wee bit of a chat among ourselves until the Germans come up, we keep at it all the same. When I got my wound in the leg it was because I got too excited in arguing with wee Geordie Ferris, of our company, about Queen's Park Rangers and their chances this season: *A Private of the Gordon Highlanders*.

### **Feeling Led**

As I write shells from heavy guns are whining overhead, and the roar from the gun's mouth as well as the roar of shells exploding is behind and before. And (pause!) we are used to it! We are used to raining; used to going without washes for days; used to driving German columns back; used to mud, cold nights, and a terrific quantity of detail that varies from day to day. We have a knack of sticking to what we gain, and there you can feel proud of us all. For we ought to be swamped by superiority of numbers and guns. But our methods under fire are, if not perfect, very good. We are officered by excellent men, and we can *feel* led. You will understand: *A Private of the Bedfordshire Regiment*.

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### **Walnuts and Guards**

Out here I have seen the finest and saddest sights of my life. You see some amusing incidents as well. The Germans were shelling a field opposite to us for an unknown reason, for there were only a few dead cows there. Some of our chaps were getting walnuts, and the German shells were knocking walnuts down and the men were picking them up. During the first day of the battle here two of our companies were acting as right-flank guard to the brigade, and we encountered the Kaiser's famous Prussian Guards. We were greatly outnumbered, and our commanding officer told us that we killed five of theirs to one of ours. They were finely built fellows and a great height: *Lance-Corpl. J. Ryall, 1st King's Royal Rifles*.

### **Banging Away**

When I opened your parcel we were banging away, and I thought how different a place it was

tied up in. The fags—what a treat!—the chocolates, papers, and pipe. The last, by the way, is worth quids, for the troops have just had an issue of tobacco, and not many pipes are available; they get lost or broken. One thing we are short of, and that is matches. We all mark time on someone lighting up, and there's a great rush on that one match: *A Trooper of the Royal Horse Guards*.

### **All's Fair!**

They say all is fair in love and war, but it's awful to see those deadly shells flying over our head and sometimes putting some of our pals out of action. But, thank God, the wounded are picked up as soon as possible, and treated with every care that both women and men nurses can provide. In fact, I have seen men who have been badly wounded with a smile on their faces as though nothing had happened, and even while I am writing these few words under difficulty our boys are laughing and joking and singing as if we were at a picnic, and I am sure they feel quite as happy as if they were at one in reality: *Pte. B. Marshall, 1st Batt. Loyal North Lancashires*.

### **Unnerving!**

Every soldier knows that the first experience of being under fire is terribly unnerving, and the best of men will admit that at times they are tempted to run away. There was a young lad of the Worcestershire Regiment who had this feeling very badly, but he made up his mind that he would conquer it, and this is what he did: he made it a practice to go out of the trenches and expose himself to German fire for a bit every day. The poor boy trembled like a leaf, but his soul was bigger than the weak little body holding it, and he went through that terrible ordeal for a week: *A Sergeant of the York and Lancaster Regiment*.

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### **Caps and Helmets**

In the first lot of trenches our men put their caps and helmets on the top, to give the enemy the impression we were still there. Believing the trenches were actually occupied, the Germans shelled the position for three-quarters of an hour before their cavalry discovered the ruse. Meanwhile the men in the second trenches had also placed their helmets on top, but they did not go away, and the Germans, deceived, approached within a comparatively few yards, when they were met by a tremendous volley and practically wiped out: *Pte. Shepherd, 1st Lincolnshire Regiment*.

### **Spectral**

I saw the German trenches as the French guns left them. They were filled with dead, but with dead in such postures as the world has never seen since the destroying angel passed above the Philistine camp in that avenging night of Scripture. It was as though some blight from Heaven had fallen upon them. There they stood in line, rifles to shoulder, a silent company of ghosts in the grey light of dawn. It was as if a deep and sudden sleep had overtaken them—only their eyes were open. They might have been there from all eternity thus, their rifles at rest: *Anonymous*.

### **Buried Alive**

Have you any idea what a trench is like? It is simply a long cutting such as the gasmen make when laying pipes—about 5 ft. deep and 2 ft. wide. You are packed in, standing room only. No chance of a wash, or proper rest. They are supposed to shelter you from rifle shots and bits of bursting shell. Every day two or three are killed or wounded. There is another danger, too. I had an experience of it yesterday. A big shell burst in our trench, and two men and I were completely buried by the sides of the trench being blown in. It was an awful feeling being buried alive and slowly suffocating. I wished the shell had hit me, while I was underneath. Our chaps dug us out just in time, thank God: *Sergt. Saward, Royal West Kent Regiment*.

### **Cut and Thrust**

The German trenches are marvellous. They are dug right into the ground, and you might walk over them for hours without guessing that there were men hidden away in them. The wonder is how they manage to fire at all from them, but I dare say they are quite effective against shell fire, and, what's more important still, they make it very hard for our aeroplanes to spot the Germans and form any estimate of their strength. We are not one whit behind them in making trenches, and you might say that the whole fight out here is simply a matter of digging trenches right up so close that the other fellow has to run. It's dull work, but it's enlivened now and then by little fights by day and night, when the Germans rush out to surprise us or our generals think it well to push the enemy a little further back: *A Corporal, at the Aisne*.

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### **Robinson Crusoe**

I lost a few good chums. My 'listing chum was almost blown to pieces. He belonged to Newcastle, and was always laughing. He had to be buried under shell fire. We had many a good starving for water, food, and tobacco. Talking about tobacco, we had to smoke our tea. I smoked two tea



allowances, and we had a tin box of tea leaves, which we took out of a kettle, drying it on our trench tops. Now a little about the trenches. Robinson Crusoe wasn't in it. Our regiment was in them eight days without a hot drink, without a wash, shave, or a decent bit of food. We could not get stuff up there, as there was too much shell fire from the German side, and our transport could not get stuff up as the bridge over the Aisne was broken: *Pte. Gray, Northumberland Fusiliers.*

### **Swarms of Them**

We had dug trenches and were waiting for something to happen when a German aeroplane came high over our lines. Then came a rain of shells from a wood. The enemy were about a mile and half away, but they got the range to a nicety. People who say that the German artillery fire is no good simply don't know what they are talking about. I can only figure it out as being something worse than the mouth of hell. The Germans treated us to shell cross-fire, and a piece of shell hit my rifle—smash! I pitched forward in the trench, the muzzle part of the rifle went into my groin, and I got a lovely bang with another bit of shell across the leg. The Germans came out of the wood in swarms—just as if a hive had been overturned and all the bees were let loose. I thought my number was up: *Private J. Stiles.*

### **Moving!**

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We congratulated ourselves that we had got nice cover from which we could work with the rifle and for bayonet charges. At night we slept in the trenches, but at daybreak we were shelled out of them in practically no time. It was a bit of irony—such splendid trenches, and to be shelled out of them like that by the Germans. They watched us work, and then just let us have it lovely. It is no use saying the Germans are a "rotten lot" as fighters, because I think their artillery is very fine. German aeroplanes were on top of us, and found us out every time. They worked well, helping their troops and giving the guns the range: *A Private of the 1st Cheshires.*

### **Come On!**

We had a whole day of it in the trenches with the Germans firing away at us all the time. It began just after breakfast, and we were without food of any kind until we had what you might call a dainty afternoon tea in the trenches under shell fire. The mugs were passed round with the biscuits and the "bully" as best we could by the mess orderlies, but it was hard work getting through without getting more than we wanted. My next-door neighbour, so to speak, got a shrapnel bullet in his tin, and another two doors off had his biscuit shot out of his hand. We are now ready for anything that comes our way, and nothing would please us better than a good big stand-up fight with the Germans on any ground they please: *Private G. Ryder.*

### **Brave Deeds**

I am glad to see so many of our boys recommended for rewards of various kinds and mentioned in dispatches. What I fear is that one-tenth of the brave deeds done by men in the ordinary course of their duty will never be heard of. Many of the men themselves are so modest that they can't bear the publicity associated with it, and I had a man come to me with tears in his eyes to beg me not to tell any officer what he had done. He was lying in the trenches one day with a mug of milk that he had brought from a farm under fire, when he noticed a wounded Dorset casting eyes at it. Though he was sorely in need of it himself, he got up and said, "You have it, old chap. I'll get another." Out he raced through the terrible storm of shot and shell, and came back again white as a sheet, with another mug in his trembling hand. He had been hit badly in coming back: *A Sergeant of the Liverpool Regiment.*

### **"Shifting Them!"**

One morning, just about cockcrow, there was a fearful din outside our more or less private apartments in the trenches, where I had been snatching two winks after three days and nights' hard. The Germans were on us, and two minutes after the alarm we were under fire. They had crept up very close under cover of darkness, and were in trenches not more than three hundred yards away. They must have driven out our chaps who were in them, and we got orders to retake the trenches. There was no fancy work about it. We were rushed forward in companies. One half of each company would rush forward for a few yards, about twenty, while the second half lay on the ground firing at the enemy. Then the first half would lie down and fire while the second took up the running. In that way we got to the trenches with very little loss, and commenced shifting them in the way our chaps always shift undesirables from any place we want. They were well entrenched, and it was like digging them out with the bayonets. We got them out in the end: *A Corporal of the Durham Light Infantry.*

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### **Bullets and "Footer"**

We are a light-hearted lot, and so are our officers. We dug out for them a kind of a subterranean mess-room, where they took their meals. One fellow decorated it with some cigarette cards and pictures he cut out of a French paper. The food they get is not exactly what would be supplied to

them at the Hotel Cecil. A jollier and kinder lot you would not meet in a day's march. One officer, who was well stocked with cigarettes, divided among his men, and we were able to repay him for his kindness by digging him out from his mess-room. A number of shells tore up the turf, and the roof and sides fell in like a castle built of cards, burying him and two others. They were in a nice pickle, but we got them out safe and sound. During the time we were in these trenches nearly 500 shells burst over and around us, but, as the protection was so good, not a single chap was killed, and less than a dozen were wounded. When we were able to get into the open air once more and stretch our legs, it was then we realized what we had been subjected to, for the ground was literally strewn with burst shells. If all goes well we are going to have a football match tomorrow, as I have selected a team from our lot to play the Borderers, who are always swanking what they can do: *Pte. Harris, West Kent Regiment.*

### **Gallant Frenchmen**

In a little village near to Soissons, where I got my wound, there was a half-battalion of Frenchmen posted with some machine guns to hold a position, and their instructions were that they were not to yield an inch to the Germans no matter what happened. For two days and nights they fought their corner against ten times their own number of Germans, but on the third night the enemy concentrated all their spare guns on the village, and followed that up with a ferocious attack from all arms. The Frenchmen shot away till their arms ached, and their heads burned, and their throats were parched with thirst, and they were weak with hunger. They could not stop that ceaseless rush of Germans, who had orders to take the village or die. Step by step the French were forced back, and at last those left were driven into some farm buildings, where they took shelter. These were set on fire after a time, and the men, who would not surrender, had no other choice but to rush out and be shot down as they came. They did that, and next day we arrived to find the Germans in possession. We cleared them out after a hard fight, however, and helped to make things square: *A Gunner of the Royal Artillery.*

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### **Hoist!**

Quite the most awful thing I ever set eyes on was early one morning, close to Soissons. The Germans had taken up a position of great strategical value, and entrenched themselves so cleverly that nothing on earth seemed to shift them. They had got to be shifted, however, and, because we didn't make any attempts to do it by direct attack, they got a bit "chesty," and fancied themselves quite secure. All the while our engineers were feverishly at work night and day, carefully burrowing their way through the ground to where the Germans were. One morning everything was ready. We opened fire, and a feint was made against the position. The Germans stood to arms behind their trenches, and kept firing at us. We knew what was coming, and didn't press too closely, but just at the appointed time there was a terrible roar in front, and a great big cloud of earth, stones, and the mangled limbs of men and horses shot up into the sky. The mine which our mud-larks had been preparing for so long had been sprung at last, and the German defenders of the trenches saw for themselves that it is not always the open foe that is to be feared most. For yards around that position the sight was a sickening one. Many of the defenders were torn limb from limb, and the cries of those who remained alive were awful. I never saw anything to equal it, except on one occasion when I was in a pit explosion in the North: *A Corporal of the Coldstream Guards.*

### **"One Red Burial Blent"**

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The Germans are getting up to all the tricks of the trade so far as making themselves secure against infantry or shell fire is concerned. At first they didn't seem to mind what happened, and were always on the move just to walk over us, but when they found that it took two to make a bargain in the walking-over line they began to get more cautious, and now they get into holes in the ground that would make you think you had gone out rabbit-hunting if it weren't for the size of the game when you catch them. Their trenches are mighty deep, and you can't always say rightly what's in them. There was a chap of the Warwick's who went peeping into one of these holes the other day, and before he knew what to think he found himself looking down the muzzle of a German rifle. He got out of the way with only a little nick in the arm, but he might have lost his life. They had the dickens of a job to ferret that German out of his place, but they did get him out, though it was only to put him in again, as he wouldn't surrender, and his pit came in handy for a grave: *Gunner Hughes, of the Royal Field Artillery.*

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## **XIII. GALLANT DEEDS**

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*And gentlemen in England, now a-bed,  
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here;  
And hold their manhoods cheap, whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day.*

SHAKESPEARE'S "Henry V."

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow,  
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;  
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

LAURENCE BINYON'S "For the Fallen."

When we got the order to retire I found that both my boots were full of blood. When I took them off I found that my feet had swollen and there were two big holes in my heels: *Private E. Young*.

### **A Hand-shake!**

The officer said, "Baker, our time has come. Be brave, and die like a man. Good-bye." He shook hands with me. I shall always remember the minutes that followed: *A Mechanic of the English Flying Corps*.

### **Unhurt!**

I saw one of the Bays, a lance-corporal, run towards the enemy with a machine gun on his shoulders. He fired several rounds at them, and escaped without a scratch. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant for that: *Pte. Fill, 5th Dragoon Guards*.

### **What the Irish Did**

I saw a handful of Irishmen throw themselves in front of a regiment of cavalry trying to cut off a battery of Horse Artillery. Not one of the poor lads got away alive, but they made the German devils pay in kind, and anyhow the artillery got away: *Private A. McGillivray*.

### **"A Regular Devil"**

There was a man of the Buffs who carried a wounded chum for over a mile under German fire, but if you mentioned recommending that chap for the Cross he'd punch your head, and as he's a regular devil the men of his regiment say as little as they can about it: *A Driver of the Royal Field Artillery*.

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### **"Into 'Em, Lads!"**

Your son and I had fought side by side, and he missed me. The noble lad came back through fires of hell and carried me to safety. He was wounded, but not dangerously. We are all proud of that boy; he is always in the thick of it. All over the line you could hear him: "Into 'em, lads; the sooner we get through, the sooner we'll get home": *Gunner Batey, Royal Garrison Artillery*.

### **The Old Royals**

Captain Brussell, D.S.O., who directed the movement, shouted, "Cheer up, men; you all belong to the Royal Scots. If we go down we are dying for the Old Royals." These were his last words, for he fell immediately the charge had begun, struck down by two bullets from the Maxim: *Corpl. McGlade, Royal Scots*.

### **Gallantry**

Lieutenant Geoffrey Lambton, nephew of the Earl of Durham, was in charge of us in the wood, and was directing our fire from a mound. The lieutenant had given orders to fire, had picked up a rifle, and was in the act of firing himself when he was fatally wounded by a German bullet. He knew he was done for, and he gave me his pocketbook, note-book, and sketch-book to bring back to his people: *Pte. Roberts, Coldstream Guards*.

### **Brought Him In**

I saw a fine thing. We went out to take some German prisoners, when the German artillery began to shell us. We got orders to retire, and on the way poor Jack Anderson got hit in the neck. Billy Flaxington, one of our fellows, at once went out in front of a shower of bullets and brought him in. Even our officers cheered. It showed the Germans what Kirkstall Road lads are made of: *Rifleman W. Sissons, of Leeds*.

### **Skedaddled!**

I heard of a corporal of the Fusiliers Brigade who held a company of Germans at bay for two hours by the old trick of firing at them from different points, and so making them think they had a crowd to face. He was getting on very well until a party of cavalry outflanked him, as you might say. As they were right on top of him there was no kidding them about his "strength," so he skedaddled: *A Driver of the Royal Field Artillery*.

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## **An Air Duel**

Our artillery were unable to bring down a German aeroplane flying right above us, when suddenly a French aeroplane rose like a shot and hovered above the German machine, which was flying over our trenches from end to end. What really happened I don't know, but shots having been exchanged between the aeroplanes, the next thing we saw was the German spinning around us as if all control had been lost. It came down with a sickening crash just beyond us: *Private D. Schofield*.

## **Under Heavy Fire**

I saw the brave rescue of a private by young Lieutenant Amos. The man was named Varley, and had been shot in the liver. Although Varley was over 11 stone the young subaltern went alone to his aid, and, under very heavy fire, carried him to safety. The news of the death of Lieutenant Amos in hospital three weeks later was received with great regret by all who saw his self-sacrifice on that occasion: *A Private of the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers*.

## **Never Say Die!**

In camp one night a German prisoner told us about a Lancashire Fusilier who had been cut off and refused to surrender to 200 Germans. He lay on the ground and kept firing away until he hadn't a cartridge left, and as his bayonet was gone, he stood up with folded arms while they shot him down. There was a sackful of bullets in him at least, but he killed twelve and wounded over thirty of his foes before the end came: *A Private of the Coldstream Guards*.

## **Onward and Away!**

One of our lads did a daring thing last week. Somehow he got left behind, and when he found his bearings, he was right in the heart of the German lines. He put spurs to his nag, and made a dash to get through their lines. They were after him like a whirlwind, but he rode for half a mile with the whole army shooting at him. Then he found his path barred by a squadron of Uhlans. He bore madly down on them as though he intended to ride right into them, but, just when he was within a few feet of them, he swerved to the left and dashed by with only a flesh wound in the leg: *Pte. H. Hill, 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards*.

## **Hit Four Times**

I was pulling one of our officers out of the firing line when I got hit. He had been hit four times and he was going mad and jumping up. Well, that was giving our position away, so I held him down till we got the command to retire. Then I pulled him a good way with me, and all the others had got away from the firing line and the Germans were only fifty yards from me when the officer died. I had to leave him then and I crawled along till I came on the road. Then I met a sergeant, who took me to a church which was being used as a hospital: *Pte. J. Hayden, King's Own Royal Lancashire Regiment*.

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## **Sticking to Him**

I saw an awful sight: a man of the Royal Irish with six wounds from shrapnel. He called me for water, but I had none. I managed to carry him about half a mile and found water: then he was as happy as if he was not wounded. I stuck to him although he was heavy, and I was feeling weak and tired. I had to carry him across a big field of turnips; when half way I slipped, and we both fell. I then had a look back, and could see the fire mountains high. "Thank God!" I said to him, "we are out of that; it's worse than bullets": *Private G. Kay, at Mons*.

## **"Boldly They Rode!"**

Two drivers of the Royal Field Artillery brought a gun out of action with shells bursting around them. They had noticed that the gunners had been all killed, but calmly and heroically walked their horses down to the gun. One driver held the horses under a terrific fire, while the other limbered up, and the gun was brought safely back, neither men nor horses being hit. They had a miraculous escape. As we watched them from the trenches we thought it impossible for them to escape death: *Corpl. Bignell, Royal Berks Regiment*.

## **"Basted" Him!**

A private of the South Staffords, named Murphy, performed a gallant deed. They were on outpost duty, and were being continually picked off by snipers. One night Murphy got a wound in the arm, and, in broad Irish, he vowed he would find the sniper. Despite the remonstrances of his officers he kept on hunting for him. Two nights later Murphy was missing from his post, but the sniping had stopped. Later on, search being made for him, he was found lying at the foot of a big tree, close beside the body of the sniper, who was pinned to the ground with Murphy's bayonet. Murphy told the officer that when he located "the blighter" he was high up in the tree. Getting underneath he threatened to shoot, when the German dropped his rifle and scrambled down.

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"Then I gave him a good basting with my fists, and finished off by pinning him down": *Pte. J. Smith, 3rd Coldstream Guards.*

### **Help the Others!**

There was an English regiment out in front of us who had been getting it pretty hot all the morning, and, towards the evening, we saw a small party of their wounded coming in, among them a young subaltern, just a lad. His coat was off, and he stood bareheaded grasping his revolver in one hand. He had had the other arm blown clean away at the shoulder. Someone had dressed it temporarily for him, but he was anxious to find a doctor, and asked one of our officers where the nearest doctor was. Our officer told him where to find one, but added, "You're not fit to go alone owing to the blood you're losing. I shall get some of our men to help," "Oh, I don't require help," he remarked, "and the poor devils have enough to do to carry themselves out of this hell." With that he went away smiling. Help! He wouldn't have it at any cost: *Pte. A. Russell, 2nd Seaforth Highlanders.*

### **Facing Death**

Lieut. Pottinger did one of the pluckiest things that have been done in the war. He and his section were blowing up a bridge under fire. They laid the charge, and the section retired, Lieut. Pottinger and a sapper remaining behind to light the fuse. This they did, but apparently something went wrong with the detonator, and the charge did not explode. The sapper then fired ten rounds with his rifle at the charge without success. Lieut. Pottinger then said, "I'll make the d — thing go off," shook hands with the sapper, and went to the bridge. There he put the muzzle of his revolver to the charge and fired all six cartridges. The charge still did not explode, and they had to leave the bridge still standing, as they were driven back by the Germans. If that charge had gone off the lieutenant would have disappeared, and he knew it as well as I do: *A Royal Engineer.*

### **"Scotland for Ever!"**

The Scots Greys galloped forward with us hanging on to their stirrups, and it was a sight never to be forgotten. We were simply being dragged by the horses as they flew forward through a perfect cloud of bullets from the enemy's Maxims. Saddles were being emptied quickly as we closed on the German lines, and tore past their Maxims, which were in the front ranks. We were on the German gunners before they knew where they were, and many of them went down in their gore, scarcely realizing that we were amongst them. Then the fray commenced in deadly earnest. The Black Watch and the Scots Greys went into it like men possessed. They fought like demons. It was our bayonets against the Germans' swords. The German swords were no use against us. They went down in hundreds, and still the deadly work of the bayonet continued. The enemy began to waver as the carnage amongst them increased, and they soon broke and fled like rabbits: *Pte. W. Morton, 1st Batt. Black Watch.*

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### **Succouring the Wounded**

Three of my comrades were sent out on patrol, when they were fired on by the Germans. One got back to the trenches, though I was told two had returned. One I saw was wounded, and I volunteered to save him. I went out and was heavily fired at, but I made up my mind to get him—and you know I very seldom change that. Well, I persevered and got to one who was past human aid. I had missed the wounded one, who was lying nearer the trenches. I came back to the trench and reported the one dead. I then went out again to the wounded man and, with the help of Corporal Brown, brought him safely back: *Pte. Dobson, Coldstream Guards.*

### **Up the Hill**

My regiment was acting advance guard, and my company was well in advance, when we came to a hill covered with thick brushwood. Some French cavalry were sent out to do a bit of scouting. They came back and reported the hill clear. Well, we continued our march along the road, but, just as we came under the hill, the Germans opened a terrible fire on us. The hill was entrenched from top to bottom, but the trenches were well hidden in the brush. The first line was only about ninety yards from us, and the first volley bowled over a lot of my company. There were also two companies of the Camerons attached to us. There was nothing for it but the bayonet, and before you could say "Jack Robinson" we were in their first line of trenches. They ran like rabbits. Then we got reinforced by the remainder of the regiment, and the hill was taken: *A Private of the Black Watch.*

### **Harry Lauder's Songs**

I want to let the public know how the Black Watch went through it. Well, it was a terrible bit of work, but our fellows stuck to their ground like men—the men of the bulldog breed the kiddies sing about at school. The Germans were as thick as the "Hielan" heather, and by sheer weight forced us back step by step. But we had our orders, and every man stuck to them, and until the order came not a livin' man flinched. We stuck there popping off the Germans as fast as we

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could, and all around us the German shells were bursting. And in the thick of it all we were singing Harry Lauder's latest. Aye, laddie, it was grand; all around us were the dead and dying, and every now and then the German shells would burst, and as we peppered away at 'em we sang about "Roamin' in the gloamin'" and "The Lass of Killiecrankie": *A Corporal of the Black Watch*.

### **Didn't Know Defeat**

After the firing had lasted for two and a half hours the order to retire was given and we retired through a wood. Then General Davis came along and said, "Turn about, men—you must save the guns at all costs." There were only about fifty of us. We made a series of short rushes under a heavy shrapnel fire until we were up to the guns. The Germans were not more than eight hundred yards away, but we were getting very few burst shells, while we could see the Germans going down in scores. Every shot of ours told, as it was impossible to miss the enemy, who had formed from six to ten deep. We could see our artillery shells simply mowing the Germans down. Still they came on. Presently the order rang out to abandon the guns, but gallant young Lieut. Hibbert said, "No, boys; we will never let a German take a British gun!" Then our chaps raised a cheer, and resumed rapid firing. Presently we were reinforced by the South Staffords. The guns' crews stuck to their task most heroically, and, amid cheering, we rescued the whole of them: *Sergt. Meads, Royal Berks*.

### **Duty and—Death**

We occupied an exposed position on the left of the Aisne, and one night we only escaped being wiped out by mere chance, combined with as fine a deed of heroism as I have ever heard of. There was a man of the Manchester Regiment who was lying close to the German lines terribly wounded. He happened to overhear some conversation between German soldiers, and, being familiar with the language, he gathered that they intended to attack the position we held that night. In spite of his wounds he decided to set out to warn us of the danger, and he set out on the weary tramp of over five miles. He was under fire from the moment he got to his feet, but he stumbled along in spite of that, and soon got out of range. Later he ran into a patrol of Uhlans, but before they saw him he dropped to earth and shammed being dead. They passed by without a sign, and then he resumed his weary journey. By this time the strain had told on him and his wound began to bleed, marking his path towards our lines with thin red streaks. In the early morning, just half an hour before the time fixed for the German attack, he staggered into one of our advanced posts, and managed to tell his story to the officer in charge before collapsing in a heap. Thanks to the information he gave, we were ready for the Germans when they came, and beat them off; but his anxiety to warn us had cost him his life. The doctors said that the strain had been too much for him, and next day he died: *A Corporal of the Northumberland Fusiliers*.

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### **"He Saved Others"**

We were working in touch with a French corps on our left, and early one morning we were sent ahead to this village, which we had reason to believe was clear of the enemy. On the outskirts we questioned a French lad, but he seemed scared and ran away. We went on through the long narrow street, and just as we were in sight of the end a man dashed out from a farmhouse on the right. Immediately the rifles began to crack in front, and the poor chap fell dead before he reached us. He was one of our men, a private of the ——. We learned that he had been captured the previous day by a party of German cavalry, and had been held a prisoner at the farm, where the Germans were in ambush for us. He guessed their game, and though he knew that if he made the slightest sound they would kill him, he decided to make a dash to warn us of what was in store. He had more than a dozen bullets in him. We buried him next day with military honours. His identification disc and everything else was missing, so that we could only put over his grave the tribute, "He saved others." There wasn't a dry eye among us when we laid him to rest in that little village: *A Corporal at the Aisne*.

### **Heroes All**

In one of our fights it was necessary to give orders to a battalion holding an exposed position to retire. Bugle-calls were no good, and the only thing was for men to risk their lives by rushing across an open space of 400 yards at least under a hellish fire. Volunteers were asked for from the Royal Irish Fusiliers, and, though every man knew that he was taking his life in his hand, the whole lot volunteered. They couldn't all go, so they tossed for it in files, the man who couldn't guess the way the coin came down at least once out of three times being selected. The first was a shock-headed chap who didn't look as if there was very much in him. Ducking his head in a comic way that would have made you roar, he rushed into that blinding hail of bullets. He cleared the first 100 yards without being hit. It was a miracle how he did it, but in the second lap he was hit. He ran on for a minute or two, but staggered and fell after being hit a second time. Two more men stepped forward and dashed across while the Germans were doing their best to pink them. One picked up the wounded man and started to carry him in to the trenches, while the other ran ahead with the precious dispatch. Just as the wounded man and his mate were within a few yards of safety and we were cheering them for all we knew, there was a perfectly wicked volley from the Germans, and both of them collapsed. We dragged them in, but it was too late. Both were dead. The fourth man kept up his race against death and seemed to bear a charmed life, but in the last lap as you might say he went down like a felled ox. He was seen from the trenches to

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which the message was being taken, and half a dozen men ran out to his aid, the Germans renewing their fire with greater fierceness. The whole of the little party was shot down, but the wounded Fusilier still continued to crawl to the trenches with his message. Another party came out and carried him in, as well as seeing to the others. Later the battalion holding the advanced position was able to fall back in good order, but it wasn't the least bit too soon, and had it not been for those brave chaps, who risked their lives to carry that message, there would have been a battalion less to fight our battles that day, as the Germans were working round unknown to the officer in command, and would have cut it off as sure as I'm a soldier: *A Corporal of the Gloucester Regiment.*

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## XIV. TALES OF TRAGEDY

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*Say not the struggle naught availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain.*

*For now by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!  
But westward, look, the land is bright!*

A. H. CLOUGH.

Darling,—I am now lying in a forest with my leg shot off, and don't know when the ambulance will turn up. It's awful. I hope I shall see you again. Love to baby and all: *Jack.*

### Invaded!

People at home can't realize what it means to have their country invaded. Inoffensive people are sitting in their homes, when, without the slightest warning, away comes death and destruction in the shape of artillery shells from an enemy that doesn't know the meaning of the first letter of fairplay: *Pte. E. Bush, The Buffs.*

### Better Dead!

A live shell burst and hit one poor fellow in the lower part of the body. I asked him if I could do anything for him, and he said, "Yes; have you got a rifle?" "Yes," I said. "Well," he said, "for God's sake shoot me out of my misery." I told him I could not do that, so I gave him water: *Pte. F. Bruce, Suffolk Regiment.*

### Of Wife and Child

In our trenches on the Aisne after a hard fight we found one of the Gloucesters with an unfinished letter in his hand. It was written to his wife and little girl. It spoke hopefully of the future, and said, "Tell Annie I will be home in time to make her Christmas tree." He never got further, for a German shell had laid him out: *A Seaforth Highlander.*

### Loot!

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The looting has been awful; beautiful homes broken up, and articles of clothing, household linen, pictures, and furniture smashed to atoms and trodden under foot. They took away the wines, for on our advance up country the numerous German camps were strewn with bottles, articles of equipment, and other things too numerous to mention. They leave their killed by the side of the roads, and in the streets of villages—anywhere, in fact: *Sergt.-Major H. Attree, 18th Hussars.*

### The Roll call

The horrors of war can only be imagined; yet we seem to get used to them. It seems callous to me, but after the battle we have roll-call. The sergeant calls out the names. Perhaps the first one he calls is missing. Nobody knows where he is. The next one is called, and somebody says, "I saw him shot." The sergeant puts him down as "shot" or "wounded." Nobody comments or says anything: *Corporal R. W. Crow, Royal Engineers.*

### Reading Ruskin

I came on a wounded man of the Lancashire Fusiliers one day. He had two ghastly wounds in his breast, and I fancy he was booked through. He was quietly reading a little edition of Ruskin's "Crown of Wild Olive," and seemed to be enjoying it immensely. As I chatted with him for a few

minutes he told me that this little book had been his companion all through and that when he died he wanted it to be buried with him. His end came next day, and we buried the book with him: *A Sergeant of the Fifth Lancers*.

### **“All Right!”**

After being under the deadliest of shell fire for eight days I was hit, but, thank God, no bones broken. I shall never forget my poor chum. He had his leg broken with the bone sticking out, and also a great gash in the thigh. But the one glorious thing about it is, as soon as we realized we were hit, we joined in prayer to our Father, after which we helped one another to bandage ourselves up. I haven't seen him since they carried us out of the trenches, but I am sure he is all right: *Pte. W. Marshall, 1st Devonshire Regiment*.

### **Keepsakes!**

The shortest will I have ever heard of was made one night by a chap of the Royal Scots. He was bowled over in a rush at the German trenches, and, with what must have been his dying breath, he shouted after his chum, “Jock, ye can hae ma fags.” Later we came on him dead, and Jock got the fags all right in his breast pocket; but I don't think he would part with them if he wanted a smoke ever so, and none of us would have asked him to do it: *A Cameron Highlander*.

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### **Nellie's Anxiety**

I suppose Nellie is very anxious over me, but tell her I am going on grand, and am delighted I am living and able to use my rifle. As long as I can account for a German life every time I get the chance, that is all I care about, and every other British soldier is just the same. It is marvellous the pluck of our officers; they would face anything, and where they go we follow them, and would follow them anywhere. We have a lot of our officers killed; and it is a pity, poor fellows, for they are brave men. When we get close to the Germans they run like hell from our rifle fire, and then we get a grand chance at them: *Sergt. E. F. Eagar, Royal Irish Regiment*.

### **The Dog It Was!**

There was a big, awkward, gawky lad of the Camerons who took a fancy to a Scotch collie that had followed us about a lot, and one day the dog got left behind when we were falling back. The big lad was terribly upset, and went back to look for it. He found it, and was trudging along with it in his arms, making forced marches to overtake us, when he fell in with a party of Uhlans on the prowl. He and his dog fought their best, but they hadn't a chance, and both were killed: *A Private of the Highland Light Infantry*.

### **The Trail of the Sword**

It is a shame to see the lovely homes that have been deserted, the people trekking along the roads with any belongings they can manage to carry with them or wheel on barrows, and women with little babies in arms flying for their lives, and perhaps an old mother being helped along behind. These sights make lumps come in your throat, and make you think what it would be if a similar thing were to happen at home. When we first came here we went right through into Belgium, and as we were retiring the Germans were setting fire to all villages. It was a common thing to see two or three villages alight at the same time: *A British Gunner*.

### **His Loved Ones**

Just as he was going into battle a man of the Staffordshire Regiment received a letter announcing the sudden death of his wife and baby daughter. There was no time for tears or vain regrets, and he had to go into the fight with his heart stricken with that terrible grief. In the fighting he acquitted himself like a hero, and just as we were retiring he received a mortal wound. I offered a word of sympathy, but he would not hear of it. “Never mind,” he said, “I'm booked through; but I have sent a few Germans before; and, anyhow, I am going to see the ones I love”: *A Sergeant of the 9th Lancers*.

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### **Vultures**

We came on a German who had been pinned down under a gun-carriage that had to be abandoned. He could not extricate himself, and he simply had to lie there with two loathsome vultures waiting to nibble at him when the last spark of life had gone. He was relieved when we found him, for you can imagine it's not nice to see these awful creatures waiting to make a meal of you. Whenever we see them we kill them, but they are always hovering about the battlefields, and they always follow our men on the march. Some instinct seems to tell them when to expect dead men. They are terribly afraid of the aeroplanes, and when the machines are up vultures clear out of the way: *Pte. T. R. Morgan, Royal Field Artillery*.

### **A Song of Death**



I am a bit down in the mouth over a thing that happened last night. We had a bit of a sing-song and smoker to mark the arrival in camp of a couple of boxes of cigarettes. My best chum, the one I have told you about so often, was called on for a song, and, just as he took his fag out of his mouth to oblige, a shell dropped into us, and he was badly wounded on the side and in the head. "I'm done for, George," was all he had time to say, and off he went. He was a fine chum. No man ever had better, and we were all cut up about it. He had a wife and four children at home. God only knows what will become of them now: *A Sergeant of the 1st Division Staff.*

### **No More Cold Trenches**

There was a chap of the Berkshires who, like many more of us, had 'listed after a row with his girl. At the crossing of the Aisne he got hit, and he had just breath enough to tell me the name of the girl, and ask me to write to her. "Tell her," he said, "I'm sorry we had that row, but it was for the best, for if we hadn't had it I should not have been able to do my bit for my country. It seems awfully hard that I can never see her again to explain things to her, but I'm sure she will think better of me now than if I had been one of the stay-at-homes. Good-bye, old chap; there'll be no more cold nights in the trenches for me, anyhow": *A Private of the Leicestershire Regiment.*

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### **A Lady's Handkerchief**

I found myself mixed up with a French regiment on the right. I wanted to go forward with them, but the officer in charge shook his head and smiled. "They will spot you in your khaki and put you out in no time," he said in English; "make your way to the left; you'll find your fellows on that hill." I watched the regiment till it disappeared; then I made my way across a field and up a big avenue of trees. The shells were whistling overhead, but there was nothing to be afraid of. Half-way up the avenue there was a German lancer officer lying dead by the side of the road. How he got there was a mystery because we had seen no cavalry. But there he lay, and someone had crossed his hands on his breast and put a little celluloid crucifix in his hands. Over his face was a beautiful little handkerchief—a lady's—with a lace edging. It was a bit of a mystery because there wasn't a lady for miles that I knew of: *A British Infantryman.*

### **All Gone**

Letters have just arrived. How sad that the men cannot have them. We call the names out, but there is no answer. They perhaps know in heaven. Old England, when she hears about the battle, will be proud of us. The Germans were ten to one, and we outfought them. I have lost nearly all my best chums, and have seen some terrible sights. My pack was blown from my back, my cap was taken away, and a bullet or shell stripped my trousers from my thigh to the knee. Our colonel and nearly all the officers are gone. One chap in my company, only eighteen and a half years, had both legs blown away. The sergeant you shook hands with, —, has gone: *Serjt. Roberts, Loyal Lancashires.*

### **Fired!**

One night we spent in a pretty old village, where the people were very hospitable. They made some of us a bed on a cottage floor, and gave us food. Said good-bye and left about 5 A.M. A few hours later we looked back and saw the flames of the place mounting to the sky. Fired by the enemy, was the fate of that village and many more for giving our troops shelter for a night. Have seen thousands of refugees on the roads flying from the enemy, carrying all their worldly possessions on their backs. One sees many sad sights of this nature. Women tramping wearily along, sobbing with terror at the booming of the great guns and the distant glare of blazing homesteads. We have also seen hundreds of German prisoners, mostly looking "fed up." Tried to have a chat with one the other morning, but owing to our respective knowledge of English and German being limited, conversation was ditto. Have just been told it's Sunday to-day. Had quite lost count, as all days seem much alike: *Corpl. F. W. Street, R.E.*

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### **One Taken!**

With Tom Caisley on one side and Joe Fair on the other I was hopping along, with the shells bursting all around us. My strength was going, when I turned to Tom and said, "I'm beat, Tom," but he answered, "Stick it, son." I shall never forget his words, and I did "stick it," till he saw two fellows with a stretcher and called them over. I was put on the stretcher and shook hands with Tom and Joe, wishing them good-bye. Then they went back to the firing line, and I was taken to a cave, where I had my leg dressed; the bullet had gone right through the thigh. I had only been in this place about half an hour when a chap called Nicholson was brought in wounded, and I asked him if Tom and Joe were all right. He gave me a shock when he said Joe Fair had been killed while assisting him. I must confess that I cried, for Joe had been chums with Tom and me for years: *Private Thomas Elliott.*

### **A Dash for It**

I met a man belonging to C Company of the Gordons who was bleeding very much. He shouted to me, "For God's sake take me out of action." I put him on a stretcher with the help of another

bearer. We lifted him up, and just then a shell broke a tree in half close by. The trunk fell right across the man's head, killing him at once. It was getting dusk and we could not find out where our company was, as they had retired fighting. I walked about the woods very quietly at night with three others and then heard some English voices. We looked ahead and saw a battery of artillery in a lane in front of us. They said they were ambushed between two lines of fire, and shouted, "Come, get a gun, and take pot luck with us." We started, although twenty-four of the first team's horses were shot, the middle driver was dead, and the one on the second leading horse was wounded in the head. We all decided to make a dash for it in the morning. We did so over dead horses and men and found our regiment at 3 A.M. In the meantime we had got some corn from the fields, but for three days we had nothing to eat and drink but apples, dirty water, and red wine: *Bandsman T. Winstanley*.

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### A Cave Disaster

I have had some experiences, but I think the saddest was the digging out of a number of men from a kind of subterranean passage or cave, which had fallen in and buried about thirty of the Camerons. The other night information was brought to the camp that the Cameron Highlanders had met with a disaster, and I was sent off immediately with a party of our chaps to go to their assistance. We were taken to a spot on a hillside, which reminded me of the caves of Cheddar, and which had been shelled. The turf and earth were thrown up in all directions as the result of a bombardment. There were several large and small caves, and one of them had been used as a hiding-place by the Camerons. No doubt this was spotted by the Germans, for they directed their guns on it, and it collapsed. The poor fellows were buried underneath many tons of earth. This happened early in the day, and although several attempts had been made to extricate the men, very little could be done, as the bursting of the shells on the same spot drove off the small rescue parties. I had to leave before the work was completed, but I helped to dig out two dead officers and several men. The position of these caves was well known to the Germans, for they had previously occupied them, and no doubt took a fiendish delight in smashing them up when they saw the Camerons take shelter in them: *Sapper G. A. Bell, Royal Engineers*.

### An Irish Rifle

There was a young chap of the Irish Rifles. He was kneeling beside a wounded man of the Gloucester, keeping off the Germans, who were circling round like carrion birds. He had been hit himself, but was gamely firing at the enemy as fast as his wounded arm would permit. We went to his assistance, but they were both worn-out when we reached them, and, greatly to our regret, we had to leave them to be picked up by the Red Cross people. That was hard; but if you tried to pick up every wounded man you saw you wouldn't be much use as a fighter, and as we were under urgent orders to take up a position from which to cover the retreat, we had no time for sentiment. They knew that, and they weren't the men to ask us to risk the safety of the army for them. "Never mind," the rifleman said, with a faint smile on a ghastly face, "the sisters will pick us up when it's all over, but if they don't, sure, then we've only got once to die, and it's the grand fight we had, anyhow. What more could soldiers ask for?" When we came back again one of the men was there sure enough—stone dead; but his mate had gone, and whether it was the Germans or the Red Cross people that got him I wouldn't care to say: *A Trooper of the Irish Dragoons*.

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### The Worst Part

I think the worst part of it all to bear is seeing the refugees; it breaks you up to see people too old to walk being pushed about in wheelbarrows and hand-carts. Let the Germans look out if the French and the Belgians get into Germany, for there will be the devil to pay, I bet. It would be hard to blame them, whatever they do, after what I have seen done to villages here.... The pepper is good stuff; I put some in my tea—it warms you up a treat: *Bombardier Yorke, R.H.A.*

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## XV. ANECDOTES OF HUMOUR

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*Said the king to the colonel,  
"The complaints are eternal,  
That you Irish give more trouble  
Than any other corps."*

*Said the colonel to the king,  
"This complaint is no new thing,  
For your foemen, sire, have made it  
A hundred times before."*

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

The French tobacco is terrible, and the matches! Oh! Our fellows have christened them "Asquiths" because you have to "wait and see": *A Private of the R.A.M.C.*

## **“Blime!”**

One German Uhlán came up to an outpost of the Northampton and said, “Blime, take me a prisoner, I am fed up.” He had worked in London: *A Private of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment*.

## **The Proof of It**

A woman said laughingly to me, “If you kill the Kaiser you shall have my daughter.” I replied that I could do that all right, and that she could have a hair of his moustache: *Private R. Coombe*.

## **Laughter!**

Although the war has its stern, hard, realistic side, there is also a humorous side, especially so with our Tommies. They turn almost everything into a joke; in fact, I think that is the secret of their wonderful sang-froid: *Quartermaster-Sergt. Ridewood, 2nd Welsh Regiment*.

## **A Great Game**

What a dirty-looking lot we were—holes in our clothes and beards. Every time we passed a clothes-line the fellows took the clothes off it. They had lassies’ nightdresses and chemises, and anything, so long as it made a shirt. What a game it was! *A Private of the 5th Lancers*.

## **“Fine Feeds”**

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We are having good sport out here. I have got as good a heart now as I had when I left home. I tell you, there is nothing better than having a few shells and bullets buzzing round you as long as you don’t stop one. We are having some fine feeds out here—ducks, chickens, rabbits, and bags of fruit: *Trooper Maddocks, 5th Cavalry Brigade*.

## **No Tango in Paris**

The Germans painted on the walls, “We will make the English do the Tango in Paris on September 13.” But we have had a say in that, and I am certain there are a few thousands less Germans now than there were since they wrote that message: *Pte. W. Blackburn, 2nd Coldstream Guards*.

## **L.B.W.!**

An officer of the Cheshires, who is a bit of a cricketer, got uncomfortable after being cramped so long in the trenches. He raised his leg in shifting his position, and a bit of a shell hit him in the thigh. As he fell back all he said was, “Out, by George! l.b.w., as the umpire would say. Better luck next innings”: *A Trooper of the Royal Horse Guards*.

## **Irish and Merry**

We are settling down to the hard grind of active service, and if you saw us now you would think we well deserved our regimental nickname, “The Dirty Shirts.” When you have wielded the pick and shovel for a day or two in a blazing sun you don’t look as though you were going to a tea party or to chapel: *Private T. Mulligan*.

## **Cock-a-Doodle-Do!**

It is great fun watching the efforts of the troops to make the French people understand what they want. One of our fellows thought he would try for some eggs at a farmhouse. Naturally, they couldn’t understand him, so he opened his mouth, rubbed his stomach, flapped his arms, and cried, “Cock-a-doodle-doo!” The eggs came promptly: *Bombdr. H. Cressy, Royal Field Artillery*.

## **Surrounded Them**

Pat Ryan, of the Connaught Rangers, thought he ought to do something to celebrate his birthday, which fell on Friday week. Without telling a soul he went out of the trenches in the afternoon, and came back after dusk with two big Germans in tow. How or where he got them nobody knows. The captain asked how he managed to catch the two. “Sure and I surrounded them, sorr,” was the answer: *A Gunner of the Royal Artillery*.

## **Joking not Apart**

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We had six bridges to blow up. The centre bridge was to go up first, and we were to get over quickly after we had laid the charge. While we were waiting—there were ten of us—we saw a chap from the West Kents coming over, and we told him to jump for his life. The fuse was actually burning at the time, and I guess he broke all the records for jumping. A party of the King’s Own went into one battle shouting out, “Early doors this way. Early doors, ninepence!”: *Sapper*

### **Left the Duck**

I was wounded in rather a curious manner. Being caterer to the officers' mess, I was preparing the dinner, plucking a duck in the backyard, when a shell burst, and I was hit on the shoulder and head. I had laid the tables for dinner before, and to my surprise when I was expecting the return of officers, I was confronted by a party of Germans, who sat down and ate a hearty meal, while I managed to escape. Whether they finished the plucking and cooking of the duck, I thought it advisable not to return and see: *Sergt. Hanks, 4th Middlesex Regiment.*

### **Swimming for Them**

For two whole days the rain came down on us in bucketfuls. It was like having the sea bottom turned upwards and the contents poured over us. At one point tents were floating around like yachts on the lake at the Welsh Harp. Those who had been foolish enough to get on the wrong side of their clothes the night before had the devil's own job to find them in the morning. Swimming after your things when you wake up isn't an aid to quick dressing: *A Private of the Grenadiers.*

### **Asked for Him**

A wounded soldier I picked up the other day told me an amusing tale, although he was severely hurt. His regiment was capturing some Germans, and they were being disarmed, when this chap, in asking a German for his rifle, was bayoneted twice by the German and fell down unconscious. When he came round he said to his pals, "Where is the blighter?" "Never mind, Mick, don't worry," replied his pals; "we have just buried him": *Sergt. Hughes, Army Medical Corps.*

### **Mighty Particular**

There was a chap of the Grenadier Guards who was always mighty particular about his appearance, and persisted in wearing a tie all the time, whereas most of us reduce our needs to the simplest possible. One day, under heavy rifle fire, he was seen to be in a frightful fluster. "Are you hit?" he was asked. "No," he said. "What is it, then?" "This — tie is not straight," he replied, and proceeded to adjust it under fire: *Corpl. C. Hamer, Coldstream Guards.*

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### **Swear Words**

One night when we were toiling along like to drop with fatigue, we ran right into a big party of horsemen posted near a wood. We thought they were Germans, for we could not make out the colour of the uniforms or anything else, until we heard someone sing out, "Where the hell do you think you're going to?" Then we knew they were friends, and I don't think I was ever so glad to hear a real good English swear: *A Driver of the Royal Artillery.*

### **Maids of All Work**

Our Allies were greatly "taken" with the Highlanders, and many of them expressed surprise at the kindly behaviour and hearty manner of the Scotsmen. Apparently they thought the "kilties" were of a rather barbaric nature. Two Highlanders were billeted with an old French lady. Her strange lodgers gave the landlady no end of entertainment. They insisted on washing the dishes and doing all the housework, and when finished with these duties went the length of delving the garden: *Private D. Goldie.*

### **Step Outside**

In camp one night one of the German prisoners was chock-full of peace-at-any-price cant, and talked a lot about all men being brothers. This didn't please Terry Monahan, an Irish private of the Liverpool Regiment, and, in a towering rage, he turned on the German: "You dirty, church-going, altar-defiling, priest-murdering German devil," he cried, "ye're no brother of mine, and by the holy saints if ye'll only step outside for wan minit it's me will knock all the nonsense out of yer ugly head": *A Sergeant of the York and Lancaster Regiment.*

### **Didn't Wait!**

There were two lads of our regiment who were both hit, and there was only one stretcher for them. Each had his views about which had the most need of it first. The big one got ragged with the other's refusal, so raising himself with his unwounded arm, he cried, "You go the noo, Jock, an' if you're no slippy about it, you'll gaur me gae ye something ye'll remember when I'm a' richt again." Jock didn't wait any longer after that: *A Private of the Highland Light Infantry.*

### **Kaiser and Highlander**

During the advance we saw chalked notices written by Germans, such as "Wilhelm, Emperor of [Pg 146]

Europe." Then underneath you would see a British Tommy had written, "I don't think." One curious incident was the sight of a Highlander who had taken pity on a woman refugee who was carrying two babies. He took one up in each arm, and carried them along whilst the woman walked by his side carrying his rifle. I could not see what Highland regiment he belonged to because there was hardly a man who had a badge: *Corpl. W. L. Pook, Royal Engineers.*

### **"Shove-Ha'penny"**

An infantry chap found a table and, scoring lines on it with his bayonet, joined in a game of "shove-ha'penny" with four other Tommies. The sequel came later, as sequels will. When the party managed to reassemble for another game a shell had smashed the table to smithereens. "My luck's out wi' the infernal shove-ha'penny," said the infantry chap. "I'm blowed if I'll play any more." Then he explained that just before the war he was playing for pots of beer in a public-house when the police raided the place. "Now it's the Germans," he added bitterly: *A Private of the Army Medical Corps.*

### **Comments**

You hear some quaint remarks under heavy artillery fire. One day everything was quiet for a bit except for their shells, and one fellow shouted, "Fall in here for your pay, 'A' Company," which caused men and officers to laugh aloud. When once we get under fire we take very little notice of it, for it seems to come natural to us. All we look for is something to shoot at, taking no notice of what our comrades are doing on either side. When ammunition is gone we shout, "Some more souvenirs for the Huns": *Pte. Homewood, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.*

### **"Mein Gott!"**

A funny thing happened about a week ago. The scout officer of our regiment went out reconnoitring one night and rather lost his bearings. As he thought he was on his way back he bumped up against a trench which he took for his own, and started to walk along it till he came to someone, obviously an officer, walking up and down. "Hullo! Good evening," he said; when the other officer, jumping back, said, "Mein Gott, the English!" and before he had got over his surprise the scout officer jumped out of the trench and got away without being hit: *A British Scout.*

### **"Tickets, Please!"**

There's a corporal of a regiment that I won't name who was a ticket-collector on the railway before the war, and when he was called back to the colours he wasn't able to forget his old trade. One day he was in charge of a patrol that surprised a party of Germans in a wood, and, instead of a usual call to surrender, he sang out, "Tickets, please!" The Germans seemed to understand what he was driving at, for they surrendered at once, but that chap will never hear the end of the story, for when everything else ceases to amuse in the trenches, you have only to shout out, "Tickets, please!" to set everybody in fits: *A Gunner of the Royal Artillery.*

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### **No Uhlans Need Apply!**

We were about as hungry as men could be when we came on a party of Uhlans just about to sit down to a nice dinner which had been prepared for them at a big house. They looked as if they had had too much of a good time lately and wanted thinning down; so we took them prisoners, and let them watch us enjoying their dinner. They didn't like it at all, and one of them muttered something about an English pig. The baby of the troop asked him to come outside to settle it with fists, but he wasn't having it. After the best dinner I've had in my life we went round to where the Uhlans had commandeered the supplies and offered to pay, but the people were so pleased that we had got the food instead of the Germans that they wouldn't hear of payment: *Trooper Dale, Royal Dragoons.*

### **Cooking Their Dinner**

Have you ever tried cooking a dinner under shell fire? It's about as exciting as anything you could have in this world. Yesterday we were in the firing line, and as there were no prospects of relief, we had to make a spit and roast some fowls we had been given by the villagers. Just when they were doing nicely, and we were going around to turn them, the Germans found the range, and shells began to drop all around. We had to lie low, and when there was a lull one of us would rush out and turn the nearest bird, and then run back again under cover. We got them cooked all right, but two of our chaps were killed outright and four injured. That's a big bill to pay for a dinner; but soldiers are like beggars, they can't be choosers. Out here is no place for the faint-hearts, and we want only real men, who are afraid of nothing: *Pte. T. Bayley, 5th Irish Lancers.*

### **Business as Usual**

Our men had just had their papers from home, and have noted, among other things, that "Business as Usual" is the motto of patriotic shopkeepers. In hard fighting the Wiltshires, holding

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an exposed position, ran out of ammunition, and had to suspend firing until a party brought fresh supplies across the open under a heavy fire. Then the wag of the regiment, a Cockney, produced a biscuit tin with "Business as Usual" crudely printed on it, and set it up before the trenches as a hint to the Germans that the fight could now be resumed on more equal terms. Finally the tin had to be taken in because it was proving such a good target for the German riflemen, but the joker was struck twice in rescuing it: *A Private of the Wiltshire Regiment*.

### **For Neuralgia!**

We're just keeping at it in the same old slogging style that always brings us out on top. There's one chap in our company has got a ripping cure for neuralgia, but he isn't going to take out a patent, because it's too risky, and might kill the patient. Good luck's one of the ingredients, and you can't always be sure of that. He was lying in the trenches the other day nearly mad with pain in his face, when a German shell burst close by. He wasn't hit, but the explosion knocked him senseless for a bit. "Me neuralgia's gone," says he, when he came round. "And so's six of your mates," says we. "Oh, crikey!" says he. His name's Palmer, and that's why we call the German shells now "Palmer's Neuralgia Cure": *Pte. H. Thomson, 1st Gordon Highlanders*.

### **"The Wearin' o' the Green!"**

The German officer rushed off to Tim Flanagan, the biggest caution in the whole regiment, and called on him to surrender the file of men under his orders. "Is it me your honour's after talking to in that way?" says Tim in that bold way of his. "Sure, now, it's yourself that ought to be surrendering, and if you're not off this very minute, you ill-mannered German omadhaun, it's me will be after giving you as much cold steel as'll do you between this and the kingdom of heaven." Then the German officer gave the word to his men, and what happened after that I can't tell to you, for it was just then I got a bullet between my ribs; but I can tell you that neither Tim nor any of his men surrendered: *A Private of the Connaught Rangers*.

### **Not a Yarn**

A barber would do a roaring trade if he came here, no one having shaved for weeks. Consequently, beards vary according to the age of the individual and the length of time he has not shaved. Mine, for instance, is something to gaze on and remember. They are not by any means what a writer in a lady's novelette would describe as "a perfect dream." They are scattered over my chivvy-chase in anything but order, nineteen on one side, fifteen on the other, and thirty-five on the chin, intermixed with a small smattering of down and dirt. Dirt, did I say? That doesn't describe it. Water is at a discount, except for drinking: soap something to read about, and you wonder when you last used it, and when you will use it again. I can safely say, "Three weeks ago I used your soap; since then I have used no other." And that's not spinning you a yarn: *Serjt. Diggins, Leicestershire Regiment*.

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### **"Hallo, Old Tin Hat!"**

About four thousand Germans, backed up by heavy artillery play, tried to cross the river. There were only 300 Connaught Rangers all told who could be spared to keep them from fixing pontoons. Down to the river-bank they came, firing for all they were worth. The Irishmen were entrenched, and shouted across the river such greeting as "Hallo, old tin hat! When are you coming over?" and as soon as the Irishmen caught sight of the great boots of the Germans, Hibernian humour was irrepressible. The Rangers shouted, "We see you; it's no good hiding there. We can see your ears sticking out!" Then the Rangers settled down to enjoy themselves, but a little later some more German infantry, which had crossed the river to another point, attempted to outflank them. It was terribly hard work, but the way the Irish stuck it would have taken your breath away: *A Nottingham Artilleryman*.

### **Orange and Green**

Mick Clancy is that droll with his larking and bamboozling the Germans that he makes us nearly split our sides laughing at him and his ways. Yesterday he got a stick and put a cap on it so that it peeped above the trenches just like a man, and then the Germans kept shooting away at it until they must have used up tons of ammunition, and there was us all the time laughing at them. Tommy McQuiston, the big sergeant from the Black North, does nothing else morning, noon, and night but talk about Ned Carson and what he and his volunteers will do when they come out to fight the Germans. He has to put up with a lot of banter and back chat from us on the quiet in the sergeants' mess, but, sure, though he's mad Orange, he knows as well as anyone that we think no less of him for that. To get his dander up we tell him he's going to be the door porter in the Dublin Parliament when the war's over; but he never begrudges us our bit of diversion and devilment, and says more like he'll end his days as a warder in a convict prison in charge of us: *Sergeant T. Cahill*.

*What have I done for you,  
England, my England?  
What is there I would not do,  
England, my own?*

W. E. HENLEY'S "For England's Sake."

*Soldier, soldier, if by shot and shell  
They wound him, my dear lad, my sweetheart O,  
He'll lie bleeding in the rain  
And call me, all in vain,  
Crying for the fingers of his sweetheart O.*

MAURICE HEWLETT'S "Soldier, Soldier."

Give them a cigarette and let them grip the operating-table, and they will stick anything until they practically collapse: *Corpl. H. Stewart, Royal Army Medical Corps.*

### **Poor Minnie!**

They have shot my greatest friend from under me—my horse Minnie, the most faithful animal in the world. God forgive them for that; I never will: *Pte. Knowles, 6th Dragoons.*

### **His Last Wish**

I came across a young chap sitting with his back against a tree—dead, and around him, in a circle, he placed all his letters and photographs, as much as to say: "Please post these to the people concerned, as I am dying": *A Private of the Northumberland Fusiliers.*

### **The Christian Way**

One of our men holding his water-bottle to a wounded German was shot dead close to Mons on Sunday. Another stopped under fire to light a cigarette, when a bullet struck him on the fingers, and one hand will have to come off: *Private S. Burns.*

### **Asked for the Colours**

In the middle of the battle a driver got wounded and asked to see the colours before he died, and he was told by an officer that the guns were his colours. He replied, "Tell the drivers to keep their eyes on their guns, because if we lose our guns we lose our colours": *Driver W. Moore, Royal Field Artillery.*

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### **Not a Murmur**

The grandest thing to buck a man up is the way our men take their wounds. You do not hear them yelling when they are hit. You hear the words, "I've got it, boys. Hard luck!" It is grand to see the way they take it, a smile on their face, and not a murmur as they are carried down on the stretchers: *Pte. A. Robson, 7th Batt. Royal Fusiliers.*

### **Saving a Tragedy**

I was fetching our bottles of water. I crept to one house. The woman tried to tell me something in French. I could not understand, so she pulled me in the next room. There was a woman just confined. She was on the point of madness. I could not do anything, so I told my officer. He sent me for the parson, and got some of us together, and we carried her, bed and all, to a safe place: *Pte. E. Smith, 2nd Worcestershire Regiment.*

### **Going Home!**

It was wonderful how cheerful the wounded were. One poor fellow who had been shot in the head, and hit by a shrapnel bullet in the mouth—he was apparently dying—pointed out to me another man, badly wounded, remarking, "That poor bloke is going home; he will be gone before me": *Pte. W. Webb, Royal Army Medical Corps.*

### **Like Jackie!**

I was in a cottage in France, in the country, Tuesday night, to cook a bit of grub—we had had none all day—and while I was doing it the woman cried bitterly, as her husband was at the front, but I tried to cheer her up as best I could; she had a boy like Jackie, so I told her I was married and had a wife and child, and she cried worse still then: *Private Davies, of Ipswich.*

## Lit His "Fag"

"Is there anything I can do for you, old chap?" I asked a wounded man of the Hampshires, one day. "Yes," he answered, "you might light my fag for me. You will find matches and all in my inside pocket." I did as he asked, and the last glimpse I caught of him he was lying out there with German shells and bullets flying all around, calmly smoking a "Gold Flake." That spirit is characteristic of our lads: *A Private of the Grenadier Guards.*

## Cheerful in Verse

I was through all the fighting, commencing with the battle of Mons, until the 9th of last month, when I got wounded. This little verse will explain a lot: [Pg 152]

*I was wounded on the 9th,  
Near the River Marne.  
They got me in hospital on the 13th,  
On the 18th they took off my arm:*

*A Corporal of the Durham Light Infantry.*

## Succouring the Enemy

A lot of German wounded were moved into a wood for protection and shelter against the rain. Their own artillery opened fire, and soon all the trees were ablaze. The cries of the wounded were agonizing. A party of our men asked permission from their officers to go and carry the Germans out. They did it under heavy fire all the time. The wounded men were very grateful, and said that had it not been for our lads they would have been burned alive: *A Private of the Highland Light Infantry.*

## A Splendid Corporal

Near Cambrai one dark night the British took the offensive against the Germans, who were holding a bridge spanning the canal. When our men reached an embankment running sharply down to the river several failed to secure a foothold and fell into the water. Four of the men, who were unable to swim, were in imminent danger of drowning, when Corporal Brindall, an excellent swimmer, plunged into the river and rescued all four in turn. He was clambering up the embankment himself, when a German shell exploded near him, killing him instantly: *Drummer H. Savage, 1st Batt. Royal Berks.*

## A Yorkshire "Tyke"

One night in the trenches a man of the West Yorkshire Regiment took off his coat and wrapped it around a wounded chum who had to lie there until the ambulance took him away. All that night the game "tyke" stood in the trenches in his shirt-sleeves, with water up to his waist, and the temperature near to freezing-point, quietly returning the German fire. In the morning he would only own to "a bit of a chill that a cup of tea and a smoke would soon put right," but I wasn't surprised to learn that he had to be sent down to the base with pneumonia that afternoon. I hope he will pull through: *A Sergeant of the Liverpool Regiment.*

## The Other Man!

After one of our hard fights in the Aisne, there was occasion to let the wounded lie out in the rain all night. I came on one man of the Royal Irish Fusiliers who was done for. He had a waterproof cloak over him, but near by was a man of the artillery without any covering at all. I asked the Irishman if I could do anything for him. "Nothing," he said; "but if you would take this cloak and throw it over that poor chap there I would be so grateful. I will never pull through, but he may if he is attended to at once. Good-bye. See that the vultures don't get me when I'm gone, will you?": *A Private from the Aisne.* [Pg 153]

## A Costly Apple

There was a "boy" of the Connaught Rangers who made a rush out of the trenches under heavy fire to an orchard near by to get an apple for a wounded comrade who was suffering from thirst and hunger. He got the apple all right, but he got a German bullet or two in him as well on the way back, and dropped dead within fifty feet of the goal. The wounded chap had his apple brought in, after an artilleryman had been wounded in getting at it, and I hope he valued it, for it was the costliest apple I ever heard tell of bar one, and that was a long time ago: *A Private of the Highland Light Infantry.*

## No Hesitation

Two of our R.A.M.C. men were bringing in a badly wounded trooper on a stretcher, when a



fiendish fire was opened on them by a party of Germans posted on a hill about a mile off. Both of the bearers were hit, and though they strove manfully to keep up they collapsed from loss of blood, and the wounded man toppled over with them. A score of our men rushed out to their assistance, but some of them were shot down before they reached the stretcher. Four reached the stretcher and brought it in safely under a hellish fire. All the rest of the wounded were got in safely: *Private H. Sykes*.

### **Glorious Examples**

One fellow had been shot in the forehead: he had been in the trenches, full of water, for six days and seven nights, and yet he said to me, "I don't care what becomes of me. I have the satisfaction of knowing that I popped four of the Germans off before I got hit." I made a few of them some cigarettes, and gave them water to drink, and did my best to make them comfortable. You would be surprised at the gratitude which they expressed to me. These men are glorious examples of self-sacrifice. There is no distinction of persons with the wounded out here: *Motor-driver T. Robinson, of Brighton*.

### **A Kindly German**

After Soissons, I was lying on the field badly wounded. Near by was a young fellow of the Northamptonshire Regiment. Standing over him was a German infantryman holding a water-bottle to his lips and trying to soothe him. The wounded man was delirious, and kept calling, "Mother are you there?" all the time. The German seemed to understand, for he passed his hand gently over the feverish brow and caressed the poor lad as tenderly as any woman might have done. Death came at last, and as the soul of the wounded man passed to its last account I saw the German trying to hide his tears: *Corpl. Houston, Seaforth Highlanders*.

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### **Driven Out!**

The burning of the poor villagers' houses was bad enough to see, but the sight of the poor women and children fleeing before the Germans would break a man's heart. The poor people did not know what to do or where to go. Some of them came to us asking questions, but we, of course, could do nothing, for we did not understand their language and did not know what they were saying. They were in a bad way, and the sight of some of them and their misery brought the tears to the eyes of many of the men of my regiment: *Pte. Rossiter, Royal Irish Rifles*.

### **Cried Like Babies**

The other day I stopped to assist a young lad of the West Kents who had been badly hit by a piece of shell. He hadn't long to live, and he knew it, too. I asked him if there was any message I could take to someone at home. The poor lad's eyes filled with tears as he answered, "I ran away from home and 'listed a year ago. Mother and dad don't know I'm here, but you tell them from me I'm not sorry I did it." When I told our boys afterwards about that they cried like babies, but, mind you, that is the spirit that is going to pull England through this war, and there isn't a man of us that doesn't think of that poor boy and his example every time we go into a fight: *Corporal Sam Haslett*.

### **The "Kiddies"**

The worst part, to my mind, was to see the plight of the poor women and children. English people at home cannot realize what these poor creatures suffered. We used to meet them on the road utterly worn out with walking and carrying their babies and the few small things that they had. They wept with joy on seeing us. It seemed grand to be a soldier. No matter how tired we were, it was almost a free fight as to who carried the "kiddy" and the bundle, and there was always a tin or two of our "bully" to spare. We made them spare it if there wasn't: *A Private of the Lancashire Regiment*.

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### **Finely Done**

When we were waiting for the order to go in I saw a cavalry sergeant who had been badly wounded three times and was still pegging away at it. As he was fighting I saw him go to a badly wounded corporal who was shouting to be taken out of the way of the line. The wounded sergeant bound up the other man's wound, and then sat him on his own horse and sent him back out of the way. Then I saw the sergeant limp along on foot as best he could after his regiment to fight again. I don't know what became of him, but I know I shall never see a finer thing as long as I live: *A Wounded Hussar*.

### **What McCabe Did**

McCabe helped me to dress my knee wound under a hail of shells and bullets. I had been lying there for half an hour when Mac came along. "Hullo," he said, "what's up?" "Rip up my trousers," I cried, "and help me to bind my knee." While we were getting on with the job the shells started to pepper about. I said, "Clear out, Mac, you'll get hit." He said, "After I've finished with you." He

then went after the ambulance men, but it was like looking for a bushel of gold. He did not return. I then made up my mind to crawl to safety, so I discarded my rifle and equipment, and with another fellow crawled about 600 yards back through a swede field: *Corporal Erler*.

### **Taking the Salute**

A troop train with a thousand Belgian soldiers came in. They looked terribly dirty, but awfully earnest. They seemed delighted to meet an Englishman, and always wanted to shake hands. I reckon I shook hands with a couple of hundred of them. When they saw an English officer they jumped to the salute. As they passed a major of one of the Scottish regiments who was lying on a stretcher, having been shot in the chest twice, and also other parts, they saluted him, too. The major, although he was very weak, cried to his orderly, "Hold me up. I can't take a salute lying down." His orderly told him he was too ill to move, but he persisted, and he was propped up, and acknowledged the salutes, with hardly sufficient strength to hold his hand to his forehead. It was a pathetic sight: *Anonymous*.

### **A Brave Sergeant**

We were in a very hot attack in defending a bridge. The Germans poured a very destructive fire into us; we were forced to give way, and had to retire across the bridge. There was practically no shelter, and during our retirement one of our officers was severely wounded. He would undoubtedly have fallen into the hands of the enemy but for the extreme bravery of Sergeant Cropp, who, perceiving the situation, gallantly ventured on to the bridge and, seizing the wounded lieutenant, placed him on his back. Instead of risking a journey across the shot-swept bridge, he decided, encumbered as he was, to swim the canal, which he did, and swam with the wounded officer out of the line of fire and into a place of safety: *A Scots Fusilier*.

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### **Officer and Gentleman**

About three in the afternoon, just as our artillery had got up ready to cover us, the Germans found our range with artillery, and down came the "coal-boxes." Near me was lying our brave captain mortally wounded, and as the shells burst he would occasionally open his eyes and call out—but 'twas very weak—"Stick it, Welsh, stick it." Many of the wounded managed to crawl up and down the firing line "dishing out" ammunition we were unable to use, so our brave lads stuck at it until our artillery got into action and put "paid" to the enemy's account. We had won! The "contemptible little army," are we? We made them eat their words. Out in that field were strewn thousands of German dead and wounded. They even piled them up and made barricades of their dead. Toward dusk, though we were still exposed to terrible shell fire, several of our lads volunteered to collect the wounded. Many got hit in doing so. Captain Haggard died that evening, his last words being, "Stick it, Welsh!" He died as he had lived—an officer and a gentleman: *Pte. C. Derry, Welsh Regiment*.

### **The Spirit of Old**

There is absolutely no doubt that our men are still animated by the spirit of old. I came on a couple of men of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who had been cut off at Mons. One was badly wounded, but his companion had stuck by him all the time in a country swarming with Germans, and though they had only a few biscuits between them they managed to pull through until we picked them up. I pressed the unwounded man to tell me how they managed to get through the four days on six biscuits, but he always got angry and told me to shut up. I fancy he went without anything, and gave the biscuits to the wounded man. They were offered shelter many times by the French peasants, but they were so afraid of bringing trouble on these kind folk that they would never accept shelter. One night they lay out in the open all through a heavy downpour, though there was a house at hand where they could have had shelter. Uhlans were on the prowl, and they would not think of compromising the French people, who would have been glad to help them: *Lance-Corpl. Edmondson, Royal Irish Regiment*.

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### **"Hallelujah!"**

We had been lying in the trenches firing for all we were worth. On my right, shoulder to shoulder, were two Salvationists. I remembered them as having held a meeting with some of us chaps about a week before. As we lay there with the bullets whistling round us these two were the coolest of the whole cool lot! After we had been fighting some time we had orders to fall back, and as we were getting away from the trenches one of the Salvationists was hit and fell. His chum didn't miss him until we had gone several hundred yards, and then he says, "Where's ----?" calling him by name. "I must go back and fetch him!" and off he hurried, braving the hail of shot and shell. I admired his bravery so much that I offered to go with him, but he said, "No, the Lord will protect me; I'll manage it." So I threw myself on the ground and waited. I saw him creep along for some yards, then run to cover; creep along, and take shelter again; and, finally, having found his chum, he picked him up and made a dash for safety! How the bullets fell around him! Into the shelter of some trees he went; out again, and in once more; and when he did get into the last piece of clearing I couldn't wait any longer, so I rushed forward to help him. Then I got hit. What do you think the brave fellow did? He just put his other arm around me and carried us both off. Darkness was fast coming on, and presently he laid us both down and found the wounds,

which he bandaged up with strips which he tore from his shirt. I shall never forget that terrible night: *An Anonymous Private*.

### **“A Rare Good One”**

Near our trenches there were a lot of wounded, and their cries for water were pitiful. In the trenches was a quiet chap of the Engineers, who could stand it no longer. He collected all the water-bottles he could lay hold of, and said he was going out. The air was thick with shell and rifle fire, and to show yourself at all was to sign your death-warrant. That chap knew it as well as we did, but that was not going to stop him. He got to the first man all right, and gave him a swig from a bottle. No sooner did he show himself than the Germans opened fire. After attending to the first man he crawled along the ground to others until he was about a quarter of a mile away from us. Then he stood up and zigzagged towards another batch of wounded, but that was the end of him. The German fire got hotter and hotter. He was hit badly, and with just a slight upward fling of his arms he dropped to earth like the hero he was. Later he was picked up with the wounded, but he was as dead as they make them out there. The wounded men, for whose sake he had risked and lost his life, thought a lot of him, and were greatly cut up at his death. One of them, who was hit so hard that he would never see another Sunday, said to me as we passed the Engineer chap, who lay with a smile on his white face, and had more bullets in him than would set a battalion of sharpshooters up in business for themselves, “He was a rare good one, he was. It’s something worth living for to have seen a deed like that, and now that I have seen it I don’t care what becomes of me.” That’s what we all felt about it: *A Corporal of the Bedfordshire Regiment*.

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## **XVII. THE MAN AMID WAR**

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*War, that mad game the world so loves to play.*

SWIFT’S “Ode to Sir William Temple.”

*The combat deepens. On, ye brave,  
Who rush to glory or the grave.*

CAMPBELL’S “Hohenlinden.”

*But there is neither East nor West, border, nor breed nor birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face, tho’ they come from the ends of the earth!*

KIPLING’S “Ballad of East and West.”

Everybody is brave out here, but we all pass the biscuit on to the flying-men. If ever men won a V.C. they have: *An Infantry Private*.

### **“All’s Well”**

It’s all “Vive l’Anglais” where we go. The villagers look on us as their saviours. We all feel very cheerful and all have the one idea that we must win, so as long as we are not downhearted. “All’s well” will be the cry: *An Unnamed Private*.

### **The Beginning**

You have a sort of want-to-go-home-to-your-mother feeling at the start, but that soon goes when you get into your stride. When your pal gets wiped out at your side you feel anxious to get your own back: *Private W. A. Cast*.

### **Holed!**

My hat has six holes punctured by shrapnel. One shot carried half of the badge away, another caught the wire rim and doubled it up like a hat-pin to five inches. I have had up to a sovereign offered for it, but I am sticking to it, you bet: *Pte. Cawley, 3rd Coldstream Guards*.

### **Jammy!**

Now about this jam. If you get a big pot you’ll carry it along, and like as not get it smashed. Then your whole kit’s mucked up. Likewise if you get it in a tin you’ll open it and take what you want, but you’ll have no lid to put on, so you’ll leave the rest behind: *Pte. Moss, of the Hussars*.

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## Next for Shaving

One daring thing I saw on the Aisne was done by a man of the Buffs. He was surprised by the Germans, and the only weapon he had to meet the attack of one who came at him with a rifle was a half-brick. He let fly with it, and caught the "sausage" on the head, bowling him clean over. Then he picked up his rifle and coolly took his position, calling out, "Next for shaving": *Pte. G. Barton, Royal Engineers.*

## A Strange Meeting

A few years ago I was a delegate for the I.L.P. at the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart, and stayed at the house of a German, Hans Woesschhoeft by name. After the battle of the Marne I was with a force pursuing the Germans, and one day engaged in bayonet fighting a German cavalryman. Looking at him closer, I recognized my host of happier days. He recognized me, and we had not the heart to fight further. He saved the situation by surrendering: *Corpl. Hayhurst, Shropshire Light Infantry.*

## "All We Want"

We are still getting on in the pink of health, and have all we want. My chum, —, wishes to be remembered to you; he says he doesn't want to come back again to England. We are amongst some of the finest people I have ever met, and they will give us anything we want. We can get plenty of tobacco here, so will you please send me a pipe? I shall get it some time. Well, dear, I can't say more now, so will wish you good-bye for the present. Tell the missis I wish to be remembered to her. I will close with heaps of love: *A Sergeant of the 3rd Hussars.*

## Dare-Devils

The army is full of dare-devils who are never happy unless they are risking their lives in some extravagant way. Two men of the Leinster Regiment had an argument about each other's running powers. To settle the dispute they had a hundred yards sprint outside the trenches under German fire all the time. Both had some narrow escapes, but got through without a scratch. They wanted to do it over again, but an officer stopped them: *Pte. R. Collier, Sherwood Foresters.*

## An Evil Eye!

You can see that the German hates you by the evil look in his eye. It isn't safe to go near him unless you have a bayonet in your hand. I was trying to do something for one wounded German, and the next thing I saw was his mate from behind him coming for me with a bayonet. He was wounded, too, but he thought he was going to get a stick at me. But I stuck first, and he did not want more than one, I can tell you. You have got some funny jobs to do in fighting: *A Private of the Coldstream Guards.*

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## Signed the Pledge!

Wine is offered us instead of water by the French people, but we are refusing it. Some of the hardest drinkers in the regiment have signed the pledge for the war. Some of the French tell of miraculous escapes. One man was holding a glass of water to a wounded comrade when a bullet shattered the glass. In another case a man came out of action with two bullets in his pocket. One had travelled through a neighbour's body before being spent, and the other had struck a cigarette-case and had been deflected: *A Private of Withington.*

## The Balm of Baccy

We are issued tobacco, but those who haven't pipes find it difficult to get a smoke, as cigarette-papers are very scarce. As much as five francs has been offered for a 1d. packet. Thank goodness I have a pipe. It is really marvellous the amount of comfort and enjoyment one derives from a smoke. During the cold nights, when unable to sleep through being on some duty, sitting round the old camp fire thinking, the old pipe of 'bacca has a very soothing effect. There is something missing when one is without it: *Sergt. Ibbitson, Cyclist Company.*

## His Spare Time

In the haste of the retreat the Germans abandoned and we picked up bicycles, gramophones, concertinas, accordions, civilian clothes, and provisions of all kinds, and what not. There were a lot of dead Germans behind them. One officer was sitting quite natural, with his head resting on his hands. Another chap had apparently been a bit of a carver, for he had just finished carving a doll's house, with furniture complete. He had evidently been doing it in his spare time under fire: *Pte. Trobe, Royal Artillery.*

## Wet, But Exciting

I have a month's growth of whiskers, and I look horrid. We are all the same. I have not had a

chance of a wash for a week. The last wash I had was after twenty-four chaps had washed in one bucket. At the time of writing I am soaking wet, and am waiting for the sun to dry me. We are all ready for anything. We have lost thirty of our men. Thank God, I am spared, but I am ready to die for the old country. I have been soaking wet for a week, but we are on the move—too exciting to notice anything: *Pte. T. Percy, Army Veterinary Corps.*

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### **“Nearer, my God, to Thee”**

It was raining like blazes and a cold, wretched night. We all knew we were going into action in the morning, and we stood together while shelter was found for us. Suddenly somebody started to sing “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” and the whole battalion took it up, and we sang it right through. Next we had the “Glory Song,” and it was impressive. We went into action the next day, and on the following night twenty-five or thirty of our men who had sung those hymns were buried, and an officer who read the service was in tears: *Pte. Baker, Coldstream Guards.*

### **Happy all the Day**

It’s a fine sight to see us on the march, swinging along the roads as happy as schoolboys and singing all the old songs we can think of. The tunes are sometimes a bit out, but nobody minds so long as we’re happy. As we pass through the villages the French come out to cheer us and bring us food and fruit. Cigarettes we get more of than we know what to do with. Some of them are rotten, so we save them for the German prisoners, who would smoke anything they can lay hands on. Flowers also we get plenty of, and we are having the time of our lives: *Corporal J. Bailey.*

### **“Supreme Beings”**

The roads are simply cruel. But the worst is we cannot get a decent smoke. I am in the best of health, what with the feeding and the open-air life, the stars being our covering for the last few weeks. We have seen some of the most lovely country imaginable. Some of the hills were four miles long, with about eight S-bends in them. The people over here go half mad when we go through the villages and towns. They throw fruit and flowers at us, give us wine, and goodness knows what. If we happen to stop they run out to shake hands and hang round us as if we were supreme beings: *Driver L. Finch.*

### **“Who Goes There?”**

I was posted on guard, and after about an hour I began to feel sleepy, so I went to stand beside a wagon, when suddenly I heard a noise. Then I shouted, “Halt! who goes there?” But there was no reply. Again I shouted. Still there was no response. Then I saw a figure move about five yards away from me, but as it was so very dark I could not tell whether it was one of our own men or not, so I shouted for the last time, and as there was no reply I fired. The guard turned out and ran to the place, bringing back the victim, shot through the shoulder. He was a German spy: *Driver Renniberg, Army Service Corps.*

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### **“Mum’s the Word”**

Wish I could describe all I have seen to you; but have not the time, for one thing, and not allowed to give anything of importance in our letters, of course. The French are fine, generous people. Have seen and conversed as well as possible with their wounded, as we have passed some quantity on our way in trains, and German prisoners with them. From what I have seen of them so far, especially those returning from the front, they are fine fellows. Taking them all round, I believe they are bigger than our fellows. The Germans appear similar to ours, although I could only see them by lantern light for a few seconds as they were lying down in railway goods wagons—they may have been wounded. The French appear to be treating them well. This is a beautiful country—rather flat what I have seen, but well-cultivated soil similar to round Cambridge: *Private H. J. Charity.*

### **The Impossible Order**

We enjoy the hard life all right because it’s full up with excitement, and we are doing our little bit towards squaring off that big account with the Germans. They’re not doing the fine things they promised to do, and it must make them sick to think of their failure to wipe out our army, for you can take it from me that they had their orders direct from the Kaiser that the British force was to be punished at any cost for daring to come over here without his orders. There’s been punishment enough, God knows, but it hasn’t all been on the one side. There’s many a German could tell of being punished for all he was worth, and they won’t be in a hurry to deal out punishment to us again: *Private E. Wood.*

### **The Valiant Spirit**

After marching and fighting nearly every day we are all feeling like veterans now, and we are ready to keep the ball rolling for just as long as it takes to give the Kaiser’s lads a lesson in soldiering that is likely to be remembered in their precious Fatherland so long as there are

Germans alive. We are not kidding ourselves about what we have before us, but we are bracing ourselves for it, and we will certainly put our best foot forward and get our backs into the work as you would expect British soldiers to do. This is going to be the biggest thing we've ever taken on, and there'll be many an English home in mourning before it's through; but you simply must make up your minds to face it as bravely as we are facing it, because that's the only way to win, and we're out to win at any price. We can't and we won't allow the Germans to get the best of us in this fight, and they will have to trample on our dead bodies first before they get a chance of trampling on our flag, as they say they will. The dead won't all be Britons, and we have no doubt about who's going to win, if it takes us a century to do it: *Private S. Hobson*.

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### **Spared!**

In the hospital there were twenty wounded, including three Germans, in charge of an English doctor. After our troops had retired to their base, some distance in the rear, the hospital was raided by a party of fifty Germans. They were all more or less under the influence of drink, and they demanded that we should tell them where our regiment was. Not one of us would give the game away, and they thereupon said they would shoot us all. They commenced flourishing their revolvers and shouting, and I can tell you that I began to shake. I was really afraid then, and I thought our numbers were up. But the unexpected happened. The three wounded Germans implored their comrades to spare us, pointing out that they had been most kindly treated by the English doctor: *A Private of the Hussars*.

### **Jolly Boys are We!**

I am sitting on the grass in a huge encampment of some thousands of men who, despite all kinds of adverse circumstances, are still as jolly as the proverbial skylark. It is quite remarkable to see the philosophical way in which Tommy takes everything. Here is a little example which may, perhaps, be amusing to some of the Merrie Villagers next Sunday. A huge field, inches thick in mud, nice clay soil, which hangs on to you like grim death; wet shirts, due to a steady downpour all night; no tea for breakfast, owing to the rain having put all fires out; and the troops sitting as best they can on their waterproof sheets on wet earth, doing what? Why, singing, at the top of their voices, "It's a long, long way to Tipperary!": *Bombdr. Barron, of Finsbury Park*.

### **The "Born Grouzers"**

Just now we suffer more from the plague of spies than we did from flies in South Africa. "Kill that spy" is a cry as necessary as "Kill that fly" at home. Scarcely a day passes without the arrest of Germans or Austrians engaged in their low trade. They get short shrift. A chap can't be sorry for them; they are such dirty dogs. They are going about circulating lies of all kinds. One of their yarns is to tell of whole regiments wiped out. Sometimes it is a French regiment and sometimes a British one. One of the kidney tried it on in a café here to-night. He made free with the name of a regiment actually quartered here. When we had done with him he had practical proof that this scurvy German method of killing off your enemies is only satisfactory so long as you can avoid a meeting with the "killed and wounded." We are all comfortable here, and there is no shortage of any kind, so if you hear from the born "grouzers" of hardships don't believe them: *Corporal G. Robbins*.

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### **Well Tended**

I was about the last man that got hit, and I got a proper one too. An explosive bullet got me behind the knee, and blew away my knee and part of thigh and shin. I lay there for a time in the forest with no one but the Germans, who were not at all unkind to me; they gave me water and wine to drink, and two of their Red Cross bandaged my leg up temporarily until the ambulance came along about ten hours later. Well, dad, if I ever prayed I prayed during that time; I was in sheer agony the whole time. Eventually the ambulance came along and brought me back (a prisoner, of course) to a Roman Catholic chapel, which was converted into a temporary hospital, and I lay there till I was brought out to a château, where two German doctors amputated my leg. They did their best for me, but in a rough way. I was there for about ten days with hardly any food, as they hadn't it for themselves, only dry bread and black coffee. Our own people released us, and took all the Germans who were there prisoners: *Sergt. O'Dwyer, Irish Guards*.

### **"Archibald" a Drawback**

The Germans have a topsides gun we call "Archibald." He shoots extraordinarily well on some days and damn badly on others. They always get our height correct, but so far have brought nobody down. Several machines have been hit by his shrapnel bullets and bits of his shell. He also flies a sort of parachute which he uses to range on. The other day we pulled his leg properly by getting between him and a bright sun so that he could not see us properly. He sent up his parachute, height exactly correct, fuse well timed, and proceeded to pepper it no end, all about half a mile away from us. Once I heard his beastly shells whistling above the noise of the engine when we came out of the clouds, so he must have been jolly near. He has a twin brother named "Cuthbert," who is a large howitzer. His first shot is good, but the remainder always miles behind. "Archibald" certainly is a drawback, as one has to be rather careful to circumvent him, as the blighter's shooting has improved wonderfully: *An Army Airman*.

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## “Here Comes the Last”

It is amusing to hear some soldiers speak when they come down the line, and it is becoming quite a joke to say, “Here comes the last of such-and-such a regiment,” for invariably they claim to be the last—all the others are cut up. It is no doubt the case that some battalions have been severely handled. I met one of the Dorsets—but here hangs a tale. You will know the old bookshop in Churchwallgate. On the day I left Macclesfield I called in to wish the bookseller good-bye. It was mentioned incidentally that he had a relative who had been called up; I had met him on one occasion, and would I be likely to see him again? Of course this was highly improbable, but I did meet him. After we had retired from — I jumped up on a truck-load of biscuits along with others, and said not a word, being too busy admiring the magnificent beauty of the country in this district. At last we talked of things in general, of the inferior rifle-shooting of the Germans, but with respect of his shrapnel, and I mentioned Macclesfield, hoping to be back at Christmas. A man of the Dorsets cocked his ears. “Macclesfield! Put it there, Corporal,” he said, holding out his hand. “Put it there. I have been weighing you up for the last ten minutes, wondering where I had seen you before. Now I know.” This was the man whom I never expected to see, and we met under difficult conditions on a truck racing hell for leather through a country which a few days later was the grave of many a German soldier: *Pte. Dickenson, Army Service Corps.*

### Saved by a Curé

A smart young corporal accompanied me to reconnoitre, and we went too far ahead, and were cut off in a part of the country thick with Uhlans. As we rode in the direction of — two wounded men were limping along, both with legs damaged, one from the Middlesex and the other Lancashire Fusiliers, and so we took them up. The men were hungry and tattered to shreds with fighting, but in fine spirits. We soon came across a small village, and I found the curé a grand sportsman and full of pluck and hospitality. He seemed charmed to find a friend who was English, and told me that the Germans were dressed in the uniforms of British soldiers, which they took from the dead and from prisoners in order to deceive French villagers, who in many places in that district had welcomed these wolves in sheep’s clothing. We were warned that the enemy would be sure to track us up to the village. The curé said he could hide the two wounded men in the crypt of his church, and put up beds for them. It has a secret trapdoor, and was an ancient treasure-house of a feudal lord, whose castle we saw in ruins at the top of the hill close by. Then he hid away our saddlery and uniforms in the roof of a barn, and insisted upon our making a rest-chamber of the tower of his church, which was approached by a ladder, which we were to pull up to the belfry as soon as we got there. He smuggled in wine and meat and bread and cakes, fruit and cigarettes, with plenty of bedding pulled up by a rope. We slept soundly, and the owls seemed the only other tenants, who resented our intrusion. No troops passed through the village that night. In the morning the curé came round at six o’clock, and we heard him say Mass. After that we let down the ladder, and he came up with delicious hot chocolate and a basket of rolls and butter. Our horses he had placed in different stables a mile apart, and put French “fittings” on them, so as to deceive the enemy: *A Non-Commissioned Officer in the Dragoons.*

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### After the Battle

We, whose work commences only after the battle, have learned to know things that baffle description. Waiting all day long in more or less sheltered positions is sad enough: with the noise of rifle fire and the roaring of the guns we cannot but constantly think of the poor fellows who are being hit. The din of the battle grows less, the night draws on, the moment has now come for us to do our task. With acetylene lamps to light us, we cross the battlefield in all directions and pick up the wounded. As to the dead, alas! how numerous they are! We find them petrified in their last attitude in their last *élan*. And the crying and moaning of the wounded scattered in the cornfields and among the damp meadows! I know of nothing more poignant than that. The bullets nearly always go right through; wounds in the chest or in the abdomen are almost certainly mortal. Fortunately, such wounds are comparatively few in number. German shells are more noisy than efficient, and their splinters generally only cause small wounds. I must add that the bullets of our rifles are as deadly as those of the Germans, while our shells are far more dangerous than theirs. The poor devils who are hit by them are to be pitied. A good many Germans allow themselves to be made prisoners; they know we will treat them humanely: *A Member of the Ambulance Corps.*

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## XVIII. THE COMMON TASK

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*The land we from our fathers had in trust,  
And to our children will transmit or die:  
This is our maxim, this our piety;  
And God and nature say that it is just.  
That which we would perform in arms—we must!*

WORDSWORTH’S “Motherland.”

*Glory we count of lesser worth  
Than wife and babe and hearth and home;  
Theirs is the mandate speeding forth  
Our steps of thunder on the foam;  
For them we fight, for them we stand,  
Yea, and for faith 'twixt land and land.*

WILLIAM WATSON'S "Ten Men Forsworn."

Give my love to Patrick-street, Waterford, for that is where the best girl on earth lives, and tell Ireland that we're doing our duty and that Thomas Moran will have another go at the Germans directly the doctor permits: *Pte. T. Moran, East Lancashire Regiment.*

### **Busy!**

We have had no time for anything, for when we have a minute to spare I have to give my clothes a scrub, and they don't half get in a state. I have only got one pair of socks, and I have to wait while they dry before I can wear them: *Pte. Chapman, 3rd Hussars.*

### **"Really Good"**

I am well, and just about having the time of my life. It's really good always being on the move, seeing fresh sights every day; and if there should be a few Germans on the move—why, it only increases the fun, and throws a little more excitement into the work: *Corpl. R. Carton, Royal Field Artillery.*

### **A Great Time!**

We are having good sport out here. I have got as good a heart now as I had when I left home. I tell you there is nothing better than having a few shells and bullets buzzing round you as long as you don't stop one. We are having some fine feeds out here—ducks, chickens, rabbits, and bags of fruit: *Trooper G. W. Maddocks, 5th Cavalry Brigade.*

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### **In Mourning**

Every now and again our vans go out to aid in collecting and dealing with the poor fellows who are wounded. The dead, of course, are beyond earthly aid, but the chaplain reads some prayers as the bodies are interred. Burials take place at all sorts of queer places—by the roadside, in farmyards, etc. It is awful to see the devastation which has been wrought: *Pte. Coombe, Army Medical Corps.*

### **Consolations**

Except for a bad cold and having lost all my belongings, I am none the worse. The thing I am sorry about is that it all happened so soon and sudden, and I hardly had time to look round. But I am ready for the next "Day excursion to Berlin." I have one consolation, and that is I killed two Uhlans and wounded one before they captured me: *A Trooper of the Dragoon Guards.*

### **All Smiles!**

Much amusement was caused during yesterday afternoon by some remarkable legends chalked up on some transport wagons passing through. Such sentences as "This way to Berlin!" "Kaiser killers," "Kaiser's coffin," "Vive la France!" and sundry other information marked up in chalk by the dusty, but jovial travellers, caused people to stop and smile: *Lance-Corpl. F. E. Hunt, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.*

### **The Pot Boiling**

I am very well; plenty to eat, and tobacco. We are in action in a wood, guns nicely under cover, and we shall be, too, shortly, for it is getting dark. We have made snug little shelters for ourselves, and are quite "comfy." The pot is on the fire, and it won't be long before we have a good feed. I hope to be home for Christmas dinner, so have a good spread: *Bombdr. Earp, Royal Artillery.*

### **The Old Horse**

I came down to the rest camp with others to get a fresh horse. My old horse was shot under me. I was sorry, too, for he was a splendid animal, and it is solely due to him that I am alive to write this letter. We had to make a run for it, and I can tell you that those with slow horses did not get far. Things are going very well indeed with us now, although they are about five, and in some cases twenty, to one. But we can generally manage to thrash them: *Corpl. R. Greenwood, 18th Hussars.*



I have given up collecting pieces of shells for souvenirs, having found myself a veritable Krupp's scrap heap. Spies seem to be the chief excitement here, and the old motto has been altered to read, "Catch that spy!" Two days ago a haystack was found in the interior of which was a complete telegraph office working by underground cable to the German lines, and thus the Germans were kept acquainted with our movements and the disposition of our artillery: *A Telegraphist, 1st Army Headquarters.*

### **Worthy of Tom Brown**

Another chap tried to get some bread at a farm. After he had made all sorts of queer signs the woman seemed to understand, and said, "Oui, oui, M'sieur," rushed back into the house and brought back a bundle of hay! There was a terrific roar of laughter from the troops. The nonplussed look on the woman's face and the "fed-up" expression on the chap's made a picture worthy of the pencil of poor old Tom Brown: *Bombdr. E. Cressy, Royal Field Artillery.*

### **Wonderfully Popular**

The troops are wonderfully popular, and I think a lot of it is due to their kindness to the kiddies and animals, and also to their unbounded enthusiasm and good spirits. There's no grouching, and there is nothing but what fun is made of. No one has seen the soldier at his best unless he has seen him here. Grimy, unshaved, his khaki full of grease marks, and tired out, yet full of life and fun, his sole luxury a good wash—grub, sleep, everything goes to blazes if there's water to be had for a wash, but, good Lord, you should see our towels: *A Sergeant of the Army Service Corps.*

### **Messing Together**

Every day we receive jam, bacon or ham, bread, tinned meat (commonly known as bully-beef), biscuits, and cheese. We do not get a lot, but enough to keep us in trim and free from want. We also get plenty of dry tea and sugar. It is quite amusing at first to see the lads making their tea, a thing they are doing all day long. On this game the boys generally get together in groups of sixes, draw their rations in bulk, and mess together. You ought to see their cooking utensils. They use water-cans, pails, in fact, anything that holds a decent amount of water: *Sergt. Clark, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.*

### **"Merry and Bright"**

I see you are all excited about getting us plenty of socks, but Heaven only knows when we shall get a chance to wear them. I haven't been out of my boots for a fortnight. It would be much more to the point if you were to send us men to give the Germans "socks." "Merry and bright" is still our motto. Don't get downhearted, no matter what you hear at home. Some of these days things will come all right. Keep your eyes wide open, and you will have a big surprise sooner than you think. We're all right, and the Germans will find that out sooner than you at home: *Private J. Willis.*

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### **Next, Please!**

I have never seen our lads so cheery as they are under great trials. You couldn't help being proud of them if you saw them lying in the trenches cracking jokes or smoking while they take pot-shots at the Germans.... We have very little spare time now, but what we have we pass by smoking concerts, sing-songs, and story-telling. Sometimes we have football for a change, with a German helmet for a ball, and to pass the time in the trenches have invented the game of guessing where the next German shell will drop. Sometimes we have bets on it, and the man who guesses correctly the greatest number of times takes the stakes: *Sapper Bradle.*

### **That "Interest"**

We are at present living in a school, and it seems funny to see so many soldiers' beds on the floor. Our bedding (don't laugh) is one waterproof sheet and our coat for a blanket; and still we are all as happy as sand-boys. We have been here some time now enjoying a rest, and at the same time getting fitted out again for the front. As you can imagine by reading the papers, nearly everything we had—horses, carts, wagons, cooks, and Maxims—were all blown in the air by German shells, but I am thankful to say we have got over all that, and shan't forget to pay out Johnnie German with interest the first time we have the luck to meet him again, which we all hope won't be long, as the sooner they are crushed the sooner we will get home again: *A Private of Keith, N.B.*

### **Sad and Glad**

I am having a very interesting but a jolly hard time. About fourteen days ago I was chased four miles by German Lancers. They were on horses, and I was on my machine. The road was so bad they nearly had me, but I stuck to it and got away. It has been raining "cats and dogs" the last three days, and I am wet through, but happy and contented and very well. I shall have loads to

tell you when I get home—tales, I fear, of pain, rapine, suffering, and all the horrors of a great war; but all the same I have some funny experiences to relate as well: *Special Dispatch-Rider A. R. Gurney*.

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### **Unexpected!**

On the Marne we spent two days on a long mine out towards the German lines, and just when we were getting to the close of our job we heard pickaxes going as fast and as hard as you like, and then the wall of clay before us gave way, showing a party of Germans at the same game! You never saw men more astonished in your life. "Fancy meeting you," was written all over their faces, and they hadn't quite recovered from their shock when we pounced on them. We had a pretty sharp scrap down there indeed, but we got the best of it, though we had four of our chaps laid out. One German devil was just caught in time with a fuse which he was going to apply with the mad idea of blowing us all up! *Sapper T. Gilhooly, Royal Engineers*.

### **Tempting Grapes**

In the last fight we were posted near to a wall over which hung the most tempting grapes you ever set eyes on. When you've lain for nearly a day in a hot sun without bite or sup, grapes seem more tempting than ever. Though the Germans seemed to concentrate their whole fire on the corner where those grapes were, most of us couldn't resist the temptation and risk of stealing out to get them. What you had to do was to crawl along the top of the trenches like a big snail, and then, when you got there, make a big spring up and catch what you could before the German shots caught you. We weren't always successful, and there's many a lad of ours owes his life or his wounds to touching that forbidden fruit: *An Irish Guardsman*.

### **"Our Menu!"**

We were on a convoy of ammunition and food, and had to go about 150 miles. We had got seventy odd miles, when we were sighted by Uhlans. There were about 100 of them, and fifty of our men, and we got in a very bad position, but we got out with the loss of a few drivers, and we never lost any of our convoy. This is our menu: Monday: breakfast, eggs; dinner, roast beef; tea, cake; supper, fish. Tuesday: breakfast, eggs; dinner, roast beef; tea, cake; supper, eels. Wednesday: breakfast, steak; dinner, rabbit; tea, biscuits; supper, eels. Thursday: breakfast, liver; dinner, pork; tea, kippers; supper, stew. Friday: breakfast, beef; dinner, ham; tea, jam; supper, stew. Saturday: breakfast, bacon; dinner, rabbit; tea, ducks; supper, eggs. Sunday: breakfast, eggs and bacon; dinner, roast beef; tea, tea. After Sunday tea we all go to the pictures (I *don't* think): *Driver Ellis, Army Service Corps*.

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### **Trust Thomas!**

We were all of us hungry yesterday. To-day I have been out about a mile and have returned with some carrots, onions, and potatoes. These have been peeled, cut up, and are now boiling in a pail with six tins of corned beef added. A feed is what we contemplate, and a feed we will have. We are all looking forward to a profound gorge, and I, for one, have moist lips at thought of the meal within a commandeered pail! But the bucket of stew is done! It's fine! Excellent!! Yes! All that because it is rare on campaigns such as this. We very seldom see a cooked meal. It is usually bread and biscuit, tinned beef or tinned jam, bacon or cheese. Trust Thomas Atkins to look after himself, as you trust him to break the back of Kaiserism: *Pte. A. E. Basham, Bedfordshire Regiment*.

### **Night Duty**

You ask me what night duty in a surgical ward on active service is like. Well, imagine a huge square room, holding fifty beds, at present occupied by thirty-three patients, the rest having been sent to the base hospital for convalescents. We mount duty at 8 o'clock, and finish at 7 A.M. next morning. Our work during the night consists of attending to their personal wants, such as—one would like a drink of hot milk, another cannot sleep, he is in pain—a shrapnel wound in the thigh, and, unfortunately, he cannot turn over. So you have to look at the dressing, see that everything is O.K., start a bit of a yarn about anything, until he or you get fed up. Get him a drink, and, in all probability, the next time you have a look at him he is asleep: *A Hospital Orderly*.

### **Sea Echoes**

We get now and again odd stories of what our tars are doing, and we were mighty pleased over that dust-up in the North Sea. We kept singing "Boys of the Bulldog Breed" till we thought our throats would crack, and it was taken up all along the line by our men. It's not so risky as you would think on the battlefield. We were under heavy fire for two days before one of us was hit; I know other regiments had similar experiences. You're all right so long as you keep under cover, but where the losses come in is when you have to retire with all those fiendish guns blazing away at you in the open. Then you can't help being hit, and there's always their cavalry to look out for, though it isn't of much account against men with the bayonet. They have more than they know what to do with, and they're always turning up where they're least expected: *Corporal W.*

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## The Motor-Man

There are two of us in charge of each motor, because the roads being very bad our hands and wrists get awfully tired holding the wheel, and we relieve each other. Ours is most important work, for it has been said an army marches on its stomach—that is to say, an army is not much use if it is hungry; therefore, if I have food wagons attached to my motor I must be on the spot when wanted—with ammunition it is just the same, of course. When our ammunition wagons get empty other full ones are brought up and ours are filled. We never go back to fetch anything; so it is the fighting line all the time. When the battle is over—and some of them have been very long, lasting over days and days—we get what rest and sleep we can, and have a sound meal. If we have been fortunate enough we have had sundry naps during lulls in the fighting, and have been able to get our food in the same manner: *A Salvationist Motor man, Royal Field Artillery.*

## An Interpreter

I now coil myself up in the "O.P." corner of the stage of the municipal theatre. It is curious to see by the dim light of the pilot lights forty or fifty men sleeping on the boards with their rifles stacked between them. The curtain is up, but the auditorium is dark and empty, for what is probably the most realistic and interesting scene that has ever been set between its proscenium. I am surrounded by a crowd of French people of every age and of all shapes and sizes. The fact that I am writing a letter seems to strike them as an incident of extraordinary interest. "Here's one writing a letter," they call to their friends, and they all flock round. The people of this town press round us when we feed, sleep, wash, dress, and, in fact, at every moment of the day. Until we were quartered in the theatre some of the more modest soldiers were compelled to wait till it was dark before they could summon up sufficient courage to change their clothes. One old lady has just come up and tested the quality of the material of my tunic and has moved off nodding her head in approbation. Their interest in our welfare is practical, nevertheless: *Pte. F. J. St. Aubyn, Interpreter.*

## A Proper Adventure

We saw a small body of Germans, and, having nothing better to do, we were told to go and capture them. There were thirty, and they all gave in except one, who made a rush for it right back past our convoy. Two of us went after him. The men on the lorries fired, but they were afraid of hitting us. He led us through the village, and turned up a back lane into a sort of builder's yard. In that yard was a pit of soft lime, and we were all running so fast that we did not see it. It looked like sand. In he falls. I am following; in I goes; can't stop in time; up to our waists. This bloke makes a grab at me; we have a struggle; we are going in further, gun and all. The other man is shouting, "Why don't you shoot him?" but I couldn't. The barrel was choked with lime. Then he spit in my face. That done it. I hit him just a tap with the butt end of my rifle on the napper, and down he went. Meanwhile my pal had gone for help. They fetched planks, ladders, and all sorts of things. At last they pulled me out by sticking my head and shoulders through the rungs. You should have seen me when I did get out—a very pretty sight. When the women saw me they tore all the things off me and threw pails of water over me and thoroughly dowsed me. One woman gave me an old skirt to put on, and I marched back like that. As far as I know, that "sausage" is there now, as he did not wake up after that tap for luck: *An Infantry Private.*

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## "Culture" for Them

The Germans are great on night attacks, but they soon found out that they had to be out very early if they wanted to catch us napping. One night we got a hint that something might be looked for, so we made preparations to give them a very nice reception when they paid their early morning call. Strong parties of picked shots were thrown out all along the line towards the German trenches and their orders were to lie in wait until the Germans came up to drive back the pickets. Just when we were getting impatient and wanting to shout, "Hurry up! Hurry up!" like they do in the music halls when the turns are slow at coming on, rifles began to crack in front, and the pickets fell back more quickly than usual. That was our chance. The Germans came on like the great big brave chaps they are when they're twenty to one, and we let them come until the head of their force was level with a tree that had been marked for range. "Now!" the officer in command whispered, and we gave it them right where they carry their rations after dinner. We poured another volley into them, and then went after them with the bayonets. They beat us easily in the sprinting; besides, we had orders not to venture too far from camp, so we came back and lay down to wait for the next turn. They came back again, and when they got to the tree they stopped to look around. They got the same old sauce as before, and they were off again. The entertainment wasn't altogether over, for half an hour later a big body of Germans falling back from another little surprise on our left walked right into us. We blazed right into them, and they didn't wait to ask what sort of culture it was that made it possible to grow rifles in the wood at night-time: *A Lance-Corporal of the East Yorkshire Regiment.*

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## Cooking no Joke

I daresay you wonder how we go on about our cooking. When we were in column we had a cook for every sub-section. Every evening, or when we arrived at our billet, rations were drawn. A sub-section of forty men would draw about eight to twelve pounds of cheese, nine or ten pounds of bacon, about one and a half to two pounds of tea, two to three pounds of sugar, and, if there was bread, about sixteen loaves, each weighing about two pounds, or two 56 lb. boxes of biscuits, forty tins of bully beef, or twenty-eight pounds of fresh meat. I cooked for three weeks, and I can assure you it is no joke to be cook for forty men and not know much about the work. I will give an idea of a day's work as cook. We had as a rule *réveillé* at 3 A.M. or 4 A.M. I would get up half an hour earlier and start the fire. The water would boil within twenty minutes, and I put the tea and sugar in. The men would afterwards use the fire themselves for frying. Directly breakfast was over I filled the dixies again and kept them ready for dinner. Some of the fellows would come in and would peel potatoes and carrots. I cut the meat up, or, if there was no fresh meat, I opened tins of bully beef as a substitute. I put this on the fire two or three hours before dinner so as to ensure it being done properly. In the afternoon rations were drawn. I had to cut them up, and it wants some judgment to cut a small piece of bacon or cheese for forty hungry men. But it was always done somehow. Tea was ready from four to five o'clock. Milk was got where possible, in addition to eggs and butter. I was fed up with it after three weeks and handed it over. It is different in the battery I am in here. The corporal draws the rations and cuts them up. We generally have bacon for breakfast. We fry it in our saucepan together and soak the bread in the fat; it goes down good: *Gunner Southern, Royal Horse Artillery.*

### Let Down Lightly

One night—there were about ten of us—we were surprised to find a light in an empty farmhouse, and were still more surprised to find sounds of revelry coming out through the window. We peeped in, and there were about fifty Germans all over the shop, drinking, and eating, and smoking, and generally trying to look as if they were having a jolly old time. It was a dare-devil of an Irishman who suggested that we ought to give the Germans a little surprise, and we were all in with him. Doing our best to look fierce, and create the impression that we had at least a brigade behind us, we flung open the door without any ceremony. Our first rush was for the passage where most of the Germans had stacked their rifles, and from there we were able to cover the largest party in any one room. They were so taken aback that they made very little resistance. The only chap who showed any fight at all was a big fellow, who had good reason to fear us, for he had escaped the day before, after being arrested as a spy. He whipped out a revolver, and some of his chums drew swords, but we fired into them, and they threw up their hands, after the little one had sent a revolver bullet through my arm. We fastened them up securely, collected all the smokes and grub they had not touched, and marched them off to the camp. There was a nice how-d'ye-do when we got back, for the sound of firing so close by had alarmed the whole camp, and we were called to account for our behaviour. I think they were inclined to let us down lightly, because of the prisoners, particularly the spy chap; but we had no business to be out of barracks that night, and we'll probably have some mark of official displeasure chalked up against us: *Pte. F. Lewis, 1st South Staffs.*

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## XIX. MATTERS IN GENERAL

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*Come all the world against her,  
England yet shall stand.*

A. C. SWINBURNE.

*Vain, mightiest fleets of iron framed;  
Vain, those all-shattering guns,  
Unless proud England keep, untamed,  
The strong heart of her sons.  
So, let his name through Europe ring—  
A man of mean estate,  
Who died as firm as Sparta's king,  
Because his soul was great.*

SIR F. H. DOYLE'S "Private of the Buffs."

We run a series of concerts each evening round a big camp fire, and I am always the first to start them off. There are three French girls who come down and sing for us, but they are not as good as you at singing: *A Private of the A.M.C.*

### The Kilt

Most of the Highlanders are hit in the legs. It is because of tartan trews and hose, which are

more visible at a distance than any other part of their dress. Bare calves also show up in sunlight: *Private P. Barry.*

### **Proper Officers**

Our officers don't grab the best for themselves like the German brutes. The other night, in the wet and cold—and it was really cold—three of our officers turned out of a snug big bedroom in a farm to make way for four of our privates who were done up with cold and fatigue: *Pte. Watts, Cheshire Regiment.*

### **Scented!**

Soap is unknown out here, but luck had it that I found a German haversack the other day. It contained, amongst numerous useless things, two sticks of shaving soap (scented). Now all the troops are chipping me for using scented soap on active service. I don't mind—it's soap: *Pte. Revis, 4th Middlesex Regiment.*

### **Bottles All the Way**

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Some of the towns we passed through suggested that there had been a battle of bottles rather than a battle of bullets. The streets were thickly strewn with bottles, champagne bottles and bottles that had contained the modest vin ordinaire. In those respects the Germans do themselves well: *Bombdr. Jamieson, Royal Artillery.*

### **Brain and Muscle**

The French are fighting hard all round us with a grit and a go that will carry them through. Have you ever seen a little man fighting a great, big, hulking giant, who keeps on forcing the little man about the place until the giant tires himself, and then the little one, who has kept his wind, knocks him over? That's how the fighting round here strikes me. We are dancing about round the big German army here, but our turn will come: *Corpl. T. Trainor.*

### **A True Dream**

It is a funny thing that Harry should dream about my arm being in a sling. You can tell him it is quite true. It was my right arm, and it is in a sling, but it will soon be out again for action. I enclose you a photo of dear old "Taff," the goat which was the mascot of the regiment. He was shot the same day as I was, but I am very sorry to say that he is dead: *Pte. Boswell, Welsh Regiment.*

### **"Tough Nuts"**

Have come across some very strange soldiers, with stranger weapons and equipment. Talk about the load of a Tommy, the pack of a Turco or Senegalese is double the size, and they are tough nuts, you take it from me. The cultured army of Kaiser Bill is material for mincemeat before very long, and all I can say is, "God help the troops with which the native regiments, both African and Indian, get to grips": *A Staff Sergeant-Major.*

### **No Football!**

It is all very well to read in the papers what a chap wrote to someone in Redhill about being fifty-six hours in the trenches and arranging football matches. We were thirteen days in the trenches at one place, where we only had to stand up a minute to bring a battery of German artillery on the top of us, and for hours we had to lie still or be blown to atoms. But never mind; the sun will shine again: *Pte. Gibson, Royal Scots.*

### **Hungry!**

"Daddy's Old Corps," as we call the Lincolns, caught a lot of prisoners who seemed glad to get caught. One man was asked if he spoke English. He replied, "English none," and on being asked if he wanted some biscuits, he said, "Ah, yes, I'm hungry," so he was evidently a typical German—good at telling lies. He also knew how to demolish, for he got through six biscuits and a 12 oz. tin of bully in the twinkling of a gnat's eyebrow, and then said, "More": *Corpl. Hawkins, of the Lincolns.*

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### **Animal Instinct**

Even the animals in the French villages seemed to know the difference between us and the Germans, and they used to come out to meet us. There was a dog that followed our battery on the march for four days, and we hadn't the heart to chase it away, and kept it with us. It was a soldier's dog, you could see, and it died a soldier's death, for it was smashed to pieces by a shell when curled upon the ground beside one of our guns in action. We craved it a soldier's funeral with our own comrades next day: *An Artilleryman, of Leicester.*

## Sacramental

I am thankful to say I managed to take communion this morning, the first time since I have been out here, and I took it under very extraordinary conditions. It was in a large house, which has been converted into a hospital, and we were in a dark cellar, in which were several casks of wine. We knelt on mattresses covered with blood, and we could hear shells bursting outside. We could also hear the groans of the wounded inside the building, Germans as well as English, but still the communion service was nice and inspiring, even under such conditions: *Sergt.-Major Elliott, Queen's West Surrey.*

## Sportsmen!

You see some of us with a saucepan, or a frying-pan, and all sorts of pots to do a bit of cooking in. We covered a large cornfield one day in action, and when a few rounds had gone up a hare and a rabbit dodged my way. I had them both. My pal had a plump little partridge, and then a fowl got in the way; so we had a good feed at the end of the day. We pooled the lot and put them in a pot together: *Pte. Oliver, 2nd Worcesters.*

## Praise and Song

Before leaving Belgium we arranged with a priest to have masses said for the souls of our dead chums, and we scraped together what odd money we had, but his reverence wouldn't hear of taking our money for prayers for the relief of the brave lads who had died so far from the Old Land to rid Belgian soil of the unmannerly German scrubs. When we got here we sang "Paddies Evermore," and then we were off to chapel to pray for the souls of the lads that are gone: *Private McGlade.*

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## Convalescent!

By the address, you will see I am at my winter hotel, but, unfortunately, am confined to my room by a slight indisposition. As a matter of fact, I have been wounded in my left leg by a sweet little German humming-bird, or bullet, which wanted a good home. This place is a magnificent hotel, and we are very comfortable here. I am in a spacious ball-room, beautifully decorated. The kindness of the French people is wonderful, and an example to some of the Britishers, who in time of peace won't look at a redcoat: *Lance-Corporal Hawkins.*

## A Strange "Bisley"

We were down to the last cigarette in a box that had done the company for a week. There was a fight to get it, but the sergeant-major said we would have to shoot for it like the King's Prize at Bisley. It was to go to the man hitting the most Germans in fifty shots. A corporal was sent up a tree to signal hits and misses as best he could. Half the company entered, and the prize was won by a chap who had twenty-three hits. The runner-up had twenty-two, and, as a sort of consolation prize, he was allowed to sit near while the winner smoked the cigarette. He said being near the smoke was better than nothing: *A Private of the Scottish Rifles.*

## "Tiddlers!"

We billeted for two days at a place two days' march from Belgium, and had a pretty good time bathing, and—what was most amusing—fishing in a small pond for "tiddlers." I and a chum went to a woman at a house and, making her understand the best way we could, begged some cotton and a couple of pins. We had a couple of hours' fishing, and captured quite two dozen, although before long lots of our chaps caught the complaint and did the same as we did, causing much amusement. I suppose that Frenchwoman had to buy a new stock of cotton, but she was a good sort and was as much amused as the soldiers: *Pte. Purgue, of the Royal Fusiliers.*

## Grace—and Food

The open-air service was good. The chaplain is a dear old chap. I had to go and fetch him from headquarters and take him back after the service, which was rather touching, though he managed to put a bit of fun into it. He gave us a text which I think I shall remember all my life; it fitted the occasion so good. It was: "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in." I am having a rather soft time of it lately.... Two weeks ago I was out buying bullocks, and that journey lasted ten days. I had a nice bed each night, tons of good food, and a good bath. It was the first time I had taken my clothes off since we landed: *A Soldier with the 4th Division Train.*

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## Polus!

Our fellows get on very well with the Frenchmen; I suppose it is because most of us can talk the lingo after a style. There was one old chap called Polus, a short, tubby little fellow with bright eyes and black moustache, we palled up to quite a lot. He could sing quite well, and was very funny when we called him Signor Caruso. We had him by the fire the other night; you can imagine us round a fire in a corner, formed up against the outside wall of the station, and a lean-

to shed, ourselves, some of the Scottish, and some Frenchmen, and this old chap singing and keeping us laughing all the time. He had really a fine voice, and sang the "Marseillaise" and "Toreador," and one or two other songs very well indeed: *Sergt. Sandle, of the H.A.C.*

### **"Gey Hard!"**

Two of our chaps one day had a wrangle about when we were likely to reach Berlin. One thought it would be by Christmas, but the other, being more patriotic, was for St. Andrew's Day, and said there was no prospect of any haggis for the occasion. They made a bet on it, and it was duly registered by a chum, who acted as bookmaker for them frequently. Next day they were in action, and one of them was badly hit. His mate found him, and he saw he hadn't long to live. The wounded man was far gone, but he had enough sense to recognize his chum, and in a weak voice he said, "I'm thinkin', Geordie, that wee bet o' oors wull hae tae be aff noo. It's gey hard, but the Almighty kens best": *A Sergeant of the Seaforth Highlanders.*

### **"Terribly Put Out"**

I see men of the other Irish regiments now and again, and they're terribly put out over the way these German heathens are destroying churches and sending priests out to starve by the roadside in order that the Germans may be free to live in their swinish way in the houses and churches and sacred buildings. There's not a man in any of the regiments, Protestant or Roman, that doesn't mean to make the Germans pay for this, and, with all their bitterness against our faith, there are Protestants from the North who are wilder than we are about it, and declare they won't stand by and see such things done by dirty Germans without making a row about it. One of them said the other day in his solemn Presbyterian way, "I hate the Pope as much as any man, and I wouldn't think twice about shutting down all your chapels, but it's another story when the Germans try it on." That's the way most of the men from the North look at it: *Pte. Harkness, Royal Irish Regiment.*

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### **A Fortunate One**

I am one of the fortunate ones. I was always told I would never be killed, and I begin to think I was born under a lucky star. I have been engaged in driving motor-wagons to and from the men lying in the trenches fighting our battle on the Aisne. Certainly I have seen very little of the fighting, but the roar of the big guns has been my companion night and day. I had not been on the job four days before I lost my first wagon, which I named the "London, Croydon, and Purley Growler." On my second journey to the field of operations we were ambushed by a body of Germans, who pounced out of a wood, but not one of them got back to tell the tale. It was a perfect eye-opener for me and a nerve-tester, I can tell you. We were just congratulating ourselves when crash went a shell on to the bonnet. How I escaped I don't know. My growler was no good; she was a complete wreck. After transferring the load to another lorry we abandoned her and got away, but not before several of our fellows were winged: *Private W. G. Davies, A.S.C.*

### **Joke, but No Beer**

Some men prefer to prepare their own food, but the majority divide themselves into sections and get one, or sometimes two, of their number to do all the cooking, washing up, etc. And whatever "cookie" serves up is always accepted as excellent. And many are the jokes cracked and tales told round the fire during meal-times. Very often the cooks have just got a fire going and the pots on when the order comes, "Wind up," *i.e.* start engines going, and then there is commotion. Semi-boiling water has to be thrown away, and half-cooked food put back in the "grub-box" till the next stop. But we have nothing to grumble at. There is food—and to spare—for all of us. One thing that is often wanted by our men is a good glass of English ale. I know a few here who would gladly give their day's rations for a "pint." The "land of wine and cider" will never be the "land of beer" to the English Tommy. We have many a sing-song of a night round the camp fires. I have got a melodeon, which was left on a battlefield by a German soldier, so that is our band. It is an impressive sight to see about thirty fellows around a fire singing lustily "A Little Grey Home in the West," accompanied by a melodeon, with the roar of cannon occasionally breaking in: *Driver Drake, of the Supply Column.*

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### **The Country Round**

The people all round here speak Flemish; it is a curious mixture of English, French, and German, and they sometimes give us useful information. They are a fine healthy stock, and work like niggers for us. Our hostess was up all night feeding soldiers as they came in. Yesterday I met a splendid old man, who told me all about his son and showed me his photograph; he had one postcard from his son, with no date, merely saying, "All well," and the old man told me he had buried it in the garden for fear the Germans should come and take it from him. That gave me some idea of how people at home feel about their relatives at the front: *Despatch-rider Gabain, 1st Cavalry Brigade.*

### **"Jambon!"**

We sleep fourteen in a tent, which is a bit crowded, but we are not in it long enough to notice it. Fourteen of us washed in two quarts of water this morning! So we have plenty of ink, and some of us haven't changed our clothes for five or six weeks. We have two rather queer pets here: two little pigs, who run about among the horses, and are quite friendly with them, and eat their corn as well. As one of the fellows said, pork (or, as the French call it, *jambon*) tastes very nice boiled, so they may be, before very long, in the casualty list as missing or prisoners of war: *Lance-Corpl. Forward, Army Service Corps.*

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## XX. SUMMING IT UP

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*We must be free or die, who speak the tongue  
That Shakespeare spake: the faith and morals hold  
Which Milton held.*

WORDSWORTH'S "It is not to be thought of."

*Drink! to our fathers who begot us men,  
To the dead voices that are never dumb;  
Then to the land of all our loves, and then  
To the long parting, and the age to come.*

HENRY NEWBOLT'S "Sacramentum Supremum."

Now we have our nose in the right direction, but it's stiff work and slow, and a case of dog eat dog, the meat being tough on either side: *Sergt. Surr, East Lancashires.*

### "Chin-Waggers"

Don't run away with the idea that this is going to be an easy thing, for it's not, and the sooner the fireside chin-waggers at home realize it the sooner will the job be finished in the way a soldier likes to see such jobs done: *Private E. Mayhead.*

### The Better Man

The German bully has not quite come up to expectations. Tommy is his superior in every department, bar telling lies, of which the "sausage" has no superior. They are getting hard hit all over the place, and seem anxious to get back to the Vaterland: *Corporal Rogers.*

### No Anxiety

Surely you are not anxious in England about the result of the war. There can only be one result if Germany still continues to fight—that is, the absolute destruction of her army. There has no one been taken in more than we ourselves have been with the quality of the German army: *Pte. Harker, Army Service Corps.*

### Volunteers!

The Germans are making a dead set at the English, and are putting their best troops against them. They despised us as a negligible quantity, but they have got to know by now that they have to reckon with some of the best fighting troops in the world. We fight voluntarily and not compulsorily: *A Sergeant-Major of 18th Hussars.*

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### The Popular C.I.C.

The whole of the army has absolute confidence in General French. He is such a splendidly cool leader. Nothing flurries him, and he treats his troops like men. When he passes along the lines he doesn't come looking sulky or stern, but he will talk as pleasantly to the ordinary soldier as to the highest officer. Yes, the army in France will follow General French anywhere: *Pte. S. Powell, 2nd Batt. Welsh Regiment.*

### The Wrong Horse

We don't mind how hard the Germans press us, for we can always give them as good as they give us, with something to spare as a reminder to Kaiser Bill that he's backed the wrong horse this time. I expect he knows it by now, however, and I wouldn't be in his place for worlds. It must be awful to feel that you have made mugs of so many poor chaps who are being sent to their deaths for no good reason that any sane person can see: *Private J. Thomson.*



## Close Fighting

When it comes to close fighting it has been shown more times than I can count that, man for man, our regiments are equal to anything the Germans can put in the field, and we're certainly not impressed with the fighting finish of the German soldier. Their prisoners are surly and bad-tempered, who don't like being taken, and evidently bear us a grudge for catching them: *Private T. Macpherson.*

## Mud—and Glory

There's very little chance for any of the showy kind of fighting that gets into the papers and delights the girls. It's simply dull, dreary work in the trenches, where there's more mud than glory and more chills on the liver than cheers. This war will be won by the men who can put up with the most of that sort of thing, and we have got to grin and bear it right to the end. I must say that, though it's not what they like best, our chaps are keeping at it pretty well, and they won't be easily worn out at this game: *Pte. G. Turner, Hampshire Regiment.*

## What Thinks the Kaiser?

What do you think of our army now? I wonder what the Kaiser thinks about it? His famous crushing machine turns out to be an easily demoralized crowd of automatic soulless clods who don't know the meaning of individual effort and efficiency. Take away their driving power, the fear of their brutal officers, and they stand a useless mass of brainless, bewildered men. They have a certain amount of pluck, but they don't know how to put it to account: *A Manchester Soldier.*

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## Professional!

German prisoners are a good deal more friendly than they were. I think they are coming to see we are not the fiends we were painted, and, besides, many of their men are sick of the whole business. All classes of society are found in the ranks as private soldiers, and one of the toughest customers I have had through my hands was a professor of music at one of the universities. He was quite young, in spite of his position, and he fought like a tiger. His hatred of us was shown in every way possible. He had lived in London for some time and knew our language well: *Sergeant T. Whelan.*

## “Cracking Up!”

I am not at all surprised to find the Germans cracking up before the swift advance of the Allies. They gave us the impression at first that they were in too big a hurry to keep going for long at a time, but I suppose haste is part of the method of waging war. The Germans themselves are not very terrible as fighters. It is the strangeness of their methods and the up-to-date character of their appliances that count for a great deal. You do not expect to be half blinded with searchlights when marching at night, and though we get used to it soon, the horses do not, and I found that we often got into tight corners through the horses getting terrified at the glare of the light: *Trooper P. Ryan, 4th Dragoon Guards.*

## Easily the Best

Our men are easily the best troops out here, and the Germans are the “rottenest” fighters it is possible to imagine. They fight like devils when you can't get at them, but when captured (and we have got them wholesale) they try to give one the impression they don't want to fight, and only do so under compulsion. Our infantry are simply marvellous, especially the “Jocks” and the “Guards.” Taking things on the whole, the Germans rely almost entirely on artillery, and their shells drop like rain without doing a great amount of harm, whilst their infantry are packed like sardines in trenches, and they could not hit the town they were born in: *Pte. L. Brown, 18th Hussars.*

## The Whip Hand

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There's not the least doubt that we have the whip hand of the Germans now, and it's only a question of time until we knock them under altogether. Their officers simply won't hear of letting them surrender, and so long as there's an officer about they'll stand like sheep and be slaughtered by the thousand. They fear their officers ten times worse than they fear death. When there isn't an officer about they're quick enough to surrender. Some of them have been kept marching night and day for days on end. It's a horrible sight to see some of them used up as they have been; and they hate their officers like poison for what they have had to go through: *Private King.*

## The Pathos of It

One dare not think of all the misery, sadness, and sorrow that greets one where the fighting has been; lifelong efforts and struggling dashed to the ground in the space of an hour or so. You quiet

English folks, with your beautiful homes and orderly lives, cannot realize what a modern war means. You must spend night after night in cattle trucks, where groaning, dying men are lying on straw; you must imagine the interior of those trucks, only lighted with a dripping oil lamp; you must see the pale, drawn faces and the red-stained limbs; then you must stop and ask yourself if you are really in the twentieth century, or if you are not dreaming. How one gets to love the light and the sun after such nightmares, even when the Germans were so near, and that with the dawn we knew the sing-song of the cannons would start again. I could have yelled with joy at the first signs of daylight: *An English Interpreter*.

### **The London Bus**

Some plucky things have been done by chauffeurs and motor-lorry drivers. It would make some of your London drivers stare to see what they will risk. One of them said this war will cause a revolution in motor driving, as, till now, they never had a chance of seeing what a heavy motor-van could do off a macadamized road. They simply go wherever there is room for them, and more than once they have charged patrol parties who tried to capture them, and got through all right. One driver, seeing that the road was blocked, charged a wooden fence and turf wall, and got out of the way of a lorry that the Germans sent at full speed to smash him. The smashing was on the German lorry. Motorcycles also do wonders. They travel like demons, and rarely get hit: *Pte. Watts, Cheshire Regiment*.

### **Putting up with It**

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Fighting's kindergarten work compared with lying in your damp clothes in the washed-out trenches night and day, with maybe not a chance of getting any more warmth than you can get from a wax match. That you may have in the day-time, but you'll get into trouble if you fit it on in the night, when the least sign of light will bring the enemy's fire down on you, besides the court-martial next day. You're lying there until you're as stiff as if you were dead, and your body's twisted and torn with the pains of rheumatism and lumbago or quinsy, or your whole frame shakes with the ague. That's the sort of work that tells you whether a man's made of the right stuff, but you needn't think there's any grumbling. Our chaps can put up with that just as well as anybody, and they'll come through it all right: *Pte. Cook, Coldstream Guards*.

### **Rubbing It In**

What most of us feel here is that the Germans are staking everything on fighting in France or Belgium, and when they are beaten, as they will be sooner or later, they will howl for peace to save their own country from the horrors of invasion. That's an idea we have got from their prisoners, and they think it's a rattling good one. If it were left to the army to settle you may be sure that we'd vote to a man for giving the devils a taste of their own medicine, and you'll see us crossing their sacred Rhine before long unless you're the greatest fools in creation. You are only a woman and can't vote, but for Heaven's sake rub it in to all the men you know that this is what the army feels about the thing. We wouldn't make peace with the devils until we've rubbed their noses well into the ground of their Fatherland, and we'll do it yet, even if it costs us a million lives: *Lance-Corpl. S. Northcroft, of Wolverhampton*.

### **The Franco-British Team**

The great match for the European Cup is still being played out, and I daresay there's a record gate, though you can't see the spectators from the field. That's one of the rules of the game when this match is on. Our team is about as fit as you can have them, and they're all good men, though some of them are amateurs and the Germans are all "pros." The German forwards are a rotten pack. They have no dash worth talking about, and they come up the field as though they were going to the funeral of their nearest and dearest. When they are charged they nearly always fall away on to their backs, and their goal-keeping's about the rottenest thing you ever set eyes on. I wouldn't give a brass farthing for their chances of lifting the Cup, and if you have any brass to spare you can put it on the Franco-British team, who are scoring goals so fast that we haven't time to stop and count them. The Kaiser makes a rotten captain for any team, and it's little wonder they are losing. Most of our side would like to tell him what they think of him and his team: *A Gunner of the Royal Field Artillery*.

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### **Music and Lunch**

We have been in the thick of the fighting all the time, and I can't understand how it happens that I'm alive and here now, and everyone else is the same. If ever there was a Providence above watching and guarding, there is one over our regiment, and me in particular. Last week I was four days and three nights without sleep at all, except an hour in the saddle or lying on the roadside; but we have been having a rest this last two days, and we could do with it. You don't look very well in your photo; in fact, it made me feel more worried than whole regiments of Germans would do. You are worrying about me, I am afraid, and you absolutely must not do that. Why, I'm in the pink of condition; have just had a chicken for dinner (from a deserted chateau). Have just had two packets of Player's from the Cigarette Fund. I'm just going to have a sleep, and I wouldn't call the King my uncle: *A Bandsman of the Lancers*.

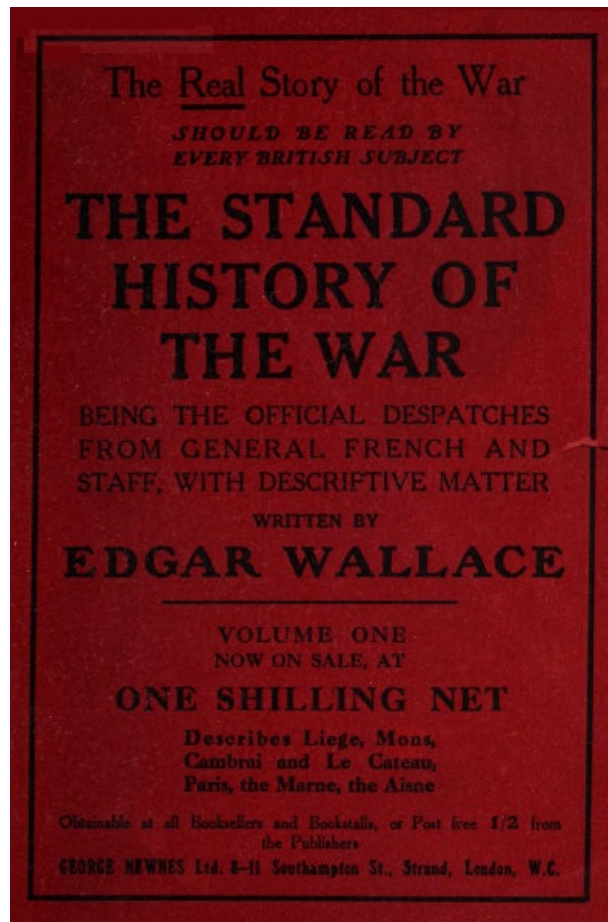
## The Indian Men

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, or a party of revellers rushing to catch the last train. They got to grips with the Germans in double-quick time, and the howl of joy that went up told us that those chaps felt that they were paying the Germans back in full for the peppering they had got whilst waiting for orders. When they came back from that charge they looked very well pleased with themselves, and they had every right to be. They are very proud of being selected to fight with us, and are terribly anxious to make a good impression. They have done it, and no mistake. I watched them one day under shell fire and I was astonished at their coolness. "Coal-boxes" were being emptied around them, but they didn't seem to pay the slightest heed, and if one of them did go under his mates simply went on as though nothing had happened. 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: I have seen a man dress one himself in the firing line. One day I questioned one chap about it, and his answer, given with a smile, was, "We must be as brave as the English." They are astonished at the coolness of our men under fire, and it's amusing to hear them trying to pick up our camp songs. They were greatly taken with "The March of the Cameron Men," which they heard one night. They have a poor opinion of the Germans as fighting men, and are greatly interested when we tell them of the horrors perpetrated on the French and Belgians. We are all impressed with the Indians—they are fine fellows: *A Sergeant of the King's Own Scottish Borderers.*

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## A Happy Ending

I have a French book for travellers in France, so with it I went to a farm and showed them that I wanted eggs. So they said, "Ah, wee." The man got a whip and bunched all the chickens together, and then told me to pick one out. I tried to make him understand it was eggs I wanted, not chickens, but failed. So I got an onion, put it on some straw, sat on it, and then got up and "Cock-a-doodle-dooed!" Laugh, you would have thought they had gone mad. They went to the farm next door and told them, and there I was stuck in the middle of them, going all colours of the rainbow. The secret of it was this; in the book it says: "English, I would like two boiled eggs; French, *Je veux deux œufs à la coque.*" I showed them the last word, which I thought was eggs, but eggs is *œufs*. Well, well, it's all in a lifetime: *A London Fusilier.*



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