

## THE STRONG POINT

(By Lieut. J. B. Morton.)  
Four men sat at a wooden table in the Divisional canteen, eating sausage and mashed potatoes. When they had finished they pushed their plates aside, finished their coffee, and lit their pipes. Then they called on Phelim Raftery for a tale. Phelim was a gunner and was temporarily attached to the tanks. He had a great reputation as a teller of tales, and this is the tale he told that night.

There was a Platoon holding a strong point in an important part of the British line. The trenches ran along a ridge which the Germans particularly enjoyed, for it commanded a view of the surrounding country and was carefully and strongly fortified. Everyone knew they were going to attack the position again, and the men there knew that if the strong point fell, that part of the line went with it. A barrage had been put down behind the trenches which made it very difficult to get food up to the front. The men had contented themselves with their pipes and cigarettes, but at last their supplies of tobacco ran short also.

"I hope they'll soon come sir," we'll have nothing to smoke."

That night the Platoon commander sat at the telephone. "Yes, Sir," he said. "We all quite understand. Hold out to the death. Yes, Sir. Forty-three men, Sir, all in good spirits."

"He got up and walked slowly down the trench. There was no question about the spirits of the men. Their only anxiety was for their dwindling supply of cigarettes and tobacco. The Platoon commander emptied his cigarette case when he came to the Lewis Gunners, and gave the sentries a word or two of advice. Then he saw that his own revolver was in proper order, and that every man knew where to find the reserve of ammunition and the bombs. A 'Minnie' landed a few feet from the parapet and brought in some of the sandbags. He took a spare himself and started to bury them up again sucking at his empty pipe. He was patting the parapet into shape when the alarm was given. There was a bustling in the trench, and in a second the men were at their posts. The British Grand Fleet was at the Duke of Atholl, who visited the American ships as the personal representative of the King.

It was a moonless night and the sky was dark with clouds, so that it was difficult at first to make out the moving forms. But the artillery had already seen them and had shortened their barrage. That drove the attackers more quickly out of their trench. For a few seconds they may have hugged the delusion that they were "surprising" the British, just for a few seconds, and then came their disillusionment. Lewis guns and rifles spoke, and the air was throbbled with bullets. There were great numbers of the Germans, and the check was only momentary. They pressed forward over the fallen, coming nearer and nearer.

They were some forty yards from their objective when Percy came. He came quite calmly, almost superciliously blundering out of the night, and the Germans saw his bulk loom like with his Lewis gun and his six-pounders.

They knew that any moment he might move forward in that deliberate, inexorable manner of the tanks. They judged it wiser to withdraw. So they went back, with Percy neatly enfilading them, and the men in the strong point speeding them from the rear. When all was clear once more, Percy turned and waddled back into the night. The platoon commander went to the telephone once more.

"Yes, Sir, Merriek speaking. Hold them? No, Sir, beat them off. Thanks to the Tank. Expect they'll have another shot, Sir."

Then he went round his defences, and saw that everything possible was done for the wounded men. He

had kept a small reserve of cigarettes for this emergency. These he distributed. They were to be relieved quite soon, unless there was another attack.

He began to feel very weak. He wished there was some tobacco in his pipe. He wondered if anyone had noticed blood on his clothes. His thigh hurt devilishly. His head began to whirl, and intense physical sickness came over him. He'd better lean up against something. He went slowly to a corner of the trench, and a great darkness was in front of his eyes and a great singing in his ears, like the sound of the sea in storm. He must pull himself together; somebody was speaking. He leant one hand against the parapet.

"Yes, sergeant."

"They're coming, Sir."

"Oh, right." He made one great effort to walk.

"Sentries all right? I—I—"

"It's the relief—yes." I meant Sir. Word just come. We're to get ready to go."

"Oh—relief—yes." He felt his mind slipping away. That infernal pain was burning him. The sergeant's voice was coming from a great distance. Gradually he was sinking into deep places.

The sergeant caught him and uttered an exclamation of surprise. The subaltern's tunic was wet with blood round the thigh. Presently the relief came, and he was taken away on a stretcher.

In the mess two days later, in a village behind the line, the M.O. was talking to the colonel.

"Yes, Sir," he said, "there's no doubt about it. Young Merriek was hit some time before that attack, but he just kept it quiet. And he knew what was coming. But it's not serious fortunately. He'll need a bit of a rest, that's all."

### MESSAGE TO U.S. SAILORS.

Associated Press.  
London, July 29. — A personal message of greetings and good wishes from King George V was recently delivered to the men of the American battleships with the British Grand Fleet by the Duke of Atholl, who visited the American ships as the personal representative of the King.

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### FOUR DRIVES FAIL.

Germans Expected to Get Decision on West Front.

Drive on the Somme, March 21.  
Base, 50 miles; advance, 35.  
Defeated in 11 days.

Drive on the Lys, April 9.  
Base, 20 miles; advance, 13.  
Defeated in nine days.

Drive on the Aisne, May 27.  
Base, 43 miles; advance, 30.  
Defeated in seven days.

Drive on the Oise, June 9.  
Base, 22 miles; advance, 12.  
Defeated in six days.

Such is the record of the German spring campaign in the west. It is an admirable example of what economists call the law of diminishing returns, in accordance with which products of the soil decrease in amount in proportion to the increase of population, requiring additional labor and capital to augment the supply. Note the successive decrease in the duration of the drive, from 11 to nine, to seven, to six, showing that the enemy is more quickly exhausted now than he was three months ago.

Also it will be observed that his penetrating power is less. The latest drive was from a slightly longer line than that in Flanders, yet the depth of advance was a mile or so less. The entire campaign has added territory in the grip of the Germans, not very valuable if one excepts the Chemin-des-Dames and the line of the Aisne river, which are strategically of great importance; the rest matters little. On the other hand, not a single one of the Boche objectives has been reached.

Although the Allies have lost largely in prisoners and guns taken by the enemy, this is counter-balanced by the fact that the Germans have sacrificed in their vain efforts hundreds of thousands of men whom they could ill spare. Some estimates place their losses as high as 680,000 men, even more than in the slaughterhouse of Verdun. The German army is depleted and has been fought to a standstill, but it is believed that there are yet untouched reserves of men, together with those back from the hospitals, with whom the enemy will undoubtedly go on with the war.

The military coterie that is now the master of Germany cares nothing for the lives of her people so long as it can retain its supremacy. One may take for granted, therefore, that it will continue the struggle as long as it can and the men to fight for its interests. For the time being, however, the rulers have been defeated. Whatever their ultimate purpose, whether it was the capture of Paris or simply a preparation for a drive against the Channel ports, they have failed.

STORE ROBBED THIRD TIME.  
Woodstock, July 29.—For the third time in the past few weeks the general store of John Kelly was entered by thieves some time after closing time Saturday night, and a large quantity of goods was stolen. There is no clue to the thieves.

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