

HOW "UNCLE" WALT MASON CAME BACK

Down And Out at Age of Forty-Five, the Famous Poet of Emporia Has Since Made a Big Success of Life.

One of the most vital autobiographical stories that has appeared in a long time comes in the current issue of the American Magazine from the pen of Walt Mason. The prose poems of Walt Mason are known the continent over, and are a popular daily feature in The Courier. It is most interesting to learn that Mason is a Canadian by birth, and that his career has been one long, heroic struggle. However, let the poet of Emporia tell it himself.

On October 12, 1872, I arrived in Emporia, Kansas, to begin at the bottom and work up. I was forty-five years old, and my assets consisted of the bare necessities. I wore, an extra shirt, \$1.35 in money, and an old penny and buggy. I had no ambition and no confidence in the future; everything that kind had been licked out of me and the only thing I was conscious of was a profound discouragement. The bottom had fallen out of the planetary system, so far as I was concerned.

I was not the victim of a cruel world, or a stern-hearted deity. I was the victim of my own folly. I had spent all the best years of my life with the prodigal sons, holding vassal in wayside inns; and when I arrived in Emporia I was fresh from an institution in Kansas city where picked people have the alcohol boiled out of them, and are supposed to be sent forth as good as new.

I began my newspaper career when I was twenty-two years old. Before that, for several years, I had been working on Kansas farms, where I achieved a reputation as the worst hired man in the state. I had a mania for writing and was setting down every thought that came into my head, been currying mules or milking cows and employing farmers don't take kindly to literary work. My one ambition was to do newspaper work; and one winter day I absconded from the farm and went to seek my fortune. I managed to get a job as telegraph editor of a Kansas morning paper; the work kept me at my desk until the clock was ringing aloft, and when the paper had gone to press, the night editor, the city editor and I repaired to a little booth around the corner, where an un-moral citizen sold fire-water. There we sat until broad daylight, every morning telling stories and quaffing the kind nepenthe.

And there I acquired a taste for conviviality that stuck to me until

my mane was getting gray. In those halcyon days most newspaper men were partial to the flowing bowl. The young man who refused to look upon the wine was considered offensive. In fact, there was a superstitious belief, in newspaper offices, that one couldn't be a good reporter unless he was a good "mixer," and he couldn't be a good mixer unless he was at all times ready to consume his share of booze. There was some foundation for this theory, in those grand old days when city councilmen were recruited from the saloonkeepers, and caucuses and conventions were held in the back rooms of grog parlors.

While this theory survived I never had trouble getting employment. I drifted around the country from one town to the other. Being of a happy-go-lucky disposition, I gave no thought to the future. Sufficient to the day was the evil, or the good thereof. Because I seemed able to get a job whenever I wanted one, it never occurred to me that conditions might change—and I wouldn't have cared if they had. I was known in all western newspaper offices, and live like an angel. I could always get employment was that I was "a hog for work," so long as I lasted. In all my experience I have known but one man who could turn out as much copy, day after day, the year round. This was Ed Howe, of the Atchison Globe, for whom I worked for a year and a half.

A Prolific Producer. Some newspaper proprietors considered it a blessing when I turned up; for I would turn in and write the whole editorial page, and edit the telegraph, and read proofs, and do as much as three ordinary people would do. This is no boast. There are many editors who will endorse the statement. I always tackled a new job with a virtuous determination to cut out the fool habits for good. I was going to turn over a new leaf and be a shining example to the young. Time and again I fooled my employers as well as myself. For two or three weeks I would like to be an ascetic and break all hard work records; the managing editor would raise my wages every week, and take me into his private office, and tell me that I kept up my present lick he would give me half of his kingdom and the hand of his daughter in marriage, or words to that effect. I had a dozen such opportunities to establish myself firmly in fine situations,

by my virtuous resolves never lasted longer than two or three weeks. I would equip myself with a good suit of clothes and purple and fine linen, and become obtrusively respectable, and then of a sudden there would come a great longing for the gilded saloon and the company of people who drank not wisely but too well; and then, poof! away would fly all the excellent resolutions, and I'd wake up some fine morning in a livery stable, to find that my roommate was in the pawnshop, and I couldn't remember whether it was Wednesday or the Chinese New Year.

In November of one memorable year I was seated in a beautifully furnished editorial room, the star man of a great and growing newspaper. The managing editor thought so much of my work, and was so convinced that I had reformed for good, that he had fitted up the sumptuous offices for my exclusive use. I was honored and petted, and every possible way in the following February I was shovelling snow off the sidewalks in an Iowa town to get the price of a feed and bunk.

Breaking Good Resolutions. I will give a concrete instance of this sort of experience: I blew into Denver one cold day, shivering in a suit that would have been considered too gauzy in Florida. I was penniless and hungry and, as I had been sleeping in box cars for two nights, I considered my reputation, and too gauged in Florida. I went to the office of the Denver News and found John Arkins, who was the editor and proprietor. He knew my reputation, and considered me so amusing he laughed for an hour before handing over five dollars. Then he told me I could contribute at space rates if I would write good resolutions. At last I had seen the error of my ways, and was going to abandon the hucks and the swine. Never again said I in fluting tones. I got a humble hall room in a cheap boarding house and a pad of paper and a pencil, and wrote a column or two of highly moral paragraphs. The News printed them next morning, and another batch next day, and in a week they formed a feature called Denver was talking about. I had letters of approval from clergymen and merchant princes, and invitations to everything.

One day Mr. Arkins called me into his private office for heart-to-heart talk. First he gave me an order for a suit of clothes, no price limit set, and explained that this was his gift to me. Then he told me that my staff promised to be of value to the paper, and if I would behave myself, and abandon that conduct which had made my name blinding in newspaper offices from Dan to Beersheba, my future was assured. The News didn't quarrel over wages when I found something to write. I was in luck. Mr. Arkins with tears in his eyes that my good resolutions were like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, and he had a strong family resemblance to the Rock of Gibraltar. Thrones might crumble and dynasties crash, but my resolutions would rise triumphant above the wreck of matter.

"Go and get your suit of clothes," said Mr. Arkins, "and come around to-morrow ready for regular business. I went forth and got the suit of clothes. I don't remember what happened after that. Two or three days later I woke up at Ogden. I had never known why I went there or how I got there.

A Change of the Times. This was the sort of life I led for many years. If one is young and has a sense of humor, such ups and downs don't matter. But one can't always be young, and a sense of humor becomes frayed along the edges after a while.

Conditions were changing in newspaper offices and I was so busy I didn't notice it. The old superstition that a reporter should be a good mixer, and hence a competent drinker, had died the death. A red nose was no longer a recommendation when one applied for a job in a newspaper office. So, when at the ripe age of 45, I found myself in that bleaching institution at Kansas City, I slowly realized that I was worse than down and out. I was a back number, a has-been. And I no longer had the resilience of youth. I was feeling very old and humble and useless.

I wrote to editors everywhere, describing my circumstances, and offering to work for any old wage, that I might earn a route to sleep and a meal ticket. I went to a daily newspaper in Kansas City and offered to write the whole editorial page for twelve dollars a week. But there was nothing doing. My reputation for unreliability was against me. These were sickening days, when every man brought replies from editors, explaining why they couldn't give me work, kindly trying to let me down easy. There seemed to be no place for me anywhere.

Then one weary day I picked up an old magazine and read an article by William Allen White. It was a good article, so full of life and kind words that I thought he was a man who might understand. So I wrote to him asking him if he couldn't give me a little job. On the next newspaper, to carry me along until I could get something else.

(To be concluded to-morrow)



SCOUTS OF FIRST CANADIAN

This is a picture of the Scouts Section of the 1st Canadian Battalion in France.

GREAT RECORD OF CANADIANS

Give Hun the Two Worst Beatings He's Had

Have Made a Name Which Will Live Forever

With the Canadian Forces, Sept. 9.—It is a month to-day since the Canadian Corps went into action before Arras. In that battle and in the more recent battle of Arras, it has added two important chapters to the history of the world and to the deeds that rebound to the honor of Canada. In that brief span its captures of guns have been one-seventh of the total guns captured by all the allied nations this year.

It is possible now to lift the veil a little and give a connected account of these operations. During the period of July 1 to July 10, the Canadian Corps was concentrated in the Monchy-Breton-Ligercourt-le-Cauroy-Dieval-Auchel-Chateau de la Haine area and held in reserve. For the previous two months they had been constantly practising open warfare. On July 10, the corps was released from the reserve and relieved a corps in the line from Telegraph Hill south. This line was held by three divisions, and our Second Division, which had been attached up to that time to another corps, thus losing the benefit of the period of training, was taken out and put into reserve to go through the same course. The general plan adopted during this period of holding the line was to foster in the mind of the enemy the idea of a pending attack in order to retain or draw his reserves into this area and consequently an aggressive policy was adopted. Active probing was carried out by day and night and raids were constantly effected. The artillery carried out a vigorous program of harassing, firing and counter-battery work. From prisoners it was learned that the enemy expected an attack and that troops had been frequently rushed forward to defend the Droocourt-Queant line.

Took Enemy by Surprise. On July 20 the corps was transferred to the Fourth Army and orders were received to move to another front. The time between July 20 and August 8 was given up to moving the corps to the new area extending from Villers-Bretonneux in the north to the woods of Gekell in the south. How the move was executed and with what success can best be indicated by the fact that no member of the corps knew where he was going and the success of the attack was demonstrated by the fact that the enemy lines were completely by surprise on the night of August 7-8.

Therefore the Canadian Corps was concentrated in woods and fields and all available cover in front of Amiens and in the center of the front line extending from Domart through Hangard Wood, east of Cashy. At 20 minutes past 4 on the morning of August 8, the Corps attacked and in three divisions the Second Division being on the north, the First in the center, and the Third on the south. The corps was extended between the Amiens-Chaulnes railway and the Amiens and Roye road. On the left flank of the Canadians were the Australians, and on the right flank, the French. All the troops attacked simultaneously.

During the first day the Canadian troops advanced about 20,000 yds. a world's record, capturing the villages of Domart, Housies, Hangard, Abcourt, Courcelles, Demuin, Lezard, Maroilles, and Flesquières. The advance was enormously attributed to the Australians, Beaumont, Gayer, Weincourt, LeQuenel, Gillancourt, Beaufort, and Folles. On the second day a further advance was made through stiff fighting, when the Fourth Canadian Division was thrust into the fray to relieve the Second. On this day the villages of Leclercq, Warville, Soudiers, Moncourt, Maroilles, and Chilly were captured. On the third day the Corps was reinforced by a British division and the attack was prosecuted. The village of Quenoy and Fouquescourt fell on this day. The fighting was intense, since the enemy had been driven back to a system of trenches easy of defense and was making the most of it.

Handed Line Over to French. The next few days saw probably the bitterest contest of the battle. From the capture of Parvillers, Dammery, Huitrich, all of which, together with Fresnoy, Guyencourt, Chavette, and Fransart, were ultimately taken, the time up to August 12 was taken up on consolidating for defence the positions won, and on that date the Corps handed its line over to the French and proceeded to move north. Thus ended the first of the most noteworthy achievements of the Canadian Corps, if not of the war.

The following facts best illustrate the magnitude and importance of the operation. The area captured was approximately 67 square miles. The average depth of penetration in enemy territory was 13 1/2 miles. Villages captured numbered 27. During this battle we engaged 16 enemy divisions, of which nine were fully engaged, four partly engaged, and three others identified. We took 9,131 prisoners of all ranks, 190 guns and howitzers, 1,640 machine guns and howitzers, nine rail-ways, steam engines and five pierce-lofts, besides countless booty in the shape of equipment and vast stores of munitions.

Happy is the realization that they had inflicted on the enemy the worst defeat he had yet suffered, the great Canadian Corps on August 30 moved to a new field, on which they were to reap fresh and even finer laurels. The interval between August 20 and 25 was devoted to getting the divisions in line, preparatory to the great attack of August 26. All was ready on the night of the 25th. The disposition was as follows: On the north between the Scarpe River and the Arras-Cambrai Road the Third Canadian Division, between the Second Canadian Division. The First and Fourth Canadian Divisions had been left on the Amiens front to complete the relief, and were just arriving in the new area.

Secured Jumping-Off Line. At 3 o'clock on the morning of August 26 the attack was launched, and by 7:30 the village of Monchy-le-Preux, situated on an eminence, had been captured by the Third Division. Other villages captured on this day were Guesnappes, Wancourt, and a preparatory attack, the object being to clean up the intervening territory and secure a good jumping-off line for the main attack. The great defense system known as the Queant-Droocourt switch of Woluwe line, therefore, 25 August 26 to September 2, was devoted to tightening the position, and the corps made excellent progress.

The situation on the night of September 1 was generally satisfactory. The line, due north and south by the Droocourt and Etrépigny, had been reached and decided upon as a jumping-off line. In addition to those on the first day, the following villages had been captured: Villers-Bretonneux, Bolly, Cherizy, Hamblain, Pelvies, Remy, Haucourt and Etrépigny.

At 5 o'clock on the morning of Monday, September 2, the formidable task of piercing the great switch line was begun. The disposition of troops was as follows: From north to south, First Canadian Division, Fourth Canadian Division, another British division in support, and a British division in support, and a Canadian division in support.

The attack was entirely successful, and the great Queant-Droocourt line was pierced as arranged on the first day. The Corps advanced in the face of a withering machine-gun fire and captured the villages of Dury, Villers and Guesnappes.

Fighting went on during Sept. 2 and 3, and was the hardest the Corps had yet experienced. By Sept. 3 the enemy was forced back to the east bank of the Canal de Nord, while the Canadians occupied the west bank. The second great victory of the Corps within the month was thus accomplished by Sept. 5, and that great fighting formation has made a name that must forever live in the annals of history. From a strategic standpoint this second great achievement was even more important than the first. It is a brief summary of its deeds. In a brief summary of its deeds, the Canadian Corps engaged eleven enemy divisions, captured eleven fully and partly and three identified. Five complete trench systems were taken and the captured area approximated 56 square miles, with an average depth of penetration 12 1/2 miles.

Details of the captures are as follows: Eighty-nine heavy field guns, two 4.1-inch naval guns, 40 anti-trainers, 7,047 machine-guns, 73 trench mortars, 2 searchlights and 3 hellos, besides wagons, horses and large quantities of ammunition and engineering supplies and equipment as well as hospital supplies.

Ten thousand, three hundred and sixty prisoners of all ranks were captured and 22 villages. Great victories are not to be won without heavy price, and our casualties, though severe, were not extraordinary, considering the objects gained in both battles. Altogether the number did not greatly exceed the total number of prisoners captured by the corps.

Primarily these brilliant victories were the work of the incomparable Canadian Infantry, well supported by our artillery, the Canadian forces of motor machine-guns, the tank bridges and other formations, such as the intelligence department, engineers, railway battalions, signposts, army service corps, transport and other services, which, under the name of the "dog-eat-dog" unit, took their part at the front and suffered many casualties. The field ambulances did wonderful work, and a mission must not be made of the T. M. C. A. outposts, who were always in close touch with the fighting units supplying their comforts and stimulating their activities.

The greatest asset of the Canadian Corps is the wonderful esprit de corps which permeates all ranks and units. The Corps has unbounded faith and admiration for its great leader, Sir Arthur Currie, and it is almost too, that it owes much to the brilliant corps staff, which co-ordinates victory and reaped from it its fullest fruits.

SWEDEN DIATED. By Courier London Wire. Honolulu, Sept. 8.—Duke Kan. Hanamoku, holder of all the world's swimmer records from 25 yards to 100—meters, has been transferred from draft class three to class one by his exemption board here. He will be inducted into the army when he returns from the United States where he is now on a swimming tour, it was announced.

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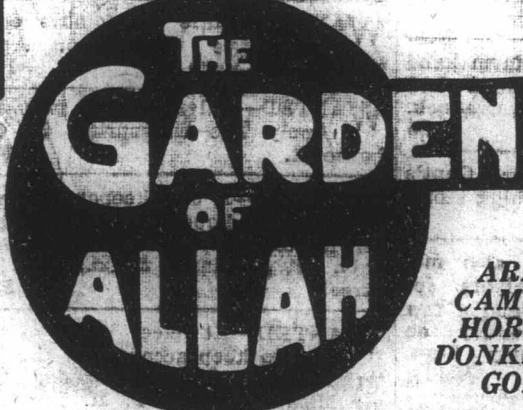
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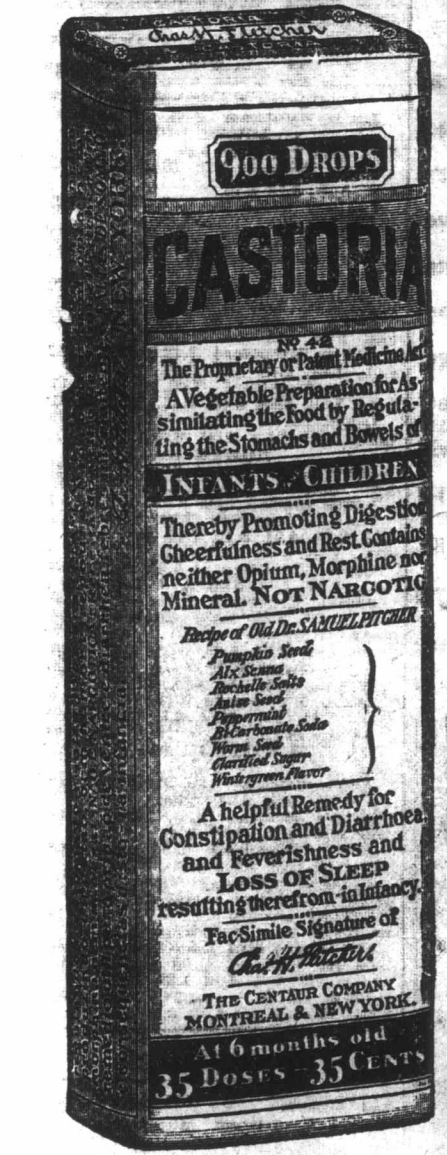
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