

# LEAR HAS BEEN THROUGH A WHOLE LOT OF FIGHTING:--LUCKY TO BE ALIVE

HE HAS BEEN A SOLDIER SINCE HE WAS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD. WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO SAIL FROM CANADA IN AUGUST, 1914, REACHING THE FRONT ONE MONTH LATER. FOUGHT AT YPRES, RICHEBOURG, NEUVE CHAPELLE AND LOOS WITHOUT GETTING A SCRATCH—THEN WAS WOUNDED WHILE BREWING A "BILLY" OF TEA IN A DUGOUT! HIS GREAT REGRET IS THAT THE TEA WAS NEVER TASTED!

In the good old days—three years and more ago—the alarm of war was sounded throughout the world. Britain mobilised and sent out calls to her Reservists to report home for duty. One of these reservists was Sergeant-Major Lear.

Born in London, England, January 1886, with a zeal for soldiering in his early youth, he joined the Middlesex Militia when sixteen years of age, only to be claimed out on account of age. He joined the East Surrey Militia a year later, and was transferred to the Regulars—the Oxfordshire Light Infantry—in 1903. After three years' service with this regiment he went on reserve, and shortly came out to Canada, settling in Brantford, Ont. Here he was employed by the Massey Harris Co., but finding indoor work un congenial sought employment outdoors as a carpenter.

### First to Sail.

Upon mobilisation in August 1914 Sergeant-Major Lear reported to Levis, Que., and proceeded to England on the "Tunisian" the first boat to carry reservists from Canada, leaving Quebec on August 21st.

Arriving in England he reported to the Regimental Depot at Oxford and was sent from there to Portsmouth, only to stay there one week before departing for France; just one month from date of sailing from Canada. (This should suit the most exacting).

Being thus early on the job Lear saw quite a lot of heavy fighting, particularly in the defence and first battle of Ypres. He recalls having a good look round the famous Cloth Hall at Ypres before it was shelled. His first Christmas in the trenches was marked by the presentation by Princess Mary of a gift box, a souvenir highly prized by these soldiers who were the fortunate recipients.

At Richebourg his regiment was heavily shelled and suffered losses of 420 men and 20 officers. Lear, however, came through with nothing more than a touch of gas. This battle was fought at the same time as Festubert where our

Canadians distinguished themselves. Lear was also engaged in the battles of Neuve Chapelle and Loos where his regiment again suffered heavily.

### Shelled in Dugout.

The circumstances whereby Lear received his injuries are interest-



LEONARD R. LEAR, C.S.M.  
"C" Company.

(Photo by Pinsonnault)

ing. His regiment was holding the front lines at the quarries near La Bassée when the Germans became suspicious of some activity in the lines and commenced shelling heavily. S. M. Lear, a sergeant, and a party of stretcher bearers took shelter in a dugout, and soon after, while brewing a "billy" of tea, a shell came through the roof. The shell hit the man next to him but did not explode. The dugout roof collapsed, burying the whole party. When they were afterwards excavated, two were dead (one hit by the shell, the other suffocated). The remainder were severely injured, Lear being cut and bruised in several places and suffering from shock.

He was sent to Etratrat hospital, a picturesque little place about 20 miles from Havre. Here he stayed three weeks and from there went to the convalescent camp at Havre, from thence to Rouen and later back to his old Regiment. Two

months later he was granted his discharge owing to poor health as a result of his injuries.

### Sent to Canada.

The British Government sent him back to Canada, and on his return to Brantford he was accorded a very hearty reception. Civil life however was impossible, and the return of good health brought with it the yearning to get into the fight again. Seven months from the date of his discharge therefore saw Lear as a sapper in the Canadian Engineers. His previous experience as a soldier and his ability soon procured for him the steady promotion he deserved.

### Congratulated by King.

Sergeant-Major Lear was not a recipient of one of the three D. C. Medals presented to his regiment at Bailleau but was one of those who received the congratulations of His Majesty for the sterling fights they had put up.

Lear served in the early days of the war under Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Chas. Munro. He has seen sixteen years of soldiering and, as related here, plenty of action. In his capacity of C.S.M. here at the Depot he is highly esteemed and we only hope his next meeting with the Hun will be a good deal nearer the Rhine than his former meeting was.

### A GOOD LOSER.

There is no half way about losing—you either do it very badly or you do it very well. Readers, meet Lieutenant-Colonel J. F. Elkington of the Royal Warwickshire Mounted—our pet loser. Elkington was cashiered at the beginning of the war on charges that have since been disproved. But he

neither denounced the War Office nor committed suicide. After the regiment he had served for thirty years marched into action without him, he slipped away and enlisted as a private in the Foreign Legion of France. Soon he was lost in the names of the western battle-front, and only his wife knew that he was "out there," a legionnaire in the ranks, winning his way back. And back he came after twenty-two months, his legs shattered, but covered with glory and French medals. After the story had been told of his single-handed stand against a company of Germans, all England insisted upon his reinstatement; and King George himself gave him back his rank.

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