

THRILLING ACCOUNT BY THE OFFICIAL EYE WITNESS, SIR MAX AITKEN, OF THE CANADIAN ATTACK ON GERMAN POSITIONS AT STONY MOUNTAIN

A thrilling account of the exploits of the First Ontario Battalion of the Canadian expeditionary forces is given in the "eye-witness" narrative compiled by Sir Max Aitken, the Canadian record officer at the front. Individual instances of splendid heroism and gallantry are told of by the observer. The narrative, which is a continuation of the story of the orchard battle, begins with the fighting the middle of June. The narrative follows:

On a Canadian Battle Front, July 13, via London.—About this time (the middle of June) a British division was directed to make a frontal attack on a fortified place in the enemy's trench line, known to our intelligence staff as "Stony Mountain."

The 1st Canadian Ontario Regiment, commanded by Lieut.-Col. Hill of the 1st Brigade, was detailed to prepare the right flank of the British division by seizing two lines of German trenches between "Stony Mountain" and another fortified place one hundred and fifty yards to the south. The defensive flank to be thrown back to the right. If our men got through, would depend upon the advance made by the British division.

Prepare for the Attack

Working parties of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 1st Brigade were told off to secure the lines of trenches and to connect them with our trenches, and finally to make the defensive flank.

After a few days of preparations the 1st Canadian Battalion, Ontario Regiment, moved up and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon the battalion reached our line of trenches opposite the position to be attacked when the 2nd Canadian Battalion, under Lieut.-Col. Watson, which was holding the trench position, withdrew to the right to make room for them.

The trench line on the right of the attacking battalion was held by the 2nd and 4th Canadian Battalions as far as the La Basse canal, with the 3rd Canadian (Toronto) Regiment in support. The left was held by the East Works.

Waiting for the Word

From 3 o'clock until 6 in the evening the Ontario regiment waited the command to charge and sang their chosen songs, all popular but unprintable. The enemy bombarded our position heartily, though our artillery had the better of them. Fifteen minutes before the attack was timed to take place two 18-pounder guns, which had been placed in the infantry trenches under the cover of darkness on the instruction of Brigadier-General Durston, commander of the Canadian Artillery, opened fire upon the parapet of the enemy trenches.

One gun, under Lieut. C. S. Craik, fired over one hundred rounds, sweeping the ground clear of wire and destroying two machine guns. Lieut. Craik, who was wounded at Veres early in May and again while observing near Gumeny, was seriously wounded after completing his task here. Lieut. Kelly, who was in command of the other gun, succeeded in destroying a machine gun, when his own gun was wrecked by an enemy shell and he was wounded. The gun shells were hurled and missed and the paper by the mere force of musketry fire.

Miss Also Kills Canadians

Just before 6 o'clock a mine, which had been previously prepared by the sappers, was exploded. Owing to the discovery of water under the German trenches its tunnel could not be carried far enough forward, and the Canadian troops had been withdrawn from a position in the Canadian line, known as "Duck's Hill," to guard against casualties in our own trenches when it went off.

However, to make sure that the explosion would reach the German line, we had to rely entirely on the supply of bombs which the bombers carried themselves.

The leading company, under Major S. L. Smith, rushed forward with the mine and firing dirt of mine explosion for a screen and met a wire being dug from the German machine

AT THE NICKEL

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As the home of the fattest man in the world, for there lived Mr. Jonathan Miller who weighed 499 lbs. and moved about in a special carriage of his own. Pte. Gledhill destined perhaps, to conquer fresh fame on Ben Miller, saw Germans advancing down the trench, saw also that only three Canadians were left in the trench, two with a machine gun and himself, as he said, "running a race."

Pte. Smith

The efforts of the battalion were now confined to erecting barricades just south of "Stony Mountain," and north of "Dorchester," and to holding the second line trench. The supply of bombs ran short and Pte. Smith of Southampton, Ont., son of a Methodist minister, and not much more than nineteen, was almost the only source of replenishment. He was, till Armageddon, a student at the Listowel business college.

History relates he was singing the trench version of "I wonder how the Old Folks Are at Home," when the mine exploded and he was buried. By the time he had dug himself out he discovered that all his world, including his wife, had disappeared. But his business training told him there was an active demand for bombs for the German trenches a few score yards away. So Pte. Smith fastened himself with bombs, from dead and wounded bomb throwers around him and set out, mainly on all fours to supply that demand. He did it five times. He was not himself a bomb thrower, but a mere moodie man.

On Perilous Duty

Twice he went up to the trenches and handed over his load to the busy men. Thrice, so hot was the fire, that he had to lie down and toss the bombs (they do not explode until the safety pin is withdrawn) into the trench to the who needed them most. His clothes were literally shot into rags and ravel, but he himself was untouched in all his hazardous speculations, and he explains his escape by saying "Oh I kept moving."

The Spirit Endured

So through all these hells the spirit of man endured and rejoiced indomitably. But after all, the supply of bombs ran out and the casualties resulting from heavy machine gun and rifle fire from "Stony Mountain," considerably increased the difficulties of holding the line. The bombers could fight no more. One unknown man was seen wounded standing on the parapet of the German front line trench; he had thrown every bomb he carried and, weeping with rage, continued to hurl bricks and stones at the advancing enemy until his end came. Every effort was made to clear out the wounded and reinforcements for the third battalion were sent forward, but still no work could be done and a further supply of bombs was not yet available.

The Lack of Bombs

Bombs were absolutely necessary. At one point four volunteers who went to get more were killed, one after the other, upon which Sergt. Evans, of London, Eng., by way of Vermilion, Alberta, and at one time a private in the Argyll and Sutherland regiment, went back and fortunately returned with a load. He was followed by Sergt. Newell, a cheese-maker from Watford, near Barns, and Sergt.-Major Cuddy, a druggist from Strathroy.

Loss of the Officers

Gradually our men in the second German line were forced back along the German communication trench, and the loss of practically all our officers hampered the fight. The volunteers who were bringing forward the supply of bombs were nearly all killed and the supply died out with them. The British division had been unable to advance on the left, owing to the strength of the fortified position at "Stony Mountain" and the German line north of that fort. The Canadians held their ground, however, jopping for the ultimate success of the attack on the left, in the face of heavy pressure on their exposed left flank.

Forced Back by Numbers

The enemy meanwhile had been accumulating strong forces and finally at about half-past nine, the remnants of the battalion were forced to vacate all the ground that had been gained. The withdrawal was conducted with deliberation through a hat of bullets, but it cost us heavily. One splendid incident amongst many may perhaps explain the reason.

Died With Glory

Lieut. Campbell crawled out of the enemy trench and was carried into our trench in a dying condition by Co.-Sergt.-Major Owen, from Woodstock, Ont. In the words of Kluge Lake: "And no man died that night with more glory, yet many died and there was much glory." The working parties detailed for the construction of the line adjoining our trench

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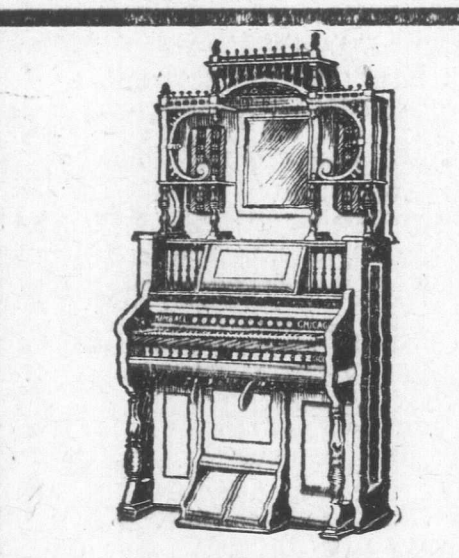
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