

using the trenches, which were by then waist-deep in water, so, after some discussion, the party decided to chance a route above ground.

Breckenridge was the first man out of the communication trench. Hunched well over, loping along at top speed, he willed himself to dodge the enemy bullets.

"Where are you going?" the man behind him shouted.

"Never mind where I'm going," Breckenridge panted. "Don't follow me unless you want to. If you know a better way, go to it. I'm getting out of here as quickly as I can."

When, at last, they tumbled into the Cross Street trench, Breckenridge felt as if a ton of weight had suddenly been removed from his shoulders. With the mud splashing over their uniforms they followed the trench to the Quarry Line. There they filled their ration bags and headed into the traffic stream moving up the Grange Subway. It was hard work, balancing the bags on their shoulders, trying to avoid stepping on the hundreds of men curled up on the wet chalk floor or simply standing, three deep. "Watch where you're going," Breckenridge heard one man grumble; and another: "What size boots do you wear?" Gingerly he and the others picked their way through the narrow subway, squeezed into the headquarters dugout, deposited their loads, and settled down as best they could.

As night fell and the rumble of guns continued and the occasional starshell illuminated the debris of No Man's Land, the Royal Flying Corps swept across the Douai Plain behind the ridge and bombed the Douai airport, where von Richthofen's *Jagstaffel* was quartered. Richthofen's own all-red Albatross barely escaped being blown to pieces, but as the last of the raiders droned off into the night, the German ace was able to get some sleep. It was a fitful slumber; he tossed on his cot, continuing to dream of guns firing above him. Suddenly the dream became a reality: he sat bolt upright in bed at the sound of a low-flying airplane directly above his hut. The noise increased until it filled his quarters. The plane, he realized, could be no more than one hundred feet above him. Instinctively, in his fright, Germany's greatest pilot pulled the blankets over his head just as a bomb shattered the window of the hut. Von Richthofen leaped up, ran out onto the tarmac, pistol in hand, and fired a few shots at the vanishing British plane. Then he returned to his troubled sleep, awaiting the coming dawn.