

BATTLE STORIES FROM WEST FRONT

A SCOTTISH REGULAR.

The sister in chief of the ward indicated a quiet-looking man, who was smoking a well-seasoned briar, with an aspect of serene content.

"There's a fine soldier, in No. 4. It does you good to look after a contented man like that—not that the boys aren't all contented and happy, but he has seen a lot of fighting and is so quiet about it."

In conversation with the sergeant, it was easy to see why the sister was taken with him. The soft, west Scotland voice, the natural good manners, the patience he showed in hearing the wounds he had received in a hard-fought action, all made him very attractive. He was indeed a very fine type of soldier.

The unmistakable inflection in his speaking made me ask at once, "What part of Scotland do you come from?"

"From the West—from Paisley?" "Couldn't you get to some heat-ner home, then?"

"Oh, it wasn't worth while bothering about this in a splendid place, couldn't be better."

"I wonder if I knew your place in Paisley—were you in one of the hills there?"

"Oh, no. I'm a time serving soldier."

"First Expeditionary Force?"

"Not the real first lot, Sir; the second lot—then Le Cat-mau."

"That seemed early enough, but it showed the real Scots caution, and there were the regular opening gambits, until the thing 'warns up.' One day it was, by dropping into the familiar accents of the West."

"The change is too subtle for record in the printed word. One puts oblique questions and gets slant-wise answers. The correct formula is in this fashion:

"You got on all right then?"

"Not bad. They came at us through the standing corn, about six deep. We could just see their heads and shoulders and we let drive at them, but they extended very quick."

"How many rounds would you fellows get off a minute?"

"About twenty, but that's nothing. Some fellows could get off twenty-five or thirty. Then we were on the Aisne and the Marne. I've been out ever since, with two leaves. This wound makes the third leave. I've never been hit before."

"One has to put leading questions about this stage and, by patience, elicit a story. There is nothing of Othello's loquacity in the Scots soldier, but this is his story, briefly, of the battles, sieges, fortunes he had passed."

"I was in the Somme, yes. It was a good show and I got on fine. They gave me the Military Medal. I wasn't for anything much, I just looked after the company when all the officers were hit. Oh, well, our company was first in the enemy's lines; that was all."

"But the Somme was nothing like this present show for good management, though it was pretty good. This time we were in front of a place called Fontaine-les-Croiselles, just at the beginning of this month. We had to take two lines of trenches, and the second was in the Hindenburg line. The Germans have made an awful strong trench, with a good deep tunnel running all the length under the parapet. Common engineering, boards and timbers, but thick overhead cover. The machine gun emplacements are in ferro-concrete, and if the artillery hits them they just bend. They're made up of hoops of iron woven together and filled round with concrete. It would take a very direct hit by a big shell to knock them to bits. The way we take them is with rifle-grenades. We get round the sides of them and lam them with rifle-grenades; that makes the machine-guns keep their heads down and we get into them then. The German machine-gun teams are pretty good soldiers, we must often find them dead at their posts. But the quality of their infantry is not so good. I'm inclined to say that the quality has been getting lower steadily since the Marne."

"Oh, yes, we had to take our second line like that, with rifle, grenades and bombs. It was easy taking the first line, we had to just follow the barrage. The men were a bit too eager and nearly got into our own barrage, but they're very obedient boys and we managed all right. Then when we were consolidating the second line, the Germans put in a good, heavy barrage, big stuff, and they came bombing down the trench. It was well done and I got hit, and our boys had to go back—the Ger-

mans were much too strong—five or six to one.

"Yes, I was left behind, I'd got it in the hip and the arm you see. A German stretcher-bearer bound up my arm with my field dressing, but he did nothing for my hip. I couldn't turn round on the ground, maybe that was it. They left me alone, though some of them passing scowled at me when I asked for a drink of water. I made signs like drinking but none of them would give me any. A great big Saxon—I think he was—came along, and he gave me a drink from his water-bottle. It tasted something like soda-water."

"I was very lucky because they just left me lying where I was. I lay for the night and in the morning our boys took the trench and stuck to it this time. I was carried back to the clearing station."

"I don't think anybody needs to worry about the Hindenburg line. It's well enough constructed, but what we did shows it can be broken into. Oh, yes the wire's pretty deep—too deep and too thick, for a shell or two will soon blow a path through it. We only want a bit of a path and it's all right, that's enough for us. You see, it's always the foot soldier that has the last say; you can blow a trench to bits easy enough, but it's the infantry that has to hold it after it's taken. It seems an awful cocky thing to say that our chaps can beat the Germans any day, but it's a fact, all the same. The Germans are not the men they used to be and our men are getting better as time goes on."

"How do the men now-a-days compare with the men at the first I mean the old Regular Army?"

"I asked."

"They're just the same. The spirit is just the same in the fighting, and they're very obedient."

"Then you're a great believer in the barrack square soldier?"

My Scotsman smiled at that.

"I'll not go so far as to say that, Sir," he said. "The barrack square and the long training makes the best soldier. You can't help thinking your regiment is the best in the army, when an instructor is always drumming it into you. The barrack square goes for making esprit de corps and that's a great thing, surely. Then men now haven't had the same time as the old soldiers and keep cheery when things are not so good as they might be."

"But, mind you, this is a great affair now. The artillery is just splendid and you always get your food up to time, and if you get hit, you get splendid treatment."

"And how are you getting on yourself, sergeant?" (That is a Scots joke.) He took the cue.

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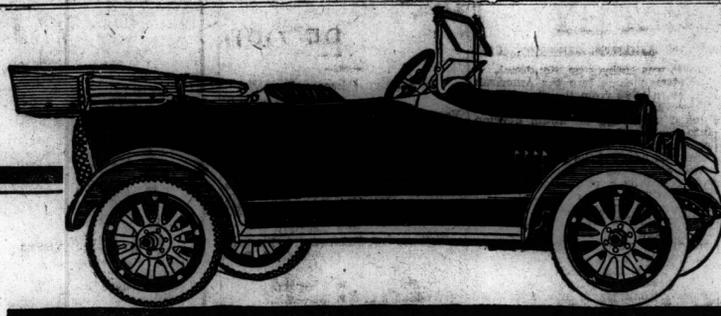
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POTATO POINTERS

(From the Country Gentleman)

The potato patch should be laid out in long rows neighboring the corn patch, if you go in for a good sized area, so it will be handy for one or two horse cultivators during the season. For this purpose the rows should be three feet apart. With all hand work, the space may be skimped a little.

The modern style is to plant potatoes shallow and keep up the dirt afterwards as needed. The home gardener often hasn't the tools or the time for much after banking and may be permitted to plant a little more deeply. On newly turned sod, a good depth, say six inches, is advisable so that the roots will not find themselves in an air space and out of contact with the earth.

I drop my pieces of seed potatoes 14 to 16 inches apart in the furrow, then cover with the hand plow by making two trips to the furrow, throwing the dirt back on each side. The dark green bud-like plants generally show their heads in a fortnight, and so do the rascally young weeds, for which the wheel hoes and the wheel cultivator teeth are proper discipline.

Level cultivation is the thing until the plants get quite large or threaten to fall over, when they may be gradually banked with the hand plow, seconded by the good old hand hoe. If subject to blight give early treatment of Bordeaux mixture, and be prepared to dose the Colorado beetle with Paris green or arsenate of lead.

My own tubers are a trifle scabby, and I shall soak them for a couple of hours in a solution of half a pint of formaldehyde mixed with 15 gallons of water. After soaking I shall cut them, like the others, into planting pieces having two eyes each. It is well to plant right after cutting. Some of the smaller potatoes will not be cut, for the new plant needs a sizeable amount of nutriment.

Incidentally if you take seed potatoes out of a bin there is no object in selecting the biggest for these may have been solitary individuals in the hill and not representative of a thrifty all-round family. Take the medium run of the bin now, and

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this fall select seed from the best lot of hills. Seed potatoes, of course, should not be allowed to sprout before planting. Keep them dark and cool.

A peck of seed will plant about 125 hills, and in good condition will yield 20 to thirty fold. That is, a bushel of planted potatoes will give you a crop of 20 to 30 bushels.

SWEDISH LOSSES. (Associated Press) Stockholm, June 9.—Sweden's merchant fleet lost, either through the war or by accident, in the first three months of this year, thirteen steamers with a total tonnage of 22,932; two motor-driven vessels with a total of 2,623 tons, and six sailing vessels aggregating 1,153 tons. Including three steamers lost by decision of prize courts, and other vessels withdrawn from service, the whole fleet has been reduced by 42 units. The excess of tonnage lost over newly built or purchased tonnage amounts to 15,429 tons. Many sailors, seeing no outlook for work under present conditions, have temporarily given up the sea and taken positions inland, many of them going to farms.

CLOTHES RATIONED. (Associated Press) London, June 9.—Clothes are the next thing to be rationed in this country. This is forecasted in the recommendations of a committee appointed to review the general wool position in view of the necessity of ensuring a reserve of wool for military purposes. It is recommended that a limited number of articles in which wool forms a constituent part should be standardized for the home trade. There are stocks of cloth and clothing in the hands of merchants and retailers sufficient to clothe the population with reasonable economy for twelve months, but it says that great care should be exercised to conserve supplies.

RED FOR PEACE. (Associated Press) London, June 9.—Mansion House, official residence of the Lord Mayor of London, Sir William Dunn, now black from the soke of the city, will be painted a bright red if peace comes this year. The Lord Mayor said that if peace came before his term of office expired, he would paint the Mansion House red and entertain the soldiers from his own neighborhood on elaborate scale.

Contracts for 2,450,000 pairs of shoes for the army and the navy, have been let by Washington at an average price of \$4.85.



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