

It has already been stated that four British guns were taken in a wood comparatively early in the evening of the 22nd. In the course of that night, and under the heaviest machine-gun fire, this wood was assaulted by the Canadian Scottish, Sixteenth Battalion of the Third Brigade, and the Tenth Battalion of the Second Brigade, which was intercepted for this purpose on its way to a reserve trench. The battalions were respectively commanded by Lieut.-Col. Leckie and Lieut.-Col. Boyle, and after a most fierce struggle in the light of a misty moon they took the position at the point of the bayonet. At midnight the Second Battalion, under Colonel Watson, and the Toronto Regiment, Queen's Own, Third Battalion, under Lieut.-Col. Rennie, both of the First Brigade, brought up much-needed reinforcement, and though not actually engaged in the assault were in reserve.

All through the following days and nights these battalions shared the fortunes and misfortunes of the Third Brigade. An officer who took part in the attack describes how the men about him fell under the fire of the machine guns, which, in his phrase, played upon them "like a watering pot." He added quite simply, "I wrote my own life off." But the line never wavered. When one man fell another took his place, and with a final shout the survivors of the two battalions flung themselves into the wood. The German garrison was completely demoralized, and the impetuous advance of the Canadians did not cease until they reached the far side of the wood and intrenched themselves there in the position so dearly gained. They had, however, the disappointment of finding that the guns had been blown up by the enemy, and later on in the same night a most formidable concentration of artillery fire, sweeping the wood as a tropical storm sweeps the leaves from a forest, made it impossible for them to hold the position for which they had sacrificed so much.

The fighting continued without intermission all through the night, and, to those who observed the indications that the attack was being pushed with ever-growing strength, it hardly seemed possible that the Canadians, fighting in positions so difficult to defend and so little the subject of deliberate choice, could maintain their resistance for any long period. At 6 A. M. on Friday it became apparent that the left was becoming more and more involved, and a powerful German attempt to outflank it developed rapidly. The consequences, if it had been broken or outflanked, need not be insisted upon. They were not merely local.

It was therefore decided, formidable as the attempt undoubtedly was, to try and give relief by a counter-attack upon the first line of German trenches, now far, far advanced from those originally occupied by the French. This was carried out by the Ontario First and Fourth Battalions of the First Brigade, under Brig.-Gen. Mercer, acting in combination with a British brigade.

It is safe to say that the youngest private in the rank, as he set his teeth for the advance, knew the task in front of him, and the youngest subaltern knew all that rested upon its success. It did not seem that any human being could live in the shower of shot and shell which began to play upon the advancing troops. They suffered terrible casualties. For a short time every other man seemed to fall, but the attack was pressed ever closer and closer.

The Fourth Canadian Battalion at one moment came under a particularly withering fire. For a moment—not more—it wavered. Its most gallant commanding officer, Lieut.-Col. Burchill, carrying, after an old fashion, a light cane, coolly and cheerfully rallied his men and, at the very moment when his example had infected them, fell dead at the head of his battalion. With a hoarse cry of anger they sprang forward (for, indeed, they loved him), as if to avenge his death. The astonishing attack which followed—pushed home in the face of direct frontal fire made in broad daylight by battalions whose names should live for ever in the memories of soldiers—was carried to the first