



WITH the exception of his father, that lad was, three years ago, the most hopeless bum we had around the town. The only creditable job I ever saw him tackle was a blacksmith nearly twice his weight who started in to horse whip the old man. The blighter had owed the smith an account for a long time, and at last gave his creditor to understand that he didn't mean to pay it.

"The boy didn't stop to reflect that he didn't owe the old man so much as the board and housing of a pup at any time since he could remember. But he was his Dad; so he took the old fellow's part and, merely reversing for the time the order of primogeniture, he fought for his father as a bear would have fought in defence of her cub.

"And he gave that fellow such a pasting there was some talk of the boy being run in for manslaughter. Fortunately, however, the man recovered but he'll take the marks of that thrashing with him to his grave.

"The boy disappeared when things were looking hot, and the next thing we heard was that he had enlisted. But it woke up the father. He had gone all to pieces since the wife died when the boy was barely two years old, but starting from the day the young 'un fought for him, he seemed to pull himself together, and now there he is running that grain separator for Bob Carson.

"And the boy? Well, sir, it's an amazing story, but it's as true as gospel, he has brought more credit to this town than anything or anybody else belonging to it ever did."

Such, in brief, was the prologue of the hardware store-keeper to one of the finest and most cheerful records of all such that Canada has built up in the war. Its "hero" was a young man whose praises were then ringing all over the country side, whose personality and wonderful deeds were then exciting the admiration and esteem of at least one great nation of the allied cause which already had engraved the name of Canada large and deep upon her tablet of grateful memories.

And this was but a western Canadian wastrel—in pre-war days notorious as one who couldn't stick at a job of work when it was given him. Perfectly honest, a well set up, good looking lad, but in other respects as flabby and unreliable as any spoilt child of the streets. But it must have been in the blood. He had had a mother of whom no one who knew her had anything to say but kind things, and who shall say that it was not the hereditary caste in that woman's soul which had predetermined the niche that was waiting for her boy in the temple of

fame—a place peculiarly his own in the regards of a great people.

The umteenth battalion of the Canadian infantry had been safely deposited at a port on the English Channel, and ten days later, a draft from it which included Private George Blackett, No. 069943 was rushed to the Somme front to reinforce the line which had suffered severely in a recent advance.

By chance (or was it something better) the regimental sergeant-major of the unit to which Private Blackett was now attached being hard up for non-coms, spotted the clean cut, upstanding lad from the western prairie town. The boy "took the sergeant's eye," and after rapping out a few questions, he was made a full corporal on the spot.



That was the first independent acknowledgment that boy ever remembered having received that there was something in him that raised him at least one step above the dead level of the common herd of men. That boy recalls that "lift"—so unexpected, and yet so thoroughly justified—as the greatest day in his life, and he will never forget that sergeant-major.

Now this lad had "roughed it" quite a bit, had done pretty well little else but rough it all his life, but he had never known life under anything of the terrifying conditions into which he was suddenly flung, within a day or two of his landing on French soil.

"Shell fire" is easily written, but it is impossible for the one who merely reads the phrase to realize it. There are no words in any literature to describe its terror. Imagination fails; exaggeration is impossible. Your ghastliest concept of hell is colourless and tame beside a "drum fire" bombardment.

No rhetoric here, my friend; a big push, a day's advance assails every sense, till giants break down and rugged lads tremble into nerveless aphasia.

Yet here comes the amazing spectacle of an Irish platoon leader with a little Irish terrier, fairly bristling with Irish loyalty to his master, surveying what promises to be the most terrifying experience they have ever faced with no less concern than they have on so many occasions sized up a ratting match.

And this was not your old fashioned spick and span "officer" pointing with a presentation jewelled sword to where his men must go, but a real live thoroughly clay-caked leader of men, with a long lineage of fighting Irish blood in his veins.

By and by he mounts the parapet with—a football! and a "Time's up; come on boys!"

Can he be mad in this frightful orgy of machine made murder? Not a bit of it. "Follow up!" he yells, and kicks off amid tempestuous cheers. The names of men in his platoon have been written on that ball which a Kerry man from far Alberta is now dribbling with deadly intent towards the first German line.

Such is the method and the spirit of the attack of those new citizen armies that have been improvised from the factory, the farm and the farragos of western life, even when bayonets drip and barrels are too hot to hold.

And when the position is taken, consolidation is the next step and a counter-attack by the foe—perhaps in the dark with new horrors added, half seen by the transient gleam of flares.

It was into such a blood wetter that this young Canadian corporal now flung himself, following his gallant leader and that faithful little tyke whose fidelity and courage were more than human. And if they "thought" at all, it was simply getting there and sticking to it while life and the power of sensing things were theirs.

Sixteen men of this western unit dashed out under Lieutenant X, who was struck dead at once by machine gun fire. This frightful weapon was making new revelations and here a specimen of it sprayed the Canadian lines with cruel havoc.

Time after time those heroic lads charged it, but the boldest withered away and survivors cowered in ditches or behind haystacks to escape the ceaseless stream—ten shots a second, six hundred a minute!

This little band of Canucks were great sufferers. "I see two Huns," cried Corporal Blackett, suddenly. His officer got up on his knees to see, and fell back dead. Up rose Blackett now and fired. One grey

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