

*Gets Material  
from  
Everywhere in Canada*

# CANADIAN COURIER

*Goes to  
Canadians  
all over Canada*

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## RED COURCELLETTE

THE Machine Gun Officer sat on the sofa beside an attentive listener and made a diagram on a scrap of paper while he talked. The left sleeve of his tunic was decorated with two little stripes of gold braid, and the breast, with the snippet of white-and-purple ribbon which marks the winners of the Military Cross. His right wrist has a lumpy, reddish scar where a German bullet tore the muscles six months ago; but it did not interfere with his sketching.

"This," he said, drawing a small oblong, "is the village of Courcellette. This is the central square, and this is the road running through. The road to Bapaume was to the left." He indicated it by a curving single line with an arrow-head for direction.

"Courcellette was a regular French village, built of brick, but all in ruins from our shells. We were two miles away from it on the afternoon of the fifteenth of September, and we did not expect to fight that day. It was a beautiful autumn day, clear and blue. There had been frost the night before. Our O. C. gathered us in his dug-out behind the lines at half-past two, explained what we had to do, and gave us our maps. I wish I had mine to show you, but they took it from me in the hospital.

"Do you know Captain Kettle? That's our colonel. Little, fierce, red, bristling moustache—no mercy—by James! He court-martialled seven of his officers, but they deserved it. No better officer in France, and, you know, the colonel makes the regiment. He was in the Lancers once, and then in the Mounted Police. He was a prize-fighter among other things, and always fought in the class above him because he could not find his match in his own.

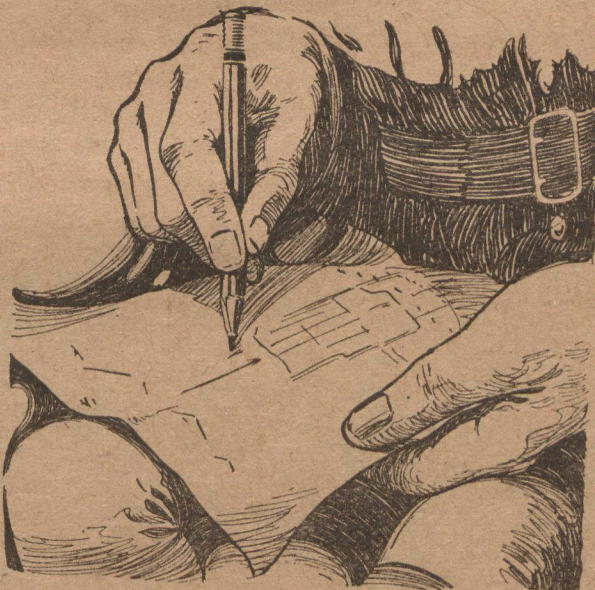
"After we got our orders, we had to explain everything to our non-coms, and get up to the front. It took some hustling. For example, I had charge of thirteen machine-guns, and I had to show each crew on the map exactly what position they were to take up, and be sure that every man understood what he had to do. Our orders were to go right through the village and dig ourselves in beyond the German trench on the far side.

"It all came off exactly as it was planned. We passed through the Herringbones who were entrenched on the top of a gentle slope towards Courcellette. We had only fourteen hundred yards to go." He marked the distance by a faint line, with an arrow-head at each end. "At 6.15 p.m."—putting down the figures—"we were here, at the southern edge of Courcellette, and at 6.25, we were on the other side and digging ourselves in. We did not stop to make prisoners; that was done by the battalion that followed us. It was broad daylight, for we were working on summer time.

"THE Germans had their trench all along the southern side of the village." Here he deepened the southern boundary of the oblong. "We could see their rifles pointed at us as we came along. They might have got every one of us, but they were demoralized by our bombardment, and they put up their hands. They had no spirit left. I don't know what units they were.

"We" (the Bounding Bluenoses) "had to work along this street." He drew it, a double line parallel to the first and to the left. "It was full of dug-outs"—indicated by short dashes—"and the Germans fought from house to house, shooting round corners. You had to go carefully, like fighting Indians.

A TALE OF THE BOUNDING BLUENOSES—and others—as told by a Canadian Officer Boy to the Author. Red Courcellette, as he described it, was no lurid epic of conscious heroism. No, it was a piece of work planned on schedule time, carried out to a dot by the clock and the diagram, a day's work or so as the crippled hand traced it on his knees. The plain, unvarnished tale of the boy who had been through it all conveyed the impression that he had assisted in a military parade. That's the British streak in the Canadian, perhaps. But we know it's never mere doggedness. And the Canadian is never a machine. He just works to the schedule.



By ARCHIBALD MacMECHAN

"The second German trench was just along the other side of the village," He deepened the northern boundary. "And beyond that was a light railway"—a dotted line—"leading to an engineer's dump just outside the village to the left. We crossed both; there was no resistance any more than at the first; the Germans all put their hands up. We began digging. The soil was hard chalk. Every now and then the Germans left behind would fire into us. There were the Germans in front of us; and somewhere away to the right, a field-gun—it must have been—was enfilading us. There was no need to urge the men to dig. I placed the machine-guns along our front." He indicated their positions by a series of emphatic dots. One was posted on each of the roads that flanked the trench of the Bounding Bluenoses. "About ten minutes after we got through, the Potagedepois took up their position on our left—there's a good regiment—they're all right—the Princely Patricks were on our left, and to their left again were the Regal Canucks." He put down famous initials on his diagram.

"At this point"—making a small square at the end of the further trench—"the Germans had a trench-mortar emplacement; and, as I came along quite a bunch of them, about thirty, came up out of it. I was alone now. I did not know what had become of the others. I was carrying a German rifle I had picked up, and tried to use it on them, but it wouldn't fire. I didn't know how to work it. So I threw it down and went on, flourishing my revolver, calling to them to surrender. I got a bullet in my right wrist, when my hand was up in the air. It came near my head. I shifted my revolver to my left hand and kept on. They surrendered," he concluded in a matter-of-fact tone; "they were badly scared."

HE did not say so, but it was for this piece of good luck, combined with other routine work, which gave him the right to wear that snippet of white-and-purple ribbon. No Military Cross or Companion of the Distinguished Order will ever admit that he earned his distinction. He did nothing more than his brothers in arms is the burden of his song; or else he honestly doesn't know what he got it for.

"Decorations are easy to get along the western front, except the V. C.," wrote one of the first Canadian M. C.'s. The standard of heroism has been raised in this war.

It seemed to the listener that he had read of Courcellette as a bloody battle, that there had been heavy losses, and that once again the Canadians had won renown in the stricken field, at the price of many slain. The plain, unvarnished tale of the boy who had been through it all conveyed the impression that he had assisted in a military parade. Any emotion that he manifested was satisfaction that a somewhat elaborate programme had been carried out exactly as it had been planned, that there had been no mistakes and no hitches; and that the time-table had been followed to the minute. It was the sort of satisfaction one might feel in a well-played game of chess. That the Germans were a factor in the game could barely be inferred from his unemotional narrative. In response to questions, the Machine Gun Officer admitted that there had been losses. There was the triple barrage to advance through; but he made light even of the barrage.

"It's all nonsense about the shell-holes, about men falling into them and being lost. The ground we had to cover was like a plowed field. Yes, it is quite true that we advanced at a walk in perfect order. The long lines absolutely straight. The boys went on smiling. You saw a shell burst and some fall, but the lines went on." There were three curtains of fire, three hedges of bursting shell to pass through, before the Canadians even reached the Germans. To get Canadians to go ahead, to follow their officers is never a problem; they may not be soldiers, but they are fighters.

He conveyed the impression that it was not altogether impossible to dodge the shattering projectiles in a barrage. The Germans do not traverse their guns, i.e., swing the muzzles round from side to side, spraying death like water from a hose; they keep firing straight ahead. You note where the shells fall and take your chance. Still the Bounding Bluenoses lost heavily. Of the bronzed, eager, young officers who gathered in the colonel's dug-out on the afternoon of the fifteenth, very few were left next day.