

Corporal Tells Of A Victory With Bayonets

Struggling groups of snarling men, drunk with the mad lust of battle, as they shoot and stab and slash up and down the winding streets of a French village—the road of cannon, the rattle of small arms and the angry rasp of crossed bayonets; the thousand and one details of a hand to hand combat—all are described in gripping word pictures by Charles Tardieu in a new instalment of "Impressions of a Corporal," published in a recent number of the Figaro. He tells of the storming by a French battalion of a hamlet held by the Germans.

"Up to nightfall," he writes, "they had held out obstinately, clinging like leeches to the bank of the canal. For five hours our seventy-fives had sprinkled them, but, constantly reinforced, their line kept up its fire, having doubtless received orders to hold the position until dark. It would have been madness to try to take the bridge, for a number of machine guns were trained upon it.

"The infantry fire ceased with the close of day. At intervals our batteries would open upon them, to keep them busy. Under cover of the darkness we were able to reach the road, three hundred yards from the canal. We passed there a night of naps, broken by vigils, by patrols and spasmodic firing.

"With the dawn our skirmishers advanced to the canal and crept cautiously across the bridge, unopposed. They had gone during the night, apparently afraid of being taken between two fires, and were retrenching themselves in the village of W—. From the canal to W— stretched two thousand yards of marshy ground planted with osiers and brambles; here a beet field, there some vines.

Advance Through Water

"The bridge cross we advance, Indian file, along the sides of the road, tramping through the water and mud, while our skirmishers slip far ahead, dodging into the brush, halting, searching, advancing, covering every inch of ground. A shot and a skirmisher, uncovered on the road, falls. We halt and the major makes his dispositions for the attack. The village must be taken at once before they have had time to make its defences strong. A patrol goes out to reconnoitre, the men slipping through the undergrowth like cats and disappearing from sight. The fog melts slowly, the sky lights up with rosy streaks, the sun peeks up over the horizon and a slight breeze gently stirs the leaves. It will be a fine day.

"We wait, hidden under cover of the woods, far from the road. A biscuit, a bite of chocolate, a mouthful of tepid water and a pipe. Our precaution is good, for along the line of the road, easy and natural target, several shells fall, tearing up huge gouts of earth and stone.

"One, two, three shots. They are firing upon our patrol. Two minutes pass, then a volley followed by a lively fusillade of Shileas for a moment. Three shells come crashing through the trees and tear huge holes in the soft earth. The patrol comes back. It seems that the Germans have dug trenches at the edge of the village, to the north and south of the road, and pierced loopholes in the garden walls and houses where they are entrenched.

Shells Meet Advance.

"On all sides but that upon which we face, W— is masked by curtains of trees. It does not matter. We could not hope to take them by surprise and at least we will be able to see our way clearly. The most difficult task is to approach without losing too many men. We must hurry, for not knowing our position, their heavy guns of 150 and 120 are searching methodically through our woods. The shells announce their coming, whistling like locomotives, crashing through the branches, digging huge holes and bursting with a terrifying noise. Bits of metal are flying through the trees, are plunging into the earth. We are stretched upon the ground and—do I hear snoring?"

"Patience! Fear of danger? One becomes habituated to worse than that. These 'pollus' sleep in the mud while 200 pounds shells moving at the rate of 500 yards a second, are striking all about them, and detonations that would shake stone walls lull their slumbers. Is anything an impossibility to such as these?"

"The third! Un, everybody! Forward!" someone calls. A kick wakes up the sleepers and the company, our captain at its head, traversing the road, inclines to the right through a clump of chestnuts and bushes.

"We are going to turn the village," says the quartermaster sergeant, who has come from the commander's station, "while our comrades attack in front!" And he rubs his hands contentedly.

"He is a jolly Provencal, with an accent steeped in garlic. And a brave chap, too, who has been wounded once, but refused to be taken from the firing line. He laughs.

Will Have Some Party.

"You understand," he explains, "old man B— (the major) is going to let loose a frontal attack, under cover of the trees, with coffee mills (machine guns) and seventy-fives, while we are going to hit them so hard on the left flank that they will not have time to say 'Out!' We will have some party!"

"We have to force our way through the tangle of brush, and the branches sling our faces. The thorn bushes hook themselves upon our great coats and, our heavy shoes go 'flick, flick, into the tangle. There is not the slightest vestige of a path. Nevertheless we make good progress. The newly risen sun sends its rays through the foliage where the birds are twittering.

"All the time the great shells are

keeping up their hellish clamor, waking the echoes of the wood. A change of direction brings us in the direction of the village, and we go forward with prudence.

"Suddenly rifle fire opens from W— The attack has commenced. We can hear our men answering. The German field pieces with their dry and hurried note join in the concert, and their shells fly back to burst upon the reserves—who do not exist!"

Four Germans Slain.

"A clearing is ahead of us. We cross it, creeping like snails for a hundred yards. Then the woods begin again. A scout slips back quietly—a German patrol is advancing toward us. The order is given to let them pass, then bring them down, all but one, with the bayonet. We open out and lie down, making a net into which the patrol will advance. Now they come, four men and a sergeant, advancing ten paces apart. Now they are on the line—now they are in the trap! Bayonets glimmer, a German turns, opens his mouth to shout, but only coughs as a sharp blade strikes home. The other three men do not even see the death that strikes them. The sergeant, seized by a dozen hands and hurled to the ground, with bayonets at his throat, rolls eye of terror. He is told that the slightest move or noise means instant death. While our sergeant major, an Alsatian, questions him, his eyes never leave the points that menace him.

"We learn that one battalion—a battalion sacrificed—has been ordered to hold W— to the last man, while a half company is holding the village to the northeast. Two men take the prisoner to the rear, while another runs to the major with the information. The rest of us hurry on, for things are warming up upon the left.

"The heavy ordnance is gradually quieting, but a battery of seventy-sevens, probably posted upon a height, is ceaselessly sending its shells every ten seconds along the edges of the village. They come, whistling like rockets and burst with angry squalls, while the continual fusillade fills in the interval with its rattle.

"We hurry through the cover, filled with that nervousness that one always feels at the approach of a combat, and which is concealed in a hundred ways—chewing a blade of grass, twisting one's moustache mechanically, fussing with a badly rolled cigarette, munching a biscuit or chewing a plug of tobacco. Not a word now, each one thinks of himself, of his rifle, his cartridges, his bayonet. Only the irrespressible M—, the quartermaster sergeant, places his finger upon his pulse, then loudly declares that he is not the least bit nervous.

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Wake Up! New Brunswick!

This World War Demands the Supreme Effort of a United Empire

Shall Our Province Fall Behind?

It should not be supposed that contributions of a couple of thousand men, a few odd dollars, some barrels of potatoes and boxes of socks constitute our rightful sacrifice. So far not more than a handful of people in all this country have any actual realization of what the war means. These few have given their husbands or their sons to the cause of Empire. The remainder have done nothing in comparison with their abilities and their opportunities.

Our national life, our peace, our prosperity and our happiness are so dependent upon the well-being of the British Empire that only by playing our part in that Empire can we maintain our fortunate position.

Up to the present ninety-nine per cent. of us do not realize what sacrifice means, nor what is being endured by those nearer to the firing line than we are. We must give, not only of our material wealth, but of our blood, and not niggardly, but with a generous hand.

None of us wish to part with our husbands and our children, but it is better that they should serve the Empire and save our homes than that our enemies should triumph and all that we hold dear be taken from us.

*"For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old."*

The 55th Regiment still requires five hundred men from New Brunswick. These men must be furnished at once, and must be recruited from New Brunswick homes. We cannot ask strangers to take our places. The duty before us is clear, however hard the part may seem. Some will lose their lives; others will be maimed; many will return.

MEN OF NEW BRUNSWICK—Once upon a time there was a man who said that he would rather be a live coward than a dead hero.

What is Your Choice at the Present Time? The Question is Up to You Today!