

# GO SINGING DOWN VALE OF DEATH

Grim War Story of the  
Fighting Men  
of Wales

The Scene Back of Ghelvelt in  
Earlier Days of the World Con-  
flict—The First Battle of Ypres  
— One Welsh Regiment Lost  
700 Men in a Little More Than  
Two Days

(By F. J. Sleath.)  
One man goes to his death with  
a smile on his face and a jest on his lips;  
others with a spoken or unspoken prayer  
rising from the depths of their inmost  
being. Some evince a perturbation  
which their utmost efforts cannot con-  
ceal; others display a calmness and a  
chill control which has to be seen be-

fore the deadly purpose which it hides  
can be fully appreciated. Each and  
every man of the British army, drawn  
as they are from different tribes and  
different countries, display some char-  
acteristic, individual or national, which  
the approach to the mystery of death  
calls out from their inner self. Here is  
a tale of men who went singing into the  
valley of the shadow.

The German advance on Paris had  
been stayed and repulsed, and each side  
was feeling for an opening nearer the  
sea. The British army had driven the  
outlying German troops from Lower  
Belgium, and Ypres had been cleared of  
the invader, but in October of 1914,  
when the incident took place, the  
counter-advance had been stopped by  
the accumulating German hordes, and  
they in turn were pressing back on  
Ypres with a weight which, when con-  
sidered in units alone, seemed bound  
to crush the small British force opposing  
them. For three weeks one British divi-  
sion—the immortal Seventh—held a  
frontage of more than four miles, but  
the incomparable mettle of the troops  
bore the onset of nearly ten times the  
number, and in spite of fearful carnage  
—several battalions simply ceased to  
exist—the position was held; and the  
possession of the Ypres salient today  
forms a splendid tribute to the martial  
prowess of the trained bands of Britain.

The Menin road ran straight through  
the centre of the Zonnebeke-Zandvoorde  
line held by the Seventh division. The  
road left Ypres by the Menin gate, and  
mounted the wooded high ground above  
Hooge, and then swept in a southeasterly  
direction to the small township of  
Ghelvelt.

The Sharp Shooters.

The village had been the scene of  
bitter fighting. The Germans had been  
beaten out by a Guards regiment, and  
though the position had finally to be  
abandoned, at the time we speak of it  
was still in our hands. The fiercest

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ly do any work, and would nearly smother  
at times. I had many remedies, some only  
relieving me for a time. I got a box of  
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onto, Ont.

German attacks came along this broad  
highway between Ypres and Menin, and  
once, taking advantage of a thick mist,  
the Germans marched right through the  
first British trenches, and took up a  
position behind which made the front  
line almost untenable, and it was only  
by the lucky chance which included in  
the ranks of the regiment holding the  
sector on one side of the road, some of  
the finest snipers in the British army,  
that the advance was stayed—stayed by  
the individual marksmanship of men who  
were the legitimate forerunners of the  
splendid body of snipers the British  
army now possesses.

But though the attack had been stop-  
ped for the moment, and on the evening  
of this late October day there was no  
infantry fighting, every portent indi-  
cated a lull before a greater outburst  
of the storm; yet the peculiar character-  
istic of the British soldier which shows  
itself in the tendency to carry out the  
details of his wonted daily life even  
though the heavens threaten to fall, and  
overwhelm him, manifested itself now  
in innumerable little happenings all over  
the field of battle.

In every house behind the firing line  
men were washing themselves free from  
the dirt of battle, just as they would  
cleanse themselves from the dust of the  
roadway in the home-land, and the  
little inn just within the shelter of the  
belt of woodland which traverses the  
road behind Ghelvelt, two British of-  
ficers were having their hair cut. The  
prosaic task had just been finished when  
the sound of many voices singing in  
unison was borne to their ears, and they  
rushed out to discover the cause.

Away to the eastward the German  
guns were lighting the sky as they  
scattered the iron hail behind the Brit-  
ish lines, and the blue flashes of the  
bursting shrapnel cast a fitful dazzling  
radiance over the land. To the north-  
ward the farms and buildings round  
Veldhoek were on fire, and on the other  
side of the road, as far as the eye could  
reach, the blazing steeplings bore witness  
to the ruthlessness of invasion and the  
ruin of a prosperous country. The  
light from the burning countryside lit

up lengths of the roadway, and through  
the patches of illumination staggered the  
forms of wounded soldiers, some sing-  
ly, some in groups helping each other,  
all seeking the haven of the field ambu-  
lance; and over in the fields at the side  
of the road a dim mass of men could  
be seen standing, and above the din of  
the desultory gunfire floated the full-  
throated voices of grown men singing  
in harmony the folksongs of the Welsh  
fatherland.

"Men of Harlech."

There were Welsh regiments in that  
historic first battle of Ypres. One of  
them lost 700 men in a little more than  
two days of fighting, and the remnants  
of this regiment had been sent back  
beyond Ghelvelt to await the arrival of  
drafts to make up their strength before  
being plunged anew into the holocaust;  
and on the battle-eve the national in-  
stinct had asserted itself, and like the  
gladiators of old calling out the salute  
to their emperor before engaging in the  
death struggle, these Welsh soldiers of  
the British regular army had gathered  
themselves together to pour out their  
national fervor in the war songs of  
their race. "Men of Harlech" rolled out  
its stirring measures, and then followed  
many songs and hymns which their  
fathers had learned on the moors  
and mountain sides of the homeland.

Of the two officers who had been at-  
tracted by the singing, one was a major  
with years of service comprising half  
a lifetime, a man scarred in the wars of  
a generation; the other was a subaltern  
whose first "blooding" had taken place  
the day before; yet the tears were cours-  
ing down the veteran's furrowed cheeks,  
and the unrestrained sobbing of the sub-  
altern seemed altogether in harmony.  
But the tears were not tears of weak-  
ness. Each man felt a new spirit enter-  
ing his soul, the spirit which pours out  
life itself in defence of a chosen ideal;  
the wounded who had gathered in  
groups at the side of the road to listen  
went on their way strengthened and  
cheered; and the men passing up the  
road to the relief of the hard-pressed  
regiments beyond felt new life burning  
in their veins.

The Welsh have always been a na-  
tion of inspired singers. All down the  
roll of history, when clouds of foreign  
oppression were gathering thickest about  
their national aspirations, the songs of  
their hearts have stirred the people to  
new effort. But nothing more touch-  
ing and inspiring has ever been record-  
ed in their national story than the spec-  
tacle of these strong men, sundered  
from their fatherland and faced by a fiery  
ordeal in which most of them were or-  
dained to perish, going singing down the  
vale of death.

Concerning Maize

The country growing the biggest  
crop of maize (says a writer in the  
London Daily Chronicle)—the article of  
food that we are asked earnestly to  
add to our dietary—is the United  
States of America. The annual produc-  
tion of maize varies between 2,750,-

000,000 and 3,000,000,000 bushels. Italy,  
the next biggest grower, manages to  
provide about a thirtieth of the Am-  
erican quantity. Egypt, Roumania and  
Russia are also producers. Russia is  
the greatest rye grower, and she also  
tops the table in wheat. Germany fur-  
nishes her population with about twice  
as much wheat as does England.



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