

Presently, we came to a spot where the parapet had been badly smashed by a Boche shell that evening, though the darkness was too black to permit of my realising that till the point was passed. My guide called a halt here, and I heard him groping in the wet blackness before me.

"Now," said he, after a few moments, "if you will put your left foot on my shoulder, here, and let your right foot get a bit of a grip on the side of the parados, the next step forward will clear you. Then please wait a moment for me to get in front again."

Those were not his precise words, because his English was only a little easier for him than my French for me. But that was the gist of it. It is characteristic of trench life that it quickly teaches everyone to recognise and obey superior knowledge. I obeyed my good guide before realising what he was doing. In obeying him, I learned that he had calmly placed himself in a hole in which the water reached his waist, to make sure of my getting past an awkward corner without inconvenience. He could not have done it otherwise, without the exposure for me of climbing out of the trench and going "overland"; and there was considerable dropping rifle fire from across the way. He had a