

bravery and are positively the greatest heroes in this war. Captains, Majors, Colonels and Generals all get more or less glory, some receive decorations and many obtain higher rank, but not one of them suffered as much as Private Jones or Private Smith, nor have they been exposed to danger once where Jones and Smith have risked their lives ten times. Nor do I wish to insinuate for one instant, that the officers have shirked their duty. They most positively have not, but their duty does not call them to be so constantly exposed.

After one of these Somme tours was over and our men reached their miserable billets, some of them, great strong men, broke down and cried through absolute exhaustion. But mark you they did not break down until they were out of the line. They were so weary and tired; they had been shelled all the time by horrible screaming shells; rattled at by machine guns if they so much as showed their noses; and sniped at by snipers if for one instant they exposed themselves. When they got out of it, some of them broke down as I have said, but next day they would laugh and be quite all right.

Six men were detailed in the line to carry in each stretcher case, and although this was a very dangerous and almost superhuman task it was always readily undertaken by the comrades of the wounded men. Usually it was a question of coming in over the top as the task was absolutely impossible through the trenches, not only on account of the greater mud, but also because the trenches were so tortuous that a stretcher could not be carried through them.

They wallowed for hours through the mud, passed through all the dangers, stumbled and fell and struggled through the inky black of the night. But they hung on and arrived at the dressing station sweating, breathless, plastered with mud and completely done in.

I give these men full credit for their pluck and determination. I have never seen men do so much for one another as they will in this war game, and it is a good thing that such is the case, as otherwise it would have been quite a different tale for those who fell.

It was while we were on this front that our Quartermaster, Captain Glover, conceived the idea of supplying the men in the line with home-made Tommy Cookers. He had hundreds of empty jam tins collected, and promptly got the pioneers punching ventilating holes in them. Long strips of sacking were next cut the width of the length of the can, these were profusely smeared with grease, rolled and placed in the tins and a Tommy Cooker was ready, which would burn for several hours.

On our first trip of eight days into the Somme, eighteen hundred of these cookers were used by our men and instead of existing on bully beef and biscuits, they heated their Maconachie (tinned ration) and actually toasted their bread. This was a great comfort to our men and helped them wonderfully.

Another dreadful enemy that we had to combat in the trenches was trench feet, an exceedingly painful condition, and practically the same thing as frozen feet. It starts with a general swelling of every part of the foot, which becomes bright red in color, glazed and shining in appearance, followed by a white and sodden condition of the skin. If allowed to progress the condition becomes very serious, resulting in the necessity for free incisions and in some cases even mortification sets in and a loss of part or the whole of the foot is the result. Standing in the cold mud and water for days without getting an opportunity to dry the feet or change the socks, is the cause.

The army authorities take very stringent measures to prevent this condition, and have issued an order that any battalion sending a case of this sort to the hospital, will lose its leave for all hands. This is about the harshest measure they could take and required some ingenuity on the part of the Medical Officer to circumvent. Platoon commanders are held directly responsible for the condition of the men's feet, and they must personally see to it that the men dry and rub their feet and change their socks every day.

The ladies of Canada have been very good and liberal to the troops in the line and have sent them, among other things, many thousands of pairs of socks. These gifts from the women have prevented who can tell how many cases of trench feet? At a very bad time our battalion, I can remember, received seven hundred and fifty pairs of socks from the Canadian Red Cross, and one hundred and fifty pairs of lovely hand-knit socks from the Triple Entente Chapter of the Daughters of the Empire of Vancouver.

It was when our men were on this front that many of them got down on their knees in the mud and prayed. I am sure that they must have felt that any human aid was impossible, that the exposure was almost beyond human endurance and that the Hun shelling was almost more than they could bear. In any case, whatever the reason, they certainly felt that they needed some higher help and asked for it. Always after an occasion of this kind, they were calmed and steadied and determined and dangerous.