

was then in front of us with the artillery somewhere in the rear. We met the Sixteenth when it was ordered to retire, and we retired with it for a short distance. I can only speak of what was going on on my immediate front as far as the battle is concerned. A man in action really sees little of what happens around him. We stayed there until we were ordered to retire. We then became the firing line, the front line of troops being driven out by the gas. We remained there with both flanks in the air—both our right and left—and we remained there until we retired by order because the line was driven in in many directions.

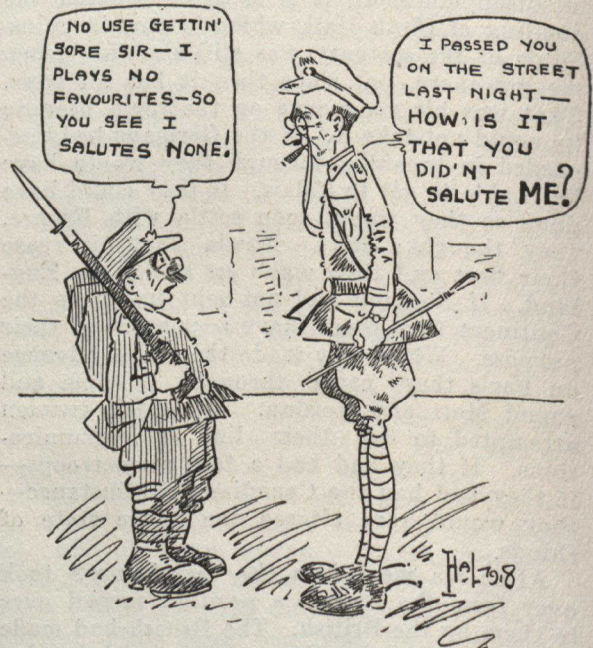
The Germans had, I was told officially, no less than twelve divisions against us. We were there with only one. They had their picked troops there. We know their divisions are stronger than ours; so that it is quite likely they had 200,000 troops against our twenty thousand. They did not capture us. We held the line intact. To offset what ground we did lose under the attacks of the gas the British troops in charge on the St. Julien woods retook much ground, so that as far as that was concerned we came out about even. We strengthened our line, which made it more comfortable to live in, and we did that in a sense without artillery. The artillery was behind us when the action began, and we fell back, so that they had to gallop off and take up a position further to the rear, but still in front of Ypres. Our troops for that time had no support from their artillery, but they held the ground practically unsupported. After they found us still holding the line they gave us support and then we continued to hold it. From reports of conversations with other officers of the battalion I found that my company was only an example of what others were doing. They stayed in those trenches; they never said a word; they carried out instructions; and trained troops could not have done better.

The fire of the enemy's artillery was something terrific. They brought their artillery so close that they could fire straight at us—they were scoring direct hits as military men describe it; and we could see the flashes of the guns. Aviators were over our heads dropping smoke bombs on the trenches, and by this means the artillery got the range accurately. You would see these smoke bombs and then you knew you were going to get a fusillade from the artillery. They bombarded us with gun after gun. We tried to count them. They were firing about 150 rounds a minute—firing in gusts. When they attacked

us there came forward rows of men dressed in British uniforms. I was under the impression that they were British soldiers; but we discovered they were Germans, gave them a volley, and then we were sure of it by the way they ran.

Our casualties were approximately fifty per cent. of our fighting strength. When I tell you that the usual percentage is about five you will understand how hot that action was.

There is one thing I should like to make clear. The men who have been at the front fighting are not likely, when they return home, to fit in easily into ordinary employment. They become entirely disorganized. Their minds do not take readily to the change—except those, perhaps, who may be comfortably off. I am speaking from personal experience. After I came home from the South African war I found that to be the case. I am not a lazy man, but when I really tried to go to work I found it took a year or two to get back into my working gait again. I know, therefore, so well how this war will affect the men who are engaged in it. I shall ask you to be patient with these men when they return to you and seek work again. Until they get back again to their normal state of living you must be patient with them. You will remember my words some day, perhaps. British Columbia has a hard proposition, but it will be solved.



Consistent.