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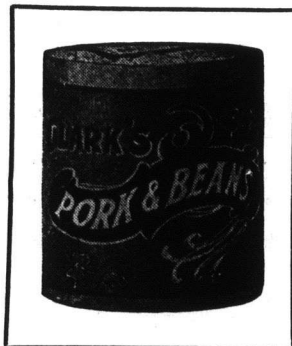
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A Night in the Salient—Hooge Sector

After the battle of Sanctuary Wood

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Major General Sir A. C. Macdonell, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Commanding 1st Canadian Division in France

A DAY in the trenches in front of Ypres was quiet enough as a rule, save when a *strafe* was on, as little movement was possible on both sides. Once the mantle of darkness had fallen, however, everything was stir and hustle, and the area behind the trenches resembled a beehive—with ration parties, ammunition parties, engineer working parties, brigade wiring parties, burial parties, scouting parties, and the odd raiding parties slipping up to its jump-off.

I was commanding a brigade and our new divisional commander expressed a wish to have me take him around the line, which had only recently been recaptured from the Boche. This, I was rather loathe to do, as I did not think it yet in shape for the G.O.C. to visit. On our right we were holding a series of shell-holes as a front line and digging hard each night joining them up. Behind our shell-hole position we had a short piece of continuous trench intact, as a support, connected at each end with an almost continuous trench, and behind, by two blown-in communication trenches, which we were endeavoring to clear.

The brigade had lost pretty heavily in the battle, so we had a large number of new hands, both officers and men, and I was straining every nerve to get our area fortified and tidied up.

I knew the General of yore. No more thorough and gallant officer ever wore the uniform, and I realized he would insist upon trying to visit the advanced posts, and felt the responsibility, and, as we viewed it, the culpability we should incur if he got hit whilst in our charge.

However, the General was determined, and we started from my headquarters in the ramparts, through the sally port across the bridge by the famous Swan's Nest, over to the Bunde, and up past the Tuilleries and Dormy House towards Maple Copse, passing to the north of it. I pointed out the various working parties at Zillebeke Dump, etc., etc. Two officers accompanied us, splendid specimens of Canadian Highland gentlemen, Col. B. McL., and Capt. G. C. McD.

There are nights when things start wrong, and keep going wrong, in spite of you. The night grew inky black save for the German flares and occasional shelling. Suddenly a figure loomed up in the darkness, caught the General by the coat and said: "If you please, are you a burial party?" "No, I'm not," was the indignant reply; "What on earth is there about me that makes you think I'm a burial party?" I hastened to explain (recognizing the voice). "I beg your pardon, sir, this is the gallant hard working parson of our Highland Battalion. He is burying the dead in Lover's Lane, which I have given orders to fill in. It was in Hun hands for eight or ten days, and it was the only thing to do." "I don't care who he is, or what he is," said the incensed general, "I won't have him call me a burial party." "Much luck will come to me," he muttered, and I remembered he was Irish. I hastened to finish: "I promised him a strong burial party, which should be here now, hence his error."

Then we proceeded; the General obviously upset. We met stretcher parties carrying the wounded out, and these we stopped and spoke to, in most cases just pressing them by the hand, and wishing them speedy recovery.

I remember a little later on we met a man bringing out his comrade, badly shell shocked. With every shell or even a flare the poor creature would sink to the ground, giving a shuddering drawn out groan as he did so, and I have never witnessed or heard anything to equal the tenderness of the man in charge. "Bill, old pal, I'm here; I've got your hand. It's Jack, Bill." Then, "It's all right, pull yourself together, boy, hang on to me. Here's our Gen-

eral, our own Brigadier. Don't give way before him," etc., etc.

Then we reached Hill Street, our first real trench. Here the G.O.C. found a good deal of fault, and we pressed on. The difficulty was really to find the shell-hole line, without slipping through it, and the G.O.C. began enquiring quite loudly as to whether our guide was sure. Suddenly, from a shell hole nearby, a voice, low but concentrated and menacing, said: "Hold your tongue! Do you realize there is a Hun machine gun within sixty yards?"

"No, I don't," was the unexpected reply. "And I have been called a burial party, and I won't be told to hold my tongue, too." (Tableau!)

Then to me: "Mac, I'm going off to see my old brigade." I remonstrated. Finally, R—G— (our pet name for Capt. G. C. McD.) and he, went. B. M. and I sat down to await their return. It would have been criminal to send more than the two under the circumstances. At last they returned, and then we worked our way towards the blown-in northern communication trench. I jumped into it at a piece that was intact, and leaning on the fire-step, which seemed very high, proceeded to instruct the corporal as to what I wanted him to do. I laid particular stress upon burying the dead, amongst other things. "Alright, sir," he said, "I'll go at it hard, and I'll start in by burying them two Huns you're leaning on." I jumped backwards, then I lifted the empty sand bags I had been leaning on and underneath were two dead Huns, piled one on top of the other, and the corporal explained that he had picked them up from the floor of the trench.

Next we worked down to a famous block in the trench that had been fought hard, and changed hands several times, finally remaining in ours. I told the general that a western officer had explained to me how he captured it and then lost heavily from machine gun fire, and later was counter-attacked by a strong party of Huns, who drove him back. As his party fell back they were reinforced by a strong platoon. I cut in here and said: "Well, what did you do, then?" "Do, sir? Why, we went right back with a whoop and a holler, recaptured the block and held it for good and all."

The dead were lying thick on both sides of the block, but more Hun dead than ours. I gave orders regarding their burial, and we moved on. I had a bad arm from recent wounds, and I kept falling in the dark and hitting it until at last the pain was almost more than I could bear. R—G— was a wonderful guide, and he led us from isolated post to isolated post. The General was so keen that we spent more time with each than we had calculated on, and dawn caught us still at it. I dissuaded the G.O.C. from attempting to go further, fearing he would be caught in the line for the day, unable to get out, and as it was, we made our way out across country in the grey of the morning, just in time, as when we reached the well known Yeomanry Post, M.G.'s and whiz bangs had begun their morning's work in the R. line.

Even the G.O.C. was tired out when we reached the ramparts, and glad enough to rest and refresh the inner man.

He had found a good deal of fault, which we rightly or wrongly traced to the dear old Padre's: "Are you a burial party?" He, however, never alluded to it again, and my beautiful staunch old brigade had no better friend than that same splendidly gallant G.O.C.

Nearly all children are subject to worms, and many are born with them. Spare them suffering by using Mother Graves' Worm Exterminator, the best remedy of the kind that can be had.