

Africa, but I found that I knew nothing about war at all. But this I must say, that men who went into war the first time proved themselves just as good as the men who had been through the Boer war.

The cannonading at the battle of Neuve Chapelle was so intense that you could not distinguish the report of one gun from another. It was what is called drum-fire, one boom following another so fast that you cannot distinguish between them. After the bombardment we were moved back again to divisional billets and rested. General Smith-Dorrien, a General that the Canadians were proud to serve under, was a magnificent General. I had the honor of serving with his forces in Africa. He told us: "I want to tell you that the British War Office and the Official Staff at the front have every confidence in your ability to hold the most difficult part of the British line." That part of the line was part of the famous Ypres salient. It is a semi-circular line, and a difficult position to hold for the reason that the enemy artillery can shoot in different directions, including behind you—indeed, in almost every direction. The salient was five or six miles long and extended from Ypres. Ypres contained the famous Cloth Hall, where the kings of Belgium were crowned, and the German historians must have had some idea of this, for it is said that the Kaiser anticipated being crowned King of Belgium there. But the British disappointed him. The British held the place, and then, in disappointment, it is said, he ordered the shelling of Cloth Hall, which is now in ruins. Some of the statuary was still standing when we got there, but since then it has all gone. That was his vengeance on the town because he could not take it. If the Germans had succeeded in breaking through they would have been able to get to Calais. If they could have done so they would soon settle with France, they thought; drive Russia back, increase their fleet and then make an attack on England. If England had not sent troops to the Continent they would have accomplished their purpose. When they made their first advance on Paris they came through Belgium and round Metz and Verdun. A British division attempted to cut their line of communications. If they had had a few more troops—if they had had the Canadians, for instance—they would have altered the whole state of things.

After we went into the trenches we took over from the French a position turned over to them by the British. The British had made a salient into the German line and handed over parts of it to the French. The Kaiser

had done much to develop Canada. The Germans had done much for Canada—more even than the British. They had put money and capital into Canada. The Kaiser was more incensed against the Canadians than the British. He said, "Indeed we will give them h—l when they come here." He did.

We were only a few days—in fact the first day—in the trenches when we had many killed amongst the men from Vancouver, including Mr. Frank Bowser's son. We got a rough time. But I must tell you that in all my experience of war I never saw better men than the men who were with me there—even amongst the British troops. They took it so wholeheartedly; they made sport of it. Indeed you have to do that on the battlefield to keep your courage up. In the morning, early, when the men would be ordered to "stand to" you would hear them shouting across to the Germans, "Good morning, Fritz." Lots of the Germans speak English, and they would frequently reply. One of our men, I remember, used to shout, "I say, waiter, bring me a sausage." And the reply used to come, "Go to hell, you sons of guns." One morning I was walking along the trenches and a German shouted over—it was just after they had been sinking our boats—"Well, what do you think of your blooming ships now?" Quick as a flash one of our men retorted, "Well, what dy yer think of yer bleedin' nivy nah?"

Finally they started in. They said they were going to capture the Canadian division and show them first a little bit of real war, and that it was to be no picnic for them. They launched an attack with gas but they made no impression. The French line at that place was held by raw, new Turcos from the north coast of Africa and they were unable to stand the gas. The Germans drove them out and they retired towards Poperinghe.

I am glad to speak of the Sixteenth battalion. They fought most nobly. This battalion attempted to fill the break in the line. A battalion is supposed to hold only about five hundred yards of line; so when I mention that this battalion had to hold two thousand yards of line you will see how widely separated these men must have been. The Germans worked around our flank and in order to keep from being captured our men had to fight back to back—fighting both ways at the same time. They did this and held the line until supports came. That is what the Sixteenth battalion helped to do.

We were resting when the call came to us to support the French troops. We went in after they retired, and the Sixteenth battalion