

REALISTIC STORY OF A NIGHT ATTACK

Written for The Clansman by an
Imperial Who Was One
Of the Party

The atmosphere in the firing line is rather more lively than usual: news has been brought to us that a raid will be carried out at somewhere near 10.0 p. m. and that the raiding party will be made up of men from the regiment next to us in the line. We question in what way we shall have to take part but before any satisfactory reply is formed, come instructions for us brought by the platoon officer. "You will open rapid fire when the artillery starts across No Man's Land and directly in front. Keep that up for a few minutes and then start individual fire. Machine guns will be up here to strengthen you." "Very good, sir," is the reply.

The daylight fades. We look to our rifles, giving them a thorough over-hauling

to get them fit for the work tonight. We do this, not so much because they need it, but to relieve our minds which are full of thoughts. We realize that there may be some of us ushered into the Great Beyond during this night's affair.

We soon finish our rifles and ammunition is brought up and divided, each man taking enough for himself. A few minutes' rest. The boys then take up their positions for the raid—positions which are of most advantage both for firing and cover.

Ha. Here are the machine gunners, those much abused but extremely useful members of trench society. They take up their positions and all are at last ready for what the night may bring forth.

"This waiting gets on my nerves," whispers one whose nerves are becoming ragged. His companion replies, "Not 'alf, but I guess it can't be helped. I wonder how it will go off tonight. I bet those blighters'll get the wind up." "You bet your life they will." is the emphatic answer. Then silence.

"When the devil are they goin' to start" whispers one. "What, you getting the wind up," questions his neighbor. "No, but I can't stand this waiting." . . . Bang, bang! Bang! goes one of our batteries. The chaps near me stiffen themselves and say to one another, "Ha! that's the idea." And then batteries, the existence of which we had not dreamed, open fire with a roll as of long-continued thunder. Each of us grasps his rifle and we blaze away. "Huh! the blighters across there were not long in waking up." This is heard as the reply of the enemy's artillery bursts near us. We continue rapid firing regardless of aching arms, shells or falling dirt, all of which we are conscious but hardly acknowledge. All round is the continual cr-r-rump, cr-r-r-rump, as the heavy enemy shells explode, throwing up columns of dirt and sand bags high in the air, and shaking the ground on which we stand. At intervals, too, in the air above us comes the nerve-wrecking and jarring explosion of shrapnel and lyddite, while seemingly just skimming the parapet come whiz-bangs, bursting with a metallic sound. Way down, deep down in our hearts there is a barely formulated hope that none of us will be involved in any of these explosions. But we still fire on although no enemy is visible. We know that our fire is keeping him low. From their positions the machine guns are rattling away and we hear, as we load up

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