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The Imperial Life Assurance Company of Canada

HEAD OFFICE TORONTO, CANADA

A. P. Allingham, Provincial Manager. St. John

In The British Lines

Keeping The Men Fit For The Great Advance Movement Against The Hordes of Huns

(London Times Weekly.)
With the British in the trenches I described in my previous article are no stronger than any other portion of the great ditch which stretches with but a very occasional break right across southern Belgium and eastern France. A trench map such as those prepared by the army map makers in the field gives one some idea of the extraordinary complexity and strength of these defences upon both sides. Communication trenches, saps, dug-outs, fighting trenches, snipers' pits, sunk wire entanglements, machine gun emplacements, earth or sand-bag breast works cover the map as closely as the veins upon a leaf. An enormous amount of labor has been expended in the endeavor to improve trenches from the comfort point of view. To the casual visitor the result does not seem to be commensurate with the effort. To the men who stood night after night in freezing mud up to their thighs the change effected is enormous. Some of them established in the

bed of the river des Leys, which overflowed its banks to a distance of eighty or ninety yards, were absolutely uninhabitable, and during the night they had to be evacuated, and the men lay down upon the mud of the road in the rear until any activity of the enemy forced them back to the water-logged trenches. I saw some of this old trench line where the men were at work repelling with pick and shovel the ravage of the rain. The splinter-protecting narrowness of the cut, in some places almost too narrow for passage, had given way to a dangerous open width; instead of the clean cut clay wall faced with hurdles or wire netting there was just a confused mound of tumbled mud. The trench looked almost as though it had been blown to pieces by a land mine. Night after night the men are at work building up what the elements have un-built during the day, consolidating, improving and extending the hold they have upon France.
They do not pretend to like it, but they nevertheless have a cheery philosophy that has carried them through what they are undergoing at present, and will support them and give them stout hearts when the word comes that they are to go for a decision. This philosophy I heard expressed in an under-tone in a trench east of Arras, where, when one dim khaki figure, gazing over the parapet, said to his neighbor who quick feeling after his third day "it's a trifle despondent, 'it will be all right; I've always 'erd as 'ow it's the first seven years of war is the worst."

The physical strength of the trench life found its crude moral expression in that remark. Our line by now has grown from the thin line of mud thrown up feverishly with trenching tools by men in the heat of a general engagement to a vast system of permanent fortifications. That line, if necessary, and the men who fill it, will last through the seven lean years of war until the time comes when infantry will be marching and shooting at ranges over eighty yards, when cavalry will have come back to its own and will be jingling along the high road, having at last a "dash at the enemy," when artillery teams will stream along the causeway galloping to new positions, when the maps of the British Army will move forward from Section Y to Section Z, when generals will again become strategists and war once more.

Everyday Activity
This picture of permanence must not be taken to mean that our troops stand quietly behind their defence works keeping their house as clean and as strong as they can, watching the German flares over the landscape at night and listening to the chorus of artillery, machine-guns, musketry and bombs from straw-staked stables in dug-outs, waiting to be attacked. They have a cold and almost callous activity. Night firing is encouraged; it serves the double purpose of keeping our sentries awake and of disturbing the slumbers of the enemy. The patrols go out every night in the "No Man's Land" between the two trench lines, and they never know when they may not come across one of the trench listening patrols of the enemy, and have a smart piece of bayonet work to do. Every now and again, in order to worry the Germans, and in order to keep the men from becoming too trench-tired, they have more definite "shows," as the army calls those local attacks which keep the casualty list going from day to day.
A great many of these unimportant fights exceed, in the amount of effort they require and the amount of injury they inflict, engagements which, during the South African War, were trumpeted across the world as great and sanguinary battles. I was up at Ypres last week and the ruins of the town were shaking with the vibration of the constant artillery fire to the southeast. The short, quick inclusive bark of the French "75" mingled with the duller booming of our own artillery. We were attacking with all the old and all the new methods of warfare, which are constantly practiced in this war; occasionally the wind brought a noisy gust of rapid machine-gun firing, belt after belt rattling away in the distance. Up there to the southeast men were putting into practice the education in the old and almost forgotten traditions of the army which have been revived and relearned during the last few months. The grenadiers and the bombardiers have again acquired an actual instead of a purely historical significance, for while the army is constantly active along the trench line, it is by no means idle when it gets to battle. They are, of course, given a thoroughly adequate rest when they have been through a strenuous time. The methods of relief and the time-tables of duty in the trenches vary from brigade to brigade, according to the view of the

particular brigadier or the depth of water and mud in which the men have to do their spell of duty in the first line.

Polishing Up
Commanders arrange that while available for trench service the men shall have as light a time as possible, but when the battalion moves back to reserve their time is fully occupied in solving the great problem which lies before our army today in Flanders, that of keeping the trenches manned and at the same time keeping the army fit for the great day when an advance becomes possible. There are regimental officers whose voices become heavy with regret when they talk of the condition in which their men came out to France.

"Indian Battalion, Sir, the finest in the service," which had their marching power reduced, their shooting deteriorated by the heavy requirements of the trench. When they get back into reserve the work of polishing up, of removing all these trench stains upon the glittering regimental machinery goes on again. They are put through their shooting on improvised ranges, they are given a little marching, and every now and again they may have some divisional exercise.

The cavalry are in some respects the most to be pitied; their officers high over the fact that at present at least all the years of training the men have received, all the horse care which they have been taught and which has made of them the finest cavalry in the world, is now absolutely worthless; but the training of the cavalryman, the individual intelligence required of him, has made of him an adaptable and splendid material for trench fighting. When they get back from the trenches they find their horses sometimes with floppy bellies, which are not beloved of the English cavalry commander, who likes to see the play of muscles over the belly of the horse in movement in any case not in the pink of condition which is their normal state. The cavalryman's time does not hang heavy on his hands. It is difficult to keep the horses in good condition in a country so closely cut up as is French Flanders, where roads are many and meadows few. Happy is the colonel who finds his regiment billeted in one of those long, straggly villages which make of this country a huge suburb of Lille, a stretch of level grass where he can keep his old men polished and their horses fit, and where he can put the enemy paper of his experience over the stalling if unpolished metal of the recruits.

Picture of the Bombardiers.
Never before in history has there been accomplished such a vast educational work as is being carried out now in Flanders, frequently under the fire of the enemy's shells. One part of this great school of war is devoted to the training of the bombardiers; they are strange looking men, recalling old traditions and realizing at the same time many of the prophetic pictures of the future fighter to be found in a novel by Wells. Around their middle they carry some twenty or thirty bombs, little cylinders fastened on a long stick round which fall streamers of ribbon. This clothing of ribbons suggests the birth of a mixed breed of Scotsmen and Red Indians who have taken to wearing the Red Indian head-dress as a kilt. In action they are stranger still.

Crouching down among the barbed wire the bombardiers, with their supporting infantrymen with fixed bayonets, raise themselves a little from the earth, and, seizing one of these rocket-like bombs from their belts, grasp them by the stick and hurl them high above the parapet. They twist and travel uncertainly through the air, and then finally the force of equilibrium supplied by the streamers of ribbon asserts itself and they plunge straight as a plumb line down into the

trench. There is a noise as though a gigantic Chinese cracker were jumping zig-zag along the zig-zag trench, and clouds of greenish smoke rise up through which hurdle humps of earth and stone and fragments of the outer iron ring upon the bomb, which constitute its shrapnel.

Keeping a Won Trench.

Then when they get into the trench the picture is one of the men bayoneting and firing, of little crouching khaki figures scurrying along from traverse to traverse, halting a moment while the bombardier from the cover of the jutting earthwork pitches bomb after bomb over it into the next section of the trench. It is thus a trench is gained,

and when it has been won the work of keeping it begins. Here again the bombardiers come into play, bomb after bomb, and while one party is busy tearing it to pieces and shutting it up with a clay and sandbag parapet the others are preventing the enemy from swarming along the tortuous channel to the reconquest of their last trench.

What is happening in infantry warfare is being repeated in every branch of the service. Each arm is adapting itself to the new devices of warfare developed by

the enemy and trying to go one better to the surprise of its own.

Metagama Concert Party.

A talented body of songsters and musicians from the new C. P. R. liner Metagama now in port, gave their first local concert last evening, entertaining a large audience in the Seamen's Institute with a delightful programme. T. A. Levey presided with F. Johnson vice-chairman. G. Gordon was accompanist. The programme was arranged by Allan Mayne and those taking part included Senor Rafael Todor, H. J. Dixon, and G. Gordon, composing the Metagama orchestra; W. Prescott, W. Pleasant, H. Collins, W. Smith, A. Mayne, W. Bowman, A. Deane, H. Smith.



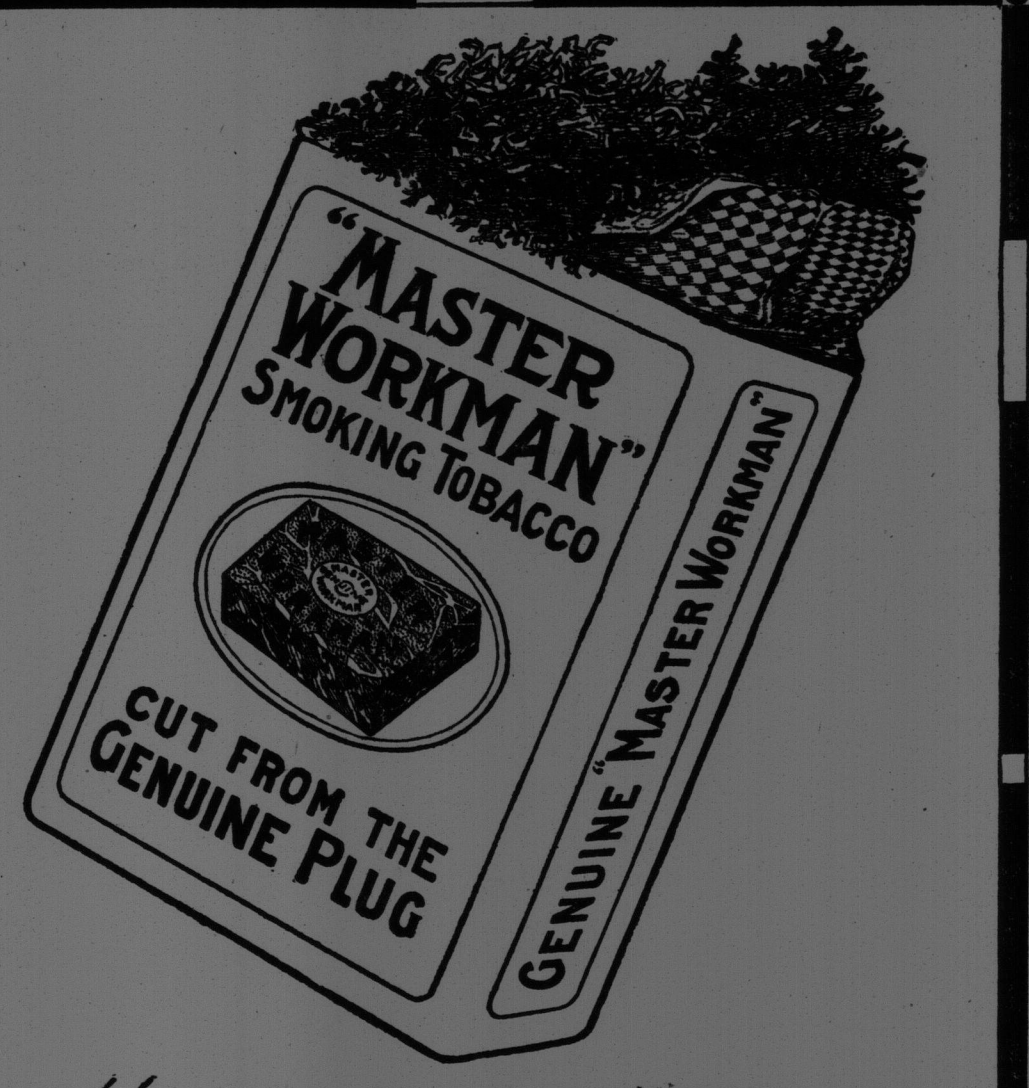
That Subtle Air of Refinement

which proclaims the woman of breeding is largely a matter of careful attention to detail. A shapely hand encased in an ill-fitting glove not infrequently proves to be the discordant note in an otherwise harmonious ensemble.

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