

# The Freeman's Journal

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SIXTEEN PAGES

## MILLION MAN BATTLE OF LA CHAMPAGNE

Picture of the Terrific Bombardment of the Allies Which Preceded Dash to Victory

Châlons, France, Oct. 22.—(Correspondence.)—There was still wreckage enough remaining on the battlefield of Champagne three weeks after the battle was fought to give some idea of the havoc of destruction when it was fresh after the advance. Within a space of fifteen miles in length, by from one to three miles in breadth at least 1,000,000 men were engaged in battle on both sides. 95,000 prisoners were taken and at least two or three shells for every man engaged were fired.

The sheet of preparatory shell fire which had descended upon fifteen miles of German front trenches had meant a swath of slaughter to start with. For three days, night and day, this bombardment continued. According to the accounts of German prisoners they could only hug the shelter of their subterranean chambers under their crumbling parapets. A wall of artillery fire back of the trenches kept the supplies from reaching them. In front of the trenches the continued crash of shrapnel blasts was cutting the barbed wire. For months the French had been accumulating ammunition, which they poured out from every calibre of gun.

Charge Was Only 200 Yards

This shell fire not only killed and wounded German soldiers but also made the most elaborate trenches into dustheaps, but littered the field with smashed German helmets, transport wagons, clothing, equipment and all the impediments of an army. There was peace in the German trenches for the first time in three days as the wave of French infantry rushed for the German trenches. Then the French guns stopped firing lest they kill their own men.

The wave had not more than 200 yards to go. Estimate the time that it takes the average man to run that distance and you have the time it took the French soldiers to reach the wreckage which had been in the German trenches and grapple with any survivors in the ditches. In some places the wave swept on beyond the trenches like the tide rough, the average man to run that distance and you have the time it took the French soldiers to reach the wreckage which had been in the German trenches and grapple with any survivors in the ditches.

Wonderful Bastion Destroyed

The town of Ypres in the British lines probably remains the most complete example of shell fire. But Ypres was a town, it was not built to withstand shell fire, but at a bombardment of this kind it was taken in the German trenches and grapple with any survivors in the ditches.

LETTER OF HALIFAX SOLDIER IN WAR

Jeremiah Fraser, of the 25th, Tells of Trenches

GREAT OBJECT LESSON

Hard Work and Danger Are the Making of a Man—Philosophy on the Firing Line

G. Jeremiah Fraser, of the Signalling Corps, 25th N. B. Battalion, a son of Jerry Fraser, a Halifax cabman, is the author of the following very interesting letter.

Dear Dad:—

This letter is being written in my dugout in the trench by the light of a candle.

The joint is about one mile from the main road and the communication trench is nicely boarded, which makes the walking clean.

The dugout has a tiled floor, two bunks, board roof cover, with corrugated iron, this again covered with sand bags. There are many things I have pinched in a nearby house to make things comfortable, including two chairs, bench, coal, rack, oak table for telegraph instruments (flag being abolished in this war) also two rubber sheets, which I used as a door; taking it altogether it is a snug and comfortable place. In fact, it is the luck of any in our line of trenches.

There are plenty of mice and a few large rats which have a habit of strutting around as if they owned the place. A week ago we completed six days with six casualties. This week there is a different tale, for instead of the Saxons, we are now dealing with the Prussians who are much better fighters, I e, more aggressive.

Tonight it has been merry hell; over fifteen shells exploded near this dugout, but as we bear a charmed life, to date nothing has happened.

During my experience at the front I have had over ten very narrow escapes from shrapnel and bullets, and as I mentioned to Gerald, a man can adopt himself providing he is made of the right stuff, to all circumstances, and although on the job for only eight days I have seen sights that would turn a weak man's stomach. However, I can assure you that I feel just as safe as in my little cot at home. No doubt is the result of hard grub and at times very hard work.

There are days in the trenches when you don't get a chance to wash for three or four days and when you get a lot of jam in your beard you are some pret-

ty sight—I don't think. Nevertheless, this is the life. You talk about enjoying it. So far it has struck me as a regular picnic. You see, when you get it particularly dirty such as marching all night in rain and mud you appreciate the fine weather, and rest so much that its second to Heaven getting into an old barn with some hay.

This was the greatest object lesson, or I should say being here, that a young man of my careless and easy-going habits could get, and should I come out of it, it will shape my future far different and better, I am sure, than I had not had the experience.

Here I witness the uselessness of the English and of the French, and to see what titled English women are doing so elaborately in the trenches. For example, while in France I saw an English lady and her daughter spend night after night sewing and mending for the soldiers in their beautiful houses, and all would make you weep. It's a fact, certainly, was some to see the nice houses upset so, but then you couldn't understand unless you were here. Well, Dad, my opinion is that the war is doing the world good in one sense, and although it may not in another, still, I think it will be a better world for it.

This generation has become too soft and selfish, and God knows it needed this to bring them out of it. Ease and luxury will make anyone selfish, but give them hard work and danger, and there is where one's best qualities come out.

I don't think the people at home realize just what the soldiers are doing. It is not the risk they run, that is a secondary consideration. It is the physical hardships they have to endure. Take a man at a listening post in a pool of water and mud afraid to move for two hours at a stretch. Take these fellows standing up under fire, building wire entanglements and parapets. Fortunately, I am in a dry trench, but we have trenches where the men are almost up to their knees in mud and this for six days at a stretch is no sinecure to the soldier.

Our officers are at it day and night and get very little sleep. The strain is on them, but they are the ones who are holding their own nicely.

Well, Dad, I will close for the present. I am going to a treasure task at home. Hoping to see the day, I e, the gang will meet at the shack and have some good music and one of your famous stews. This is, in fact, the only thing that makes me wish at times I were home. I never get homesick, as should I be at home I would be wishing I were here and vice versa. Good luck to all and an easy winter.

Your veteran,

JEREMIAH.

Jerry Fraser has another son, Corporal Cyril Fraser, with the 1st Manitoba Regiment which, strangely enough, is brigaded with the 25th

## BRITISH KING VISITS FRENCH BATTLEFIELDS



A great review of French troops was held at the recent visit of King George of England to the front. Photo shows King George and General Joffre watching the troops march past. The Prince of Wales is seen to the left of the photograph.

## PRISONERS ARE AIDING FRANCE

Captives Doing Work of Men at the Front

ARE PAID FOR THEIR LABOR

Appear Contented With Their Lot—Always Retain Military Training and Respect for Officers

Rhinne, Central France, Nov. 12.—(Correspondence of The Associated Press).—"Achtung!" was the German command of attention given by a German sergeant major in trim German uniform to 1,800 German soldiers, all in their gray-green uniforms with red-edged caps, ranged in long ranks along the deep along the great courtyard of the barracks of Rhinne. The sharp and guttural German command sounded strangely in this French setting, with French officers receiving deferential salutes and giving directions, and French soldiers in their vivid red-blue uniforms standing at shoulder-arms to the German ranks.

These long lines of German soldiers were typical of the scores of German prisoners, centering at the little town of Rhinne, and radiating from here to the Spanish frontier and over to the French colonies in Africa.

Here at Rhinne, too, is the centre of another form of German industry on French soil, with thousands of German-Polish soldiers doing the same work they did in the coal mines of Poland, digging the coal from the rich deposits of the Rhinne, and the crushing sabots of the French coal fields which have passed into the hands of the invaders.

The Associated Press was given the opportunity to see a large number of the prisoners, and typical scenes of the soldiers doing agricultural and mining work, the party being arranged by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the escort of French army officers, Lieutenant Brunet and Lieutenant Garcin.

In the courtyard of the Rhinne Barracks, the German prisoners were lined up to give the visitors a typical instance of their appearance. They looked rather shabby, but they were clean and well-dressed. Their uniforms were stained and tattered, showing the results of life in the trenches. They were irregular in height—big, bearded Bavarians and short, stocky men.

"Bring them to attention, and have them take three steps forward, turn, and three steps backwards," said the French commandant.

The direction was interpreted to the German sergeant-major, and then rang out "Achtung!" The effect was electrical on these soiled and slouchy ranks. They sprang into even lines, every head straight and shoulders back, transformed from an irregular mass into perfectly aligned platoons, which would have done credit to a parade ground. Then, as the command of three steps was given in German, the long lines of heavy wooden sabots, came up into the German goose step, and fairly crashed back and forth over the stone pavement. In an instant the goose step and the crashing sabots stopped and the lines were rigid. It was little short of sensational, this galvanizing of a whole regiment of mud-stained men into a body of fairly vibrating military energy and force and automatic military precision.

Six hundred of these men had recently been captured in the French advance in Champagne, but they were mingled indiscriminately with the others. One large dormitory, however, was given over chiefly to Champagne prisoners. This, like the rest of the rooms, was scrupulously clean and in good condition, with mattresses and blankets for each man, rooms for shower baths, and the equipment of a well-ordered barracks. The same place had been used before for

## HOW GRAHAM WON VICTORIA CROSS

"Just Hung On, Whole Thing Mechanical"

NOT CUT OUT FOR A SOLDIER!

Last Survivor of Crew Worked Machine Gun in Face of Tremendous Odds—His Own Story

London, Nov. 10.—(Correspondence by Edmund Candler).—No one who has done anything ever has an ounce of side. Even young men who have been at grips with first causes are modest. They develop a sense of proportion. The modesty of the V. C. is.

Take the boy Graham's case. His V. C. he told me, was an inconceivable piece of good luck. He had stuck to his machine gun all right, he admitted. But it was the only thing he could do. "They had stopped shelling us," he explained, "and we were coming on thick and hot. Naturally I hung on. It was the only chance. The other fellows were down. What else could I do?"

"Skeddadle, I suppose? I never thought of it. It would have wanted some luck. Stuck to my gun, I stuck to it to save my skin. It was all I had to hang on to. I can tell you, I should have had cold feet without it. But, of course, one doesn't think of all this; it was the whole thing mechanical."

By Graham saved the trench, and if there is any truth in despatches he did the job alone.

"That was luck, too," he explained. "The Boches didn't know we were down. They got fed up and turned just at the right moment. I was badly hit."

"I discovered that afterwards."

The Crazy Gun.

"If everyone got a decoration," he said, "for doing his job the ribbon wouldn't be worth taking home. I was the only one who was not cut out for a soldier. My little show was a bit dramatic as it was such a close shave. It was an important bit of trench, too, and that happened to be a staff officer looking on."

It occurred to me that what the staff officer saw must have been horrible—a single man with a shattered leg holding his own against a crowd of men, and down to nurse his gun like a child. Half a dozen different things were going wrong in his mind. Most of them were the pockets getting tight. In another minute the cartridges would have jammed. He had his last-aid box out, with its duplicate pills, and was nursing the machine which "had saved his skin" when the loss of blood made him faint.

"An extraordinary feeling going off," he said. "Like taking gas. I never dared have a tooth out without gas."

"I nearly fainted again when I heard about the V. C. I was in a base hospital in Boulogne and was taking a morning stroll to see the Folkestone come in. I bought a paper and took it into the buffet, and was just leaving it behind when my eye caught a headline. Lieutenant Graham, V. C. Even then, though the fellow had my name, I did not associate it with myself until I found my own ugly photo underneath."

Makes Him Sick.

"All the gush they had written made me feel quite sick," he went on. "Hagard's wounded hero, and that sort of thing. My first feeling was shame. I wondered what the fellows in the regiment thought of it. Most of them were dead; I was glad they wouldn't see it. But there were Brown and Holder and Mayes, a ripping good crowd—they'd had their necks in it for months and only one Military Cross and a D. S. O. between them, and I, who had just joined, got this merely for blowing away with my machine gun when somebody happened to be looking on. They looked on me as a rotter in the game, not cut out for soldiering," as the major said, though, I will say, they didn't rub it in.

"When I left the buffet I had a feeling in the pit of my stomach which I only remembered having once before. It reminded me of a thing which happened to me at school. It was speech day and the hall was crowded with everybody's

## SHIPS TO USE OIL RATHER THAN COAL

Victoria, B. C., Dec. 3.—Five more vessels of the fleet of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company are to be converted to oil burners. They are the steamers Spokane, Unatilla, City of Puenia, Senator and City of Seattle. There is a possibility that the latter vessel will be converted to oil while she is undergoing repairs at Prince Rupert.

Direction to make the change from coal to oil burners is the result of recent investigations in the matter of fuel by the United States Navy. The company's larger steamers, the Congress, Governor and President are already oil burners, and the conversion of the five named doubtless would have been made long ago but for the fact that the Pacific Coast Company's extensive fleet of smaller vessels nearly always have been the source of fuel supply for the company's vessels. The steamer Spokane probably will be one of the first to be changed.

"Does your wife want to vote?"

"No; she wants a larger town house, a villa on the seacoast and a new limousine car every six months. I'd be pleased most to death, if I could fix her attention on a small matter like the vote."

## Serbia Is Being Crucified for Canadians and For the People of the British Empire

By Pere Nicolas, Serbia's Greatest Preacher, who was offered the Archbishopric of Uskub

"Come, noble Britons! Come quickly, our greater and better brothers! Come to us and see if ever a nation suffered such cruel tortures or bore them more heroically; for, behold, you will see a whole nation being crucified!"

If Serbia falls, Europe falls

For in Serbia within the last few days not merely has the crux of the whole war been reached, but the nation has become the symbol of every principle which civilization has at stake.

In Serbia, I tell you, every free nation is witnessing its future fate. It is freedom's "To be or not to be."

Poland's agony you have witnessed and Belgium's martyrdom. Must yet another people be sacrificed? God save Europe this shame.

Come, come quickly, I pray you. Nearly the half of Serbia is already in the hands of the savages. Come quickly, and come in all your might, that every Balkan state may know that night is on the side of right and that the evil-doer cannot reign unpunished!

We know our feet. They carry not our goods, but our lives. They will not occupy our territory! They will exterminate us. It will not be a battle, it will be a massacre.

We are already in retreat—but it is not retreat as well as ours; for you bade us resist in Freedom's name, and we are fighting our battle no less than ours.

It is the retreat not only of an army, but of a people—men, women, and children. They have left the plains, they are retreating in the mountains, the fighters baring their breasts to the piercing arrows of lead in order to protect the wives and children who are crouching behind the barricades for safety.

Yet of what avail will that heroism be if human smiles from within, children everywhere crying aloud—Serbia's last hope of immortality! All the while the brave men are fighting, and the mothers see their child dying within her very arms. But the men bear the smile of a terrible irony upon their lips and some whisper the words of our great Serbian poem—

The Earth is too cruel and hard, The Heavens above too high, Its doors are closed to us, Our prayers re-echo in the void.

Has earth ever witnessed a greater tragedy, or could the human mind conceive of greater sorrow for the human heart to bear?

Who would have believed in the Armenian massacre if Lord Bryce had posed as a prophet instead of merely a historian? Your English minds, steeped in the holiness of Christ's Gospel more than those of any other people on earth, cannot conceive that the bounds of possibility in wickedness have long ago been reached in the East.

Well, I tell you this! The fate of Armenia is the fate which Serbia sees hanging like a sword of Damocles over its head. England has the power to grasp that sword from the threatening enemy and turn it upon his own breast. Will England do it?

You must be a Serbian to understand the thrill of emotion that runs through our veins when we read your English newspapers calling "Help—help quickly, or Serbia dies!" We know your cry is a response to those cries of agony of our kith and kin, which every day and every night and every hour and every minute echo and re-echo in our minds. Still madness itself would seem a relief.

Even from the material standpoint the sacrifice would repay you for the Serbian nation is the nation which divides eastern and western barbarism, and prevents those two torrents from flooding the whole universe; and for every one who dies in the Balkans, ten, or maybe a hundred, will be saved in Africa or Asia. But as a priest I cannot look upon it in that light.

I only see the spiritual aspect of the crisis. Serbia is being condemned as if she were crying aloud—Serbia's last hope of immortality! All the while the brave men are fighting, and the mothers see their child dying within her very arms. But the men bear the smile of a terrible irony upon their lips and some whisper the words of our great Serbian poem—

CHINESE GO HOME UNTIL WAR IS OVER

Hundreds Sailing From Western Ports—New Year's Festivities An Attraction But Many Will Stay Longer

Victoria, Dec. 3.—For several months natives of the Celestial Empire resident on this continent have, in small and large numbers, been making their way back to the Far East to attend the Chinese New Year festivities. Whether Oriental celebrations are really responsible for the general exodus of Chinese from Canada and the United States is a matter for doubt, but the fact remains that the British steamship lines operating between this coast and China are unable to handle the rush of boats at the present time.

Since the outbreak of war the lot of the average Chinese in Canada has been none too easy. In these dull times they are finding it hard to secure employment, and the outcome of it all is that the Chinese are being driven to the verge of actual starvation. It is certain that the general staff will do anything rather than allow the victorious Chinese army to be tried in despatches he did the job alone.

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It occurred to me that what the staff officer saw must have been horrible—a single man with a shattered leg holding his own against a crowd of men, and down to nurse his gun like a child. Half a dozen different things were going wrong in his mind. Most of them were the pockets getting tight. In another minute the cartridges would have jammed. He had his last-aid box out, with its duplicate pills, and was nursing the machine which "had saved his skin" when the loss of blood made him faint.

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Life was made very pleasant for Graham. There had been an impossible, unapproachable "she." She had laughed at him kindly before the war. And now she took him. The glamor of the bit of ribbon made half the difference, the boy's delightful modesty the other half. She was dowered with the fairness which is the proverbial reward of the brave. He had six months' convalescence at home, the time of his life in a beautiful old house by the river and she was with him. He was going to do after the war. It was always after the war. In spite of his V. C. he was not drawn to the army. His diffidence about his value as an officer was incurable. He told me he had none of the qualities of a soldier, that he hated the whole business, was essentially a man of peace, and had great misgivings whether he would be

## KILL CAPTIVES IF FOOD SHORT

Amazing Proposal Is Advanced Seriously by German Politician

Berlin, Dec. 3.—Draconic threats are contained in the tenth issue of the Deutsche Kriegeschriften, which publishes an article by Dr. Heinz Pothoff, leader of the Progressive party in the Rhine province and a former member of the Reichstag.

"There is no doubt," says this article, "that the German general staff is determined to resort to extreme measures. If Germany ever should be brought to the verge of actual starvation, it is certain that the general staff will do anything rather than allow the victorious Chinese army to be tried in despatches he did the job alone.

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able to live up to the part or even "stick it out" at all.

"Nonsense," I said, "it is instinctive in you to do the right thing."

"Oh, I suppose I shall keep my end up," he said doubtfully.

Early in the autumn he went on again. This time to the Dardanelles, attached to another battalion of his regiment. He had not been at that front a week when his name was in the casualty list. "Wounded," and then again a few days. "Died of wounds."

The Last of Him

It was a machine gun again. This time the thing was steaming, and they were short of water, and somebody had to get it. The mullah was a death-trap in the daylight, enfiladed by snipers and the odds against coming back were more than two to one. I wonder how Graham would have explained away this second act of heroism. The "to save my skin" argument would not hold here. It was done in cold blood, when spirits are lowest after hours of squinting under shell fire in shelter, and the strain of days and nights without relief or sleep. Also life meant very much more to him, as much as it can even mean to a young man.

He was hit directly he left the trench, and was seen to wriggle into cover, and then out again. He was hit a second time and lay still.

He had time for reflection. The old garden, with its late October flowers, the shadow of the girl knitting beside it. All this must have come over him as surely must irresistibly drive him home. He must have seen the old house which would have been his and hers—if he came through a haunt of peace to pass quiet days in. For it was agreed he must never serve after the war. He hated noises, loathed routine, shrank from pain and blood. And he was quite sure he had none of the qualities that make a soldier.