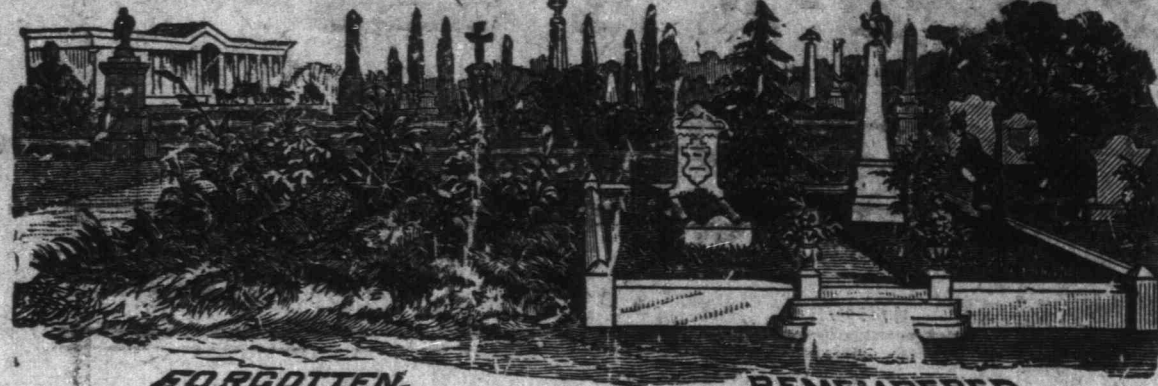


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## THE FRENCH VICTORY AND DEFEAT OF THE GERMANS AT VERDUN.

**A Stirring Story of Our French Allies' Glorious and Successful Defence of Their Great Stronghold.**

LONDON, Eng., Dec. 1.—The ordeal of France during the frantic explosion of German energy that Falkenhayn directed, was terrible and tragic. Every French harlet had to send forth men to die at Verdun. The German Chief of Staff transformed the struggle into an incomparable test of the staying power of the German and French races.

His method was plain, simple and brutal. It was the method of the bull rush. He massed his guns first on one point and then on another, sending out the Germans to die in divisions, so that he might put the French out of action in brigades. He sacrificed three Germans to kill one Frenchman. His idea was that France would not stand the incessant strain.

In contrast to this General Joffre's immediate plan was very simple. It was to hold out. As was afterwards revealed, Sir Douglas Haig had placed himself completely at the service of the French Commander in Chief, and had suggested that he should use the British Army to weaken the thrust at Verdun. But General Joffre had refused the proffered help.

Joffre had to send a telegram to British Headquarters and a million Britons, with thousands of heavy guns, would fling themselves upon the German lines and compel Falkenhayn to divide his shell output, his heavy artillery and his million of men between Verdun and the Somme. But Joffre, instead of sending the telegram in question, merely despatched officers to British Headquarters to assure and calm the chaffing Scotchman commanding the military forces in France of the British Empire.

**A Wonderful Commander**  
In the matter of tenacity of character, it may be doubted whether any ancient commander has shown the power of General Joffre. No such leader can be found in history.

The German siege guns bombarded the French nine mile front with unparalleled fury. Then, on the morning of Sunday, April 9th, 1916, some forty thousand Germans came out of the woods and stormed up the long western slopes towards Hill 304. The grey figures advanced in dense and very deep formation, by columns of companies, the intention being to choke the French guns by sheer numbers.

But the wonderful French quick-firer, which was used like a machine gun by General Petain's soldiers, broke every German column within a hundred yards of the French trenches.

Another forty thousand German troops charged from the woods in dense columns, but General Petain, working on his central telephone control system, turned hundreds of guns upon the grey masses, and smashed them up completely. Other German hosts, advancing along the open field of fire by the grass flats, were caught in a terrible way by shrapnel, machine gun bullets, and musketry fire, and smashed back with very heavy loss.

It had cost Falkenhayn the best part of a hundred thousand men to take five hundred yards of advanced French trench. Yet the Germans had not made the least impression upon the French defences.

**Terrific German Attacks.**  
None the less, all through May and the greater part of June, 1916, Falkenhayn, through his subordinate commanders, directed a series of terrific attacks at the Dead Man Hill. On Sunday morning, May 7th, a mass attack was delivered on a two-mile front between Dead Man Hill and Hill 304. The hillsides and the mouth of the valley between the crests glistened with advancing grey waves.

Some five brigades tried to storm the heights, but they were broken one after the other between the cross fire of the French batteries and the machine guns, and when evening fell only one communication trench on the west side of the valley had been won by the Germans. When dawn broke the Germans had only tens of thousands of dead and wounded to show as the result of the struggle.

the evening in taking five hundred yards of the French line.

But courageous as the Prussians had proved themselves, they were no match against the French in scientific warfare. The victorious remnant of the division was pounded all Sunday evening by hundreds of French guns, and then a small French force was brought through the curtain of fire the Germans maintained around Thiaumont, and in a swift counter attack nearly all the lost ground was retaken.

The Germans had spent nearly a month in the preparation of this new offensive movement, yet after expending millions of shells, wearing out guns by the hundreds, and losing men by the thousand score, they won nothing. As a French officer sardonically remarked: "The cost of ground around Verdun was rising!"

**Huns Mowed Down in Thousands.**  
As the charging German columns were held by rifles and machine guns the flanking French batteries caught the checked, grey masses and mowed them down in ghastly swathes. Soon the Germans had ramparts of their own dead to serve as cover in their rushing mass attacks. On both Dead Man Hill and Hill 304 the grey piles of dead, wounded and stunned men formed barriers some yards in height.

In their counter attacks the French took living prisoners from these stacks of corpses. For it often happened that men who had not been hurt were knocked down and buried under the falling wall of their slain or wounded comrades. Most of the men thus recovered seemed to be dazed, partly by shell shock, but largely by a drug mixture of ether and alcohol. A good deal of Dutch courage was thus combined with the remarkable iron discipline, under which mass after mass of German infantry climbed up the slopes to die.

On May 23rd the French line was again buried in shell and cloaked in smoke. It was not until the evening that the German infantry could get through the curtain of high explosive and shrapnel and reach the French trenches between Dead Man Hill and Hill 304.

**The Fury of the French.**  
Having at last got within striking distance, the Germans brought up a detachment of flame throwers, and with torrents of liquid fire burned the French out of their lines as twilight was falling. Just before night-fall the French returned, and in a charge of terrible fury stabbed and bombed the flame throwers and the supporting enemy troops out of the lines and recovered all the position.

Liquid fire is like poison gas. It is calculated to frighten savages, but when used against an army of disciplined civilized men it rouses them to such a pitch of fury that they overthrow all the calculations of their enemy. In half an hour's savage night-fighting the Germans lost all the ground they had won at the cost of tens of thousands of men, and only a small remnant of them escaped back to the trenches from which they had advanced.

At dawn on that day the German fire on Fort Vaux had become appalling. The trenches had for months been battered by heavy French shells and now that the Germans again turned their parks of artillery upon the ruins, tearing the concrete into more murderous splinters and excavating the ground to an extraordinary depth, it seemed that nothing could remain alive amidst the choking, smoking poison fumes.

**Rushing to Meet the Foe.**  
But the masked men of the 129th French Regiment, though falling in hundreds, continued to break up every charge. Some of their grenadiers actually ran out to meet the German attack, bombed their way round the fort, broke into the German lines, and came back unhurt.

On the other hand, even the best German troops were beginning to break and falter unless they were kept in a terribly expensive close formation. In short, the French people, whom Falkenhayn was attempting to daunt, were at last clearly seen by him to be wearing better than the German people under the superhuman strain of four months' incessant slaughter.

All day and all night one small band of Frenchmen, outside Vaux village, fought like men possessed, and broke every charge made by the enemy. For three days and three nights the awful struggle went on, and as the German commander threw

fresh divisions into the shamble of ruins, the fight swayed up and down the village street till the little brook in the nearby ravine ran red, and the living fought behind mounds of dead.

On the south east of Douaumont Fort the French Alpine troops broke every German attempt to get at Vaux village from the rear. On the glacis of Vaux Fort a Saxon division which had made the first mass attack on the left, came upon a sunken line of barbed wire entanglements which had been missed by the German shells and were there held and slaughtered by the thousands.

**Huns Trapped and Annihilated.**  
The steep slopes of the promontory were covered with a mass of writhing figures unable to advance and unable to escape. The French had a long field of fire down the incline, and with bombs, musketry fire, machine gun fire and a curtain of shrapnel they caught the Germans, front and rear, and annihilated them.

Half-way between the fort and the village there was one small trench held by the 101st French Infantry Regiment, and only forty yards away were the German entrenchments. The French trench was smashed up by salvos of 11 inch shells and by maintaining a continual fire with jackets of ten of these shells the Germans prevented the position being repaired. But the weakened regiment held out, and stopped an enemy advance through a neighbouring wood, and then, cut off from food and water, fought on all night and all the next day, and broke an enemy charge in the evening.

**A Terrible Mishap.**  
An order was then given to send up a rocket, asking the French gunners to put a curtain fire over the retreating Germans. But, unhappily, the rocket burst before it rose, and set fire to all the stock of rockets.

The trench filled with fire and smoke, and French artillery observers on the height above thought that he enemy had conquered the position by a liquor fire attack. At the end of two hours the flames were got under and the stock of grenades prevented from exploding. Sixteen pints of water were then got through the German curtain fire to the survivors of the regiment, enabling each man to have one mouthful.

By now the handful of heroic Frenchmen in Vaux Fort itself began to weaken from thirst. A few daring men succeeded in getting in with a tiny supply of water, but all outside attempts made to get a large supply into the fort failed.

By an encircling movement the German infantry won the wall of the fort and tried to rush across the courtyard, but were shot down. They climbed on the shattered roofs and with a rope lowered baskets of high explosives through the windows, dropped in time fuses, and swung the charges against the French sharpshooters in the rooms.

Still the garrison fought on. But, owing to lack of water, the situation became hopeless on the morning of June 6th. Major Raynal surrendered with his handful of exhausted men.

Even the Prussian was moved when he saw how small and how encircled by thirst was the force that had for a week resisted the attack of his great army, and Major Raynal was allowed to retain his sword. By the French Government the defender of Fort Vaux was created a Commander of the Legion of Honor.

**The British to the Rescue.**  
But in the last week in June the King Falkenhayn had long expected happened. For ninety minutes the British front fired and thundered by night as well as by day, indicating that the untired new British armies were, in conjunction with the French, about to attack on the Somme.

All the world is conversant with the momentous happenings since July 1st. The Anglo-French victories on the Somme quickly had the effect of reducing the German pressure at Verdun to the merely nominal. For all practical purposes the French remained masters of the field. They had won the greatest victory in defence known to history.

By a sudden and tremendous counter spring the French have recovered much of the ground the Germans won at Verdun. Of course, our Allies may yet suffer some setback in this quarter, but on the other hand, it is to be hoped they will have hugely extended their gains by the time these lines appear in print.

**Got the Wrong One.**  
"May I see Lieutenant Barker, please she asked at the hospital. She was very pretty.  
"We don't allow anyone but relatives to see the patients. Are you a member of his family?" asked the matron.  
"Why, yes," she answered blushing. Then boldly: "Why, I am his sister."  
"Oh, really," answered the matron. "I am so glad to meet you! I am the Lieutenant's mother."

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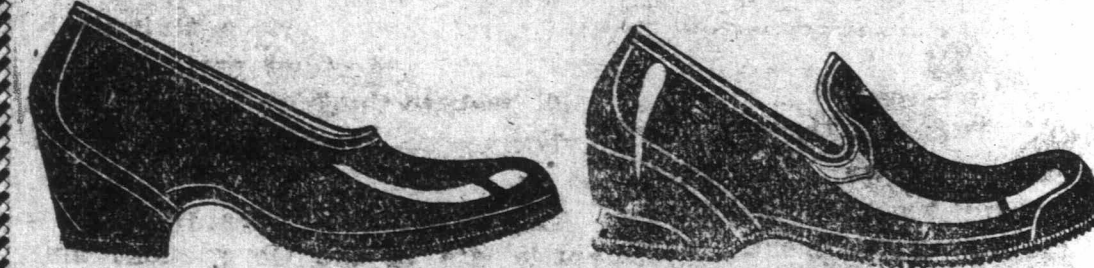
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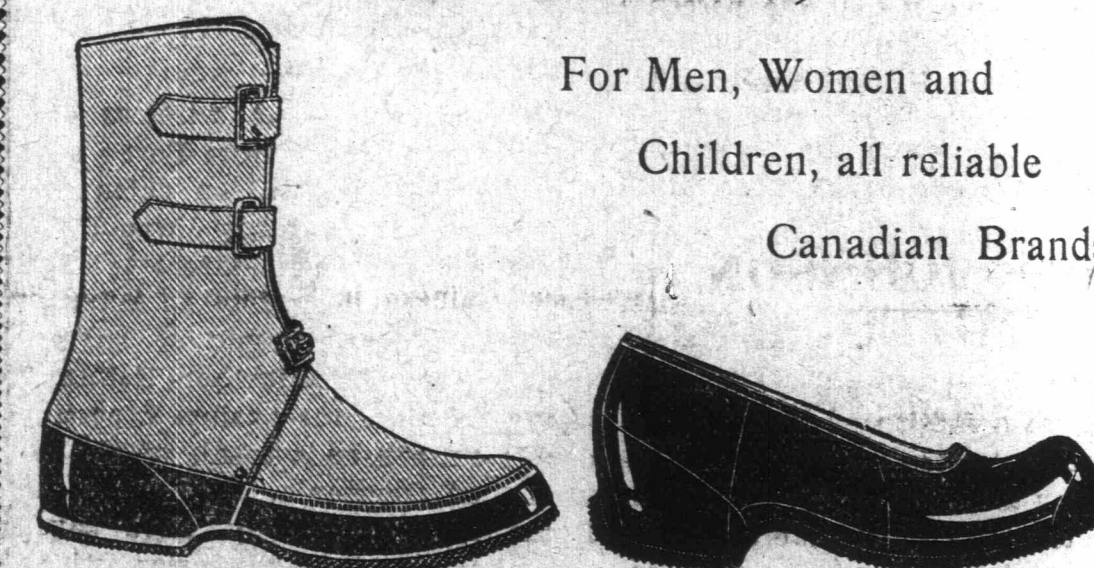
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