

UNDYING STORIES OF OUR "DEATHLESS ARMY"

the paymastership. This arranged, he sped back to his adopted Battalion. He was not the only one of his department who served as a combatant on that day. Honorary Captain McGregor, of British Columbia, for example, had been paymaster in the Canadian Scottish, 16th Battalion. He, too, armed with a cane and a revolver, went forward at his own desire to hand-to-hand fighting in the wood where he was killed, fighting gallantly to the last.

THE case of Major Guthrie, of New Brunswick, is somewhat similar. He was Major of the 12th Battalion, still in England, but was then at the front in some legal-military capacity connected with court-martial. He, like Captain Costigan, had asked the General that Friday morning for a commission in the sorely tried 10th. There was some hesitation, since Guthrie as a major might quite possibly find himself in command of what was left of the 10th if, and when, he found it. "I'll go as a lieutenant, of course," said he.

THE grim practical joking of Fate is illustrated by the adventures of Major Hercule Barre—a young French-Canadian who fought well and spoke English imperfectly. He had been ordered to get to his company in haste, and on the way (it was dark) met some British officers, who promptly declared him a spy. The more he protested, the more certain they were that his speech betrayed him. So they had him back to the nearest Headquarters, where he was identified by a brother officer, and started off afresh—only to be held up a second time by some cyclists, who treated him precisely as the British officers had done. Once again he reached Headquarters; once more the officer, who had identified him before, guaranteed his good faith; and for the third time Barre set out. This time it was a bullet that stopped him. He dragged himself to the side of the road and waited for help. Someone came at last, and he hailed. "Who is it?" said a voice. "I, Barre!" he cried. "What, you, Barre? What do you want this time?" It was the officer who had twice identified him within the last hour. "Stretcher-bearers," said Barre. His friend in need summoned a stretcher-bearer, and Barre was borne off.

THERE were many others who fell by the way in the discharge of their duty. Lieut.-Colonel Currie, commanding the 48th Highlanders, 15th Battalion, had his telephone communication with his men in the trenches cut by shrapnel. He therefore moved his Battalion Headquarters into the reserve trenches, and took with him there a little band of "runners" to keep him in touch with the Brigade Headquarters, a couple of miles in the rear. A "runner" is a man on foot who, at every risk, must bear the message entrusted to him to its destination over ground cross-harrowed by shellfire and, possibly, in the enemy's occupation. One such runner was despatched, and was no more heard of until, days after the battle, the Lieut.-Colonel received a note from him in hospital. It ran: "My dear Colonel Currie,—I am so sorry that you will be annoyed with me for not bringing back a receipt for the message which you sent to Headquarters by me. I delivered the message all right, but on the way back with a receipt, I was hurt by a shell, and I am taking this first opportunity of letting you know that the message was delivered. I am afraid that you will be angry with me. I am now in hospital.—Yours truly, (Sgd.) M. K. Kerr." It is characteristic of the Colonel, and our country, that he should always refer to the private as M. K. Kerr; and, from the English point of view, equally characteristic that M. K. Kerr's report should begin: "My dear Colonel Currie."

AND here is a story of a Brigade Headquarters that lived in a house surrounded by a moat over which there was only one road. On Thursday the enemy's artillery found the house, and later on, as the rush came, their rifle fire found it also. The staff went on with its work till the end of the week, when incendiary shells set the place alight and they were forced to move. The road being impassable on account of shrapnel, they swam the moat, but one of them was badly wounded, and for him swimming was out of the question. Captain Scrimger (now a V. C.), medical officer attached to the Royal Montreal Regiment, protected the wounded man with his own body against the shrapnel that was coming through the naked rafters, and carried him out of the blazing house into the open. Two of the staff, Brig.-General Hughes (then Brigade Major

of the 3rd Infantry Brigade) and Lieut. Thompson (then Assistant Adjutant, Royal Montreal Regiment) re-swam the moat and, waiting for a lull in the shell fire, got the wounded man across the road on to a stretcher and into a dressing station.

ON April 24th Colonel Watson, who was editor of the Quebec Chronicle before he took command of the 2nd Battalion, was called on to perform as difficult and dangerous a task as fell to the lot of any commander during all these difficult and bloody days. The operation was most ably carried out, and Colonel Watson crowned his success, in the midst of what appeared to be defeat, with a deed of personal heroism which, but for his rank, would most assuredly have won for him the Victoria Cross.

About noon, the General Officer Commanding the 3rd Brigade telephoned to Colonel Watson to ask whether, in his opinion, the line of which he was in charge, could still be held. Colonel Watson, though the position was precarious, said that he could still hold on.

Matters, however, grew worse, and at two o'clock the General Officer Commanding sent Colonel Watson a peremptory order to fall back at once. Unfortunately, this message was not received until about three, when the position had become desperate.

The Battalion, apart from many dead, had by this time upwards of 150 wounded, and the Colonel first saw to the removal of all these. Then, leaving his Battalion Headquarters, he went up to the front line, in order that he might give, in person, his instructions to his company commanders to retire. When he reached the front line, Colonel Watson made the most careful dispositions so as to avoid, even at that terrible moment, any excuse for disorder and undue haste in the course of the most perilous and intricate manoeuvre which had now to be carried out. He began by sending back all details, such as signallers and pioneers, and then proceeded to get the companies out of the trenches, one by one—first the company on the left, then the centre, and, lastly, the company on the right.

It was from the angle of a shattered house, which had been used as a dressing station, that Colonel Watson and Colonel Rogers, the second in command of the Battalion, watched the retirement of the three companies, together with details of the 14th Battalion, which had been attached to them since the morning. The men were in extended order, and as they passed the officers the enemy's fire was very heavy, and men fell like wheat before a scythe.

When the last company was well on its way to safety, the two officers, after a brief consultation, decided that it would be best for them to take separate routes back to the Battalion Headquarters line. The reason for this was simple and poignant—it increased the chances of one of them getting through; not, for that matter, that either had very much hope of escaping the enemy's pitiless fire. They never expected to see each other again, and they shook hands in farewell before they dashed out on their separate ways, which lay through a spray of bullets and flying shrapnel. When he had gone about 300 yards, Colonel Watson paused for a moment under the cover of a tree to watch the further retirement of the company he was following. It was at this moment that he noticed one of his officers, Lieut. A. H. Hugill, lying on the ground about sixty yards to the left, in the direction of the enemy's attack. Without a moment's hesitation, Colonel Watson went back to him, thinking that he was wounded; but on asking him what was the matter, Lieut. Hugill told him that he had simply been compelled to rest and recover his breath before he could make another rush.

Almost at the same moment, Private Wilson, also of the 2nd Battalion, was passing near by when he was shot through the leg. The man was so close at hand that Colonel Watson felt impelled to endeavour to rescue him, and suggested to Lieut. Hugill that, between them, they might be able to carry the wounded man back over the eight or nine hundred yards—nearly half a mile—which still separated them from a place of comparative safety. Lieut. Hugill immediately agreed, whereupon Colonel Watson knelt down, and got Wilson on to his back, and carried him several hundred yards until the original Battalion Headquarters was reached; and all the time that Colonel Watson staggered along with his load the air was alive with bullets, which grew thicker and thicker, as the enemy was now rapidly advancing.

The various companies had already retired beyond

what had been the Battalion Headquarters, so that Colonel Watson and Lieut. Hugill had no opportunity of calling for aid. They rested for a few minutes and then started off once more, and between them they managed to get the wounded private across the 700 yards of fire-swept ground which still had to be covered. But, in spite of the fact that the ground was ploughed up with shells all round them during their desperate and heroic retreat, Colonel Watson and Lieutenant Hugill retrieved their man in safety.

WHAT, again, could be more thrilling than the story of the dash of Major H. M. Dyer, a farmer from Manitoba, and Captain (now Lieut.-Col. 25th Battalion) Edward Hilliam, a fruit farmer from British Columbia, when in the face of almost certain death, after the trench telephones were disabled, they set out to order the retirement of a battalion on the point of being overwhelmed!

It was on April 25th that the position of the 5th Canadian Battalion on the Gravenstafel Ridge became untenable; but the men in the fire trench did not entertain any thought of retirement. The telephones between Headquarters and the trench were disabled, the wires having been cut again and again by the enemy's shell fire. General Currie saw the immediate need of sending a positive order to the Battalion to fall back, and Major Dyer and Captain Hilliam, both of the 5th Battalion, undertook to carry up the word to the fire trench. Each received a copy of the order, for nothing but a written order signed by their Brigade Commander would bring the men out. The two officers advanced with an interval of about twenty yards between them, for one or other of them had to get through. They were soon on the bald hilltop, where there were no trenches and no cover of any description. Machine gun and rifle fire swept the ground. They reached a little patch of mustard, and laughed to each other at the thought of using these frail plants as cover. Still unhit, they reached a region of shell holes, great and small. These holes pitted the ground, irregularly, some being only five yards apart, others ten or twelve; but to the officers, each hole in their line of advance meant a little haven of dead ground, and a brief breathing space. So they went forward, scrambling and dodging in and out of the pits. When within 100 yards of our trench, Captain Hilliam fell, shot through the side, and rolled into a ditch. Major Dyer went on, and was shot through the chest when within a few yards of the trench. He delivered the message, and what was left of the Battalion fell back. Men who went to the ditch to assist Captain Hilliam, found only a piece of board, on which he had written with clay, "I have crawled home."

THE men of No. 2 Company of the 14th Battalion assisted Major (now Lieut.-Colonel) W. B. M. King, of the Canadian Field Artillery, to perform one of the most astonishing and daring feats of the campaign. With superb audacity Major King kept his guns in an advanced position, where he deliberately awaited the approach of the Germans till they were within 200 yards. Then, after he had fired his guns into the massed ranks of the enemy, he succeeded, with the assistance of the infantry, in getting the guns away. It was during the course of this part of the action that Lance-Corporal Fred Fisher, of the 13th Battalion, won his V.C., but lost his life. Being in charge of a machine gun, he took it forward to cover the extrication of Major King's battery. All the four men of his gun crew were shot down, but he obtained the services of four men of the 14th Battalion, and continued to work his gun until the battery was clear.

No sooner were Major King's men in safety than Fisher pushed still further forward to reinforce our front line, but while getting his men into position he was shot dead.

TAKE the story of Sergeant J. Richardson, of the 2nd Canadian Battalion. It is a tale of how shrewd common sense defeated the wiles of the enemy. On April-23rd Richardson was on the extreme left of our line in command of a half-platoon, when the words, "Lieutenant Scott orders you to surrender," were passed to him. He knew that there were three company commanders in the line between himself and Lieutenant Scott, and, therefore, correctly concluded that the order had nothing to do with any officer of his regiment, but was of German origin. He not only ignored the order, but discredited it with his men by passing back "No surrender!" It is impossible to say how much ground, and how many lives, the sergeant saved that day by his lively