



Story of a Canadian Hero's
Reckless Daring.

Unparalleled in the History of Warfare.

BY PATRICK DENVIR.

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PREFACE.

In this little booklet I am re-publishing an interview which I gave to a reporter in London, Ontario, and which I hope may prove interesting to any who have never been at the front.

Yours truly,

PATRICK DENVIR.

Cobourg, February 5th, 1917.

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The Man Who Has Done His Bit

By Kind Permission of E. Howe, of the
8th Hussars.

He was one of the first
To answer the call

When it came from over the sea,
The King sent word that he wanted men
To keep the Empire free.

He looked so gay
As he marched away
So handsome strong and fit,
But how is he coming home again,
The man who has done his bit?

The wounds he bears

The scars he wears

Have left him now unfit

But how is he going to earn his living,

The man who has done his bit?

Will you do your part and help him on?

Or will you be one of that kind

That stay at home and by the fireside

sit

And say I do not mind

For the man who has done his bit?

LONDON, Ont., Feb. 3.—Paddy Denvir thumped with his cane on the polished floor of Ward 7 of the Victoria hospital when asked if he remembered crawling out under fire at the second battle of Ypres to get the fish that had been rolled up to the bank of the Yser canal by the German shells.

“Remember? Do I remember? Ask me if I remember my mother. Ask me if I remember Ireland. Don’t ask me if I remember those fish!”

Paddy paused—the exertion of pounding the cane had given his wounded back a wrench—and he winced even while a grin slowly spread over his plain, honest Irish face. The grin was partly for me, and partly for Private Baines, the First Battalion man who had drawn up a chair beside us. Paddy is wounded in the left foot, the right hand and the spine. Baines wears a bandage about his jaw.

“Sure, Bertie, (one of his pals) don’t I remember them?” he demanded of the boy—Baines is only a trifle more than 20 years old. “Didn’t we read the Craig-Haskin stories together, and remember bit by bit all that was put down in them? Didn’t we live it all over together in this same sleepy ward, disturbing the civilian patients by our riotous joy in those sames tales of what we did and how we did it? Didn’t I say to Bertie here that if you wanted affidavits of the truth of those stories all you needed to do was to come to Ward 7 and get them? And here you are asking me if I remember those fish!

“Now that you’ve spent your good money on railroad fare to pay me this call I’ll tell you that I do remember the fish, and the time I had getting them. It was by the dressing station we were when a coal box—we call ’em that because they’re so dirty—ripped by us,

and lit in the canal that we'd passed over a few hours before. The shell threw the water high up in the air, and the mud along with it. When I looked again I saw those fish floundering on the banks.

“I'll Have Those Fish if it Takes a Leg.”

“Well, there's no telling what you'll do in war. You're just as likely as not to think up some harum-scarum stunt and carry it through without a scratch when all the cards of fate are marked against you. That same I did. A breakfast of biscuit without water hadn't struck me as a hifalutin menu for a gentleman of my tender rearing and I says to myself, says I, I'll have those fish if it takes a leg, my two arms and my life!

“And I got 'em. On my stomach I crawled with the battalion yelling to me

that I'd forgotten to say my prayers.

“Sure the saints protected me. H-- was roarin' over my head. Like street cars comin' from a far distance those shells sounded, I hadn't gone more than 10 yards before one tore into a tree that stood by the road, and snapped it off as though it had been the stem of one of my own clay pipes.

“I couldn't crawl over that tree, so I went around. A dead Scotchie, big as a mountain from the gas of the day before, lay right in front of me a few yards away. A shell blew the Heelander all to smithereens, and parts of his kilt fell on me. 'Twas the only time that I ever wore the plaid!

“The fish had stopped their flounderin' when I got to the canal, and lay aisy and quiet in my pocket as I was startin' back. By that time I was wonderin' what imp of the devil had prompted me to come out there and

throw me perfectly good life away. Then another coal-box struck the canal, and I knew I had come out for a bawth, as my English friends would say.

“It was one of those fashionable mud baths that is good for rheumatism, boils, cold in the head, small-pox, gout, glanders, lumbago, pimples, and all that ails you. I got a thorough treatment with no charges demanded. I was drenched with dirty water, and mud—I had half of Belgium clingin’ to my clothes.

**“ Haythen Gewgaw ” Tempts Him
Further.**

“On my way back I crept up close to one of those French-Algerians who had tied himself into knots from his dose of the gas. I wasn’t particularly curious about the haythen’s health, for I knew he had gone to the prophet’s paradise many hours before, but I did want the saber with which he did his butcherin’.

“It was about four feet long, curved, and flared out at the ends till it looked like a meat-axe. I wanted it to manicure my nails with. But I never got it. The Germans convinced me that it was an idle vanity. A shrapnel shell exploded near the Turco, and as I lay quiet while it rained its devilment around me, I says to myself, says I, ‘Paddy, you don’t want that haythen gewgaw. Be content with the fish and thank the saints that you got a stomach left to put it into.’

“When I got back to the line the Lieutenant up and says to me, ‘Paddy, you blamed fool, do you take this for a picnic?’

“‘No, sir,’ says I, ‘just a little outing that I’ve taken for my king and my country!’

“‘Your king and your country,’ says he, ‘don’t call for you to risk your life for a few fish.’

“ ‘Lieutenant,’ says I, ‘when the Lord calls you it doesn’t matter if you’re out in the open gathering fish, or behind a dressing station waiting to charge.’ And I rolled my eyes on the boys that had gone since I went for my fish. And the Lieutenant saw the point.

Enlisted Because He Likes to Shoot.

“And that’s my idea of war. It don’t matter whether you’re asleep in billets miles back from the line or between the trenches stickin’ with your bayonet at everything that wears the Dutch uniform. You may stick, and stick, and stick with the steel, and only get your clothes soiled from the blood spurting out over your rifle stock as you drag the blade out of them, and back in billets you may get so blowed up in your sleep that the friends who are hitting the hay with you will have to pick you in pieces off their tunics.

I've seen men skulkin' in dug-outs scattered in small bits over the landscape, and I've seen men spit in death's face in a charge and only get their faces and hands dirty. You never can tell!

"I enlisted because I like to shoot. From the days when I was a kid up to the time when I went to war I had a rifle in my hands a good deal of the time. I will say for France and Belgium that there's good shootin' over there. And the fishin' isn't bad. I used there. And the fishin' ain't bad. I used to work for the telephone company in Amherstburg. I have a lot of friends in Detroit.

"They tell a lot of stories about me, but most of them ain't true. For instance, they tell of the time when I was on sentry duty near an old farm house. Around the corner was a German sentry. Each of us knew that the other fellow would get his if he turned the

corner. They say I put my foot on my rifle barrel and bent it so that it was at right angles with the stock. Then I'm supposed to have crept up to the corner, poked it around and shot the German sentry as he was crawling up to do the same thing to me.

“They say it was me who stopped an officer coming through the dark by calling ‘Who goes there?’

Many Jokes Told at His Expense.

“The officer said, ‘A friend, Lieutenant James.’

“‘Pass on, friend Jimmy,’ they say I answered.

“They say it was me who was asked at drill over in England what steps I'd take in retiring from a superior body of the enemy, and who said, ‘Long steps!’

“Because I'm Irish they put up to me all the trench josh that passes

around. I'm supposed to have put up a sign over a field where the crosses are so thick you can hardly step between them. The sign reads: 'Wake up, your king and your country needs you.'

"The boys must have their jokes—even if they are ghastly—and because I was always up to some devilment they put a lot of them on me.

"They say that my shoes were so worn out that the officer put me on patrol duty with orders to take a new pair from the first German I shot. I—according to the story—stayed away a long time, and when I got back the officer demanded what had kept me.

"'You told me to get shoes,' I'm supposed to have said, but I had to kill fifty men before I got a pair to fit.'

"What was the narrowest escape I had? Sure, I nearly had my teeth taken out. No, not by a bullet, but by a

dentist. It was when we were on short rations, and I had wandered over near the French lines. The Frenchies had plenty to eat, and I thought I could induce them to give me some. I couldn't make out their lingo, so I opened my mouth, pointed to it, and made signs to show that I was terribly hungry. They looked at me pittingly (the French really have good hearts), and before I knew they had me hustled over to a tent, where they jabbered my story to a man in a white suit. It was not till he had me in a chair, and was waving the forceps that I saw what they were up to. They thought I had toothache!"

Paddy's Wounds Are Healing Slowly.

Paddy paused as a white gowned nurse passed through the long sunshiny ward.

"Time to be dressed, Mr. Denvir," she reminded him.

Paddy's wounds in the foot and hand are healed, but the place where the shrapnel tore his back still needs attention.

I read a London paper telling of a big recruiting meeting the night before while the men, one after another, submitted themselves to the doctor and nurse.

The bandage that was swathed about the jaw of "Bertie" Baines was removed, and I saw a livid, unhealed wound on his jaw. A slim young soldier who had come in the door saw it, too—and he saw Paddy Denvir hobble over the floor with the stick—but he paused only a moment to nod to the men back from Flanders, and went to the bedside of another patient he had come to visit. I could hear him giving this man the latest news of the battalion,

how many recruits had been secured in the last few days, and of the boys' hope that it would soon be sent to the front.

"I'm tired of hangin' around London," he said, "I want to be where somethin's doing!"

The two uniformed men — neither Baines nor Denvir are in bed—helped themselves from my cigarette box, and glanced at the slim soldier as his tall, athletic figure stood framed in the doorway on his way out.

"He wants to be where there's somethin' doin'," grunted Paddy. "He wants to be where there's some fun, and nice pretty girls and such the like. **Only Hints at What He Thinks of War**

"What do you think of it yourself, Paddy?" I parried.

"Think of it!" he exclaimed. "Look at me, and tell me what I ought to think of it! See me hobbling around here, and figure out that I'll never be able

to do the Irish jig like in the good old days gone by."

"It was in the days when the boys felt that this was to be a short, punchy war, that this was sung," said Paddy. He repeated the lines:

"We're the boys from Oxford County

And we come from Woodstock town;

We're here to do our duty,

And to fight for king and crown.

Cheer, boys, cheer,

As we go marching round.

"We've come across the ocean,

Just to down the Allemands;

And when we get to the firing line,

Our ranks are sure to be thin,

But there's bound to be some of us left

To march into Berlin!"

"Darned poor verse," commented Paddy, "but it shows what the lads were thinking of when they first started on this war. There's another one

something like it. It runs this way:

“We’re on our way to Germany,
 At the kaiser’s throne we want to be,
 We’ll drink his beer,
 And give a cheer
 For Canada across the sea.”

“The Walkerville bunch had a song
 that went something like this:

“You people want to know who we are,
 We come from society so near and so
 far,

We know our manners,
 We spend our tanners,
 We are respected wherever we go.

And when we are walking,
 Down the old Walker road,

All the ladies say
 ‘Oh, there they go!’

We come from Walkerville;
 Never work, and never will,
 We are the Walkerville boys.”

Well or Wounded the Soldier Sings.

“Songs? There are a million of them,” said Paddy. “The boys sing through wet and cold, in billets and on the firing line, when they’re well and when they’re wounded. After the battle of Givenchy, they tell me, the handful of Walkerville boys who were left told an officer they could still sing. ‘You’ve got to show me,’ he said. Then they sang that last bit I’ve given you just to prove that they could.

“I wasn’t at the battle of Givenchy myself. My soldierin’ stopped just a little while before Haskin got his. It was in a charge. I had gone across that field he told about, over that ditch and by those cattle that were grazing with the wounded and dead lying around them.

“I had come through without a scratch, and then I got it all of a sudden. We had just left the trench when

it came—a bullet in the foot. I went down and the boys swerved around me in the charge to avoid trampling me. It was when I was down that I got another in the hand.

“I crawled into a shell hole. Beside me was a fourth battalion man with his leg off. He bled to death lying there. Another man who laid face downward there with us was alive when we crawled in beside him, for he was groaning. I listened to his groans for two hours and then a shrapnel burst in the air just 30 feet above us. I got hit in the spine then, and I guess I groaned some myself. Anyway, when I came to enough to notice what was going on around me the other fellow's groans had stopped.”

Not An Easy Place to Hold.

It was not an easy place to hold. It was not a cheap place to hold. But the surrender of this little town would have

meant inevitably an entire alteration in the face of the northern war. It would have involved the entire retirement of the Belgian army from its northern position. Once the Yser Canal to the north of Ypres was turned the whole of the Belgian position up to Nieuport and the sea would inevitably have gone. Let the Germans push beyond Ypres and nothing could have prevented them pressing on first to Dunkirk and then beyond. Ypres was, and is, essentially the key to Calais, and so we would have found the German armies turning the entire flank of the allied position. Had the Canadians not held Ypres and our 1st Division not saved the day at Ypres in April, 1915, there would have been no battle of the Somme to-day, for the British armies would now be fighting their way for a foothold on northern French soil. And "fat Bertha"—Germany's darling gun

--from the white cliffs above Sangaate would have been dropping its 42 cm. shells into the villas of Folkestone and the forts and working class streets of Dover.

Worth while! If ever a thing has been worth while in this war it has been the defence of Ypres. If ever there can be said to have been a portion of the war which has saved the whole, that has been the holding of this ancient Flemish capital. Every Canadian may be proud that Canada had her share, and a great share, in it. For here Canada helped to save Europe.

"Well, Paddy, what do you think of war?"

"I wouldn't have missed the sight of it on any account," he answered. "One thing that made me laugh while in the hospital in England was the sight of a poor chap who had hot salt at his feet, a mustard plaster on his chest and a

vinegar bandage on his head. I thought that if the pepper can had been glued to his nose he would have made a first-class cruit-stand."

"How about the food? What were the biscuits like?"

"Say, I wish I had one just to see you try to eat it. Why, one little Belgian fellow who couldn't speak a word of English came to me one day and indicated that he wanted something to eat. He appeared to have a good set of grinders so I gave him a biscuit with a piece of 'bully beef' on top. In about twenty minutes he returned handed me the biscuit (which he had evidently taken for a plate) and, bowing, said, "Mer-ci, beaucoup." I, myself, was a week trying to bit off one corner, but perhaps I was something like the boy with the filberts—trying to grab too much at one time. I always was generous to myself, in the line of eats."

In speaking of the Red Cross Pte. Denvir spoke very highly—also the St. John's Ambulance. "You ought to see them work, and how they go about it. It is something grand."

"How did you like your officers?"

"My officers were the best in the Canadian contingent. Our Colonel, Lt.-Col. ————— was badly wounded, but went back a second time with another battalion. My own officer, Major —————, just got home the other day. He wrote me a nice letter and I sent him a Christmas card. He said he was getting ready for some big event to take place shortly and asked me to guess what it was. I've guessed."

"What did you guess?"

"You never mind about that. You ought to have as good guessing grey matter as I have, haven't you?"

"What do you think of your officers?"

“I think that they were some of the best that ever held a commission, They were lion-hearted brave and bold; Like the heroes in the days of old; And their names should be inscribed in letters of gold, In Canadian history, when all is told.”

“Well, what became of the fish anyhow?”

“Oh, those awful fish! They were trying to break the line and we were trying to save it, and did save it. They afterwards got wounded, and, I believe, gassed, and taken prisoners.

Trench Talk and Songs.

“Have you ever heard of our great big Canadian gun? It takes a week to load it. The men have to retire seventy-two miles on account of the concussion from the report. When the shell drops on the enemy's lines, what men

it does not kill, it brings back prisoners a week later full of hot air."

Once at Valcartier camp a Sergeant shouted at me, "Don't you know the company has fallen in? Double up and fall in at the river." "Not on your life, Sergeant," says I. "I joined the first Canadian contingent — not the Coldstream Guards."

Daily Routine.

5 a.m.—Reveille.

5.30 a.m.—Roll Call.

6 a.m.—Battalion will parade in bare feet and helmets. Rout march to dark-night lighthouse and back.

6.30 a.m.—Swimming parade. Any man found wandering at the bottom of the sea will be given his discharge. All submarines found to be handed in to the Quartermaster and put in his kit bag.

7.30 a.m.—Camel parade before going to Egypt. All camels' humps to be polished and chins cleaned.

9.30 a.m.—Route march to Russia, headed by the Amherstburg band. Here we suffer grief and pain.

N.C.O.'s will be supplied with goat's milk free of charge.

1.30 p.m.—All men suffering from corns will parade to Quartermaster stores for sandpaper.

3 p.m.—There will be a night attack on the nearest “pub.” Fatigue party will be detailed to carry away the empties.

5.30 p.m.—Fire Alarm. All men will stay in bed till carried to a place of safety.

6 p.m.—Passes will be given to men for shaving and washing. This only applies to men in need of the same.

In case of Zepp raid all men will make for the nearest cookhouse table and remain underneath till refreshments are dished out.

During the night all men are warned to have their toe nails cut to prevent tearing of the blankets.

Defaulters—Pte. Pillowslip has been awarded one month in confectionery shop for refusing to eat his rations. Pte. Dime, 10 days C.B. for taking a June bug for a Zepp on the 17th of March. Pte. Respirator, 5 days, No. 2, for striking a match to see if the gas was coming over.

Lights out.

Note.—Outdoor sleepers are entitled to crawl in and get warm provided they will refrain from bragging about sleeping outdoors.

Keep Your Head Down

Keep your head down, Allemand!
Keep your head down, Allemand!
Last night by the "star-shell" light,
I saw you,
I saw you,
Fix your old barb wire,
If you want to see your father,
And your mother any more,
Keep your head down, Allemand!

No Conscription.

Come on, you boys of Canada!
And never let it be said,
That you ever had to be led,
Like a horse, with a halter round his
 head!
But uphold the name that the first
 boys made,
 And go right to the fore;
And take your place in this big fight,
 Our Empire's righteous war.