

D. K. Moulton

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When the Lantern of Hope Burned Low.

The Story of the
1/4th Northumberland Fusiliers (T.F.)
during the
German Offensives of
March, April, May, 1918.

By Rev. R. WILFRID CALLIN, C.F.



Corpl. J. Curtin with "Nanny" and
"Daisy."

When the Lantern of Hope Burned Low.

The Spring of 1918 will be for ever remembered as the darkest hour in the fortunes of the Allies. Three years and a half of war had seen the Allied cause grow in moral clearness and military glory, but the aftermath of the Russian revolution had placed in the hands of the Central Powers an opportunity of which they were not slow to take advantage. By the liberation of their Armies on the Eastern Front, a force of not less than one million fresh and vigorous men, supported by immense artillery reserves, were released for offensive purposes in the West. That the Central Powers meant to make a final bid for victory was certain. How that bid was made, where the three great blows of March 21st, April 9th, and May 27th fell, and what their successive aims were, is now a matter of history. How near they came to success, what desperate fighting took place before the Hun was finally thwarted almost within reach of his goal, is also a matter of history—written in calm, dispassionate, but profoundly moving words in Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's despatch. Here we record, not a description of the offensive that failed, but a fragment of the reason why they failed. Other regiments played their part as finely as we did. Indeed, in so vast a conflict, one battalion more or less made little difference. But this was *our* Battalion; three times in less than ten weeks we met the full shock of the enemy's strongest blows; three times by an inscrutable Fate we were at the very centre of his deadly attack. We do not complain, neither do we boast; in life and death we did but our duty; but in the dying of our indomitables is written the whole spirit of a great deliverance. We were of Britain, and Britain was at bay; that was all.

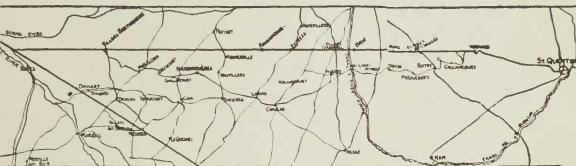
The Second Battle of The Somme.

MARCH 21st to APRIL 4th, 1918.

I.

For some days before the historic March 21st the Battalion had been lying in reserve at the village of Le Quesnel, on the east side of the main road between Amiens and Roye. The time was fully occupied. Almost every day saw the Companies, singly or together, drilling or carrying out tactical schemes in the neighbourhood. Lewis gun classes were held on the neglected lawn of the chateau, and there also long hours were devoted to blackboard lectures on the specialist work of a modern soldier. Guard-mounting became an institution, and there was keen rivalry between the Companies for the smartest guard. Recreative games and impromptu concerts filled up the evenings. The health and *morale* of the men were excellent.

Late on the night of March 20th, the guns were heard booming in rising anger, presaging we knew not what. We had, of course, often discussed the long-expected enemy offensive, to be made with all his might of men and guns, thanks to the liberation of his divisions in the East. With daybreak of Thursday, 21st, came the warning order to be ready to move at half-an-hour's notice. Late that afternoon we marched out of the village where we had spent so happy and busy a time. Fife and drum went merrily, and soldier songs enlivened the way. Who can ever



understand the psychology of the British soldier? Going to battle? Of course we were. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, so sing, sing, sing! And what songs:

“ There’s a moose in oor back hoose,
Pit lie idle, pit lie idle.”

Or—

“ Good-bye-ee! Good-bye-ee!
Wipe the tear, baby dear, from your eye-ee! ”

Thus, in the gathering dusk, we reached our appointed railhead, and entrained as far as Brie, from whence under urgent orders we marched to Caulaincourt, arriving there shortly after dawn on Friday, March 22nd. The Transport, following by road, received their new orders *en route*, and pushed on to Mons-en-Chausee.

These were the positions roughly when the tide of battle broke on us. Our Battalion had taken up its position on the “ Green Line,” knowing that the Boche hordes had succeeded in breaking our front defences. It was on the “ Green Line ” that we joined battle with the enemy, and the fight waged fiercely through Friday afternoon. Casualties, especially amongst officers, were heavy from the first, the Commanding Officer (Lieut.-Col. William Robb, M.C.) being wounded, and all Company Commanders killed or missing. The story of Capt. W. B. Hicks and “ A ” Company will be told later; suffice it to say here that on Friday evening they were regarded as missing, probably captured. Captain T. W. Gregory, of “ B ” Company, was wounded, but continued to fight; was wounded again in several places, and died in the Field Ambulance in the neighbouring village of Tertry. Captain A. Finlayson, of “ C ” Company, was wounded in the arm, but refused to go back, fighting with a number of his men from behind the shelter of a broken wall in the village. It is feared that this officer, an unyielding, indomitable Scot, fell at the spot from which not even wounds could dislodge him. Equally gallant, scarcely varying in a word, is the story of Captain King, of “ D ” Company, another officer who never came back. 2nd-Lieut. Chevreau, a Franco-British officer, holder of the Croix de Guerre, was in charge of an advanced position with a platoon of “ B ” Company. He and his 34 men fought until they were reduced to 8, of whom several were wounded. Though badly wounded



Lieut.-Col. W. Robb, M.C.



Captain W. B. Hicks, M.C.
Captain W. B. F. Essex.

Captain T. W. Gregory.
2nd-Lieut. H. Stewart,



Captain E. L. Dobson.
Lieut. J. C. Napier.

Lieut. W. E. Pearson.
2nd-Lieut. W. Anderson.



2nd-Lieut. H. E. Bull.

2nd-Lieut. L. R. Chevreau de Montlehr.

2nd-Lieut. J. G. Clark.

Captain King, M.C.

Lieut. J. McVey.

himself he continued to fight, in order to cover the escape of his wounded men to the Aid Post. He gave no ground to the last and died at his post. Lieut. Lund was wounded in two places, treated at the Aid Post and not seen again. 2nd-Lieut. Cockburn was wounded at the opening of the action. 2nd-Lieut. Tibbs was missing, being last seen heroically defending his position.

The command of the Battalion had now devolved upon the Adjutant, Capt. T. A. Lacy Thompson, M.C., in whose courage and judgment we had the completest confidence. "Tock," as we call him, was perhaps our most popular officer, as he was also one of our best soldiers. In accordance with general instructions received by him the whole line was withdrawn, under cover of darkness, to Meraucourt, where we provided the men with hot tea and food, and later through Devizes to the river at St. Christ. Considerable fighting took place here on Saturday night, the enemy making repeated and most desperate attempts to gain possession. On one occasion he actually succeeded in getting across, but thanks to the excellent work of "C" Company (amongst whom Corporal Steele may be named) was destroyed or driven back by concentrated rifle and Lewis gun fire.

In the meantime the Transport had evacuated Mons-en-Chausee, the Boche being in possession a couple of hours afterwards. Mons will always have a sentimental interest for us, inasmuch as we salved there the Battalion mascot, "Nanny." Nanny was tethered in a field, and had obviously been abandoned. Little notice was taken of her until the enemy began to shell the place with shrapnel. Then, under fire, the chain was cut and the goat saved. During the strenuous days and nights that followed, her milk was a god-send. By the time the Battalion had reached St. Christ, the Transport had arrived near the cross roads on the west of the village of Misery. Here they were constantly under fire, but this was child's play to carrying rations and extras up to the Battalion through Misery. At the time the enemy crossed the bridge, the ration limbers were in the road immediately behind. This road was enfiladed by machine-gun fire, and was heavily shelled. It was imperatively necessary to take the rations back to a place of safety. The limbers were reloaded at lightning speed and went back at the gallop. Misery played up to its name that night, for the wild gallop had scarcely started when the enemy laid a barrage right across the village. By a

streak of luck the luck which can never be explained no one was hit, though a trace was cut clearly in two by a flying piece of shrapnel.

Our position at dawn on Sunday, 24th, was on the slight rise between St. Christ bridgehead and Misery, but we were withdrawn to Foucaucourt during the morning for a brief rest. Here a dramatic surprise awaited us, for Captain Hicks and over 90 men of "A" Company arrived. They were as reinforcements from the dead. On Friday afternoon they had been cut off from the rest of the Battalion, but refused to surrender. A diversion by some other British force (presumed to have been cavalry) weakened the enemy circle. Hicks and his gallant men immediately seized the opportunity, fought their way out, and escaped to the South towards Nesle. Thence, after much journeying and fretful delay, they learned the whereabouts of the Battalion and rejoined us. On the Sunday afternoon, their two hours' sleep enlivened by an enemy bombing raid, the Battalion moved up to Assevillers, after having taken up an intermediate position at the Sugar Refinery. Hard fighting again took place, but it was only with the greatest reluctance and to conform with the rest of the line—forced back both North and South under tremendous pressure—that we withdrew through Foucaucourt (now on fire) to Vauvillers. "D" Company was left to cover the retirement of the Battalion, and put up a magnificent fight, 2nd-Lieut. Essex, acting Company Commander, being awarded the Military Cross for his remarkable skill and bravery.

II.

The Vauvillers area was to witness some of the keenest fighting of the whole battle. It is open, undulating country with numerous villages and fair roads, some sunken. Here on Monday, 25th, under the urgent necessity of checking the Boche advance, the Battalion vigorously counter-attacked, fighting through the streets of Framerville and doing most excellent work. Captain Hicks, *toujours calme*, was captured during this effort. On Tuesday, 26th, there was another vigorous fight at Vauvillers and neighbourhood with several spirited counter-attacks led by Captain Lacy Thompson, whose work during these days defies description.



Captain T. A. Lacy-Thompson, D.S.O., M.C



Captain H. A. Grierson, R.A.M.C.
Captain R. J. Somerville.

Rev. R. W. Callin, C.F.
2nd-Lieut. A. A. Pickering.



Lieut. T. C. Lund. 2nd-Lieut. G. Davies, M.C.
Captain L. G. Thomas, M.C.
Lieut. W. H. Nicholson. 2nd-Lieut. H. R. Rees.



Lieut. J. W. Cockburn.

Lieut. S. Siddeley, M.C.

Captain A. Finlayson.

2nd-Lieut. T. Tibbs.

2nd-Lieut. A. N. Lawson.

To the deep regret of all he was wounded, as was Captain L. G. Thomas, M.C., of the Trench Mortar Battery (acting as infantry at this time with our Battalion). 2nd-Lieut. Anderson, who had done conspicuously good work from the opening of the battle, was also a casualty. General fighting followed, ranging over the country from Rozieres to Harbonnieres. One amusing incident may be recorded. The Transport had taken rations and supplies to the neighbourhood of Vauvillers, and were instructed to take them to the Battalion in the village. There in the centre of the village they were met by a thunderstruck officer of the Durham Light Infantry, who wanted to know with the customary ornamented language what the Transport officer and the writer wanted with limbers in front of the front line—the British it was true held two sides of the village, but the Boche held the other two, and were even now behind the Transport. The quick turn round in the village street, and the triumphant gallop out, with flame and sparks flying from the cookers, gave a touch of the comic to what might have been very serious.

On Wednesday, 27th, the battle moved steadily through Harbonnieres, Guillaucourt, and Ignacourt, the Battalion fighting an undramatic but highly important rearguard action, to cover the retirement of the main body. I think I was more impressed by the hapless plight of the refugees tramping slowly west along these roads than anywhere else. With household goods piled high on barrows and trucks, elderly men and women trudged drearily on. Gone was the light from their faces, gone the music from their speech. Tears and despair ruled them. Sometimes, from sheer weariness they would drop by the roadside, as deaf to the shelling as the most hardened veteran. As for the children, clinging to their mothers' skirts or lending their puny strength to push the barrow on which was their little all, the sight of them would have broken any heart but that of a German. In these circumstances Thomas Atkins betrayed those tender traits which have won for ever the heart of the peasantry of France. With no thought of his own tiredness, or yet of his own weighty kit, he cracked a joke in the broad Northumberland accent, and put his shoulder to the wheel. Thus they lived, fought, laughed, and sometimes died. Lieut. McVey was wounded at this time, some two days only after joining the Battalion. Lieut. Siddeley was wounded at Harbonnieres, after most gallant behaviour

from the commencement of the battle. This action continued in a South-South-Westerly direction towards Villers-aux-Erables. We were back in the very area from which on the previous Thursday we had so light-heartedly set out. The roads had been badly congested near Foucaucourt, but at the top of the hill leading down into Moreuil, a very nasty situation had arisen. Several roads converged at this point, and traffic both up and down was exceedingly heavy, with the result that something very like a block unavoidably existed for some hours. We were subjected to machine-gun fire from an enemy aeroplane, but in our cool British way replied at once with rifle and Lewis gun fire, then rested in the mud of the fields to make a meal. The fatigue and lack of regular food was telling heavily on officers and men alike, and a very pleasant change was provided during this enforced and dangerous pause by fowls which had been "rescued" from abandoned farms at Harbonnières, Marcelcave, and Villers-Bretteux. The congestion presently cleared, and the bridge over the Avre at Moreuil-Morisel was crossed about midnight. There followed a long dreary march to Merville-aux-Bois, men trudging along almost asleep.

Three or four hours—rather less than more—in the barns at Merville-aux-Bois, and the Battalion were ordered once more into the line. They marched back over the Avre to a position in front of Domart, between Demuin and Hangard. They were now commanded in the line by Captain E. L. Dobson, who had rejoined from a Corps School. This was the 29th (Good Friday). Captain Dobson, who did finely in his responsible position, was hit during a severe fight on Saturday, 30th, and was rescued under circumstances which demand space in this little account. A rectification of the line on a small scale had to be effected just as Captain Dobson was wounded. His right thigh was shattered, and he was carried some distance, but owing to his weight had to be temporarily left behind. When the Battalion formed up anew he was some 300 or 400 yards out in front under heavy fire. Private Robson and Private Armstrong volunteered to attempt a rescue. Private Armstrong was hit and they had to return. 2nd-Lieut. Gwylon Davies then went out, but he also was hit and had to return. 2nd-Lieut. (the Reverend) W. E. Pearson and Private David Forster made a third attempt, reached Captain Dobson safely, and carried him back to the shelter of our own lines.

On the 30th the bulk of the Battalion were withdrawn from the line, with the exception of a party under Lieut. Nicholson (just rejoined from Divisional Headquarters), 2nd-Lieut. H. R. Rees, 2nd-Lieut. H. Stewart (both of whom had exhibited the finest courage throughout the whole battle), and 2nd-Lieut. Davison (re-joined from special work). This party shared the strenuous work of the succeeding two days, when the Boche was finally held up within gun-range of Amiens, and his gambler's bid for that city defeated. Then these officers and their men went North to the Battalion, which was at Vironchaux.

III.

Apart from heavy casualties, the worst feature of the Somme fighting retreat was undoubtedly the incredible fatigue and lack of sleep. Men simply could not keep awake despite the danger, and the slightest respite found them in deep slumber. Any bed was a good bed—A heap of stones by the roadside, a ditch, an open field, a sloping bank. Cold and hunger were forgotten in Nature's overwhelming clamour for sleep. Passing through Moreuil on the eve of Good Friday, men dropped asleep on doorsteps for three or four minutes at a time, walked a few yards further, slept on another doorstep, and so on. The writer knows two officers who slept four times in this fashion in passing through the village just mentioned, and was himself accused later the same night of being asleep as he walked hanging on to a strap of the Mess Cart. Physically, the men had come to the very end of their tether, and only sheer will-power kept them going. It was not so much a question of muscles being tired—though they were *very* tired—as of the very bones being sore, and all reserve force being utterly used up. Nevertheless, what that will-power could do the enemy learned to his cost. Despite the fatigue, despite the demoralising effect a retreat was bound to have, this black fortnight was illuminated by instances of individual bravery worthy of the highest traditions of the Fifth Fusiliers and the British Army; whilst the set teeth and bull-dog tenacity of the Battalion as a unit, contesting each mile of ground, holding on to the last moment, counter-attacking when hopelessly outnumbered, robbed the enemy of his vital *elan*, made him hesitate when hesitation meant failure, and contributed a full quota to the fighting which robbed him of the prize for which he strove so much. The rearguard action of the "Fourth," a little thing in the mighty movements of these days, has yet in it that fire and glory which make such things historic.



Captain J. V. Gregory, M.C.



Captain J. M. Benson.
2nd-Lieut. F. G. Peddie, M.C.

Captain J. N. Goodbody, M.C.
Captain J. S. J. Robson, M.C.



2nd-Lieut. C. M. Davison.

2nd-Lieut. J. B. Brown.

2nd-Lieut. H. R. Tully.

2nd-Lieut. W. A. Kipling.

2nd-Lieut. A. Marshall.



2nd-Lieut. A. H. Royle,

2nd-Lieut. A. E. Morris.

2nd-Lieut. J. A. Greaney.

2nd-Lieut. F. B. Clarke,

2nd-Lieut. W. L. McLean.

The Battle of the Lys.

APRIL 9th to 23rd, 1918.

I.

The change from Picardy to French Flanders was a very striking one. We had come to the fringe of the Black Country. Behind us were the chimneys and slag-heaps of Lillers, the mean streets and the general ugliness of things. Around us was flat and monotonous country, and stagnant frog-filled dykes. Even the ancient and picturesque town of Merville was unable to break the general dull tone. Yet the sun shone graciously upon us. Spring was there with all its witchery, and our ranks had been filled with young soldiers from the homeland, bringing to the deadness and desolation of things the spirit and fire of youth.

The whole Battalion was infected with youthful vigour and expectancy, from our young Commanding Officer (Capt. J. v. Gregory, M.C.), with youthful veterans like Essex, Nicholson, and Davison, other older but no less heroic survivors like Stewart, Bull, Kipling, Pearson, and the Doctor, down to the youngest drummer boy. Personally I shall not soon forget the inspiration and uplift of our service held in the H.Q. barn on Sunday morning, April 7th. We were those who had been delivered out of a great tribulation, and were gathering new strength and energy for the tasks of the coming days. How near the death-grapple was, we did not guess.

II.

On Monday, April 8th, we marched to a scattered hamlet marked on the map as "Arriwage"—a name corrupted in all probability by a printer's error from "Au Rivage," much to the scorn of the valiant Ferrari, our French interpreter. We were there in a convenient position to take over the line from the Portuguese, and this was to have been done on Tuesday, 9th. But on that morning we were roused by the startling news that the enemy had attacked and occupied the Portuguese front line and was advancing. Thereupon we received orders to report to Brigade between Merville and Estaires, and on doing this lined up in farms to await battle orders. One Company was detached to guard the Railway at Beaupre, whilst the other three Companies marched on the Water Tank, Estaires, and dug in near strong points in the neighbourhood. Two advanced positions in particular were of the highest value—Pone le Meause and Pont Levis, the crossings of the River Lys. Dispositions were accordingly made in conjunction with a D.L.I. Battalion, and fierce fighting took place for the possession of these important points, fighting in which the youths from home, conquering inexperience and the first fright of battle, vied with our veterans in tenacity, resolution, and faithfulness. The machine-gun fire was deadly, the flat open country being fatally adapted to this modern weapon. Nevertheless the spirit of our men was seen in the desperate efforts they made to reach their positions, the grip they kept of them, and the effective check they imposed on the enemy's advance. 2nd-Lieut. Lawson (re-joined from leave) was wounded near Pont Levis and presumed dead, but after weeks of waiting we learned that he had been picked up by the enemy and was in a German hospital, making a good recovery from severe wounds. 2nd-Lieut. Napier was wounded in the neck, but managed to reach a British hospital. Capt. J. S. J. Robson, M.C. (re-joined after long absence on special work),

in a desperate attempt with a small party to strengthen our position after Lawson had fallen, was himself wounded. Again an attempt at reinforcement was made by a party under 2nd-Lieut. C. M. Davison. Forcing his indomitable way across the open, this popular young officer (affectionately known as "The Prince") was mortally wounded before reaching the objective. He died in a Casualty Clearing Station a few hours afterwards. This was one of the fights which do not lend themselves to picturesque description, and so scarcely ever figure in newspaper accounts. But it was a quiet, deadly struggle through daylight and dark for the secure possession of a position of great strength. No effort was spared by the enemy to prevent our reinforcing it, and by sheer weight of numbers and intensity of fire he meant to throw us right away from it. So the deadly trial of strength continued until by the mere weight of the attack we had to modify our positions. Thus we reorganised near the Trou Bayard Road, a change which was successfully accomplished under circumstances of the greatest difficulty, and reflected the highest credit upon all concerned, amongst whom we may mention C.S.M. Osborne, M.C. The line was now continuous, and we were linked up with other Battalions. In addition, the return of "D" Company, materially strengthened the fighting force of the Battalion. We were here attacked repeatedly, with heavy trench mortar and machine-gun fire, but no ground whatever was yielded through the hours of daylight, Thursday, 11th, though the strain and fatigue were having marked effects, especially on our younger soldiers. I remember having a chat with Essex in the "B" Company trench, about midnight, and whilst he was cautioning me to keep my six feet of humanity as near Mother Earth as possible, owing to the intermittent bursts of machine-gun fire when the Boche tried to enfilade us, seeing some of the younger lads fast asleep—cold, wet, and danger all forgotten.

Again the line had to be reconstituted, and acting under Brigade instructions a new position was taken up near La Couronne. Though comparatively little ground had been yielded to the enemy, it was of the utmost importance that he should be held, and a great fight took place on Friday, 12th, when we stood shoulder to shoulder with the Brigade of Guards. In this fighting we had several officer casualties, 2nd-Lieut. W. A. Kipling being hit in the face. 2nd-Lieut. F. B. Clarke (who had rejoined us from

Divisional Headquarters at the beginning of the Lys Battle) was also wounded, whilst 2nd-Lieut. H. E. Bull (who had done superb work on the Somme, and gained his M.C.) went down with shell shock.

Let me here pay my personal tribute to the Ambulance personnel of the Battalion. The conduct of the stretcher-bearers was superb. Roads were shelled and swept by machine-gun fire alternately. Two or three squads were knocked out—one whilst carrying Lieut. Stiles of the Trench Mortar Battery—but, driven off the roads, the indomitable S.B.'s carried their wounded comrades across the fields, over ditches, sometimes more than two miles. The Regimental Aid Post was hit by a shell when crowded to the doors with stretcher cases from our own and a neighbouring Division. Yet Capt. Grierson went about his work of mercy unresting, unhasting, a fine example to all.

III.

At 6 p.m. on Friday, 12th, a re-assembly took place near Vieux Berquin, from which the Battalion marched to the Transport lines at Le 1^{er} Anglais and rested the night. After this much-needed respite, we marched to billets in abandoned farms just behind the line, being now relieved from actual front-line fighting but set to work on defences in the Bois de Nieppe. During this time, night and day, we were under orders to be ready to move at ten minutes' notice.

The days in the Bois de Nieppe were, after recent events, comparatively quiet. There was a certain amount of shelling, particularly by one gun, nicknamed "The Silent One." For some reason, probably very high velocity, the shells arrived before any warning screech was heard, and as they were of heavy calibre there were other things more pleasant. Fortunately casualties were few. Lewis gun classes were continued in the wood in constant, persistent preparation for the real work of war. Lamotte Chateau was sufficiently interesting and dangerous to tempt ardent spirits to explore it. Essex, that inveterate musician, must needs play selections from Beethoven and Schubert on the abandoned grand piano whilst shells were "modifying" the roof of the Chateau, and dead horses lay in the Courtyard. What vain covetousness that immovable "grand" roused in us!

This, then, was the line on which the second German Offensive spent itself after a week of the most furious fighting, and although another week was given to further attempts by the enemy, the initial surprise and impetus had gone and he had definitely reached the limit of his power in that sector. The aim of the Somme Offensive had been the capture of Amiens and the



Lieut.-Col. B. D. Gibson, D.S.O.,
Croix de Guerre.



Lieut. H. H. Harrison. Captain F. C. H. Bennett, R.A.M.C.
 Captain D. T. Turner.
 2nd-Lieut. J. A. McIntyre. 2nd-Lieut. H. E. Findley.



Lieut. F. J. Ives.
 Lieut. R. H. Smallwood.
 2nd-Lieut. W. J. Maxfield.

Lieut. W. S. Jones.
 2nd-Lieut. J. W. Marsden.



Lieut. L. S. Cheeseright, M.C.

2nd-Lieut. J. E. Farwell.

Captain R. Allen.

2nd-Lieut. C. Tolkien.

Lieut. J. J. Holme.

separation of the British Armies. The aim of the Northern Offensive was the possession of the Channel and the diversion of all British Transport to more southerly ports, already congested by American traffic. The prize in each case was big, and the attempt in each within an ace of achievement. Both failed. The cause of failure in the one can be described in glowing pictures, dramatic and powerful. The scene was large and historic, the movement rapid, the heroism obvious. In the second case there is much less movement. The stage is crowded and dark. It is a tense struggle in the night, where the gallantry of the individual is not seen, where stubbornness is matched against stubbornness and the defenders die silently rather than give way. *That* was the Battle of the Lys—sombre, subtle, and deadly.

We came out of the fight broken, exhausted, but with high morale. This time the enemy had been held quickly and securely. New hope and confidence throbbed in every heart. We were in the mood for inspiration, and the inspiration did not fail us. As we withdrew from the battle we were met by Lieut.-Col. B. D. Gibson, D.S.O., fully recovered from his illness of September, 1917, full of vigour and radiating will-power; accompanied by the friend and helper of all, our Second in Command, Major J. Ridley Robb. What their personalities meant to us no pen can describe, but they were felt at once and were our re-creation.

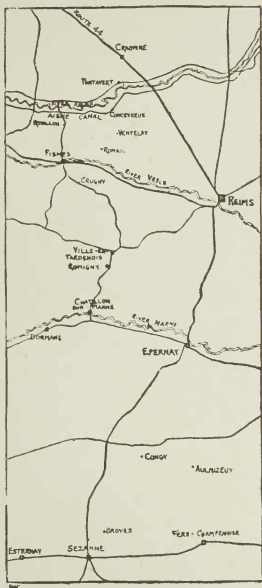
The Third Battle—From the Aisne to the Marne.

MAY 27th to JUNE 16th, 1918.

I.

The Southward move was exhilarating. All along the route we had evidences of the happy *entente* that now binds Britain and France together. Flags were hung out, hands were waved, elderly gentlemen gravely raised their hats or saluted, and the fair sex—an overwhelming majority—threw kisses at us in most liberal fashion. The glimpse of Paris, as we skirted the Northern and Western sides at the leisurely pace of a troop train, stirred many to excitement. Then through the gathering gloom we travelled on amid scenes pregnant with ecclesiastical history—past the Church of Meaux where Bossuet preached some of his most famous sermons—until we reached our detraining point. The few days in camp near Fere-in-Tardenois helped to familiarise us with the country, which was sweet and glorious in the glad garment of Spring. It witnessed, too, the reorganisation of the Battalion, the absorption of new drafts, and rapid growth in efficiency. We felt the driving-power of Colonel Gibson in everything.

Then we moved into the front area, taking over from a famous French regiment. Findlay, with his fine knowledge of French, was particularly useful here, and our reception by the French Colonel and his officers was particularly kind. The whole area was eloquent with memories of the war—from the first great battle of the Aisne in 1914, to the stupendous storming of the Chemin des Dames in the Spring of 1917. The Aisne canal became a favourite bathing-place, and in the generous warmth of the excellent weather helped us to forget the dark days of the previous



months. Reims, with its Cathedral glorious even in ruins, was not far to the East of us; Soissons, almost equally beautiful, away to our left. Even the villages, such at any rate as had escaped the devastation of war, were things of beauty. I shall not soon forget one midnight ride down the hillside through Longueval. The clustering houses, with the quaint old Church set in the midst, were bathed in the full light of a gorgeous moon, and the silver and shadows created a magic scene. Scarcely had we passed the village than from the thickets and hedgerows came the thrilling notes of a score of nightingales, singing away in the silence and the moonlight a sad song whose ecstasy touched us almost to tears.

As for the line itself, we had the Craonne plateau—the broad open land on the immediate right of the *Chemin des Dames*. The trenches were almost innumerable and formed a most extraordinary network. They were shallow and chalky, difficult to walk in, and some of them scarcely ever dry. To get to the advanced positions meant an extraordinary expenditure of time and energy—the trenches leading one by the longest possible route. French wit had seized on this characteristic and named one of them "The Trench of a Thousand Days." We were constantly overlooked by the enemy (owing to the slight slope) and this was especially the case from the little elevation known as "*Ouvrage des Quarrieres*." The National Road 44 ran across our front North-West and South-East. In such positions then we took our turn with our sister-battalions in the line—a few days in front, a few days in reserve, a few days in support. We moved into the front line for the second time on Saturday night-Sunday morning, May 25-26.

II.

Sunday was a day of glorious sunshine and beautiful calm. Over the whole area a great quiet prevailed. Some of us have long been suspicious of such calmness, as a sure sign of some further frightfulness being prepared in secret by the Hun. And signs had been given that something was afoot. His famous red aeroplanes—the stormy petrels—had been seen for a day or two; new guns had been ranging; convoys or motor lorries had been reported near his lines. What this denoted became definitely known on Sunday evening. Prisoners had given the information that at 1 a.m. Monday, 21st, the enemy intended to attack in great force. The last needful preparations for battle were soon completed, and the Fourth, inspired by Colonel Gibson, waited the fateful hour. At something past eleven o'clock on the Sunday night our own guns began—anticipating the Hun by a hundred minutes, and helping to disorganise his concentrations. But on the stroke of 1 o'clock the whole front from Soissons to Reims broke into flame, and we knew that for the third time in ten weeks we were up against the real thing. Within fifteen minutes it was obvious that the Hun had an extraordinary concentration of guns of every calibre, and that his bombardment had been organised beforehand in most thorough and accurate fashion. A big proportion of gas was used, about four varieties being distinguished in the later French and British reports. The whole line was deluged with shells, and the front trenches especially must have been reduced to a pulverised mass. For two hours and a half this continued; then lifted further on as the infantry and tanks attacked at 3.30 a.m. Then ensued a fight that had epic qualities. Standing in the ruins of their defences, the Northumberlands awaited the onslaught—waited and met it with rifle and Lewis gun fire until the grey hordes broke and stayed their course, tanks and men alike.

overwhelming numbers, they poured on again, and our men were pressed back to their second positions, fighting as steadily and effectively as their depleting numbers permitted. Another battalion came to their help, and the wood in front of Pontavert became a perfect hell. Draw a line from the front of that wood eastwards to the Bois des Buttes, and you have roughly the line on which the Fourth fought its last battle as a battalion. What that fight was like few of us know. The enemy came in great force diagonally from the right, between Rontoux and the line running Ville-aux-Bois—Bois des Buttes, so getting in behind the battalion and working towards Craonne. Thus they were almost completely cut off. Out of the melee only a few merged. Marshall came down gassed, and after a certain rest and treatment at Concevreux, returned to the fight with Major Robb's party, Napier (barely recovered from his wound) came down badly gassed and had to be sent to hospital. Capt. Gregory, the Adjutant, was wounded and reported to have been left in the marshes, but by the almost super-human courage of two of our men, Hunter and Cogblan, was carried out and eventually reached hospital wounded in three places. Capt. Benson, of the Trench Mortar Battery, having made his way to the forefront of the fight, led an attack on a German tank, but was killed in the effort. Colonel Gibson fell, shot through the head as he was directing the last defences. Thus the Battalion lost its Commanding Officer—a man revered and loved by all. All nerve and will, he died fighting to the last, the very incarnation of courage. A born leader and a superb soldier, he had joined in the early Volunteer days, finally becoming Commanding Officer in the summer of 1915. His name will be ever remembered by those who knew him as one of the straightest, strongest men we have known. With the enemy on every side, the River and Canal both behind them, the survivors, on the exhaustion of ammunition, were taken prisoner.

During this time there was in Concevreux, on the Canal bank, the Administrative and Transport people, along with our Second in Command, Major (now Lieut.-Colonel) Ridley Robb, Captain David Turner (who had rejoined from Ireland), Lieut. J. M. Goodbody (Assistant Adjutant), and a few men. Gathering together every available man, Major Robb and Captain Turner proceeded along the Canal bank to defend the bridges (very numerous) and to hold up the enemy where he must cross. They



Lieut.-Col. J. R. Robb, Croix de Chevalier,
Legion of Honour.

were joined later by Lieut. Goodbody. Very stout work they did, too, holding on from 9 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., when orders were received to withdraw to the high ground above Concevreux.

A few of us remained in Concevreux during the morning to deal with what wounded we could. Fifty or sixty perhaps passed through our hands and were sent on to hospital at Meurival—on stretchers, on doors, and on barrows. Nicholson (who had been acting as Liason Officer with Brigade) came in with a very nasty wound in the thigh, but as cheery and as indomitable as ever. The last we dressed was our Regimental Sergeant-Major, Fewster, very badly hit indeed. What happened to poor Fewster after he left us we do not know. When he had gone, Lieut. Playford (Doctor), the Rev. Coyle (R.C. Padre), and I decided to leave—Sergeant Hall and two men remaining to fire the stores that could not be removed. I caught up the Transport at the top of the hill, and from there watched the Boche cross the valley towards us. Though it was after midday, he was putting up his Very lights to show to his people behind where his advanced positions were located. His machine-gun posts could be clearly distinguished, and his lines of men by roadside, hedgerow, and dyke.

What happened during the rest of that day and the next must be told in snatches. The long string of Transport, making its slow way down the zig-zag road to Ventelay and Romaine, was hit with deadly accuracy, and we lost both men and animals. It was a nerve-racking time for Pickering, but his coolness and wise leadership never showed to better advantage. They were gassed, shelled, fired at repeatedly by machine-guns from aeroplanes, and bombed by the roadside. One thing which imperilled the survivors and the Transport was that the Boche had been able to execute a tremendous flanking movement on the left, and had come round with incredible rapidity. Perhaps the most pathetic thing about it all was that several hospitals in this way fell into his hands before the wounded had all been removed. Many of those we had treated at the Aid Post at Concevreux had to be reported "Missing" as the result of this.

In the meantime the Fourth was represented in other directions. Pearson, attached to the Divisional Lewis Gun School, lined the ridge at Revillon, and with his gunners fought a very stout

covering action. Essex had been at the Divisional Wing, but early on Tuesday morning went up to the line at Jonchery, with a strong party of men, and did most excellent work. Stewart, who was in hospital, came out, and with the unassuming but unfaltering courage that ever characterised him, went up the line. These three officers—Nonconformist minister, banker, and blacksmith—with their triple record on the Somme, the Lys, and the Aisne—are amongst the finest soldiers it has ever been my privilege to meet. Cheesewright was attached to the Royal Engineers on the morning of the 27th, and escaped in pyjamas and tunic. He fought for a time with some isolated details, but eventually linked up with us on the road to Ville-en-Tardenois. Firth and Farwell, who were at a Divisional School, returned from their School to the line. Firth was wounded, but escaped to Hospital. Farwell, a bonnie lad from Scotland, was badly wounded, and had to be reported "Missing."

Scanty as were our numbers, separated as each little section was, a steady fight was carried on. The main body—if such a small force can be called a main body—under Major Robb, fought tenaciously as they slowly gave way before the enemy—fighting, bluffing, retiring, reorganising, and fighting again. On Monday night at La Haie farm they were almost cut off, and had to retire across country on a compass bearing through fields and woods. Tuesday night was spent at Ville-en-Tardenois. Wednesday, with a junction of some of the sections, saw a retirement through Romigny and Jonquery to Baslieux. Here a composite Brigade was formed under Major Robb's command, with Capt. David Turner in charge of the 149 Company. They returned to a line about Romigny. The difficulties faced by the slender forces were enormous—difficulties of numbers, morale, and liaison. It speaks volumes for the fine leadership of Major Robb that so much was done. He and his indomitable officers were the soul of the fight. At Romigny we lost Captain Turner. "David," as we all called him, was one of the stoutest soldiers the Fourth ever attracted or produced. He had spent the night with his men at Ville-en-Tardenois, but was defending Romigny village on the Thursday morning. The enemy entered the village about 2 p.m., and there was considerable rifle and machine-gun fire. At 2.30 Capt. Turner went to the left to reconnoitre in person—runners having been sent and failed to return—he passed behind some large French huts and was never seen again. Thus the puny force put up its retreating fight. Sunday saw them at

Vert-la-Gravelle, Wednesday, 5th June, Nanteuil. Thursday at 9 a.m. they took up a reserve position at the Bois de Courton, but the same night moved into the front line west of Bligny, which they occupied until the 12th. Then they came into reserve again at Bois de Courton until the 18th, when they were relieved by the Italians, and came out, ultimately reaching (20th) Broyes, on the edge of the great plain of Champagne, the southernmost limit of the German advance in that area in 1914.

EPILOGUE.

Such then is the story, brief, tragic, unforgettable. We have put on paper the facts and the names, but some who read these pages will see in the bald recital the moving drama of a great terror. They will watch again the grey hordes of the enemy pouring on, pouring on. They will see the glint of bare steel, hear the ugly zipp-zipp of the bullets, or the crash of the falling shells. Their nostrils will tingle again with the vivid memory of gas. But most of all they will live anew in the fight, tasting its excitement, its dangers and its separations over and over again. For them no atmosphere need be created: they know—they feel.

And with them for company, we turn in memory to those who fell. Men we had lived with, laughed with, slept with. Men with the years and the faults of boys, men who scorned not to give Youth's flower and beauty to the dust, for England. They sleep to-day by field and hedgerow, in ruined gardens and unlovely woods. Scarce one of them is marked. But if there be in war any greatness, any glory, it is theirs and theirs alone. With the supreme test thrust upon them, they met it with the supreme sacrifice. They held the foe, denied him the prize, until the last dark hour had passed and the sun of Victory and Peace came up "like thunder" upon an astonished world.

Living! Salute the dead!

LETTER

Included by Special Permission of

THE MAJOR-GENERAL COMMANDING 50th DIVISION.

To Officer Commanding,
4th Northumberland Fusiliers.

It is with the deepest regret that I hand over the command of the Battalions which originally constituted the 50th Division.

The time during which these Battalions have been under my command has been a short but stirring one.

Three times—on the Somme, the Lys, and the Aisne—the 50th Division had to bear the full brunt of the German attack, and each time they fought most gallantly against great odds. Previous to this, in the Second Battle of Ypres, on the Somme in 1916, at Arras, and again at Ypres in 1917, the 50th Division had made a glorious name for itself.

For the time being, through no fault of yours, your Battalion is to remain as a *Cadre*, but this *Cadre* will keep alive the traditions and *Esprit de Corps* of the Battalion, and when the time comes for it to be made up, I know that the new Battalion will worthily live up to these traditions.

I hope that at some future date, I may again have the honour of having your Battalion under my command.

In the meanwhile, good-bye, and the best of luck to all ranks.

(Signed) MAJOR-GENERAL,
Commanding 50th Division.

Headquarters,
50th Division,
13th August, 1918.

THE "FIGHTING FIFTH."

(Written with special reference to the Fourth Battalion,
and included here by kind permission of the Editor
of "The Passing Show.")

The Fighting Fifth!—the Fighting Fifth—they're famed in song and story;
Wherever they've fought they've fought like hell, and won immortal glory;
They've carried their Flag in the thick o' the fight—the good old "Gosling
Green,"

With a rose in every corner and the "George and Dragon" between!

They carried the Flag at Corunna, Vittoria and Toulouse;
Napoleon's stoutest marshals shook woundily in their shoes
When they heard the Fifth was against 'em, and hurried to give 'em room—
They carried the Flag at Lucknow, they carried it at Khartoum.

The good old days are over—war's an unlovely hag!—
No Colour goes into action now, no more they carry the Flag;
But when the Miners' Regiment bursts through the battle flame
Their hearts are high and their courage keen and their valour just the same.

And when from the big Somme battle they staggered, battered and torn,
They were dour and dauntless always, although overwhelmed, outworn;
Hating the forced retirement, hating to face to the West,
Hating to shift their shattered ranks to the Southern line—for a rest.

"A rest!" In a "quiet sector" where, lifting from the plain,
The green-clad vineyards glimmer on the hillsides of Champagne;
Where, from the misty ages, wrapped in a Faith sublime,
Rheims' vast cathedral watches the hurrying steps of time.

"A rest!" In a "quiet sector!" Scarce had they drawn full breath,
When on their wearied ranks burst forth a wilder storm of Death;
On them the foe press fiercely, round them the grey waves throng,
But still the "Fifth" were faithful, and still the "Fifth" were strong!

Strong, as the flood closed round them, to die and never yield,
And take toll of the hated foe upon that stricken field;
They died to a man, together, in that wood all green with Spring—
But the German dead lay thrice as thick all round them in a ring!

There lies their gallant Colonel and many a hundred more,
But far Northumbria's lads will come to settle up the score;
The "Fighting Fifth" goes under, but, to the Old Flag true,
The "Fighting Fifth" shall pour again from mine and Tyne anew!

"Argent" in the *Passing Show*, June 28th, 1918.

**List of Decorations Awarded to Officers, N.C.O.'s and
Men of the 4th Bn. Northumberland Fusiliers for the
Fighting on the Somme, Lys, and Aisne.
1918.**

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER.

Captain and Adj. T. A. LACY THOMPSON, M.C. (Somme).

From the 22nd March to the 28th March, 1918, after his Commanding Officer was wounded he commanded his Battalion with the greatest courage.

On the 27th March, 1918, near Harbonnieres, the enemy having captured a village in the lines of a Division on his flank, he led his Battalion with conspicuous gallantry in a house-to-house counter attack, and by his example his Battalion cleared the greater part of the village and re-established the line.

On the 28th March, 1918, in spite of two gunshot wounds in the leg, after the units on his flanks had been driven back, he held his ground for over an hour until the counter attack restored the situation. By holding his ground he made a counter attack possible, and inflicted the heaviest losses on the retreating enemy.

MILITARY CROSS.

Captain W. B. HICKS (Somme).

For conspicuous gallantry and resource on the 21st March, 1918, near Caulaincourt.

The Company commanded by this officer was separated from the remainder of the Battalion by a river. The Battalion being driven back he covered their retirement and held his position for 5 hours afterwards, though completely isolated and sustaining many casualties. He afterwards extricated his Company in a most able manner, and rejoined his Battalion two days later. The bridge by which they crossed the Somme was blown up as the rear of the Company crossed.

On the 26th March, 1918, near Framerville he showed the utmost gallantry when leading a counter attack.

Captain W. F. R. ESSEX (Somme and Lys).

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty on the 25th March, 1918, near Assevillers while in command of a Company.

He handled his Company under heavy fire in a difficult rearguard action with extraordinary skill and bravery, covering the withdrawal of the remainder of the Battalion with complete success.

Again on the 10th and 11th April, 1918, near Trou Bayard, his personal example and gallantry was the means of his Company holding out for 20 hours in a strong point under repeated attacks and point blank artillery fire.

Lieut. F. SIDDELEY (Somme).

For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on 27th March, 1918, near Vauvillers.

Under a heavy attack his Company began to withdraw, but with the utmost gallantry he rallied and reorganised them, and led them in a counter attack which completely drove off the enemy. He was severely wounded in the arm in the course of this counter attack.

2nd-Lieut. G. DAVIES (Somme).

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty on 21st March, 1918, near Caulaincourt, when he volunteered to go forward and locate the enemy's position, returning with valuable information.

On 27th March, 1918, near Vauvillers, he again showed great gallantry, fearlessly exposing himself and encouraging his men under heavy fire, afterwards leading a counter attack with great dash, and holding on until compelled to withdraw for want of ammunition.

2nd-Lieut. W. ANDERSON (Somme).

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty on 21st March, 1918, near Caulaincourt, when he showed great initiative in reorganising his Company after a withdrawal, fearlessly exposing himself under heavy fire.

On the 27th March, 1918, he again showed great gallantry near Vauvillers in organising and leading a counter attack; and though his right arm was broken by a gunshot wound, he remained in the line encouraging his men until compelled to withdraw for want of ammunition.

2nd-Lieut. H. E. BULL (Somme).

On 26th March, 1918, at Vauvillers, when a team of Lewis gunners had all become casualties, this officer pushed forward with the gun up the main Harbonnieres-Vauvillers Road in advance of the attacking infantry, and under a hail of enemy machine gun bullets, brought such effective fire to bear on the enemy machine gun that the remainder of the Company were able to reach their objective. On this occasion and on many others this officer, by his gallantry and total disregard for personal safety, led his men under the most difficult circumstances, with energy and success.

Lieut. J. M. GOODBODY (Aisne).

For exceptional gallantry and devotion to duty on the morning of 27th May, 1918, when holding the canal bank south of Chaudardes. The enemy crossed the bridge over the Aisne 400 yards on his left flank and established a trench mortar. Through his initiative and direction of rifle fire he knocked out the team and forced the enemy to withdraw over the bridge, and caused them numerous casualties.

Later, on two occasions he went back and got ammunition to the troops holding the line, and throughout the fighting on the 27th and 28th May his coolness under fire did much to steady the troops during successive withdrawals.

2nd-Lieut. A. MARSHALL (Aisne).

On the morning of May 27th this officer, although badly gassed, and having been sent to the dressing station, refused to go further back, and after resting an hour returned with a party of stragglers to defend the Aisne Canal bank.

This officer's devotion to duty and courage was a splendid example to all ranks.

BAR TO MILITARY CROSS.

Captain J. V. GREGORY, M.C. (Lys).

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty at Trou Bayard, Pont Levis, Pont Le Meuse, Neuf Berquin, and Vaux Berquin in the Estaires district. During the period 9th April to 12th April, 1918, he commanded his Battalion, and through his coolness and clever leadership his men were able to put up a very spirited resistance against repeated enemy attacks.

MILITARY MEDAL.

201975, Sergt. (now C.S.M.) W. MOWLE (Somme).

On the 23rd March, 1918, at St. Christ bridgehead, this N.C.O., while acting as Coy. Sergt.-Major, rendered invaluable service in rallying and encouraging his men for a counter attack. The success of this effort was due in considerable measure to his energy and courage.

30/253 L. Sergt. (now Sergt.) A. W. PETERS (Somme).

On the 22nd March, 1918, at Caulaincourt this N.C.O., from a forward position, protected the flank of the neighbouring Company and harassed the enemy in his advance. He held his ground although almost surrounded, and when his task was accomplished extricated his platoon with great coolness and skill. During the whole of the time the Battalion was in action he set an example of courage and cheerfulness in difficult circumstances.

46793, Corpl. J. W. KEEN (Somme).

On the 22nd March, at Caulaincourt this N.C.O., although twice severely wounded, rallied and reorganised the men to cover the retirement of part of the Regimental Transport. He refused to leave his post until ordered by an officer to proceed to the dressing station, which he reached with the utmost difficulty.

200750, Corpl. T. T. STEELE (Somme).

On the night of the 23rd March, 1918, when his Company was holding the bridge over the Somme at St. Christ, this N.C.O. covered the bridge with his Lewis gun and held back the enemy until compelled to withdraw owing to his gun being put out of action. His example and leadership throughout nine days of fighting were magnificent. He brought his gun back intact when the Battalion was relieved.

21/16, Pte. E. ALCOCK (Somme).

On 22nd March, 1918, at Caulaincourt, this man volunteered to accompany his platoon sergeant in re-occupying a trench. He showed great bravery in remaining alone in the trench while the rest of the platoon was rallied and brought back.

On 24th March, 1918, during a counter attack at Framerville he led his Lewis gun team right forward and brought very effective fire to bear on the enemy.



R.Q.M.S. E. C. Nixon.



R.S.M. G. D. Fewster.



C.S.M. W. Mowle.

C.S.M. G. Osborne, M.C.

C.S.M. W. Robinson.

C.S.M. E. Wind, M.S.M.

C.S.M. T. T. Charlton.



Sergt. A. W. Peters, M.M.

Sergt. J. Kelly, D.C.M.

Lance-Sergt. M. Allport, D.C.M.

Corpl. J. W. Keen, M.M.

Lance-Corpl. E. Allcock, M.M.

200616, Lce.-Corpl. M. HOPPER (Somme).

On 24th March, 1918, at Assevillers this N.C.O. was left in charge of four Lewis gun limbers and two cook kitchens, and on his own initiative, when the shelling of the village became intense, led the cook kitchens through heavy shell fire towards the trenches. The men were thus enabled to have hot food provided for them when greatly in need of same. At the same time he sent the Lewis gun limbers to a place of safety.

200037, Pte. D. FORSTER.

On March 22nd, 1918, at Caulaincourt, under heavy fire, he carried his C.O., who was severely wounded, to a place of safety, a distance of 600 yards. Throughout a week of continual fighting and movement he showed himself a thoroughly reliable soldier, and utterly regardless of personal danger. On several occasions his example of coolness and courage helped to steady his comrades.

On March 30th, 1918, near Demuin, the senior officer of the Battalion being wounded in the leg and left behind in the course of retirement, Pte. Forster returned through a heavy barrage of shrapnel and machine gun fire and succeeded in carrying him to a point where stretcher bearers could attend to him.

200067, Pte. C. BOWMAN (Somme).

On 24th March, 1918, at Assevillers; when the village and trenches in front, held by the Battalion, were heavily shelled, this man volunteered to take his limber close up to the trenches in order to collect camp kettles.

On the night of March 26th-27th, 1918, in front of Harbonnières, this man again showed the utmost readiness for difficult duty regardless of personal risk.

200666, Pte. W. ROBSON (Somme).

On March 30th, between Demuin and Domart, the senior officer of the Battalion being severely wounded, Pte. Robson dressed his wound, and, under terrific machine gun and shrapnel barrage, emerged from cover and crossed open ground carrying the wounded officer on his back. Owing to the intensity of the fire he was obliged to leave the officer temporarily, but returned with the stretcher bearers in time to co-operate in a further and successful effort to bring the officer to safety.

200550, Pte. W. HERON (Somme).

On March 22nd, 1918, at Caulaincourt, this stretcher bearer worked with the utmost gallantry, attending to the wounded without regard to danger or fatigue. Subsequently throughout nine days' fighting he continually exposed himself to heavy machine gun fire and shelling, carrying on his duties as stretcher bearer for long periods without rest.

235022, Lce. Corpl. H. HUNTER (Lys).

For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on 11th April, 1918, near Trou Bayard. When the position was obscure he twice went forward from Battalion Headquarters to ascertain the exact position of the front line, and under heavy machine gun fire brought back very valuable information, which cleared up the situation and enabled the Commanding Officer to fill in a gap.

40355, Pte. T. COLLINGWOOD (Lys).

For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on the 9th April, 1919, near Estaires. He made repeated journeys as Company runner to Battalion Headquarters through very heavy shell and machine gun fire, working gallantly until completely exhausted.

201915, Pte. B. F. POND (Lys).

For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on the 11th April, 1918, near Estaires. Pte. Pond, who was a Company runner, repeatedly carried messages under extremely heavy fire. He was eventually severely wounded in the right arm while carrying a message from a detached flank. He nevertheless delivered his message before reporting his wound, and was the means of preventing a platoon from being completely surrounded.

204604, Pte. FOSTER PARKIN (Lys).

For conspicuous bravery and initiative on the 10th April, 1918, near Estaires. He pushed ahead with a Lewis gun in a most daring manner, and covered the advance of his Company with enfilade fire.

Later in the day he shot down a low-flying enemy aeroplane.

On the 11th April, 1918, he remained behind covering the withdrawal of his Company with Lewis gun fire until he had exhausted his ammunition, when he successfully brought his gun out of action.



Lance-Corpl. M. Hopper, M.M.

Lance-Corpl. J. W. Scott, M.M.

Lance-Corpl. A. Gauld, M.M.

Pte. D. Forster, M.M.

Pte. W. H. Robson, M.M.



Pte. W. Heron, M.M.
Pte. J. J. Knott, M.M.
Pte. S. R. Futers, M.M.

Pte. C. Bowman, M.M.
Pte. J. Daykin, M.M.
Pte. B. F. Proud, M.M.



Pte. B. Curry, M.M.

Lance-Corpl. Daniels, M.M.

Lance-Corpl. T. Collingwood, M.M.

Lance-Corpl. M. O'Brien,
Croix de Guerre.

Lance-Corpl. F. Parkin, M.M.

Lance-Corpl. H. Hunter, M.M.

202260, Pte. B. CURRY (Somme).

On the 22nd March, 1918, at Caulaincourt this man, being in charge of a Lewis Gun Section, was sent forward to guard the flank of our "B" Company. When the enemy advanced, he held this position on a wooded hillside, and single-handed brought direct enfilade fire to bear upon the enemy, inflicting heavy losses. He carried his gun out of action when his ammunition was exhausted, and immediately afterwards rendered most valuable assistance in collecting scattered detachments of our men and forming a line behind the village of Caulaincourt.

200835, Pte. S. R. FUTERS (Aisne).

204568, Pte. J. DAYKIN (Aisne).

For gallantry and devotion to duty on the morning of 27th May, 1918, on the south bank of the Aisne Canal near Concevreux. These men volunteered to carry messages to a unit of the 25th Division over open ground and exposed to heavy machine gun fire. Pte. Futers volunteered to deliver the message in the first instance, and succeeded in doing so, but on his return journey he was wounded in the back and was unable to deliver the reply. Pte. Daykin then volunteered to take a second message, which he managed to deliver, and succeeded in bringing back a reply. Both these men were exposed to very heavy machine gun fire throughout their journeys.

200091, Corpl. J. M. MOGERLEY, D.C.M. (Aisne).

On the 27th May, 1918, this N.C.O. was detailed to find out where S.A.A. could best be dumped for the Battalion. He went from Le Fait Farm to Wireless Station Concevreux under very heavy machine gun fire. He received his instructions from the C.O. and returned and made a most gallant effort to get the S.A.A. up to the Battalion, but was turned back by an officer. He again returned to find the Battalion, but found they had moved. He ascertained their line of retirement, and in spite of heavy machine gun fire he found a suitable place for a dump, and the S.A.A. was picked up by the Battalion.

200489, Pte. J. J. KNOTT (Aisne).

On the 27th May, 1918, on the road between La Fait Farm and Ventelay Village, the transport was being heavily and accurately shelled. One shell landed on a limber, and the driver and mules were all wounded and the rear half of the limber destroyed. Pte. Knott salvaged the rear half of another damaged limber and hitched it on. He mounted the wounded mules and drove them through Ventelay still under heavy shell fire, until they collapsed.

DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDAL.

200490, Sergt. J. KELLY (Aisne).

On May 27th, 1918, near Revillon, this N.C.O. assisted in organising Lewis gun teams for the purpose of retarding the enemy's advance on Fismes. He displayed the utmost coolness under fire, and his example and leadership on several occasions prevented premature retirement on the part of young and inexperienced soldiers.

Later in the day, near Glennes, he took up a position with two Lewis guns in a wood commanding the enemy's approach, and though twice slightly wounded he held this position until almost surrounded, inflicting heavy loss on the enemy and considerably delaying his advance. The courage and tenacity shown by this N.C.O. was beyond praise, and rendered great service in difficult circumstances.

FRENCH DECORATIONS.

CROIX DE GUERRE with Palms.

Lieut.-Colonel B. D. GIBSON, D.S.O.

This officer was in command of his Battalion, which was holding the front line trenches, on May 27th, 1918, in the Aisne sector. He continued to send information of the enemy's advance until his Headquarters was completely surrounded. He then collected all available men of his Headquarters party, and although attacked on three sides it was due to this officer's personal example and total disregard of danger that the enemy were delayed in their advance for a considerable time. He was shot through the head and killed whilst standing on the parapet to get a better view of the enemy, who at that time were advancing up a communication trench.

CROIX DE CHEVALIER LEGION OF HONOUR.

Lieut.-Colonel J. RIDLEY ROBB.

CROIX DE GUERRE with Gold Star.

75634, Lce.-Corpl. (now Sergt.) M. O'BRIEN (Aisne).

On 27th May, 1918, near Revillon, this N.C.O. was in charge of a Lewis Gun Section, and held on to his position after all the supporting troops had retired. He continued to engage the enemy, inflicting heavy losses, until his gun was blown up by trench mortar fire.

Later, near Glennes, he reorganised his section as riflemen, and assisted in defending the approach to Fismes. His example of courage and tenacity was of great assistance in preventing the premature abandonment of our position to the enemy.

75463, Pte. A. DANIELS (Aisne).

On 27th May, 1918, near Revillon and near Glennes, this man was in charge of a Lewis Gun Section, and held his team together during two assaults on his position. He held his ground until practically surrounded, inflicting heavy losses on the enemy and materially delaying his advance. Throughout the day the steadiness of this man under fire, and his disregard of personal danger was an inspiration to the young soldiers under his command, most of whom were under fire for the first time.

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