

1001

VERSES WRITTEN IN THE TRENCHES



PRIVATE A. NIXON
10th Battalion

VERSES WRITTEN
IN THE TRENCHES



THE BATTLE OF COURCELETTE.

'Twas the fifteenth of September, and the day
was fine and clear;
And the village was quite peaceful as we drew
quickly near;
First came the Twenty-second A Co., then B of
Twenty-five,
And we opened up a fire and not many were left
alive.
The Fritziez who were holding that town of Cour-
celette
Were soon killed off and what were left we treated
to bayonet,
And when our company got relief after fighting
there all day
There were few of those poor Fritziez left for them
to scare away;
And so we recovered back our land and raised
the Union Jack
And went forward with our machine guns for we
knew no turning back.

For Canadians don't lose trenches nor let Fritziez
hold them long;
For we always get the best of them by using our
Mill's bomb.
Back in the town of Albert we rested there a
while,
Pride of our great victory was certain from our
smile.
For once before at Ypres we bravely stood the test
And once again we conquered and knew we'd done
our best;
On the twenty-seventh we got the word to go back
into the fray

And we knew we'd have victory, and again we'd
win the day.
And as we neared the town again, the shot and
shell did fly,
We pushed our way through shouting, "We'll win
or else we'll die."
At eleven in the evening we started from Pozieres
Hill,

"Forward" was the orders and those we had to fil.
We advanced right up that morning to the very
jaws of hell;
And hundreds of our infantry and officers with
them fell.
We dug in our machine guns with our entrenching
tools,
And getting into action we made the Fritzies run
like fools.

We got into their trenches safe, we got in there
to stay,
We were all eager for the fight and snapped the
Huns all day;
We took nine hundred prisoners and marched
them back to town
For we had our barbed wire big enough to hold
10,000 down.
So we got back that little town for which we
dearly paid;
And it took the French Canadian boys also the
Fifth Brigade
And hundreds of our boys are buried beneath the
soil of France,
But like the rest of our brave boys went there to
take their chance.

Composed by

Cpl. A. Audette, 22nd Batt.

COMPLIMENTARY DINNER.

"Somewhere in France."

Zero 7.00 pip enma. Be ready when barrage opens.

EATS, ETC.

Lewis gun cocktail just for a starter:

Cheer oh m'lads!

Hors d'oeievres, pip-squeaked on toast,
rum jar sauce.

Mill's Bomb Soup (passed by Censor).

Adjutant's Dressing.

ANTI GAS RELISHES.

Tomatoes, Cabbage (pickled to the ears).

Celery, Nuns Alley Cukes.

Shell Dressing Mowatt Pickles.

(He'd get 'em anyhow)

Casualty Joints (marked for duty by the M. O.)

Prime ribs de youthful oxen.

(Imported by Pringle & Co., Inc.)

Five Point Nine Spuds—au pip.

Beaucoup Legumes.

(Swedish for "Have another Bob")

Creamed and Boiled pomme de terre.

Barbed Wire Peas.

Harrison Sweets (Trocadero Flavor).

Ammonia Capsule Merangue

(Detonated with Lemons.)

Fruits, Nuts, Smoke Bombs, Toothpicks.

Libations: Coffee Noir, Tea the same way.

Wines, Water, Porter, drawn from the wood.

More Water, Liqueurs, Etc.

HINTS TO GUESTS.

Walking out dress will be worn, minus caps, box respirators, etc.

Don't tip the waiters—they might break the glasses.

Barrack damages will be charged for any dishes broken. The M. O. will attend to any broken heads.

Entrenching tool handles are not to be used as toothpicks. Strict quietness is requested during Lieut. _____ address on "The Nutritive Value of Canned Beans for Canadian Troops." After his experience in Norman Trench, much interest will be evinced in Lieut. _____ address on "Cylindrical Sticks vs. the Mill's Bomb."

A vote will be taken upon "Bully Beef" as opposed to "Canned Chicken" as emergency rations.

O. C. "A" Co., for your information please. Tomatoes M. I. K. (more in kitchen.)

Officers expecting to go on leave soon are advised to consult Lieut. _____ who is understood to be writing a book on "London's High Spots."

Ten minutes will be allotted Lieut. _____ for a talk on "Why Our Aeroplanes Don't Fall Down."

Parades August 28, 1917. The 8.30 parade is cancelled and there will be none until August 29, 1917. B. S. 999. Ha-ha-ha.

NO MAN'S LAND.

The rain will help—I'm not so thirsty now;

How cool it falls upon my burning lips!

Thirst is a frightful thing—I realize how

It drives men mad, like scores of scourging
whips.

The still cool dark is better than the light!

The sun beats down so fiercely through the day,
It seems to burn away my very sight—

And shrivel me to nothing where I lay.

This "No Man's Land" is strange—a neutral
ground,

Where friend and foe together come to sleep,
Indifferent to the shaking hell of sound—

To shell still searching for more grain to reap.
Kincaid died very well! Before he went

He smiled a bit and said he hoped we'd won;

And then he said he saw his home in Kent,

And then lay staring at the staring sun.

That German over there was peaceful, too,

He looked a long, long time across their line,

And then he tried to sing some song he knew

And so passed on without another sign.

Well this won't do for me—I'd best get back,

I'm just a little sleepy, I confess,

But I must be in time, we may attack—

The lads would miss me too at evening mess.

A moment more, and then I'll make a start—

I can't be shirking at a time like this,

I'll just repeat—I know them all by heart—

Some words of hers that ended in a kiss.

Why do I seem to feel her tender hand?

To see her eyes with all their old time light?

Is she beside me? ah, I understand—

I think perhaps I'll sleep here through the night.

HOW FOUR CANADIAN SOLDIERS CAP- TURED 103 GERMANS.

"When the Candle Went Out."

A remarkable incident of the Canadian advance was narrated to a correspondent by a Canadian Corporal.

With three other men he went down into the darkness of a German dug-out of large dimensions. There was a murmur of many voices from the pitch darkness of the far end. Arrived at the bottom of the steps, the flickering candle-light revealed a large ghostly looking cavern whose mysterious shadows seemed to stretch away into infinity. Then a murmurous clamour broke out from the war end, and the advancing glimmer of light showed a huddled crowd of Huns, all standing with hands well over their heads, and explaining that they were very poor men, who wished nobody any harm, least of all the brave Canadian soldiers. And then the candle went out and the subaltern yelled that if any man moved an inch, he would bomb them all to glory. The candle was relighted with some difficulty. But it was a ticklish situation. Every one of those Huns were armed though their hands were well up at that moment. In front of the lowest steps four hated Canadians stood in the light of a candle. The subaltern knew that the advance had surged well forward before this, so that no immediate help was to be looked for. He had to think quickly and act with confidence, whatever he might feel. He did so. His orderly he sent to act as guard and director of operations at the entrance to the dug-out in the trench. Then in plain and emphatic English, he ordered the Huns to advance in threes and pile their arms, warning them that he would bomb the crowd if one of them made a mistake. By threes they were all marched up into daylight and by threes the orderly above stairs dispatched them to the rear to our own lines, with the simple warning that he was a dead shot.

THE BATTLE OF COURCELETTE.

September 15th, 1916.

This brings to memory the men of the 5th Brigade who were in service at the Somme. And by the people of the whole Dominion should be remembered with pride, that day which saw the capture of Courcelette regarded as one of the most important engagements of the Canadians in this great war. Cpl. A. Audette, a member of the 22nd Batt., took part along with many others. He has since returned to Canada, although a little lame none the worse for his great experience on that day last year.

He said Canada should be proud of the splendid work of her sons in taking Courcelette. On the morning of the fifteenth little did we think that scores of our boys would be sleeping their last sleep on the shell pit ground that night and many Canadian homes would be saddened. Some will tell you that the taking of Courcelette was a small affair. But let me tell you that when a brigade takes part it is no small action. Usually when being assisted by a couple of our monstrous Tanks we are sure up against the real thing, as crossing over thirty hundred yards of ground is no small affair. You are bound to meet with some tough resistance and the gallant 5th Brigade met it too. Men were torn to pieces, some were running mad, some were shell shocked and some were gassed, others were going ahead doing their best. You can't imagine shell after shell falling and exploding among the advancing men. Recalling that day I shall always remember my friend, Capt. Silvase, who was with me in the support and who did many brave acts in caring for the wounded, and who was killed September 26th, 1916. He was one of the coolest men I saw that day, when we lost seventeen out of the twenty-one.

By Cpl. Audette.

CHARGE OF THE CRUMB BRIGADE.

When the simple peasant wonders,
When in peace it's joy and love;
Where the big guns roar in Flanders
And the fire clouds break above—
Where stands the hungry army
From the Maple arrayed,
They fight in countless numbers—
The charge of the Crumb Brigade.

They bite and the red blood rushes,
For they fear no human foe,
With curses, groans and flashes
And scratch but legions grow.
It seems then an angry devil
Those cursed hell fiends made,
On our shirts and flesh they revel—
The charge of the Crumb Brigade.

In the hour of Britain's danger,
We crossed the Atlantic foam,
To fight the hostile stranger
For freedom, love and home,
We charge and the world rings glory
The flower of the Germans fade—
But in silence we tell the story
Of the charge of the Crumb Brigade.

They tear, they bite, they plunder,
We scratch, we curse and we moan
Till our flesh is rent asunder
And misery claims its own.
On the winds our curses floating
While they bite on their fiendish raid,
"Till their stomachs are full and gloating
With the charge of the Crumb Brigade.

There is joy and peace in Heaven,
At least so the sages tell

For the wicked and unforgiving
They say there is war in hell.
But when the clouds of death have fell
And the judgment seal is made,
I would face the fire of the raging hell
Than the charge of the Crumb Brigade.

(Composed in the Trenches by one of the Boys.)

THE CANDLE WENT OUT.

The Kaiser particularly wanted his Bavarians to meet our troops just once. Well, a hundred of them met four—one badly wounded—in that dug-out and have survived to tell their friends in Germany what they think of the contemptible little army—some day.

SEVENTEEN OUT OF TWENTY-ONE.

No fighting corps at the front has brought more honor to Canada than the 22nd French-Canadian Batt., which has been heavily engaged in the recent actions. This corps which was raised at Montreal and was the first purely French-Canadian unit to sail for overseas, has won distinction in several big engagements. The 22nd Batt. sailed for overseas on May 20, 1915, and first went into action at Hill 60 or Zellebeek, known among the soldiers as the third battle of Ypres. Its big chance came, however, at the battle of Courcellette on September 15th, 1916, when it captured a most formidable German position with great dash, losing seventeen out of twenty-one officers and more than half its men.

The 22nd Batt. is one of the most popular and meritorious units at the front, its particular "chum" amongst the Canadian Corps being the 25th Nova Scotia Batt.

THE BATTLE OF COURCELOTTE.

The Second Division had not long to wait for action after reaching the Somme. The four Canadian divisions were given the line in front of Courcellette on the afternoon of September 15th, 1916. An eastern Ontario battalion (the censor has not yet given us their number) was given a sugar refinery on the outskirts of Courcellette as an objective for attack. They carried it with such facility that the divisional commander decided it was a good time to gather in the village. The 5th Brigade was in reserve two miles behind the line. At noon nothing was further from thought of officers and men than a sustained charge in the open against the enemy. But unexpectedly the opportunity came and every man was ready. The plan was for the entire brigade to advance a mile behind the sugar refinery, penetrate the village as far as possible and hold on. Counting on the French clan in attack, were the 22nd Battalion placed in front for the attack on the right half of the village; the 25th Battalion on the left. The 26th followed closely on the heels of the 22nd; and for this reason, it was pointed out, suffered more heavily from the shell fire of the enemy. The 24th Battalion was given a similar position in supporting the 25th. It was a day of record breaking. It was said afterward that the G. O. C. on the Somme declared that the Second Canadian Division that day had accomplished more than any other division since the offensive was launched two months and a half before. The 5th Brigade was said to have been the first British

brigade since Mons to advance in the open under heavy shell fire, and obtain all their objective—a record which of course has been broken again and again since that time. As for the 26th they made a new record of capturing more prisoners that day than their entire strength in action. With wild cries and irresistible dash the 22nd Battalion, after crossing the mile, swept with artillery and rifle fire, met the German defenders hand to hand and broke through line after line of trenches. They were not to be withstood and dashed madly through the streets leaving many isolated parties of Germans in strongly fortified posts in the rear. Right through the village went the sons of the habitant, and not until they had reached concrete trenches far in the rear were they halted. Close behind came the men of the 26th. It was their duty to clear the cellars and take the last desperate Huns from the dug-out. It was desperate work, for these places were strongly fortified and some of the enemy fought to the last. Six hundred prisoners were gathered in.

Cpl. A. Audette.

THE DYING SOLDIER BOY.

Somewhere out in Flanders
There is a lonely spot
That will linger in our memory,
For it cannot be forgot.
A soldier boy is lying,
For that was where he died
When the battle raged in fury
At the turning of the tide.

The sturdy captain shouted
Along the crowded line,
Which one of you will volunteer
To break the German line?
Tho' the shells and shrapnel bursting,
As they fell upon the ground,
Tore the earth all up like ditches
For miles and miles around.

One brave and young lieutenant stood up
Without a thought of fear,
Tho' the deadly bombs and bullets
Fairly whistled past his ear.
He volunteered to lead the men
On that fatal day's patrol,
To cut the German wires,
Yet death rang through his soul.

Stealthily they crept away,
For they could scarcely wait
To reach the German trenches—
That place of bitter hate.
They all reached there in safety
And were coming back again
When a mighty crash resounded,
Like thunder through the rain.

Alas! that one stray bullet
That pierced the soldier's side

Caused the fatal death wound,
And gallantly he died.
Tho' he crept back to safety
On his tired hands and knees,
While the cruel requiem
Sighed sadly through the breeze.

He lay wounded there and bleeding
As the sun sunk in the west,
While he thought of home and mother
And the girl he loved the best.
So many, many thoughts
Passed through that soldier's brain,
As he lay alone there dying
On the blood drenched battle plain.

At last his comrades found him,
But they saw the end was near,
How tenderly they watched him,
This lad that knew no fear.
And as he lay there suffering
That night before he died,
He said, Send this message to the girl,
Who would have been my bride.

Dear Mary, I am dying,
We will never meet again,
I was wounded in the battle
As it raged upon the plain.
Think kindly of me sometimes
For I loved you from the start
Good-bye, my own dear darling,
Farewell, my true sweetheart.

Is there any other message
Was what his comrade said,
God bless you boys, he whispered,
And the soldier fell dead.
A look of calm serenity
Passed o'er that fair young face,
For he knew he'd done his duty
In that awful shell-wrecked place.

They buried him at midnight,
When the stars were shining bright,
When the moon was softly beaming
Through the shadows of the night.
And now he's sleeping peacefully
Beneath the soft green turf,
With daisies dotted on his grave
Like whitecaps on the surf.

A picture of his sweetheart,
Was placed upon his breast
And a look of peace was on his face
As they laid him down to rest.
And if you looked more closely
You might find lying there,
A memento from his mother
A lock of silver hair.

A wooden cross now marks the spot
Where his remains were laid,
Across the broad Atlantic
'Neath Flanders' cedar shade.
Away from home and loved ones,
He gave his noble life,
To help his king and country
Amid the awful strife.

He is sleeping in his glory
Where he died that dreadful night,
Beneath the dark blue heavens,
By the moonbeam's misty light.
Beside the tree he's lying,
Down deep beneath the root,
And for a shroud he's wearing
A blood stained khaki suit.

The boys will all remember
That fatal day's patrol,
When they cut the German wires
And when death rang through their souls.
And another thing they won't forget,

Is the friend they loved the best
As he lay alone there dying
When the sun sank in the west.

A noble cause he died for
A cause for good and right
To overthrow the Prussian guards,
He tried with all his might.
Although at home beyond the sea,
He'll never roam again
We know he's glad he answered
The call that came to men.

Four long years you've struggled for the right,
To suppress the brutal German might,
To uphold Humanity's sacred flame,
To keep unblemished Liberty's fair name.
To avenge the wrong to Belgium done
By the tricky and the murdering Hun;
To restore all that was lost to France,
To see once more her glorious people dance,
No more has she a bleeding heart,
Alsace Lorraine is again her part.
And Fair Britannia ever more shall be
The exalted ruler of the sea.
She has redeemed Palestine once more,
God's chosen people shall dwell there as before.
To give back Trieste again to thee,
Oh! Beautiful, heroic Italy!
No more has Serbia a trampled land,
No more oppressed by a foreign hand.
America, what do we owe to thee?
Savior of Freedom and Democracy.
When there came a plea across the wave
The Humanity of the world to save
Your brave sons responded to the call,
Nobly giving up their lives and all.
Four long years we've battled with the Hun
Honor to the Allies your cause you've won.

THE OATH.

I will not drink from a German cup,
Or eat from a German plate.
I will not deal with a German man
All foul with German hate.

I'll use no drug with a German name
That's grown on German land.
I'll eat no food and drink no beer
If made by a German hand.

I will not use a German tool,
Razor, or knife, or saw.
I will not trade with a German shop
That lives by the German law.

I will not sail on a German ship,
Where German songs are sung,
I will not breathe where God's clean air,
Is soiled by a German tongue.

I'll not forget their awful deeds,
To girls and little boys.
No more I'll hang on Christmas trees,
Those blood-stained German toys.

I will not take a German's word,
He'll break it if he can.
There is no love in a German heart,
Or faith in a German man.

This is my oath. When war is done,
I'll swear to keep it true,
And since I know you feel the same,
I'll pass it on to you.

Somewhere in France he sleeps tonight,
Far from his native shore;
He gave his life in Freedom's fight,
Could any one do more?

Though he is gone forever
To a better land above,
Cruel death it came and severed
From the one we dearly loved.

Though our heart is full of sorrow
It will fill again with joy,
Because we know he was no slacker
Our darling soldier boy.

Let others sing of ancient worth,
The heroes of the Trojan war,
The fair-haired Vikings of the north
Or the stern troops of Hamilcar.
My theme far other men than these
The fabled demigods of song,
Born of the mist of Orient ease
To live awhile in classic tongue.

I sing of men who gladly went,
Not lightly as in wanton mood,
Filled with a Bereserk merriment,
They welcomed death all unsubdued;
Who by their dying hurled the foe
Deep down into hell's darkest night;
Whose memories shall ever glow
In deathless scrolls of living light.

Oh Canada, protect them well
From coward smirch all undefiled,
Still let the hoary grandsire tell
Their epic to the toddling child.
They are not ours; their names shall ring
Far down the corridors of time;
Homers unborn with praise shall sing
And tell their deeds in deathless rhyme.

They are not ours; for freedom's cause
They stood within the deadly breach,
With men of other creeds and laws,
With men of other birth and speech;
They are not ours; oh let the land
On which their infant feet have trod
From mountain peak to ocean strand,
Ever be staunch to freedom's God.

They are not ours; the human race
Has welcomed them with high acclaim,
To each one giving well-won place
Within the deathless halls of fame.
They are not ours; though alien hands
Shall rear the headstone on their grave,
Their lives have rivetted the bands
Shall save the world they died to save.