

# Decoration Day

## Doubly Sacred This Year

The sacrifice of men which we are now making for the Freedom of the World causes us to look with unusual pride upon our fallen heroes of this and former conflicts. Their deeds and examples of patriotism, should serve to fire the true fighting spirit of all loyal Americans. On

### Thursday, May Thirty

let us all join in paying tribute to these heroes in a manner that is commensurate with our loyalty and patriotism.

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### OVER THE TOP

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their horrible-looking respirators. I examined my first smoke helmet. A bullet had gone through it on the left side, just grazing my ear. The gas had penetrated through the hole made in the cloth.

Out of our crew of six we lost two killed and two wounded. That night we buried all of the dead, excepting those in No Man's Land. In death there is not much distinction; friend and foe are treated alike.

After the wind had dispersed the gas the R. A. M. C. got busy with their chemical sprayers, spraying out the dugouts and low parts of the trenches to dissipate any fumes of the German gas which may have been lurking in same.

Two days after the gas attack I was sent to division headquarters. In answer to an order requesting that captains of units should detail a man whom they thought capable of passing an examination for the divisional intelligence department.

Before leaving for this assignment I went along the front-line trench saying good-by to my mates and bidding them to take care of themselves. I had eluded a cushy job behind the lines, and how sorry I felt that they had to stay in the front line and argue out the war with Fritz. They were envious but still good-natured, and as I left the trench to go to the rear they shouted after me:

"Good luck, Yank, old boy; don't forget to send up a few fags to your old mates."

I promised to do this and left. I reported at headquarters with sixteen others and passed the required examination. Out of the sixteen applicants four were selected.

I was highly elated because I was, I thought, in for a cushy job back at the base.

The next morning the four reported to division headquarters for instructions. Two of the men were sent to large towns in the rear of the lines with an easy job. When it came our turn the officer told us we were good men and had passed a very creditable examination.

My tin hat began to get too small for me, and I noted that the other man, Atwell by name, was sticking his chest out more than usual.

The officer continued: "I think I can use you two men to great advantage in the front line. Here are your orders and instructions, also the pass which gives you full authority as special M. P. detailed on intelligence work. Report at the front line according to your instructions. It is risky work and I wish you both the best of luck."

My heart dropped to zero and Atwell's face was a study. We saluted and left.

That wishing us the "best of luck" sounded very ominous in our ears; if he had said "I wish you both a swift and painless death" it would have been more to the point.

When we had read our instructions we knew we were in for it good and plenty.

What Atwell said is not fit for publication, but I strongly seconded his opinion of the war, army and divisional headquarters in general.

After a bit our spirits rose. We were full-fledged spy-catchers, because our instructions and orders, said so.

We immediately reported to the nearest French estaminet and had several glasses of muddy water, which they called beer. After drinking our beer we left the estaminet and hailed an empty ambulance.

After showing the driver our passes we got in. The driver was going to the part of the line where we had to report.

How the wounded ever survived a ride in that ambulance was inexplicable to me. It was worse than riding on a gun carriage over a rock road, was holding, making a notation in a little book.

When he had finished writing, he whispered:

"Go into that billet and wait orders, and no talking. Understand?"

I stumbled into the barn and sat on the floor in the darkness. I could see no one, but could hear men breathing and moving; they seemed nervous and restless. I know I was.

During my wait, three other men entered. Then the officer poked his head in the door and ordered:

"Fall in, outside the billet, in single rank."

We fell in, standing at ease. Then he commanded:

"Squad—Shun! Number!"

There were twelve of us.

"Right—Turn! Left—Wheel! Quick—March!" And away we went. The rain was trickling down my back and I was shivering from the cold.

With the officer leading, we must have marched over an hour, plowing through the mud and occasionally stumbling into a shell hole in the road.

When suddenly the officer made a left wheel, and we found ourselves in a sort of enclosed courtyard.

The dawn was breaking and the rain had ceased.

In front of us were four stacks of rifles, three to a stack.

The officer brought us to attention and gave the order to unpile arms. We each took a rifle. Giving us "Stand at ease," in a nervous and shaky voice, he informed:

"Men, you are here on a very solemn duty. You have been selected as a firing squad for the execution of a soldier, who, having been found guilty of a grievous crime against king and country, has been regularly and duly tried and sentenced to be shot at 3:28 a. m. this date. This sentence has been approved by the reviewing authority and ordered carried out. It is our duty to carry on with the sentence of the court."

"There are twelve rifles, one of which contains a blank cartridge, the other eleven containing ball cartridges. Every man is expected to do his duty and fire to kill. Take your orders from me. Squad—Shun!"

We came to attention. Then he left.

My heart was of lead and my knees shook.

After standing at "attention" for what seemed a week, though in reality it could not have been over five minutes, we heard a low whispering in our rear and footsteps on the stone flagging of the courtyard.

Our officer reappeared and in a low, but firm voice, ordered:

"About—Turn"

We turned about. In the gray light of dawn, a few yards in front of me, I could make out a brick wall. Against this wall was a dark form with a white square pinned on its breast. We were supposed to aim at this square. To the right of the form I noticed a white spot on the wall. This would be my target.

"Ready! Aim! Fire!"

The dark form sank into a huddled heap. My bullet sped on its way, and hit the whitish spot on the wall; I could see the splinters fly. Some one else had received the rifle containing the blank cartridge, but my mind was at ease, there was no blood of a Tommy on my hands.

"Order—Arms! About—Turn! File—Arms! Stand—Clear."

The stacks were re-formed.

"Quick—March! Right—Wheel!"

And we left the scene of execution behind us.

It was now daylight. After marching about five minutes, we were dismissed with the following instructions from the officer in command:

"Return, alone, to your respective companies, and remember, no talking about this affair, or else it will go hard with the guilty ones."

We needed no urging to get away. I did not recognize any of the men on the firing squad; even the officer was a stranger to me.

The victim's relations and friends in Bilghty will never know that he was executed; they will be under the impression that he died doing his bit for king and country.

In the public casualty lists his name will appear under the caption "Accidentally Killed," or "Died."

The day after the execution I received orders to report back to the line, and to keep a stiff tongue in my head.

Executions are a part of the day's work, but the part we hated most of all, I think—certainly the saddest. The British war department is thought by many people to be composed of rigid regulations all wound around with red

Atwell was a good companion and very entertaining. He had an utter contempt for danger, but was not foolhardy. At swearing he was a wonder. A cavalry regiment would have been proud of him. Though born in England, he had spent several years in New York. He was about six feet one, and as strong as an ox.

We took up our quarters in a large dugout of the royal engineers, and mapped out our future actions. This dugout was on the edge of a large cemetery, and several times at night in returning to it, we got many a fall stumbling over the graves of English, French and Germans. Atwell on these occasions never indulged in swearing, though at any other time, at the least stumble, he would turn the air blue.

A certain section of our trenches was held by the Royal Irish rifles. For several days a very strong rumor went the rounds that a German spy was in our midst. This spy was supposed to be dressed in the uniform of a British staff officer. Several stories had been told about an officer wearing a red band around his cap, who patrolled the front-line and communication trenches asking suspicious questions as to location of batteries, machine-gun emplacements, and trench mortars. If a shell dropped in a battery, on a machine gun or even near a dugout, this spy was blamed.

The rumor gained such strength that an order was issued for all troops to immediately place under arrest anyone answering to the description of the spy.

Atwell and I were on the qui vive. We constantly patrolled the trenches at night, and even in the day, but the spy always eluded us.

One day while in a communication trench, we were horrified to see our brigadier general, Old Pepper, being brought down by a big private of the Royal Irish rifles. The general was walking in front, and the private with fixed bayonet was following in the rear.

We saluted as the general passed us. The Irishman had a broad grin on his face and we could scarcely believe our eyes—the general was under arrest. After passing a few feet beyond us, the general turned, and said in a wrathful voice to Atwell:

"Tell this d—n fool who I am. He's arrested me as a spy."

Atwell was speechless. The sentry buried in with:

"None o' that gassin' out o' you. Back to headquarters you goes, Mr. Fritz. Open that face o' yours again, an' I'll dent in your napper with the butt o' my rifle."

The general's face was a sight to behold. He was fairly boiling over with rage, but he shut up.

Atwell tried to get in front of the sentry to explain to him that it really was the general he had under arrest, but the sentry threatened to run his bayonet through him, and would have done it, too. So Atwell stepped aside, and remained silent. I was nearly bursting with suppressed laughter. One word, and I would have exploded. It is not exactly diplomatic to laugh at your general in such a predicament.

The sentry and his prisoner arrived at brigade headquarters with disastrous results to the sentry.

The joke was that the general had personally issued the order for the spy's arrest. It was a habit of the general to walk through the trenches on rounds of inspection, unattended by any of his staff. The Irishman, being new in the regiment, had never seen the general before, so when he came across him alone in a communication trench, he promptly put him under arrest. Brigadier generals wear a red band around their caps.

Next day we passed the Irishman tied to the wheel of a limber, the beginning of his sentence of twenty-one

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Store closes Tomorrow 10 a.m. Decoration Day.

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### Job Too Big for Average Man.

It takes lots of brains, patience and attractiveness to keep everybody straight. The trouble is it's not so much a matter of benefit to others as it is a satisfaction to yourself to be the general manager of things. The world could lose several in every community and its efficiency and peace would not suffer in the least. The chap that would be general manager of any group of people must not only be a man of big mentality but it has to be recognized to bring harmonious results.

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| 9 8-10lb. sack Barley Flour . . . 90c              | Lard Substitutes   |
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