SERGEANT McCLINTOCK.

"OVER THERE"

The Thrill and the Hell of the Trenches, Described by an American Boy.

Sergeant Alexander McClintock of Lexington, Ky., and the Canadian Army Has Gripping Tale That Every American Will Read, For He Tells the Facts—Unadorned. Wounded, a Distinguished Conduct Medal Man, He Was Invalided Home, but Is Going "Out There" Again to Fight For Uncle Sam and His Allies. An Inspiring, Interesting, Personal Narrative, Full of the Spirit and Atmosphere of the Trenches.

No. 4. Shifted to the Somme

By Sergeant Alexander McClintock, D. C. M., 87th Overseas Batt., Canadian Gren. Guards.

Sergeant McClintock is an American boy of Lexington, Ky., who has seen service in France, was decorated for bravery, wounded, invalided home and now is returning to accept a commission. This is the fourth article in the series. In the first article he told of his training up to the point where he reached the front line trenches. In the second he outlined the elaborate preparations for a bomb raid, and in the third the disastrous raid was described.

A FEW days after the bombing raid, which ended so disastrously for us, our battalion was relieved from duty on the front line, and the tip we got was that we were to go down to the big show then taking place on the Somme. Our relief was a division of Australians. You see, the sector which we had held in Belgium was a sort of preparatory school for the regular fighting over in France.

It wasn't long before we got into what you might call the big league contest, but in the meanwhile we had a little rest from battling Fritz and the opportunity to observe some things which seem to me to be worth telling about. Those of you who are exclusively fond of the stirring detail of war, such as shooting and being shot at and bombing and bayoneting, need only skip a little of this. We had an entirely satisfactory amount of smoke and excitement later.

As soon as our relief battalion had got in we moved back to Poperinghe for a couple of days' rest. We were a pretty contented and jovial lot, our platoon especially. We were all glad to get away from the strain of holding a front trench, and there were other advantages. For instance, the alterations of our muster due to casualties had not come through battalion headquarters, and therefore we had in our platoon sixty-three rum rations night and morning and only sixteen men.

It Was Good Clean Fighting. Nobody Fired a Shot.

There was a Canadian Scot in our crowd who said that the only word which described the situation was "g-r-r-r-a-nd!"

There was a good deal of jealousy at that time between the Canadians and the Australians. Each had the same force in the field—four divisions. Either force was bigger than any other army composed exclusively of volunteers ever before assembled. While I belong to the Canadian army and believe the Canadian overseas forces the finest troops ever led to war, I must say that I have never seen a body of men so magnificent in average physique as the Australians. And some of them were even above the high average. The man that punched me in the eye in an "estaminа" in Poperinghe made up entirely in his own person for the absence of Les Darcy from the Australian ranks. I don't know just how the fight started between the Australians and us in Poperinghe, but I know that it took three regiments of imperial troops to stop it. The most convincing story I heard of the origin of the bat tle was told me by one of our men, who said he was there when it began. He said one of the Australians had carelessly remarked that the British generals had decided it was time to get through with the sideshow in Belgium, and this was the reason why they had sent regular troops like the Australians in to relieve the Canadians.

Then some sensitive Canadian wished the Australians luck and hoped they'd finish it up as well as they had the affair in the Dardanelles. After that our two days' rest was made up principally of beating it out of estaminas when strategic requirements suggested a new base or beating it into estaminas when it looked as if we could act as efficient re-enforcements. That fight never stopped for forty-eight hours, and the only places it didn't include were the church and the hospitals. I'll bet to this day that the Belgians who run the estaminas in Poperinghe will duck behind the bars if you just mention Canada and Australia in the same breath.

But I'm bound to say that it was good, clean fighting. Nobody fired a shot, nobody pulled a bayonet, and nobody got the wrong idea about anything. The Australian heavyweight champion who landed on me went right out in the street and saluted one of our lieutenants. We had just one satisfying reflection after the fight was over—the Australian battalion that relieved us fell heir to the counterattack which the Germans sent across to even up on our bombing raid.

Down to the Somme.

We began our march to the Somme by a hike to St. Omer, the first British headquarters in Europe. Then we stopped for a week about twenty miles from Calais, where we underwent a course of intensified training for open fighting. The infantry tactics, in which we were drilled, were very similar to those of the United States army, those which, in fact, were originated by the United States troops in the days of Indian fighting. We covered most of the ground around Calais on our stomachs in open order. While it may seem impertinent for me, a mere non-com, to express an opinion about the larger affairs of the campaign, I think I may be excused for saying that the war didn't at all take the course which was expected and hoped for after the fight on the Somme. Undoubtedly the allies expected to break through the German line. That is well known now. While we were being trained near Calais for open warfare a very large force of cavalry was being assembled and prepared for the same purpose. It was never used.

That was last August, and the allies haven't broken through yet. Eventually I believe they will break through, but in my opinion men who are drawn for service in the first half million of our new American army will be veterans in Europe before the big break comes which will wreck the Prussian hope of success in this war. And if we of the U. S. A. don't throw in the weight to beat the Prussians now they will not be beaten, and in that case the day will not be very far distant when we will have to beat them to save our homes and our nation. War is a dreadful and inglorious and ill smelling and cruel thing. But if we hold back now we will be in the logical position of a man hesitating to go to grips with a drunken, savage, shrieking, spewing maniac who has all but whipped his proper keepers and is going after the onlooker. However, I wish we had had two months more of weather on the Somme. There might have been a different story to tell.

Simplified Medicine.

We got drafts of recruits before we went to the Somme, and some of our wounded men were sent back to England, where we had left our "safety first battalion." That was really the Fifty-first battalion of the Fourth division of the Canadian forces, composed of the physically rejected, men recovering from wounds and men injured in training. The Tommies, however, called it the "safety first" or "Major Gilday's Light Infantry." Major Gilday was our battalion surgeon. He was immensely popular, and he achieved a great name for himself. He made one realize what a great personal force a doctor can be and what an unnecessary elaboration there is in the civil practice of medicine.

Under Major Gilday's administration no man in our battalion was sick if he could walk, and if he couldn't walk there was a reasonable suspicion that he was drunk. The major simplified medicine down to an exact science of two forms of treatment and two remedies—"number nines" and whale oil. "Number nines" were pale oval pills, which, if they had been eggs, would have run about eight to an omelet for six persons. They had an internal effect which could only be defined as dynamic. After our men had become acquainted with them through personal experience they stopped calling them "number nines" and called them "whiz-bangs." There were only two possibilities of error under Major Gilday's system of simplified medicine. One was to take a whiz-bang for trench feet and the other to use whale oil externally for some form of digestional hesitancy. And in either case no permanent harm could result, while the error was as simple of correction as the command "about face." Blighty was therefore not very popular with our battalion, blighty being the trench name for the hospital.

Two weeks and a half after we left Belgium we arrived at Albert, having marched all the way. The sight which met our eyes as we rounded the rock quarry hill outside of Albert was wonderful beyond description. I remember how tremendously it impressed my pal, Macfarlane. He sat by the roadside and looked round over the landscape as if he were fascinated.

"Boy," said he, "we're at the big show at last."

Poor fellow! It was not only the big show, but the last performance for

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him. Within sight of the spot where he sat wondering he later fell in action and died. The scene which so impressed him gave us all a feeling of great awe. Great shells from a thousand guns were streaking and criss-crossing the sky. Without glasses I counted thirty-nine of our observation balloons. Away off in the distance I saw one German captive balloon. The other aircraft were uncountable. They were everywhere, apparently in hundreds. There could have been no more wonderful panorama picture of war in its new aspect.

Our battalion was in and out of the town of Albert several days waiting for orders. The battle of Courcelette was then in progress, and the First, Second and Third Canadian divisions were holding front positions at terrible cost. In the first part of October, 1916, we "went in" opposite the famous Regina trench. The battleground was just miles and miles of debris and shell holes. Before we went to our position the officers and non-coms were taken in by scouts to get the lay of the land. These trips were called "Cook's tours." On one of them I went through the town of Poizers twice and didn't know it. It had a population of 12,000 before the war. On the spot where it had stood not even a whole brick was left, it seemed. Its demolition was complete. That was an example of the condition of the whole country over which our forces had blasted their way for ten miles since the previous July. There were not even landmarks left.

The "Cook's Tour."

On the night when we went in to inspect the positions we were to hold, our scouts, leading us through the flat desert of destruction, got completely turned round and took us back through a trench composed of shell holes connected up until we ran into a battalion of another brigade. The place was dreadful beyond words. The stench of the dead was sickening. In many places arms and legs of dead men stuck out of the trench walls.

We made a fresh start after our blunder, moving in single file and keeping in touch each with the man ahead of him. We stumbled along in the darkness through this awful labyrinth until we ran into some of our own scouts at 2 a. m. and found that we were halfway across No Man's land, several hundred yards beyond our front line and likely to be utterly wiped out in twenty seconds should the Germans sight us. Fine guides we had on this "Cook's tour." At last we reached our proper position, and fifteen minutes after we got there a whiz-bang, a low explosive murderer, buried me completely. They had to dig me out. A few minutes later a high explosive shell fell in a trench section where three of our men were stationed. All we could find after it exploded were one arm and one leg, which we buried. The trenches were without trench mats, and the mud was from six inches to three feet deep all through them. There were no dugouts, only merely miserable "funk holes," dug where it was possible to dig them without uncovering dead men. We remained in this position four days, from the 17th to the 21st of October, 1916.

There were reasons, of course, for the difference between conditions in Belgium and on the Somme. On the Somme we were constantly preparing for a new advance, and we were only temporarily established on ground which we had but recently taken after long drumming with big guns. The trenches were merely shell holes connected by ditches. Our old and ubiquitous and variously useful friend, the sandbag, was not present in any capacity, and therefore we had no parapets or dugouts. The communication trenches were all blown in, and everything had to come to us overland, with the result that we never were quite sure when we would get ammunition, rations or relief forces. The most awful thing was that the soil all about us was filled with freshly buried men. If we undertook to cut a trench or enlarge a funk hole our spades struck into human flesh and the explosion of a big shell along our line sent decomposed and dismembered and sickening mementos of an earlier fight showering among us. We lived in the muck and stench of "glorious" war, those of us who lived.

The German Dugout—and What They Found.

Here and there along this line were the abandoned dugouts of the Ger

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