

**MY FOURTEEN MONTHS  
AT THE FRONT**  
Continued from first page

dispatch had been delivered. My officer told me afterward that the French general to whom he had handed the dispatch had taken the medallion miltaire off his own breast and pinned it on that of this young dispatch rider. He was also later awarded the Victoria cross and given a commission. It is things like this that make one proud to belong to such an army.

**CHAPTER III.  
Christmas in the Trenches.**

**S**oon after this I received orders to proceed by automobile to Aire and wait for instructions. Aire was at that time the headquarters of the Indian contingent, and I was anxious to see the Indians in action. After two days' waiting there I got orders to go to Boescheppe and report myself for duty to Lieutenant McNulty. Boescheppe was not far away, so I started at once and arrived before dark. I found Lieutenant McNulty without any trouble, and he told me to report to him again the next morning, as he would not want me that day.

I found a cafe where there was room for me, and I made myself comfortable. The place was full of Indian troops, and I was very much interested in them, as they were the first I had seen in France.

That night I went around the village to see all there was to be seen, and unintentionally I stayed out after 8 o'clock. I was making my way back to my billet along the middle of the road. It was as dark as pitch, and I couldn't see a yard in front of me. Suddenly I bumped into something, and quicker than a flash two hands closed around my throat. My mouth just naturally opened wide, and I yelled "Friend!" the loudest I ever yelled in my life.

Then a light shone in my face, and I saw it was a great big Sikh on sentry go. As soon as he saw my uniform it was all right, but I was shivering for half an hour, and I vowed I'd never go prowling around at night again as long as I remained within the Indian lines.

The Indians are the most religious people I ever saw. They seem to live only for their religion, and all their ac-

tioning the last engagement were light, as they lost only four killed and nineteen wounded, but forty-two died from exposure.

The Sikh places caste above everything. He will not drink from anything that has been used by a white man, for if he did he would lose caste. If he happens to be eating and a white man's shadow falls across the Sikh's food he will starve rather than touch it again.

The Indians got along very well with the French people, and some of them could even talk a little broken French. The suffering among the Indians during the first winter was terrible, but they bore it all fairly cheerfully and did their duty well. They are not trench fighters, though, and cannot play the waiting game. They want to get out at the enemy, and the officers have their work cut out to keep them in the trenches for very long.

The Germans certainly did not like the Indians a little bit. The Indians' belief regarding no quarter is not especially nice to think about, and their natural instincts are hard to control. They have a weakness for cutting off ears and heads and keeping other little souvenirs. The Germans know this and naturally it puts the fear of death into them.

I spent Christmas day of 1914 in the trenches just south of Ypres. Christmas eve was a beautiful night, and the Germans who held the trenches opposite left us very much alone the entire evening. We didn't bother them either.

There was a beautiful moon, and with everything so quiet and peaceful it was hard to realize that there was a war on. During the evening the Germans started singing, and I heard some of the most beautiful music I ever listened to in my life. The song might start just opposite us, and it would be taken up all along the line, and soon it would seem as if all the Germans in Belgium were singing. When they had finished we would applaud with all our might, and then we would give them a song in return.

A regiment in the trenches started "My Old Kentucky Home." The men were getting well along with it when some one in the German trenches joined the singing in just as good English as any of us could speak. It was beautiful, but it made me awfully homesick. After they had finished the same German voice sang "Dancing Around," and, believe me, that fellow could sing ragtime. He was applauded uproariously, and then we sang some more popular songs for them, and so it went until the wee small hours of the morning.

During the night a couple of our chaps crawled up almost to the German parapet, and with them they took a phonograph and a record. They wound up the machine, put on the record and attached a piece of string to the starting lever. Then they crawled back, unwinding the string as they came. The next morning they pulled the string, and it started the machine playing the song which was so popular in England at that time, "When We Wind Up the Watch on the Rhine." You can bet that that phonograph was filled full of lead in short order.

During the few weeks directly after Christmas I was in the trenches just south of Ypres most of the time. When on duty in the daytime it was not so bad, but the nights were awful. The Germans had the advantage over us in that their trenches were on higher ground, and they drained all the water down into our own. We had only buckets to bail with, and it was very slow work, as well as dangerous. Then, too, the cold weather increased our troubles.

I notice in my diary, which I kept from time to time, that I entered an incident which shows our state. I will quote you just what I wrote:

"Dec. 27, 1914. - Was talking with two boys of the Royal Scots today. They have just come down from the Hollebeke trenches, and they are in terrible condition. Their casualties dur-

ing the last engagement were light, as they lost only four killed and nineteen wounded, but forty-two died from exposure.

"One poor devil tells me that he has three brothers and fifteen cousins in his battalion. Two of his brothers died during the past two weeks. One stopped a bullet, but the other one drowned right by his side in the trenches, and he was unable to aid him.

"A lot came in on their hands and knees, and many came dragging themselves on their stomachs through the mud. It was terrible."

One of the saddest things I have ever seen is the last roll call of a regiment which has been cut to pieces. I saw one regiment go into action for the first time.

I watched them go up singing and shouting and in high spirits generally. They were 1,100 strong going into action, but two days later they came out, and there were only twenty-three of them to answer the last roll call. It was a heartbreaking sight and impossible to forget.

One day I went to some trenches our division had just taken over. The water was above our knees, and there was also about a foot of soft mud. In feeling around for a firmer foothold my foot struck something more solid than the ground around me. I started stamping and kicking about, but I couldn't seem to make it give way. Being curious, one of my comrades and I dug down with trenching tools. What we unearthed was the body of a dead Frenchman. Heaven only knows how long he had been there, but he was as black as a derby hat.

At this time the Dickebusch-Hollebeke road was alive with snipers. In some way they would get through our lines and secrete themselves along the road, where they could pick off individuals without much fear of being seen. I noticed that there was one place in particular where we always heard a bullet pass too close to be comfortable. It was a little wooden bridge, and I don't think I ever crossed it without hearing one whine past me.

One day I rode up with a second lieutenant of the Royal Engineers. As we crossed the bridge a bullet whizzed between us, but when I looked at the officer he did not appear to have noticed it, so I didn't say anything. About three hours later we were coming back the same way. Just before we came to the bridge he said:

"That blasted sniper has potted at me twice too often. We'll leave the road here and sneak down opposite that bridge under cover of the trees. Let us see if we can find the blighter. We'll wait until he pots at somebody else, and you keep your ears stretched and try to locate where the report comes from."

We tethered our horses to a tree and crept down to a point just about opposite the bridge. After a few minutes an empty transport wagon came along. As this hit the bridge I distinctly heard the crack of a rifle, but it came from behind and to the right of us. We heard the bullet sing over our heads and saw the driver duck and put the whip to his horses.

Continued Next Week.

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