

GOOD ROADS,
GOOD HOMES,
BEST CHEESE

CLOVERDALE COURIER

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Last and all the
Time.

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WILLIAM J. ROBINSON

MY FOURTEEN MONTHS AT THE FRONT

An American Boy's
Baptism of Fire

By WILLIAM J. ROBINSON

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The most graphic account of the great war that has yet been written comes from the pen of a twenty-two-year-old Boston boy, who has just returned from France, where as dragoon guardsman, dispatch rider and motor-car driver he served fourteen months under the British flag. Out of thirty-one motorcycle dispatch riders he was one of four survivors.

During the time I was at the front I put six automobiles out of commission. According to an estimate made after a year of war, the average life of an automobile is eight days and the life of a horse is about thirty hours.

The first auto I lost was due to engine trouble, and I had to abandon it for the salvage companies to take care of. The second one was destroyed by a shell in the city of Ypres while I was having some dinner. The third one I lost during the scrap for hill 60. I got stuck in the middle of a field, and as it was in doubtful position I set fire to it and trusted to luck that I had done the right thing. The other three were used up by the fearful condition of the roads.

We knew several days before the attack came on hill 60 that there was something in the wind. Our mining and tunneling companies had been working day and night, and I noticed that the artillery seemed to be concentrating in that vicinity. Re-enforcements were brought up, and everything seemed to point toward some doings in the near future.

Two days before the attack came off I was warned to hold myself in readiness to take a motorcycle machine gun into action, but I was not told anything about when I was likely to be wanted.

Hill 60 itself had hardly any right to be called a hill, for to me it looked like a little rising ground and that's all, but we had ninety-two batteries of artillery playing all over it, and they kept up the heaviest possible bombardment for thirty-five minutes. When you think of 368 cannon pouring shells into such a small place as one little hill it may give you some idea of what we gave the Germans who were trying to hold it against us.

The bombardment stopped as abruptly as it started, and as soon as it ended the mines we had laid under the hill

were set off. The earth seemed to tremble for a moment, and then came a great rumbling roar, followed by an upheaval of earth which seemed to reach the clouds. The moment the mines had been set off our chaps left their trenches on the dead run, and they charged across the crater where hill 60 had been but a few moments before.

The heavy artillery fire we had given the Germans had partly deflorated them. The explosion of the mines finished the job, and they fled like sheep. Our machine gun was pouring steel into them for a few moments, but we had to stop, as our own men were pursuing them, and it was not safe to continue our fire any longer. It was all over in a very short time and, while we had to stand by all night, our work did not last long during the actual battle.

Soon after this battle I secured my first "leave" to go to England for a rest of seven days, and though this is supposed to be a story of experiences while on the fighting front, I will relate something that happened while I was in Glasgow, Scotland.

Of all the cities in the British isles Glasgow has sent more men to the front than any other in proportion to her size. The business firms of the city encourage their men to enlist and do all they can to make things easy for them to leave their families. In many cases firms continue to pay men their salaries while they are at the front. The street car company in Glasgow has sent thousands, and their places are taken by women while the men are away.

Not only are there women conductors on the street cars, but women drive the cars too. When one arrives at the station in Glasgow it seems very odd to have a woman step up and ask to carry your bag. Women have taken the places of the porters in the stations.

Scotland has responded nobly to the country's call. In many of the small villages the entire male population has gone to the war, excepting, of course, the men who are too old or those who are physically unfit.

In the British isles during this war a great many of the women have been "helping recruiting" by walking the streets and putting a white feather in the buttonhole of every man they meet who is not wearing khaki.

I was standing just outside the Central station in Glasgow when a woman walked up to a man who was standing near me, and without a word she pulled a white feather through his buttonhole. He was a great big fellow, and she had to do some reaching to get at him. He smiled when he saw what she had done and said "Thank you, madam," very politely.

That was like waving a red flag before a bull, and she grew crimson and started telling him what she thought of him. He listened until she was all through, and then he asked, "Have you another one of those feathers, by any chance?"

"Yes, I have, you coward," she snapped, and she put another feather on him. As she did so he pulled a Victoria cross from his pocket and pinned it right under the feathers.

That woman gasped and stuttered and stammered trying to make an apology, and she reached out to take the feathers back, but he stopped her.

"No, madam," he said, "I'll keep these as souvenirs, if you don't mind, but I'd like to say a few words to you about what you are doing."

"Because I am in civilian clothes does not signify that I am a coward. For all you knew I might have been medically unfit for service. I might have been a married man with ten or a dozen small children depending on me. I might have been any number of things that would have prevented me from joining the army, but you didn't even wait to inquire."

"You shaply thought that because I was not in khaki I was a coward, and you thought to shame me into joining the army. As a matter of fact, I have been at my home recovering from wounds I received when I won this little cross, and I am now on my way back to join my regiment."

"If you will accept a suggestion from a man who knows men, you will stop this silly business, for you are doing more harm than anything else, and if I were a civilian and you had done it to me then, I would have faced a firing party before I would join the army. I trust you have learned something Good afternoon."

I found out later that he was a sergeant piper in one of the most famous Scottish regiments and that he won the cross for saving three officers when wounded himself.

CHAPTER VIII. Second Battle For Calais.

MY rest of seven days seemed very short, and I was back on the job at Poperinghe all too soon.

Ypres, which was six miles away, had been comparatively quiet all winter. In fact, it had been so quiet that our Twenty-seventh divisional headquarters had moved in there. As the spring drew near the Germans began to shell around the city again, but very few shells landed directly in the city proper.

There was a big gas tank on the outskirts down toward Krustadt, and around this place the shell fire would be rather heavy at times. The city was much knocked about even then, but it was nothing to what it was at the end of the "second battle for Calais."

Before the beginning of this battle the Kaiser was quoted as having said that if he failed to break us this time he would lay the city of Ypres to the ground street by street. He failed to break us, all right, and he kept his word, for today the fine old city of Ypres is nothing but a shapeless heap of broken bricks.

For weeks before the attack our air men were bringing in reports that the Germans were massing heavy bodies of fresh troops just in front of our position. All our transport trains went through the city, our men were billeted there, and one of our divisional headquarters had moved into the city.

The Germans still continued to bombard our positions in this vicinity, but they left the city itself severely alone. All winter it had been as safe to go through Ypres as it would be to go to church, consequently an order to go to Ypres did not bother anybody very much.

I was at the divisional headquarters in Ypres with a staff officer on the afternoon the bombardment started. We

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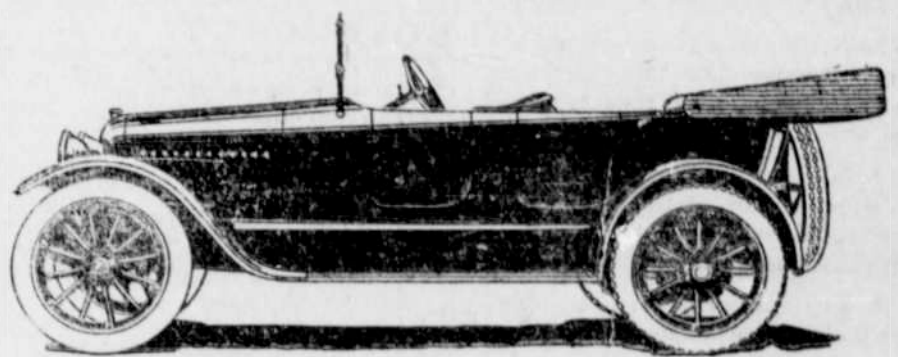
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Cloverdale, Oregon.

had gone to the city on horses, and we naturally expected to come back that way. I suppose it was about 2 o'clock when we arrived there, and I put the horses in the yard behind several buildings.

As I was still on duty, I didn't dare go very far away, for I didn't know at what moment the officer might show up. The first inkling I got of anything unpleasant was when I heard the scream of several shells coming through the air at once.

Right then I acted on the impulse that seizes every one at such a time and went through the nearest cellar window, where I landed on a pile of potatoes. I was content to stay there, too, until an orderly found me and told me that my officer wanted me. The Germans had been bombarding us about half an hour then, and there was no sign of any letting up yet.

The orderly told me that the shells were dropping in at the rate of forty-one to the minute, and I remember wondering who on earth would be fool enough to count the number of shells falling. I reported to my officer and found him as cool as a cucumber. He asked me where the horses were, and when I told him he said for me to leave them there and to go and find a car of some kind.

I knew it was mighty serious when he would abandon the horses, and I started out with the fear of God in my heart and wondering where in the dickens I would find a car in that inferno. As a matter of fact, I did find one, or at least it had been a car at some time or other. It was an ambulance which had had the body blown off, and some



The Houses Were Going Down in Every Quarter.

one had built a couple of little bucket seats out of empty bacon boxes.

Bacon boxes or not, it certainly looked like a million gold dollars to me at that moment, and I wasn't so slow about nabbing it. The engine was all

Continued on last page.