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Beaumont-Hamel

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EDITORIAL

THE Editors had hoped that this Number of THE VETERAN would have been published before July 1st and would have been known as Commemoration Number. Unfortunately the strike that existed among the Printers during the months of June and July prevented this.

This Number commemorates the episode in "The Trail of the Caribou" that is known as Beaumont Hamel, that day and place full of tragedy and honour for Newfoundland. The mention of the name conjures up two visions. It brings before our minds that awful holicaust of July 1st, 1916, when The Royal Newfoundland Regiment covered itself with immortal glory and it brings back the memory of the gallant heroes who are sleeping their last sleep beneath the soil of France near what was once the village of Beaumont Hamel. The story is fittingly and graphically told by one who was there. Official documents were at his disposal and the account is as full and true as it is possible to have it.

In a previous number the Editors expressed the hope that a full and detailed account of every action in which The Royal Newfoundland Regiment and the Royal Naval Reserve took part would eventually be told in these pages, and if this is achieved, the launching of this magazine will not be in vain. This consideration alone should be sufficient to warrant the support of the public.

Latest, re Pensions: Same to be read in conjunction with Pension Report, page 68.

We are in receipt of a reply from the Deputy Colonial Secretary, advising that the payment of a bonus from the drop balance on hand has been passed to the Board of Pension Commissioners for adjustment.

BEAUMONT HAMEL

MAJOR A. RALEY, M.C., C. de G.

FOREWORD

I SINCERELY trust that, in availing myself of the privilege offered me by the G.W.V.A. to write an account of the operations at Beaumont Hamel, I have not undertaken a task too far beyond my powers. I cannot but feel that there must be others who could have done justice to the tremendously important page in the Regiment's history much better than I could; nevertheless the facts I have stated are correct and if the reader finds that the text becomes tiresome I humbly plead ignorance in the art of "reporting."

The points I have tried to emphasise are:

(i) The wonderfully high level of discipline of the Battalion before the battle—a standard that was never beaten and probably never equalled at any later date.

(ii) The reason why the advance was necessary.

(iii) The nature of the actual advance.

No words of mine can give a fair account of the advance. It was just a steady walk forward of several hundred Newfoundlanders, each one knowing that he was going to be hit but determined to carry out his orders until he could advance no further.

In the Press the advance has been repeatedly referred to as a "Charge." This word gives quite a wrong impression. It makes one imagine men shouting and running at an enemy, bayonets fixed and all excitement. This sort of charge is easy, compared to the steady advance against an unseen foe as carried out on July 1st.

I have purposely refrained from mentioning names in this account. The whole operation was unique and stands high above all others of the Regiment, and yet there was not a single "immediate" award given for the action. This again is a record, for the Regiment won several honours in every other engagement in which it took part. Full enquiries were made of survivors but all had the same information to give, namely, that every man deserved of the highest and no man deserved more or less than his comrades. There may be similar cases in other Battalions but I have never heard of one.

The so-much talked of Ravine at Beaumont Hamel just in rear of the German front line trenches.

Unfortunately this account of Beaumont Hamel has been written against time and perhaps is not so full as it might be. I am deeply indebted to Major B. Butler, D.S.O.,

M.C., for very kindly writing the account of his raid for me. I feel sure all readers will be pleased to get a first-hand report of this gallant little exploit from the pen of the very man that led it.

I am also indebted to the Militia Department for the loan of a copy of the War Diary.

A. RALEY,
Major,
late 1st Bat. Royal
Newfoundland Regt.

June 14th, 1921,
St. John's, Nfld.

[Editors' Note.—Major Butler, unfortunately, has been unable to supply us with his article on the Raid. It is hoped we will have this for a subsequent issue of "The Veteran."]

BEAUMONT HAMEL

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1—THE WIDER OUTLOOK.

WHENEVER the glorious advance of the (then) Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont Hamel is spoken of there appears a certain doubt in the minds of some people as to why the advance was necessary at all. In order to make the causes and circumstances as clear as the limited capabilities of the writer can it would be well to look back to those days and review the situation as it existed then.

No matter what view be taken of 1915 it was a dark and depressing year for the British Empire. Loos had certainly not been the success expected, though many valuable lessons were learnt during the battle. The Russians were heavily defeated in Poland, and Gallipoli had to be evacuated, while early in 1916, after a very gallant defence, Kut fell. Against these set-backs Italy had come into the war, the munition output was increasing rapidly, more and more men were coming into the field (all of whom were eager to get at grips with the enemy), the morale was very high, and among all people there was a feeling that our set-backs had been rather through bad luck than through bad management.

Then came the tremendous threat by the Germans at Verdun, and all ranks instinctively knew that fighting on a huge scale was now about to commence. Breathlessly news from the Verdun Sector was awaited. For five days the enemy pushed forward until the fall of the famous fortress was hourly expected, but this was not to be. The brilliant generalship of Petain saved the situation and though the Germans kept on hammering the wonderful French stood firm. There were those who at this time criticised Sir Douglas Haig for not counter-attacking at once to help the French. Now we know that this would only have helped the Germans; the British were not in a position to attack so early. As late as June a large German force was still attacking at Verdun and now the British were ready. In addition to easing the strain on Verdun there was one more important reason why the British should attack now and that was to prevent the Germans moving troops from the Western Front. About this time the Austrians were carrying out a big offensive against Italy. The Russians, under General Brussilov, apparently having recovered from their defeat in 1915, brilliantly attacked and defeated the Austrians and thus eased the strain on Italy. The Russian victory did not, however, cause Germany to cease her offensive at Verdun; therefore it was now almost imperative for the British to attack.

The area chosen by the British Commander-in-Chief was the Somme country. This was a new kind of country for the British to fight in during this war, being low, rolling hills, nearly all grass land and woods, in marked contrast to the mud and dykes of Flanders or the slag heaps and coal pits of Loos. It was well-known that the country was very strongly fortified and those who criticise the choice of ground for this offensive must bear in mind that any part of the front was strong and also the very important fact that even at this date the British were not strong enough to carry out a great offensive by themselves and therefore had to fight where they joined the French.

While discussing the Battle from the

wider point of view it would be as well to explain also the reasons why the Newfoundlanders had to attack when they did. Very roughly the position was this: the British line in front of Beaumont Hamel ran nearly North and South and faced East. A mile or two South of Beaumont Hamel the line turned due East round Fricourt village, thus giving the Germans in this Sector the advantage of what is known as "interior lines of communication," that is to say, the enemy could place his reserve troops and guns in such a position, in the angle formed by the lines, that they could be brought into action equally easily against the British lines either North *or* East of Fricourt.

On July 1st the attack from Gommecourt to Thiepval, nearly all the "North and South" line, was unsuccessful and died down early. This gave the Germans an opportunity to turn their heavy guns on to the Fricourt, Mametz, Montaubau Line where the British were making good progress. The advance here became slower and in places checked so that, in the same way as the British were advancing to help the French at Verdun, the 88th Brigade had to advance to help their comrades further down the line. The enemy heavy guns were once again turned on to the Beaumont Hamel Sector which they drenched with H.E. and shrapnel until late in the afternoon.

It is certain that the prompt advance of the Newfoundlanders had a great deal to do with the further advance to the South.

Tactics are forever changing but, where battles are being won and lost, this principle of mutual co-operation can never change whether it be individuals concerned or vast armies.

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2—THE GATHERING STORM

IN the last number of THE VETERAN you were informed or reminded, as the case may be, how irksome the life in Gallipoli became. This was chiefly owing to the confined area in which we existed and the fact that the area was all in range of the enemy guns.

A large proportion of the Battalion in France in early '16 had experienced the Gallipoli campaign and later Suez, so that the undulating country of the Somme appeared as a haven of rest to them.

Among all ranks there was an instinctive feeling that something big was about to happen but details were quite unknown. Day after day small parties of gunners would be seen marching about with picks and shovels —evidently new gun emplacements were being made somewhere,—or maybe strolling through an orchard behind the lines one would come across lines of camouflage net work—evidently something important was coming here. However, though the signs were many, the storm did not seem very near until we went back to Louvencourt on June 7th, 1916.

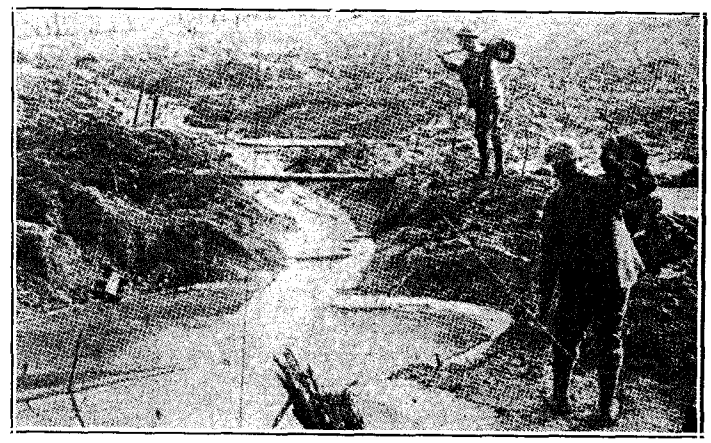
Louvencourt was the home of the Newfoundland Regiment from the time of our landing in France to July 1st and was not different from any other well-to-do village, neither cleaner nor dirtier. The same big white horses used to clop slowly and heavily down the street; the same old woman, bent double, used to hurry along carrying a bundle, never as small as herself, on her back, the estaminets were there, and on Sunday the entire population turned out to the little village church. Yes, Louvencourt was just like other villages to all except Newfoundlanders, but to Newfoundlanders it was more than the ordinary village, for all the peasants were their friends and the peasants loved them. All ranks had friends in Louvencourt who were anxiously waiting to welcome them on their return from each tour in the lines and—Louvencourt mourned on July 2nd.

The weather for most of the time spent in Louvencourt was very fine and warm, which helped greatly in the training of the Battalion.

On arrival in billets on June 7th orders were waiting for us. They were long orders that took a good deal of time to re-draft for the Battalion, and as soon as this was done company commanders were sent for and at 9.30 p.m. all were assembled in Headquarter Mess.

The Orders from Brigade included a map of some country North of C Co. billets which had been plotted out, imitation trenches dug and ploughed to represent exactly the country the Brigade would have to fight over between our present trenches and the Puisieux Road, our final objective.

At this conference it was decided that A and B Companies should lead the attack, with



A Trench in France during the Winter of 1916-1917.

A Co. on the left, followed at some 100 yards distance by C and D Companies, with C on the left. Each company was to advance in lines of platoons in file (or single file) at 40 paces interval and 25 yards between sections. This formation was discussed and demonstrated on the table with matches until about midnight when the conference broke up and the officers, pairing off, strolled back to their billets only to have to go through it all again with their subalterns and senior N. C. O's.

A sudden change had come over everyone. The great day was much nearer now that the intensive training was commencing. A new keenness swept through the Regiment. Even the most happy-go-lucky subaltern drank in

the smallest piece of advice as if his very life depended on it.

At 5.30 a.m. on June 8th the C.O. could have been seen riding up the lane leading to the forming-up place for the practice attacks, and, as he approached the windmill, mounted officers could have been seen cantering from all points of the compass to meet him. These were the O.C. Companies, Machine Gun and Signalling Officers and any others who could squeeze a mount out of the Transport Officer. They had all been over the ground to see their own particular pieces and they now came to meet their C.O. to go over it all again with him. Real hard work had started at last, but everyone enjoyed the early morning ride and went home to breakfast full of further information for those who had stayed behind.

About breakfast time it was decided that the whole Brigade should not do the attack together this day but that Battalion Commanders could have their commands and the training area at their disposal.

The area was very well marked out with flags and, with the help of the Staff guides, all ranks were quite familiar with the ground and knew the different objectives and routes as if they were streets in the village.

The day of our first intensive training was, however, to suffer a sad blow. At 11.30 a.m. a telegram came into the Orderly Room very briefly stating that Lord Kitchener had been drowned. The news for an hour or two seemed to take the vim out of the work but only to double the energy a little later.

The training went on day after day. Sometimes, once through the whole attack would satisfy the General, frequently, certain bits had to be done two or three times and once the whole attack was done twice.

To do the attack once the troops would have to cover a good ten miles between leaving billets and getting back to dinners and all this in full fighting order, sometimes doubling, sometimes charging, sometimes digging but always on the move. C Co., who were told off as consolidating company, always had a full share of digging and also had to carry more tools.

One thing in particular—training over full grown crops—took all ranks a day or two to get used to. Acres and acres of corn and wheat had to be sacrificed for the training. It seemed almost wicked to wade into waist-high wheat and yet we knew very well that we should not be allowed to do it unless it was absolutely necessary.

Those who fondly imagined that after the practice attack they would rest for the remainder of the day generally received a rude shock as soon as they got to billets. It was surprising how the Brigade could keep us at it. Demonstrations were given nearly every afternoon which meant that companies had to be formed up and marched to place of demonstration and the order usually included the words "strictest march discipline will be maintained."

Dog tired the troops would come swinging back to billets singing at the tops of their voices and the Battalion of those days *could* sing.

About 7 p.m. the various messes would sit down to dinner when in would come a runner with a message from Brigade—"Please demonstrate to troops visibility of patrols and men moving, lying and kneeling still, advancing by rushes (i) by light of 1" flare, (ii) by light of 2" flare." This demonstration could only be given after dark, so orders would be sent out to the companies and soon after dark the village lanes would be sounding with the even tramp of hundreds of men and the hearty singing of great men happy in their duty—but they could grumble too as every (good) soldier will.

At last, on June 14th, we got orders to proceed to the line again on the evening of the 15th. We all looked forward to a quiet day on the 15th and a fair share of rest in the trenches.

Dinner on June 14th was a happy meal. We knew the Great Day was near, news of the sweeping advance of General Brussilov had just come in and with it the coffee and smokes; everyone was smiling and feeling pleased and at peace with all but the Bosches, when—"Message from Brigade, Sir!"

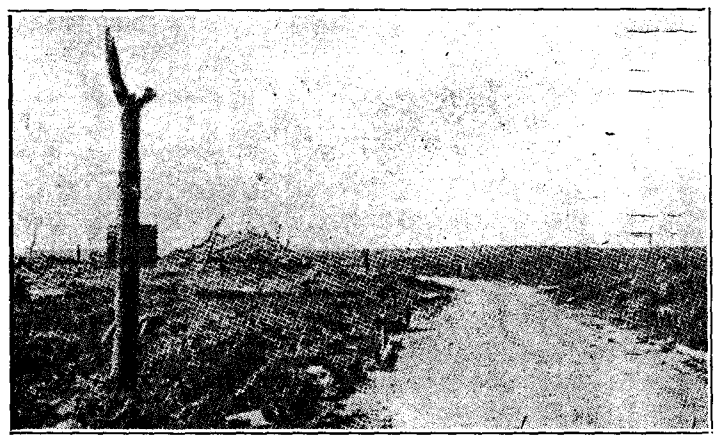
This was the message: "The Brigade will do a final practice attack to-morrow morning 15th inst. Move off 0600 aaa. Clocks will be advanced one hour at midnight 14th/15th." So we lost an hour's sleep, did a hard and very rushed day's work and eventually arrived in the line after a 9 or 10 mile march; but we had done our training, and if ever a regiment was fit for battle the Newfoundland Regiment was that day, both physically and morally.

No sooner were the men settled away in the trenches than they began to realise that there was more work to be done here than in the back areas.

There still remained a considerable amount of work to be done on the new firing line that had been dug all along the 29th Division front but this was looked upon as ordinary routine work and was expected. What was not expected, however, was the tremendous amount of work they had to do underground by daylight and on the top at night. Deep dug-outs to accommodate over a thousand men had to be completed. This work underground was very trying, especially to men who had so much other work to do; the atmosphere was hot and stuffy and every shovelful of clay had to be moved up a steep shaft about 30 feet in length, stacked in the trench and then emptied somewhere on the top after dark. In every fire bay in the sector two sets of steps had to be cut to help the men to scramble out easily on "The Day." A certain amount of this could be done during the day, but most of this work of course went on through the night and in addition thirty-two bridges had to be built over the trenches to allow troops to advance more easily in battle. This work was most important and required a certain amount of skilled labour as the bridges averaged about 12 feet in length and had to be carefully camouflaged before daylight. Three or four of these bridges had to be made wide and strong enough to take Horse Artillery and Ammunition Columns. Wherever bridges were built gaps had to be cut in the barbed wire entanglements. These gaps had to be cut zig-zag so that the Hun could not so easily detect them when he had

his look round in the morning for something interesting to report to his seniors.

The above-mentioned tasks were some of those for which the men hoped to be detailed, as the alternative they knew would be carrying R.E. Stores. Carrying was about the best hated task the infantry man had to perform. The place where he picked up his load, the route he followed and the place he finally put it down were almost invariably known to the enemy gunners, who in the quietest of times always sent over some shells to quicken the pace of carrying parties. On June 22nd orders were received to furnish R.E. Carrying Parties totalling over 300 strong. They were to carry "babies" to the front line, so stated the order.



Tipperary Avenue.

Every night since we took over the line an endless chain of men loaded with barbed wire, screw pickets, timber, &c., had tramped from front to rear and back again from dusk till dawn and now came this order. The actual carrying was about a mile which had to be done up a slippery trench and in a gas mask. Each "baby" required two men to carry it and the strictest orders were issued that in the event of shelling by the enemy "baby" had to be put down and the bearers were to protect it with their bodies. The "babies" were heavy metal cylinders filled with poison gas, but whether the gas inside the cylinders was more poisonous than that outside when the various carrying parties were introduced to their task has not been recorded.

It must be remembered that the Germans knew of the extra activity along our front, knew we were about to attack and therefore their artillery was much more aggressive than normally. The Regiment suffered casualties daily, the trenches were continually, though not very heavily, shelled and all the night work was open to enemy machine gun and rifle fire.

Every man was doing an even share of all this work, though probably each one thought he was doing a good deal more, in addition to his four hours out of every twelve sentry duty. Patrolling at night in No Man's Land went on ceaselessly.

By the time we were to be relieved we knew that the preliminary bombardment for the Great Day was to commence on June 24th and that the Great Day was June 28th.

The enemy aircraft had been very active, but even as early as this date it was clear to the most unobservant that the British were obtaining an undoubted superiority.

The South Wales Borderers were to relieve the Regiment on June 23rd, the first party being scheduled to report at 5 p.m. At 4.15 p.m. a tremendous rain storm swept across the sector, so heavy was it that in twenty-five minutes Tipperary Avenue was waist deep in water. This made it impossible for the South West Borderers to get up before dusk when they could pass the worst sections of the trench over the top. The first party arrived at 9.15 p.m. but the relief was not complete until 12.30 a.m. on 24th and it was 3.30 a.m. before all hands had had a square meal in billets at Louvencourt once again—the first meal since 7.30 a.m. the previous day.

The days from June 24th to 28th were exceedingly worrying for all ranks, but more

particularly for officers, who were at their wits' ends to find places on an ordinary soldier where the endless new instruments of war could be hung. No sooner had a company commander satisfactorily disposed of his complement of bombs, Mills, than a stock of bombs, Stokes, would arrive only to be followed by fuses for bangalore torpedoes, extra Lewis gun ammunition, wire crippers, wire cutters, Verey lights, rockets, buckets to carry bombs in, rifle grenades and so on in an endless stream. No sooner had Lieut. Pip detailed Pte. Squeak to carry a pair of wire clippers than it would be discovered that Pte. Squeak had already got a 50% share in carrying a trench bridge and a bucket of bombs, while Private Whiz reported he was going over the top as Captain Bang's runner and could he be relieved of the seven-foot trench ladder that he was at present down to carry.

Fortunately in a well disciplined Regiment with a high morale as the Newfoundlanders had—not only then but always—it seems that the worse the predicament the men are in, the more humour they find. At all events laughter and song held sway over Louvencourt on these days just preceding Beaumont Hamel.

Twice more during this final visit to our old billets the Regiment did a tactical exercise over the training area, once alone and once with the rest of the Brigade.

Conferences were the order of the day. The orders for the attack were out. On June 27th the Brigadier came to Battalion H.Q. and went over all the orders with the officers. The order of attack was for the 86th and 87th Brigades to carry the 1st Enemy System and the 88th Brigade to follow them 20 minutes later and capture the 3rd Line System. The formation of the Regiment in the attack was to remain as decided at the conference on June 7th with the 1st Essex Regiment on our right. The left boundary of the 29th Division was the South edge of Beaumont Hamel so that the Regiment did not really have the actual village to attack.

During these days we saw a good deal of Lieut. Col. Franklin, our first C.O., who was stationed with his Battalion just North of us. His Battalion had to attack Beaumont Hamel on The Day. After Colonel Franklin's last visit the C.O. remarked "If anything should happen to me in the show do everything you can to get Colonel Franklin back to the command of this Regiment." The C.O. was no mean judge of men.

* * * * *

a—THE BATTLE.

ON the last day or two before the 28th heavy rain set in but everything was ready even to the bringing down of all the enemy observation balloons. On the 27th the message came through that the attack was postponed 48 hours.

During this period the various Staffs were worried about two very important matters. The first was the identification of the enemy troops opposite the Brigade Sector. There was very little hope of a German surrendering at this time so the surest way of obtaining the required information was by raiding. A raid was an attack on a specified area of enemy trenches by a picked body of men specially trained for the purpose. The object of raids was usually to ascertain some particular information though occasionally they were purely primitive.

On June 26th and 27th Major B. Butler (than Captain) led a raiding party across No Man's Land and attacked the Huns. These raids are dealt with in a subsequent number but they cannot be allowed to pass unmentioned in this article of events of that period. The fact that the party was met on the first night by very heavy fire and some bombing proved that the enemy were at any rate alert. The raiding party had to withdraw to avoid our own barrage. They were driven back to Louvencourt where, after a nerve-racking experience, they got to bed in the small hours of the morning. It would be natural to expect that out of fifty men or so some of them would want a day off duty after such an experience, but such was by no means the case. Orders were received from Brigade that the raid must be repeated the following night.

What could show more clearly the high moral that existed in the Regiment than the fact that every man who went out on the 26th volunteered to go again on 27th and what greater tribute can Major Butler ever have paid to his powers of leadership than the fact that this little body of brave men wished to be led by him again?

The second worry the Staff had was of a somewhat different kind. It was naturally their wish that the troops attacking on July 1st should have as peaceful a night and as quiet a march as possible on the eve of battle. Unfortunately our bombardment seemed to have made the enemy snappy and cross. Their artillery fire was really nothing to speak of throughout our preliminary bombardment but it became very evident that he was systematically ranging on certain areas and tracks that he could easily know of from aeroplane photographs.

The enemy, with the utmost lack of consideration, waited until early morning of June 30th before he really interfered with anything concerning the Regiment. On this morning the luck which we hoped would continue, left us and the enemy artillery ranged all along the roads and tracks we were to march on from Acheux eastwards. The risk to be run by taking this route on the march to the trenches was therefore very great and if possible was not to be taken.

At 2 p.m. o'clock on June 30th an officer was sent on horseback to try and find another suitable route, avoiding main roads and the large village of Mailly-Maillet. A route was mapped out with the help of the Brigade Major of 86th Brigade and the willing co-operation of several Battery Commanders who promised to allow the Regiment to pass between their batteries and also to cease firing until the troops were under cover again.

June 30th was a beautiful day, very little work was done and everyone was in the best of spirits. In the afternoon a draft of 66 new men arrived and the majority of these took part in the attack next day.

As sunset approached men could be seen coming out of the farms and houses with

their battle equipment slung over their arms; in twos and threes they strolled to a spot near where they would have to fall in at 9 p.m. Some would sit here on the grass by the road side, others would turn back and walk into the village, while another would thoughtfully pull at his pipe as he gave his rifle and bayonet a final overhauling.

Here were a thousand or so Newfoundlanders—fishermen, lumbermen, trappers and men from the city just spending their last few free minutes together before falling in; falling in for the last time until the curtain had rung down on the tragedy of Beaumont Hamel.

Capt. Basil Gotto, the eminent sculptor at work on Newfoundland's Battle Exploits' Memorials which are to be cast in bronze and erected at Beaumont Hamel, Guedecourt, Marcoing, Monchy, Le Preux and Kieberg Ridge to commemorate the gallant deeds of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, at those places. There will also be erected at Winchester, Rockwood and Ayr Cemeteries rough hewn Granite Crosses.

At 9 p.m. the Regiment fell in. While the roll was being called another Regiment that was to attack on the morrow marched past. By ten minutes past nine all company commanders had reported their companies correct, the C. O. mounted his horse and rode to the head of the column, then with a wave of his hand commenced the last march to Beaumont Hamel.

The inhabitants of Louvencourt were there to see the start. How much these peasants knew one cannot tell but it would be idle to suppose that they were in complete ignorance of the pending attack.

For two minutes the C.O. kept the Regiment marching to attention—and such marching it was—not a glance to right or left, heads up, in one solid mass they swung through Louvencourt. Oh! you people of Newfoundland, be proud and honour the memory of these men—these men who set the standard of Honour for your Regiment for all time. Never before nor since did the Newfoundland Regiment march as on this occasion. Many indeed are the fine marches done by the Regiment but even the march past His Majesty King George V did not equal it. Then there were bands and drums and deafening cheering; at Louvencourt for two minutes there was not a sound except the steady tramp of men. After the usual two hundred yards had been marched the C. O. turned in his saddle and gave the signal to march at ease. The column seemed to heave as the men slung their rifles, then it steadied down again and from front to rear of the Battalion every officer and man spontaneously broke into song. "Keep the Home Fires Burning" was practically the only song sung and this was kept up until a halt was called just East of Acheux. The Regiment halted here for half an hour in order to cross

a ridge when the visibility was not so good for the evening. During this halt the regiment that marched through Louvencourt cut across the head of the Battalion from northwards. They too had evidently mapped out a new route. It was a Regiment in which all ranks had a friend so we got a very suitable opportunity to wish them God speed.

When darkness had fallen the Battalion fell in ready to continue the march. The noise of the guns seemed very near now, the sky appeared to be illuminated with incessant sheet-lightning. The heavies were pounding away on the left and every now and then the swishing rush of a shell was heard overhead.

Singing had now ceased; there was very little talking—only a muffled grumble, as a man slipped in a rut or kicked his foot against a stone, for the battle equipment was beginning to feel heavy. Of what the men were thinking let the mothers, wives and sisters imagine.—It would not be of the coming battle.

At last the hill into Mailly-Maillet was reached but before entering the village the Regiment turned off the main road, leaving the village on their left. On emerging into open country South of the village an officer was sent forward to warn the batteries that the troops were coming. Now the actual battle area was reached and the march was continued in silence over fields. The batteries were firing hard when the head of the column reached them but they ceased at once when they saw the troops.

It was here that the only unpleasant incident of the march happened. On arriving at the entrance to Tipperary Avenue (a communication trench) it was found that one old friendly Regiment still packed it, so we were forced to halt as we were, strung out in single file over more than half a mile of country that was liable to be shelled at any moment. After five minutes and no shelling we began to hope for no trouble but alas, the swish of a heavy salvo came along and then another and another. They did not burst

among us but very unpleasantly close—so close in fact that at least one company had to leave its position and deploy. The wait seemed endless, as also did the enemy shelling. In reality the shelling was not very bad but the time and situation were very critical. When talking the matter over in the trenches an hour or two later it appeared that everyone was under the impression that someone else was right in the thick of it.

The weary, aggravating tramp up the long communication trench came to an end at last and by 2 a.m. on July 1st the Regiment was settled away in St. John's Road and Clommel Avenue from which trenches

Auchonvillers—where a few of our gallant lads sleep.

the attack was to be delivered. These trenches were comparatively new, having been largely dug by the Regiment and were in rear of the line that we usually held when in the forward sector. St. John's Road was so christened by the 2nd South Wales Borderers as a compliment to the Regiment. The South Wales Borderers put the finishing touches to the trench after the Newfoundlanders had broken the back of the work.

For officers there was no rest but the men, very tired after five hours marching, were soon asleep except, of course, observers, sentries, &c. Lewis gunners overhauled their guns and each man was roused in turn by his platoon commander to have his equipment inspected. Another tedious duty was the issuing of further Battle Stores to those previously detailed to carry them. These stores consisted chiefly of trench bridges and ladders, to be carried by two men each, and the bangalore torpedoes. The torpedoes were long lengths of metal piping filled with explosives and fitted with a fuse for firing. They were used for blowing gaps in wire entanglements. All these heavy stores had been sent up by a careful staff to save the men carrying them on the eve of battle.

Inspections and issues of stores having been completed, there was only the wait for zero hour. This wait was the same as has been written about in almost every book about the war. Most of the men dozed, the officers strolled about their various commands chatting to groups in each fire bay and giving final little bits of advice, cigarette smoking was allowed and altogether it was very much like the final few minutes in the pavilion before a big football match.

The British artillery was keeping up a continual roar; so much firing was going on that the sharp crack of the field guns was almost reduced to nothing by the ceaseless rush of the shells overhead.

Slowly the sky in the East grew lighter and as day broke a last meal was taken by all ranks.

The enemy had not been shelling heavily but they had caused one or two casualties in the ranks on the left of our line.

At 6 a.m. everybody was alert, the sun was up and the final wait had commenced. The gun fire increased and the intense bombardment, that was to continue until 7.15 a.m., opened. It was now quite impossible to distinguish the report of a gun; it seemed as if all the reports were merged into one continuous roar.

When the intense bombardment com-

menced an officer was sent from each battalion to meet the Brigade Major and synchronise watches. The officer took two watches and on return to his unit visited each company commander to give him and his subalterns the correct time.

The enemy did not reply to the British bombardment and most of the troops were very anxious to watch the effect of the fire.

"Zero" hour was fixed for 7.30 a.m. and all knew that the remaining interesting items between now and the jump off were firstly, the air activity, secondly, the hurricane bombardment at 7.15 a.m. and last, but, perhaps the most interesting to novices, the blowing up of the mine in front of Beaumont Hamel. This mine was in the sector of the 4th Division but the Royal Fusiliers of the 29th Division were supplying the troops to seize the lip when the explosion took place.

At 7.15 a.m. the hurricane bombardment opened. The noise was now kept at a steady pitch; there was no break in the sound at all; in fact it seemed as if the sound were felt rather than heard, the air seeming suddenly to increase in weight.

Again an officer was sent to synchronise watches, this time in the front line trenches that were then held by the South Wales Borderers (29th Division). Watches were synchronised between 7.25 and 7.30. At 7.30 a.m., above the bombardment, was felt the concussion and trembling of the earth as the ground in front of Beaumont Hamel shot like a fountain into the air and at the same moment the South Wales Borderers ran up the trench steps and out into the open. The artillery fire lulled for a second or two and then along the whole battle front it lifted and became a "barrage."

From the very start it was obvious that the enemy were not only extremely well prepared for an attack but were actually expecting it. Before the Newfoundland officer had finished synchronising his watch wounded men of the South West Borderers were flopping back over the parapet. In spite of our tremendous gun fire the enemy machine

gunners and riflemen were firing as only exceptionally well-trained troops could. An enemy Musketon Battalion had pushed its guns well into No Man's Land and was doing enormous execution. A smart German officer had led his men to the lip of the crater of the Beaumont Hamel mine and had most doggedly stayed there until all British attacks had ceased. The machine guns of this party of the enemy could bring an unbearable enfilade fire onto any troops in No Man's Land on the North and South of Beaumont Hamel. The German artillery had now opened up but never attained anything like the weight of the British.

Though no news came through to the Newfoundlanders there was a general feelings that things were not quite as they should be. The enormous volume of machine gun fire from the enemy lines and the short time it seemed to last, at first made one hopeful that all was well and that they were being put out of action by our troops. This hope was dashed with each fresh burst of fire as the British made their repeated attempts to advance. All along the corps front isolated parties are known, or believed, to have entered, and occasionally penetrated beyond, the enemy front line but by evening all had been killed or captured with the exception of a few hundred who straggled back.

Ploegstreet Cemetery.

The Newfoundlanders under pre-arranged orders were to advance and capture the enemy Third Line System of trenches at 8.40 a.m. but at 8.20 a.m. orders were received to stand-by and await further orders. Even now no news as to how the attack was going had reached the Battalion. 8.40 came and went and when the Battalion should have been advancing, with probably slight opposition, they were still sitting on the fire step awaiting orders. All the men now knew that, at the very best, the attack was not moving forward on scheduled time but they were not kept waiting long for something definite.

At 8.45 the telephone rang and the verbal order was received from Brigade.

"1st Essex and the Newfoundland Regiment will advance as soon as possible" and then went on to give the boundaries of our objective. The Battalion had to occupy the enemy's first line trench from Point 89 to just North of Point 60 and work forward to Station Road which was partially sunken and in rear of the enemy front line. Having checked the objective on the map the following questions were asked Brigade:—

"Does 'as soon as possible' mean independently of the Essex or have we to work together?" "Go as soon as you can move, independently."

"Has the enemy's front line been captured?" "The situation is not cleared up."

With this knowledge the C.O. sent for all Company Commanders who, in less than five minutes, were collected together for the last time. A very short conference was held. The attack was to take place in the formation already rehearsed and laid down in operation orders. The Battalion was to advance from St. John's Road and Clommel Avenue, that is to say, from the rear line of trenches, and this necessitated passing through narrow gaps in four belts of wire, all of which were on the side of a slight hill running down to-

wards the enemy. A more deadly piece of ground to cross, in the formation the Battalion had to adopt to pass through the wire, it is hard to imagine.

At 9.15 a.m. Brigade were notified that the Newfoundland Regiment was moving off.

Let the reader try to picture the scene. "The Newfoundlanders are moving" was the message Brigade had just received.

As in all the rehearsals the C.O. was the first to move carrying, as always, his thick ash stick. When he had advanced about twenty yards he gave the same signal to the O. C's Companies and immediately the parapet swarmed with men. From each corner of every traverse men came pouring. With remarkable precision men took up their correct positions in their sections, not a single section, so far as can be ascertained, went in the wrong direction, that is to say, tried to crowd through a gap that was cut for a neighbouring section. The rear sections stood on the parapet waiting for the leading ones to gain their proper distance (40 paces). Steadily they advanced to the first line of wire under a heavy machine gun fire, first from the right and then from the whole front. Men began to drop, but not in great numbers, as the enemy had their guns trained on the gaps. The first gaps were reached and men fell in each of them, those who could not go on did their best to clear the gaps of wounded, killed and equipment.

Try to imagine the attack at this stage. The Newfoundlanders just starting the advance down the slope towards the enemy, no other troops were advancing on right or left of them, every enemy machine gun in the area firing at high pressure at pre-ranged targets and the first line of wire passed by A and B Coy's with heavy casualties and the attack only about two minutes old. Now C and D Coy's were out of the trench and advancing. C Co. were detailed for the work of consolidating the captured position and were even more heavily laden than the others.

Many men of A and B Coy's were now

King's Certificate now being issued to all men who were disabled in the Great War.

overloaded, having picked up the battle stores of their wounded comrades. They were now struggling through the second and pushing on to the third belt. Men were falling faster now, the machine gun fire was appallingly heavy but the steadiness of the men was quite unshaken. On they went with never so much as a waver anywhere. Each man as he fell, if life were still in him, endeavoured to roll out of the way of his comrades, there to lie until those wonderful Newfoundland stretcher-bearers found them. The only visible sign that the men knew they were under this terrific fire was that they all instinctively tucked their chins into an advanced shoulder as they had so often done when fighting their way home against a blizzard in some little outport in far off Newfoundland.

C and D Companies were now coming on but having the same experience that A and B had suffered. Many a poor man in C Company had reason to be sorry that he was a member of the consolidating company for, when wounded, a pick or shovel is a torturous tool to have strapped to one's back.

By this time the enemy artillery had commenced a barrage along our front wire and were also bombarding, though not heavily,

the area over which the troops were advancing.

At last the remnants of A and B Companies reached the front wire and any who had hopes that the worst was past soon had those hopes dashed. It seemed impossible that men could live to get through those gaps, yet here and there a man would be seen to dash forward as if bursting through a hedge. Here and there could be seen an officer, looking for men to lead. They were through the last belt now, but oh! how few. Still they knew their orders—to advance and capture the enemy front line. Here could be seen two men strolling side by side until one would pitch forward and the other would walk on alone a few paces only to suffer in like manner; there, could be seen a young subaltern, who stops to look for some men; none are near him; he looks at the Bosche trenches, defiantly waving a field telephone in that direction; then, putting down his head, charges alone, waving his telephone over his head as he rushes until he falls too.

Now C and D Companies reach this zone of death. One might reasonably have expected some sign of hesitation among young soldiers in their first action, but it was not there. C and D went into the test and came through with their colours flying and honoured. Individuals burst through again and tried to join up into some semblance of formation, but they were shot down almost to a man. Just the same steady walk continued. In one case, towards the left of the line, a section advanced on the last belt almost intact—or possibly others had joined it. In rear of this section walked two men carrying a 10 foot trench bridge. As the section approached the gap men began to fall in ones and twos until, at the gap, all were down except the two men with the bridge. At the entrance to the gap the leading man of the two was hit and, as he fell, brought down the bridge, and his partner. Without the least sign of flurry, the second man got up, hoisted the bridge onto his head and slowly picked his way through the now crowded gap. Whether the German machine gunners withheld their fire in admiration is not known but this

hero stolidly advanced until he could advance no more.

All this advance lasted about twenty minutes but now the effect was being felt. The enemy heavy and field artillery opened an exceedingly heavy and intense bombardment on the whole system of trenches. Judging from the shell fire in the sector lately occupied by the Battalion a tremendous weight of artillery must have been taken off the southern part of the attack. If the Newfoundlanders had not advanced the enemy would have had no reason to open this heavy bombardment and these guns could have been added to those firing South and might quite conceivably have finally stopped the attack there, as had happened on the northern sector.

Bridge after bridge was splintered and blown away, trenches were blocked everywhere, particularly the support trench which was completely leveled.

The attack having failed the C.O., who had observed the advance from a spot just behind the wire in front of this trench, now made a dash for a communication on his right. Down this trench he made his way to the firing line hoping to be able to collect even a handful of men with which to continue the advance. Not a sound man could he find.

The trenches were literally packed with wounded and dead of all regiments. The heat was almost unbearable and added to this was the incessant bursting of heavy shells on parapet, traverse and in the trench. Wounded men who had managed to crawl a little rolled down into the trench, falling with a sickening thud on the bottom or some wounded comrade and there they lay under a sweltering sun groaning and waiting for the stretcher-bearer. Certain communication trenches had been set aside for moving the wounded but this very soon became impracticable.

There was one thing, however, that could not but leave a vivid impression on any in the trenches at this time. The almost universal question asked by all the wounded was—"Is the Colonel pleased" or "satisfied." Whatever the words used were, that was the one thing they all wanted to know.

Immediately after an action one sees deeper into the inner thoughts of a soldier than at any other time; an hour after, he has probably chatted with some friends or has adopted some flowery phrases that sometimes add or detract from the actual facts, and occasionally alter the meaning altogether, but here were these Newfoundlanders, whose one thought was whether they had come up to the expectations of their Commanding Officer. They knew very well that if they had they had done all a soldier could do.

At times one is apt to think that Newfoundland does not fully realize the debt she owes this Commanding Officer. He had taken over the Battalion at the end of the Gallipoli campaign, found them the finest body of men that could be desired in the trenches, but when Egypt was reached he found himself faced with work enough for a dozen experienced officers. He was the only man with expert military knowledge in the Battalion, he had no Second-in-Command, he was unknown to most of the Regiment and on top of all his ordinary regimental duties his diplomacy was strained almost to breaking point by communications of all sorts from Newfoundland. Officers rolling out of their camp beds in the morning would take a look out of the tent and there they would see the C.O. standing alone—he was much alone in those days—fully dressed, watching and taking in every detail around him. Worry, yes, he had worries from reveille to tattoo but it was in those days he began to love the Newfoundlanders and to work for them with all his might, sparing neither himself nor them, until, being but human, the strain of the war wore him out, as it must every man in time, and he had to go home to rest.

The Battalion at Beaumont Hamel made the name of the Regiment a glorious name for all time—let us not forget the man who made that Battalion what it was. He had material to work on that could not be beaten in any army in the world but that did not make the work less easy.

At 9.45 a.m., just 30 minutes after the advance commenced, the C.O. reported in person to Brigade Battle H.Q., which were in a deep dug-out 100 yards behind our firing line. Here sat the Brigadier and his Staff. The entrance was crowded with runners and one or two wounded had struggled in who lay in a semi conscious state on the steps. It was a serious looking gathering. The Brigade Major had already given the General some idea of the Newfoundlanders' advance but the C. O's report sounded even worse. It seemed unbelievable to the General that a Battalion, nearly 800 strong, could be completely wiped out in a few minutes.

After some discussion as to the situation it was decided that the C.O. should go out with the few men he had and collect the unwounded in No Man's Land and make another effort to reach the enemy trenches. The C.O. immediately started off on this forlorn hope but at the entrance to the dug-out was stopped by a senior officer of the Corps Staff. On hearing the C.O's orders he took him back into the dug-out and in a very few words convinced the General as to the futility of any attempt being made to continue the attack, at any rate so far as the Newfoundland Regiment was concerned.

The Staff Officer had seen the advance of the Regiment from an observation post on the right and when it was over at once made his way to Brigade Battle H.Q. He was simply unable to find words with which to express his admiration of the magnificent way in which the men had pressed forward to the last man.

By 10 a.m. the attacks along the whole sector had been repulsed but the enemy artillery was still keeping up an exceptionally heavy bombardment, while our own artillery had also resumed bombarding the enemy trenches.

Early in the afternoon the 10% reinforcements arrived in the line and the Battalion were ordered to occupy the support trench in the right sub-sector known as St. James' Street. During the afternoon the reinforcements, which had now become the battalion, suffered several casualties from shell fire, casualties which unfortunately included an undue proportion of officers.

During the afternoon many wounded made attempts to crawl back to the line but they were carefully watched by the Germans. Each man wore on his back a bright tin triangle, square or circle, according to his Division, and these flashed out like a heliograph with the slightest movement so that as long as a man retained his equipment it was next to impossible for him to crawl in without drawing fire.

There was considerable comment in the Press about this time on the action taken by the enemy in firing on British wounded. That the Hun was quite capable of deliberately firing at wounded men is well known but at Beaumont Hamel there was every excuse for this. At least three regiments had advanced in this sector during the early part of the morning; the fire had been deadly, but the enemy could not know that every man was wounded and they were quite justified in supposing that every man they saw moving was joining a party which was being collected to continue the attack. At least one such party, composed of K.O.S.B's and Newfoundlanders, did make an attempt. The majority of the movement was nearer our lines than the enemy so the latter could not clearly see if a man was hit or not.

By morning, on July 2nd, some 68 other ranks who had taken part in the advance had straggled back and answered their names. The Battalion remained in St. James' Street during the day and on the 3rd moved to Fethard Street in our old sub-sector. This day and the two following were spent in bringing in wounded, bringing in the dead and collecting equipment. These were dismal days, though the full appreciation of the loss sustained did not seem to be fully realized by those who had seen it all. On the 4th the rain came and hampered the sad work the men were doing; the trenches began to fill, for any drainage there had been completely disappeared during the bombardment. During the afternoon a message came from Brigade warning the Regiment to be ready to beat back an enemy counter-attack.

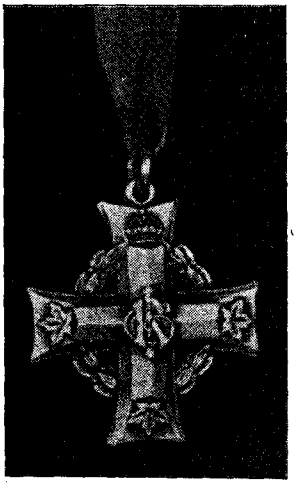
Mercifully for us and more so for the enemy the attack did not take place.

On July 6th the Battalion were ordered to go back to billets at Englebelmer. So few were there that they were allowed to go back by daylight in small parties. The enemy shelled the village during dinner hour but the old 1st Battalion was gone and the few men who were left received rapid promotion in order to help in the moulding of a new one.

A draft of 127 other ranks joined on July 11th and on July 14th the beginning of another 1st Battalion was in the line—strength, 260 rifles.

Such is briefly the story of the advance that first won renown for the Newfoundlanders. Many glorious deeds were performed later on but the Advance at Beaumont Hamel will for ever shine most brightly in the Annals of the Regiment.

What a magnificent example these men have set us! Dauntlessly they advanced through the narrow gaps and lanes over the bodies of their comrades, soon knowing the hopelessness of their task, yet ever pressing on where duty called. Let those of us, then, who are left so follow their good example that we too may go hard and straight through the narrow ways of life.



Memorial Cross issued to Next of Kin of Deceased Canadians.

NEWFOUNDLAND

Published in the London Times, August 28th, 1917.

THERE lies a Land in the West and North
Whither the bravest men went forth,
And daunted not by fog nor ice
They reached at last to a Paradise.
Full two thousand miles it lay
Washed by a sea of English grey,
And they named it Newfoundland at sight;
It's rather the Land of Heart's Delight!

Now after close five hundred years
You give us back with fearless eyes,
Dimm'd with glory but not with tears
The greatest gift that a Land can prize.
You give back all that there is to give,
The young who die so the Land may live,
Nor willed it otherwise.
Die? They were weary, God gave them rest.
Fall? They are raised for evermore!
Whether on Beaumont Hamel's crest
Or "Caribou Hill" by the Turkish shore,
Never their glory can fade or fall
Who have won the greatest Cross of all,
Nor ever their country dies!

Ah! Men must know you to understand,
Have seen the cliffs of your rugged land,
Have seen the mist come rolling down
The hills that guard the glistening town,
Have seen the schooners creeping in,
And smelt the homely smell within
The fishing port asleep,
And in the rivers flowing free
Through the spruce woods to the sea
Have known the pools at break of day
Where silver-coated salmon play,
And seen the tangled river's brink
Where caribou come down to drink,
And beavers build and creep.

All this is shared with those who fell.
It is the Land they loved so well.
For many a soldier, lying low
In some French village-battle glow,
Sees before his blood is spent
The sunset over Heart's Content.
Many a sailor, lost at sea
Sweeping a mined-in channel free,
Sees his schooner far away,
And sunrise in Conception Bay.
Aye, though they died on distant shores
They died for This! It's doubly yours!
And there is Pride and Comfort too
To know what they once loved and knew.

There lies a Land in the West and North
Whither the bravest men went forth,
And daunted not by fog nor ice
They reached at last to a Paradise.
—A Land to be won by those who durst,
No wonder the English chose it first,
And they named it Newfoundland at sight;
It's rather the Land of Heart's Delight.

P. E. GOLDSMITH.