

# British Guns Cut Germans From Rest of the World

Philip Gibbs Describes the Terrific Power of the British Bombardment at Contalmaison—  
The Germans in the Fortress Knew Their Case Was Hopeless from Start

London, July 14—Writing in the London Daily Chronicle under date, with the British armies in the field, July 10, Philip Gibbs says: The village of Contalmaison has been taken by the British again. Whether it was ever held before by more than a handful of men, who went in and out is doubtful.

I have already described in previous despatches how the British concentrated fire on positions in front of the village and then upon the village itself with terrific intensity. I saw the beginning of this bombardment and watched the men going up to the support of the attack which was to follow.

It was begun when fresh troops, who had been brought up to help the tired men who had been fighting in this part of the line under heavy fire for several days, and they advanced under cover of the guns to the left and right of the village.

It was already hemmed in on both sides, for other British troops were in firm possession of Baliff Wood, to the left, and during the evening, by a series of bombing attacks, Mametz Wood, to the right, had been almost cleared of Germans.

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The Germans in Contalmaison knew the position was hopeless. When the British guns lifted they heard the cheers of the British infantry on both sides of the village, and many of them streamed out of the village in a disorderly retreat, only to be caught behind by the extended barrages between Contalmaison and Pozieres and Bazentin-le-Petit, so that their rout became a shambles.

The British were quickly in the village, and having learned the lesson by experience of other troops at other places, made a thorough search of machine gun emplacements and dugouts, so there would be no further trouble within the waeps' nest.

The men left in Contalmaison were in a dreadful state. They

suffered to the very brink of human endurance and beyond. They were surprised to find themselves living enough to be taken prisoners.

One of these men with whom I talked this morning told me a tragic tale. He spoke a little English, having been a cabinet maker in Tottenham Road some years ago before he went back to Wurtemberg, where, when the war began, he was, he said, taken and put in a uniform and told to fight.

With the other men of the 122nd Bavarian Regiment he went into Contalmaison five days ago. Soon the rations they brought with them were finished. Owing to the ceaseless gunfire, it was impossible to get fresh supplies. They suffered great agonies of thirst and the numbers of their dead and wounded increased speedily.

"There was a hole in the ground," said this German cabinet maker, whose head was bound with a bloody bandage, and who dazed and troubled when I talked with him. "It was a dark hole, which held twenty men, all lying in a heap together, and that was the only dugout for my company, so there was not room for more than a few.

"It was necessary to take turns in this shelter while outside the English shells were coming and bursting everywhere. Two or three men were dragged out to make room for two or three others then those who went outside were killed or wounded. Some of them had their heads blown off, some of them had both legs torn off, and some of them their arms, but we went on taking turns in the hole, although those who went outside knew it was their turn to die very likely. At last the most of those who came into the hole were wounded, some of them badly, so that we lay in blood.

"There was only one doctor there, an under-officer. He bandaged some of us till he had no more bandages; then last night we knew the end was coming. Your guns began to fire altogether the dreadful trommeifeurer, as we call it, and the shells burst and smashed up the ground about us. We stayed down in the hole waiting for the end.

"Then we heard your soldiers. Presently two of them came down into our holes. There were two boys and had their pockets full of bombs. They had bombs in their hands also, and they seemed to wonder whether they would kill us, but we were all wounded, nearly all, and we cried 'Kameraden,' and now we are prisoners and I am thirsty."

Other prisoners told me in effect that the fire was terrible in Contalmaison, and at least half their men holding it were killed or wounded, so that when the British entered last night they walked

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over bodies of the dead. These men who escaped were in a pitiful condition. They lay on the ground utterly exhausted, most of them, and that was strange with their faces in the earth. Perhaps it was to blot out the vision of the things seen.

I shall remember the cabinet maker of Tottenham Court Road. In spite of the clay which caked his face and clothes, and the bloody rag round his head, he was a handsome bearded fellow, with blue eyes, which once or twice lighted up with a tragic smile as when I asked him when he thought the war would end.

"In 1915," he said, "when I was wounded at Ypres, I thought the war would end in a few months and a little while ago I thought so again." Then he muttered something to himself, but loudly enough for me to hear the words: "Surely we cannot go on much longer."

I left these men and further down the road I saw many more prisoners there, nearly 300 of them marching down the side track be-



tween some ripening corn under mounted escort. Most of them were young and healthy men, who walked briskly, and it was only the few behind who limped as they walked and looked broken and beaten men.

It was a good day in prisoners, for about 500 have come down from Contalmaison, Mametz Wood, and Trones Wood, as living proofs of the advance in all those places.

All the prisoners speak of the terror of the British artillery fire and the documents captured in their dugouts tell the same tale in words which reveal the full horror of the bombardment.

"We are quite shut off from the rest of the world," wrote a German soldier on the day before our great attack. Nothing comes to us, no letters. The English keep such a barrage on our approaches it is terrible. Tomorrow morning it will be seven days since the bombardment began. We cannot hold out much longer. Everything is shot to pieces."

"Our thirst is terrible," wrote another man. "We hunt our water and drink it out of shell holes."

Many of the men speak of the torture of thirst which they suffered during the bombardment.

"Every one of us in these five days has become years older. We hardly know ourselves. Bechtel said that in these five days he had lost ten pounds. Hunger could easily be borne, but thirst make one almost mad. Luckily it rained yesterday and the water in shell holes, with the yellow shell, sulphur, tasted as good as a bottle of beer. Today we got something to eat. It was impossible to bring food before up into the front line under the violent curtain of fire of the enemy."

One other out of hundreds tells all in a few words: "We came into the front line ten days ago. During this ten days I suffered more than at any time during the last two years. The dugouts are damaged in places and the trenches are completely destroyed."

We do not gloat over the suffering of our enemy, though we must make him yield. I have seen things today before which one's soul swoons and which, God willing, my pen shall write so that men shall remember the meaning of war, but now, when these things are inevitable, we must look only to our progress toward the end.

Today we made good progress toward it. Yesterday I wrote of a position we attacked on July 1, as a great German fortress within chain or strongholds linked by underground works.

"In ten days, by wonderful gallantry of the men and the great power of the guns, the British have smashed several of their forts as strong as any on the western front defended as stubbornly by masses of guns and troops, and have stormed a way in so deeply that the Germans are now forced to fall back upon the next line of defence.

The cost has been great, but the German losses and the present position in which they find themselves prove the success of the main attacks.

For the first time since the beginning of the war the initiative has passed to the British, and the German Headquarters Staff is pushed for reserves.

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## SAND AND GRAVEL

Increased Demand For Washed Material In Cement Work. More than \$18,000,000 worth of sand and gravel was dug out for sale in the United States in 1909, according to a report just issued by the geological survey.

This notable increase in production is due in great part to the more extensive use of sand and gravel in concrete construction work, but larger quantities were also used as railroad ballast and filling. There was also a considerable increase in the use of molding sand. The production of glass sand in 1909 was but little more than that in 1908.

During 1909 the geological survey made field and laboratory studies of many kinds of sands and gravels in localities where federal buildings were in course of construction. These studies have shown great differences in the quality of sand and gravel used at different places for making concrete. Some contractors contend that run-of-bank sand gravel is the best for making cement concrete, but this contention is generally not sustained by practical trials and experiments. The most desirable material is that which is free from clay, loam or dust. Mica also is objectionable if present in large quantity, as well as pyrite or limonite. A coating of dust on gravel prevents its proper contact with cement, and the pebbles are therefore easily broken out of the concrete.

During recent years, particularly in the large building centers, there has been a greater general appreciation of the importance of using proper sand and gravel in cement concrete, so that leading architects and builders are requiring, sound, clean, washed material.

## To Keep Brasswork Bright.

Brass rails or other brasswork on launches or boats can be easily kept bright by the use of sperm oil. Some boatmen polish their brasswork only once with putz or polishing powder, while for the rest of the season they keep it bright with sperm oil, which is rubbed on with a very oily cloth. Before starting on a trip the brasswork is rubbed over with the sperm oil cloth to prevent the salt from reaching the brass, and on the return the salt is readily taken off, leaving the rail bright. This method was recently suggested to an automobilist, who found it to be a great success, because he could polish up his brass very easily after it had been left several days. Scientific American.

## ARIZONA BRONCHOS.

Like the Little Girl With a Curl in the Center of Her Forehead.

When the Arizona broncho wishes to be safe for you and for himself he is the safest thing in the world, and when he wishes to be unsafe life is a merry chance.

I went up and down trails in Arizona which were almost perpendicular and rough and stone strewn too. But there was little danger, for the broncho has not the "ten pound," but the "thousand pound" look. His nose is to the ground, his eyes fastened on the trail, his footstep the most beautifully careful thing the mind can conceive. One foot placed before the other even and preserves the balance, adjusts the weight for another, and all this wonderful machinery of equipoise, stability and safety you feel working under you like a delicate machine.

Yet this sage pioneer of the trail, with his meticulous care of you and himself, was just a wild range pony, hunted down by the range rider, driven, coaxed or duped into a corral, broken, saddled, bridled and ridden all in one hour; wrenched out of his wildness, having his heart broken and made into a slave while you would eat your breakfast.

He is not a beauty; he is just a mongrel. But his legs and his feet are made of iron and steel, and the work he does over awful trails, in a rough and ragged country, strewn with stones and flints and bowlders and lava sand scrub, week after week, month after month and year after year, without a splinter of the legs of a thoroughbred in three days.—Gilbert Parker in August Metropolitan.