

Mr. William J. Robinson Writes of War Experience

Some Things He Saw When On a Visit To Paris---An Irish Bomb Thrower, Who Delivered the Goods---Scenes of Horror Which Followed a German Air Raid---Guiding a Deaf Colonel on the Firing Line.

The Boston Sunday Globe for January 30 contains another instalment of Mr. William J. Robinson's interesting experiences while serving in France with the British Expeditionary Force. Letters received by relatives here state that Mr. Robinson's articles on the war have made a big hit in New England, and he is being deluged with offers to take the lecture platform. One concern offered him the sum of \$1,000 for a series of lectures to extend over a period of one month. He has already delivered a number of "talks" on the war to clubs and societies in Boston and has been paid at the rate of \$35 per hour. The management of the Boston Globe have offered him a permanent position on the staff whenever he is ready to accept it.

Mr. Robinson's last contribution on the war was in part as follows:

(Boston Globe.)

A Visit to Paris.

I was sent to Paris in my car to bring back an officer to the front. I was surprised on entering Paris to find so few British soldiers. I knew that we had several permanent bases in the vicinity and I expected to find the place swarming with Tommies.

I soon found the reason for Tommy's absence for as soon as I left the car and started out on foot, I was continually being stopped and asked who I was, what I was, where did I come from, what was I doing and what was I going to do.

Being on special duty, I had a pass in my possession which bore a French stamp as well as the British. This pass would take me anywhere in France or Belgium, and a flask of it, coupled with the words "special duty" permitted me to go anywhere I pleased. Had I been without it I would have been arrested about every ten minutes.

Ready for the Taubes.

The defences in Paris against hostile aircraft attack were a revelation to me. I never saw anything more thorough in my life. The outskirts of the city fairly bristle with anti-aircraft guns, observation posts and hangars. Any of the more venturesome Germans who care to make an attempt against Paris is in for a hot reception.

The city itself is very quiet. One misses the bustle and excitement of present day London, but there is a feeling of subdued activity in the atmosphere which leaves the impression that big things are going on all round.

The big hotels which cater to the foreign tourist are all closed, as are many of the big stores, and some of the theatres. In fact, the Paris that one sees now is the real Paris and not the gathering place for the pleasure-seekers of the world.

One notices the absence of young men more than anywhere else in France, business here being carried on by the older men and those unfit for military service.

The people take the war very seriously and are determined to fight the thing through to the end.

Two days after my arrival the officer I was to take back was ready to start. The ride back was uneventful, but on our return we found that the headquarters were going to be moved north across the Belgian frontier the next day. We were to take over the job of holding the town of Poperinghe and we were now holding more front than previously.

Scotchmen a Curiosity.

At this time the roads were in terrible condition. They are made of cobblestones in the middle, but either side is nothing but mud, so after a few days' rain, if one slips off of the stones one finds himself in a regular quagmire and will sink in over the axle.

We took Poperinghe over from the French, and while we were moving in they were moving out, and the two lines of transports each going over the same road, resulted in some fine mix-ups.

Eventually we arrived all right and found that this place was much better than Hazebrouck, which we had left and which was the junction of 7 railroad lines and consequently a popular target for German aircraft.

The people in Poperinghe, had never had British troops in the town before

and seemed to be very glad to see us.

We had several Scotch regiments in our corps and when they came out of the trenches the first time they created a great sensation in the town. Their kilts were a never failing source of astonishment to the Belgians. The woman in the house where I was billeted thought it was cruel to make them wear the "little dresses" in the cold weather. She wanted to know what they wore underneath them, and when I told her that they wore nothing, she wouldn't believe me. I explained to her that it was against orders for them to wear trousers under the kilt, but still she refused to believe it.

The Bomb-Thrower.

We used two kinds of bombs. The pin bomb with the time fuse, and the percussion bomb. The pin bomb is used mostly for throwing from the trench. To throw this bomb you take it in your hand, draw out the pin with the other hand, count two seconds, and throw it. When the pin is drawn it starts the time-fuse working, and the bomb explodes in four seconds.

It requires a cool head to throw the bombs effectively.

The percussion bomb explodes only on striking something. If a "bomber" with a belt full of these bombs misses his step and falls, he can kiss himself good-bye for there will be nothing left to pick up.

During an attack at Menin I saw an incident that I will never forget. Our fellows had taken two lines of trenches in a very few minutes. In some places some Germans were occupying part of trench while we held the other part.

A big Irishman came up with a load of bombs and as he came forward I saw these Germans raise their rifles to fire at him.

The Irishman was too quick for them though, for he chucked a bomb into their trench and I heard his yell, "Split that between ye, ye swine!"

It wiped out the whole crowd of them, of course, and the best part of it was that the Irishman didn't alter his stride the least bit. The expression has become quite popular among bombers.

Winging an Aeroplane.

We hadn't been in Poperinghe many days before German aeroplanes began coming over us. They didn't do any damage at first and I wondered why they didn't drop any bombs.

At last we got used to them and they didn't bother us at all. Once in a while our guns would bring one of them to the earth, and then there would be one grand rush to the place where the machine fell.

I saw one fellow fall one morning, and as I had my motorbike right there I hopped on and dashed down the road to try to find him. He had come to earth safely, but his engine had been ruined by a piece of shrapnel. He had set fire to his machine and was calmly sitting on the ground watching it burn.

Some Flying Corps fellows were ahead of me and took him prisoner. As he got to his feet he remarked in perfect English: "I had a presentiment that I wouldn't get back this morning. O well, do with me what you will."

However, he was a German. A great many of our enemy could speak the King's language.

We knew that sooner or later these aeroplanes were going to take a good stiff crack at us. The first air raid they pulled off on Poperinghe came about a month after we had taken the town over.

I had a new car and ran into the Grand Palace and stopped right in front of the general billet where the corps and guards were living. I had the engine still running and was sitting in the driving seat listening to it.

Bombarded From the Sky.

Suddenly a Taube shot down through the clouds and a second or so later there was a deafening explosion, followed by two others in quick succession. The first bomb landed about 30 yards from me and the pieces of it flew all around me.

An old man standing right by my car had almost his whole face swept right off by a piece of the bomb. I can never forget my horror at the pitiful noise which came from this shapeless, bloody mass which had but a

moment before been a human face.

A woman with two children had just passed and the woman was blown right through a window of a hotel and all that was left of the kiddies was two little bundles of bloody clothes and a little pair of shoes projecting from each.

A man passing on a bicycle had his side torn away and he lay in the gutter gasping, with his life blood just pouring from him. His bicycle was all twisted and bent and was hung over a lamp-post about 50 yards away.

First of Many Raids.

Altogether there were 46 casualties from that raid; 11 were killed. There was only one British soldier and one French gendarme killed among the military. The remainder were all civilians.

Military funerals were given them all, and during the services in the church and in fact until the whole funeral was over three aeroplanes, one Belgian, one French and one English, circled back and forth over the city.

This was only the first of many air raids on this town, and many a poor civilian who had harmed no one met his death in this way.

Blown Off the Table.

If it is still standing, there is very near the front a chateau at Vlamerlinghe, not far from Poperinghe, where one of our divisions had their headquarters. It is a beautiful place, built in old style, with enormous grounds and a moat all around it.

It was while sitting on a table in a room in this chateau that I first heard one of our really big guns fired. I knew that these guns were placed in the grounds of the chateau somewhere but never thought what was likely to happen when they went into action.

As I said I was sitting on a table talking to one of the fellows about an air raid that we had just pulled off. Suddenly and without the slightest warning came this terrific explosion which lifted me off the table and dumped me halfway across the room. The whole place rocked and every window in the house was broken.

We rushed out to see what had happened and found that it was one of these guns that had just been fired. I mention this merely to show what damage the concussion alone will do.

During the time the divisional headquarters were in this chateau the strictest rules were enforced regarding keeping pander cover. To look at it from the outside one would never dream that on the inside several Generals and their staffs were working a tremendous fighting machine.

I guess it was about the most quietly conducted headquarters on the whole front.

Church First to Go.

After those big guns of ours went into action it was only a matter of a few days before shells began to drop in on the place. I happened to be on the other side of the village when the bombardment commenced, and I had to run through it on my way back.

As usual, one of the first places to fall was the church, and as I passed by I caught a glimpse of the church burning and priests working feverishly to save some of the contents.

The people, as usual, were in a panic, and the road was crowded with them. One can't help feeling terribly sorry for them, for they are leaving all they have in the world and they know that the chances are they will find only heaps of brick to mark their homes when they return.

Strangest of All Missions.

One night I was called and warned of special duty next day. I hadn't the slightest idea in the world what it would be, but I'll confess that I was surprised when I found I was wanted by a Colonel who had been sent out from England to find the grave of Prince Maurice of Battenberg.

The grave was thought to be in the Menin churchyard, and I was to guide this Colonel up there and was placed at his disposal until the grave was found.

Now the Menin churchyard is not a

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pleasing proposition at best of times, and from what I could see it was going to be far from pleasant this time. "Hell-fire Corner" is just opposite the church.

Prince Maurice, fighting for the English, had been killed at Ypres and hurriedly buried in the churchyard, which had been so constantly shelled that it was feared his body had been entirely obliterated. English royalty was anxious to know if his remains were still marked.

As we went up the road in my car, I warned the officer to be careful for there were plenty of snipers about. I did this hoping to make him be careful. He was such an old man he had not been out to the front in this war, but from the colors he was wearing on his breast I would be willing to wager that this is the first one he hasn't been in for a good many years.

Searching for a Grave.

We got to the churchyard without anything exciting happening, but I was not at all fussy about poking around among those graves. The place had been shelled to pieces and bodies blown out of the graves. The smell was fearful.

After about fifteen minutes' search we found the grave we were looking for by the inscription at the base of a crude monument, and marked it so we would be sure to find it again. The body of the Prince will probably be buried elsewhere in more peaceful times.

When we left the graveyard he asked how far it was to our trenches. I told him it was less than a mile, but that it was a mighty risky business to go up in the day time.

When the old Colonel found it was such a short distance, he wanted to go up and see what it was like. I was under his orders, so there was nothing for me to do but take him. I told him of the snipers again, but he didn't seem to care for all the snipers in the German army, and we started.

Escorting the Deaf Colonel.

We hadn't gone 200 yards before a bullet pinged by close enough to give a wooden man heart failure. Of course I ducked, and the old man noticed it and said: "If you hear any snipers you might let me know. I'm getting rather deaf lately."

Well, I admit I swore.

At last we came to where the communication trench begins, and I told him about it. It was about 100 yards off the road and parallel to it. It is awfully muddy and one of the dirtiest holes to get to that I ever saw. He saw this and wanted to stick to the road, so I said no more for a few minutes.

Pretty soon a few shells began to come over and I could see them bursting further up the road. So I spoke again and pointed out the danger we were running into. He had to consent then, so we slipped through the mud and finally got into the trench. It was very easy after that and we got up to the trenches just in time for lunch.

In the afternoon he was shown all through the trenches there, and asked to see some bombs thrown.

Everything was lovely until about 4 o'clock. Suddenly something whizzed over and landed in the trench not a dozen feet from where we were standing.

I didn't wait to see what it was. I didn't even hesitate. My feet just acted automatically, and I think I broke the world's record for the standing broad jump.

As it happened the thing didn't explode, and it's a good thing it didn't for the old Colonel just stood and watched it.

On our way back he had me picking up shell noses and pieces of shell until the car resembled a junk wagon.

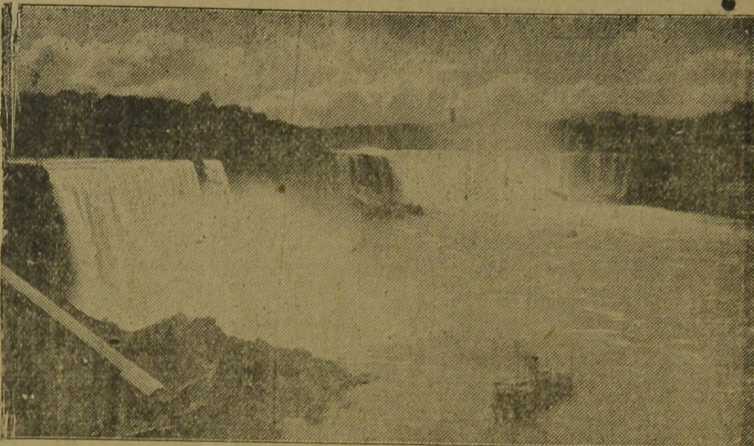
GERMAN SCIENTISTS ACTED AS SPIES

(Canadian Press.)

New York, Feb. 1.—A special to The Herald from Melbourne says:

That four German savants who attended the congress of the British association for the advancement of science held in Australia in August and September 1914, mocked the hospitality lavished upon them as upon other guests of the association by Australian—in plain words, turned themselves into spies—has just been revealed by the age of this city. These German professors were Drs. Albert Penck, Eugene Goldstein, Graolsner and Fringsheim. The Age says:

"These learned gentlemen still lingered in the commonwealth when war was declared. They immediately approached the federal government for permission to return to Germany, representing that they were international scientists and therefore neutrals and that although by accident of birth German citizens, they belonged to the whole world and ought not to be detained. The commonwealth government assented to this proposition and merely required them to take the oath of neutrality. Drs. Goldstein and Penck promptly took the oath, the former went to Java and the latter took ship to England. Drs. Graebner and Fringsheim were more dilatory than their confreres and they raised certain objections. At length, however, they took the oath but suspicion fell on them and



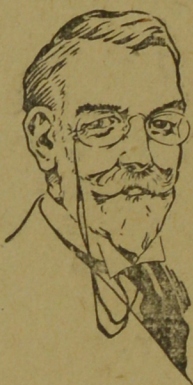
NIAGARA FALLS, SHOWING GOAT ISLAND IN THE CENTRE.

FELL TO HIS DEATH AT NIAGARA FALLS.

(Canadian Press.)

Niagara Falls, Feb. 2.—A man about 50 years of age, believed to be David Clarkson, an actor of McKeesport, Pa., slid over the back of Goat Island near the approach to the Luna Island bridge yesterday, to the rocks 180 feet below, meeting instant death. Almost every bone in his body was broken. The only eye witness was a young man from Meadville, whose name is withheld by the authorities of the state reservation. The man was first noticed by the young Canadian in a crouching position on the very edge of the river bank, and when he was spoken to the man believed to be Clarkson started to rise, gave himself a shove with his hands and disappeared over the cliff.

THE VICTROLA AND THE COMMUNITY—NO. 4



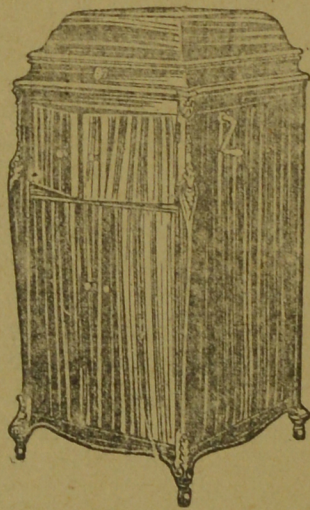
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their correspondence was intercepted and examined before they sailed. This correspondence proved that they were spies and they were immediately arrested and interned. Dr. Goldstein got away but not so Dr. Penck. The last named professor's baggage was overhauled during his journey to Europe under cabled instructions from the war authorities. It contained even more complete information concerning Australia's military preparations and intentions than the correspondence of Graebner and Fringsheim and it contained in addition, the most excellent contour map of the country surrounding some of our largest capital cities—maps that could have no vestige of use than to serve the ends of the German army of invasion.