

William J. Robinson Tells Of Bombardment of Ypres

Shells Dropped on Doomed City at the Rate of Forty-One a Minute---Dant's Inferno Was Outdone---A Wild Drive Through the City in a Motor Car During Bombardment---A Graphic Description of the Scene of Carnage.

(William J. Robinson, in Boston Sunday Globe.)

The Germans made no secret of the fact that they were going to have another big try for the coast through us. For weeks before the attack came off our airmen were bringing in reports that the Germans were massing heavy bodies of fresh troops just in front of our position.

The Kaiser was reported to have made the threat that if he failed to break us this time he would lay the city of Ypres to the ground, street by street. If he really did make this threat, which I consider quite possible, he certainly kept his word to the last letter.

It had been so quiet around Ypres all last winter that we had almost forgotten what had happened there the previous fall. 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 divisional headquarters with a staff officer on the afternoon the bombardment started. We 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 the buildings. The first inkling I got of anything unpleasant happening was when I heard the scream of several shells coming through the air at once.

Shells 41 to the Minute.

Right then I acted on the impulse that seizes everyone at such a time, and I went right 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. They had been bombarding us about a half hour then and there was no sign of letting up. The orderly told me the shells were dropping at the rate of 41 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 and go and find a car of some kind. I knew things were mighty serious when he would abandon the horses, and I started out wondering where I would find a car in that inferno.

As a matter of fact I did find what had been a car at some time or other. It was an ambulance which had had the body blown off, and someone had built a couple of little bucket seats out of empty bacon boxes.

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

The engine was all right and I decided to take a chance on the rest of it holding together until I got my officer through the city, anyway. I pulled around in front of the headquarters and the officer jumped in.

Pure Madness.

It seemed as though the whole city was being torn from its very foundations, so terrible was the din. The houses were going down in every quarter, and on the face of it it looked like pure madness to try to go through at all.



Wagons, horses, autos, bicycles, men and women and children, soldiers and civilians, were lying dead and dying in every street. I should say about 50 per cent. of the shells were landing in the Grand Place, and the buildings were falling around and practically covering up the road.

We had a straight run of about 200 yards before we got to the worst part of it, and I certainly saw to it that the old bus made the most of what she had.

We were going at a pretty good pace, but it seemed to me that we were just crawling.

There was a sharp corner as one turns out of the main square and I knew it would be impossible to twist her around it at the pace we were going, so I tried a stunt I had read about racing drivers doing on the hair-pin curves. I gave her more power, jammed on the brake and we skidded around on two wheels. We were between the devil and the deep sea, and I felt that no chances we could take were too long, considering the fix we were in. The bacon boxes held together all right, and we got out of it without being touched, but I am ready to admit it was more pure luck than anything else.

What got my goat was that during the whole thing the officer sat there with a cigar in his mouth and a monocle in his eye, and didn't even look nervous.

Heroic Ambulance Drivers.

When we got back to our own headquarters he said "thank you" and dismissed me, and remarked to another that "one damned fool had escaped wearing a wooden uniform that day by the breadth of a gnat's eyelash."

If he was referring to me I agree with him most heartily, for believe me that ride did me out of a year's growth.

I certainly pitied our transport men during this time as I never pitied them before. They could not help being nervous while waiting to go through the city, which they had to do, as there was absolutely no other way for them to go.

The ambulances, too, suffered heavily. Think of how the poor wounded fellows inside must have felt, suffering untold agonies, yet obliged to ride through that inferno of shells and falling houses. It is a wonder that any of them lived through it.

Trip after trip they would make through the "death trap" expecting each one would be their last, and of course many of them realized their expectations.

Into the Jaws of Hell.

All night the bombardment continued with unabated fury, yet our supplies went through the city to the men just the same.

Next morning I was ordered to report in my car to a young officer of the Intelligence Department. The officer told me that he had orders to go through Ypres to a little place called Potijze to report to the divisional commander there. We had to go slowly, even at the start, as the road was filled with all kinds of transport. After we got through the village of Vlamerdinghe we found the road almost perfectly straight and we could see right into the city of Ypres before one comes within two kilometres of it.

As we swung into this straight road I noticed several German aeroplanes over the city and it was plain to be seen that they were dropping petrol bombs, and the instant they exploded they would spray petrol all over the place and flames would shoot up in the air. In this way they were setting fire to the city.

It was a terrible sight, what with the ground fairly trembling from the terrific explosions, smoke from burning houses, crash of falling buildings---It made a scene that would need a Dante to describe it.

White Clear Through.

The thought that we were to attempt the passage through all this was terrifying to me. An awful fear, almost a panic, seemed to grip me, and I longed to hide my face from that flaming hell which seemed to be stretching out its tentacles of fire to draw us into its gaping maw.

I looked at the officer, almost praying that he would give the order to

stop, but even as I looked I knew there was no chance of that.

He was as white as death, but there was a look of determination on his face and there was no promise of his backing down.

I think his bulldog grit helped me, for I resolved that I would stick by him as long as I could hold out. And he certainly showed that he was "white" clear through, for he told me to stop a moment. I did, and he got out of the car.

"Robinson," he said, "I've just been thinking that there won't be any need for you to come any farther. It is a rotten business and as there are ambulances going up all the time I can get a lift up on one. I don't believe in taking unnecessary risks and in this case it would be risking an extra man and a car too, and I don't mind going on an ambulance the least bit."

I thought it was just about one of the finest things I had ever heard of a man doing, and I want to say right here that such things as this are typical of the true British officer.

There are men holding commissions who couldn't do such a thing to save their necks, but they are the pikers found in every country---"temporary gentlemen" they are called by the real men obliged to associate with them.

When a 15-inch Shell Burst.

My officer's generosity did not help me in one way, though I appreciated it more than I can tell. I had orders to take him to Potijze and to bring him back, and if I stayed behind and anything happened to him I would be worse off than though I were lying beneath the ruins of Ypres.

I explained this to him and said I would rather take him. God knows whether it was true or not, but I said it anyway. While we were talking another car passed up and as my officer got in I resolved to follow the man ahead.

It contained a major and a colonel besides the driver and it kept about 200 yards ahead of us up to the outskirts of the city.

Before one enters the city proper one must cross a double line of rail-

road tracks. The machine ahead had just crossed these when a big 15-inch shell burst beside it. From where we were it looked as if the car and its occupants must have been wiped off the face of the earth.

I stopped to wait until the smoke cleared away before going on. It seemed like hours before we saw the spot again, and you can imagine our surprise at seeing the car turned completely around and coming towards us.

The chauffeur was gathering speed and passed us at a fairly good pace. We had time enough though to see one of the most terrible sights that I saw during the whole time I was at the front.

Dead Men as Passengers.

The car itself was in an awful condition. The major who was sitting with the driver had his head and the whole side of his body torn away and the rest of him was leaning on the driver, who was being covered with the blood from the awful thing beside him.

The colonel, who had been sitting in the back car, was curled over on the seat and his head and part of his shoulder were lying in a pool of blood in the bottom of the car. To me the most terrible part of it was the driver. He was white as a ghost and his eyes seemed to be sticking an inch out of their sockets. His teeth were bared and his whole face was twisted into the most hellish expression one could imagine. The knuckles of his hands stood out white, so hard was he gripping the steering wheel.

"Good God, he's gone mad!" cried my officer, and I was sure of it. The officer ordered me to turn around and catch him if possible. I set out for all I was worth, and as I went through Vlamerdinghe he was just stopping in front of the field dressing station. The orderly rushed out when he heard the car, and I heard that driver say, "For God's sake take this thing away from me!"

I saw that poor fellow a couple of weeks later. He was walking around alone all right except that his face was continually twitching horribly. His nerve was completely gone and he was discharged at once.

Trying to Go Around.

When he saw that the driver was being taken care of we started back to make our attempt to pass through the burning city. This time I seemed to have lost all feeling of fear---in fact I didn't have any feeling at all.

Before we came to the railway tracks before referred to there is a road that leads to the village of Elverdinghe. Before we came to this road the officer spoke:

"I think it would be worth while trying to get to the canal bank through Elverdinghe, and from there we could perhaps be able to get through to Potijze on foot. Let us try that way, anyway."

I was willing to try anything, and so we headed for Elverdinghe; but when we arrived we found we had but jumped from the frying pan into the fire, for Elverdinghe was getting it hot and heavy from the German field batteries.

We got out of Elverdinghe as quickly as we could. We hadn't been going 10 minutes before a sentry stopped us and informed us that the road was closed and we would have to go back.

The sentry said he had strict orders from the provost marshal and he dared not let us pass. There was nothing left for us to do but turn back. We went straight back to headquarters and explained and the officer ordered me to report next morning and we would try again.

In a Dugout at Potijze.

The next day I reported and we decided to try again. As we got near Ypres the fire seemed to slacken, and we got through without mishap.

If Ypres had been in bad condition before this I don't know how it could be described now. In the centre of the town there was scarcely a building left standing. The streets were littered with bodies of every description and broken wagons, ambulances, water carts, etc., lay everywhere. The streets were almost obliterated and we were riding over broken bricks and mortar. We found the road the other side of Ypres about as usual, so we got to Potijze without more excitement.

Potijze is a very tiny place, but it has seen some hard fighting. Our trenches run just outside the village, and we have dugouts all around there.

On our arrival my officer told me to turn the car and get into one of the dugouts and wait. I found a dugout about 20 yards away and went in. There were two officers there and they told me to sit down and went on with their work.

Only Taste of Poison Gas.

I got some paper and a pencil and started to write a letter. About ten minutes later I heard a lot of running

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around and shouting over our heads. Then I noticed that my throat and nose seemed to be burning and my eyes commenced to water. It struck me suddenly what it was. It was the gas. An officer poked his head down and shouted, "Run like hell, it's the gas!"

By this time I could hardly see and I was doing some tall old scrambling to get out of that place. When I got outside I found that everything was covered with a greenish yellow haze, and I couldn't see three feet in front of me.

I ran in the direction of the place I had left my car, and struck it the first shot. Perhaps I wasn't thankful I had left the engine running! I started down the road for all I was worth, but before I had gone 100 yards I got off the road and stuck in a ploughed field. But I was clear of the gas.

My officer showed up safe and sound

(Continued on page three.)

A Genuine Rupture Cure Sent on Trial to Prove It Don't Wear a Truss Any Longer

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April 15th, 1915.
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Dear Sir:
I received your letter by first post this morning. I beg to thank you for your Appliance which was instrumental in the way it cured me of my rupture. I have now been in Kitchener's army seven months, and I have never felt anything a day. I do not have the slightest trouble. I remember when I passed the doctor he remarked "There is nothing wrong with you, young man, you are in the best condition," and he sounded me all over, and I again thank you for the same, and I give my consent to use my letter as a testimonial to anyone, as I have been cured. Hoping you and your firm much success.

Yours truly,
John Carter

Wouldn't Take \$100 for Appliance
Cranworth, Ont.
Dear Mr. Brooks---I am pleased to write you and let you know what your Appliance has done for me. I think I am all right now, as I have not seen the first sign of it since last fall. I can now run, jump and lift all I like and I would not take \$100 for it if I could not get another. I do not wear it except when at hard work. Your appliance is just as good as ever. You can use this letter as you like for the benefit of others.

Yours sincerely,
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If you have tried most everything else, come to me. Where others fail is where I have my greatest success. Send attached coupon today and I will send you free my illustrated book on Rupture and its cure, showing my Appliance and giving you prices and names of many people who have tried it and were cured. It is instant relief when all others fail. Remember, I use no knives, no harness, no lies.

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Make up your mind right now that you will never pay out another dollar for trusses. They are expensive, uncomfortable and actually harmful. And when you once try a Brooks Appliance you could never be persuaded to ever again wear a truss.

The above is C. E. Brooks, inventor of the Appliance, who cured himself and who is now giving others the benefit of his experience. If ruptured, write him today, at Marshall, Michigan.

Rupture Thoroughly Healed
Ingersoll, Ont., Feb. 6, 1914.
Mr. C. E. Brooks:
Perhaps you will be interested in hearing what your Appliance has done for me. I know without doubt that my rupture has been thoroughly healed after a term of sixteen years' suffering, and I attribute my restored and healed condition to the wearing of your Appliance, which held the bowel firmly and painlessly during the healing process. I have not worn it for months---neither do I feel in need of it.

Yours truly,
F. C. NOXON.

Ruptured 22 Years; Now Cured
East Sherbrooke, Que., Jan. 27, 1914.
Mr. C. E. Brooks:
Dear Sir---I am very glad to hear from you, and happy to be able to tell you that my rupture was cured some time ago by your Appliance. I now need no truss after twenty-two years of torture.

Yours truly,
G. R. LEMAY.

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Make up your mind right now that you will never pay out another dollar for trusses. They are expensive, uncomfortable and actually harmful. And when you once try a Brooks Appliance you could never be persuaded to ever again wear a truss.

Very truly yours,
REV. H. A. SISSON.

Cured Me Completely
Perth Centre, N. B., April 26, 1914.
Mr. C. E. Brooks:
Dear Sir---I received your letter regarding the Appliance you sent me. It was a complete success and now I don't know that I ever had a rupture. It has cured me completely and I thank you very much for it.

Yours truly,
REV. H. A. SISSON.

Child Cured in 3 Months
Brantford, Ont., Feb. 19, 1914.
11 Richardson St.
Mr. C. E. Brooks, Marshall, Mich.
Dear Mr. Brooks---Just a line to let you know your Appliance has completely cured our little boy and we are very well pleased with it. We had it on him for about three months, and since he has had it off the rupture has not showed at all.

Yours truly,
MRS. G. SUDDABY.

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