

# Stewart Lyon Describes Conditions at the Front

**Manitoba Engineer Escaped Death by a Tenth Part of a Second ---Thousands of Men Who are Doing Their Bit Never Had a Weapon in Their Hands---Few Men Have Hand to Hand Encounters With the Enemy.**

(Canadian Press Mail Correspondence)  
(by Stewart Lyon.)

CANADIAN FIELD HEADQUARTERS, March 19.—"The closest call I've ever had," said the young Manitoban engineer who does his part to win the war by operating a motor car, "was up in 'The Salient.' One day near Ypres I was driving a General to the front when a 5.9 shell passed through the car from one side to the other between the front and rear seats. It landed in the road after smashing one of the car doors, and the explosion that followed blew the front off the car and destroyed one of the wheels, but hurt nobody. When the shell passed through the car we were going fast, and I reckon that either the General or I escaped death by less than the tenth part of a second."

Dramatic stories such as that of the young motorist, are heard at many a mess at the front, where men face death daily in manifold forms. They

## HAD BOILS

For Six Months.

**B. B. B. DROVS THEM AWAY**

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are a feature also of many of the letters sent from this side and the more dramatic they are the more readily do they find their way into print. The inevitable result has been the creation in the public mind of the idea that the war consists chiefly of similar incidents in which men risk their lives in spectacular fashion while "all the world wonders."

### Never See the Enemy.

The truth is so far removed from this conception that it is well it should be impressed on people at home. There are tens of thousands of men at the front doing their daily work within range of the enemy's artillery and contributing in an important way to the winning of the war who have never had a weapon in their hands and have never seen a German other than the prisoners passing through to the rear.

Even the artillery men who handle the bigger guns and to whom a swift and terrible death may come at any moment, from some point miles away over a ridge on the sky-line, seldom see the enemy.

The infantry who hold the trenches, who "go over" when a raid is to be made, and who follow up the artillery preparation when new ground is to be occupied, do come into actual physical contact with the enemy like the soldiers of former wars, and know the foe as individuals. Yet even among the infantry the number of men who have had hand-to-hand encounters with their foes is relatively small.

### Artillery the Main Thing.

Instead of being a place for the display of personal strength and courage, the modern battlefield tends to become more and more an area where, in certain highly complicated engineering, industrial and transportation operations are carried on under abnormal conditions. Given fighting men who are well matched as those of the Allies and Germany are on the Western front, the victory must go to the combatant with the greater material resources—guns, shells, lorries, available railways, horses, food for man and beast—and the engineering and administrative skill to make full use of them.

We could not win the war without the fine type of fighting men in the

trenches. To them all honor is due. They pay most of the price of victory. But we could not win the war with them alone. Behind them there must be created and maintained a great business organization far more numerous in personnel than the fighting units.

Some one has said that the Lab r expended by the Canadians alone in France and Belgium, would have built a railway as great as the Canadian Pacific. The statement is impossible of verification, but it may well be true. The work done has been of such a temporary nature and so much of it has been destructive that it is only by seeing it in progress from day to day any one can estimate its volume.

### An Immense Task.

Without poking into statistics, which are regarded by all good censors with marked aversion, I am reasonably certain that on a relatively narrow front here there are as many men and vehicles engaged in carrying ammunition, and food to the front from railhead as would do the motor bus and taxi work of any city in the Empire, save London. There are guns used by all the belligerents on this front so large that the shells for them weigh over a ton each. Three or at most four such shells are a load for the bigger motor transport wagons. Feeding a few such guns involves a smuch haulage as the feeding of thousands of men.

In a former letter on the business side of war I tried to show some of the effects of hauling heavy guns and vast quantities of stores over roads never intended for such traffic. Roads have simply to be recreated every few months. Near us is an old Roman road that despite its admirable foundation has sunk out of sight. Since the spring break up, the care bestowed on systems of communication in northern France has been great and incessant. Modern mobile artillery has enormously complicated the problems of offensive warfare.

### Big Civilian Population.

A complication that adds to transport difficulties is the presence in some places of an abnormally large civilian population. Within the area

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## CASUALTIES AMONG CANADIAN OFFICERS

Ottawa, April 17.—Today's casualty list claims the names of twenty officers killed and eleven wounded, but out of a total of 117 of all ranks, it is stated officially at militia headquarters that no information is available there as the total casualties to date, and all figures so far published are unauthorized estimates. The only statement headquarters will make is that their information is to the effect that while heavy, the losses are lighter than might be expected under the circumstances.

## GREAT BATTLE ON THE RIVER AISNE

Berlin, via London, April 17.—One of the greatest battles of the mighty war and therefore also in world's history, says the official statement issued today by the German army headquarters staff "is in progress on the river Aisne."

### O'DOWD WON DECISION.

Boston, April 18.—Mike O'Dowd, of St. Paul, won a referee's decision over Frank Carbon, of New York, in a 12-round bout here last night. O'Dowd had an advantage in nearly every round, hitting freely with both hands.

### ALL MOONSHINE.

"Who was it said, 'Hitch your wagon to a star'?"  
"Oh, some motorist who didn't want to lend another a little gasoline, perhaps."

### DODGING HIGH COST.

"How much was those collars?"  
"Two for a quarter."  
"How much for fun?"  
"Fifteen cents."  
"Giff me der odder vun."

occupied by the British army thousands of refugees have crowded, and in some cases the congestion is serious. In one town, the normal population has been increased to over double. A large proportion of the refugees brought their draught animals with them, and go out from the towns and villages daily to work the land, almost right up to the fighting front.

It is somewhat startling to see a farmer plowing all around an ammunition dump, while above quite unheeded shrapnel is bursting over a German aeroplane which has come across the lines to spy out the land. The people are well aware that there is danger of serious injury or even of death from splinters of the shell casing or from the bullets which fall from a height of ten thousand feet with terrific force.

Even more illustrative of the matter-of-fact attitude of the people in the face of the strange conditions under which they live is the sight of little children playing the French equivalent of "ring around a Rosie" or marbles within sound of the guns that now and again drop shells into their homes. We have been accustomed to think of the French people as easily excited. It is doubtful if in either Great Britain or Canada the people would face ever present peril, and go about their work and play with the stoicism shown by these French peasants.

There presence makes the war seem almost a family affair in which everybody has a part.

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