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forests many miles behind the line. "You having the good time up here?" I remarked to one sturdy warrior with the name P. B. Te Pohatu printed with an indelible pencil on his gas respirator. "No fear," he replied, and when I asked him the reason he did not mince his words. "Too much plummy Boche shell," he said, with a grin that revealed a set of teeth which would make light work of breaking up even an army biscuit.

"Along the line of route, men from the Signal Company were still looking to the communications. In a battle, when things go wrong, signallers particularly are cursed. And in a battle things generally do go wrong with signals, so that at times human flesh and blood have to do the work of the wires. That is often the case in the forward positions. The running of lines from cable head to Brigade forward stations is no sinecure, and the maintaining of lines, once they have been laid, is not easy when a fierce battle is raging. In one section in this battle three hundred yards of line was broken in thirty places, and men worked sixteen hours out of twenty-four endeavouring to maintain the connection. One lance-corporal was, in this battle, blown up by shell fire for the fourth time. On the first occasion he escaped with the loss of his shirt; the second time he was blown out of a trench and suffered slightly from shock; while his third experience left him with some slight wounds."

Pushing mule tracks under shell fire was an enlivening occupation. Reconnoissances had to be made for the forward mule and infantry tracks across the wilderness of the shell-holes, and material was carried up under the enemy barrages.

Along these roads and tracks the D.A.C. did splendid work. One watches them admiringly in daylight and darkness splashing along. Sometimes exploding shells would blow men and mules off the tracks altogether. Pathetic little groups lay huddled in strange shapes—men and animals that had died in the strenuous work of feeding the guns and the troops. There was not time as yet to trouble about burying them—the living and not the dead were the chief concern.

Captain Ross tells of the fine action of a transport corporal who stopped a team which had bolted along a road full of transport and troops. Returning, he soon had the team clear, although one horse had been killed and the driver wounded. Wounded himself at this stage, he carried on, attending first to the driver and then continuing his work with the column.

### THE TERRIBLE CONDITIONS IN THE LAST BATTLE.

The capture of the ridges beyond the Ypres salient was the natural corollary to the taking of the Messines Ridge. After a considerable advance had been made in the battle of the Ridges by troops from the Motherland, the New Zealanders on October 4th entered the fight, with troops from the Old Country on their left, and Australian troops on their right. The New Zealanders were successful in capturing the Gravenstafel Ridge, Abraham Heights, and positions immediately beyond. The "pill-box" problem had been grappled with, and found not to be insoluble. The dead that lay just behind our front showed how hard the fighting had been in the storming of these strong points. But stormed they were.

The weather had been going from bad to worse, and frequently the whole battlefield was shrouded in mist and rain. Bringing up ammunition and the working of the guns became more and more difficult. Vast quantities of material were being gathered at railheads and dumps, and feverish activity reigned everywhere. In clear glimpses between rain-storms and fogs, the enemy shelled and bombed from aeroplanes. Sometimes he got his target, but failed to hinder the great war machine. The artillery struggled forward with their pieces, overcoming almost superhuman difficulties. Storms of gunfire swept the German positions, ploughed the lands and roads, and interfered with their communications.

On the night of the 11th of October the New Zealanders were ready once more at their starting place, Australians again on their right, British, as before, on their left. During the night a cold rain fell, and dawn came through mist and drizzle. The divisions previously holding this ground had made little headway, for rain and mud were heavy odds against them. Our jumping-off place was consequently only a short distance beyond our former outposts. It ran from a point near Adler House, past Peter Pan, and on through Marsh Bottom to the Ravebeek—a front of about 1,600 yards. Away on the right, on the crest of the ridge a little less than 2000

yards off, loomed the ruined buildings of Passchendaele.

First to be attacked, with nest of pill-boxes and machine-guns, were the Cemetery, Wolf Farm, Wolf Copse, and Bellevue. Thick across the whole of Bellevue Spur was uncut wire of the low picket pattern, 2 feet 6 inches high, and varying from 20 to 40 yards in depth. It had been part of the damaged wire in the Staden-Zonnebeke defences, but, having been repaired, it was again formidable. The ground between Wolf Farm and Wolf Copse and about Marsh Bottom, farther on the right, was very marshy.

Before our men lay the most adverse conditions for an attack—greasy mud, waterlogged shell-holes, concrete redoubts fronted with wire and crammed full with machine-guns. The greatest impediment to success was the inefficiency of the artillery. It had been impossible to bring many guns up, and accurate shooting was considerably hindered by the constant slipping of the gun trails. The sum total of this was that the infantry had not the splendid barrage essential for the thorough cutting of the wire and the shocking of the pill-boxes.

Following the thin barrage, the advancing waves of infantry found themselves raked with machine-gun fire, sniped with rifles, and even shot at by machine-guns perched on little platforms in the almost branchless trees.

In the early morning, when I viewed the attack from Hill 37, there was not the usual intensity of fire, and progress was clearly slow. Later in the morning, the mists lifting, the Passchendaele Ridge revealed itself above the shell and bullet-swept slope. In one hollow away on the left there was an inferno of shell-fire, and the black smoke of the German crumps rose at intervals along the line and farther back.

The whole line was being held up by masses of barbed wire and with a withering machine-gun fire, against which further advance, without increased artillery preparation, was impossible. In spite of this, wave after wave went forward. Numbers were shot down, but still they persevered. Of individual heroism there were many examples, but dozens and scores of brave deeds must pass unrecorded.

In the afternoon the attack was broken off.

The walking wounded were struggling back. Mud-stained and blood-stained, some smiling and cheerful, others thoughtful and with wan faces, often leaning on a comrade's shoulder or arm, the little stream came trickling down. Hot food and drink bucked them up wonderfully.

The Medical Corps and a host of stretcher-bearers toiled all day and night.

The infantry fought till they were exhausted, and the stretcher-bearers toiled until they were in the last stages of fatigue. For two days and two nights, under fire, through sodden, shell-torn ground and vicious weather, they carried the wounded. There was mud on the battlefield often four feet deep. The weariness of the work was beyond description. The ground was almost impassable. By day they were under observation of the enemy; by night they trusted to their luck in the darkness. Infantry, Artillerymen and Army Service Corps men assisted in this work, and by 10.30 a.m. on the 14th the whole of the New Zealand sector was clear of wounded.

Captain Ross describes the splendid work of a signalling sergeant who, when the colonel of a Canterbury Battalion was killed, had a long and arduous time finding the next senior officer to command. One after another he found them casualties, but eventually found the Lieutenant whom the succession of casualties had made O.C. In doing so he passed over considerable distances of the fire-swept desolation, and went to headquarters twice before he finally ran his man to earth.

There were two nasty "pill-boxes" close to the little Ravebeek stream, and an Ottago platoon, swinging round to fill a gap, found itself under their fire. It also suffered from rifle fire which came from a trench near the "pill-boxes." The officer in charge immediately led his men forward and captured it. The "pill-boxes," however, continued to hold out, for the Germans were now fighting well. Holding the garrison with a frontal attack by a Lewis gun and working round the flanks, some of them eventually succeeded in capturing both "pill-boxes" and about 80 prisoners. By this time the platoon was reduced to two—the officer and his batman. He constituted himself the garrison of the "pill-boxes," and remained in one while his batman was sent to report to battalion headquarters. The batman was killed before he had gone far. Some Australians then appeared on the scene, and the New Zealander took them into the "pill-box." He repeatedly endeavoured to get messages back, and had no fewer than five runners shot in the attempt. He held on till evening, and then in com-

pliance with instructions, rejoined his company, of which he was by this time the commander. He reorganised his men under shell fire, consolidated the position chosen, and established part of a new line.

Captain Ross records many other fine deeds, but, alas, there is not the space in these pages for them. They were mostly performed in splendid attempts to force passages in the uncut wire and reorganising shattered units, and in consolidating some sort of a line. In one dark, wet night the depleted brigades worked strenuously, attempting to form a respectable line in the morass of mud and shell holes.

The following excellent description of the terrible conditions under which our fellows attacked on the 12th are given in the "Bystander" of October 24th:—

"... Such areas as are not actual lagoons are a standing marsh of deep craters, separated only by narrow, shelving banks of mud, and it is across such land that our men went to the attack after days of storm and bitter cold, where heavy rain had added to the floods, and they themselves were soaked and chill and weary."

"They went in the grey of dawn and in the teeth of machine-gun and rifle fire. The men waded ankle-deep and knee-deep, they went up to their waists in shell-holes and struggled through or they sank to their necks and were helped out by comrades. But they kept on unflinchingly, through one great crater after another, and the stretcher-bearers (especially picked out by the German snipers) went forward and back over the battlefield without a thought of their own fatigue."

"As for the wounded, who lay for hours, days, hidden in deep craters, who had to be carried from two to three miles through the morass, and sometimes were so completely embedded in the mud that the bearers had to dig them out (in the case of the seriously wounded a long and delicate operation)." Ah, well! as the eye-witnesses say, perhaps it were better not to paint too plain a picture of the lurid scene of war.

### A WHITE NEW ZEALAND.

#### RETURNED SOLDIERS TO DISCUSS QUESTION.

Questions affecting the influx of Asiatics into New Zealand are to be considered by the Wellington Returned Soldiers' Association shortly. Mr J. McKenzie has given notice to introduce a motion dealing with the invasion of coloured people, alien in race, language, and religion, and one of the propositions to be discussed will be a suggestion that the number of Hindus allowed to remain in New Zealand shall not exceed the number of New Zealanders who settle in India.

Another motion, to be proposed by Mr John I. Fox, is as follows:—"Whilst in thorough agreement with the policy of a 'White New Zealand,' this association is of the strong opinion that in order to maintain such a principle, a vigorous policy of immigration must be prosecuted, and a sound scheme of national defence established on the lines of a citizens' defence force."

### NEW ZEALAND PERMANENT FORCE.

The provisions of the financial instructions and allowance regulations relating to medical attendance and sick leave have been extended to cover the whole of the personnel of the New Zealand Permanent Force, including those temporarily employed. Returned soldiers suffering from a recrudescence of disabilities contracted on active service shall be deemed to be "first class" sick, and reduction to half-pay will be automatically effected. In the cases of temporarily employed personnel placed on sick leave on account of disabilities caused by wounds or sickness contracted in the late war, normal sick leave should not usually exceed one month, the soldier being discharged at the end of that period, and his case thus brought into its proper status under the Commissioner of Pensions. If, however, recovery is likely within a short period a recommendation should be made to the general officer commanding for continuance of full pay.

When a Japanese girl is born, a pair of dolls are presented to her, and she plays with them until she is quite grown up. Then, if she marries, she takes care that the dolls are eventually given to her daughters (if any), and she adds to the number of dolls in accordance with the numbers of her daughters! Consequently, in some cases, a large number of dolls are collected.

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