

known cavalry call of 'Boot and Saddle' is really a corruption of the old French signal, 'Boute-selle,' or 'Put on your saddles.' 'Admiral' comes from the Arabic 'Emir of bagh,' meaning 'Lord of the sea'; 'commodore' comes from the Italian 'comandatore'; exploit, the matter of fact narrative of which equals, the term 'giving quarter' is believed to have originated in the agreement which existed in the old fighting days, account of his gallant action as it appeared in the *London Gazette*:—

## BRAVE IRISH SOLDIERS

### O'LEARY'S BRILLIANT EXPLOIT.

The award of the Victoria Cross to Michael O'Leary, of the Irish Guards, has set everybody talking of his exploits, the matter of fact narrative of which equals, if it does not surpass, the best things related of the warrior heroes in song and story. The following is the account of his gallant action as it appeared in the *London Gazette*:—



SERGEANT O'LEARY, V.C.

'No. 3556. Lance Corporal Michael O'Leary, 1st Battalion Irish Guards.—For conspicuous bravery at Cuinchy on 1st February, 1915, when forming one of a storming party which advanced against the enemy's barricades. He rushed to the front and himself killed five Germans who were holding the first barricade, after which he attacked a second barricade about 60 yards further on, which he captured after killing three of the enemy and making prisoners of two more. Lance Corporal O'Leary thus practically captured the enemy's position by himself, and prevented the rest of the attacking party from being fired upon.'

In addition to receiving the Victoria Cross, this young Irishman of 24 years of age was on the field of his great achievement promoted to the rank of sergeant. The official despatches from the Headquarters Staff make no mention whatever of Sergeant O'Leary's glorious achievement (says the *Freeman's Journal*). 'Eye-Witness' described it in part, but made no reference to the hero of 'the most conspicuous gallantry.' His name was suppressed, his nationality was suppressed, his regiment was suppressed. He was described simply as 'one of our men.'

Sergeant O'Leary's exploit was not the only display of Irish heroism on that day. It will be remembered that the incident occurred at the attack on Cuinchy on the 1st February. This was part of the battle that raged for several days on the Bethune-La Bassée line, of which the desperate struggle for the village of Givenchy, which recalled some of the most heroic episodes of the great Continental wars, was the central feature. In that hotly-contested fight the Irish Guards fought with desperate valor, which the Commander-in-

Chief acknowledged. Cuinchy, where O'Leary won his place in the rank of heroes, is three-quarters of a mile south of Givenchy, at the other side of the canal, and it was there that the Irish Guards stemmed finally the tide of the Germans' desperate attacks in force and compelled the enemy to retire. The work of the Irish Guards at Cuinchy is described in Sir John French's despatch of the 12th of February as 'a fine piece of work,' and he wrote again of their 'indomitable pluck.' The struggle for Cuinchy began at half-past 2 o'clock in the morning and lasted until after midday. The German night attack surprised the Coldstream Guards, who were driven from their trenches. The Irish Guards came to their assistance three-quarters of an hour later, and a desperate attack was made to regain the trenches. The fight was renewed again and again, and it was not until noon that an attack with the bayonet dislodged the enemy. 'All the ground which had been lost was brilliantly retaken. They captured three German trenches, two sets of barricades, and killed or made prisoners many of the enemy.'

Sergeant O'Leary is the son of a small farmer residing at Inchigeela, near Macroom, County Cork. He was born in September, 1890, and is thus little more than 24 years old. Five years ago he enlisted in the Irish Guards, and after serving three years went into the Reserve in June, 1913. After a brief stay at his home in County Cork he started for Canada, where he joined the North-West Mounted Police—the famous force which is accountable for the peace and order of the vast and as yet largely unsettled territory of the north-western portion of the Dominion. O'Leary was serving with this force when war broke out, and being still liable to service as a reservist, he at once returned to London.

#### Press and Other Tributes.

The *Daily News*, in recounting the heroic action, compares O'Leary to Roland, the nephew of Charlemagne, one of the greatest heroes of the Middle Ages.

'Only Homer could do justice to his exploit at Cuinchy,' states the *Globe*. 'It reads more like some tale of Hector or Achilles in the Plains of Troy than the sober record of the twentieth century fighting in Flanders.'

The *Pall Mall Gazette* says: 'The recipients of the Victoria Cross include some who would have gained a place in the *Iliad*—fighters in whom a perfect hurricane of temperament is evoked by a crisis, and whose energy has perhaps a power of magnetising the enemy before it destroys him.' Having described O'Leary's brilliant exploit, the same journal goes on to say: 'When we try to understand achievements of this kind we have to fall back upon the sheer moral supremacy which forgetfulness of self establishes over those confronted by it. And alongside of the explosive and Homeric type of valor we have the more distinctively modern kind which endures the most prolonged nervous strain, and works coolly and efficiently, despite the knowledge that death may come at any moment.'

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, writing of O'Leary in the *Evening News*, pays him the following tribute: 'No writer in fiction would dare to fasten such an achievement to any of his characters; but the Irish have always had the reputation of being wonderful fighters, and Lance-Corporal Michael O'Leary is clearly one of them.'

Mr T. P. O'Connor, M.P., also writing in the *Evening News*, says: 'I am moved to admiration by the splendid courage of so many men and officers of every race. I am particularly proud that one of my own people should have been so foremost in these wonderful and brave achievements. It is only one of the many exploits which reveal the Irish as great fighters, and is a vindication of Mr Redmond and his colleagues in calling upon their people to rally to the great cause of the Allies.'

The Countess of Limerick states in the same paper: 'The Irishman never fails. O'Leary is typical of the Irishman and the Irish Guardsman. His exploit—the finest thing in the whole war—does not surprise me in the least.'