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WHAT THE "BOYS" DID OVER THERE

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Bringing in a "Sniper"

An Incident of the Battle of Kemmell Hill,
Told by Sargeant Jack Winston, 55525
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About two hours before dawn on the morning of Oct 8th, 1915, my company was in a sector of the front line trenches near Kemmel Hill Flanders). My comrades were taking their ease as we had been in comparative quiet for the previous three days. They were variously employed: some writing home, others idly smoking, the signal man lounging in the dugout near his telephone instrument, and sundry others doing their bit toward cleanliness by removing "cooties" from their shirts. Our lieutenant was looking hard across No Man's Land through the trench periscope, and I wondered what was keeping him so long at a spot I thought we all knew by heart. He stood there perfectly immovable for at least fifteen minutes, while several star-shells, fired both from our own lines and the German trenches, flared and died. Finally he turned to me and whispered, "Jack, I do not remember that dead horse out there yesterday. Take a look and tell me if you remember seeing it before." I looked at the spot indicated and sure enough there was a dead horse lying at the side of a shell-hole where I could have sworn there was nothing the day before.

I told the lieutenant I was sure that nothing had been there on the previous day, and waited for further orders. German snipers had annoyed us considerably and as they took great pains in concealing their nests we had little success in stopping them. Several casualties had resulted from their activities. The lieutenant had evidently been thinking, while taking his long observation, for he said almost at once: "I believe that nag is a neat bit of camouflage. One of those Huns is probably hidden in that carcass to get a better shot at us."

He then told me to have the men at the portholes fire at the carcass, at five second intervals, to keep "Fritz," if he was there, under cover - and taking advantage of the dark interval between glare of the star-shells, he slipped "Over the Top," having told me he was going to get that Hun.

Imagine my suspense for the next half hour. I kept looking through the periscope but for fully fifteen minutes I could not find my officer. Finally I spotted him sprawled out, apparently dead, as a star-shell lit up the ground within the range of our periscope. As no shot had been fired, except form our portholes, I knew he was not as dead as he seemed. And sure enough when next I could make him out he was several yards ahead, and to the left, of the spot where I had last seen him. Then I knew what he was after. He was making a detour to approach the carcass from the rear, and as he could only move in the dark intervals between star-shells his progress was, of necessity, slow. At the end of another fifteen minutes I located him in a position, as nearly as I could judge, about ten yards in the rear and just a step to the left of the carcass. I then thought it time for me to take a hand, and give him what help I could.

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Running into the signal man's dugout I told him to call for a barrage, giving the range at, approximately, thirty yards behind the point at which the carcass lay.

I then jumped back to the periscope only to see, by the next flare, that the lieutenant was no longer in sight. Leaving the periscope I selected three men, whom I was sure I could trust, and, by the time I had brought them to the firing step, the barrage from the guns in our rear for which the signal man had telegraphed began to fall.

Quickly explaining to the men what I had in mind, that we were going to help the lieutenant, I was about to give the order to go "Over the Top," when another man, who had overheard, begged me for permission to accompany us, and as I had need for some one to repair the barbed wire, which lieutenant had cut on his way out, I gave him the job together with permission to go with us.

After a few words of instruction to the corporal, who, during my absence, was left in command of our sector, we went silently "Over the Top" at the point where the lieutenant had preceded us.

The barrage had by this time aroused the curiosity of the enemy and they were replying with the brisk shelling of our lines, and the batteries that were laying down the barrage.

We advanced at a walk and were fortunate enough to find the place where our lieutenant had cut his way through our barbed wire. There I left my volunteers with the necessary tools to repair the wire, after we should have passed through it on our return.

It was now beginning to get light enough for us to see several yards in either direction around us, and after moving forward about fifty yards beyond the wire, we ran straight into the lieutenant, who was driving the Hun before him at the muzzle of his automatic.

We wasted no time on the return journey but hustled "Fritz" along at a brisk pace.

Just as we had passed back through the barbed wire, a piece of shrapnel struck my volunteer in the shoulder, and I was forced to stop, and leave a man to complete repairs on the wire, while I helped the wounded man back to the trenches. The remaining men, who had started with me, had remained with the lieutenant and his prisoner, and we found all safe in the trench on our arrival.

My wounded man proved to be not seriously hurt and the man who remained to end the wire also returned unhurt.

When all were safe in the trench, the lieutenant called off the barrage and the enemy in our front was doubtless wondering what it was all about, until the sniper, who, as the lieutenant surmised, was hidden in the camouflaged carcass, returned no more.

the lieutenant had arrived at a point about five paces behind the Hun before the sniper discovered him, and then had him covered with his automatic. Like most of his breed there was a wide "yellow streak" in this baby-killer and he cried "Kamerad" instantly. By the time the lieutenant had secured his prisoner's rifle our barrage was falling and, under its protection, he began his march back with the prisoner, and met us before he had gone twenty-five yards. The rest you know.

The prisoner expected to be killed at once and begged piteously for his life, saying "he had a wife and three children." One of the men replied that if he had his way he would make it a "widow and three orphans."

Needless to say he did not have his way, and for all I know that sniper is still eating three square meals per day in a prison camp.

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