

Letters and Diaries

A Group of Soldiers' Letters

A German cavalry division was pursuing a division of English infantry. The English ranks were suddenly reinforced; they turned and charged the Germans, who fled in disorder.

All the Germans fled—but one. Says an English soldier, Trooper S. Cargill:

When they saw us coming they turned and fled, at least all but one, who came rushing at us with his lance at the charge. I caught hold of his horse, which was half mad with terror, and my chum was going to run the rider through when he noticed the awful glaze in his eyes, and we saw that the poor devil was dead.

That ghastly vision of the mounted corpse can find no place in histories of this war. It has no historical significance even if it did receive a place in the cable dispatches from the front. Only from the lips of soldiers or from their pens when they snatch a few moments from the business of war to write to their people at home come such naïvely graphic accounts of trivial but illuminative incidents.

In many an American family is treasured a packet of yellow papers, on which are written, in ink fast fading away, brief and intimate impressions of the civil war by men who waged it. Every war has thus its unknown, unhonored chroniclers, who send to their little home circles narratives that for startling realism no highly paid special correspondent could surpass.