

V8583W

WITH THE SCOTTISH REGIMENTS AT THE FRONT

By
E. CHARLES VIVIAN

AUTHOR OF "PASSION FRUIT," "DIVIDED WAYS," ETC.

136534
2/9/15

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

MCMXIV

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE GUARDS AND THE GREYS . . .	I

CHAPTER II

THE ROYAL SCOTS	17
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER III

THE ROYAL SCOTS FUSILIERS . . .	36
---------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV

THE KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS .	48
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V

THE BLACK WATCH	73
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI

THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS . . .	93
------------------------------	----

Contents

CHAPTER VII

	PAGE
THE SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS . . .	114

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAMERON HIGHLANDERS . . .	138
-------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX

THE ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGH- LANDERS	157
--	-----

CHAPTER X

THE HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY AND THE CAMERONIANS	169
--	-----

CHAPTER I

THE GUARDS AND THE GREYS

IF one should ask any man, of any regiment of the British Army, what was the quality of the regiment to which he belonged, the answer would be to the effect that his was the best regiment in the service, without any exception. If any other answer should be returned to such a query, it might be assumed that there was something wrong with that particular man ; he ought not to be a soldier, for every soldier worthy of the name firmly believes that his regiment is the best.

The Scottish regiments are not exempt from this belief, and surely, judging by their regimental histories, they have good cause. Certain peculiar honours are theirs,

Scottish Regiments at the Front

too : they form the only kilted force of regular troops in the world, for one thing ; and for another thing the oldest regiment of the British Army is Scottish—for the Royal Scots, with definite history dating back to 1625, lay claim to direct descent from the Scottish archers who were kept for centuries as guards for French kings. Putting legend and tradition aside, it is certain and beyond dispute that John Hepburn led the Royal Scots under Gustavus Adolphus, the great Swedish champion of liberty, as early as 1625 ; and in 1633, with eight years of hard work on Continental battlefields to season their ranks, the Royal Scots were definitely and officially included in the British Army, seeing service under Marlborough at Blenheim, Ramillies, Malplaquet, and Oudenarde. There is a story of Blenheim to the effect that the Commander-in-chief of the French Army, taken prisoner by Marlborough, congratulated

The Guards and the Greys

the latter on having overcome "the best troops in the world." The Duke caustically requested him to "Except those troops by whom you have been conquered." Prominent among these were the Royal Scots.

But, although senior in point of age, the Royal Scots is not "the right of the line" in the British Army. This proud distinction is held by the Royal Horse Artillery, which probably numbers as many Scotsmen in its ranks as men of any other nationality. The Artillery, however, knows no nationalities in its nomenclature. One is first a gunner, and then either English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish—the guns count before territorial distinctions. Next to the R.H.A., if ever the line of the whole Army were formed, would come the Brigade of Guards, and here the Scots Guards find a place, very near the right of the line, when the length of that line is considered.

Scottish Regiments at the Front

It is possible, to a certain extent, to trace the history of each unit of the Army, as far as the present European war is concerned, by means of the letters sent home by the men of each unit. Such histories are necessarily brief and scrappy, but they afford some idea of what the various regiments are doing on the field; and the object of this book is, to some extent, to show how each Scottish regiment has contributed to the glory of Scotland and the fame of the British Army since August of 1914. Some reference to the earlier exploits of Scots on other fields may perhaps be pardoned, for there are some stories—like that already quoted regarding the Duke of Marlborough—that never grow old.

Of the Scots Guards, few records have as yet come to hand, beyond those that are common knowledge. The regiment has nearly three hundred years of history, having been raised as the "Scots Fusi-

The Guards and the Greys

lier Guards" in 1641. Nineteen years later they became the "Scots Guards," and in the closing years of the seventeenth century they fought in Flanders, subsequently serving with distinction under the Duke of Marlborough. From "Dettingen" through the Napoleonic and Crimean wars up to "Modder River" the battle honours on their colours range, for like the great majority of British regiments they had their share of South Africa in the last campaign there.

Personal records of their deeds in the early stages of this present war are scarce, but certain it is that there were Scots Guards at the battle of the Marne, although the official dispatches are chary of mentioning the names of regiments engaged in definite actions or at definite points. For, previously to the battle of the Marne, there was a Guardsman of Kilmarnock of whom a story is told. He was on duty with a comrade when

Scottish Regiments at the Front

two mounted men approached, and on challenging the riders the Scots found that one of them was a Uhlan—who made off with all speed. The Kilmarnock man advanced on the other rider, whom his comrade had covered with his rifle, but the horseman made a motion with his left hand toward his revolver. Thereupon the Kilmarnock man, being tall and powerfully built, struck out with his fist and knocked the man from his saddle, ascertaining subsequently that he was a German scout officer, and that he carried a diary which gave particulars of the movements of the brigade to which the Scots Guards were attached, from the time of its leaving Havre almost up to the time of the officer's capture. There were in the diary frequent allusions to "those hellish British"—which comment speaks for itself.

Later, along the position of the Aisne, the first battalion of the Guards were

The Guards and the Greys

busy. On a certain Sunday afternoon the Guards and the Black Watch were in the thick of the fighting, and that night they were ordered to the trenches—and the Germans had the position of the trenches ranged to a nicety, so that they were able to drop shells with wicked precision all night. Next morning the German infantry retreated for a matter of a mile, uphill, and there waited for the inevitable advance of the Guards and the Black Watch. The retreat was a trap, for on the advance the two British battalions were subject to shell as well as rifle fire, and out of one section of fourteen men only one was left. This one, a corporal, was badly cut about the face, and had one knee severely damaged, but with a field dressing tied round his leg he remained in the firing line all day, going over to the Black Watch, since he had drifted too far away from his own battalion to rejoin it at once. “I had

Scottish Regiments at the Front

to stick it in the field all day," he says, "and the fighting was awful. The Germans had all their big guns firing at us, and we could not get our own guns up to fire back at them. I never expected to get out of it alive. Well, after lying half the night wet in the open, among the dead Germans and our own dead, I got strength enough to crawl back, and managed to find a hospital about twelve o'clock at night, nearly dead. I never got any sleep that night, but guess what the Germans did in the morning! They blew the hospital up in the air. I happened to be near the door, so I got away all right; but I got another bit in the back that flattened me out for awhile. I missed all the ambulances through this. The next carts that came along were the ammunition ones. The driver helped me on to the back of one, but I had hardly enough strength to hang on. The Germans shelled all these carts for miles, and

The Guards and the Greys

the horses of the one I was on got hit with a shell, and I had not the strength to climb on to another one. The drivers were hurrying away for their lives, so I had to scramble along for two miles on my own to a big barn, which they called a field hospital."

And there the record ends. It makes a scrap of history of the Guards, though when the regimental histories of this war come to be written it will be found that such stories as these are only scraps of the whole, for the battles of the Aisne and of the coast do not mark the end.

With regard to the Scots Greys, their work in the early days is well known now, for from Mons down through the three weeks of the great retreat they upheld the honour of Scotland so well that on the 8th of September Sir John French addressed the regiment in words that officers and men alike will remember. He came on them while they were resting,

Scottish Regiments at the Front

and these were his words, as given by a man of the regiment :

“ I am very sorry to disturb you from your sleep, Greys, but I feel I must say a few words to you. I have been watching your work very closely, and it has been magnificent. Your country is proud of you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. It is not the first time I have had the pleasure of thanking you, and I hope it will not be the last. There are no soldiers in the world that could have done what you have done.”

This, it must be pointed out, is as it is told by a soldier of the regiment ; it is worth while to make the contrast between it and a letter said to be from a man of the Greys to his wife, in which he says :

“ I was in the retreat from Mons. We were told to go out and draw the enemy, and before going all our officers and

The Guards and the Greys

generals said, 'Good-bye,' so you can bet we felt all right.

"A couple of chaps in my troop went through the South African war, but after the Mons fighting said the medals they got in Africa were not worth the keeping. They saw more shot and shell in one day here than they saw in three years in South Africa.

"The inhabitants go fairly mad when they see us, as they know they will be cared for by us."

The writer of that letter *may* have heard a German shell in the air—and he may not. Queries rise in one's mind as to whom the "officers and generals" said good-bye to, and also a query rises as to how many generals the Scots Greys have in their ranks—these points come up automatically. It is not the custom in the British Army, after the order for an advance has been given, to give time even for the "officers and generals" of

Scottish Regiments at the Front

a regiment to wander round with last messages ; and, if ever the Greys played this game in the fighting in France, there can be little doubt that the inhabitants of the country went " fairly mad " over the regiment. The letter looks like a fraud, but it is typical of some that are finding their way into print nearly every day.

Circumstantial and bearing the impress of truth is the account of the doings of the regiment given by one Private Ward, who came home wounded from the Aisne. He tells, all too briefly, how from the second day after landing in France the regiment was continually in action. The work for the most part, however, was in the nature of a grand artillery duel, and the Greys were mainly employed in scouting, with an occasional charge " thrown in." In the battle of the Aisne the Greys supported the King's Own Scottish Borderers and

The Guards and the Greys

the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in the crossing of the river; and, after the infantry had all crossed, the Greys went in single file, with sixteen feet between man and man, over a pontoon bridge that was under shell fire from the German guns, placed on the heights in front. Many of the horses were killed, and Ward himself was struck in the leg with a piece of shell, causing so severe a flesh wound that he had to be taken to the field ambulance, and thence home. And thus the story of the Greys ends, so far as this record is concerned.

It is a regiment of great traditions, as British cavalry regiments go. Alone among the cavalry the Greys wear the bearskin in place of the metal helmet in parade dress, and they are nearly as old as the Scots Guards, having been raised as a regiment in 1678, and forming the oldest regiment of Dragoons in the service. Originally they were known as

Scottish Regiments at the Front

the "Royal Regiment of Scots Dragoons," a title that was subsequently changed to "Grey Dragoons," from which their present title of "Scots Greys" was evolved. Unto this day the sergeants of the regiment wear the badge above their chevrons that commemorates the taking of the French eagle of the famous Régiment du Roi; and at Waterloo they charged with the Gordons clinging to their stirrup leathers, while cavalrymen and Gordons alike yelled—"Scotland for ever!" To Napoleon they were known as "*ces terribles chevaux gris*," and out of the charge of the Heavy Brigade in the Crimea they brought back two Victoria Crosses.

No record of the doings of Scottish regiments in this present war can be compiled without mention of the Scots Guards and the Greys, but their history properly belongs to that of the Guards Brigade and of the cavalry respectively

The Guards and the Greys

—and in these two counts they must be reckoned for a full recital of their doings. The foregoing mere incidents will serve as compromise, lest it should be thought that the two regiments had been overlooked. As for the Royal Artillery, it knows no more of territorial distinctions, as already mentioned, than it does of battle honours—for every battle in which a British Army has fought might be inscribed on the colours of the gunners, if they had colours. It is probable that, when the relative populations of the four nationalities are taken into account, Scotsmen will be found to preponderate in the R.A., for the Scot is always a little mechanically inclined, and the working of the guns needs most mechanical knowledge of any of the three arms.

Of infantry of the line, there are ten definitely Scottish regiments, and an effort will be made to trace their histories in the great European campaign—

Scottish Regiments at the Front

or rather, in the first days of that campaign, as far as personal narratives will admit. Blanks and gaps there must be, but the stories that officers and men have to tell will, when collated and set down in some sort of order, enable us to conceive of the nature of the work in which Scots are well maintaining the honour of their regiments.

CHAPTER II

THE ROYAL SCOTS

ONE of the titles bestowed on the Royal Scots, that of "Pontius Pilate's Body-guard," marks the claim of the regiment to antiquity. Under Marlborough, in the French war in America, at Corunna, through the Peninsular war with Wellington, at Quatre Bras and Waterloo, in India, the Crimea, and in China, have the battalions of the Royal Scots upheld the honour of the British Army; and it stands to their credit that in the South African campaign, in which they were engaged practically from start to finish, there was not a single case of surrender of a party of the Royal Scots.

The history of the regiment in the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

present war begins at Landrecies and Mons, and it is worthy of note that the first story of a man of the regiment that comes to hand concerns the bravery of men of other units. The man in question was twice wounded himself before being invalided home; but, declining to talk about himself, he remarked that for real British pluck he had never seen anything to equal that of the Middlesex regiment. He saw them digging trenches near Mons when a mass of Germans, who seemed to come from nowhere, came down on them. He conjectured that the Germans had been apprised of the position of the Middlesex men by an air scout, and he saw how the Germans came on the Middlesex, who were totally unprepared in the matter of equipment, and had to face fixed bayonets with no apparent means of reprisal. But the sergeant of a company set the fashion by the use of his fists, and "downed"

The Royal Scots

two of the attacking Germans; the whole of the company followed suit, but they were badly cut about by the Germans, and the sergeant was bayoneted. Near by were the Connaughts, who, after six guns had been taken by the Germans, charged down on the enemy and took back the guns, with the aid of artillery fire. But, regarding the doings of the Royal Scots at the time, the man of the regiment who tells this story has never a word to say.

A corporal of the 1st Royal Scots tells how Lieutenant Geoffrey Lambton, nephew of the Earl of Durham, died. It happened in the third rearguard action after Mons that the lieutenant was in charge of his men in a wood, and was directing fire from a mound. Before and beneath the Scots the Germans were in strong force, and were preparing to attack, when Lambton gave the order to fire, and, picking up a rifle himself, set the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

example to his men. Fatally wounded by a German bullet, he knew that he had not long to live, so handed over to the corporal his pocket-book, note-book and sketch-book, to take back to his people.

Another corporal of the regiment testifies to the spirit of its men at Landrecies, where in company with about fifty others he was cut off from the main body, and engaged in desperate street fighting. The party joined up with the Grenadier Guards, and in the streets of Landrecies German officers called on them to surrender, but the officers answered that "British never surrender—fix bayonets and charge!" So well did they charge that the streets were piled with German dead. The Royal Scots were heavily engaged at Landrecies, and accounted for a great number of the enemy there.

Graphically is the story of the retreat told by one Private Stewart, who was invalided home after the battle of the

The Royal Scots

Marne. "After Mons," he says, "the hardships of fighting on the retreat began. We had little time for sleep; both day and night we retreated, and as they marched the men slept. If a man in front of you happened to stop, you found yourself bumping into him. I didn't have my clothes off for six weeks, and my kit and overcoat have been left on the field. At one place where we halted for the day the lady of the farmhouse was washing, so some of us took off our shirts to have them washed. While they were hanging up to dry the order came that the troops had to move on, and the wet garments had to be put on just as they were. Mine was dry next morning. Two of my mates were killed in the trenches by one shell, which burst close to them. We were not deeply entrenched, and the German artillery fire was so heavy that we had to lie on our sides like pitmen and dig

Scottish Regiments at the Front

ourselves in deeper. We had a chance to look up occasionally when our guns replied. Another time the Royal Scots were having a meal by the roadside, when we got orders that we must be finished in five minutes. In less than that time the Germans opened fire, but fortunately the side of the road was an embankment, and so formed a natural trench. We lay there during the rest of the day and the greater part of the night, keeping off the attack by constant fire. My company captured about forty German cyclists, who offered no resistance—this was after the Marne, when the Germans retired. The British had been blazing away for some time at what appeared to be the helmets of the men in the trenches, when an officer saw that the helmets were not moving. He gave the order to advance, and when we got up we found that the Germans were retiring, and had left their helmets as

The Royal Scots

a blind. Many prisoners were taken that day."

Brief as an official report is this story, and as pithy, giving as it does an outline of the work in which the Royal Scots have been engaged from the time of Landrecies onwards. For it is not what is actually written that counts in such a sincere piece of writing as this, but the facts that appear between the lines. The brief reference to the hardships of the retreat, the queer washing day, and the interrupted meal, are chapters of war in themselves, reported with a brevity and conciseness which stamp the document as authentic.

Another man of the regiment was in the first of the fighting at Landrecies, and went on to the positions of the Marne and the Aisne, returning wounded from the latter, with four splinters of shrapnel in his back, one in his ribs, and a bullet wound in his head—surely

Scottish Regiments at the Front

enough to send any man back from the firing line. At Landrecies he and his fellows encountered a looting party of Germans, who carried large quantities of jewellery, clothing, and other articles : practically every account of the first of the fighting tells of German attention to details of this kind.

At the position of the Aisne, the Royal Scots had a stiff struggle in the holding of a pontoon bridge, and the man who tells this story was wounded there during a rain of shell fire to which his battalion was subjected. After he was hit, he lay unconscious for seven hours, and in order to escape after regaining his senses he had to propel himself, feet first, along a sort of furrow or ditch. It was a weary business, and, exposing himself momentarily, he was hit again on the head by a bullet, though the lead failed to penetrate to any depth ; and during his journey he was for a time between the

The Royal Scots

fire of Germans and British. He came on a German trench full of dead men, and was struck by the elaborate arrangement of the trench, for there were tables and chairs, and a quantity of champagne bottles, both full and empty—the trench was well stocked with wine.

Previously to being wounded, this man made one of a party that captured a number of Germans, one of whom spoke English well, and told his captors that he had a wife and five children in Glasgow, and that the only way to get back to them was to court capture. This German had been in employment in Glasgow, and was called up *five months* before the war broke out—a significant fact when it is remembered how German statesmen are still insisting that Britain made the war.

A man of the Royal Scots has told how Captain Price of the regiment died. While in the trenches, and under a hot

Scottish Regiments at the Front

fire, Captain Price ran forward to help a corporal who had been shot in the arm, and in kindly fashion the captain was preventing the corporal from seeing his wound—shielding the injured arm while it was being dressed. While so engaged Captain Price was struck in the head by a piece of shrapnel, and he died while being carried to the field hospital. On the testimony of the men of the regiment, a braver or kindlier officer than Captain C. L. Price, D.S.O., has never worn uniform.

With regard to the work of the regiment in the trenches of the Aisne, and the enemy they have had to face, one man of the regiment speaks. "The Germans are good range finders with their big guns," he says, "and their fire is very effective—but you could get boys to give them points with the rifle. One thing has made an impression on me, and that is that the enemy has no respect

The Royal Scots

whatever for the Red Cross. Our men were proceeding along a road, when they came on a Red Cross waggon lying on its side, with several Red Cross men lying dead beside it. There was one brave incident I witnessed, and although I do not know the name of the fellow who showed such pluck, I know he belonged to the Royal Scots. I saw him carry one of his comrades across a field for about three hundred yards, though the fire from the German ranks was simply awful at the time."

Here, again, is an instance of the way in which the men tell of each other's deeds but make no mention of their own. The French soldier, as a rule, knows when he has done a brave action, and talks about it—the quality does not make him less brave, but it is one that is inconsistent with British character. The average British soldier is usually quite unconscious that he has done anything worthy

Scottish Regiments at the Front

of note, and, even if he knows the value of what he has done, he is very shy of speaking about it, and usually prefers to talk about the things somebody else has accomplished.

A certain Private Kemp, invalided home to Berwick, testifies to the way in which tobacco and cigarettes have come to be regarded by the men in the firing line. He tells how, when out scouting, he was captured by three Uhlans, who took away his arms and equipment, and were just about to take him away as a prisoner when a shot was fired, and the Uhlans took to their heels. Kemp, wounded in the leg, fell, and after lying for an hour and a half, he was picked up by advancing British troops. "One great hardship," he says, "was the lack of tobacco all the time. I and many of my comrades have been reduced to smoking dried tea-leaves wrapped in old newspaper.

The Royal Scots

A real smoke would have been a blessing."

One officer of the regiment, wounded while out in front of the trenches studying the position of the enemy with field-glasses, was carried back into shelter, and laid in the trench until the field ambulance should come to remove him to the rear. "He lay there smoking cigarettes," says one of the men, "and shouting—'Good old Royal Scots—well done!' whenever anything came off." And in this and incidents like it lies the spirit that makes the Royal Scots what they are—it is the spirit of men who do not know when they are beaten, who will never admit defeat. It is the spirit that Findlater showed at Dargai.

Yet another private of the regiment, writing with no address and no date to his letter, says: "In the last scrap I was in we had a terrible time one way and

Scottish Regiments at the Front

another. After marching from the Sunday to the Tuesday night, we got anchored near a farm, and the next morning, just when breakfast was ready, we had to leave it lying and get stuck into our trenches, as the Germans had come on us. We could see them moving up on our front, and our artillery were not long in getting their range and sending them out of it. Our big guns were going finely until the afternoon, when they seemed to stop all at once, compared with the guns the Germans had brought up. They started to shell a village behind us with their siege guns, and they just blew holes in it. We had a church for a hospital, and that went up too—but that is their usual dirty game. They have no respect for a Red Cross waggon, and, as far as I can see, they seem to take them for targets. We had to retire after being shelled for about eight hours, and we lost a good few men, but had the consolation of

The Royal Scots

knowing that, as usual, the enemy had lost a good many more. We are having a rest now, and have not seen the battalion for two weeks. It is a very sad sight to see the people here going about homeless ; most of them are of the poorer class, and it must be an awful time for them."

Writing later, the same man says : " We have come through four days' hard fighting, and have been relieved—we drove the Germans out of all their positions. At one place the French were trying to shift the enemy, so our lot were brought up to assist ; and although we lost a good few men in the open fields, our chaps stuck it well. General Smith-Dorrien sent along a message—' Good, Royal Scots ! ' and then when we took the other side of the bridge he said ' Bravo, Royal Scots ! ' so we have not done so badly."

And there, for the present, the record

Scottish Regiments at the Front

of this oldest regiment of the service must be broken off. It tells of work from Mons and Landrecies, through the great retreat to the position of the Marne, and on to the Aisne—and there it ends, for the present. We know that many of the regiments along the line of the Aisne have been moved up to assist in the great Flanders battles, and in all probability there have been Royal Scots in that Flanders line as well as along the Aisne.

There is one story of this first regiment of British infantry which, though it is nearly fourteen years old, should always be told in any account of the deeds of the regiment. It concerns a certain Sergeant G. Robertson, placed in command of a party of about twenty men who were acting as railway escort to a train from Pretoria. The train was bound for the Eastern Transvaal, and, on reaching Pan, it was stopped by Boers blowing up the

The Royal Scots

line. The Boers attacked in force, being concealed in a trench a few yards from the train, and the escort at once, under orders from Sergeant Robertson, opened fire. The Boers, who greatly outnumbered the escort, called on Robertson to surrender, but he answered—"No surrender!" Almost immediately afterwards, he was shot through the head.

A similar case concerns Major Twyford, an officer of the Royal Scots, who in April of 1901 was attacked by a commando under Jan de Beers in the Badfontein Valley. Twyford and his party numbered eight all told, mounted men, and they took up a position among the ruins of a farmhouse which afforded some shelter from the fire of the enemy. The commando of Boers closed in on them, and, having in mind the enormous disparity of the forces, called on them to surrender. Major Twyford declined to

Scottish Regiments at the Front

do so, and went on firing on de Beers' commando until shot dead by the enemy.

Captain Price, of whom mention has already been made, was a lieutenant at the time of the South African war, and was recommended at that time for the Victoria Cross for especial gallantry in leading "E" company at the action at Bermondsey. Three of the non-commissioned officers and men were specially mentioned for their gallantry in this affair, a certain Corporal Paul was promoted sergeant for his bravery, and Lieutenant Price, recommended for his V.C., obtained the D.S.O. France saw him brave as ever, and the regiment will keep his memory as that of one of its most gallant officers.

But, if one begins to tell the story of the deeds of the regiment of Royal Scots in previous campaigns, the story is without end, and space will not admit of it. It were unwise to say that the Royal

The Royal Scots

Scots are first in bravery in action, as they are first in seniority among line regiments ; but at least, in the matter of courage, they are equal with any, as the present campaign in France has proved.

CHAPTER III

THE ROYAL SCOTS FUSILIERS

THE titles of regiments are apt to be confusing to the lay mind, and it is difficult at first to distinguish between the Royal Scots and the Royal Scots Fusiliers, on paper. In old time the Fusiliers were the "twenty-first" regiment of infantry; they were raised in Scotland in 1678 for service under Charles II, and served under William III in Holland and Flanders, as well as under the great Duke of Marlborough and under George II when the latter commanded his troops in person at the battle of Dettingen.

Their history in previous campaigns to this of France and Belgium is a long one. At Blenheim, Malplaquet, and

The Royal Scots Fusiliers

Ramillies the Scots Fusiliers won particular distinction—the brigadier who led the principal attack at Blenheim was a colonel of the Scots Fusiliers. At Dettingen and Fontenoy, again, the Fusiliers were well to the front, and in the last-named engagement the regiment suffered so severely that it became necessary to move it to Flanders. In 1761 the Scots Fusiliers took part in the capture of Belle Isle, and later, in the American War of Independence—bolstering up a bad cause—they underwent intense privations, and, foodless and minus ammunition, capitulated with General Burgoyne at Saratoga to a force five times the strength of that which Burgoyne commanded. 1793 saw them engaged in capturing the islands of the West Indies from the French, and in 1807 they formed part of the second expedition to Egypt. Then at Messina the Fusiliers alone were responsible

Scottish Regiments at the Front

for the capture of over a thousand officers and men out of a force which attempted to land there, and up to the time of the abdication of Napoleon the regiment was engaged in active service. In St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, are deposited the tattered colours carried by the regiment in the Napoleonic campaigns.

In the Crimea the Fusiliers again lost their colonel ; at Inkermann, where the colonel fell, the regiment was in the very front of the battle throughout the day, fighting throughout the battle without food, and calling for more ammunition. They were present throughout the great siege and at the fall of Sevastopol, and the colours borne in that campaign—presented to the regiment in 1827 by King William IV—cost the life of one officer and led to two more being severely wounded at Inkermann, while 17 N.C.O.'s and men who acted as escort were either killed or severely wounded. These

The Royal Scots Fusiliers

colours were subsequently deposited in the parish church of Ayr, the depot headquarters of the regiment.

In Africa against the Zulus and Basutos, as well as against the Boers in the first war of the Transvaal, the Fusiliers fought next after the Crimean campaign; and then they took part in the subjugation of King Theebaw in Burmah. In 1899 the 2nd battalion embarked for South Africa, and was set to form a part of the 6th Fusilier brigade. From Colenso they brought away a Victoria Cross, awarded to Private Ravenhill for conspicuous gallantry in saving guns from which the gunners had been shot away.

To the Fusiliers fell the honour of being the first British regiment to enter the Transvaal during the war, and they took part in the hoisting of the British flag at Christiana, the first Transvaal town to be captured. A little later, the colonel of the regiment, with a force of

Scottish Regiments at the Front

under 120 men, went on to Potchefstroom, and there hoisted a British flag that had been buried there at the time of the peace of 1881, and, after being disinterred, had been kept in the possession of the family of a former commanding officer of the Scots Fusiliers. So distinguished was the conduct of the regiment in the South African campaign that, on the representation of Colonel Carr, C.B., the commanding officer, the white plume that had not been worn since 1860 by the Fusiliers was given back to them, as a recognition of their services. To a civilian this may seem a very little thing, but the regiment regards it far otherwise.

As for the campaign in France, there are very few authentic records of the men of the regiment to hand at the time of writing, but from those few one can reconstruct a good deal of the work of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. One man tells that the Germans captured all the trans-

The Royal Scots Fusiliers

port, which contained all the kits of the men, who were thus left with only the clothes they stood in for a matter of five weeks. Since this account came through in the latter part of October, it may safely be assumed that the regiment was concerned in the great retreat to the Marne, though no letter of those received tells of doings at Mons, Landrecies, or the very early battlefields. Still, it is not safe to assume that the regiment—or some part of it—was *not* engaged in the first actions.

One may picture what the men looked like from the account sent by one of them. “I got a bit of a shave a week ago,” he says, “but I have not had a wash for over a fortnight.” Kipling’s “I wish my mother could see me now” fits the case admirably.

Again, evidently concerning the retreat, the same soldier writes: “We got an order to stop a motor car one day, and

Scottish Regiments at the Front

as the driver pulled up a man tried to escape on the opposite side, and I colared him. He got into an awful state, and started pulling photos and papers from his pockets and talked in a very excited manner. He was taken away, and I believe he was shot the next morning as a spy."

This might possibly have been at the position of the Marne, or between that time and the holding of the line of the Aisne, but it is far more likely to have occurred at the time of the retreat, when motorists on the roads were plentiful, and spies could do good work for their employers.

There are various stories which go to describe the work of the Fusiliers at the Aisne, and the monotony of life in the trenches is well portrayed in one letter. The writer says: "As we can't always be killing Germans we are sometimes hard put to it to kill time in the trenches.

The Royal Scots Fusiliers

Next to religion, I think football is the thing that interests us most, and we are always eager to hear news of our teams at home. The papers that reach us have not got much news of that kind in, and it would be a godsend to us if only somebody would take in hand to start a paper for circulating among the troops giving nothing but the latest football news."

On the more serious side is a communication from a man of the regiment who was wounded at the position of the Aisne. He stated that "the men have come through an awful time," and added that he himself was stuck in the trenches for seven days without a break, while he went for fourteen days without being able to wash his face. The German way was to attack in order to draw the British fire, and then to retire, after which would come a terrific artillery bombardment—but the British stuck to their ground always. Finally this man was hit

Scottish Regiments at the Front

in the head by shrapnel, while his particular chum was shot in the stomach, and they both went into a French hospital.

By these simple records one may trace the regiment from the great retreat to the Aisne; and then another letter takes the story on very nearly to the great coast battle, where, by what the writer says, the second battalion of the Scots Fusiliers have been from the beginning of the German attempts on Calais. The writer, in describing how the German spies adopt the very old trick of assisting artillery fire by the use of the hands of a steeple clock, locates his story at Ypres, where some of the fiercest fighting of the whole war has taken place.

“It was at the town of Ypres—a name, by the way, that gets many quaint pronunciations from our men—and the hands of the steeple clock stood at 10.40. When the men of the battalion had been in the place a quarter of an hour, such

The Royal Scots Fusiliers

shelling began as they had never known before—and then somebody pointed out that the hands of the clock had been altered to indicate 12.40. Thereupon a search was made of the clock tower, when three Germans were found and taken prisoners, much to the disgust of the men who had seen their comrades suffering from the shell fire. They would willingly have given these spies shorter shrift than mere capture, but of course the rules of war had to be observed, even in such a clear case of espionage as this."

There is one man of the second battalion who, wounded and sent home from the battle in the north-west of France, speaks of the fighting there as "past description." He had seen hard fighting in India, but reckoned the work against the Germans as beyond words to express it. "Germans came on in solid masses, urged on by the officers with the points of their swords, and on over the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

bodies of their dead comrades. This," producing a German forage cap, "belonged to one poor devil I sent to his long home; and this," producing a rosary, "was given to me by a Frenchwoman in return for helping her to get her daughter away to a place of safety, out of the way of the Germans."

Little things, these, but the contrast afforded by the two trophies goes to prove that the men of the Fusiliers are fighting in the right way and with the right spirit. There is little doubt, however, that the second battalion of the regiment has lost very heavily in the Flanders fighting. One report—an unofficial one, it is true—speaks of the battalion as being reduced to less than 150 officers and men. This may mean anything, for companies are sent away on detached duties, bodies of men get cut off from their battalions and join up with others—all sorts of things may

The Royal Scots Fusiliers

happen in addition to real casualties to reduce the strength of a battalion in such a series of actions as has been fought between Lille and the coasts of France and Belgium. But, whatever may have happened in this way, there can be no doubt that the Royal Scots Fusiliers, of which the second battalion certainly took part in these battles, has maintained the honour of the regiment to the full, and such of its officers and men as have fallen have rendered good account of themselves.

CHAPTER IV

THE KING'S OWN SCOTTISH BORDERERS

IF legend may be believed, the Scottish Borderers came into existence with a strength of a thousand men in four hours of the 19th of March, 1689, a recruiting record which stands unbeaten in subsequent history. The regiment was raised by the followers of King William III, and within four months of the time of its formation was facing "Bonnie Dundee" at the pass of Killiecrankie. General Mackay, the officer commanding the King's troops, testified that only two regiments of his force bore themselves as they ought, and of these two one was the King's Own Scottish Borderers. When it is remembered that the regiment

King's Own Scottish Borderers

had only been formed four months, this fact will be seen in its true light ; and for over two centuries the Borderers have maintained the reputation given them by Mackay.

Having settled the authority of King William in Scotland, the Borderers were sent over to Ireland, where they helped in driving out James and his Irish and French adherents from the United Kingdom, and consolidating the rule of the Orange king. Thence, in the service of William, the regiment went to Flanders, where they took part in the siege of Namur, and lost twenty officers and 500 men by the explosion of one of the mines of the enemy. It was here that the Borderers were first made acquainted with the practice of fixing the bayonet alongside the muzzle of the musket instead of into it, for up to that time fixing bayonets had involved thrusting the bayonet into the barrel, when the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

weapon could not be fired. Seeing a French regiment advancing with fixed bayonets, the Colonel of the Borderers ordered his men to fix theirs, and calmly awaited the result, confident in the superiority of his men over their opponents in this class of fighting. But at short range the French amazed the Scots by pouring in a volley, for they had their bayonets fixed round the muzzles of their muskets instead of in them. Recovering themselves, the Borderers charged and routed the enemy, and learned from one of the French muskets left on the field how this apparent miracle had been accomplished. Thenceforth British troops fixed their bayonets on instead of in their muskets.

When, in 1697, the treaty of Ryswick put an end to the campaign which included the taking of Namur, the Borderers returned home. Their next notable exploit was at Vigo, in 1719,

King's Own Scottish Borderers

where they destroyed the stores collected for an invasion of England. Thirteen years later the regiment was among the defending force at Gibraltar, and withstood the attacks of a force of 20,000 men, who were eventually obliged to retire, leaving the Rock in British hands. Then came Fontenoy, where the Borderers lost 206 officers and men; and later Minden, where sixty squadrons of French cavalry charged again and again, only to be broken against the defence of six British regiments, of which the Borderers formed one. Having thus accounted for the cavalry, the six regiments put to flight two French brigades of infantry, and virtually annihilated a body of Saxon infantry, being the whole time under heavy artillery fire. Returning in 1763 from the many Continental fields in which it had taken part, the regiment buried with full military honours at Newcastle-on-Tyne the frag-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

ments of the colours carried from victory to victory for twenty years.

There followed nineteen years of peace service, and then the Borderers were sent to Gibraltar as reinforcements, arriving in time to assist in the final discomfiture of the besieging force. In 1793 the Borderers were transformed into Marines, in which capacity they came in for a share of the prize money accruing from the capture of a ship valued at a million sterling, and then took part in the victory won by Lord Howe over the French fleet at Brest. There were Borderers, too, at the siege of Toulon, where Napoleon I, at that time only an artillery lieutenant, was wounded by a British soldier's bayonet.

In the Napoleonic wars the Borderers were faced with more hard work than chances of glory. They went to the campaign in Holland in 1799, and took part in the expedition to Egypt in 1801,

King's Own Scottish Borderers

while eight years later they were at the capture of Martinique, a name borne on their colours. But for the rest of the time up to Waterloo they were engaged mainly in inconspicuous garrison duty, with no chance of adding to their reputation. Their luck held to a similar course through the nineteenth century, up to the outbreak of the last South African war, for they were set to deal with a Boer insurrection at the Cape in 1842, sent to Canada at the time of the Fenian raid in 1866, and engaged in the Afghan campaign of 1878-80. They fought in the Egyptian war in 1888, and then went to work on the Indian frontier, where is much fighting and little glory for most regiments that take part. In the Tirah campaign alone the Borderers were in action twenty-three times—yet who remembers the Tirah campaign to-day ?

As for the South African campaign, it has been placed on record that the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

Borderers "put in as much hard work in marching and fighting as any body of troops in the whole campaign." Paardeberg, Poplar Grove, and Karee Spruit were three notable actions of this war in which the Borderers took part, they having been allotted to the 7th Division of the Army of South Africa. At the last-named action eighty-three officers and men of the Borderers were killed or wounded. Later, at Vlakfontein, the Borderers and the Derbyshires shared the honour of saving General Dixon's column from utter disaster, and recapturing two British guns which had been taken by the Boers.

Now, as for the war in France, the record of the Borderers is fairly complete. It begins with the account of the adventures of a maxim-gun section during the first week of the war, as related by a man of the gun section who was invalided home very early in the campaign. He

King's Own Scottish Borderers

states that at Mons his gun section were located inside a house at Mons, firing from one of the windows, while Germans in considerable numbers were searching the surrounding houses. It took the Germans four hours to locate the maxim gun, and then, as they riddled the house with bullets, the plaster and laths began to come down on the heads of the Borderers' men, whereupon the latter thought the time had come to clear out. Under fire they dismounted their gun and scrambled out from the back of the house, whence they got under cover from the German fire, and, when night fell, they were able to make their way back to their own lines.

“ While we were in action on Tuesday,” the record continues, “ a shell struck the limber of the gun and almost blew it to bits. I was struck on the shoulder by a piece of shrapnel. On another occasion we were firing from an isolated position

Scottish Regiments at the Front

when a company of Germans surprised us by appearing about a hundred yards away. We were thirteen strong—one officer and twelve men—so we put up the gun and made for cover. We had about two hundred yards to run across a field, but every one of us escaped without a scratch.”

On the 16th of September the War Office report of “Missing” included the names of men belonging to the Borderers, and of these many went to Doberitz camp of prisoners. One man, writing from Doberitz, stated that he had been captured on August 26th, and was being fairly well treated. Which recalls the fact that Colonel Stephenson, the commanding officer of the Borderers, had the misfortune to be wounded and captured in the very early stages of the war. It was at Le Cateau that the colonel was wounded, and, although the wound was not exceptionally serious, it was enough

King's Own Scottish Borderers

to put Colonel Stephenson out of action for the time. He was assisted to an ambulance waggon and got inside, but afterwards he came out of his own accord in order to make way for men more seriously injured. Almost immediately afterwards the retreat was continued, and according to one account the colonel was found lying wounded by the Germans. Another account states that the four horses of one of the ambulance waggons were lost during the retreat, and fifteen men of the Borderers were ordered to replace the horses in drawing the ambulance waggon, with the result that the whole party, including Colonel Stephenson in the waggon with other wounded, were captured. Major Leigh, D.S.O., another officer of the Borderers, was wounded at Mons and captured by the Germans, according to all accounts, while three other officers are reported to have been taken prisoners in the first weeks of the war.

Scottish Regiments at the Front

It was at Mons, too, that young Lieutenant Amos, of the Borderers, who had only received his commission five months before, went out to the front and brought back a wounded man much bigger and heavier than himself. A few days later Lieutenant Amos led out his platoon of men in face of the enemy's fire, when he was shot down, and the men of the platoon thought at the time that he was only wounded. "When night came on," said one man of the platoon, "I went out to look for him, and just as I had got to where he was lying and had lifted his head, the moon shone out full from behind the clouds, and I saw he was quite dead. He had been shot through the heart."

Whatever dispatches may say with regard to individual officers and men, it is usually safe to take the opinions of the men themselves with regard to their officers. An instance of this is the case

King's Own Scottish Borderers

of Lieutenant Hamilton-Dalrymple, of the Borderers, who was described by his men as "a very daring man." He had excelled in patrol work and scouting, especially at night, and on the retreat was placed in charge of four platoons, which he led out for an attack. He had led out No. 16 platoon, and went back for No. 15, and, when leading these men out, he was shot in the leg by a German sniper and had to be carried to the rear. The man who told this story of his officer was subsequently hit by a splinter from a shell which accounted for five men.

Near Le Cateau the Borderers buried Lieutenant Amos and twenty-one of the men of the regiment. Throughout the day, while an artillery duel had raged, the dead had lain out on the battlefield, and a long grave was dug for them by their comrades. In this the bodies were laid, each covered by a waterproof sheet,

Scottish Regiments at the Front

and an officer recited a brief funeral service. While, during the next day, the artillery duel went on, the Borderers cut out in the grass that covered the grave of their comrades the letters "K.O.S.B.," and filled in the blank letter-spaces with small stones, completing their work by fashioning and erecting a small cross of wood to mark the place of burial.

There was one youngster of the Borderers in these first days who, at Mons, received a flesh wound while trying to cross two planks across a canal that was being peppered with machine-gun fire. Colonel Stephenson gripped him to save him from falling into the canal, and—"You had better go back to the hospital, sonny," said the colonel. But the youngster got little rest or respite in hospital, for the Germans shelled the hospital building, after their fashion, and the patients had to beat a quick retreat.

King's Own Scottish Borderers

Later, this same youngster came to the engagement at Béthune, one of the fiercest of the campaign, and one night he was on sentry duty at a wayside shrine. Just at the time the reliefs were coming round he saw Germans in the distance, and fired at them once or twice, "for luck," as he phrased it, considering that he was entitled to a last shot before going off duty. But the glare of his rifle fire must have betrayed his position, for almost immediately he received another wound in the body, and this time it was a sufficiently serious matter to cause him to be sent home.

By means of such letters as these one may trace the regiment through the first, and in some respects the worst, of the fighting. At the position of the Aisne, the accounts of the Borderers grow numerous, and it appears that the second battalion of the regiment was in

Scottish Regiments at the Front

the thick of things. One account describes the crossing of the Aisne under shell fire from the German guns. The second battalion got their orders to cross very early one morning, and turned out in a cold, rainy dawn; "but we got our pipes set going, and were all right then." On reaching the river, it was found that there were no bridges, but some rafts had been constructed by the Engineers, and these rafts were loaded each with six men, and hauled across to the opposite bank of the river with ropes. With the weight of men and equipment, the rafts were submerged so that the men were up to their knees in water while they crossed, but such incidents as that were regarded as trifling.

On the far bank of the river, the German shell fire was hotter than ever, and many men of the battalion were wounded, mostly in the arms and legs. "You bet we took all the cover we could get," says

King's Own Scottish Borderers

the narrator. "Some time after this three of us were lying in a field, and I was smoking my pipe, while my chum was puffing at a cigarette. The man next to my chum hadn't a match, and wanted a light badly, so he got up to get a light from my chum. As soon as he rose the poor beggar was hit by a fragment of shell and killed. My chum had got hold of a trench-making tool. It's like a spade at the one end, and like a pick at the other, and he stuck the pick end into the ground and lay down behind it, covering his head with the spade end. Every two or three minutes you could hear the bullets spattering against the iron of the tool."

Later, they got into the trenches, where some of the men were standing knee-deep in water, and others were submerged up to their waists. "It was no picnic, but they were a bright lot, cracking jokes or making remarks about

Scottish Regiments at the Front

the 'Black Marias,' or 'Jack Johnsons,' as they call the big German shells."

Although, in the first days on the Aisne, the first line of German troops were opposed to the British, the latter had a very poor opinion of their opponents. The general view was that the Germans were not very keen on fighting, and a number of them when captured said that they were forced by their officers to fight. In one case, when the men had refused to fire, their officers had turned on them and shot them—as might have been expected in any army. One wounded and captured German, placed in the next bed in hospital to a wounded Borderer, spoke broken English, and in the course of a chat was asked what he thought of the British. "British artillery," he said, "no good—not enough. British infantry—*mein Gott!*" His expression as he spoke completed the comment.

King's Own Scottish Borderers

A Borderer wounded at the Aisne had fought beside the French, whom he described as very plucky, but rather slow. Their artillery, however, won his admiration, and he declared it the best he had ever seen. He was emphatic in his appreciation of the way in which the French people treated the British troops, supplying them with food and fruit, and in many ways expressing their sympathy.

“My chum and I came to a village one day,” he said, “and wanted to get some bread and tobacco. We met a peasant woman in the village, and I said ‘*Du pain.*’ She took me by the arm and pushed me into a dark room, but I couldn’t see where I was, and called for my chum, who came in as well, though we were both afraid it might be a trap. Then we noticed some food and wine on a table. It struck us, when we came to look round, that nearly all the furniture in the house was smashed.

Scottish Regiments at the Front

‘The Prussians,’ the woman told us. And it’s the same in every village you go into—these Germans smash everything but us. They’re trying hard to smash us too, but they can’t manage it.”

“It is a grand thing,” says another man of the regiment, “to shoot at Germans—they make such a lovely target. We can’t miss them, and, poor things, they are wishing it was over. Every prisoner we take says they are starving, and they look it, too. Well, never mind, we are there to kill, and kill we do. They are frightened of us, and say we shoot too straight—the French and British are finishing them off in thousands.”

As regards the Flanders battle, the last sentence of this letter may be taken literally, but the rest of it is open to question. The dogged resistance on the Aisne, and the tremendous attacks up by Ypres and along the coast, were not

King's Own Scottish Borderers

made by men starving and utterly miserable—the work has been too fierce for that to be possible. The reserve troops of the German Army have no liking for their work, and, newly taken from comfort to the rigid discipline and severe conditions of the firing line, are naturally inclined to complain at what the first-line troops regard as mere everyday inconveniences ; and doubtless it was some of these that were referred to in this letter.

But, to revert to the position on the Aisne, there is yet another Borderer's story that is worthy of reproduction. The narrator states that during the battle two German women, masquerading as nurses, went about the British lines by motor, accompanied by a chauffeur. Among the British soldiers on outpost duty they freely distributed cigarettes, which were afterwards found to be inoculated by poison. Before any fatal

Scottish Regiments at the Front

results had accrued, the nature of the cigarettes was discovered, and the pseudo-nurses were rounded up and shot. The story may be true, but it seems a little improbable that *no* ill results should have attended the distribution of these cigarettes before discovery of the trick. The man who tells this story adds that two Scottish pipers held up and captured eight Germans in a wood near Crecy. The pipers had become detached from their division, and carried no arms, but on coming on the Germans they assumed a firing position and pointed the long drones of their pipes at the enemy, calling on them to surrender. The Germans at once threw down their rifles, and were taken prisoners.

Let it be remembered that both of these stories are told by the same man, and that both are on the face of them improbable—and then the reader must form his own conclusion.

King's Own Scottish Borderers

The next missive takes us on to the work in the trenches around Béthune, after the opposing lines had crept up to the north-west of France. "There were few breathing-spaces," says the writer. "Ground would be gained, and our troops then had to resort to the expedient of digging themselves in: at parts of the line about a hundred yards divided our trenches from those of the enemy." The man who tells of this fighting exposed himself to get a shot at precisely the same moment that a German out in the opposite trenches took aim, and both pulled their triggers almost simultaneously. The German bullet passed right across the Borderer's scalp, but in the firing line it was impossible to get immediate medical attention, and the wounded man had to lie in the trench for hours before nightfall gave him the chance to get back to the field hospital under cover of darkness.

Scottish Regiments at the Front

It fell to the lot of the Borderers to witness the first charge of the Indian troops, and evidently the dark men enjoyed themselves. "When they got the order to advance, you never saw men more pleased in all your life. They went forward with a rush like a football team charging their opponents, or a party of revellers rushing to catch the last train. They got to grips with their enemies in double-quick time, and the howl of joy that went up told us that those chaps felt that they were paying the Germans back in full for the peppering they had got while waiting for orders. When they came back from that charge they looked very well pleased with themselves, and they had every right to be. They are very proud of being selected to fight with us, and are terribly anxious to make a good impression. They have done it, too.

"I watched them one day under shell

King's Own Scottish Borderers

fire, and was astonished at their coolness. 'Coal boxes' were being emptied all round them, but they seemed to pay not the slightest heed, and if one of them did go under, his chums simply went on as though nothing had happened. They make light of wounds, and I have known cases where men have fought for days with wounds that might have excused any man for dropping out. When the wounds are very bad, I have seen the men themselves dressing them in the firing line. One day I questioned one of them about this, and he said, 'We must be as brave as the British.' It's amusing to hear them trying to pick up our camp songs. They have a poor opinion of the Germans as fighting men, and are greatly interested when we tell them of the horrors perpetrated on the Belgians and French."

Thus writes a wounded sergeant of the Borderers. Now the official account

Scottish Regiments at the Front

states that the first charge of the Indians was made to recover ground and trenches that had been taken by the Germans by sheer weight of numbers from British troops—so we may safely conclude that the Borderers, probably the second battalion, were among the men holding those trenches, and probably were in the section of the line that was forced back. And there, beside the Indian contingent, we may leave them, certain that in all the fighting in Flanders and for the recovery of Belgium they will acquit themselves like men.

CHAPTER V

THE BLACK WATCH

THOUGH the Royal Scots can claim to be the oldest regiment of the British Army, the Black Watch can claim—and do claim—to be the oldest corps of Highlanders. The regiment, known in old time as the “Forty-second,” was originally formed out of the independent companies raised in 1729 to keep the peace in the hills of the Scottish Highlands, and the first parade as a regiment took place near Aberfeldy in 1740, when the regiment was numbered “43.” This was subsequently changed to “42.”

Five years later the regiment saw its first active service abroad at Fontenoy, when its men charged with such spirit

Scottish Regiments at the Front

that they were described by a French writer as "Highland furies." In 1756 the Black Watch went to America, and at Ticonderaga the loss in killed and wounded amounted to 647 officers and men. So conspicuous was the bravery of the regiment on this occasion that the King conferred on it the title of "Royal," and unto this day the Black Watch are "The Royal Highlanders." The regiment was in at the capture of Montreal, and later took part in the American War of Independence, when, in spite of the offers of heavy bribes, not a single man could be induced to desert from the ranks, bad as was the cause in which the British troops were fighting then.

In 1780 the second battalion of the Black Watch was raised, to begin its active service in India. It was constituted a separate regiment in 1786, and named the "Perthshire Regiment," numbered "73." (Two officers and fifty-

The Black Watch

three men of this battalion were among the heroes who went down with the *Birkenhead*.) It was nearly a century later that the Perthshire Regiment was again joined to the Black Watch as its second battalion, and thenceforth the battle honours of both battalions have been borne on the colours of the regiment.

The campaign in Flanders in 1794 and the following year gave to the regiment the "red hackle" that is still worn in the full-dress feather bonnet. Again the Black Watch went to the front for the Egyptian campaign of 1800, and at Alexandria Sir Ralph Abercromby called on the Highlanders for the effort that won the battle. The next great event in the history of the regiment was Corunna, where Sir John Moore bade the Highlanders "Remember Egypt!" On to the siege of Toulouse the Black Watch took their part in all fighting that was

Scottish Regiments at the Front

to be had, and at Toulouse itself they lost over 300 officers and men in driving back the French Army into the city.

Just on 300 more officers and men fell in the three days' fighting of Quatre Bras and Waterloo, and the Royal Highlanders were mentioned specially in dispatches by the Duke of Wellington—an honour accorded to only four of the regiments that took part in the final overthrow of Napoleon. From then on to the middle of the nineteenth century the life of the regiment was uneventful, for Europe slept, and it did not fall to the Black Watch to engage in the little frontier and colonial wars of the Empire.

But 1854 brought the Crimean War, and the Royal Highlanders took the field again as the senior regiment of Sir Colin Campbell's famous Highland Brigade. The brigade took part in the charge on the heights of the Alma, and was also in at the taking of Sevastopol

The Black Watch

on the 8th of September, 1855. The end of this war brought but little respite, for under their old chief, Sir Colin Campbell, the regiment took part in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny. The battle of Cawnpur, the siege and capture of Lucknow, and the battle of Bareilly, found the Royal Highlanders well to the front, and the name " Lucknow " is borne on the colours of the regiment. A sculptured tablet in Dunkeld Cathedral commemorates the names of those of the Black Watch who fell in the Mutiny.

In the Ashanti War the Black Watch took the leading and most conspicuous part, and shared in the capture and burning of Kumasi. Then, in 1882, the regiment went to Egypt to take part in the storming of the entrenchments at Tel-el-Kebir. At Suakim, El Teb, and Tamai, such was the conduct of the regiment that Lord Wolseley sent them a telegram of congratulation, and in 1884

Scottish Regiments at the Front

the first battalion went up the Nile to the battle of Kirbekan.

Then, in 1899, the second battalion went out to South Africa as part of the ill-fated Highland Brigade under General Wauchope. On the night of Sunday, the 10th of December, in that first year of the Boer war, the Black Watch led the brigade in the memorable attack at Magersfontein. When the inferno of fire and barbed wire stopped the advance of the brigade, no less than 600 Highlanders fell, killed and wounded, including Wauchope himself. Throughout the Monday the survivors of three companies of the Black Watch held to their places in front of the Boer trenches and entanglements, while the remainder of the men of the battalion were engaged in attempting to turn the flank of the Boer position; but at nightfall it was found that the position was too strong, and the troops were drawn back. As

The Black Watch

already remarked, the brigade lost 600 in killed and wounded, and of these more than half were men of the Black Watch. In a little more than two months the survivors of the battalion had their revenge at Paardeberg, when Cronje was forced to surrender with 4,000 men. Here, again, the losses of the Black Watch amounted to 90 casualties among officers and men.

The first battalion did not come in for the earlier fighting in South Africa, but arrived in the country in time to take part in the "drives" with which Lord Kitchener put an end to the campaign. Poplar Grove and Driefontein, Retief's Nek and the surrender of Prinsloo at Wittebergen, were mere incidents to the Black Watch after the terrible work of Magersfontein and Paardeberg, and the conduct of the regiment as a whole during the war may be judged from the fact that no less than thirteen medals for dis-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

tinguished conduct were awarded to its non-commissioned officers and men.

As usual, the Black Watch were among the first regiments to take the field in the fighting in France, and they went up to Mons with the rest of the British troops who took part in the great retreat. Never during the whole of the South African campaign, said one man who had been through it, was anything experienced like the three engagements in which the Black Watch took part round Mons. The shell firing of the Germans was terrific, and the hastily constructed trenches of the British afforded very little protection against the German shell fire. Yet, though on the retreat the British troops had to undergo forced marches, some of them with very little food except such fruit as they could get by the way, they displayed splendid stamina and pluck, and the discipline maintained in this trying time, so far as the Royal High-

The Black Watch

landers were concerned, was admirable. Even when the loss of officers was heaviest, movements were still carried through with parade-like precision and coolness.

When nearing Soissons in the course of the retreat, the Black Watch were the object of an encircling movement by the enemy, and while the regiment was cutting its way through to rejoin the rest of the brigade, Colonel Grant Duff gave his orders with bullets humming round him, and went up and down the line of his battalion looking after wounded men. With the aid of the 117th Battery of R.F.A. the Black Watch succeeded in rejoining their brigade with a loss of only four men.

The work of the early days is epitomised by a man of the first battalion of the regiment. "We went straight from Boulogne to Mons," he said, "and were one of the first British regiments to reach Mons. Neither of the opposing armies

Scottish Regiments at the Front

seemed to have a very good position there, but the number of the Germans was so great that we had no chance of holding on from the first. We were in hard fighting all day on the Monday, and as the French reinforcements which we were expecting had not arrived by the Tuesday, we were given the order to retire.

“ I should judge that, altogether, we retreated quite eighty miles. We passed through Cambrai, and halted at St. Quentin ; the Germans, straining every nerve in the effort to get to Paris, had never been far behind us, and when we came to St. Quentin we got the word that we were to go into action again—and the men of the battalion were quite joyous at the prospect, for they had been none too well pleased at the continued retirement from the enemy. They started to get things ready with a will, and the engagement opened in lively fashion,

The Black Watch

both our artillery and the German going at it for all they were worth. We were in good skirmishing order, and under cover of our guns we kept on getting nearer and nearer to the enemy, till, when we were about a hundred yards of the German lines, orders were issued for a charge, and the Black Watch charged at the same time that the Scots Greys did. Not far from us the 9th Lancers and the Cameronians joined in the attack, and it was the finest sight I ever saw."

The writer continues with a description of the charge, in which, he says, the men of the Black Watch hung on to the stirrup-leathers of the Greys and went through machine-gun fire on to the German lines, and thence through to the guns of the enemy. "There were about 1,900 of us in that charge against 20,000 Germans, and the charge itself lasted about four hours. We took close upon

Scottish Regiments at the Front

4,000 prisoners, and captured a lot of their guns. In the course of the fighting I got a cut from a German sword—they are very much like saws—and fell into a pool of water, where I lay unconscious for nearly a day and night. I was picked up by one of the 9th Lancers.”

There the story ends. It is circumstantial and well borne out by other accounts of the doings of the Black Watch up to the time of St. Quentin, but one fears to accept the story of that charge in its entirety. If the men of the Black Watch advanced to within a hundred yards of the enemy under cover of their own artillery, then where did the Greys come from? For surely no artillery ever kept on firing at the enemy until *cavalry* were within a hundred yards of their objective in a charge. It is curious, too, but this is the only account that has come to hand—the only personal account of a participator—with regard to that

The Black Watch

charge of the Greys with Black Watch men hanging on to their stirrup-leathers. The story is given as told, for what it is worth.

Several accounts concur in the assistance rendered to the regiment by the 117th Battery of R.F.A., and one especially details how, when the Black Watch were subjected to overwhelming rifle fire, the guns were turned on the German riflemen with terrible effect. But there are some newspaper errors in connection with this event which are almost amusing. One of them states that, with regard to a driver of the 117th Battery—"the Highlanders were being subjected to a terrific rifle fire, when the artilleryman heroically advanced, and, getting his gun in position, put the German riflemen to flight." This was more than heroism, for a gun weighs the better part of a ton, altogether, and a driver has but a very elementary know-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

ledge of the firing mechanism of the weapon—his business is with the horses. That one driver should get the gun into position and then proceed to load and fire it, a business which occupies about a dozen men, as a rule, is well worthy of comment.

These discrepancies with known fact are unfortunately rather plentiful where the Black Watch are concerned. Another of them, though it does not credit artillerymen with the strength of elephants, tells of things that happened “on the 14th of August, at the battle of the Aisne,”—whereas on the 14th of August the great retreat was still in progress, and the battle of the Marne had not been fought, let alone that of the Aisne. “I only know,” says the author of this account, “that we lost close on 400 of the regiment, killed and wounded, the same day that I was wounded. That was on the 14th of August, at the battle of the Aisne. It was terrible, men falling

The Black Watch

on either side. The Germans were very treacherous, firing on our ambulance men as well. I was in two hospitals which we were shelled out of. All the men who could walk were told to go off as soon as possible. There were four of us left in the place all the forenoon, and the shells landing round about. I managed to crawl away when there was no firing, and I had to go about five miles to the next place. I don't know what I would have done had not an officer passing in his motor seen me and taken me to the hospital."

Another of the same kind: "On one occasion I had become detached from the main body, and met four Germans. I disposed of three of my adversaries with three successive shots, and was about to deal with the fourth, when the bolt of my rifle became jammed. The German fired, but only slightly wounded me, and I adjusted my rifle, charged my magazine, and put the man out of action."

Scottish Regiments at the Front

More heroism, almost equal to that of the gunner just quoted—and newspapers are publishing such “letters from the front” as these every day.

To come back to the real work of the regiment, a further account deals with the battle of the Aisne, where, on the 14th of September, the men occupied some high ground, and were discovered by the enemy, who set to work to render the position untenable by means of artillery fire. A patrol, sent out to get into communication with the North-amptons, had to take cover from the German artillery fire, which was so fierce that it was only in darkness they were able to return. In taking German trenches later, the Black Watch and the Camerons, who advanced together, came across numbers of dead Germans, proving that their own fire had been quite as deadly as that of their enemies. Apparently the timing of the fuses of

The Black Watch

German shells was none too good. "The artillery fire of the Germans was good, but their shells did not do nearly the same damage as those fired from the British guns. The British shells when they exploded covered a radius of something like a hundred yards, but the German shells on bursting seemed to send all their contents in a forward direction."

"But the Aisne has been a cause of heavy loss to the Black Watch," said another member of the regiment. "We lost heavily in taking up position, and the men were saddened by the loss of so many officers. One day we lost three—a captain killed, a senior captain very severely wounded, and a lieutenant killed. Then, later, the men had to deplore the loss of their commanding officer, Colonel Grant Duff—one of the bravest and best officers the regiment ever had. He died bravely. He was hard pressed and doing

Scottish Regiments at the Front

execution with one of his men's rifles when he fell with a mortal wound."

Another officer eulogised by his men was Captain Green, who was wounded at the Aisne. Hot fighting was kept up in the trenches from five in the morning until night had fallen, and throughout the night the men waited in their trenches. Shortly after four o'clock of the following morning firing was heard in front, and with the remark, "I am going forward, anyway," Captain Green went out to the front, his object being to get the range for the men, if possible. He got the range, but was hit in the head, and bandaged the wound himself, keeping his place in the trenches and declining to go into hospital.

The German fear of cold steel is emphasised in many accounts given by men of the Black Watch. "They wouldn't look at the bayonet, and we ruled the roost with very slight losses,"

The Black Watch

says one; and another—"The Germans are awfully frightened of the cold steel, and when they get a stab it is almost invariably in the back, for they run away from our boys when the bayonet appears."

Once in a while there comes an account of humanity on the part of the Germans; and one man of the Black Watch tells how he lay out in the open at the position of the Aisne for hours, wounded, and at last a German came along and bound up his wound under heavy fire. The German made the wounded man quite comfortable, and was about to retire from the danger area, when a stray bullet caught him, and he fell dead beside the man he had befriended.

Such stories as this last are welcome, and form a relief from the numberless stories of German barbarity that have appeared. Not that they disprove the stories of brutality, but they go to show that the policy of ruthlessness is a calcu-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

lated one, and that the individual German might be a kind-hearted man at times if his officers would let him. The instances of cruelty and wanton destruction that have been related all point to organised cruelty, organised destruction—it is more a matter of policy than of the conduct of individuals.

The stories quoted here form a fairly connected record of the work of the Black Watch up to the time of the battle on the Aisne ; of what came after, there is as yet no definite record. We know, from the casualty lists, that the Royal Highlanders are still making history in France, but in this first week of November we know no more than that, and a great story must still wait telling until the oft-quoted “ fog of war ” has lifted from the actions in Flanders and the north-west of France.

CHAPTER VI

THE GORDON HIGHLANDERS

FORMERLY known as the 75th and 92nd line battalions, the Gordon Highlanders form a comparatively young regiment. The first battalion was formed at Stirling in 1788 under Colonel Robert Abercromby, and was sent to India for fourteen years of active service in Mysore and Southern India. The "Royal Tiger," worn on the badges of the regiment, commemorates the part they played at the taking of Seringapatam in 1799.

The great Scottish house of Gordon raised the second battalion of the regiment near the end of the eighteenth century, and this battalion was first named "Gordon Highlanders" in 1794, when

Scottish Regiments at the Front

it was embodied at Aberdeen, with the Marquis of Huntly as its first colonel. In the Egyptian campaign of 1801, the Gordons played a conspicuous part in driving Napoleon out of Egypt, and won the "Sphinx," inscribed "Egypt," as a badge, which is now worn on all the officers' buttons. In 1807 the regiment took part in the expedition to Copenhagen, and a year later they were with Sir John Moore on the retreat to Corunna. Later, in the Peninsular campaign under Wellington, the Gordons won the admiration of their enemies and the approbation of their chief. In one action alone, that of the Maya Pass, the regiment lost over 320 officers and men killed and wounded.

On to the end of the campaign the Gordons were in the thick of things, and then, in 1815, they sailed for Belgium in May, arriving in Brussels at the end of that month. At Quatre Bras, where

The Gordon Highlanders

they were under the eye of the Duke of Wellington, the 92nd (now the 2nd battalion of the Gordons) lost heavily, and then at Waterloo itself the battalion was reduced to 300 men before the memorable charge took place. The official account of that charge, as given in the history of the regiment, is worth quoting in its entirety.

“About two o'clock in the afternoon of that memorable day, the enemy advanced a solid column of 3,000 infantry towards the position of the regiment. The column continuing to press forward, General Sir D. Pack galloped up to the regiment and called out—“Ninety-second, you must charge, for all the troops to your right and left have given way.” Three cheers from the corps expressed the devoted readiness of every individual in its ranks, though its numbers were reduced at this time to less than 300 men.

Scottish Regiments at the Front

“ The French column did not show a large front. The regiment formed four-deep, and, in that compact order, advanced till within twenty paces, when it fired a volley and instantly darted into the heart of the French column, in which it almost became invisible in the midst of the mass opposed to it. While the regiment was in the act of charging, and the instant before it came in contact with the enemy, the Scots Greys came trotting up in rear of its flanks, when both corps shouted “ Scotland for ever ! ” The column was instantaneously broken, and in its flight the cavalry rode over it. The result of this dash, which only occupied a few minutes, was a loss to the enemy of two eagles and two thousand prisoners.”

The total losses of the Gordons at Waterloo were 119 officers and men killed and wounded, and what remained of the regiment went on to occupy Paris,

The Gordon Highlanders

returning to Edinburgh in 1816. In the Crimean campaign the Gordons had bad luck, as they did not land till after Sevastopol had fallen. They had their turn in the Mutiny, however, for they fought their way from Ambala to Delhi, and sat on the "Ridge" under great John Nicholson from June to September, taking part in the final assault and storming the Kashmir gate. Later, they marched to the relief of Lucknow, and then saw general service in the many engagements that took place in the North-west Provinces before the Mutiny was finally quelled.

Then came twenty years of peace for the regiment, after which it was again called to action in Afghanistan, and took part in the ever-memorable march from Kabul to Kandahar. In the Egyptian campaign of 1882, the regiment was included in the Highland Brigade that fought at Tel-el-Kebir, and then went up

Scottish Regiments at the Front

with the expeditionary force to the relief of Khartoum and General Gordon—a fruitless errand. From that time onward to the end of the century, the Gordons saw frontier fighting in India. “Chitral” is one of the names emblazoned on the regimental colours, and in the Tirah campaign the Gordons won undying fame at the storming of the Dargai heights—which, however, was but one incident in seven months of strenuous fighting.

In the South African war, the Gordons shared in the privations of the siege of Ladysmith, and in the fierce attack made by the Boers on the Ladysmith defences, on the 6th of January, 1900, the Gordons sustained some of the fiercest of the fighting. Thus one battalion upheld the credit of the regiment, while the other, in Smith-Dorrien’s nineteenth brigade, placed the name “Paardeberg” on the regimental colours. “During the four

The Gordon Highlanders

months and a half of its existence the nineteenth brigade had marched 620 miles, often on half rations, seldom on full. It had taken part in the capture of ten towns, had fought in ten general engagements, and on twenty-seven other times, and was never beaten." Up to the end of the war the Gordons were doing brilliant work. By the end of 1902 the regiment had thirteen Victoria Crosses to its credit.

With regard to their work in France in the very early days, the men of the Gordons have shown some reticence—that is, as regards the alleged cutting off and cutting up of the regiment. It may be, so curious is the information that reached this country in September, that the men of the regiment had not heard of this cutting off and cutting up. Certain it is that they were in several tight corners in the first actions of the great retreat—but then, so were other units,

Scottish Regiments at the Front

and there is plenty of evidence to prove that Gordons came through to the Marne and the Aisne, though, unfortunately, they came without their colonel and some of their officers. Round about Mons the Gordons were heavily engaged, and found the German infantry firing weak, but their artillery work not to be despised. The greatest damage was done by the shrapnel, and not by rifle fire—a statement which concurs with practically all accounts of engagements on the great retreat. “The losses of the Allies,” said a wounded corporal of the Gordons, “were nothing to those of the Germans, who came on in a solid mass and were mowed down like sheep—close formation was their method of attack all along. The men themselves said they were driven to it by their officers at the point of the revolver, and they simply tried to be taken prisoners by the British. We passed through plundered villages,

The Gordon Highlanders

and saw windows smashed, furniture thrown out on the streets, and churches and other buildings destroyed."

Another wounded non-commissioned officer speaks of "what was left of the battalion after Mons" being in the firing-line, when an order was given for a general retreat. A dispatch rider gave the message to a part of the division to which the Gordons belonged, but on his way to them he was killed by a shell, and the Gordons, not having received the order, stuck to their position. "The Germans advanced in such force that we were at last compelled to retire, and lost a lot of jolly good fellows. I doubt if any of us would have been left if it had not been for the 135th Battery of Field Artillery. They covered our retreat, sending out such a terrible fire that the enemy were afraid to approach any nearer."

This stands as the most circumstantial

Scottish Regiments at the Front

account of the cutting-off of the Gordons that has come to hand among personal letters and accounts of the men who were there, and, unlike so many letters purporting to be from "the front," it bears the stamp of authenticity. A piper of the regiment corroborates it by saying that "the Germans came on in great masses, driving us back all the time." He tells of being left only with a revolver, his sword having snapped, after which he crossed a river, and made a stand in a church. "Eight hundred of us entered that church, the majority never to come out again, for the Germans' big 'Jack Johnsons' shelled us out." There was, apparently, an officer in charge, and when he saw how the shells were causing fatalities he gave the order for all men who could to bolt for the road and save themselves. "The people at home will not think any the worse of you, lads, for it," he is

The Gordon Highlanders

alleged to have said. According to the piper's account, some sixty or more got away to safety in one rush, in which he himself was wounded in the arm.

The work of signallers has not come into much prominence in the fighting in France, but one of the signallers of the Gordons, at least, has had occasion to use his flags. It happened that his battalion had been in a tight corner for some time, and was running short of ammunition, in consequence of which the signaller was ordered by his company officer to signal to the Army Service Corps for a further supply. He stood up facing to the rear, and, raising his flags, signalled—"From Captain——" when the message was cut short by his arm being wounded in two places. As he was trying to bind up the wounds, another piece of shrapnel came along and lodged in the same arm:

Scottish Regiments at the Front

A good general account of the fighting is given by one non-commissioned officer who went out at the end of August, and was first engaged in the fighting which took place immediately before the advance from the Marne to the Aisne. Here the Gordons were engaged near a village held by the enemy, and under very hot fire. The British troops had a hard job in getting the Germans to leave their trenches, but eventually the artillery fire from the British guns proved too much for the Germans, who got up and ran. The Gordons reached the village after the enemy had fled, and were billeted there for the night—and in this connection the non-commissioned officer responsible for this account remarks that the German rifle fire is almost useless, though their machine-gun fire is good. “ Besides, when once they think they are beaten they are off, and one can scarcely get at close quarters

The Gordon Highlanders

with them. Our party never got within half a mile of them."

In this last sentence, it must be remembered, the writer refers to the German troops who had come down on the tremendous advance which ended at the position of the Marne. Official reports leave it beyond doubt that these German troops had undergone three weeks of the severest strain that has ever been imposed on fighting men, and that their *moral* was so far impaired that, after the wheel made by von Kluck's army away from Paris, the whole of them had to be drawn back and replaced by other troops. Since they had been reduced to this state by their exertions, it is hardly to be wondered at that they would not face their enemies at close quarters.

The narrative, proceeding, states that on the advance of the British to the trenches the enemy had occupied, it

Scottish Regiments at the Front

was difficult to estimate the number of German dead, for the trenches, filled with bodies, had been covered in with earth. One German was found by the Gordons still standing in his trench, with his rifle to his shoulder, quite dead. He had evidently been shot while in the act of taking aim, and had been left by his retreating comrades. On the advance, it was noted that the work of the British artillery had been particularly deadly, especially among the woods through which the men advanced. The part of the regiment to which the narrator of these events was attached was sent back to headquarters in charge of several hundreds of prisoners, their places in the firing line being taken by others for the time being; and, after a turn at headquarters duty, the Gordons were sent on to Lille and La Bassée, opposite to a part of von Kluck's force, which had in the meantime moved out

The Gordon Highlanders

to the north-west to keep pace with the extension of the Allied line. While the Gordons were lying in an open field, taking part in an attack, the order was given to retire; but it was unheard by the men of some sections, and the enemy advanced so near that the position of some of the men became very critical. But the wretched fire of the German infantry proved their salvation, for sixteen of the Gordons made their way across perfectly level, boggy ground, with the Germans less than 1,000 yards away, and only two were wounded.

The first days on the Aisne, according to another of the Gordons, must be counted as one of the fiercest examples of warfare under modern conditions. For days the Gordons were subjected to such a hurricane of shrapnel fire that they were compelled to lie in their trenches, merely awaiting developments; and many of the men who were wounded

Scottish Regiments at the Front

by shrapnel never fired their rifles, for the enemy was too far off for rifle fire to have any effect. One man was struck fourteen times by the shrapnel fire, and still came out from the trenches to recover. It was not until the British artillery was reinforced that the infantry were able to advance.

"We were kept so busy," says one man of the Gordons concerning this time, "that for three days and nights we had no time to issue the mail. The men felt the want of a smoke more than of food, and I have seen more than one man trade away his last biscuit for a cigarette or a fill of tobacco. When the heaviest of the shelling was going on, our men were puffing away at 'fag-ends.'"

From such accounts as these one may glean some idea of what the Gordons underwent up to the time of the transference of the main battle to the Flanders area. As for this last, one non-com-

The Gordon Highlanders

missioned officer states that the men were hardly ever out of canals and wet ditches. One day a section of men lay waist deep in water from nine in the morning till three in the afternoon, patiently waiting for dusk to come, that they might get a chance to dry their clothes. "The Germans generally cease operations at dusk, and on these occasions the same old order comes along the line—"Dig yourselves in, men." And, on the day that they lay in water so long, no sooner had they dug themselves in than the order to advance was given!

Apparently authentic is the account of the death of Captain Ker of the Gordons, who, it is stated by eyewitnesses, was in command of men whom he led up in face of the enemy's fire at Béthune. The men gained the shelter of a natural rise in the ground, but before they reached this point Captain Ker was struck in the head by shrapnel, and was killed instantly.

Scottish Regiments at the Front

The men lay for some time in the position they had won, but eventually found that it was too dangerous to retain, and risked the enemy's fire in place of capture. They doubled back across a couple of fields to their old position, and eighteen of the twenty-one in the party got safely back—but only seven of them escaped being hit. Captain Ker was later picked up and buried on the field.

With regard to Colonel Gordon, V.C., it appears from one account that he was taken into a barn after having been wounded, but almost immediately afterwards the barn caught fire, and it was thought that he had been trapped in the flames. It seems, however, that the wound was only a body one, and the colonel was able to get clear, though he was afterwards taken prisoner.

“Keep your heads up, men!” one of the officers of the Gordons shouted to his men on one occasion. “They can't

The Gordon Highlanders

hit you"—pointing to the snipers up a tree; and with that remark he showed his own head above the trench. "None of us cared to follow his example, but his cheery way bucked us up," says one of the men present at the time. Yet again the same officer inquired—"Any man wanting to earn a glass of claret?" and received several enthusiastic affirmatives. "Well," he said, "catch me that hen running across the road." The offer was not accepted, for the German fire was hot at the time.

Another account refers to a battle which took place about the middle of October, the 2nd battalion being the one referred to. "I left the trenches on Saturday night for hospital," says the writer. "On Friday afternoon we had a terrible battle with the Germans, who turned all their artillery and machine guns on our trenches in an attempt to break through them. It was hell while

Scottish Regiments at the Front

it lasted, but we gave them more than they wanted. About three hundred yards in front of our trenches was a ridge running parallel with them, and every time the Germans mounted this ridge in mass they were blown into the air. Ten times they were blown away, losing battalions each time—it was sickening to see them. Towards night they retired; and my company lost pretty heavily, five men being killed and thirteen wounded. Our captain and lieutenant were also wounded. Throughout all that battle I never got so much as a scratch—I have been very lucky on two or three occasions.”

This man went into hospital at the finish with a poisoned hand and head, caused by a graze sustained three weeks before the fight of which he writes. In his letter, as in all the accounts quoted here, is noticeable an absolute lack of doubt as to the final result of the titanic struggle. Not that any one of the men

The Gordon Highlanders

actually voices confidence, but from the way in which they tell of the doings of their regiments one may gauge their spirit, and understand that they see only the one end to this war of world-forces ; that there is no fear of defeat, no thought of other than a steady driving on to a fixed end—the overthrow of German militarism. Many of them—many Gordons, without doubt—have never given the matter a thought, for they fight, as the Gordons and as the whole British Army always fights, with a belief in themselves and their leaders that amounts to such conviction as needs no words for its expression—a settled knowledge that in good time their task will be accomplished. For behind all these men are the traditions of those who cried “ Scotland for ever ! ” men who knew not the meaning of defeat.

CHAPTER VII

THE SEAFORTH HIGHLANDERS

THE 1st battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders originally bore the number subsequently allotted to the 2nd battalion, for in 1778 the 1st battalion was raised as the 78th infantry of the line by the Earl of Seaforth, and with that as its official number it went to Jersey to defend the island against a French attack, and subsequently to India. The voyage to India occupied ten months, and cost the life of the Earl of Seaforth and 200 men of the regiment ; the remainder landed safely, and underwent the campaign which ended in the overthrow of Tippoo Sahib : the Seaforths led the attack on the fortifications of Bangalore, and assisted in the taking of

The Seaforth Highlanders

Seringapatam. Then the Seaforths took Ceylon from the Dutch.

In 1786 the 1st battalion (as it is at present known) was renumbered "72nd," and in 1793 the present 2nd battalion of the regiment was formed as the "78th Foot." After work in Holland and at the Cape, the 78th went to India to fight under the future Duke of Wellington in the Mahratta War. For valour at Assaye the 78th was granted the Elephant, inscribed "Assaye," as a special badge, and also a third colour to bear. These distinctions were well earned, for the 78th defeated a force ten times as strong as itself in the course of the battle.

The warlike quality of the material from which the Seaforths were obtained may be estimated from the fact that two "second battalions" were formed in succession and sent out to join the original 78th raised in 1793. In the second

Scottish Regiments at the Front

expedition to Egypt in 1807, and in the disastrous Walcheren expedition, the battalion took part, losing heavily in officers and men in both cases—three companies were practically annihilated at El Hamet in the Egyptian campaign. After Walcheren, the Seaforths had little chance of winning distinction in the Napoleonic wars, but in 1819 and 1835 the regiment was engaged at the Cape in Kaffir wars, and the next incident of note in the history of the Seaforths was their work in the Mutiny, when they served under Havelock, marching from Allahabad to the relief of Cawnpur and Lucknow. Four battles were fought and won before the force reached Cawnpur—too late; and they went on to Lucknow. Tennyson has told how the sound of Highland music gave intimation of relief to the sorely pressed Lucknow garrison, and, regarding the work of the regiment at that time, their commander told them

The Seaforth Highlanders

—"I have been forty years in the service, I have been engaged in actions seven-and-twenty times, but in the whole of my career I have never seen any regiment behave so well as the 78th Highlanders. I am proud of you."

The 72nd, the present 1st battalion of the Seaforths, was also engaged in the suppression of the Mutiny, though not with Havelock, and they helped largely in suppressing the final flames of rebellion throughout India. Then followed nearly twenty years of peace service for the regiment, after which it took part in the campaign in Afghanistan, and shared in the memorable march from Kabul to Kandahar. The bravery of the regiment in this campaign is attested by the fact that no less than five names connected with the two years of fighting are emblazoned on the regimental colours.

The Seaforths were in the charge at Tel-el-Kebir, and in the second Egyptian

Scottish Regiments at the Front

campaign of 1898 the first battalion was engaged both at Atbara and Khartoum. In between these two wars the regiment saw much service in the two Hazara wars and the campaign of Chitral. In South Africa the Seaforths formed part of the Highland Brigade at Magersfontein, and lost no less than 212 officers and men killed and wounded in that disastrous action. Magersfontein was avenged at Paardeberg, where the Seaforths took part in the rounding up and capture of Cronje, following up this with the action at Poplar Grove and that of Driefontein. In the next great capture of the war, that of Prinsloo in the Wittebergen, the Seaforths played an active part, and from then on to the end of hostilities the regiment was actively engaged, both in blockhouse work and in the rounding up of the Boer forces. Up to 1902, the regiment had won no less than eleven Victoria Crosses, while its distinguished-

The Seaforth Highlanders

conduct medals are too numerous to count.

For the campaign in France and Belgium, the Seaforths were brigaded with the Irish Fusiliers, the Dublin Fusiliers, and the Warwickshire Regiment, under command of Brigadier-General J. A. L. Haldane, D.S.O., who made a memorable escape from Pretoria during the last Boer war. That the regiment is keeping up its traditions is instanced by the case of one man who was found retiring to the rear, wounded in nine different places. He wanted no sympathy, and asked for no help ; all he wanted to know was—who had won the St. Leger ! One of his comrades, wounded also, remarked that the Seaforths had “ fairly made the Germans hop out of their trenches when they charged with the bayonet.” The enemy had no idea that the British were so close on them till the Seaforths marched out of a farmyard right into the firing line,

Scottish Regiments at the Front

and then the Germans did not wait, but ran like cattle chased by dogs. "After marching for four days, during which time we did not know where we were, we got into motor cars and were taken to a position right under the very noses of the Germans, who got the surprise of their lives when they saw the 'ladies from hell,' as they called us on account of our kilts, advancing on them."

Further, a man of the Dublin Fusiliers bears testimony to the fighting qualities of the Seaforths. "It keeps up your spirit to be fighting with such fellows," he says, "and they have fairly put fear into the Germans with their bayonet charges. When there was any close fighting, and it came to using the cold steel, the Germans ran from them like hares. Most of the 'Jocks' now have beards, and with their kilts flying when they charge they are a wild-looking lot." The writer of this adds his evidence to

The Seaforth Highlanders

the testimony that the Germans have no liking for bayonet work. "They are big chaps, most of them, but have not got the heart for it," he observes.

The actual route taken by the regiment, in the moves made by the British forces since the war began, can be traced pretty accurately by means of various personal accounts. The first of these accounts states that the Seaforths were first engaged at Agincourt, where an advance party of Germans took the regiment by surprise, and they were hotly engaged. The Germans lost heavily, but were in very strong force, and at night the Seaforths drew back to get a rest. Two days later, at Guise, the German cavalry tried to break through the column which included the Seaforths, but they were met with fixed bayonets and driven back, though the British suffered heavy casualties.

Then "at La-Musa we had a stiff

Scottish Regiments at the Front

engagement with the German Crown Prince's army on the right wing, and by the aid of their aeroplanes the German gunners found our trenches, on which they kept up a heavy cannonading for almost three hours. An attack was made by the German cavalry, but our artillery mowed them down like hay—the slaughter was something awful. We had to retire, however, and for twenty-eight miles we marched without food before we got out of range of the enemy's guns. After three hours' rest we advanced in an opposite direction to our line of retreat, and proceeded to La Ferte, with the German cavalry in pursuit. Crossing the river there we had a thrilling time, and just crossed the bridge in time for the Royal Engineers to blow it up and prevent the Germans crossing—a number of the Engineers were killed in the explosion.

“We afterwards marched to Mons,

The Seaforth Highlanders

having several skirmishes on the way, and managed to capture a number of Germans and a field hospital. We saw many signs of German barbarism on our march, and one sight I shall never forget was that of a father and mother with a baby about two months old, lying stabbed to death by bayonets on their doorstep. Frequently we took women and children into the trenches for safety, and always they had a terrible dread of the Uhlans. We Seaforths were on the right flank at Mons, and one morning the Germans suddenly opened fire on us at three o'clock. We fixed bayonets, and followed the Guards in skirmishing order, passing over heaps of dead, and capturing German guns. But we could not keep our positions, for the Germans were entrenched in masses farther on, and we had to retire."

This account is rather muddled, for the writer speaks of days of fighting and

Scottish Regiments at the Front

marching with skirmishes before the action at Mons. One must sort out the various engagements mentioned and compare them with the official account of the first engagements in order to arrive at an estimate of the position in which the Seaforths began their fighting. On the whole, however, the writer conveys a very good idea of the work of those first few days—he was wounded in the retirement from Mons, and thus his narrative ceases there.

The story is taken on by a man of the regiment who was captured during the fighting on the Oise, and was sentenced by the enemy to be shot, but managed to escape. Having lost his regiment, he attached himself to a French unit, and kept with them for three weeks, in which time he saw only three Englishmen, all lost like himself, and they commiserated each

The Seaforth Highlanders

other on not knowing the French language, and consequently being unable to converse with their comrades in the firing line. In the town from which the writer posted his letter, the Germans had looted all the shops previous to the French reoccupation, while the British had blown up a bridge, and the Germans in turn had sunk a number of French boats in the canal to form a temporary bridge. The writer adds his evidence on the subject of German cruelty.

Concerning an engagement on the Aisne, on the 13th of September, one of the Seaforths who participated tells how his company had been resting for the night in a farmhouse after having been on the move for seven or eight days, and in the morning they went forward a march of three or four miles, which brought them into range of the enemy's position, a mile to the front. The regiment was ordered to take the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

German position, and advanced in extended order across a clear field of fire, when, fortunately for the attackers, the enemy's fire was so bad that the losses were very slight. The advance was steadily maintained, until at 300 yards' distance from the position the order was given to fix bayonets. At that, "the Germans did not wait to say 'Good night,' but simply ran, as they won't face the cold steel at any price." Still, a number of the Seaforths were put out of action in the business, in which the regiment gained all that they had been ordered to take. "It was a great charge," says the man who tells of it. "No wonder so much is thought of the Highland regiments, for it would have done your heart good to hear the cheer that went up when the order was given to charge, and the Germans did run. All I can say is that if we had been in their position we should have

The Seaforth Highlanders

waited for them to come upon us, and none of them would ever have reached us, as I think our rifle fire is good enough to stop any charge that might be made."

The same man tells of "a low, dirty trick" that the Germans played in the course of this fight. Some of them put up a white flag, and when about fifty of the Warwickshires went out to take the surrendered men they opened fire with a machine gun and slaughtered the Warwicks. "That is the kind of warfare the Germans like to carry on."

Thus runs the account of the 13th of September, and on the following day, according to several accounts received, the colonel of the regiment, Colonel Sir Evelyn Bradford, was killed—he has since been mentioned in dispatches. The most circumstantial account is as follows :

"It was in the battle of the Aisne, when the Seaforths had taken up a

Scottish Regiments at the Front

position near a wood, that the Germans began a heavy fire. The colonel was standing with two other officers surveying the field of operations, when he was struck by a shell and killed instantly. A lieutenant of the Gordons, who was attached to the battalion, was killed, and a number of the men were struck and wounded—in all, there were about thirty wounded by the one explosion. They attempted to bury the colonel the same night, but were prevented from their task by the heavy and continuous shell-fire from the enemy.” At about nine in the evening, however, a burial party set out to lay the dead commander to rest up on the face of a hill, near a large farmhouse which was the headquarters of the force for the time. “Poor Colonel Bradford!” comments a member of the party; “I cannot tell you how great our loss is. He was a brave commander, and was killed while

The Seaforth Highlanders

trying to safeguard his regiment. We could not fetch his body in while daylight lasted, but at midnight we laid him, with two other officers, to rest on their field of honour, on a hill-side overlooking a valley of the river. It was a sad but glorious moment for us to stand and hear the padre tell us that they had not shrunk from their duty, and had fallen for the sake of their comrades. The next day I found some Scotch thistle growing close by, and I plucked the blooms to form a cross over the dead chieftain's grave."

Concerning this action of the 14th of September, another participant tells that the British troops were steadily driving the Germans back, and the company of the Seaforths to which he belonged had crossed the river two days before, and were holding a ridge, though the enemy had a great advantage in point of numbers. This man sent home a

Scottish Regiments at the Front

transcript of a German officer's diary, which makes very interesting reading.

“ *July 20.*—At last the day! To have lived to see it! We are ready, let come who may. The world race is destined to be German.

“ *August 5.*—Our losses to-day [before Liège] have been frightful. Never mind, it is all allowed for. Besides, the fallen are only Polish beginners, the spilling of whose blood will spread the war lust at home—a necessary factor.

“ *August 11.*—And now for the English, used to fighting farmers. [A reference to the Boer War.] To-night Wilhelm the Greater has given us beautiful advice. You think each day of your Emperor, and do not forget God. [Note the order in which the two are mentioned.] His Majesty should remember that in thinking of him we think of God, for is not he the Almighty's instrument in this glorious fight for right?

The Seaforth Highlanders

"*August 12.*—This is clearly to be an artillery war, as we foresaw. Infantry counts for nothing.

"*August 20.*—The conceited English have ranged themselves up against us at absurd odds, our airmen say. [This, it must be remembered, was written concerning the time of the great retreat, when the German forces were in overwhelming numerical superiority.]

"*August 25.*—An English shell burst on a Red Cross wagon to-day—full of English. Ha-ha! Serve the swine right. Still, they fight well. I salute the officer who kept on swearing at Germany and her Emperor in his agony—and then to ask calmly for a bath! These English! We have scarcely time enough to bury our dead, so they are being weighted in the river."

The writer of this diary was captured, so his entries extend no farther. The way in which his views of "the con-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

ceited English " altered as time went on is worthy of note.

A R.A.M.C. officer attached to the Sea-forths gives an idea of the way in which the regiment conducted its daily business. Each morning the regiment would " stand to arms " at about three o'clock, and at four or five o'clock the men would move on, either with or without breakfast—which consisted of tea and biscuits, and bacon if there were time to cook it. Sleeping accommodation varied in quality and extent from night to night, ranging from a ploughed field or an orchard to the floor of a deserted house. Often the men were so sleepy that they lay in the road—quite contentedly, since they were allowed to lie.

" I am doing less than the men," adds the writer. " Just think of them: march, march, march, and then when we sleep it falls to the lot of many to guard the outposts with no chance of

The Seaforth Highlanders

shelter, and then go on marching through the next day, wet, and hoping to dry as they go. Only the highest praise can be given to these men.

“At present [on the Aisne] we are entrenched. Our first day in this place, where we have been for five days, was awful, for we were under fire the whole of the day, with practically no protection, and our total of killed and wounded amounted to seventy. The men never wavered, and gaps were always filled. Grand are the Highland men, and grander still will be the account they will render; I am lucky to be with such men.”

These various accounts of the work of the regiment form a fairly detailed description of the work at the Aisne. Of how the regiment was moved up to the Flanders front there is no account to hand, but the work done on the new front has been fairly fully described. First of all comes the account of Captain Meth-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

ven's death, which took place in the fighting round Lille, where Captain Methven and his company were set to drive the Germans from their trenches with the bayonet. The German trenches were at the top of a steep little hill, and up this hill Captain Methven rushed, with his men following. He paused at the edge of the enemy's trenches and turned to wave the men on—they saw him silhouetted against the skyline for a second, and then he fell, shot through the heart at what must have been point-blank range. But the trenches were won, the small force of Germans who had been holding them surrendered—Captain Methven had not died in vain. “I had read about this single-handed taking of a position,” writes a spectator, “but until I saw Captain Methven's action I thought these things only happened in story-books.”

A little later the brigade of which the 2nd Seaforths formed a part was engaged

The Seaforth Highlanders

in the storming of a position, an action in which they drove back the enemy for several miles. For the greater part of the day the British position had been commanded by the fire of the enemy, who held a position on a hill in the neighbourhood and maintained a steady fire on the British brigade. The brigade commander saw that if the enemy were given time to bring up heavy artillery they would render their own position impregnable and that of the British force untenable—the height had to be taken that day, if at all. So the “Charge!” was sounded, and the brigade advanced across the intervening ground, with the men cheering and shouting as they rushed forward—and above all the rest of the cries rose the “Caber-feidh,” the rallying-cry of the Seaforths. The German position was taken in about a quarter of an hour—and in rear were a fleet of motor vehicles, in which the retreating Germans

Scottish Regiments at the Front

decamped. Pursuit was out of the question, and there was only snap-shooting at the flying enemy by way of consolation.

Beyond this the records of the regiment do not take us at present. There remains, however, one record of "B" Company of the 2nd Battalion and its work on the night of the 13th of October, a statement that may well be included in this record of the doings of the Sea-forths. It tells how the company had to charge the enemy out of his trenches at the bayonet point, which was done with some considerable loss of killed and wounded, and the writer comments—
"There was not a coward among us."

"But that was nothing to what we had last Tuesday [Oct. 20]. We were digging trenches when we heard a volley of rifle fire come right over us, and we got the order to stand to arms and advance. Their trenches were situated in a row on a rise in a field, and we could not

The Seaforth Highlanders

get our range on them. In a minute the signal to charge went, and we all scrambled up the hill to get at them. The first to get up was our company officer, and he was hit. We all dived into their trenches at the point of their rifles, shooting and stabbing, and then came the onslaught. Some of them were too terrified to get out, while others rushed out and were shot down, and the remainder sought refuge in a house. They showed the white flag in a doorway, but we got the order not to take any notice of it until some of their officers came out, and we waved them in. About fifty surrendered. I am proud to say that we were only one company. I shall never forget that charge as long as I live. The General said—'Bravo, Seaforths! it was a grand charge.' "

Which forms a fitting final word as far as the Seaforths are concerned.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CAMERON HIGHLANDERS

MR. ALAN CAMERON, a gentleman of Scotland in the eighteenth century, fought a duel over which he was obliged to leave the British Isles, whereupon he found employment in an irregular cavalry corps which assisted the British in the American War of Independence. When the war ended he returned to England, judging that the storm had blown over, and at the time of the French Revolution he offered to raise a corps of Highlanders for the British Army. The offer was accepted, and Cameron raised 700 of his clansmen in Inverness-shire, a body which became the 79th Foot, and had its title altered in 1881 to the Cameron Highlanders.

The Cameron Highlanders

The first active service undergone by the men of the regiment was in Holland, where in 1794 under the Duke of York they fought against an enemy greatly superior in numbers. Five years later the regiment again went to Holland, to distinguish itself at the action of Egmont-op-Zee, a name borne since that time on the regimental colours. This was followed up by the expedition under Sir Ralph Abercromby to Egypt, whence Napoleon and his army were driven out by the British. The Sphinx, with "Egypt" inscribed on it, is borne by the Camerons, in common with some other Highland regiments.

Copenhagen, at the capture of which the Camerons assisted in 1807, was overshadowed as an exploit by the work of the "light company" of the Camerons at Corunna in the following year. Talavera was a field in which the Camerons had a share, as was Busaco, and the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

regiment helped in holding the "lines" of Torres Vedras through the winter in which Wellington lay at bay against Napoleon's marshals, to emerge in the spring and force the French to retreat. At Fuentes d'Onor, after holding the village in company with two other regiments against attack after attack by the French, the Camerons were forced out by the flower of the French Army, the Imperial Guard. When the fight was at its fiercest a French soldier shot dead the colonel of the regiment, and at that the Highlanders raised a cry of vengeance and swept away the famous Guard of France.

From Salamanca to Toulouse the Camerons fought on through the rest of the Peninsular campaign; they fought through Quatre Bras, and were among the four regiments specially mentioned in dispatches by Wellington after Waterloo. From that time, until 1854 called

The Cameron Highlanders

them to the Crimean campaign, the men of the regiment had only peace service; but, in the Highland Brigade under Sir Colin Campbell, the successors of the Highlanders who had distinguished themselves at Waterloo proved that the valour of the regiment was as great as ever, and at the battle of the Alma the Camerons did gallant service.

Almost immediately after the Crimea came the Mutiny, and the Camerons were among the first regiments to oppose the mutineers. At Mahomdie over a hundred men of the regiment went down with sunstroke, and then at Lucknow the mutineers had to be driven from house to house by bayonet work—in which Scottish regiments have always excelled.

For the nine months that followed the work in Lucknow, the regiment was almost constantly engaged with the enemy, especially at the battle of Bareilly

Scottish Regiments at the Front

and the crossing of the Gogra and Rapti rivers. The Mohmund and Kumasi campaigns came next, and in 1873 Queen Victoria presented the regiment with new colours and conferred on it the title of the "Queen's Own." Then in 1882 came the Egyptian campaign, and at Tel-el-Kebir a man of the Camerons was first to fall in the dawn hour at which that action began. The charge of the Camerons on the enemy's lines is a feat that has been often described, and Lieutenant-Colonel Leith's cry of "Come on, 79th!" has become historic.

In the attempt to rescue Gordon, and again in 1885, the Cameron Highlanders continued their work in Egypt, and in 1893 Lochiel of Cameron unveiled at Inverness a monument to the brave men of the regiment who had fallen in Egypt. Four years later a second battalion was raised, and in 1898 the 1st battalion again went up the Nile to assist in the

The Cameron Highlanders

final Dervish overthrow. With "Remember General Gordon" as their watchword, the Camerons shared in the battle of the Atbara, at which Mahmoud's army was annihilated and Mahmoud himself taken prisoner. Sharing in the onward march, the Camerons were present at Omdurman, where the power of the Khalifa was finally broken, and the battalion attended the memorial service held in Khartoum on September 4th of that year in memory of General Gordon. Thence one company of the regiment went up to Fashoda, and had the unique honour of representing the British Army there at the time of the incident, now nearly forgotten, which so nearly led to war with France.

It was not until March of 1900 that the Camerons landed at East London to take part in the South African campaign, and they were then incorporated in the 21st Brigade under General Bruce

Scottish Regiments at the Front

Hamilton. They shared in the general advance to Pretoria, in the crossing of the Zand River, the battle of Doorn Kop, and the engagement at Diamond Hill. Later, they shared in the capture of Prinsloo in the Wittebergen, and in the reliefs of Winburg and Ladybrand. Up to the end of the war the Camerons were in the thick of things, and the men received the personal thanks of General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien for the work they had performed while serving under him, and, what was more, for the fine spirit in which that work had been done.

The most that can be done with regard to locating the Camerons in France is to state that they formed a part of the First Division, and that when the Allies took the offensive the Camerons took the place of the Munsters; also that they have acted in very close conjunction with the Black Watch, with whom, it is highly

The Cameron Highlanders

probable, they were brigaded. At Mons the Black Watch formed the first line, and, as they lost a considerable number of men, the Camerons were moved up by way of support, when thirteen men of the battalion were killed and wounded. In the course of the great retreat there were as many as 300 men missing at one time, but parties of ten and twelve came in later and reduced the apparent losses. When nearing Soissons in the course of the retreat, the Black Watch were made the object of an encircling movement by the enemy, but they escaped with the aid of the 117th Battery R.F.A. and that of some of the Camerons. One man of the Black Watch had crossed the Aisne in the retreat, and was wounded while lying out in the open to fire, and a Cameron man stood by him and assisted him to the rear at the cost of three wounds to himself.

These slight incidents are all that can

Scottish Regiments at the Front

be gleaned with regard to the actual movements of the Camerons at the time of the retreat. Several minor incidents, however, have come to light, and of these many bear on the German abuse of the white flag and of all the recognised rules of war. On one occasion Germans were seen walking between the trenches—their own and the British—carrying stretchers; and, under the assumption that they were carrying wounded, firing was stopped for the time. It was discovered, however, that instead of wounded the supposed ambulance men were carrying machine guns on their stretchers, and at the same time they showed the Red Cross flag. On the other hand, such of the enemy as have been taken prisoners by the Camerons on the retreat told their captors that they expected to be shot at once, having been told by their officers that that would be their fate if they fell into the enemy's hands.

The Cameron Highlanders

It appears that there is plenty of humour among the Cameron men on the battlefield. "It's very funny," says one of them, "to hear a Frenchman try to sing 'Tipperary.' It fairly stumps them, but they do their best. The two favourite songs with our boys are 'Tipperary' and the Marseillaise. You should see a Frenchman when he hears that—he goes fairly daft. These Frenchmen seem terribly loungy to look at, but they are good fighters, for all that. They go smashing into it, and their artillery is the best out there. But our officers are a fine lot, the best set of men I ever came across. They do their share."

Thus, discursively, a wounded Cameron man told of the incidentals of the fighting in France—the earlier days. Then comes a fairly detailed account of the battle of the Marne, in which the first three days, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, are described as "pretty much

Scottish Regiments at the Front

preliminary," but on Tuesday the brigade of which the Camerons formed a part went out to meet the enemy, and drove them back, capturing about six hundred prisoners and eight guns. The ground was sodden with rain, and the Camerons lay out in the harvest fields taking cover behind the standing sheaves of corn, while the German artillery rained out shells on them, not even stopping when their own infantry advanced on the British troops. "We got it very rough, and a man beside me—one of our battalion—went out to help an officer who was badly wounded, but just as he got up to the officer he dropped. Our fellows were falling all round, and at about ten in the morning I got my dose. During the day the fighting round where I was lying fell off a bit, but I had to lay on the ground until dark, when another chap, who saw I couldn't move, came over to make me a bed of straw and get me

The Cameron Highlanders

comfortable. But before he could get my bed made a bullet got him through the spine, and he tumbled over in a heap—stone dead. I was lucky to get out of it, for the Germans were firing on our ambulance men. They had snipers lying among our wounded, and that night, when stretcher bearers came out to carry in the wounded officer, three of the bearers were shot. It was Wednesday morning before I was picked up by a picket of the Coldstream Guards.”

At the beginning of the battle of the Aisne, the Camerons were brought up to advance in skirmishing order under shell fire, when one man was wounded by shell fire, and fell back behind a haystack. Some other wounded also sought the shelter of the haystack, whereupon the Germans immediately began to shell it, and the wounded men sought other shelter, to fall in with a convoy of thirty German prisoners. Finally they found

Scottish Regiments at the Front

the transport column, and were taken back to a hospital established in a village in rear of the firing line—but this hospital was already full up. No less than thirty-two shells were aimed directly at this hospital, though it had a Red Cross flag flying over it all the time. This hospital was cleared, and two hours after the patients had been removed it was utterly destroyed by shell fire.

Another account relates that the enemy occupied the positions on the Aisne that they had taken up in 1870, and their guns were all placed in concrete positions, carefully prepared against the event. After the Camerons took up their position, the distance between the opposing forces was about a thousand yards, with fairly open ground between, and the regiment was ordered to attack the trenches held by the enemy. The whole brigade advanced under heavy shell fire until within 250 yards of the enemy's position—and

The Cameron Highlanders

then the man who tells of this incident was struck down by shell fire and rendered unconscious, so that he did not see the result of the advance. He knew, however, that it must have been successful, since he was still behind the British line when he recovered consciousness.

It was later on, when the battle of the Aisne had taken on the nature of a siege action, that the cave disaster occurred which caused the deaths of over thirty officers and men of the regiment. Near the firing line was a large, spacious cave, which was used partly as a collecting base for the wounded, and partly as the regimental headquarters; and on the 25th of September, while the German artillery was shelling the British positions, the roof of the cave was struck by one of the big German shells, with the result that it fell in, burying thirty-five officers and men. The cave was some 300 yards behind the firing line, so that the incident

Scottish Regiments at the Front

went unobserved for some time—though it is doubtful if anything could have been done even had prompt action been taken, since the fall of rock and earth was so heavy that most of the men in the cave must have been killed instantaneously. Four of the occupants, however, were able to shout for help, being pinned down by masses of rock at the back of the cave when the roof fell in ; and, nearly two hours after the accident, other men of the regiment heard the shouts of those imprisoned, and set to the work of rescue. Three men had been liberated, and while the rescuers were at work getting out the fourth man another shell landed in the same spot, covered in the pinned man, and blew his would-be rescuer to pieces. But this wounded man, though buried anew, was still alive, though he lost consciousness after two hours. An officer and three men of the Scots Guards finally dug him out, after he had been buried for

The Cameron Highlanders

about six hours, and he was sent away to hospital and recovery.

The Camerons came, with the greater part of the British force in France, to the fighting in the north-west which foiled the German attack on Calais, and from this part of the battle line one account has come through. "We were fairly giving it to the Germans," says a wounded man from this quarter. "In the morning we started advancing in single line by sections at three paces interval across open fields at the double, and the shells were landing all round us as fast as the enemy could fire them, but we managed to get into our positions. We had a bad time of it there, but we managed to put a stop to the German advance, and then we took up another position, and held it. When the enemy were within about eighty yards of us the officer in charge of the company gave the order to fix bayonets, and we charged,

Scottish Regiments at the Front

at which the Germans ran away. We opened fire on them, and at about two o'clock on that day I was wounded. I was lying in a hollow of the ground which we had just cleared, and I had to lie there for hours until the enemy were driven back by a British regiment. Shortly after I was wounded the Germans gained the crest of a hill, and one of the Scots Guards lying there wounded put up his hands for them not to shoot, but one of them came to within two yards of him and shot him through the stomach, and he rolled over again and died about two hours afterwards."

Against this cold-blooded savagery must be set the account given by an officer of the 1st battalion of the Camerons, who states that he was shot through the leg just before the enemy charged in great numbers and drove the British out of their trenches. One of the men tried to get the officer along in

The Cameron Highlanders

the retirement, but could not do so, and he was made a prisoner. "They banged me about a bit at first, and tied my hands behind my back, and tried to get me to walk, but of course I could not. At last one splendid German came forward and took me off to their own wounded in a farmhouse. He stayed by me the whole time, and was most wonderfully good to me. They dressed my wound and got me some water, and did what they could for me. Next day, at two in the afternoon, my company charged back at the house and drove the enemy back, rescuing me and the one or two other wounded prisoners in the house."

Another officer writes, concerning the time on the Aisne: "The way the Germans treat property is disgusting. While passing through a village not long ago the greater part of the furniture of all the houses had been dragged out and broken up, all the crockery smashed, all the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

bedding dragged out into the open street, and there left to be soaked by the rain. It is awful to see the poor peasants wandering about, homeless and starving.

“Everywhere is the fearful smell of dead horses. It seems to saturate the atmosphere, and one marches through miles of it.”

Carrion and ruin! And “one splendid German,” who stands out from among his fellows because he exercised the simple instincts of humanity! Surely in this one incident is as great accusation against the German race as in the other and worse accounts.

Meanwhile the Camerons fight on, with the courage that their regiment has shown from the time of Abercrombie’s campaign in Egypt unto this day.

CHAPTER IX

THE ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGH- LANDERS

THE threat against Britain by the French Republic in 1794 led to the raising of the 1st battalion of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the battalion having been formed in that year by the then Duke of Argyll, under the title of the 91st Regiment of Foot. The present 2nd battalion was raised by the Earl of Sutherland six years later, and numbered the "93rd Foot." These two battalions were united under their present title in 1881.

Active service was first seen by the 2nd battalion at the Cape, where its men played a prominent part in the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

defeat of the Dutch army of 5,000 men engaged in the defence of Capetown. The turn of the 1st battalion came during the Peninsular campaign, when the Argylls formed the rearguard at Corunna and were seven times engaged with the enemy. Later, they joined Wellington in Spain, and were conspicuously engaged at the Nivelle, at the crossing of the Nive, and on to the siege of Toulouse. The 2nd battalion formed part of the force that courted disaster at New Orleans in 1814, and no less than 520 officers and men fell in that fatal attack—futile as fatal.

Missing Waterloo, the regiment next won distinction in the Kaffir wars at the Cape, where it underwent five years of active service. There were “91st” men on the *Birkenhead* in 1852, and though the name of the ill-fated vessel is not borne on the colours of any regiment it might well be inscribed on those of the Argylls. Their next active service was

The Argyll and Sutherland

in the Crimean campaign, where the 2nd battalion formed part of Sir Colin Campbell's Highland Brigade, and took the heights beyond the Alma under as destructive fire as a British regiment has ever faced. At Balaclava the Highlanders were in deadly peril, but their coolness saved them for work in the trenches before Sevastopol, and for a share in the final assault.

Still under Sir Colin Campbell, their chief in the Crimea, the Highlanders took part in the suppression of the Mutiny, and marched to the relief of Lucknow, avenging the tragedy of Cawnpur at the action of Secundra Bagh, where with the loyal Sikhs they piled up a heap of 2,000 dead sepoys. On the same day the regiment took a hand in the capture of the Shah Nujjif, a strong building that was taken by desperate hand-to-hand fighting. From the top of the building the regimental colour of the Highlanders,

Scottish Regiments at the Front

waving, announced to the sorely pressed Lucknow garrison that relief was approaching—and the rest of the story of the relief is an oft-told one.

Zululand and frontier work in India next claimed the attention of the regiment, and then in 1899 the 1st battalion sailed for South Africa, to join Lord Methuen's force and take part in the battle of the Modder River, at which the Argyll and Sutherland men lost heavily. Joining General Wauchope's Highland Brigade, the battalion marched on to Magersfontein, where the commanding officer was among the killed. With the rest of the brigade the Argylls moved on to Paardeberg and the capture of Cronje and his force ; and from that time onward to the end of the war the record of the battalion is one continuous story of marching, fighting, and the general work of the campaign, up to the time of the signing of peace at Vereeniging. The

The Argyll and Sutherland

total of marching accomplished by the battalion during the course of the war was not less than 3,500 miles. Seven Victoria Crosses had been won by members of the regiment up to 1902.

The deeds of the regiment are rather scantily told by its men in France. The personal accounts begin with an appreciation of the bravery of the Hon. R. Bruce, Master of Burleigh, in the retreat from Mons. "He was too brave for anything," says a private who saw him at that time. "He simply wanted to be at 'em, and at 'em he went. I don't know where his sword was, but he hadn't it when I saw him—he had a rifle with the bayonet fixed, just like the rest of us. I saw him at the time he was wounded, and he just fought on gamely till he and his party of brave fellows were cut off and surrounded."

The next account concerns the battle of Soissons, on the Aisne—a place vari-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

ously pronounced by the troops, many of whom gave it the name of "Scissors," as being a near thing to the real method of pronunciation. "For about a week," says the narrator, "it rained night and day. You may imagine us marching all day, from daylight in the morning till dark at night, and then having to lie down in a field on the wet ground—nothing to cover ourselves with and nothing underneath us—and living on biscuits and corned beef. I feel sorry for the poor French people, and you may be thankful you are living in England. We passed through village after village on the march, and there was not a living soul in the houses; doors and windows were smashed open, and everything was broken in the way of furniture and fittings. We passed one house where the two women who lived in it had just returned after the Germans had passed. As we went by they gave

The Argyll and Sutherland

us a drink of water—it was the only thing the Germans had left them.”

Another man of the regiment, speaking of the earlier engagements, remarks—“You would think you were in hell.” He tells of the adventures of Lieutenant Campbell of the Argyll and Sutherlands, who went out with eleven men to reconnoitre in the early days of the campaign. As none of the dozen returned, and careful searches failed to reveal any traces of the party, they were given up as captured. To the surprise of their comrades, however, they all turned up safe and sound some eleven days later. It seemed that the party had unwittingly penetrated through the German lines, and, managing to escape notice, had eventually found their way out again. This story is supplemented by one which tells of a trick played by the French during the German retreat from Paris. The Argylls were located

Scottish Regiments at the Front

about thirty miles away from Paris, and in rear of them a large body of the enemy were encamped in a wood. During the night, according to this account, the French crept up to the wood without being observed by the German sentries, and placed bundles of straw among the trees, setting fire to the straw before they retired. The timber in the wood was very dry, and the trees caught fire, causing a fierce blaze in the course of a few minutes. The enemy were thrown into confusion, which was completed by the artillery fire searching the wood and making rout of the German retreat.

There is one letter concerning the doings of the Argyll and Sutherland men which is worthy of quotation, and calls for some question. The writer says : " We have distinguished ourselves a good many times since we commenced operations here, and we have lost heavily,

The Argyll and Sutherland

an occurrence much to our sorrow. It is not my place to speak of the honour that has been conferred upon us as a Scottish regiment for our bravery, and at one time we saved the British Army from defeat. We are fortunate to have any one left to relate the experience. The kindly eye of Providence has overlooked me, and I am thankful. I don't know yet how I escaped. Once I was lying in a line of sixteen men, eight of whom were killed or severely wounded by the shell fire of the enemy."

This letter comes undated, with the place of origin suppressed. It is curious, if the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders—either or both battalions—"saved the British Army from defeat," that there should be only this one account of the affair—which must have been tremendous. British soldiers, as a rule, are very quick to acknowledge

Scottish Regiments at the Front

the bravery of their comrades, and it is strange that no man of any other regiment has yet recognised that the whole of the British Army has been saved from defeat by this one regiment—or possibly by one battalion of this regiment. On the whole, one is tempted to regard the letter as a hoax, though its solemn tone would go far to dispel that idea.

One other letter there is, worthy in a different sense of full quotation, for it tells of individual bravery and resourcefulness on the part of a member of the regiment. "We had worked our way up to within eighty yards of the German trenches," says the writer, "and then got the order to charge, which we did with effect. One fellow belonging to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders made a lunge with his bayonet at an opponent, and his intended victim promptly warded off the blow, but,

The Argyll and Sutherland

much to the German's astonishment, the canny Scot brought the butt end of the rifle to the jaw like a flash, and, felling him like a bullock, finished the job with the bayonet. It was the work of a moment, done without hesitation, and is typical of the bravery and resource of the Highlanders generally."

These few records of the men of the regiment go to prove that the Argyll and Sutherland men went down from Mons to the Aisne, fought at Soissons—and that is all. Of their presence in Flanders there is no evidence so far, and at the time of writing they may still be living the life of cave-dwellers down where the old German front is still maintained against the thinned Franco-British line, or they may be round Arras, in those fierce struggles whence the wounded come back by the hundred and many men come back no more. Not till the "fog of war" has

Scottish Regiments at the Front

cleared utterly away will all their story be told, but we may rest assured that the story will not be one of which the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders need be ashamed.

CHAPTER X

THE HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY AND THE CAMERONIANS

THE Highland Light Infantry—a title shortened in the Army to a colloquial “H.L.I.,” were originally known as “Macleod’s Highlanders,” and were raised as the 73rd Foot in 1777, being embodied at Elgin in April of 1778. Lord Macleod, after whom the regiment was named, was its first commanding officer, and under his command the original members of the 73rd went to Madras in 1780, their voyage lasting no less than twelve months. The valour of the regiment in those early days of its history may be judged from the fact that between the time of landing in India and

Scottish Regiments at the Front

1806, a matter of only twenty-six years, there were emblazoned on the regimental colours no less than six names—those of Carnatic, Sholingur, Mysore, Hindustan, Seringapatam, and Cape of Good Hope. To these might well be added that of Perambaukum, for in that first action in which the H.L.I. took part the flank companies were cut to pieces in a truly heroic stand against irresistible odds. After the formation of new flank companies came the principal battles of the Carnatic, and in the attack on Cuddalore the H.L.I. lost half their strength of officers and men, and won the grateful thanks of their commander-in-chief.

In 1786 the regiment became the “71st,” and their next spell of active service was in the Mysore campaign, where they took part in all the principal engagements, including the storming of Bangalore and Seringapatam. They went from India to the Cape, and thence

The Highland Light Infantry

formed part of General Whitelock's expedition to Buenos Ayres, in which, through no fault of the Highlanders, who captured the city, Britain definitely lost a footing in South America—the result of the expedition led to Whitelocke being court-martialled and dismissed from the service. For their gallantry in the capture of Buenos Ayres the H.L.I. were specially commended by Lieutenant-General Floyd on the occasion of the presentation of new colours to the regiment.

Their next exploits were in the first Peninsular campaign, through which they came to Corunna. They were at Torres Vedras, at the fierce encounter of Fuentes d'Onor, and they took a prominent part in the battle of Vittoria, where they routed the enemy and lost their commanding officer, who fell dying while leading his men in the attack. Like Wolfe, the commanding officer of

Scottish Regiments at the Front

the H.L.I. had a last thought for the defeat of the enemy, and died happy in the knowledge that the battle was practically won. Near on four hundred of his men fell with him on this field.

No less than sixteen special medals were presented to men of the Highland Light Infantry in the Peninsular campaigns for special personal bravery, and then at Waterloo they shared in the last attack on Napoleon's Imperial Guard, with which the day ended. Earlier in the day the Highland Light Infantry formed the square in which the Duke of Wellington had his place at the time the French cavalry charged.

The regiment took part in the Crimean campaign, serving in the trenches before Sevastopol, and in the expedition to Yenikale. In the Central Indian Campaign of 1858 the H.L.I. were heavily engaged, and at the Morar Cantonments

The Highland Light Infantry

engagement the first Victoria Cross of the regiment was won.

The history of the 2nd battalion of the regiment—the old 74th, is very similar to that of the 1st battalion, including as it does the storming of Seringapatam, the principal engagements of the Peninsular campaign, and—here the history diverges—the sinking of the *Birkenhead* off the Cape. The two battalions were first definitely named “Highland Light Infantry” in place of their old-time numbers in 1881, when the Territorial system came into being as regards the Regular Army.

The 2nd battalion of the regiment took part in the Egyptian campaign of 1882, and won a Victoria Cross at Tel-el-Kebir. In the Malakand Campaign of 1897 and again in Crete in 1898, the regiment saw active service, and in the South African War the 1st battalion went through the action of Modder River and

Scottish Regiments at the Front

on to Magersfontein, where another Victoria Cross was won by Corporal Shaul of the regiment. Together with the rest of the Highland Brigade, the H.L.I. were "in" at the capture of Cronje at Paardeberg, and at the capture of Prinsloo they played an important part. No less than eighty-one officers and men were left behind by the regiment at the close of the South African campaign.

Four Victoria Crosses are reckoned to the credit of the regiment, but to these must be added the sixteen special medals for gallantry won by the H.L.I. in the Peninsular War, before ever such a thing as a Victoria Cross was instituted. Of medals for distinguished conduct, there are many in the H.L.I.

Personal accounts of the fighting in which the regiment has been engaged in France are few, up to the present time. A definite account has been received of the death of Lieutenant Sir Archibald

The Highland Light Infantry

Gibson Craig. It is stated that the lieutenant had told his servant some time previously that, in case of his death on the field, the servant was to take charge of all his personal belongings; and at a place not named—or a place of which the name has been excised—he was in charge of a party of sixteen men, who were proceeding to a rather steep hill, when they came in contact with a large number of the enemy, estimated by the Highlanders at between 300 and 400. The men had not been aware that they were so near the Germans, but when the lieutenant saw the position in which they were placed he drew his sword and shouted, “Charge, men! At them!” His men fired at the German force, and then charged with fixed bayonets, at which the enemy thought the British party was far stronger than it was in reality, for they began to retreat. The Highlanders, however, had to retire, since two of their

Scottish Regiments at the Front

number were killed and three wounded, which left a dangerously small force of effectives. They retired in good order, carrying their dead and wounded, but Sir Archibald Craig was shot through the mouth, and killed instantaneously.

This is the most circumstantial account that has come to hand regarding the work of the regiment, so far. Another story of a wounded man states that during the fighting on the Aisne, in the village of Vera Neuil, he received two pieces of shrapnel in the chest. "We were not safe anywhere, not even in the hospital, as the Germans shelled that too. I was wounded on Tuesday, September 15, when I was eating a biscuit at the time I was shot."

An officer of the H.L.I. gives an account of the way in which the Germans are conducting their fighting.

"An officer dressed as a French officer went up to some Coldstream Guards and

The Highland Light Infantry

asked if Bulkley, the machine-gun officer, was in that battalion. He then shot the officer he was talking to. Others dress up as British staff officers, and drive about in motor cars, and when they meet transports of convoys shout at them—‘The Germans are advancing on you from just ahead,’ which causes a stampede. That happened to us, for a long column of transport was ahead of us as we were retiring, and all of a sudden a supposed French officer came galloping down the road the reverse way, shouting ‘Les Allemands, les Uhlans!’ All the transport was thrown into confusion, and some of the waggons came back at a gallop. We were just behind, but mercifully the road was broad. There was a little confusion at first, but they rallied splendidly when I shouted to them, and we all advanced up the road with fixed bayonets, to find absolutely nothing.

“The Germans actually dress them-

Scottish Regiments at the Front

selves up in our men's great-coats to disguise themselves, get close, and then shoot."

These accounts demonstrate the presence of the Highland Light Infantry on the great retreat, and also at the battle of the Aisne. From the latter position they may have gone on to Flanders—the more likely alternative—or they may have remained as part of the thin defensive line left along the Aisne positions.

The present "Cameronians" were formed from the old-time "26th Cameronians," from whom the regiment takes its title, and from the "90th Perthshire Light Infantry," the first of which regiments fought for religious liberty against the King's troops at Bothwell Bridge in old days. Until the revolution which placed William of Orange on the throne they stuck to their principles, and then in one day there was enrolled from

The Cameronians

among them a regiment to support the cause of "Dutch William," a regiment which, under the Earl of Angus, held Dunkeld against a force four times their own strength. They fought at Landen, and lost their colonel, the Earl of Angus, at Steinkerk ; they shared in the capture of Namur, and then in Marlborough's battles they so fought as to be able to emblazon the names of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet on the regimental colours. They shared in the defence of Gibraltar in 1727, fought and endured through the American War of Independence, and served under Sir John Moore at Corunna. Meanwhile the 2nd battalion, formed by Thomas Graham (subsequently Lord Lynedoch), served under Sir Ralph Abercrombie in driving out Napoleon's "Invincible Army" from Egypt, and captured a French eagle at Guadeloupe.

In the Chinese campaign of 1840 the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

Cameronians 1st battalion took a share, being first to scale the walls of Amoy. The 2nd battalion saw service against the Kaffirs of South Africa in 1846 and the following year, and went on to the Crimean campaign, having among its officers a certain Lieutenant Wolseley, who was destined for great things.

In the Mutiny the 2nd battalion formed a part of Havelock's force at Lucknow, and subsequently assisted in stamping out the last traces of the great rebellion. The 1st battalion took the field in Abyssinia in 1868, and went on with Napier to Magdala. Another famous British officer shared in the exploits of the 1st battalion in the person of Sir Evelyn Wood, during the strenuous work of the Zulu campaign of 1878, when the battalion fought from Inhlobane to Ulundi, where Cetewayo was overthrown.

The Cameronians shared in Buller's

The Cameronians

advance through Natal in the South African War of 1899-1902, forming part of General Lyttleton's brigade at Colenso, reinforcing the Lancashire Brigade in the action of Spion Kop, sweeping the Boers off Vaalkrantz, and sharing in the furious charges at Pieter's Hill—until the way to Ladysmith lay open. Through the fighting for Laing's Nek, and in the guerilla warfare that lasted out the rest of the campaign, the Cameronians played their part nobly. No less than three South African campaigns are commemorated on the colours of the regiment.

Of their work in France, less personal accounts are to hand than concerning the work of any other Scottish regiment. There is one statement by a wounded man with regard to a German ruse of driving on sheep in night attacks on the trenches. The sheep were heard moving in the darkness in front of the

Scottish Regiments at the Front

trenches, and while the Cameronians opened fire on them the Germans tried to get round their flank—but two Maxim guns drove them back with a loss of over 200 dead. The incident is related with no reference to place or date.

A non-commissioned officer of the regiment speaks of the secrecy of movement that has to be maintained. None are made aware of probable movements, destinations, or reasons for any plans, and commanding officers are not informed of what is about to be done until it is absolutely imperative that they should know. The reason for this lies in the great number of German spies who are arrested in all kinds of disguises, British and French uniforms, civilian clothes, chauffeurs' uniforms, and all possible forms of dress. "The leakage of information is astounding," says the writer, "and we quite appreciate the necessity for secrecy in all our doings, and fully

The Cameronians

understand its wisdom, as we have been saved from complete destruction more than once through this secrecy.”

Even of things that took place months ago, however, there is no record yet. Of how the Gordons were cut off, and of what the Cameronians have done and where they did it, we know little or nothing—concerning all things that individual units have accomplished there is scarcely more record than the stories collected here, which make no pretence at giving a full history of the doings of the Scottish regiments at the front, but simply stand as detached records of the deeds of brave men.

And as for the London Scottish and their bravery, that story belongs to the record of Territorial regiments at the front, in which it will in due course be told.