

The Canadian V.C.'s

How Men From Canada Earned the Empire's Highest Tribute for Bravery in the Field of Battle.

Piper James Richardson, V.C., 16th Canadian Scottish. Prior to the attack he obtained permission to play his company "over the top." As the company approached its objective it was held up by very strong wire and came under an intense fire, which caused heavy casualties which momentarily demoralized the formation. Richardson, realizing the situation, strode up and down with the greatest coolness. The effect was instantaneous. Inspired by his splendid example, the company rushed the wire with such fury and determination that the obstacle was overcome and the position captured.

Later, after participating in bombing operations, he was detailed to take back wounded comrades and prisoners. After proceeding 200 yards he remembered that he had left his pipes behind. Although strongly warned, he insisted on returning to recover his pipes. He was never seen again, and is accordingly presumed dead through lapse of time.

—Official report.

BY CAROLYN CORNELL.

How the shriek of the pipes led the Canadian Scottish to victory in the battle of the Somme, October, 1916, has only recently been fully told when the Victoria Cross was granted posthumously to Piper James Richardson, who performed this heroic act. It was between Oct. 8 and Oct. 9 that the action took place in which Piper Richardson led the attack over the top and with the wild music of the hills of Scotland fired his followers to show the world what a Scot can do. The attack was victorious. Canada was honored, but the young piper has

perished in the piping contests at the Caladonian sports in Vancouver, North Vancouver and Victoria, and won valuable prizes. His father is in possession of three gold medals which he won in contests. David Richardson, a brother of the V.C., is also in the army. That young Richardson was not lacking in daring and physical courage before he went overseas is shown in an incident which happened in Vancouver, where he was working, in the year 1914. The factory where he was employed is situated near the creek, Vancouver. One day, while he was working, the alarm was given that a boy was drowned in the creek. James Richardson at once ran to the spot, dived under the water and brought up the body, but life was extinct.

It is now more than two years since Piper Richardson "played his men over the top" in his last gallant attack, and Lieut.-Col. C. W. Peck, then Major Peck, recommended him for the V.C. at that time. Through some technicality the award was not gazetted, however, until last fall. With three other pipers Richardson played the men over at the beginning of the battle of the Somme, and continued to play as the troops advanced in a murderous fire. He came back safely, but suddenly remembered that he had left behind his beloved pipes. He had been helping to carry in wounded. He went back for the pipes and has never been seen since. Lieut.-Col. Peck, now officer commanding the 16th Battalion, who recommended the decoration for the heroic young piper, has since then been given the V.C. himself.

An officer of the battalion telling the story of Piper Richardson's deed, said: "Volunteers were asked for, one from each of the four companies. The first four who came were taken. It was the first time any piper had gone out with the Canadian Scottish, or perhaps, with any Canadian battalions. It was a wonderful thing to hear these men playing away at their pipes while the attacking was cutting the wire, and it had a wonderful effect on them. The shriek of the pipes continued until the men got through. Then the pipers went forward with the men. Richardson was seen walking strongly towards the German trench, playing his pipes."

We are fortunate in having several letters of the brave young piper, which speak volumes of his good humor and bravery. He had many narrow escapes. The fact that one of the most hair-raising escapes only came out by chance leads one to believe that he probably had them every day, but did not mention them. In the very first engagement in which he took part, the taking of the little wood near St. Julien, in April, 1915, he performed a feat of daring worthy of decoration itself. Through his nerve the battalion was able to secure its position. He did not mention this event for more than a year, and then only on the request of his father, who had had an imperfect account of it from a returned soldier. In writing to his father in June, 1916, Piper Richardson said of this experience: "I would like very much to know the name of the man who related my experience to you. There were only three men in the battalion to my knowledge who knew of my experience, and only one man saw me actually through it. It is now over a year since this incident happened during the Germans' second attempt to take Ypres, and it seems funny to start to relate a story so long after, but I suppose I will have to do so. "Well, you will remember we made a charge at St. Julien on the 22nd April, 1915, and took a wood from the Germans. After we had carried the wood some of us kept going on Fritz's heels, and after advancing about 30 yards on the other side of the woods the party, about 50 men, started to dig in, but I kept going on my own, although the thing was ridiculous. Well, I may tell you I didn't get very far ahead, about 40 yards, before I landed at a farmhouse, and sure enough the Fritzies were all clustered round it sheltering from the flying bullets. When I saw what I was up against I didn't know what to do, but, believe me, my brain worked like lightning. As it was dark save for the moonlight, I "stopped" to see if I was spotted, and I really thought that while I was lying there they would hear my heart beating. Lying motionless, I saw an officer (judging by his voice and actions) coming towards me and waving his arms as if letting his men know to follow on.

My brain told me that I had two alternatives, namely, to shoot the nearest man I saw (which was the officer) and make a dash for my pals, or give myself up as a prisoner. I risked the former and aimed as quick and the best I could at my man, who rolled over like a log. Then you talk about running—there isn't a man who could have covered the ground quicker than I did, and nobody could be more thankful than I was when I found myself amongst my own kith and kin. I told the sergeant-major that the farmhouse in front was full of Germans, and that they would have to be cleared

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out if we intended to hold our position through the next day. Well, as the farmhouse was an ideal sniping post for the Hun, the matter was reported to the artillery, which, needless to say, put the farmhouse out of business."

That the young piper had a keen sense of humor is shown in many of the stories that he related. Especially in letters to his mother does he tell these stories. In the following one he concludes with the promise that he will not frequent the more dangerous route any more. The letter was dated May 1916. "He says: "Well, I had a nice little spin on the bicycle down to brigade headquarters with a message. By the way, I have got a bicycle here for my own use, that is, for carrying messages, etc., and it is certainly a very handy asset when moving from one billet to another. On two occasions last week I got messages to take up to the firing line, and without thinking I started on the bike and delivered the goods. On both occasions I was told that I did the trip very quickly, and, of course, I just said that I hit the high spots only, when doing daylight trips up there. Well, there was nothing more said until a couple of days after when I was detailed as guide for an officer going to the trenches. The officer asked me how far we had to go by my route, so I said about three miles each way, and this fairly tickled the officer, as he was told he would have six miles to walk each way. Well, we got about half way and turned in to my road, as I call it, and the officer looked at me as much as to say, "Are you sure of the road?" He stopped, and we went into a shell hole by the side of the road, where he took out a plan of the country which he studied carefully. After a pause he informed me that the road we were on was exposed the whole way to the Germans, and therefore we couldn't proceed further. Well, when we got on to the main road we started on through woods, across fields, over ditches, etc., and at last, after about six miles' walk, we got to the trenches. Leaving the officer there I thought I would risk the road once more at the double "knees up." Well, I got back safely, but, believe me, the road seemed very long with my new information, and I had a great yarn to tell my pals. They said, "I bet Jimmy won't take that road again," and I don't intend to, either.

"You would have laughed at this little incident if you had been here. While we were busy unloading the wagons a stray bullet came over and 'strafed' a chap right through the hips, whereupon he shouted, 'I've got a blighty.' He just lay down where he was and laughed like to burst his sides, passing remarks that he would soon be having a good time in Scotland, while we were still 'carrying on' out here."

In a letter to his brother and sister after telling about pushing up the line, he says: "I was at a town yesterday on pass, where we were billeted over a year ago, and I went to a house there which I used to go to, and the family knew me right away. The old lady has a fine daughter who coughed, coughed All Night Long. Terribly wearing on the system is the cough that prevents sleep. Sometimes it is a constant cough, cough that will not be quieted. Sometimes it is a choked-up, stuffed-up feeling that makes breathing difficult, and sleep impossible. Whatever kind of a cold or cough you have, Dr. Wood's Norway Pine Syrup is the remedy you need to cure it, for the simple reason that this valuable preparation combines all the lung healing virtues of the Norway pine tree with which is combined wild cherry bark and the soothing, healing and expectorant properties of other excellent herbs and barks. Miss Margaret Landy, Bristol, P. B. I., writes: "I am writing to tell you the benefit I have received from Dr. Wood's Norway Pine Syrup. Last fall I took a severe cough and cold in my head. I was unable to do anything. At night I could not sleep, but cough, cough, all night long. A friend advised me to use Dr. Wood's Norway Pine Syrup, and before the second bottle was used, I was entirely cured, and I have found this the best cough medicine I can buy. Do not accept any other "pine" preparations when you ask for "Dr. Wood's." This remedy has been on the market for a quarter of a century. It is put up in a yellow wrapper; three pine trees the trade mark; price 25c and 50c. Manufactured only by The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

there whom I got on well with. I was asking her if she would come to Canada with me (Ho! Ha!), but she said her fiance was at the war, so that finished me.

I am with my old company, but I am sorry to say very few old faces. Of course I am with them with the pipes when in billets only, then when we move back to the line I go back on the ration job, and only see the trenches once a week. Father asks me about the cooking job. Well, I think I told you that I got fed up with it, and as it is optional duty I quit. I had to cook for 18 men, and had no help, so it was no soft job. You must remember that one hasn't things fixed up out here to make such a job easy. As a case of getting bricks together for a fireplace, chasing after water, which is sometimes hard to find, and then nothing but grousing if you put salt instead of sugar in the tea (some good reason for a grouse, eh?) You would have laughed here one morning at such an incident. The morning I got to cook here was a hell of a morning. I had to cook for 18 men, and had no help, so it was no soft job. You must remember that one hasn't things fixed up out here to make such a job easy. 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