

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Descartes Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Darwin Dickens Schopenhauer Bebel Proust
Wolfram von Eschenbach Bronner Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Schiller Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Claudius Schilling Kralik Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Gerstäcker Klee Hölty Morgenstem Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus Musil
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Horaz Mörike
Luxemburg La Roche Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Machiavelli Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Ipsen Liebknecht
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ringelnatz
Nietzsche Marx Nansen Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
Sachs Poe Liebermann Koroienko
de Sade Praetorius Mistral Zetkin



The publishing house **tredition** has created the series **TREDITION CLASSICS**. It contains classical literature works from over two thousand years. Most of these titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades.

The book series is intended to preserve the cultural legacy and to promote the timeless works of classical literature. As a reader of a **TREDITION CLASSICS** book, the reader supports the mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion.

The symbol of **TREDITION CLASSICS** is Johannes Gutenberg (1400 – 1468), the inventor of movable type printing.

With the series, **tredition** intends to make thousands of international literature classics available in printed format again – worldwide.

All books are available at book retailers worldwide in paperback and in hardcover. For more information please visit: www.tredition.com



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, **tredition** offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. **tredition** is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

**Army Boys in the French Trenches
Or, Hand to Hand Fighting with
the Enemy**

Homer Randall

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Homer Randall

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8495-0919-4

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

CONTENTS

- I A SLASHING ATTACK
- II THE UPLIFTED KNIFE
- III TAKING CHANCES
- IV BETWEEN THE LINES
- V THE BARBAROUS HUNS
- VI A TASTE OF COLD STEEL
- VII NICK RABIG'S QUEER ACTIONS
- VIII COLONEL PAVET REAPPEARS
- IX THE ESCAPE
- X A GHASTLY BURDEN
- XI WITH THE TANKS
- XII BREAKING THROUGH
- XIII CAUGHT NAPPING
- XIV IN CLOSE QUARTERS
- XV THE FOUR-FOOTED ENEMY
- XVI CHASED BY CAVALRY

XVII THE BROKEN BRIDGE

XVIII RESCUE FROM THE SKY

XIX PUTTING ONE OVER

XX SUSPICION

XXI A FAMILIAR VOICE

XXII THE SHADOW OF TREASON

XXIII A HAIL OF LEAD

XXIV A DEED OF DARING

XXV STORMING THE RIDGE

CHAPTER I

A SLASHING ATTACK

"Stand ready, boys. We attack at dawn!"

The word passed in a whisper down the long line of the trench, where the American army boys crouched like so many khaki-clad ghosts, awaiting the command to go "over the top."

"That will be in about fifteen minutes from now, I figure," murmured Frank Sheldon to his friend and comrade, Bart Raymond, as he glanced at the hands of his radio watch and then put it up to his ear to make sure that it had not stopped.

"It'll seem more like fifteen hours," muttered Tom Bradford, who was on the other side of Sheldon.

"Tom's in a hurry to get at the Huns," chuckled Billy Waldon. "He wants to show them where they get off."

"I saw him putting a razor edge on his bayonet last night," added Bart.

"Now he's anxious to see how it works."

"He'll have plenty of chances to find out," said Frank. "This is going to be a hot scrap, or I miss my guess. I heard the captain tell the lieutenant that the Germans had their heaviest force right in front of our part of the line."

"So much the better," asserted Billy stoutly. "They can't come too thick or too fast. They've been sneering at what the Yankees were going to do in this war, and it's about time they got punctures in their tires."

At this moment the mess helpers passed along the line with buckets of steaming hot coffee, and the men welcomed it eagerly,

for it was late in the autumn and the night air was chill and penetrating. "Come, little cup, to one who loves thee well," murmured Tom, as he swallowed his portion in one gulp.

The others were not slow in following his example, and the buckets were emptied in a twinkling.

Then the stern vigil was renewed.

From the opposing lines a star shell rose and exploded, casting a greenish radiance over the barren stretch of No Man's Land that separated the hostile forces.

"Fritz isn't asleep," muttered Frank.

"He's right on the job with his fireworks," agreed Bart.

"Maybe he has his suspicions that we're going to give him a little surprise party," remarked Billy, "and that's his way of telling us that he's ready to welcome us with open arms."

"Fix bayonets!" came the command from the officer in charge, and there was a faint clink as the order was obeyed.

"It won't be long now," murmured Tom. "But why don't the guns open up?"

"They always do before it's time to charge," commented Billy, as he shifted his position a little. "I suppose they will now almost any minute."

"I don't think there'll be any gun fire this time before we go over the top," ventured Frank.

"What do you mean?" asked Bart in surprise, as he turned his head toward his chum.

"Do you know anything?" queried Tom.

"Not exactly know, but I've heard enough to make a guess," replied Frank. "I think we're going to play the game a little differently this time. Unless I'm mistaken, the Huns are going to get the surprise of their lives."

"Put on gas masks!" came another order, and in the six seconds allowed for this operation the masks were donned, making the men in the long line look like so many goblins.

It was light enough for them to see each other now, for the gray fingers of the dawn were already drawing the curtain of darkness aside from the eastern sky.

One minute more passed—a minute of tense, fierce expectation, while the boys gripped their rifles until it seemed that their fingers would bury themselves in the stocks.

Crash!

With a roar louder than a thousand guns the earth under the German first-line trenches split asunder, and tons of rock and mud and guns and men were hurled toward the sky.

The din was terrific, the sight appalling, and the shock for an instant was almost as great to the Americans as to their opponents, though far less tragic.

"Now, men," shouted their lieutenant, "over with you!" and with a wild yell of exultation the boys clambered over the edge of the trench and started toward the German lines.

"We're off!" panted Frank, as, with eyes blazing and bayonet ready for instant use, he rushed forward in the front rank.

"To a flying start!" gasped Bart, and then because breath was precious they said no more, but raced on like greyhounds freed from the leash.

On, on they went, with the wind whipping their faces! On, still on, to the red ruin wrought by the explosion of the mine.

For the first fifty yards the going was easy except for the craters and shell holes into which some of the boys slid and tumbled. The enemy had been so numbed and paralyzed by the overwhelming explosion that they seemed to be unable to make any resistance.

But the officers knew, and the men as well, that this was only the lull before the storm. Their enemy was desperate and resourceful, and though the cleverness of the American engineers had carried through the mine operation without detection, it was certain that the foe would rally.

Fifty yards from the first-line trench — forty — thirty — and then the German guns spoke.

A long line of flame flared up crimson in the pallid dawn.

"Down, men, down!" shouted their officers, and the Yankee lads threw themselves flat on the ground while a leaden hail swept furiously over them.

"Are you hurt, Bart?" cried Frank anxiously, as he heard a sharp exclamation from his comrade.

"Not by a bullet," growled Bart. "Took some of the skin off my knee though when I went down."

A second time the murderous fire came hurtling over them, but the officers noted with satisfaction that the enemy were shooting high.

"They haven't got the range yet," observed Billy.

"Up!" came the word of command, and again the men were on their feet and racing like mad toward the trench.

They came at last to where it had been. For it was no longer a trench!

Gone was the zigzag line that the boys knew by heart from having faced and fought against it for weeks. The mine had done its work thoroughly.

Everywhere was a welter of hideous confusion. Barbed wire entanglements with their supporting posts had been rooted from the ground. Guns had been torn from their carriages. "Pill boxes" had been smashed to bits. Horses and men and wagons and camp kitchens were mingled together in wildest chaos.

Parts of the trench had been filled to the surface with earth, while huge boulders blocked the entrance to some of the communicating passages.

There were a few sharp fights with scattered units of the enemy that had retained their senses and were trying to get their machine guns into action. But these detachments were soon cut down or captured. The great majority of the survivors were so dazed that

they surrendered with scarcely a show of resistance and were rounded up in squads to be sent to the rear.

The first trench had been won, and it was almost a bloodless victory, only a few of the American troops having fallen in the sudden rush.

But sterner work lay ahead, for the second and third German lines were still intact, bristling with men and supported heavily by their guns.

"This was easy," grinned Billy.

"Like taking a dead mouse from a blind kitten," chuckled Tom, as he wiped the grime and perspiration from his face.

"Don't fool yourselves," warned Frank, as a shell came whining over their heads. "This was only a skirmish. The real fight is coming, and coming mighty quick!"

CHAPTER II

THE UPLIFTED KNIFE

Even while Frank Sheldon spoke, the artillery of the enemy took on a deeper note until it reached the intensity of drumfire.

But now the American gunners took a hand, and the shells came pouring over the heads of the boys, searching out the line of the second enemy trench and preparing the way for the advance.

In obedience to commands, the American soldiers had sought shelter wherever they could find it, while they were recovering their wind.

Only a moment could be granted for this, however, for time was everything just now. They had caught the enemy off his guard and must take advantage of the opportunity.

"Line up, men!" cried the leader of Frank's detachment, and the high state of discipline that the American forces had reached was shown by the promptness with which the order was obeyed.

A signal was sent back to the supporting guns, and they opened up a deadly barrage fire over the heads of Frank and his comrades, clearing the ground before them of everything that dared to show itself in the open.

Behind this curtain of fire, the boys advanced, slowly at first, but gathering speed at every stride, until they were running at the double quick.

Bullets rained about them from the machine guns of the enemy and great shells tore gaps in the ranks. At Frank's left, a soldier suddenly wavered and then pitched headlong into a shell hole and lay still. Another toppled over with a bullet in his shoulder. But the lanes that were made closed almost instantly.

Now they had reached the wire entanglements that had been battered by the artillery until they hung in festoons around their posts, leaving paths through which the American lads poured.

Then like a great tidal wave they struck the trench!

The Germans had clambered out to meet them, and when the two forces met the shock was terrific. Back and forth the battle surged and swayed, each side fighting with the fury of desperation. The cannon had ceased now, for in that locked mass the shells were as likely to kill friends as foes. It was man against man, bayonet against bayonet, each combatant obeying the primitive law of "kill or be killed."

The opposing forces at this part of the line were nearly equal, with the Germans having a slight advantage in numbers. But to make up for this, the Americans had the advantage of the attack and the tremendous momentum with which they had struck the enemy's line.

For a time victory hung in the balance, but then Yankee determination and superior skill in bayonet work began to tell. The Americans would not be denied. The German line was pierced, and the forces broke up into a number of battling groups.

Frank and Bart, Billy and Tom, who all through the fight had managed to keep together, found themselves engaged with a squad of Germans double their number, two of whom were frantically trying to bring a machine gun to bear upon them.

With a bound Frank was upon them. He toppled one over with his bayonet, but while he was doing this the other fired at him point-blank with a revolver. At such a close range he could not have missed, had not Bart, quick as a flash, clubbed him over the arm with his rifle, making the bullet go wild.

"Quick, Bart!" panted Frank, as with his comrade's help he slued the machine gun around, gripped the trigger, and sent a stream of bullets into a group of the enemy charging down upon him.

Before that withering fire they dissolved like mist, and a circle was cleared as though by magic.

What Germans were left in that immediate vicinity leaped back into the trench on the edge of which they had been fighting.

"Now we've got them!" cried Frank, as with his friends' assistance he quickly wheeled the gun to the brink of the trench and depressed the muzzle so that it commanded the huddled bunch below. "Come out of that, you fellows. Hands up, quick!"

They may not have understood his words, but there was no misunderstanding the meaning of that black sinister muzzle of the machine gun with a hundred deaths behind it. They were trapped, and their hands went up with cries of "*Kamerad!*" in token of surrender.

On that part of the line the battle was over, for the plan did not contemplate going beyond the second trench at that time. The American boys had won and won gloriously. From all parts of the trench, on a two-mile front, groups of captives were coming sullenly out with uplifted hands, to be herded into groups by their captors and sent to the rear.

"Glory hallelujah!" cried Bart, as he removed his mask and wiped his streaming face. "And no gas, either."

"Some scrap!" gasped Billy, as he sank exhausted to the ground.

"Did them up to the Queen's taste," chuckled Tom.

"We certainly put one over on the Huns that time," grinned Frank happily.

And while they stand there, breathless and exulting, it may be well for the benefit of those who have not previously made the acquaintance of the American Army Boys to sketch briefly their adventures up to the time this story opens.

Frank Sheldon, Bart Raymond, Tom Bradford and Billy Waldon had all been born and brought up in Campport, a thriving American city of about twenty-five thousand people. They had known each other from boyhood, attended the same school, played on the same baseball nine and were warm friends.

Frank was the natural leader of the group. He was a tall, muscular young fellow, quick to think and quick to act, always at the front in sports as well as in the more serious events of life.

His father had died some years before, leaving only a modest home as a legacy, and Frank was the sole support of his mother. The latter had been born in France, where Mr. Sheldon had married her and brought her to America.

Later, Mrs. Sheldon's father had died, leaving her a considerable property in Auvergne, her native province. This estate, however, had been tied up in a lawsuit, and she had not come into possession of it. She had been planning to go to France to look after her interests, but her husband's death and, later on, the breaking out of the European war, had made this impossible.

She was a charming woman, with all the French sparkle and vivacity, and she and her son were bound together in ties of the strongest affection. Naturally her ardent sympathy had been with France in the great war raging in Europe. But when it became evident that America soon would take part, although she welcomed the aid this would bring to her native country, her mother heart was torn with anguish at the thought that her only son would probably join in the fighting across the sea.

But Frank, though he dreaded the separation, felt that he must join the Campport regiment that was getting ready to fight the Huns. The deciding moment came when a German tore down the American flag from a neighbor's porch. Frank knocked the fellow down and in the presence of an excited throng made him kiss the flag that he had insulted. From that moment his resolution was taken, and his mother, who had witnessed the scene, gave her consent to his joining the old Thirty-seventh regiment, made up chiefly of Campport boys, including Billy Waldon, who had seen service on the Mexican border.

Bart Raymond, Frank's special chum, a sturdy, vigorous young fellow, was equally patriotic, and joined the regiment with Frank as soon as war was declared. Tom Bradford, a fellow employee in the firm of Moore & Thomas, a thriving hardware house, wanted to enlist, but was rejected on account of his teeth, although he wrathfully declared that "he wanted to shoot the Germans, not to bite them." In fact, almost all the young fellows employed by the firm, except "Reddy," the office boy, who wanted to go badly enough, but

who was too young, tried to get into some branch of the army or navy.

A marked exception was Nick Rabig, the foreman of the shipping department, who, although born in the United States, came of German parents and lost no opportunity of "boosting" Germany and "knocking" America. He was the bully of the place and universally disliked. He hated Frank, especially after the flag incident, and only the thought of his mother had prevented Frank more than once from giving Rabig the thrashing he deserved.

Frank's regiment was sent to Camp Boone for their preliminary training, and here the young recruits were put through their paces in rifle shooting, grenade throwing, bayonet practice and all the other exercises by which Uncle Sam turns his boys into soldiers. There was plenty of fun mixed in with the hard work, and they had many stirring experiences. A pleasant feature was the coming of Tom, who although rejected when he tried to enlist had been accepted in the draft. Not so pleasant, though somewhat amusing, was the fact that Nick Rabig also had been drafted and had to go to Camp Boone, though most unwillingly.

How the regiment sailed to France for intensive training behind the firing lines; how their transport narrowly escaped being sunk by a submarine and how the tables were turned; the singular chance by which Frank met a French colonel and heard encouraging news about his mother's property; how he thoroughly "trimmed" Rabig in a boxing bout; how the Campport boys took part in the capture of a Zeppelin; how the old Thirty-seventh finally reached the trenches; Frank's daring exploit when caught in the swirl of a German charge; these and other exciting adventures are told in the first book of this Series, entitled: "Army Boys in France; Or, From Training Camp to the Trenches."

"Do you remember what that airship captain said the day we bagged him?" chuckled Billy.

"About it being impossible for Americans to get to France?" asked Bart. "You bet I do. I'll never forget that boob. I wonder if he still believes it."

"He'd sing a different tune if he were here to-day," observed Tom.

"I don't know," laughed Frank. "The German skull is pretty thick. Still you can get something through it once in a while if you keep on hammering."

"I guess these fellows haven't any doubts about our being here," observed Billy.

"They've had pretty good evidence of it," confirmed Tom, as he watched the enemy captives standing about in dejected groups, waiting to be sent to the rear.

One thing that struck the boys forcibly was the disparity of age between the prisoners. There was an unusual proportion of men beyond middle life and of youngsters still in their teens.

"Grandpas and kids," blurted out Tom.

"The Kaiser's robbing the cradle and the grave," commented Billy. "Germany's getting pretty near to the limit of her man power, I guess."

"That's true of France and England, too," observed Frank thoughtfully. "They lost the flower of their troops in the early fighting and they all have to do a great deal of combing to keep their ranks full."

"And that's where America has the Indian sign on the Huns," jubilated

Bart "We'll have our best against her second best."

"We'll trim her good and proper," predicted Frank. "Even at her best, we'd down her in the end. But don't let's kid ourselves. She's full of fight yet, and will take a lot of beating. And there are plenty of huskies in her ranks yet. Look at that big brute over there. He looks as though he could lift an ox."

He pointed to a massively built German corporal, who was evidently mad with rage at his capture. He was gesticulating wildly to

his fellow prisoners and fairly sputtering in the attempt to relieve his feelings.

"Seems to be rather peeved," grinned Tom.

"I can't catch on to what he's saying," laughed Bart. "But I'll bet he could give points to a New York truckman or the mate of a Mississippi steamboat. They'd turn green with envy if they could understand him."

"He's frothing at the mouth," chuckled Billy. "I'd hate to have him bite me just now. I'd get hydrophobia sure."

There was no time for further comment. The officers had had to give the men a short breathing spell, for all were spent with their tremendous exertions. But now after the brief rest, all was bustle and hurry.

"The Huns will be back for more," predicted Frank, as he and his friends were set to work changing the sandbags from the side of the trench that had faced the Americans to the other side that looked toward the German third line.

"They must be hard to please if they haven't had enough for one morning," growled Tom.

"They're gluttons for punishment," remarked Bart. "The first-line trench is junk from the mine explosion, but they won't give this second one up without making one mighty effort to get it back."

The young soldiers were working feverishly to organize the captured position, when their corporal, Wilson, summoned them out and they scrambled forth promptly and stood at attention.

"Fall in to take back the prisoners," he ordered.

A look of disappointment came over their faces and Wilson's eyes twinkled when he saw it.

"Haven't you had enough fighting yet?" he demanded. "Well, I feel that way myself, but orders are orders. Come along."

"Hard luck," muttered Frank in a low tone to Bart, as they obeyed the command.

"We'll miss some lovely fighting," agreed Bart.

"I was just getting warmed up," mourned Billy.

"Don't worry," advised Tom. "We'll be sent back after we get these fellows to headquarters, and we'll have a chance to get another crack at them."

The prisoners, having been searched, were placed in double file between the members of the guarding squad, who walked at a few paces interval on either side of them.

"Fall in!" came the corporal's order. "Shoulder arms. March!"

They started out briskly.

Frank and Bart happened to be close beside the big German corporal whom they had before observed. His wrath was not yet abated, and he kept up a volley of epithets as he sullenly marched along.

"He's making as much fuss as though he were the Kaiser," chuckled Tom, who was vastly amused at the prisoner's antics.

"Slap him on the wrist and tell him to be nice," counseled Billy with a grin.

The captive glared at them with insane rage in his eyes.

"I think he's going nutty," remarked Bart. "It's lucky for him there aren't any squirrels around."

"You want to keep your eye peeled for him," warned Frank. "He's bad medicine."

"He's safe enough," replied Bart, carelessly. "He hasn't any weapon, and if he started to run he wouldn't get far. He isn't cut out for a sprinter."

"Even if he were, a bullet would catch him," chimed in Billy. "He'd make a big target and it would be a pretty bad shot that would miss him."

When they reached the blown-up first trench they found it difficult to keep in line, and had to pick their way over the heaped-up ruin that had been made by the mine explosion.

Bart tripped over a strand of broken wire, and in trying to save himself from falling, his rifle slipped from his hand.