

The first Battle of Aisne by Varun Sharma

We sat around the campfire in our tent at nighttime, sharing stories and poems on the plains of Aisne. The tent had a warm, comfy feel about it, the complete opposite of the war raging on. We had survived another day of this horrific battle against the Germans. I chattered with Isaac quietly; we shared stories from back home. I wondered what my family was doing back home; they had been so scared when I had left for war.

Outside the skies were grey, preparing for a storm. The low rumble of the thunder surrounded the tent, almost drowning out the murmurs in the tent.

All sounds ceased as our general John French stood up. French was a very experienced leader, and would be needed to fight this war that never seemed to end.

“This has been a bad day for us British and French soldiers. We have had many casualties, but we must stay strong.” He bellowed, “For we will win this war!” A loud cheer filled the tent. This general was known to all armies, and was feared everywhere. We all knew, even him, that it was important to keep him alive.

As the night fell, the muttering gradually ceased and the languished troops in the camp fell asleep. Everyone’s thought were the same. Please God, let me survive for another day.

The next morning was Christmas Day. I was stirred awake by the shouting of the French and British soldiers outside. As I got ready for battle, I was surprised to hear Germans voices outside. Still, I cocked my gun and wore my helmet. As I exited the tent, I saw the scene outside. I froze in shock. I was astonished as I saw all the soldiers together exchanging gifts such as chocolate. A huge game of football was taking place in the muddy plains of the River Aisne! A Christmas truce, I thought, unbelievable.

“Hallo,” said a voice behind me joyfully, “Mein name ist Fritz, was ist ihre?” I spun around.

“My name is Jeff,” I replied smiling. We shook hands and started talking.

The riverside was loud and raucous with noise, as enemies exchanged gifts and adversaries engaged as one, to play together. Nothing had been said, but over the time-span of the night before, this French battlefield had adapted into complete inverse. A truce had been formed.

That night, I went to bed sporting a broad smile, I gathered all my presents and got ready for the next day. I laid my gun beside my army bed and fell asleep straight away. I didn’t know what the next day would bring, and didn’t want to think about it.

In the morning, I was the first to wake. I gathered bullet cartridge and loaded my gun, before waking up General French. Soon the whole army was roused from their sleeps, ready for the day ahead. I snaked my way outside and took cover in the trench. The others followed, prepared for the attack from the German Empire. Prepared for the onslaught that they were sure to bring along.

I glimpsed at the giant army on the opposite side, cocking their guns and wearing their helmets. BANG! A flurry of bullets started the day’s work. I crawled to the front of the pack, aiming my sniper

carefully. Our army had the disadvantage, being on the bottom of the hill. Men fell all around, wounded, shot in the heads, legs, shoulders, everywhere.

In the corner of my eye I saw French fall to the ground. In that moment I saw all our hopes go. Just in a flash. Tears filled my eyes, how would we ever make it? I asked myself

“Jeff, look out!” I heard a shout, almost inaudible from the piercing shrieks of guns. Abruptly, I fell to the ground, a single bullet puncturing my side. In excruciating pain, I cried out loud, sure this would be my final moment on earth.