

Stanley James Crook - 24th September 1915

The Dawlish Gazette

SATURDAY, September, 5, 1914

Pte. Stanley Crook, of the 1st Devons, son of Mr. James Crook, a member of the Dawlish Town Band, was in the memorable fighting on the French frontier last week.

In a letter to his grand-father, Mr. W. Crook, he gives the information that he was wounded, but lightly passes over his hurts (doesn't even say what they are) and seems chiefly anxious to get back to the fore-front again.

In the course of his letter he writes:

"Just a few lines to let you know that I am wounded and on my way to a place for treatment, where I don't know. My wound is not serious now, it's going on fine. The sooner it's well the better, as I want to get back to the front again. I can tell you we had a warm time in the firing line. The bullets and shells were flying past us like the wind. It's a wonder any of us poor devils are alive. The Germans came out to attack us in great masses. The fighting lasted about 40 minutes and it was a terrible affair, as fast as we shot them down others came up and took their places. Very few of our fellows killed as far as I know, but a large number were wounded, D company suffered most and our Officer told us there were only about 10 uninjured out of the whole company.

The Germans even robbed our wounded of their khaki and wore it themselves, thinking we might not recognise them in it. A German Officer pinched some of my clothes and I had to go 100 miles before I had another rig out. What you have read in the papers this week about the fighting is quite true. I can't remember much of it as all we thought about was getting hole of the Germans. All our boys fought like Britons and people at home ought to know what they went through for their countries sake. My rifle and bayonet are hungry waiting for a little more work. Roll on, so that I can go back to the front again."

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SATURDAY, September 19th, 1914

A DAWLISH WOUNDED SOLDIER. THE FIRST HOME. HIS EXPERIENCE AT MONS. GERMAN ATROCITY.

We had a talk with Private Stanley J Crook, of the Devons, the smart young Dawlish Soldier who was wounded in the terrible fighting at the Battle of Mons. He is convalescent and arriving home on Thursday for a fortnight's leave. Regarding his share in the fighting, he said that two days after reaching Havre they were ordered to draw four days emergency rations and proceeded to the front. He was with a section put to guard the communications about 15 miles from Namur. So quickly however did the Germans come on that this section soon found themselves behind the main British column and had to make a dash to the trenches. They got shelter with a Middlesex Regiment. Here they were under heavy artillery fire and continual attacks from the German Infantry for two days and a night. German aeroplanes marked the position of the trenches and gave their artillery the range. Crook came scathe less out of this ordeal, but that he had a close shave three shot holes in his cap bear quite elegant testimony. The Germans, he said, were at least five to one. He saw their artillery make great gaps in them, but as fast as they were made they filled up with others. "It was enough to mesmerise anybody to see it," he remarked. "Shoot!" he said, in reply to a question, "their Infantry couldn't knock the place they were born in, leave alone us." As the French reinforcements failed to come up, at length the order was given to retire. It was then that Crook got hurt. A nearly spent bullet struck the right side of his ankle. He felt a kind of pin-prick at first. He then took off his boot and bandaged up his wound. He struggled on, but became numbed all up one side and eventually fainted away for a time. When he came to he found that the Germans had robbed him of his shirt and trousers. Putting on the overcoat of a dead soldier of the Lancashire Regiment he crawled on and came to a "First Aid" party of four. These had had their hands cut off by the Germans [of this crook was positive] who did this and then told them to pick up the wounded. These men had the Red Cross badge on their sleeves. He soon came across another sound Red Cross section, who carried him back for medical attention. He was taken to Paris, thence to Havre and home to England.