

# THRILLING EXPLOITS OF CANADIAN V.C.

Corporal Konowal, a Russian in Dominion Ranks, Wins Coveted Honors.

**PLUCK AND DARING**  
Hero Goes With Siberian Force and Has Wife Somewhere in Russia.

Special to The Star.

Ho! My!

Don't you come anigh,

When Tommy is a-playin'

With the baynit an' the butt."

(Barrack Room Ballads.)

OTTAWA, Sept. 21.

There stepped off the train at Ottawa the other evening an unassuming man in khaki with a corporal's stripes on his sleeve. Below that stripe on the lower arm were two short lengths of gold braid to indicate that the wearer had been twice wounded in the war. Otherwise to the casual observer the individual in question would have passed unnoticed in the crowd as one of the many khaki-clad figures which are to-day as common as the man in mufti.

As a matter of fact he did to all intents and purposes pass unnoticed, although the King's regulations require that a man of any rank whatever should salute him. For he wore on his left breast the maroon ribbon with the miniature bronze cross in the centre which is the most coveted honor in all the armies—namely the Victoria Cross.

**Simply a Corporal.**

Otherwise he was simply a corporal, five feet seven in height, very deep in chest, 30 years of age or so, with a slight scar below the mouth and another in the back of the neck, keen-eyed and alert-looking, but with no other particular distinction. His name was Corp. Filip Konowal, and he was a Russian.

It is a reflection upon official Ottawa that Corp. Konowal, V.C., who enlisted in the 7th Ottawa Regiment over three years ago, and who won the highest of all military honors, came home unannounced and unmet. It is something of which the Capital City has cause to be ashamed that he was forced to wander through the city until finally he found lodging in a soldiers' club. And it is to be further regretted that even after his presence in the city had been made known no recognition of the fact was then taken by the military authorities or the city. For the deeds by which Konowal won the coveted honor were characterized by the most signal bravery and heroism.

**Record of Exploit.**

It has been traditional that the Victoria Cross has largely been won for saving life. Corp. Konowal won his for taking life—that life might be saved. The official record of the exploit is a record of killing. It reads thus:

"His section had the difficult task of mopping up cellars, craters and machine gun emplacements.

"Under his able direction all resistance was overcome successfully and heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy. In one cellar he himself bayoneted three enemy and attacked single-handed seven others in a crater, killing them all.

"On reaching the objective a machine gun was holding up the right flank causing many casualties. Corp. Konowal rushed forward, entered the emplacement, killed the crew, and brought the gun back to our lines. The next day he again attacked single-handed another machine gun emplacement, killed three of the crew, and destroyed the gun emplacement with explosives.

**Killed Sixteen Huns Alone.**

"This non-commissioned officer alone killed at least sixteen of the enemy and during the two days' actual fighting carried on continuously."

The above is an official report, and therefore sticks very close to known facts. It is sufficiently lurid in itself. But Corporal Konowal's own story contains details of even greater interest, even though told in somewhat broken English.

On August 24th, 1917, he was a corporal of a section of rifle grenadiers of the 47th B. C. Battalion. It was shortly after the capture of Vimy Ridge and the Canadians were completing their work by the capture of the village beyond. To Corporal Konowal and his section fell the unpleasant task of "mopping" up behind the first line. That is, it was their duty to search out and exterminate such groups of the Boches as had sought shelter in crater or dug-out while the first line passed, and were ready to creep out and deal death with machine gun or bomb upon those who had gone ahead. The section was to take life to save life.

**Bayoneted Three Huns.**

Naturally the members of the section scattered, and Konowal soon after going over found himself at the entrance of a dugout. Fearlessly he went down, and remorselessly he bayoneted the occupants—three men.

Having finished this grim business he proceeded further on his task. In a crater he came upon seven men with a machine gun, all armed and unwounded. "I jumped in the crater," he declares, "and I attacked them single-handed by myself. And I killed them all! I broke my rifle on the last one because he had on a steel vest. I couldn't kill him with the bayonet, so I killed him with the butt. I took his rifle from him and I smashed his face in with the butt."

"Next day," he continued, "I attacked another machine gun pit. I had twenty-eight rifle grenades with me in a bag. I opened the bag, and I killed altogether 33 men with the rifle grenades. I silenced the machine gun. But there were three Germans in a pill box, and they cried 'Kamerad,' so I said 'all right. Come along.' I made one carry the ma-

chine gun, another carry the ammunition box, and another the spare parts. And I brought them all in. When I came back to the trench, I had been away two days—the whole battalion cheered, and cried out: 'Here comes Konowal'.

#### Talked With Prisoners.

"I talked to the prisoners. One of them talked Polish, and I understood him. I asked him to tell me where his headquarters were. He said he would show me. So I got twenty men. We took the two prisoners, and they walked behind me, the twenty men following in single file, with a captain behind. We got to headquarters, and a man came out with a revolver. And there were many men behind him. He pointed the revolver, and I said "you'd better not shoot." He stopped and then I told him that he must surrender as we had more men behind. He refused to surrender to a non-commissioned officer. So he asked for an officer. But just then our captain ordered us to retreat. I told the Germans we were going back, but that if they shot at us retreat. I come back with the whole division and wipe them out. They didn't fire.

"I got some bully beef—the first food I had eaten in two days—and sat down to have a rest in our own trenches. Company D then called me to come over as a counter-attack was being prepared by the Germans. I looked through the periscope and said; 'They aren't preparing to counter-attack; they are getting out.' Just then a bullet came down and caught me in the jaw and I went down. The captain wanted me sent to the dressing station, but I asked to be sent first to my own quarters. The fellows shook hands as I went by. Then they sent me to England."

#### Wife in Russia.

Such is the plain unvarnished account of the exploits of Corporal Filip Konowal, V. C. It may here be noted that he had no rum ration when he went over, desiring, as he said, to "keep a clear mind for the work I had to do."

He has a wife in Russia, from whom he has not heard for three and a half years, though he has been assigning half his pay to her, and cannot tell whether she is receiving it or not. He has been ordered to report at Rockliffe Camp for service with the Canadian expeditionary force in Siberia, and he is actually looking forward to more "work" of the kind he did in France. And yet he remarked reflectively at the conclusion of his narrative:

"I am afraid I am doing the devil's work and not God's work."

The Victoria Cross has mostly been awarded for saving life under fire. Corporal Konowal won his for taking life, that the lives of others might be saved.