Frontal Assault

Henry Hanna was a young Irishman living in Dublin when war broke out in the summer of 1914. He along with a number of friends joined one of the "Pals" regiments made up of young men from the same football clubs, factories, businesses, neighborhoods or other organizations. After training, he and his "pals" were shipped to Egypt and from there to the battleground at Gallipoli. He wrote of his experiences in 1917 and we join his story after he has landed at Suvla Bay on the Peninsula and moved a few miles inland from the landing zone:

Jack Boyd and I were lying together keeping watch, and about 11 p.m. I said: ' What about something to eat,' as we had had only a bit of ' B.B.' and a few biscuits since morning, and our bare quart of water, which was half gone by this time. We divided a tin of bully beef, and had a good supper and nearly finished our water. The last meal poor Jack ever had.

By morning our bottles were empty, and no prospect of getting any more. At 3:30 a.m. their counter-attack started.

Brown from Clontarf was opposite me, as well as J. B. He got a graze on the left temple. The bullets knocked dirt into my face. By Jove! It was a hot time then! Their bombs started. Such a row! It was just like a living Hell, and I have no clear remembrance of anything! Next item was our bayonet charge, headed by Hickman. He was killed, Jack Boyd and Willie Boyd and young Kener also, and some others. Lax was wounded and Drummond. I was one of the last out, and when about twelve yards out could not see any of our fellows except *one*, who, as I thought, lay down, so I lay down as well. I looked around, but could not see any one to support, so I said: 'Here's a how-d'you-do. If I stay I will either get killed or wounded. If I get wounded I will lie here all day, and I have no water in my bottle, so I had better make a dash for our lines, and if I get shot-well, it cannot be helped, but I have the chance of getting in.'

While debating this over in my mind I was lying quite close to a chum called Cecil Murray (from the Bank of Ireland); he was badly hit. I asked him where he was hit. He showed me his left hand, which was in pulp, and, while speaking to him, he was hit three times in the body. The groans were heartrending.

Then a young chap called Elliott, who played 'footer,' was shot in front of me when running out; he jumped about three feet when hit; he started trying to crawl back to our lines, and just got above me when he was hit again. He died in a few minutes.

Then came my dash for safety. I made two rushes of it, and had to shout to our fellows to stop firing to allow me to get in. I got a splinter of a bullet in the side. It just pricked the skin and stuck in my belt. There is a hole in my belt where it stuck. When I got behind the line, the first thing I saw was Lex, bandaged all over the head and shoulder, but could see no one else there. There were no stretcher-bearers of any sort, so I got permission from Lieutenant Hamilton to help him down the ridge. I then discovered my knee was cut and swollen. Either another splinter of a bullet or cut by the rocks. I could hardly walk. The sights I saw going along that place I shall never forget. Some of our fellows throwing back the bombs which the Turks threw over and which had not exploded. One fellow caught them like catching a cricket ball. Wounded and dead lying everywhere. The sun streaming down and not a drop of water to be had. Neither had we bombs to reply to the Turks and drive them out.