

My Story by Clarence Herbert Cartwright

I was born October 15, 1887 on our family farm in Cramahe Township. Our nearest neighbours were the McTavishes. I knew Edith and Grace quite well growing up. I thought I might marry Grace at one point but like all my plans that too went awry. When I was three my father moved us to London so he could pursue employment at the Labatt's brewery there. I had an uneventful childhood cushioned as I was by our family's wealth and privilege. I was sent to Upper Canada College when I turned eight and stayed there until I was sixteen in 1904 and I was off to Oxford! I passed the exams to join All Souls College (would that I had not!). There I started my degree in chemistry hoping to follow in my father's footsteps. My years as an undergraduate were marked by distinction and success and in 1908 I graduated summa cum laude. I decided to stay on for advanced studies to further my knowledge. I picked a somewhat esoteric field of study involving tropical fungi. While studying this subject I had to dig deep into Christopher Codrington's Library. That old slave trader who had endowed the library in 1710 had made his fortunes off of the miseries of his fellow man. Oh and the trade in sugar. Not only had he donated money but he had also donated some artefacts he had obtained while he served as governor of the Leeward Islands. (I stumbled across them late in April 1910. Much later the connection between April 1910 and oddness became clear but at the time no such connection had presented itself). The artefacts were thin plates of some odd metal engraved with some unknown syllabary. These were widely considered a hoax meant to relieve old Codrington of some of his wealth. Since they were considered fraudulent access was not restricted. Something about them spoke to me though. While I had engaged in no study of linguistics I fancied I might be a new Jean-François Champollion and translate these plates. There were traces of some other syllabary on the plates, no more than a few lines but I fancied they repeated an earlier text. I dedicated myself to the study of these plates to the detriment of all else. Trips home for Christmas? Cancelled. Attending my father's funeral in 1914? No. I was sole heir though and all the money came to me. It kept me on in England despite my total lack of success in my chosen field. My professors finally despaired of me and decided to evict me as a suitable punishment. The joke was certainly on them as while I left the college the plates came with me! I was headed to Liverpool to board a ship to America when I spotted a sandwich board recruiting for a war against Germany and Austria-Hungary! How had I missed the rumours of war? Some near forgotten spark of patriotism stirred in my breast and I enlisted then and there. I buried the plates somewhere safe and travelled to France with the Army Ordnance Department. (I

had delusions that I might fight the Hun hand to hand but my knowledge of chemistry made me more valuable with the AOC). I spent the war for the most part inspecting ordnance and making sure it met the Army's requirements. The war passed peacefully for me for the most part. No whiff of scandal followed me from Oxford, by this point it was all hands on deck. It was my childhood all over again and my position cushioned me from the worst of the worst. I never even saw a Wonder for the first three years of the war. But then reports of atrocities and horrors conducted by Wonders and the sight of ship after ship returning to England with the crippled and maimed made me feel a crushing guilt. I petitioned for a transfer to the trenches so that I might experience first-hand what was transpiring there were met by refusal. I was too "critical" and "important" to the war effort. But the guilt grew and grew and I continued to petition for a transfer to a combat unit. I started to sicken and there was talk of having me committed. I threatened desertion but if I was shot as a madman who would translate the plates? Finally I was no use to anyone and it was decided that I would be sent to Belgium. There I joined the Second Battalion of the Alexandra, Princess of Wales' Own, the Yorkshire Regiment. As a lieutenant in charge of men's lives no less. This was a fresh horror as I had received none of the usual officer's training. This was a blessing in disguise as it turned out as I didn't make the mistakes the regular officers did. I kept my men mostly alive and intact for five long months. But's that when a night attack by Wonders took us all by surprise. There had been a day long barrage by the heavy guns of enemy. Finally night fell and we thought we might get some peace and quiet. But no. The Hun monstrosities came over the top in the dark and fell upon us like nightmares from our darkest past. Many were sad things barely clinging to life and were easily dispatched. But others, oh the memory of the others still haunt my sleep. One was an armoured worm of some sort. I saw rounds from a Vickers medium bounce off its hide. It slithered along the trench either crushing the troops beneath it or greedily gobbling them up. As it slithered though I heard it exclaim in barely understandable German "Ich will nicht. Mach mich nicht." But this did not stop its reign of terror and it ate my men salted with its tears. I had been sleeping in a bunker when the attack came and had come out to direct operations. When I heard the screaming I grabbed my pistol and ran in the direction of the commotion. When I saw what was happening I returned to the bunker and retrieved a demolition satchel. I ran back down the trench to the monster and shouted as loud as I could, "Stop you monster!" I fired my useless pistol at it and knew it couldn't even feel the bullets. But somehow it heard me and laboriously turned to face me down. My insides turned to liquid and my courage faltered and I almost fled. But no, the blood of my men was on this monster's face.

It had tiny eyes high on its head and it squinted at me. It saw the satchel and I swear something like joy filled its eyes. It opened its mouth wide and I swear uttered "Befreie mich von dieser Existenz." I pulled the lanyard that ignited the fuse and hurled the satchel at the thing. It looked like I just missed but the thing moved to intercept it and swallowed the charge! There was a pause and we stared at each other and what looked like peace came to the thing's eyes. It uttered one last sentence "Vielen Dank. Mein Name war Otto Kunst" before the charge detonated blowing the front half of the creature to shreds. I lost consciousness at this point and when next I regained consciousness I was at Bethlem Royal Hospital.