

## Journal #12



### **The Moment of Death**

This image--thought to be a still from a German film about the Battle of Verdun--captures a French soldier being thrown back by the force of a bullet. He was just one of over 500,000 French casualties of the battle.

It has been said that during war, the difference between a hero and a fool is one well-placed bullet. What does this mean to you?

## Letter

### **Guy Chapman, A Passionate Prodigality: Fragments of Autobiography (1933)**

One morning, while I was inspecting the rifles of the sentries on duty, I was startled, not to say alarmed, by three whizz-bangs bursting as it seemed all round my head. I heard one coming very close, caught a glimpse of it out of the tail of my eye, and at that moment slipped. I picked myself up, but before I could reach my full height, the minnie burst. A furious hot whirlwind rushed down, seized me and flung me violently back against the earth. I lay half-stunned while a rain of earth and offal pattered down on me, followed by something which whizzed viciously and stuck quivering in the trench wall; it was a piece of jagged steel eighteen inches long.

1. What was Guy Chapman doing in the front line?
2. What is a whizz-bang? What is a minnie?
3. Describe the artillery attack.

## Vocabulary

**Coal-Box:** Heavy German shell, usually a 5.9 inch in diameter. From the black smoke of the shell-burst. Also known as **Five-Nine**.

**Draw Crabs:** To attract enemy artillery fire.

**Minniewerfer: (minnie)** German trench mortar. A variety of calibers were employed. From German *Minenwerfer*, mine thrower.

**Packet:** Wound. To *cop a packet* was to be wounded, often fatally.

**Quarter to Ten:** British 9.45 inch trench mortar.

**Whizz-bang:** High-velocity shell. From the noise of the rapid flight and the explosion. Usually applied to the German 77mm.