

# Twilight of Youth

## Children Who Learned to Goose Step for Hitler Achieve Valhalla at Caen

(From Yesterday's Late Edition.)

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### With the Canadians in France,

July 9.—In the tortured wreckage of Caen, British and Canadian soldiers today were bearing bloody witness to the twilight of the Hitler Jugend.

The 12th SS. Panzer Division was the final flowering of the original Adolf Hitler Youth, the boys of six and seven years who began to drill with tiny wooden rifles and parade in goose step when the Nazis came to power in 1933. Today the 12th SS. Panzer is a division no more. Its living remnants are still fighting in pockets outside the suburbs, but these living remnants are far outnumbered by the dead. They lie where they fell yesterday in the levelled streets of Authie, Buron, Gruchy, Cussy, Ardenne, Franqueville, in splintered orchards and in acre after acre of grain fields where this year's only harvest will be a harvest of soaked slit trenches and weapon pits.

Beside them are their live grenades, the blackened hulks of their tanks.

### Suicidal Fury.

A few have surrendered. A few have broken under the relentless onslaught of these last 36 hours and have become suddenly the little boys they never gave themselves

a chance to be. But for the most part the pride of the Hitler Youth has died.

You hear a lot about the Fascist soldier who fights with maniacal or fanatic or suicidal fury. These are the words that must be used to describe the way the sullen, beardless striplings of the 12th SS. Panzers have fought since yesterday at dawn. An hour ago a Canadian corporal said of them "they look like babies and they die like mad bastards."

The colonel of a Canadian infantry battalion led me through the terrible debris of a part of yesterday's battlefield where his battalion was forming up to push on again. He pointed to a burnt-out Sherman tank and not 15 yards away a wrecked German 75-mm. gun.

"This will give you a rough idea what fighting these people is like," the colonel said. "These Germans sat on their gun belly down in the wheat until the tank was on top of them. They let go. They got the tank and, of course, they were killed themselves a few minutes afterward."

Throughout yesterday's tumultuous battle, the last of the Hitler Youth sat under two barrages, their own and ours, waiting for Canadian infantrymen to push on beyond their carefully concealed snipers' nests and machine-gun posts in the fields. Then, after deliberately allowing themselves to be surrounded, they would fire on the backs of leading Canadian troops, exact as high a price as they could, and then die in a spitting hail of Stens, pistols and grenades.

### Last Bullet for Himself.

Often they "played dead," and allowed the first rush of our infantry charge to speed right over them.

"I was going through a nasty piece of mortaring when I looked down into a trench and saw an apparently dead German with the muzzle of his pistol jammed in his mouth," Major A. J. Wilson, Charlottetown, said. "Just as I went past I saw his eyes roll. I made a lunge for him, and he pulled the trigger. All these people have been told that they'll be shot if they're taken prisoner. This kid apparently was working on his last bullet."

Major Harry Anderson, Kitchener, company commander in an Ontario regiment that battled the 12th SS. Panzers through the thickest of yesterday's fighting, told of meeting a nest of Germans as he and his batman, Pte. Peter Barbeck, Windsor, worked their way through a meadow. Pte. Barbeck spotted the Germans first. They were in a trench. One of them jumped out at Barbeck, tugged at a pin on a hand grenade, and fired a wild burst from his tommy gun. Major Anderson and Pte. Barbeck got grenades away almost simultaneously and the enemy pocket was erased.

"This is one redeeming feature of fighting these madmen," Major Anderson said. "They sometimes get excited and miss setup targets."

Major Art Sparks, Woodstock, Ont., a member of the same unit, saw another German youngster step into the blazing machine guns of a Sherman tank to fire an anti-tank hand mortar from 20 feet away. He missed, too, in his wild-eyed excitement.

Another German Sparks told about held out in a slit trench, catching Canadian grenades and throwing them back before they exploded. Finally one blew his right arm off. He threw another back with his left hand before he missed one and was instantly killed.

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