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ESTAMINETS I HAVE KNOWN.

THERE was the estaminet at Wippenhoek which was nightly seized by a singing party who tyrannized every member of the company. To venture to speak to a friend or murmur, "Encore, Mademoiselle," was to call forth loud cries of "Silence! Order! Order, gentlemen, if you ARE gentlemen," accompanied by fierce scowls.

Then a brither Scot would pour forth one of those native melodies which enable one to clearly understand their national emigration figures, while everyone sat around with an expression of profound misery, not daring to even gulp a drink of vin blanc for fear one's throat clicked.

Such was the iron discipline of these tyrants during a "singing session," that once seated it was impossible to make an escape; the slightest movement calling forth a shower of abuse. There was a melancholy gentleman of the R.E.'s who would embark upon a long whining song something between a Chinese play and a lobster salad nightmare, telling of a young country girl (who apparently was born, weaned, and reared upon "a rustic stile, mossgrown and grey") loved by all the village lads who, "to church on Sunday went their way," until enticed away to the great and glittering city by a fascinating stranger with a "darksome eye."

The song then referred to gilded halls, etc., and winds on until the young lady is discovered carrying her "infant cheelde" on the banks of a murky stream, indulging in a monologue on the subject of marriage lines. After this things breeze along in a most exhilarating manner; her father proves to be a victim of consumption, and her aged mother appears to be in great danger of contracting a severe chill from being permanently bathed in tears, while her young brother goes and does it by joining the army. (Although the singer does not mention it, one feels sure that the brother is doing No. 1).

Other members of the happy family are vaguely referred to as "Hangels in Evin." We wore safely through to the point where she returns home, "dragging her steps to the door" (having already passed the inevitable rustic mill and green where she once used to play)—when a merciful figure with M.P. on his arm called "time!" And we staggered into the fresh air, free.

(Written for "Now and Then.")

**THE
LETTERS OF BERTIE, THE BATMAN.**

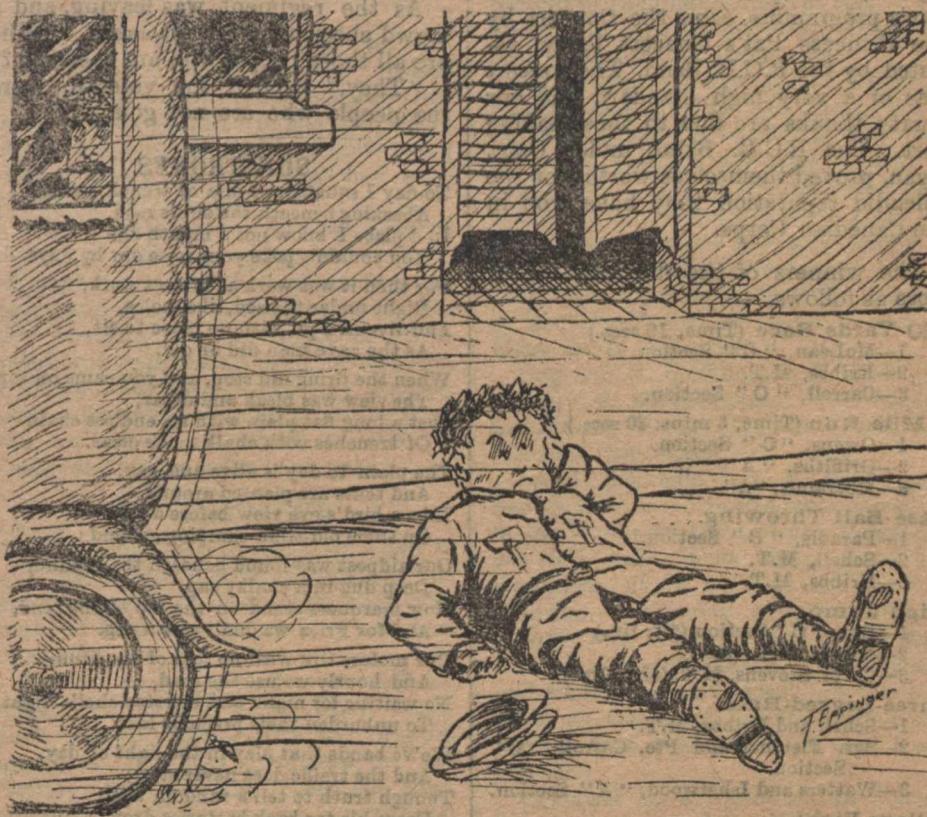
MY DEAR FLOSSIE,

As you will see by this I am in France and with the Field Ambulance. We are in the trenches around (deleted by the Censor), and it is terrible. I am writing this on the firing platform, and the rapid fire that the infantry is giving Fritz is the cause of my hand-writing being so shaky. I am broken-hearted. Our last farewell at Victoria was too much for me. I felt weak all over and the boiled eggs that you put into my tunic pocket for lunch were crushed in our last embrace.

He was particularly unfortunate in "making a landing" in the back yard of an Estaminet, where he was violently attacked by an indignant lady wielding a red-hot frying-pan. She was under the impression that he was indulging in some drunken frolic, and paid no attentions to his repeated cries of "Pardon, Madam! SEE VOO PLAY."

Making his escape over the wall in a somewhat piebald condition, he set off at the double to regain his clothes and some shreds of his outraged dignity.

Dodging round the side road, back to his position, the last straw was applied to his already overworked back, by a



"Where did that one go?"

We are constantly doped with gas by our friend Fritz, and it is so awkward to have to take one's mulligan through a tube inserted in the right ear.

The other day the gas was so dense that each man had to have a 50-lb. weight tied around his waist, to prevent him from rising bodily into the air.

Our O.C., who is very stout, was indulging in his morning "tub," when he had the misfortune to "slip his moorings," and only the excessive modesty of the German machine gunners saved him.

cheeky little boy asking for cigarette pictures.

A shell has just arrived in our trenches and has wounded one of the boys. I think he has been blown to pieces, so I must go and dress his wounds or he will bleed to death.

So I must close this letter. Well, dear, just let me say once more how much I love you.

Yours for ever,
BERTIE.

(Written for "Now and Then.")