

The officer was a young man and was evidently on an errand of haste. He slithered down the steep bank at the edge of the wood, leaped the roadside ditch, asked a question of the nearest man, and, getting an answer from him, came at the double past the guns and teams towards the major. He saluted hastily, said "Mornin', sir," and went on breathlessly. "My colonel sent me across to catch you. We are in a ditch along the edge of the far side of this wood, and could just see enough of you between the trees to make out your battery. From where we are we can see a German gun, one of their big brutes, with a team of about twenty horses pulling it, plain and fair out in the open. The colonel thinks you could knock 'em to glory before they could reach cover."

Prepare for Action.

"Where can I see them from?" said the major quickly.

"I'll show you," said the subaltern, "if you'll leave your horse and come with me through the wood. It's only a narrow belt of trees here.

The major turned to one of his subalterns, who was with him at the head of the battery.

"Send back word to the captain to come up here and wait for me!" he said rapidly. "Tell him what you have just heard this officer say, and tell him to give the word, 'Prepare for action.' "And now," he said, turning to the infantryman, "go ahead."

The two of them jumped the ditch, scrambled up the bank, and disappeared amongst the trees.

A message back to the captain who was at the rear of the battery, brought him up at a canter. The subaltern explained briefly what he had heard, and the captain, after interrupting him to shout an order to "Prepare for action," heard the finish of the story, pulled out his map, and pointing out on it a road shown as running through the trees, sent the subaltern off to reconnoitre it.

The men were stripping off their coats, rolling them and strapping them to the saddles and the wagon-seats; the Numbers One, the sergeants in charge of each gun, bustling their gunners, and seeing everything about the guns made ready; the gunners examining the mechanism and gears of the guns, opening and closing the hinged flaps of the wagons, and tearing the thin metal covers off the fuses.

Why Soldiers Drill.

It was all done smartly, and one after another the sergeants reported their sub-sections as ready. Immediately the