

THE FIRST TRICK IN THE TRENCHES.

We were lying around on an old barn floor,
Just smoking and taking our pleasure,
And no one would think from what he saw
That the morn was the end of our leisure.
But the whisper had just gone round the men,
"We're off to the trenches to-morrow";
And our thoughts became sober and serious
then,

Though there was no sign of sorrow.

In the early morn, with our harness on,
We were ready to call on Fritz,
So we hit the road with a snatch of song,
Though we may have felt like "two-bits."

A shattered village we reached at length,
Not a cottage left (large or small),
But a sombre wit on a wall had writ
"Krupp Avenue"—that was all.

And the ruins of Ypres now loomed into
view,

As we hurriedly marched along,
And then we knew that our tramp was
through,

As we heard the salient's song.

Over there the crack of machine gun,
And here the sniper's lone shot,
While the roar of "sausage" and rifle
grenade

Would sometimes ring o'er the lot.

For these are the notes the salient sings
As the days go drearily by,
And the star shells are the cold spotlights
'Neath which men live and die.

C. F. F.

THE BACKBONE OF THE ARMY.

A PROFESSIONAL TRIBUTE TO THE N.C.O.



It is written that on the seventh day man shall do no manner of work, nor his servant, nor his ox, nor anything that is his. This law is in the main rigidly observed by men and women in all stations of life. There is, however, one notable exception. The British non-commissioned officer works not only on the seventh day, but very often far into the night of it. He must work, and work, and when he has finished one job

he must look for another. It is not often that one finds the N.C.O. looking for work. Work flies to him as if he were a magnet. But he is very often to be found looking for trouble—trouble for idle hands, that is.

There never was a truer saying than that the sergeant is the backbone of the British Army. He always has been, and he always will be. Usually drawn from the same classes as the men he commands, in all cases having undergone the same experiences in the ranks as they have, he is naturally fitted to be the go-between of his officers and his men. A good N.C.O. is just as valuable to a company as an efficient colonel is to a battalion; in time he will be promoted company sergeant-major, when his position will be very much the same towards his company commander as the adjutant's is to his colonel. From company sergeant-major there is only one step to regimental sergeant-major, whose post is usually filled by that N.C.O. who combines all the qualifications necessary for the various ranks through which he has passed.

IN THE "SALIENT."



RUNNER:—"Not much use of takin' cover 'ere I guess."