

With an agonised look, Bud read the "Mene, mene, tekel upharsin!" "Lost. Gold signet ring. Finder please return to Corporal X."

The latest bulletin announces that Bud is once more returned to duty, but has borrowed a Gat. wherewith to draw upon whosoever mentions "Ring!" to him. His opinion is that those who go souvenir hunting lack taste. R. H.

Notes on "Bird Life."

No. 4.

THE WOOD-PECKER OR STRAFE-BIRD

[Classical Name: *Junco Machinus Morkillus.*]

When pursuing this bird the first point to impress upon the ornithologist is to gain familiarity with its peculiar note. Having acquired this familiarity, when its note is heard, the eager student is urgently warned to duck, to duck quickly and to stay ducked until its song has ceased. Great care should be exercised by beginners as it is a common practice with the bird to stop its song for a time and then to start up again at the very moment when it is least expected. The reason for this caution is that when the bird sings or strafes it showers over the surrounding country small but very deadly pellets. These may cause very serious injury or may result in a mere blightie, but it is not worth while risking the former in the hope of gaining one of the latter. A favourite variation of its usual clattering note is often heard by observers in these parts and this variation may be roughly represented as "Um tiddly um tum - - pop, pop." For no apparent reason this is known as the XVIIIth variation. At one time this was confined to a single specimen on our right, but we notice that of late it is becoming a popular form of greeting between these birds; some even giving the first part and waiting for another in the vicinity to end off with the inevitable "pop, pop."

The peculiar nests they frequent are known as emplacements, but beyond stating that they are extremely uncomfortable and very strongly built, I am unable owing to the military regulations to give further particulars. The species is very common and at times they make night hideous with their continuous song.

Their food is composed largely of lead, and they are very voracious eaters. Indeed they have to take in large quantities of food in order to enable them to send out the pellets previously referred to. There are a few captive specimens in the neighbourhood which are, so far as our readers are concerned, perfectly harmless, but there are also large numbers of untamed birds about. Should there be any doubt as to whether it is a tame or unfriendly specimen whose song is heard, we can only emphasise our previous advice about

ducking and we would mention that at all times "Safety first" is a good motto.

In appearance they are unusual, being possessed of three stout legs, no wings, a long thin body and a strange sight. When they see or are seeking for their prey, they strafe loudly and it is this noise which affords the one protection to the unwary. At best they are evil creatures which may by means of careful handling be turned to a useful career. At worst, they are the most disagreeable birds which we have yet had cause to mention in these small Nature Studies.

THE END.

Our Strafe Column.

By the Strafer-in-Chief.

There was a young man of La Clytte,
Who at drinking could never be bytte.

He licked up the ale,

By the jug and the pail;

But he rarely, if ever, touched mytte.

* * *

Considerable excitement was occasioned during our last tour in the trenches by a rumor, carelessly set afoot by one of "B" Company's cooks, to the effect that he had been issued with a bag of charcoal which actually burned. It is not too much to say that this was the best news that had come to the front line since the second battle of Ypres, and that the men understood the full import of it goes without saying.

In every dug-out and fire-trench, at every ration-dump and strong-point, the joyful news was discussed. Happy smiles wreathed the faces of all ranks; officers, bubbling over with merriment, between their rippling laughs forgot to give the detail to carry-on; Sergeants, tripping gaily along with the rum, celebrated the happy occasion by going fifty-fifty on every tot.

Even the Orderly-room Sergeant smiled. Happy man!

Alas, that falsehood travels half way round the world before truth has time to get his boots on!

The Board of Officers called to sit upon the phenomenal bag of charcoal investigated the circumstances thoroughly. Their report has not yet been made public, but it is understood to be very exhaustive, taking up fourteen sheets of foolscap, two pages of Army Book 153, one Signalling Message Form and the back of a postage stamp. Generally, the finding of the Board is as follows:

(a) A bag of charcoal was issued to "B" Company.

(b) It was the usual un-inflammable stuff.

(c) That, since a contradiction of the rumor would have a demoralising effect on the Canadian Army Corps, it is suggested that no more be said about it.

(d) That the Regimental Quarter-Master be warned that all charcoal issued in future must not be able to burn.

* * *

The Rats (in chorus): "Hang it all! We don't mind privates and dogs, but when it comes to Colonels, Adjutants, Sergeant-majors and ferrets . . . well! It's No Man's Land for ours."

* * *

We believe that it was a private of "A" Company who hit upon the happy phrase about "fiddling while Rum burns."

* * *

Casualty. We regret to say that during the recent heavy bombardment the dog, belonging to the Grenade Platoon, became a casualty. Basking in the sun behind the lines he was rudely disturbed by an H.E. which lit about twenty feet from him. Having ki-yi-ed fifteen times round the shell hole the terrier made a bee-line for the dug-outs where he now rests—a nervous wreck, and another testimony to Hunnish frightfulness.

The Rivals.

We received the first of the following from a correspondent before the edition of *New York Life*, in which the second item appears, was in print. We therefore append both.

Said a soldier, "When we were in (censored)

We gave Fritz (unfit for publication),
When we made the attack

All we saw was the back

Of the German who beat it for (a
manufacturing town on the eastern bank of the Rhine)."

* * *

There was a young man of (deleted),
Who went to enlist at (name censored)

He shouldered his gun

Went forth on the run

And was wounded three times at (a
certain place in northern France).

New York *Life*.

* * *

Catch of the Season. Greatest sensation of the year. . . .

Who lost the watch?

For solution see R. S. T. Orderly Room.

Of interest to the Battalion.

"Major W. H. Hedges lately in command of the Bradford Company in the 36th Regiment (South Simcoe) who returned injured from the front, has been appointed Junior Major of the 157th Battalion. While at the front he was in the 20th Battalion, in which Colonel McPhee and Major Preece are serving. Major Hedges is a popular and efficient officer, and his experience at the front will be of great value to the Overseas Simcoe Foresters."—*Orillia Packet*.