

# FITCHENER'S MOB

By JAS. NORMAN HALL.

CHAPTER VII.—(Cont'd.)  
But Fritz could be depended upon to keep up his sense of the game. He gave us just as good as we sent, and often he added something for full measure. His surprises were sausage-shaped missiles which came wobbling toward us, slowly, almost wickedly; but they dropped with lightning speed, and alas, for any poor Tommy who misjudged the place of its fall! However, every one had a chance. Trench-mortar projectiles are so accurate that one can see them coming, and they describe so leisurely an arc before they fall that men have time to run.

I have always admired Tommy Atkins for his sense of fair play. He enjoyed giving Fritz "a little bit of all-right," but he never resented it when Fritz had his own fun at our expense. In the far-off days of peace, I used to lament the fact that we had fallen upon evil times. I read of old wars with a feeling of regret that men had lost their old primal love for dangerous sport, their naive ignorance of fear. All the brave, heroic things of life were said and done. But on those trench-mortaring days, when I watched boys playing with death with right good zest, heard them shouting and laughing as they tumbled over one another in their eagerness to escape it, I was convinced of my error. Daily I saw men going through the test of fire triumphantly, and at the last, what a severe test it was! And how splendidly they met it! During the months continuously in the firing-line, I met less than a dozen natural-born cowards; and my experience was largely with plumbers, drapers' assistants, clerks, men who had no fighting traditions to back them up, make them heroic in spite of themselves.

The better I knew Tommy, the better I liked him. He has not a shred of sentimentality in his make-up. There is plenty of sentiment, sincere feeling, but it is admirably concealed. I had been a soldier of the King for many months before I realized that the men with whom I was living, sharing rations and hardships, were anything other than the healthy animals they looked. They grumbled at the restraints military discipline imposed upon them, and at the paltry shilling a day which they received for their first really hard work they had ever done. They appeared to regard England as a miserly employer, exacting their last ounce of energy for a wretchedly inadequate wage. To the casual observer, there was not the ardor of loyal sons, fighting for a beloved motherland. Rather, it seemed that of irresponsible schoolboys on a long holiday. They said nothing about patriotism, the duty of Englishmen in war-time. And if I attempted to start a conversation along that line, they walked right over me with their boots on.

This was a great disappointment at first. I should never have known, from anything that was said, that a man of them was stirred at the thought of fighting for old England. England was all right, but "I ain't goin' balmy about the old flag and all that stuff." Many of them insisted that they were in the army for personal and selfish reasons alone. They went out of their way to ridicule any and every indication of sentiment.

There was the matter of talk about mothers, for example. I can't imagine this being the case in a volunteer army of American boys, but not once, during fifteen months of British army life, did I hear a discussion of mothers. When the weekly parcels from England arrived and the boys were sharing their cake and chocolate and tobacco, one of them would say, "Good old mum. She ain't a bad sort!" to be answered with reluctant, mouth-filled grunts, or grudging nods of approval. As for fathers, I often thought to myself, "What a tremendous army of post-humous sons!" Months before I would have been astonished at this reticence. But I had learned to understand Tommy. His silences were as eloquent as any splendid outbursts or glowing tributes could have been. Indeed, they were far more eloquent! Englishmen seem to have an instinctive understanding of the futility, the emptiness, of words in the face of unspeakable experiences. It was a matter of constant wonder to me that men, living in the daily and hourly presence of death, could so surely control and conceal their feelings. Their talk was of anything but home; and yet, I knew they thought of but little else.

One of our boys was killed, and there was the letter to be written to his parents. Three Tommies who knew him best were to attempt this. They made innumerable beginnings. Each of the was afraid of blundering, of causing unnecessary pain by an inadequate revelation of the facts. There was a feminine fineness about this concern which was beautiful to see. The final draft of the letter was a little masterpiece, not of English, but of insight; such a letter as any one of us would have wished his own parents to receive under like circumstances. Nothing was forgotten which could have made the news in the slightest degree more endurable. Every trifling personal belonging was carefully saved and packed in a little box to follow the letter. All of this was done amid much boisterous jesting. And there was the usual hilarious singing to the wheezing accompaniment of an old mouth-organ. But of reference to home, or mothers, or comradeship, nothing.

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Gunns Shur-Gain Fertilizer

## WHAT FLYING FEELS LIKE

ALTHOUGH AERIAL DEVELOPMENTS PROMISE.

To Play Big Part in Our Future Lives, Few People Understand Sensations of Flight.

"What did it feel like?" "Weren't you frightened?" "Was it awfully cold?" "Did you feel seasick?" People kept asking me these questions that evening: the evening when I announced that I had returned from a flight in an aeroplane, says a British aviator. It was the first time I had flown. And I am one of those quiet individuals, living amongst quiet individuals, to whom the affair seemed something of an adventure.

No Flight of Fancy.  
Was I frightened? Frankly, there were moments when I was.

But I was too much interested to be really frightened. The whole business was utterly and factually different from anything I had experienced before. It wasn't an atom like motor-boat or tobogganing, or yachting or diving. And this was an astonishing fact—it was still less like flying! That sounds absurd. Here is what I mean. The plane, with myself in its front seat and my pilot horribly unreachable at the rear, rushed forward in a roaring torrent of air from its propeller, leapt a little, and then imperceptibly, left the ground. I saw the ground sinking. I looked down on roofs. And then our motion seemed to slow and cease. We had stopped flying. The propeller still roared deafeningly in front of my nose. Its wild still tore at my cap and goggles. But we made no progress. We were only struggling, a petulant mechanism, in an adverse gale.

A Bird's-Eye View.

That, I say, was my impression. For, beneath me, the ground was now so distant that any object on which I fixed my eye moved with extreme slowness across the field of vision; indeed, soon did not appear to move at all. It is only by watching objects passing that we gain any idea of speed. Well, there are no objects passing you in mid-air. And there is no friction and bumping of wheels to make you realize that you are travelling, as you realize it even when you shut your eyes in a train or car.

Above the Clouds.

The consequence is that, when you are hurtling through the air at a hundred miles an hour—as I was—you are convinced that the plane is remaining still, but being ferociously beaten upon by a wind which is trying to push it back and just failing. The awful, devastating noise of the engine is one's chief preoccupation at first, and the tremendous loneliness. All around me—nothingness! And if this were the case when the pigmy world was visible below, how terrible was it when we rose above the clouds, and the earth was blotted out! That white realm was a loneliness indeed—literally unearthly—beautiful, but appalling.

The Thrill of Thrills.

And it was just then that my head span round, and, as a sensation, I felt a quiver of seasickness. I did not realize it; but it was not my head that was spinning; it was the plane. Nose downwards, round and round, through the clouds, with whirling mists encircling us! Thus we ended our flight with a thrill—at least, it was a thrill for me, though doubtless a mere nothing to my pilot. Lastly, a long, slanting slide to earth, and the discovery, when I tried to step out of my seat, that I was almost frozen.

ONLY WAITING FOR THE CARS.

Arrangements Made for Importation of Corn as Soon as Possible.

Arrangements have been made by the Food Controller's Office which are expected to facilitate the movement of corn into Canada. Applications for licenses to import corn covering monthly requirements will still be necessary and these should be made without delay to the office of the Food Controller, Ottawa. The individual applications will be held at Ottawa by a detailed list of those approved of will be sent to the War Trade Board, Washington, for endorsement. This plan will ensure prompt action. It should be understood, however, that the unprecedented railway congestion in the United States is responsible for most of the difficulties in securing corn and that this is something which cannot be overcome by the Food Controller.

So far as prompt handling of applications and licenses are concerned the arrangement with Washington will make possible the obtaining of supplies as rapidly as they can be moved.

The corn crop in the United States this year is officially estimated at considerably in excess of 3,000,000,000 bushels. Canada's needs have been fully represented before the United States authorities and there is every disposition on the part of the Food Administration and the War Trade Board to allow shipments into Canada as soon as the corn can be moved. Only the cars are now required to make large supplies of corn available.



## The Housewife's Corner

WAR AND FOOD SERIES. ARTICLE No. 8.—POTATOES

At the present time there is a total surplus in Canada of 6,000,000 bushels of potatoes over normal consumption. In the United States there is a surplus of from 40,000,000 to 100,000,000 bushels. This may be regarded as a fortunate circumstance, for potatoes are among the finest of substitutes and in using them freely meat is being released for overseas. In the United States Mr. Hoover has been advocating the use of potatoes for some time past and this injunction may be applied equally to Canada.

Every province in the country except Quebec has sufficient potatoes to ensure supplies during the winter but if they are deliberately kept back in the meantime it will follow that there will be a glut on the market in spring and consequent waste of a considerable part of the surplus. Farmers who have a good supply of potatoes on hand would do well to market them now.

The Food Controller has seen to it that the prices will not be allowed to advance beyond those now obtaining. By a steady and abundant supply of potatoes being placed on the market from the present time until the 1918 crop is available, the best interests of both consumers and producers will be served and the waste of any large part of the crop will be prevented.

It is necessary as a war measure for everybody to eat potatoes and to purchase them in regular quantities so that distribution will be equal everywhere for the next five or six months, relieving railroad congestion and enabling growers and distributors to handle potatoes at the most reasonable prices and to furnish encouragement for production of a larger crop next season.

Germany plants more than twice as many potatoes as the United States and they are helping her to hold out against the Allies. Potatoes are plentiful. They are the best substitutes for the food staples we are being asked to save for the Allies. They furnish nourishment, bulk and mineral salts.

## WHEN THE HUNS RAID LONDON TOWN

VISIT OF TWENTY-FIVE FOE MACHINES.

Screaming of the Shells As They Rip the Air Are Most Terrifying Sounds.

A visitor in London has written the following letter to his mother telling of recent air raids on London: After about five weeks' freedom from airplane attacks they came again this morning during the darkness. The moon was shining, although it had waned to about one-third full. There were about twenty-five airplanes.

They attempted to get over London from four different directions, but only six succeeded in getting over the city. Two of these machines were brought down by gunfire and the crews captured alive. There were three Germans in each machine. Although they had killed three persons in London by dropping bombs, the captured crews were accorded all the rights of prisoners of war and given a good breakfast of bacon and eggs.

Attacks Driven Off.

According to the official records, the airplanes attacked the east coast at 1.30 a.m. but were driven off. We received no warning of this in London, but slept through it. Another attack was made at 3 a.m. on the River Thames, about half way between London and the coast. They were driven off by the guns. While no warning was given in my neighborhood, we could hear it in distant parts of the city and the people running in the streets soon convinced us that something was pending. I dressed, put on my overcoat and went out.

I passed the Red Cross ambulance station nearby and just then two large ambulances drove up, as they always do during a raid. However, some policemen came up and said the Germans had been driven off and told all to go home.

As soon as I returned to the hotel, at 3.30 a.m., I again went to bed. When I had just about decided to go to sleep again I heard some one use a door knocker across the street, and it made almost as much noise as a small bomb. I then heard a man tell his friend, whom he was awakening by his knocking, that there was another warning.

"Take Cover!"

In about five minutes the real warning came, which consisted of automobile hooters, police on bicycles, blowing shrill whistles and shouting, "Take cover!" I dressed again and after waking some people in the hotel who had not heard the warning I went into

## Articles Wanted for Cash

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## Food Control Corner

Drastic measures against persons hoarding food are being considered by the Food Controller. Warning was issued recently that householders and others may find themselves in an untenable predicament if spoiled flour is found on their premises. Few homes have proper storage facilities and persons who have bought large quantities of flour are liable to have it spoil on their hands next summer.

The bakers, who have been in conference this week with the Food Controller in regard to new regulations governing their operations, have recommended that the Food Controller communicate with every grocer and with all retail dealers in flour in Canada requiring from them the names and addresses of persons who have purchased more than a 98-pound bag of flour during the past month. Furthermore it is suggested that dealers and grocers failing to make correct returns would have very little chance of obtaining a license under the licensing system which will soon be extended to this trade. The recommendation adds that effective steps should be taken to prevent the possibility of serious waste.

Such action has been taken in Great Britain where the books of departmental stores have already been examined and summons have been issued in hundreds of cases against persons who have been hoarding food. There is absolutely no necessity or excuse for Canadians buying more flour than is required for current needs. The belief that the new standard flour is a poor quality is entirely unfounded. Few people will be able to tell the difference between bread made from standard flour and that made from flour heretofore in use. Hoarding is therefore, unnecessary, unprofitable and unpatriotic and food hoarders may be exposed as a result of measures now under consideration.

Dealers who attempt to sell middlings at a higher price than that fixed by the Food Controller for shorts are violating the law and rendering themselves liable to heavy penalties. They may also lose their licenses if the practice is continued. The Food Controller says that under authority of an Order-in-Council issued under the Adulteration Act, the Department of Inland Revenue has construed "shorts" and "middlings" as being the same product. The sale of middlings at a higher price than that prescribed for shorts is therefore illegal.

One thorn of experience is worth a whole wilderness of warning.—Lowell. Band trunks of shade trees with a sticky solution to prevent the ascent of wingless insects. The work should be done during February if possible.

German People Cruel.

The prisoners are beaten during the distribution of food. Dogs are set on them. The war prisoners are often incarcerated where they are kept long hours without food or drink. For the least crime the prisoners are shot without any trial.

There were cases of suffering prisoners who became insane and ended by committing suicide.

The letter adds that the German people are also cruel, not only the soldiers. They call the Russian prisoners "Russian rabble," "Russian pig," "Russian dog," etc.

The Germans divided the Russian prisoners into various groups, setting one nationality on the other. They even formed battalions of Mohammedans with the object of sending the latter to fight against the Russians. When they refused they were cruelly punished.

Curious Rustic Beliefs.

Superstition dies hard, and still in the out-of-the-way rural districts of England the people have a firm belief in herbs and charms as a cure for their various ills. In Cheshire, perhaps, such superstitions are most numerous, and a native will tell you that hedge-hogs are useful in the cure of epilepsy, that ointment should never be applied with the first finger, as that one is venomous, and that a child's nails should never be cut during the first year of its life, or it will grow up light-fingered.

Most curious, however, are the cures recommended in Cheshire for whooping cough, an illness which few children escape. A lock of hair should be cut from the sufferer's head, and put into a hole bored in the bark of a mountain ash, after which the hole should be closed. The whoop will vanish in three days under this treatment.

Many strange cures are suggested for ague. In Lincolnshire, for instance, the method is very elaborate. The sufferer should get up, at sunrise on the first day of the month, making sure his pockets are empty, take a carving-knife that he has bought and always used himself, plunge it into an anvil, and twist the knife as many times as he has had fits. Then, lying flat on the face, with head pointing to the sun, he should breathe as many times as he has suffered into the hole in the anvil, and then return home, speaking no word until he has broken his fast.

## MORE OF THE HUN CULTURE

RUSSIANS WERE BEATEN AND STARVED TO DEATH.

Letter to Russian Paper Tells of Terrible Brutality to War Prisoners.

The following statement from the Russian daily "Birshevia Viedomosti" has just been received in a letter to J. Goodman, Government interpreter. The letter in part says:

Four hundred and fifty-seven Russian soldiers who contrived to escape from the German prisons have told the following facts of German cruelty: Immediately they are captured everything in their possession is taken from them. Money, watches and boots. Boots were pulled off wounded feet, ignoring the piercing cries of the sufferers. Those who resisted were beaten by the butt end of the gun or stabbed by the bayonet.

The prisoners are driven day and night in rain and storm and get rarely an opportunity to rest. When passing by a stream of water, if the prisoners lie down for a drink, they are beaten with the gun, and some even killed by the bayonet.

In cases when the captives are to be transported over a long distance, they are crowded into locked, badly ventilated railway cars, 75 to 80 persons in one car, without any lavatories. During 24 hours such cars are filled with poisonous air, which is very often the cause of several deaths.

Starved and Tortured.

The food in the war prisons is unbearable and so little that the prisoners are always hungry and are consequently always looking for crumbs of bread. But also for this "crime," the war prisoner gets beaten very often with the butt end.

The captives are compelled to work from 12 to 16 hours daily. They must build barracks, make ammunition, dig trenches, pave roadways and till the ground. Captives are harnessed and driven to pull wagons as if they were horses. Nobody must decline, even the sick and wounded. In case a wounded prisoner falls and is unable to continue his work, they poke fun at him and torture him in various ways.

For their work they get paid from 15 to 30 pennings per day—from 7 to 15 kopecs—not in cash, but in stamps, which have their value in the barracks only, but not outside.

The Russian prisoners are being punished more severely than any others. The cause is a mysterious one. The Russian prisoners are beaten with butt ends, sticks and rods. They are stabbed with bayonets very often, they are bound to posts with their hands in the form of a cross for hours till they faint. Sometimes they are incarcerated in dark cellars, filled with water for hours, or they set them naked, a shirt as the only covering in the frost for hours.

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