

Letters from Laddie---Convalescence

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Bonnycastle Dale

WE left the lad in our last letter safe in an English hospital on the banks of a little river flowing into the Irish Sea. Here is another worry taken off your shoulders, kind readers, and mine as well; the Military Hospital Board place the wounded men in hut hospitals, well out of the range of the bombing airships of the enemy, and it is necessary, as in their gospel of Hate they teach that any enemy's death, even those wounded, makes an enemy the less—witness as proof the regular and constant shelling of the field hospitals in France, and the bombing of the base hospitals.

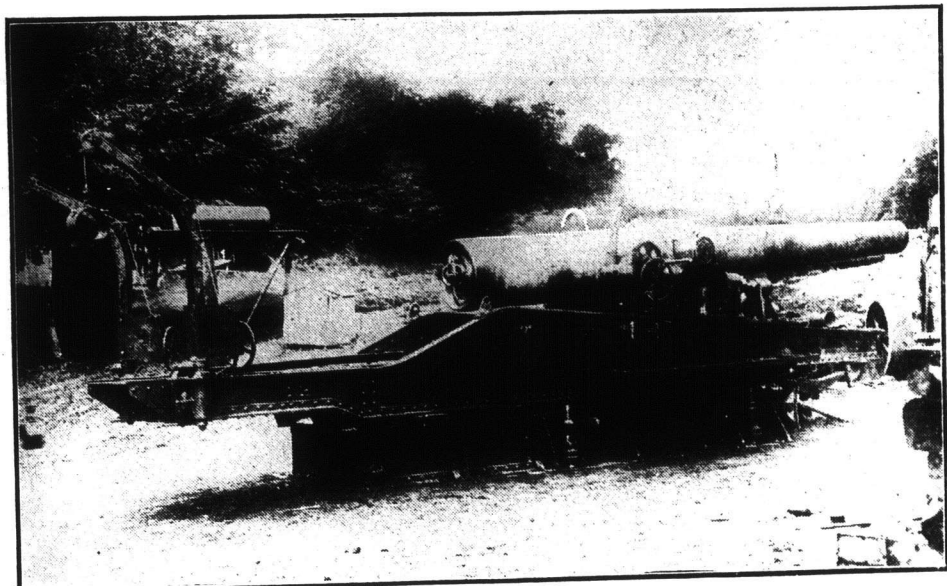
Once more let me urge the sending of sugar, lump form is the best. If this is sent to France mark it: "If you finally fail to find this soldier give it to another"—as too many packages are piling up in both France and England. In fact, Laddie lately advises me not to send any big packages to England—just sugar and sweets and tobacco and cigarettes; you are always safe in sending sweets, as even the wounded boys hardly ever get sugar.

Now we come to the date thirty days after Laddie's fall at Vimy, with that jagged "ounce of Krupp" still in him. Now, while I tell you the full truth about the doctor's ill-luck with this bit of a shell's base that now lies before me on my desk, remember it is the outside exception, one case in a thousand where this unfortunate thing has come to pass. I guess Laddie was a bit selfish and wanted to

Mother Nature." She just calmly slid that "bit of Krupp" right out of the drainage canal in the back; and I fancy had a sly grimace behind her horny old hand at the doctors. Do not, I pray you, lose an atom of faith in our army doctors; they are restoring almost all of the wounded to health and strength, but they could not see this jagged bit of shell base hiding, as no doubt it was, behind a rib.

Once the cause of irritation was removed the patient rapidly recovered. Now, I want you to notice an odd part of many wounded men's cases. It is partial or complete loss of memory of certain things, caused no doubt by the terrific concussion. Laddie tells me of a friend he saw fall in the attack, and of how many long weeks it was before he found out if he was wounded or "gone west." (The boys at the front use this word casually, as deeply though they regret the loss of a friend, death is constantly visible.) Finally he met a battery lad from France who saw the friend picked up—there was not a scratch or wound upon any part of the body, life had been driven out by the terrific concussion.

Now, all you kind readers who have wounded in the hospitals abroad, or dear lads fighting for us, note these facts: It seems to be the earnest desire of the medical corps to establish a record of recoveries, and it also seems to be the firm intention of the military authorities to push this record crowd of restored men back into the fighting lines. The rule



This photograph shows one of the best of the big French guns used in stemming the great German drive on the western front. It is a new 240 m/m piece ready for shipment to the front.

keep his wee "foundry" tucked away in his chest.

The patient's first worry is—no mail; after he is wounded it is fully a month before it begins to come at all, so try writing several letters to old and new addresses. Your first cable is likely to reach the anxious boy by now; mine took just thirty days to locate him—don't fret, the Ottawa authorities kept me posted as to how he was, not as to where he was however. He will not cable back, as a rule the wounded have no money whatever, all his personals are taken and filed and stored and he may get them again; and again, in these days of loss and destruction, he may not.

Laddie was operated on in France, the wound healing nicely; but the drainage wound being kept open as was needful now began to bother him seriously and his temperature went up alarmingly, keeping us very nervous at this end of the line, as I feared complications.

My dear unseen reader are you and I properly thankful, all day and all the time, for the many blessings we enjoy?—not miracles, just common every-day blessings. Well, how is this for an uncommon, almost miraculous, blessing! The still sorely stricken boy, for he is but twenty-one, had been carefully operated on, X-rayed, probed, nursed and fed well. Oh! those kind nurses (no wonder the lads begin to love them like a sister and end by loving them as a life's mate), but still the dangerously high temperature, and all the doctors could do did not reduce it; and keep it reduced. Now comes in the one and greatest doctor in all the war, a woman doctor if rumor can be believed, we have always called her "Old

seems to be: six months in field, base, military, and convalescent hospitals, then a medical board which marks the, now rapidly recovering, wounded men A, B, or C, with sub classes 1, 2, 3, etc. If your boy gets 3 his chances for home are good (but while we hovered in the balance politically, and might, unfortunately, not have been able to send more men promptly, Class C was abolished as after Nov. 1st.) Even if the lad is in C he may also be marked "for advancement to a higher class."

I hear that among the wounded in England now the prospects of homecoming is much brighter since Canada passed the Conscription Act.

While the man is wounded and in low condition no money is advanced, his half of his pay is held for him.

Now comes the time of outdoor convalescence when an orderly, or a walking patient, or mayhaps a nurse, usually young and pretty, takes the wounded lad out for a ride, "of course the bed went with me," as Laddie Sr., says. It is on record that none of the men ever have "a bad turn and cannot go," when it is the nurse's turn to push the wheeled stretcher. Next comes the wheeled chair, "A fellow is getting pretty proud and cocky by now; the next thing you know I'll be walking." "Why I can sit up now all right without hanging on to the bed." "Good bye spinal chairs, there are a couple of canes most suspiciously placed near my cot. I'm going to try a sly bit of walk as soon as I can manage it." "Mighty lucky I got back to that cot, these are not my own legs for they won't work when I tell them to."—"I did it! three steps! If I sweat that much for three steps why I'd drown



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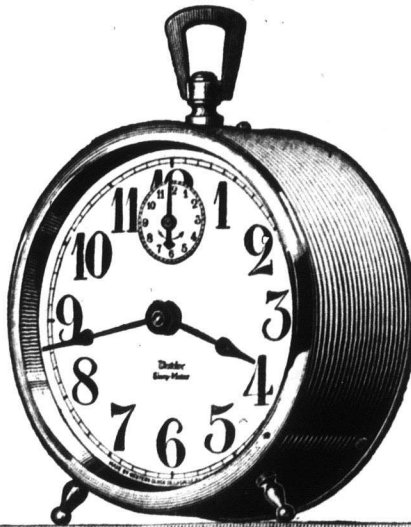
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