

would have been astonished beyond words if they could have heard what their instructor, Sergeant "Cut-the-Time," was saying at that moment to a fellow-sergeant in the sergeants' mess.

"They're good lads," he said, "and it's me, that in my time has seen the making and the breaking and the handling and the hammering of gun detachments enough to man every gun in the army; that's saying it. I had them on the "Halt, action front," this morning, and I tell you they've come on amazing since I took 'em in hand. We cut three solid seconds this morning off the time they've been taking to get the gun into action, and a second a round off the firing of ten rounds. They'll make good gunners yet if they keep at it."

"Three seconds is good enough," said the other mildly.

"It isn't good enough," returned the instructor, "if they can make it four, and four's not good enough if they can make it five. It's when they can't cut the time down by another split fraction of a second that I'll be calling them good enough. They won't be blessing me for it now, but come the day maybe they will.

Another Picture.

The battery was moving slowly down a muddy road that ran along the edge of a thick wood. It had been marching most of the night, and, since the night had been wet and dark, the battery was splashed and muddy to the gun-muzzles and the tops of the drivers' caps. It was early morning, and very cold. Gunners and drivers were muffled in coats and woollen scarves, and sat half-asleep on their horses and wagons. A thick and chilly mist had delayed the coming of light, but now the mist had lifted suddenly, blown clear by a quickly risen chill wind. When the mist had been swept away sufficiently for something to be seen of the surrounding country, the major, riding at the head of the battery, passed the word to halt and dismount, and proceeded to "find himself on the map." Glancing about him he picked out a churchsteeple in the distance, a wayside shrine, and a cross-road near at hand, a curve of the wood beside the road, and by locating these on the square map, which he took from its mud-splashed leather case, he was enabled to place his finger on the exact spot on the map where his battery stood at that moment. Satisfied on this, he was just about to give the order to mount when he heard the sound of breaking brushwood and saw an infantry officer emerge from the trees close at hand.