

CANADA in WAR PAINT

By CAPT. RALPH W. BELL

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"**T**HINK of my leave coming in two weeks, and of getting a decent bed to sleep in, with sheets!"

Sancho Panza blessed sleep, but perhaps he always had a good bed to sleep in; we, who can almost slumber on "apron" wire, have a weakness for good beds.

To appreciate fully what a good bed is, one must live for a time without one, and go to rest wrapped in a martial cloak—to wit a British warm or a trench coat, plus the universal sand-bag, than which nothing more generally useful has been seen in this war. Any man who has spent six months (in the infantry) at the front knows all about beds. Any man with a year's service is a first-class, a number one, connoisseur. The good bed is so rare that whoever spends a night in one talks about it for a week, and brings it up in reminiscences over the charcoal brazier.

"You remember when we were on the long hike from the salient? And the little place we struck the third night—Cattelle-Villeul I think it was called? By George, I had a good bed. A peach! It had a spring mattress and real linen sheets—not cotton—

and two pillows with frilly things on them, and a ripping quilt, with a top-hole eider-down. I was afraid to get into it until my batman produced that new pair of green pyjamas with the pink stripes. It simply hurt to give that bed up!"

And if you let him he will continue in like vein for half an hour. Recollections of that bed have entered into his soul; it is one of the bright spots in a gloomy life.

Needless to say, the farther you go back from the line, the better the beds. They can be roughly classified as follows: Battle beds. Front line beds. Support beds. Reserve beds. Divisional rest beds. Corps reserve beds, and Army Reserve beds. Beyond this it is fifty-fifty you will get a good bed, provided there are not too many troops in the place you go to.

Battle beds, as such, are reserved for battalion commanders, seconds in command, and adjutants. Sometimes Os.C. units have a look-in, but the humble sub. has not, unless he is one of those Johnnies who can always make something out of nothing.

When there is a "show" on nobody expects to sleep more than two hours in twenty-four, and he's lucky if he

gets that. The C.O. takes his brief slumber on some bare boards raised above the floor-level in a dug-out. The Os.C. units use a stretcher, with a cape for a pillow, and the others sleep any old where—on a broken chair, in a corner on the ground, on the steps of a dug-out, on the fire-step of a parapet, or even leaning against the parapet. One of the best snoozes we ever had was of the last variety, while Fritz was plastering the communication trenches with a barrage a mouse could not creep through.

There is one thing about battle



"The Others Sleep any Old Where."

beds; one is far too weary to do anything but flop limply down, and go instantly to sleep. The nature of your couch is of secondary importance. Possibly the prize goes to the man who slept through an intense bombardment, curled up between two dead Germans, whom he thought were a couple of his pals, asleep, when he tumbled in to rest.

Front line beds vary according to sector. Usually they are simply a series of bunks, tacked in one above the other as in a steamer-cabin, and made of a stretch of green canvas nailed to a pair of two by fours. Sometimes an ingenious blighter introduces expanded metal or chicken wire into the general make-up, with the invariable result that it gets broken by some 200-pounder, and remains a menace to tender portions of the human frame until some one gets "real wild" and smashes up the whole concern.

In support, the "downy couch" does not improve very much. Sometimes it is worse, and it is always inhabited by a fauna of the largest and most voracious kind.

All the beds at the front are the same in some respects. They are all wooden, and they nearly all have on them huge piles of mattresses, four or five deep. It is wisest not to investigate too thoroughly the inner consciousness of the latter, or the awakening may be rude. In the old days, long, long ago, when the dove of Peace billed and cooed over the roof of the world, no self-respecting citizen would sleep in them, but now with what joy do we sink with a sigh of relief into the once abominated feather-bed of doubtful antecedents, which has been slept in for two years by one officer after another, and never, never, never been aired.

C'est la guerre!

"Minnie and Family"

WHEN first I met her it was a lush, lovely day in June; the birds were singing, the grass was green, the earth teemed with life, vegetable

and animal, and the froglets hopped around in the communication trenches. Some cheery optimist was whistling "Down by the Old Mill Stream," and another equally cheery individual was potting German sniping plates with an accuracy worthy of a better cause. It was, in sooth, "A quiet day."

And then she came. Stealing towards me silently, coming upon me like a brigand in the leafy woods. I did not see her ere she was descending upon me, but others did. There came distant yells, which I failed to interpret for a moment; then, glancing upward, I saw her bobbing through the air, her one leg waving, her round ugly head a blot on the sky's fair face. The next thing that happened was that the trench gathered unto itself wings, rose and clasped me lovingly from the neck down in a cold, earthly embrace.

Of all the nasty things "old Fritz" has invented, the Minenflam is perhaps the nastiest of all. She is purely vicious, utterly destructive, and quite frightful. The very slowness with which she sails through the air is itself awe-inspiring. I never see Minnie without longing for home, or the inside of the deepest German dug-out ever digged by those hard-working German Pioneer blighters, who must all have been moles in their respective pre-incarnations.

If you are a very wide-awake Johnny, absolutely on the spot, don't-you-know—you may hear her sigh ere she leaves the (temporary) Vaterland to take flight. It is a gentle sigh, which those verblitzender English artillery-men are not meant to hear. If you do happen by chance to hear it, then the only thing to do, although it is not laid down in K. R. & O. or Divisional Orders (you see they only hear about these things), is to silently steal away; to seek the seclusion which your dug-out grants. Later, if you are a new officer, and want to impress the natives, as it were, you saunter jauntily forth, cigarette at the correct slope, cane pending vertically from the right hand, grasped firmly in the palm, little finger downwards, cap at an angle of 45°, and say: "Minnie, by Jove! Eh what? God bless my soul. Did it fall over heah or over theah?"

Minnie has her little family. The eldest male child is called by the euphonious name of Sausage, and he has brothers of various sizes, from the pure-blood Hoch-geboren down to the bourgeois little chap who makes an awful lot of fuss and clatter generally. I remember meeting little Hans one day, about the dinner hour, when he was a very naughty boy indeed. The Company was waiting to get a half-canteenful of the tannin-cum-tealeaves, called "tea" on the Western front (contained in one large dixie placed in a fairly open spot in the front line), when suddenly little Hans poked his blunt nose into the air, and all notions of tea-drinking were banished pro tem.

I tripped over a bath-mat, came into close contact with an old shell-hole full of mud, and offered up a little prayer in the record time of one-fifth of a second. Instead of entering Nirvana I only heard a resounding splash, followed by a sizzling sound, like that made by an exhausted locomotive. Little Hans had fallen into the dixie, and positively refused to explode. I think the tannin (or the tea leaves) choked him!

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