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4, 6 and 8 H.P., and is sold only by us.

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Fishermen's Union Trading Co.

OFFICERS IN THE THICK OF THE FIGHTING

Correspondent Describes a Day at the Front
With the Brigadier Generals at Work.

London, July 8.—Percival Phillips sends the following to the Daily Express from the British general headquarters:

Another lull in the bombardment! "Now for it," said the major. We started up the deserted road, past more battered cottages, and swerved abruptly into a wooded enclosure, in the center of which stood the ruin of a stone house, roofless and full of shell holes. Arriving at a low rectangular mound in one corner of the field, not unlike a new and hastily constructed family vault, my friend tapped on the wooden trapdoor. It was thrown back, and a gentleman in khaki blinked up at us.

"Hullo!" he said. "Half a minute; I'm coming up."
He blew out the candle stuck in a bottle on top of a biscuit tin, folded his writing tablet, and climbed out of the cave. The light of day revealed him as a brigadier-general whose name is not unknown in the United Kingdom.

"You've come on a quiet day," he continued. "They were flinging a few shells about in the night, but there isn't much doing just now." He kicked a fragment of shrapnel contemptuously. "Come along and see our trocodytes."

A Death-Trap.

We strolled under the trees, dodging shell holes and such unexpected obstacles as chairs, a writing desk, a pile of stores and two broken brass bedsteads. Birds sang in the branches above. It was a perfect summer morning, with hardly a breath of wind, and for a moment you might have believed that the war was only a nightmare, suddenly dispelled by the blazing sun, so quiet and restful was this secluded wood, with its cool green avenues and towering poplars.

But only for a moment. A shell whistled across the blue sky and struck with a crash somewhere beyond the trees. The sullen "woof-woof" of distant German howitzers echoed across the plain followed by the sudden, sharper "crack-crack" of rifles from an open field, apparently a few hundred yards away.

The enclosure itself was a death-trap and a graveyard. The trees "liff" which the birds sang so bravely were chipped and scarred by shrapnel; the blackened lawn—seamed with craters and strewn with fragments of metal—the house uninhabited save as a casualty dressing station. A row of flowerpots had been knocked askew by one erratic missile; a rockery was made into a fantastic ruin by another stray shot; green scum filled the fountain. There were little piles of earth marked by wooden crosses—the rest-places of men who were buried where they died—and great piles of earth scattered among the trees—the refuge of the men who still survived.

Merely a brigade headquarters—one of scores along our front—where staff officers are nearly always under fire.

Generals Shelled Out.

Many people think that a general sits in a drawing room or on a hillside in a drawing room or on a hillside, sticking little flags into maps and receiving despatches from blood-stained orderlies. To some falls this duty, but the brigadiers are in the thick of every fight, for they must be close behind the battalions they direct, and everything depends on them.

Generals who run this war do live in houses, for the battlefield of western Europe is a network of towns and villages, but the brigadier often gets a house without a roof, and sometimes with no walls to speak of, for the enemy have dealt thoroughly with it. Occasionally he finds a building fairly intact and establishes himself in it, but he is usually shelled—as often as not by accident—and then he has to dig himself in, like his men.

My journey to the front on this particular day had taken me through all the phases of "headquarter life," from the quiet surroundings of the central organizations of the British army in the field to this devastated estate, which was so close to the German trenches, that one could have shouted to the enemy.

As you get nearer and nearer the front you find headquarter life a little rougher and a little more hazardous. First, there is the army commander and his staff, billeted in a moated mansion beyond sound of the guns. Drive a few miles towards the enemy, and you will find the corps general comfortably but not gaudily ensconced in a village—may-

be in one of the cramped public buildings or with a school or a laundry as his map room.

Tragic Contrasts.

Continue your journey, and you discover the general of division living in the zone of possible bombardment. His chateau is habitable but pitted here and there by shells. The park contains dugouts, which are used occasionally. Divisional headquarters routine is frequently disturbed by the morning and evening hail of the enemy's long-distance guns.

Then you motor on, following roads that are regularly shelled, passing one destroyed village after another, and finally finding the brigade headquarters, in an area where life is very precarious at times, and death comes suddenly out of a clear sky.

I thought of these contrasts as I walked through the fields while the brigadier talked about the kaleidoscopic changes wrought by war.

"A curious business altogether," he was saying. "One night I was on leave, dining with my family in London, and exactly twenty-four hours later I was back fighting like hell near —"

We passed a broken gate at the end of the tree-lined track. Four officers were blown to pieces there by a stray howitzer shell two days ago as they paused on their way to dinner. You can see their graves there. Another officer was writing a note in a ground-floor room when a shell crashed through one corner, killing him and wiping away the end of the building. Death is always lurking among the trees where the birds sing cheerily.

"A quiet day," repeated the brigadier as another shell sped over the trees. "What do you think happened this morning? We had strawberries for breakfast!"

Four men came slowly over the little rustic bridge beside the driveway bearing a stretcher, over which a blanket had been drawn taut. Two worn and dusty boots protruded from one end of the blanket.

"Killed this morning," said the brigadier. "Hit by a shell in trench just outside."

The Burial Service.

A young officer left our group and called to the stretcher-bearers: "Take him over there!" He followed, fumbling in his tunic for a little book. He looked like any other keen young subaltern in khaki, save that his tie and shoulder straps were black. I could see him through the trees, reading the burial service beside the shallow grave.

"Yes, you often do get a livelier time here than up in the firing line," said the brigadier casually. "They don't mind that if they don't shell my men in the trenches. Like to shell us pretty regularly now, but I look at our signallers?"

I crawled down four steep steps cut in clay, along a narrow tunnel, into a low room perhaps four feet wide, roofed by five feet of earth, timbers and sandbags. Two men sat at little wooden tables, each lit by a single candle. The first had a telephone receiver at his ear. He glanced up and went on reading "Robinson Crusoe." The second, without looking up, was repeating a message word for word as it came from an observation post at the front trench.

The Dug-Out Mess.

Then into the next catacomb—the mess. A plank table, chairs from the ruins—"they're safer here than in the open," said a subaltern—and just room enough to squeeze half a dozen men against the earthen wall. Then into other dug-outs where officers grinned cheerfully from the shadows, as they looked up from half-finished letters.

"That's our line," said the brigadier, as I came out into the sunshine. He pointed to a fragment of a brick cottage stuck in a field beyond the trees. Just in front of it was a yellow ribbon, which curved above and below the ruin like a gigantic snake. Beyond it lay another field like the first, where the zig-zag firing line ran parallel with the enemy's breastworks.

"The German trenches are about — yards from here," continued the brigadier. "You can go out to our line, if you like, but I'd rather you didn't. They'll pot at you if you show yourself, and you'll raise the usual hornets' nest. Our men are pretty tired this morning."

Other staff officers came up from their lairs into the sunshine. They talked casually of the lighter side of war; of —'s new dug-out, which

was such a tight fit that he could scarcely turn round; of the stray dog that chased the leaves clipped from trees by shrapnel until he met an untimely end; of —'s cooking, and the temporary burial of the infuriated — when his dug-out was blown in by a shell. Smiles and jests, with the shadow of death always across them.

William the Sniper.

Had I heard of William the Sniper? Would I like to talk with him? Produce William, somebody! Arrives William, a shy, blond, mustached young Canadian, who stammered excessively when he attempted to give me a few reminiscences of his experiences when stalking Germans in the dark of the moon. His convulsive sentences were punctuated by the scream of an occasional shell. I know of no more trying ordeal than standing under a tree, well within the zone of fire, endeavoring to show calm interest in the narrative of a man who clings for what seems a little time to every syllable of every other word.

Before I left the front I visited three other brigadier-generals in their improvised bomb-proofs. The first sat on a kitchen chair in front of a badly damaged cottage, with a map on his knee; the second lived in a sumptuous cave built by his long men of such strength and with such thoroughness that the admiring brigadier ventured the opinion that it would withstand any shell the Germans could make; the third slept in a more modest dug-out in the midst of his soldiers.

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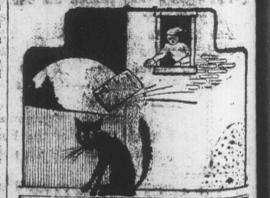
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