

THE GHOST OF THE OLD "CHATOO."

"HIS'LL do," said Private Smith, of the —th Canadians, as he threw the tiny beam of his pocket light on the broken façade and yawning doorway of the old "chatoo."

He had been disgorged from an archaic leave train after fourteen glorious days in Blighty, given the location of his unit, and told to move. He went, but not in any unseemly hurry. Nature called for the stimulus of food and drink, so it was well on towards dusk before he was clear of the rail-head town. He humped his pack dolefully and trudged along the lonely country road, keeping an ear open for the rumbling of a motor transport, on which he had been counting for a fitting finish to a life of temporary luxury. But no motor transport materialised. A staff car breezed by him, and a motor-cyclist shot past with all the pomp and circumstance of a 'bus, and then silence and night fell on the road. Smith leaned back against the grassy bank by the roadside to rest and ease his shoulders.

so when he saw the old "chatoo" standing black against the sky, he decided to rest there until daylight. The interior was not specially inviting, but Smith was not particular; he had slept in much worse billets many a time. He stepped over the rubble of stonework on the ground floor, and, with the staring eye of his light directing his way, mounted the dismantled staircase.

In the shell of a high-ceilinged room he threw off his equipment, kicked aside a litter of old sacks and empty tins, and laid his ground-sheet and blanket in a corner. The wide fireplace had a homely look, but there was nothing left to serve as fuel in the devastated house; the very wall-paper had only survived in patches, and the broken window space had been stripped of its casement. Successive relays of soldiers, French and British, had scribbled their names, units, and personal sentiments on the stained walls; but these did not interest Smith. He drew off the leave boots with a sigh of relief, and, pulling



Bob (with recollections of French economy): "Wot's 'e after now, Bill—rats?"
Bill: "No, Madame dropped a franc in the straw pile last winter."

He must have fallen asleep there, for when he next came to himself, misty stars looked down on a world asleep. He stretched his cramped legs, lit a cigarette, and took to the road once more. After a time of moody plodding he reached a shell-battered village. A traffic control man stood with his lamp at the cross-roads.

"How far to X?" Smith asked.

"'Bout five kilometres," answered the traffic control. "Back off leaf?"

"Yep."

"How's things in Blighty?"

"Same old way. People there seem to think the war's goin' to finish Friday week; but we know better." And the custodian of superior insight moved off disgustedly.

A little way beyond the village, he found himself growing footsore. The leave boots he had bought were hurting his feet,

his blanket and greatcoat over him, composed himself to sleep.

He was awakened by a stealthy movement in the room and a muffled clinking of metal. "Rats," he thought, and turned wearily over on the hard floor with his face to the window, through which a veiled moon now shed a soft light. At first, through half-closed eyes, he saw nothing. Then he noticed a black patch in the far corner, and caught a faint rustle. A groan followed—a hollow, chesty note.

Smith sat up. "Who's there?" he demanded.

"It is I, Guy de Montivilliers," answered a rusty voice. "Who is this disturbs my midnight hauntings? Mortal, if you be one, begone, ere worse befall you!"

"What battalion d'you belong to—the twenty-sec—?"

"The Legion of the Damned," responded the voice, with a fine appreciation of its own resonance.

"Oh, the Third Brigade! That's nothing to get het up about."