

THE LISTENING POST



6th Duke of Connaught's Rifles 11th Irish Fusiliers 88th Victoria Fusiliers
 02nd Rocky Mountain Rangers 04th New Westminster Fus. West Kootenay Rifles
 Reinforcing Establisments 11th, 30th, 47th



PRINTED BY KIND PERMISSION OF LT. COL. IV. W. ODLUM, D.S.O., OFFICER COMMANDING 7th CANADIAN INFANTRY BATTALION.
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MANNA FROM HEAVEN

For four or five days and nights he had toiled and moiled, helping out the slightly wounded, carrying stretcher cases, caring for the maimed and broken men, the shell-shaken and the unstrung. He had marshaled burial parties to their ghostly errand of gathering up the pitiful pieces of human clay that were once sentient beings. He had stood by the side of innumeral graves when the Chaplain hurried through the service, for there were many such to be said.

All the previous night he had labouriously worked along the battered communication trench up towards the front where the clangour and glow of bursting shell were incessant and the quivering flare lights rose and fell continuously. Now it was nearly day, and, his task ended, he was headed for the rest billets; bruised in every limb, stumbling with weariness, heavy with the reaction of nerves so long on the rack. In all that time he had scarcely tasted food, for there was little time to be had and excitement had robbed him of appetite.

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE

The other evening I was ordered from my dug-out for "Carrying party" and stumbled down the dark trench to Headquarters. While the N.C.O. was reporting for instructions, an Exalted One came along. He had evidently sprinkled a little rum on his handkerchief, or his hair, for he carried a soul moving atmosphere.

I was sniffing appreciatively and with emotion when he addressed me. "Goo' night o' boy" he said. Standing severely at attention, I replied "Good evening Sir".

Disapprovingly and in silence, I watched the dark figure mount the parades and waver uncertainly through the maze of shell holes behind the trench. He was smoking a cigarette and carried a lighted electric torch in a place, where, to show a light was to invite a shower of bullets.

Suddenly I heard a splash and at once dashed to the rescue. I found the Exalted One floundering profanely in the depths of the wettest shell-hole amongst many bobbing jam tins and several hysterical rats. His chief concern

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The thought of the long miles back to the billets was not pleasant to a man in his weakened condition, but there was no help for it, so he set out along the cobbled highway. It was almost daylight when he reached "Shrapnel Corner", a dangerous spot which had justified its name in the past day or two judging by the smashed and splintered wagons over-turned by the road side. An ammunition limber had been upset and shells were spilled in all directions. Half mechanically he began to collect these and pile them neatly by the road side. Just then he spied a sandbag. It was a new sandbag and it bulged suggestively. He picked it up and ran across two straw bottle cases, plucked these off and nearly fainted, "Bass, !!!" Bottled Bass no less. He dived deeper and drew out a whole roasted duck done to a turn and infinitely alluring to the eyes of a hungry man; deeper still and he ran across nearly a whole loaf of bread thinly sliced, a knife and fork all complete.

That morning there was at least one soldier and Provost Sergeant who breakfasted thoroughly and turned his steps "homewards" with renewed energy and reviving hope.

appeared to be for his cigarette which had been mislaid somehow. I pulled him out, soothed him, wrung him out and started him on his way. Just then a German machine gun opened up. They throw about six hundred bullets a minute and have a most compelling accent.

Inspired by visions of the V. C., I dashed after the Exalted One and with a fine flying tackle hurled him violently to the mud, hacked his shins, sat on his chest, and then with a supreme effort pitched the pair of us in a mutual heap into a shell-hole, and safety. For a moment we lay panting, while the bullets cracked and sang over head. Then I untwisted my wrist watch from his left ear, dusted him with my bayonet, put his false teeth back into his face, kissed him twice on the bald spot, curtsied gracefully and said "Sir, I have saved your life". "Dem you, you've sprung my floating rib" he growled and limped off, leaving me after a last long lingering inhalation of his alcoholic aura to reflect bitterly on the ingratitude of human nature and the fallibility of human hopes.