

that morning, he said he'd like to take a look inside and see the works." He laughed aloud at this gruesome witicism and continued: "So he gave me a whiff of ether, opened the skull and, just as I expected, found 'no-body home'. He closed the door, and here I am, fit as a fiddle. What a lucky devil I am to have no brains!"

A number of wounded officers had arrived with the men, and many of our private rooms were filled. We had retained the brass beds, a few practical chairs and small rugs for these rooms, and with a good fire in the grate they looked particularly cosy and attractive.

The nurses, too, took special pride in supplementing the meals of the patients, both officers and men, with delicacies of their own. To the hot roast chicken was added creamed asparagus or French peas, appetizing salads of fresh green vegetables—which may be had in France the year round. A bottle of ale or wine and hot-house grapes or Spanish canteloupe helped to make life pleasant and hastened them along the road to health. Oh, you may well believe that nothing was omitted which made for their comfort or well-being. We felt, and justly so, that for the men who "held the line" there was nothing in this wide world half good enough. As the inspecting general remarked to the colonel a few days later:

"Give the boys the best the land affords—if they want Malaga grapes, get them. If they want beer or wine, let them have it. Spare no expense that will make them happy and well—they deserve it all!"

As I entered the room of a young English captain, I found him propped up in bed with a few magazines and books beside him. He was looking very cheerful.

"How are you feeling?"

It was our stock question.

He smiled pleasantly as he replied: "Splendid, sir, splendid. Your nurses

are charmingly attentive and kind. The rooms and meals are delightful. I'm in great dread lest I get well too soon!"

He handed me a little crumpled square on which a few lines in pencil were scrawled, and continued: "I showed that note to my commanding officer before they carried me away. It was a humiliation, but it was my duty."

"What does it mean?" I asked him. "I'm sure this little bit of paper has a history."

He smiled reminiscently and began: "Our company had been holding a point in the lines which, under a terrific bombardment, had become untenable. The commanding officer ordered us to withdraw to a safer trench in the rear. I called my men and we succeeded in retiring to the position indicated, in good order and with few casualties."

"I thought every man had left the advanced trench, but a few moments later when a small body of Germans attempted to storm it, we were astonished to see it defended by rapid rifle fire from some unknown source. The battle raged for some hours all along the line, but still this little spot was stubbornly held. Again and again the Germans assailed it; but each time with the same lack of success—each attack they lost twenty or thirty men, and those who reached the trench were apparently unable to oust its mysterious defenders. When dusk fell the fighting ceased; and shortly afterwards I received this little note—it speaks for itself."

I spread the paper upon my knee and read:

Sir,—Two other men and I were left behind when the company withdrew. During the fight we collected in eight stragglers from other battalions, so we are now eleven. We held the line against all the attacks. If you, sir, and the rest of the company wish to come back now, the trench is perfectly safe.

Sergeant.

*To be continued.*