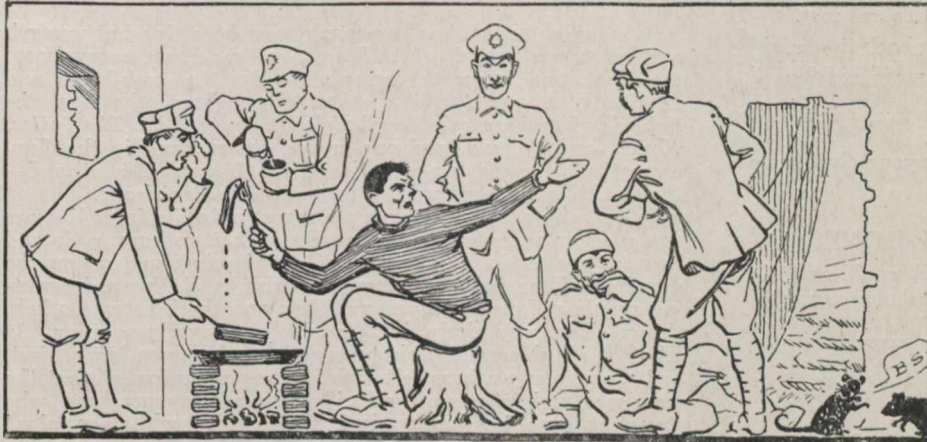


## X.Y.8.

THE above mysterious-looking heading is not a chemical formula, neither has it any connection with algebra. For the benefit of the uninitiated, it may be as well to state at once that it is a strategic point behind our front line, which bristles with machinery for converting German wives into widows in the most approved and speedy style.

Here, then, a dozen or so of us were, in the ordinary course of duty, quartered recently. Our duties consisted mainly of taking turns to peep shyly at Fritz from advantageous corners, in case he should be afflicted with *wanderlust*. Our policy was strictly one of "Wait and See." We take it that he was blissfully unconscious of our presence, though very suspicious. A little smoke straying from beneath the mulligan pot usually made him peeved, on which occasions he would put over a bit of hate, as a matter of form.



"Daybreak always found the boys around the fire."

No mention of X.Y.8 would be complete that omitted reference to the numerous society which honoured us with their presence and attentions. For here the Belgian rat attains his full dignity and corpulence, and insists on being paid all proper compliments. His relation in the front-line trench steps off the trench boards, even for a private; the X.Y.8 rat reserves that privilege for himself. At night he amuses himself by contentedly chewing the ears of the sleepers, for the purpose probably of acquiring a working knowledge of the more forcible adjectives used at threshing time. He gets them all right.

Daybreak always found the boys around the fire where the skipper, by virtue of his exalted position as cook, held complete sway, the crowd unanimously according him that degree of reverence which a cook always commands in the best circles. There was much talk, and the proud boast of each and every member that he had travelled was responsible for many and various themes. The skipper, describing the discharge of a cargo of dolls' eyes at Nagasaki, would be overwhelmed by a general discussion on the quality of the goods at the little estaminet, where the fair Bertha dispenses joy juice with her own dainty fingers. Of course, there was always the danger about this time of one of the younger and more callous youths butting in with that cheerful daybreak topic, the allurements of the Belgian maiden. Everyone, of course, is qualified



"An Officer . . . . with a jolly little demijohn under his arm."

to expand on this subject, and many are the instances on record of the lavish promises of this generous person "after the war."

Take heart, O girls of Manitoba! This reckless person will go bankrupt before one tithe of her promises are redeemed.

But hark! What was that magic cry that, like an electric shock, rouses everyone to instant action? Again it rises, loud and insistent. "Rum up!" Crowding to the back door, which commanded an expansive view, our hopes were confirmed—realised.

For the most interesting feature of all this muddy Belgian landscape is an officer slowly winding his way up the slope with a jolly little demijohn of rum tucked under his arm. He enters, amid expectant silence. K.R. and O. lays down no hard and fast rules to govern the procedure on these interesting occasions, and it is still a moot point among the old hands whether a steady or a shaky hand is most to be desired. The pretty ceremony being duly performed, the officer departs, doubtless feeling that consciousness of virtue which comes to those who, like the Boy Scouts, perform at least one good deed every day. And for a little while there lingers round this much strafed refuge a tender fragrance reminiscent of coral islands and far Jamaica.

Breakfast over, and our spirits warmed up, the desire for debate and discussion manifests itself. Representatives of Brandon and Boissevain, Portage and the "Peg," Victoria and Vancouver mix it up in keen and wordy warfare, on subjects as varied as the different breeds of draught horses and the domestic morals of the Peruvians, with a lofty disregard of the gentle Hun a few hundred yards away. Meantime our long-tailed friends sneak off to indulge in their favourite pastime, chewing the buttons off our

mackintosh capes.

While at X.Y.8 the member from Portage broke out into exquisite verse. Appended is one of the stirring stanzas:—

What matter if the sausages are saucy,  
They can't come close enough to spoil our stew;  
And as for whizzy-bangs, blimey, we should worry,  
Distance lends enchantment to the view.

#### A COLD ONE FROM THE BRAZIER (16th Battalion).

The Orderly Sergeant of No. 1 Co. was busy detailing men for a working party, when a private interrupted his labours by calling out, "What's the dress to-night, Sergeant?" "Oh!" came back the absent-minded reply, "smoke helmets only."

#### A PROBLEM FOR THE ENGINEERS.

If it takes 250 pounds of gun-cotton to move four bricks, how much will it take to blow up that "Mound"?

#### OVERHEARD WHILE ON LEAVE.

Here's to Major Kitson,  
For he's a jolly good sport;  
The 27th needs the Major,  
Let's have another snort.

N.B.—And he got back on time, too.  
(Portage papers—please copy.)

TOMMY (after a few "'arf and 'arfs"), in darkened streets of London: "Send up a flare, Fritz! I can't find my way along this blankety-blank trench."

#### THIRTY YEARS HENCE.

Dear old Generalissimo Complin, who some years ago in the early stages of the war gained much prominence as O.C. "A" and "B" Companies, 27th (City of Winnipeg) Battalion, was quietly laid to rest on the 15th inst 'neath the shady nooks of Regent's Street, with full military honours. 'Tis said his last words were: "Gott Straffe The Bull Ring."

A certain dressing-station behind our lines was shelled rather heavily one day recently, and the occupants—the F.A. lads—had rather hurriedly taken to the cellar. A certain private of our H.Q. Staff (name censored) came along and entered the building. He found no one in, but heard whispers from below, and, realising what had happened, strolled over to the trap door and shouted: "All right, come on up, girls; there's a real sport here now." (Note by Censor: "It's a good thing the censorship is military and not moral.")