

O-PIP!

“O-PIP” is the army way of saying Observation Post, the “Pip” part being the Morse code pronunciation of the letter P, so that it is not likely to be confused with B or E when being sent over the wire. But this is not intended to be a homily on the phonetic beauties of the Morse code. It is merely going to be a story of an “O-Pip,” an F. O. O. (Forward Observing Officer), and a *ruse de guerre*. An army expresses its individuality and sense of humour in *ruses de guerre*. The German army put this one over and furnished the troops with several loud guffaws at the expense of a rather smart battery. It happened in this wise.

The F.O.O.’s of the aforesaid battery were keen young men, desperately jealous of a war-old reputation. It was their boast that war need never be slow from an artillery standpoint. “Good men could always find good targets,” so they said. The motto of the battery was “Let us show ’em.” It expressed the ambition and determination of the personnel with most commendable brevity and lucidity.

The battery was due for a rest and moved to a reputedly quiet sector on the Flanders front. The Germans in this area were reported to be almost tame—Huns who couldn’t even whistle “Deutschland über Alles.” In the new gun pits the betting was that before long the enemy would be dancing to a new version of the “Anvil Chorus,” played by a master, on British eighteen pounders. The keen young men would see to that. Picking laurels where none were thought to grow was the battery’s favourite pastime.

It was a beautiful spring morning, and the view over and beyond the German lines was restful and pleasing to the eye. Here and there slowly dissolving wisps of smoke curled dreamily upward on the still air. War seemed miles away. Even the —th Battery’s keenest F.O.O., hunting for targets with the eager friskiness of a terrier after rats, felt the soothing influence of the hazy spring sunshine. But this would never do, he