

FROM THE TRENCHES

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No. 3—WOUNDED

"SOME min have all the luck that's goin'," said Corporal Flaherty. "There's Murney, and he has been at home two times since he came out here. Three months ago he was allowed to go home and see his wife and to welcome a new Murney into the wurl. Then in the Loos, too, he got a bit of shrapnel in his heel and now he's home again. I don't seem to be able to get home at all. I wish I had got Murney's shrapnel in my heel . . . I'm sick of the trenches; I wish the war was over."

"What were you talking to the Captain about yesterday?" asked Rifleman Barty, and he winked knowingly.

"What the devil is it to you?" inquired Flaherty.

"It's nothin' at all to me," said Barty. "I would just like to know."

"Well, you'll not know," said the Corporal.

"Then maybe I'll be allowed to make a guess," said Barty. "You'll not mind me guessin', will yer?"

"Hold yer ugly jaw!" said Flaherty, endeavouring to smile, but I could see an uneasy look in the man's eyes. "Ye're always blatherin'."

"Am I?" asked Barty, and turned to us.

"Corp'ril Flaherty," he said, "is goin' home on leave to see his old woman and welcome a new Flaherty into the world, just like Murney did three months ago."

Flaherty went red in the face, then white. He fixed a killing look on Barty and yelled at him: "Up you get on the firestep and keep on sentry till I tell you ye're free. That'll be a damned long time, me boy!"

"You're a gay old dog, Flaherty," said Barty, making no haste to obey the order. "One wouldn't think that there was so much in you; isn't that so, my boys? Papa Flaherty wants to get home!"

Barty winked again and glanced at the men who surrounded him. There were nine of us altogether, sardined in the bay of a trench that ran across the fields between Loos and Hulloch. Nine! Flaherty, whom I knew very well, a Dublin man, with a wife in London; Barty, a Cockney of Irish descent; the "cherub," a stout youth with a fresh complexion, soft red lips and tender blue eyes; a sergeant, a very good fellow, and kind to his men . . . The others I knew only slightly. One of them a boy of nineteen or twenty had just come out from England; this was his second day in the trenches.