

ENGLAND'S BIG GUNS

AND the Irresistible Force is now working on the Immovable Object, with great 18-inch guns that hurl a 3-ton missile 8 miles and explode it 60 feet down in the earth.

But of all these hideous engines the most hideous and most unnatural, says H. Warner Allen in *The Unbroken Line*, was the enormous fifteen-inch howitzer. It stood apart from all the lesser monsters in a lair of its own, and it seemed to move of its own volition. One scarcely noticed the men around it, so insignificant did they seem. When we first saw it it was lying flat, like some prehistoric monster waiting for its prey. With the aid of pulleys and a trolley the huge projectile was hauled toward its breach. Then, when the breach was closed, it seemed to wake up, and without any visible human agency it raised its nose over the edge of the pit in which it lived. It moved slowly upwards until one could have sworn that it was gazing intently into the clouds above the steep hillside before it. The men who had been ministering to it hastily ran aside and left a respectful distance between themselves and the monster. The non-commissioned officer who was to fire the great howitzer, as he stood back on the hillside, seemed no more important than its humblest slave.

There was silence. Instinctively one stopped one's ears. There was a great roar, a sheet of flame, and a thin mist of fiercely driven smoke. Everything in the valley shook and trembled, while a hut covered with a tarpaulin collapsed entirely, as with a wild bellowing the huge shell tore through the air on its way towards the enemy. Then quietly the gun lowered its nose again, and sank back into its pit with a dignified swagger that seemed to say that there was no reason to make a fuss about it.

THE top picture shows the Mounting of a Great Gun; one of the largest guns viewed from the breech.

The drawing below shows the night shift working on a gun.

These drawings were made by Muirhead Bone right in some of the big munition shops to which the artist had War Office permission to make all the pictures he wanted to. They are all taken from "The Western Front," published for the Government by Country Life, Ltd.

