

MY EXPERIENCES OF "GOING SICK"

By Stuart Graham

"Herpes Labialis," I found myself repeating as I awoke from a fearfully unsound sleep. Where was I—all nicely tucked in, in a snowy-white bed with a Sister and an M.O. standing over me. They had been wondering, so they said, if I was going to come to or go West.

"What made you fall down those awful stairs?" the Sister asked when I opened my eyes widely and looked around. Gradually the earth settled back to the course assigned to it, thanks to the laws of gravity, and the star-lit world, from which I was just emerging, changed into beautiful sunlight, the most rapid dawn I have ever witnessed, for it was already noon.

Then vaguely I remembered things just as they happened and shuddered. It was Friday when I reported sick to the Orderly Officer, who at once sent me to an M.O. for examination and report; there I was stripped, and the M.O. was tapping all over my body whilst I repeated "Ninety-nine, Ninety-nine," until I asked if he owned a hymn book that I might sing "There were Ninety and Nine," it would be much more interesting, but as was natural he did not possess one. Then he took my blood-pressure with what he called a sphygmomanometer, but it might just as easily have been called a bicycle inner tube, for there was no apparent difference (just swank). I stood all this examination quite well, but when the M.O. left the room for a moment to see the Pathologist, my suspicions were aroused and I dared to glance at my case sheet; the result justified the chance I was taking, for there before my eyes it was written: "A splendid specimen of herpes labialis on orbicularis oris inferioris."

Was ever human being more sorely afflicted. * * * After that I remember very little, I have a hazy recollection of diving from the railing of the back stairs, and then again of the basement floor rushing up to meet me. * * * Then there was the question the Sister was repeating, "What made you fall down those awful stairs?" In reply I simply groaned, but when the Sister had gone I ventured to ask the Doc. quietly the real significance of "Herpes labialis on orbicularis oris inferioris." "Why that is simply the medical way of informing you there is a cold-sore on your lower lip."

Hours later I awakened and the Sister told me I would not need to "swing the lead" any longer, for my medical case sheet now read, in addition to herpes labialis, one compound fracture of the skull, broken leg, three fractured ribs, and a broken collar bone, and it was all written in plain English. I expect to make Canada by the end of the month.