

JIMMY'S STORY.

THE late fall had set in, as late falls have a habit of doing in this damp, dismal country, and though there may have been a slight question of the lateness, there was no room for doubt as to the fall. It was a real, long, wet fall, and it looked as if it would keep on falling for some considerable time; and the bunch of wet, miserable creatures crawling in the general direction of Passchendaele were just approaching that state of mind when a man finds real pleasure in becoming an anarchist, murderer, or going on a bomb-proof job, when they reached the pill-box.

It was a motley crowd that squeezed into the welcome shelter of the concrete walls—the Senior Blacksmith (official sawbones to the unit), with his stock of implements, including folding saw, axe, pincers, and crowbar

didn't exactly use these words, that is what he meant), "and though the wind didn't blow worth a whoop, there is no doubt it was considerably 'up' in No. 2 company the time we relieved the umpty-umth battalion in Farbus Wood. We had the dick ends shelled out of us on the way up—oh, no! there weren't any casualties—and had just nicely got settled down in the wood and the posts relieved when Fritzie opened up showers and swarms and clouds of 5.9's (here everyone looked suitably impressed). Suddenly a wounded man came running into company headquarters and said the whole of No. 3 post had been wiped out, and I yelled to Gillie and Old Bill, and down through the village we went. We hadn't gone more than about a hundred yards when Fritzie laid down a terrific bombardment of 17-inch gas-



Corporal: "D'you know who you're talking to?"

Jam-tin Bill: "No, an' I don't give a whoop neither."

Corporal: "Well, you're talking to an officer—at least I will be as soon as my commission comes through."

complete; Jimmy, the pretty one, with his bag of useless documents, and eternal questions; Polly, the coy one, with his slow, shy smile, and a few yards of D.1 wire trailing from his hip pocket; Davy, the Lewis gunner, carelessly picking his teeth with a gas-regulator key; Theo, the arch-anarchist, nonchalantly removing the nitro-glycerine from a number eight detonator with a split pin; and seated in the one armchair with a more or less becoming grace, the rotund Major.

Conversation had wandered the usual weary round from girls to watered rum rations, *via* easy blighties to the best way to dodge a 5.9, when the mention of shells made Jimmy wake up and begin to tell his story. He began thusly:

"It was a dark and stormy night" (at least, if he

shells, egg bombs, and Véry lights right in front of us, and back through the village we went. We tried going down a side street to the left, and had just got to about the last house when Heinie again started in right across the street in front of us with Johnny Walkers, Minnies, and potato-mashers—and back through the village we went. We tried once more along the railway lane, when Gillie and old Bill got cold feet—and back through the——" But at this point the howl of derision that went up from the crowd cut short the narrative, and Jimmy got peeved and refused to continue it, so what it was all about anyway we never found out, and why we all howled him down so suddenly Jimmy couldn't guess, so I suppose we are just about quits.

IDDY-UMPTY.