

But in the apparent chaos there was nothing but the most smooth and ordered movement, the quick but most exact following of a routine drill so well ground that its motions were almost mechanical. The gunners were off their seats before the wheels had stopped turning, the key snatched clear and the trail of the gun lifted, the wheels seized and the gun whirled round in a half-circle and dropped pointing to the enemy. The ammunition wagon pulled up into place beside the gun, the traces flung clear, and the teams hauled round and trotted off. As Gunner Donovan's trail was lifted clear his yell of "Limber, drive on," started the team forward with a jerk, and a moment later, as he and Number Two slipped into their seats on the gun the Number Two grinned at him. "Sharp's the word," he said; "d'you mind the time——" He was interrupted roughly by the sergeant, who had just had the target pointed to him, jerking up the trail to throw the gun roughly into line.

"Shut your head, and get to it, Donovan. You see the target there, don't you?"

"See it a fair treat!" said Donovan joyfully; "I'll bet I plunk a bull in the first three shots."

Back in the wood the infantry colonel from a vantage-point half-way up a tall tree watched the ensuing duel with the keenest excitement.

The battery's first two ranging shots dropped in a neat bracket, one over and one short; in the next two the bracket closed, shorter shot being almost on top of the target. This evidently gave the range closely enough, and the whole battery burst into a roar of fire, the blazing flashes running up and down the line of guns like the reports of a gigantic Chinese cracker. Over the long team of the German gun a thick cloud of white smoke hung heavily, burst following upon burst and hail after hail of shrapnel, sweeping the men and horses below. Then through the crashing reports of the guns and the whimpering rush of their shells' passage, there came a long whistling scream that rose and rose and broke off abruptly in a deep rolling cr-r-r-rump. A spout of brown earth and thick black smoke showed where the enemy shell had burst far out in front of the battery.

A Fierce Duel.

The infantry colonel wached anxiously. He knew that out there somewhere another heavy German gun had come into action; he knew that it was a good deal slower in its rate of fire, but that once it had secured its line and range it could practically obliterate the light field guns of the bat-