KITCHENER'S MOB

By Jas. Norman Hall.

CHAPTER VIII.
Under Cover
I. UNSEEN FORCES

"We come acrost the Channel
For to wallop Germany;
But they 'ave n't got no soldiers—
Not that any one can see.
They plug us with their rifles
An' they let their shrapnel fly,
But they never takes a pot at us
Exceptin' on the sly.

Chorus
"Fritzie w'en you comin' out?
This wot you calls a fight?
You won't never get to Calais
Always keepin' out o' sight.

"We're a goin' back to Blightey—
"Wot's the use a-witin' 'ere
Like a lot o' bloomin' mud-larks
Above the parapet.
We been in France fer seven months
An' 'ave n't seen 'im yet!'

So sang Tommy, the incorrigible parodist, during the long summer days and nights of 1915, when he was impatiently waiting for something to turn up. For three months and more we were face to face with an enemy whom we rarely saw. It was a weird experience. Rifles cracked, bullets zip-zipped along the top of the parapet, great shells whistled over our heads or tore immense holes in the trenches, trench-mortar projectiles and hand-grenades were hurled at us, and yet there was not a living soul to be seen across the narrow strip of No-Man's-Land, whence all this murderous rain of steel anl lead was coming. Daily we kept careful and continuous watch, searching the long, curving line of German trenches and the ground behind them with our periscopes and field-glasses, and nearly always with the same barren result. We saw only the thin wreaths of smoke rising, morning, and evening, from trench fires; the shattered trees, the forlorn and silent ruins, the long grass waving in the wind.

Although we were often within two hundred yards of thousands of German soldiers, rarely farther than four hundred yards away, I did not see one of them until we had been in the trenches for more than six weeks, and then only for the interval of a second or two. My German was building up a piece of damaged parapet. I watched the earth being thrown over the top of the trench, when suddenly a head appeared, only to be immediately withdrawn. One of our snipers had evidently been watching, too. A rifle cracked and I saw a clour of dust arise where the bullet clipped the top of the parapet. The German waved his spade defiantly in the air, and continued digging; but he remained discreetly under cover thereafter.

This marked an epoch in my experience in a war of unseen forces. I had actually beheld a German, although Tommy insisted that it was only the old caretaker, "the bloke wot keeps the trenches tidy." This mythical personage, a creature of Tommy's own fancy, assumed a very real importance during the summer when the attractions at the Western Threatre of War were only mildly interesting. "Carl the caretaker" was supposed to be a methodical old man whom the Emperor had left in charge of his trenches on the western front during the absence of the German armies in Russia. Many were the stories told about him at different parts of the line. Sometimes he was endowed with a family. "Missus" and his "three little nippers" were with him, and together were blocking the way to Berlin of the entire British Army. Sometimes he was "Hans the Grenadier," owing to his fondness for nightly bombing parties. Sometimes he was "Minnie's husband," Minnie being that redoubtable lady known in polite military circles as a "Minnenwerfer." As already explained, she was sausage-like in shape, and frightfully demonstrative. When she went visiting at the behest of her husband, Tommy usually contrived to be "not at home," whereupon Minnie wrecked the house and disappeared in a cloud of dense black smoke.

One imagines all sorts of monstrous things about an unseen enemy. The strain of constantly watching and seeing nothing became almost unbearable at times. We were often too far apart to have our early morning interchange of courtesies, and then the constant phtt-phtt of bullets annoyed and exasperated us. I for one welcomed any evidence that our opponents were fathers and husbands and brothers just as we were. I remember my delight, one fine summer morning, at seeing three great kites soaring above the German line. There is much to be said for men who enjoy flying kites. Once they mounted a dummy figure of a man on their parapet. Tommy had great sport shooting at it, the Germans jiggling its arms and legs in a most laughable manner whenever a hit was registered. In their eagerness to "get a good bead" on the figure, the men threw caution to the winds, and stood on the firing-benches, shooting over the top of the parapet. Fritz and Hans were true sportsmen while the fun was on, and did not once fire at us. Then the dummy was taken down, and we returned to the more serious game of war with the old deadly earnestness. I recall such incidents with joy as I remember certain happy events in childhood. We needed these trivial occurrences to keep us sane and human. There were not many of them, but such as there were, we talked of for days and weeks afterward.

As for the matter of keeping out of sight, there was a good deal to be said on both sides. Although Tommy was impatient with his prudent enemy and sang songs, twitting him about always keeping under cover, he did not usually forget, in the daytime at least, to make his own observations of the German line with caution. Telescopic sights have made the business of sniping an exact science. They magnify the object aimed at many diameters, and if it remains in view long enough to permit the pulling of a trigger, the chances of a hit are almost one hundred per cent.

II. "THE BUTT-NOTCHER"

Snipers have a roving commission. They mave from one part of the line to another, sometimes firing from carefully concealed loop-holes in the parapet, sometimes from snipers' nests in trees or hedges. Often they creep out into the tall grass of No-Man's-Land. There, with a plentiful supply of food and ammunition, they remain for a day or two at a time, lying in wait for victims. It was a cold-blooded business, and hateful to some of the men. With others, the passion for it grew. They kept tally of their victims by cutting notches on the butts of their rifles.

I well remember the pleasant June day when I first met a "butt-notcher." I was going for water, to an old farmhouse about half a mile from our sector of trench. It was a day of bright sunshine. Poppies and buttercups had taken root in the banks of earth heaped up on either side of the communication trench. They were nodding their heads as gayly in the breeze as of old did Wordsworth's daffodils in the quiet countryside at Rydal Mount. It was a joy to see them there, reminding one that God was still in his heaven, whatever might be wrong with the world. It was a joy to be alive, a joy which one could share unselfishly with friend and enemy alike. The colossal stupidity of war was never more apparent to me than upon that day. I hated my job, and if I hated any man, it was the one who had invented the murderous little weapon known as a machine gun.

I longed to get out on top of the ground. I wanted to lie at full length in the grass; for it was June, and Nature has a way of making one feel the call of June, even from the bottom of a communication trench seven feet deep. Flowers and grass peep down at one, and white clouds sail placidly across
"The strip of blue we prisoners call
the sky."
I felt that I must see all of the sky and see it at once. Therefore I set down my water cans, one on top of the other, stepped up on them, and was soon over the top of the trench, crawling through the tall grass toward a clump of willows about fifty yards away. I passed two lonely graves with their wooden crosses hidden in depths of shimmering, waving green, and found an old rifle, its stock weather-warped and the barrel eaten with rust. The ground was covered with tin cans, fragments of shell-casing, and rubbish of all sorts; but it was hidden from view. Men had been laying waste the earth during the long winter, and now June was healing the wounds with flowers and cool green grasses.

I was sorry that I went to the willows, for it was there that I found the sniper. He had a wonderfully concealed position, which was made bullet-proof with steel plates and sandbags, all covered so naturally with growing grass and willow bushes that it would have been impossible to detect it at a distance of ten yards. In fact, I would not have discovered it had it not been for the loud crack of a rifle sounding so close at hand. I crept on to investigate and found the sniper looking quite disappointed.

(To be continued.)

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE——!

Can anyone who has not seen them imagine what it is like to be a prisoner in this present war? Someone, who saw the first French, English, Russian and Canadian prisoners either returned or escaped, writes of them: "They have an expression of their own, a concentrated, unuttered suffering in their eyes, an unending patience in their voices. There is all the difference in the world between them and the soldiers returned from the Front. The latter, even when severely wounded, have a proud, almost satisfied look, as if in making their supreme effort, something of the glory and exaltation of those fearful moments still clung to them. They are warriors hurt in the great game, brought gladly and triumphantly home, where they know well what welcome awaits them.

"How different is the lot of the allied prisoners? The sight of them, of any nation, is an unforgettable recurring nightmare. A voice, weak, but insistent, rings in your ears: 'Won't you help us?'

"They know what it is to do valiantly, without praise, to suffer silently without sympathy, to ache with homesickness, surrounded by the enemy. They are the unseen heroes and we cannot guess at half their pain."

There are at present more than a million and a half Allied prisoners of war in German hands. The Prisoners of War Society, of which Principal Hutton of University College, Toronto, is president, is appealing through the churches of Ontario for money to help provide the bare necessaries of life to these unfortunate heroes. Congregations who have not yet contributed may send their donations to the treasurer of the society, Hugh Fletcher, Esq., 532 Huron St., Toronto.

Rye mush is more palatable if made with half milk instead of all water.

From Industrial Agent to Flight Commander

Interesting despatches of incidents in the lives of flying men in England are given in letters to friends written by Acting Flight Commander Graham Waters Curtis, formerly Industrial Agent of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Montreal, who is now a flying instructor in England. The school in which he teaches is a vast expanse of country close to a beautiful seaside resort. He writes: "The view from the air is superb, and we often fly out over the sea, and dive down near the British warships and wave to the sailors. When diving we only travel at the rate of about 175 miles an hour! I am kept very busy instructing and am turning out a lot of expert pilots. The school I am connected with is one in which flyers finish their course of training. A lot of chaps from Borden come to us to get final lessons, and then they are sent to France. We do all kinds of fancy performances—loop the loop, roll, make spinning nose dives, side slips, and vertical turns." He describes how "little excitements" happen when one aeronaut gets into the "wash, or slip-stream of air" made by a preceding navigator. The letters indicate that Acting Flight Commander Curtis is a lucky master of the high school in which he soars. He says: "We have a lot of smashes, but very few deaths, considering everything. None of my pupils has been killed yet."

Acting Flight Commander Curtis has lately been recommended by his commanding officer for a first lieutenancy, and expects to be sent to France at any time. He joined the Royal Flying Corps on November 15th, 1916.

Acting Flight Commander G. W. Curtis and his machine just after a "crash" at a training camp in England.

The Housewife's Corner

WAR AND FOOD SERIES, ARTICLE No. 9—MAPLE SUGAR

The term "made in Canada" applies to maple sugar, if it does to anything, and there should be a splendid field for this industry during the next few years.

Sugar is one of the commodities that we are asked to save. The Allies are calling upon this continent for a considerable portion of our normal domestic sugar supply. East India sugar is practically unavailable, the last crop having been lost owing to the fact that enormous cargoes of raw sugar were sunk by enemy submarines.

The sugar that we take from Cuba is lessening the amount that the little island can supply to the Allies. Therefore, it behooves us to import as little sugar as possible and to make use of the abundant supply of natural sugar which is available. In England the allowance of sugar per head of population has been reduced to 2 pounds per month. In Italy it is only 1 pound per month. Canadians, however, are still consuming between 7 and 8 pounds per capita each month.

If the maple sugar resources were fully organized Eastern Canada alone could produce enough maple sugar to supply the total sugar requirements of the Dominion.

This is too much to expect at this stage and yet much can be done to increase production this spring. There are great numbers of trees available and as the sap runs before the farmer's busy season commences he should be able to go in for tapping on an extensive scale. It will be good business. In the past the demand has far exceeded the supply and this year it will be even greater owing to the scarcity of beet and cane sugar.

Many farmers have gone out of maple sugar-making in recent years owing to the low scale of prices arising from the competition of adulterated maple products. The Pure Maple Sugar law now protects the manufacturers of the genuine article, while the scarcity of cane and beet sugar makes it less profitable for manufacturers to mix cane and beet sugar with maple extracts.

With an abundant supply available and with a certain demand there is no reason why men and women, too, should not go into the bush this spring and tap the trees for their natural riches. It is a responsibility, a duty. All available kettles, pans and buckets should be routed out and cleaned now. In parts of Ontario tapping begins early in March so that there is no time to be lost.

Maple sugar and maple syrup will yet be universally found in the homes of Canada, as the finest of substitutes for the sugar to which we are accustomed. Let Europe have the white sugar while we have our own delicious "made in Canada" maple sugar.

Dates as a War Food.

One food that we frequently should give our families is the date. There are many delightful ways of serving dates. They have not advanced as much in price as other foods and we can well take advantage of this in these days of high prices.

The fleshy part of the date contains sugar in a large degree and a little protein. Its food value expressed in scientific terms is fifteen hundred and seventy-five calories to the pound. Beef is one of the greatest of muscle-producing foods and is rated at eleven hundred and sixty-five calories to the pound. This shows what dates mean to the diet when served a few times a week, in one form or another. It is healthful as well as palatable frequently to substitute dates for other sweets. The housewife who buys a package of a recognized high grade brand knows that she has a food product which will furnish energy.

If dates are hard when purchased, they can easily be softened by pouring boiling water over them. They should always be carefully washed before using.

Graham Date Gems.—½ cupful brown sugar, ½ cupful shortening, 2 eggs, 1 cupful sour milk, ½ teaspoonful soda, 1½ cupfuls graham flour, 1½ pounds chopped dates, nutmeg to flavor.

Yiddish Date Pudding.—1 pound dates, juice of one orange, ½ pint cream, 1 cupful boiled rice, 1 teaspoonful vanilla, ½ box gelatine, 2-3 cupful water, 1 cupful sugar. Soften gelatine in cold water, dissolve over hot water. Chop dates, cover with orange juice. Add sugar, rice, vanilla. Add dissolved gelatine. Fold in whipped cream. Pour into cold wet mold. Set in cold place to harden.

Date Cheese Salad.—6 dates, 3 figs, ½ cupful blanched chopped almonds, 1 scant cupful cream cheese, 1 teaspoonful lemon juice, pinch salt. Mix the ingredients to a paste and make into balls. Serve four to each person on a nest of lettuce leaves with a mayonnaise dressing to which an equal quantity of whipped cream has been added.

Date Cookies.—2 cupfuls flour, 2 cupfuls oatmeal, 1 cupful brown sugar, 1 cupful shortening, ½ cupful milk 2 teaspoonfuls baking powder. Mix as oatmeal cookies, spread half of the sheet with date paste, fold other half over, press edges together and cut into squares or circles. Bake in a quick oven.

Stuffed Dates.—Serve these instead of candy. Select plump dates. Wash thoroughly. Open on one side to remove pit. Fill cavity with an almond or walnut meat or chopped nuts and raisins. Close. Roll in white of egg and then in crushed nut meats. These are better if made one day before they are needed.

A healthy hen will lay from 300 to 500 eggs during lifetime. Her best laying capacity is during her second year.

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