

THE HIDDEN HOARD.

It was Micky who first saw the old French civilian raking over the rubble heap where once a cottage had stood, and it was Micky's newspaper-fed imagination which immediately jumped to the conclusion that somewhere beneath the wreck of the roof-tree lay a hidden hoard.

Along with his pal, "Red" McDougal, he had been exploring the heaped-up *débris*—all that was left of a once prosperous village, a village which had figured time and again in the earlier communiqués of the war as the scene of desperate fighting, and which the receding tide of battle had left broken and derelict.

Shell-fire, sudden death and all the dreary precocity that comes to the youth of a country at war, had not sufficed to quench the restless curiosity of the two boys—for they were little more. They had been wandering over the shell-pitted mounds of brick and mortar, gleaning here and there an odd article with which to furnish their dug-out, when Micky spied the old man picking with palsied eagerness at the ruins of a building.

"Oh, Red!" whispered Micky, hoarsely. "Here a minute."

Red dropped the rusty bed-spring which he had been trying to disentangle from the surrounding rubbish and came at once.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"Keep down!" commanded Micky. "See that old guy? Well, I'll just bet he's huntin' for the old stockin' with the savin's of a lifetime in it, stuck away behind the kitchen chimney."

The ruined hamlet was still near enough to the firing-line to make the presence of civilians unusual, and there was a furtiveness about the old man's movements—or so it seemed to the boys—that lent colour to Micky's assertion.

Crouched down behind a fragment of wall, they breathlessly watched the aged Frenchman as he painfully moved the mass of material in front of him. At last, with two simultaneous gulps of excitement, they saw him stop suddenly, and noticed the weather-wizened features wrinkle in a smile of satisfaction.

"He's found it all right," gasped Micky.

Red could only nod.

To their surprise, the old civilian straightened up, and hobbled slowly away, muttering to himself.

No sooner had he gained the high road running arrow-straight through the tumbled wreckage than the two boys scrambled over to the place where the villager had stood. There were no signs of the hearthstone both had expected to see. Instead, in front of them lay a mass of masonry sandwiching broken rafters, rusted iron-ware, and shards of pulverised pottery.

"I don't see no signs of the stockin'," said Red, doubtfully.

"Why, you chump," cried Micky, with heat, "d'you think the old man 'ud leave it here if it was in sight?"

Inspired by his enthusiasm, Red attacked the pile, and soon the two were raising clouds of mortar dust with the vigour of their efforts. They pierced through the strata of broken brick, encountering a layer of empty tins welded with the straw of an old paliasse, and, below that again, relics of a bygone husband, but never a sign of the object they sought.

At last, tired and dirty, they stopped, and tramped back to their quarters for supper.

Reinvigorated, they returned, and darkness found them still at it, and still unsuccessful.

"The old civvy's bound to come back," said Micky, as he rubbed his scratched and tender finger-tips.

"Hope so," responded Red, whose faith was beginning to wane.

That night the two agreed to keep watch on the place, in case the old man should return, but nothing happened until after breakfast next morning, when they saw the old civilian driving along the road a ponderous horse attached to a rickety old cart, and with him a strong-looking French soldier—a "missionnaire," evidently.

With beating hearts the two boys watched the conveyance stop by the roadside, and the two men reach the scene of their labours.

The old man looked puzzled for a moment, and then spoke a word or two in rapid French. With a couple of quick wrenches the soldier dragged an old, rusty plough from the ruins, and, with the help of the older man, loaded it on the wagon and drove away.

The two boys stared at one another for a moment, and then clinched in combat.

J. W. C.

Advice to Correspondents

By "Sister Smiff."

ADDENUF.

Ques.—"Please tell me the easiest way to make Blighty?"

Ans.—Take the second, twelfth, ninth, seventh, eighth, nineteenth and twenty-fifth letters of the alphabet respectively, and your question is answered.

SOUVENIR.

Ques.—"I have a souvenir bomb, and in the end of it is a little tube painted red. I tried to take it out with a pin, but failed. How can I remove it, as I should like to make something out of it?"

Ans.—Hit it with an entrenching tool, or jab it with a spike, and you should have no trouble in making a blighty out of it.

FUMER.

Ques.—"Why don't we get as many cigarettes as we used to?"

Ans.—On account of running short of names to call the different brands.

BLIGHTY.

Ques.—"What is the meaning of the expression of 'Up the line with the best of luck'?"

Ans.—All the answers I have heard are quite unprintable.

INFORMED.

Ques.—"What do you think of the Zeppelins? Aren't they a wonderful invention?"

Ans.—Yes, they're certainly getting them "down fine."

UNO.

Ques.—"Why is a gun always spoken of as 'she' and 'her'?"

Ans.—How-its-her, I couldn't say.

DIMPLES.

Ques.—"Are you aware that a 5.9 shell distributes more blighties than a 13.5?"

Ans.—It never struck me before.

SMOKIE.

Ques.—"What is the best remedy for a smoky dug-out?"

Ans.—Put the fire out.

SERUM.

Ques.—"Do you think the dope the M.O. puts in a man's arm saves life?"

Ans.—Certainly not. A friend of mine was napooed a week after having been vaccinated.

BLIGHTLET.

Ques.—"A chum of mine was hit by a piece of shrapnel which pierced his helmet and struck him just above the brain. He was so astonished. He didn't even faint. Why?"

Ans.—Because such a thing never entered his head before.

WILHELM'S LAMENT.

Come, mein childer, draw you near
Und von story you shall hear:
It was on der western field of war
I rode mein horse so white.
Der British run mit horse und gun
So fast dey fool me quite.
Hoch, see! Dey run der wrong dam way.
—Just den I woke und it was day—
Mein soldiers, dot I t'ought immune
From fear, dey beat it soon;
Und Little Willie, mein tear son,
Win nix a victory at Verdun.
Von million of mein men he lose,
Und his poor brain get much confuse.
(I tink he hog der champagne booze)
Mein Navy, once so goot and grand,
Goes no more from der Vaterland.
Der Gott-straft Yank he now make war
—Und soon, I tink, he strafe mein shore.
Der Belgiums yet, dey ain'd half done.
Oh, vy dis war was it begun!