

and infantry stretcher-bearers took charge of the two wounded gunners. Percy had his arm dressed with a field dressing, but refused to go to the dressing-station until a relief should come from the battery. Being partially disabled, he assumed charge of the gun. One of the two remaining gunners he sent to the battery for reinforcements, as telephone connections had been broken. An infantry man went with him to satisfy the order that "runners" shall not go singly after nightfall. When the infantryman regained consciousness in the hospital two days later he explained the non-appearance of reinforcements.

In order to get the gun ready for action in its new position the ammunition had to be moved. Fritz had lightened the task by hitting and destroying one pile. The infantry officers let Percy have a few men to transfer the balance.

No gunners having appeared, Percy secured four infantrymen to fill in as a substitute crew in case the impending attack should materialize before the arrival of a relief. These he initiated into the mysteries of fuse-setting and loading while he detailed his one gunner to look after the range-drum and breech, leaving the actual laying to himself, as his right hand was still serviceable.

As he had had a midnight session of gun-drill, he arranged to have the infantry guard call him in case of an S. O. S., and turned in with his greenhorn crew.

The arrangement for the infantry guard to wake the gun crew was quite unnecessary, for Fritz staged a throbbing reveille of gun fire just at the peep o' dawn. Percy roused his men and they stood to the gun.

It was still dark enough to get the full beauty of the bombardment. From behind the first crest in the German lines, hosts of great triangular flashes of

light reached up and probed the dull-grey sky momentarily, like sudden flashes from giant search-lights. Where the barrage played on our front line of trenches the gloom was pierced at regular intervals with the sparklike flash of bursting shrapnel. The vault above No Man's Land was filled with phosphorescent star-shells and blood-red rockets calling for our artillery. Percy did not appreciate the scene at the time, but the picture became registered subconsciously and came back to him with striking force after it was all over.

Presently the barrage lifted from the first line of trenches to the second line. A new sound became audible above the drum-beat of the barrage—it was the hectic rattle of machine gun and rifle fire. The Germans were over the top.

It was still too dark to distinguish the grey-clad infantry, so Percy let fly into No Man's Land at random, hoping for luck. This he kept up until the rifle fire subsided, and word came back that the first line had succumbed to the assault.

Following a comparative lull, the duration of which Percy could never intelligently estimate, the barrage lifted again and settled on the trench just behind the gun. Again the Germans were in the open, this time visible in the growing light, and time after time their serried ranks were shattered by perfect bursts of shrapnel, directed more by good luck than good management by the make-shift gun crew. But on they came, with thinning ranks, but relentlessly, unfalteringly, heroically. They reached and captured the second line of trenches.

Percy and his gun were then in No Man's Land. He had barely time to reflect on the gravity of his situation when the field grey appeared in the open again, charging, though greatly reduced in numbers, with the utmost determination. For they were then

almost within reach of their first definite objective, which was the ridge along the brow of which ran the support trench, just behind Percy's gun. From this crest they could operate against the valley in which the bulk of the British artillery was located.

By ordering a zero fuse Percy fired shrapnel, which burst beautifully just in front of the gun, ploughing great furrows in the advancing masses. The attackers shied violently to right and left, leaving a gap in front of the gun. Into this gap jumped a German under officer, charging wildly at the gun. The crew loaded hurriedly and Percy pulled the firing lever, but too late, for the German was already too near, and the shell went past him before exploding.

Percy was looking frantically for something with which to defend himself, when the German burst through the bushes and rounded the side of the gun with poised bayonet. All seemed over, when the German fell, killed by a bullet from a trench behind.

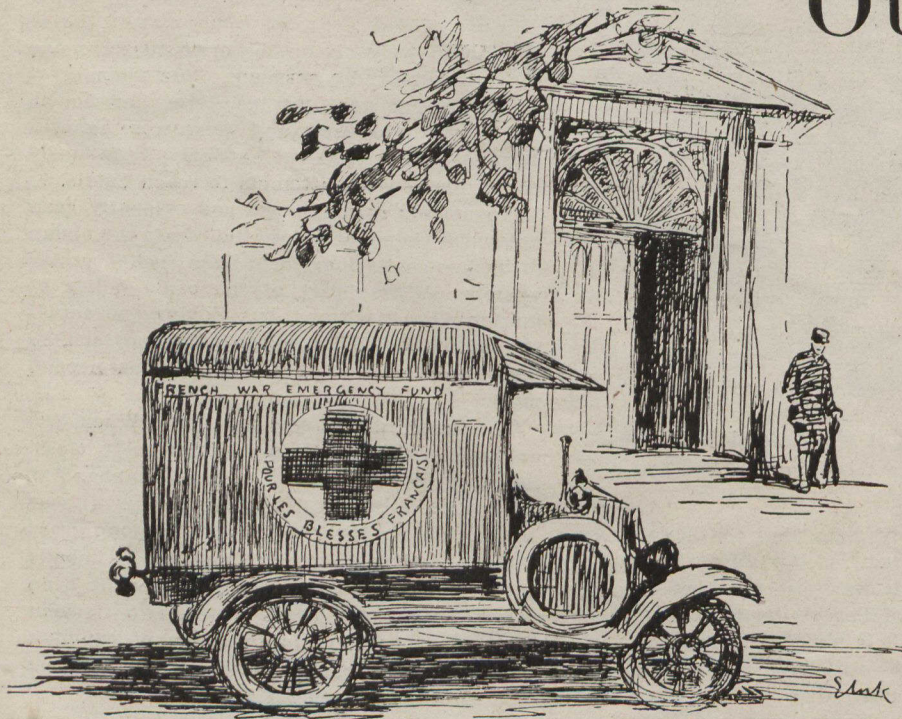
At practically the same moment the infantry behind the gun, on a front of about one hundred yards, rose from the trenches with a shout and charged the Germans. Shaken by the ordeal of charging into the mouth of a field gun, they turned and fled. The infantry halted at the hedge shielding the gun, and flinging a cordon around it and back to the trench, concealed themselves in the long grass and awaited developments.

The German retired to the second line trench to reorganize. Meanwhile some gunners appeared and Percy and his infantry gun crew were relieved. An hour later a counter-attack drove the enemy out of the captured trenches. That was the first thing Percy heard when he reached the dressing-station.

"Our Battery" has always maintained that for the Victoria Cross Percy won on that occasion, he has to thank the Flanneries more than anything else.

Outside the Hospital Gates

By ESTELLE M. KERR



Our little Ford waits outside the hospital doors.

Aix-la-Bains.

DINNER is over, and the waiters are removing fruit plates and bottles from the tables under the trees, while the guests retire to the far end of the garden. The whole atmosphere of the place breathes of luxury and indolence; and yet, a day or two ago, the languid young officers now lazily smoking cigarettes were probably in the trenches; and an hour or two ago, the fair-haired girl sipping a dainty cup of coffee beneath a potted palm, was washing china of a more generous mould in a Y. M. C. A. canteen; while I (looking tolerably respectable in this half-light) have spent the entire day performing necessary operations on the black and oily interior of a Ford.

It was aggravating, in such an attractive town, to spend my time in a garage with the mercury soaring to an alarming height; but now in the garden the trees are garnished with shining grapes, which shed a soft radiance on bare necks and sombre uniforms.

To-morrow I shall be motoring beside the emerald

puffs and pants up the hills, the most beautiful scenery in France loses its charm! My every mood is merged in that of my little Ford.

The car is called "Percy" after his late driver; a name wholly unsuitable to the practical elderly appearance of both. But we really cannot call him O.8153 every time we speak to him, and there is such a strong family likeness between all the Ford vans belonging to the F. W. E. F. that we must give them names. Percy has rather more than his share of large red crosses. The one on top would make an excellent target, but our sleep has been untroubled by airplanes, and we have heard the guns only once, from very far away.

Sometimes the delegate I am driving on her tour of French Military Hospitals is tired and harassed from endless visits and troublesome reports; sometimes I am the one who suffers from long drives and mechanical difficulties; sometimes it is Percy who boils with rage at having to mount such long, steep hills. At such times we all worry lest some disaster overtake us on the road. We haven't perfect

Lake Bourget—a luxury that millionaires in Aix cannot share — and later I may be lunching, hot and dusty, at a miserable little wayside tavern on eggs, black bread and sour wine. The life of a chauffeuse is full of contrasts!

WHETHER I dine in a palace or hovel; whether I sleep in the ducal suite or curled on the seat of my motor beneath the stars, affects not my happiness. But if the car begins to make strange noises and

confidence in Percy, though he really is a deserving little fellow. And he had some hard work to do, climbing the Ballons d'Alsace, crawling up a mountain pass for eleven kilometres and then, still worse, descending the long precipitous road with all its hair-pin turnings. And before his engine had time to cool he was called upon to mount to a fortress hospital perched high on a hill, like the enchanted castle of a fairy tale. No wonder his brake gave way! Poor Percy! I sometimes feel his distress so keenly that I would willingly exchange this sublime scenery for the monotonous asphalt and red brick houses of a small Canadian town. But Vosges is lovely, Jura still more beautiful, and Savoie the loveliest of all! So it was really good of Percy to hold out until we got here.

He is remarkably agile, too. Only a skilled acrobat could have avoided killing some of the hens and chickens that would get in front of the car and race us. I hope I may never be called upon to eat such muscular birds! The cows, too, were extremely trying in the way they planted themselves in front of him; the attitude of the geese was almost suicidal, while the peasant carts, drawn by bullocks, formed a formidable obstacle on hills, for the drivers were always deaf to the sound of the horn.

WE have visited hospitals in old convents and monasteries—spacious, peaceful places with gardens and sunny courtyards—hospitals in handsome college buildings; in severely plain barracks with great square drill-yards; fortress hospitals on rocky heights, and sad hospitals in prisons. Then there were evacuation stations in canvas or wooden tents, concealed from the view of passing airmen by boughs of trees, or irregular camouflage bands of green and brown. An American hospital we have seen is designed to accommodate ten thousand beds, and the largest French one is situated in the colossal buildings of a former barracks which has even its stables fitted out with beds—which have never been needed, I am glad to say.

So many things help to make a hospital good, bad or indifferent that the casual observer may get an