

THE C. H. Q. CHRISTMAS EVE.

IT was Christmas Eve, and we sat at an improvised card-table, consisting of a short length of duck-board with a ground sheet covering.

"Who opened it?" demanded the Junior Sub.

"I did," the C.O. told him. "For two."

"I'll stay for two," said Bombs modestly. "Hallo! What's that?"

"That," was a sickening crump above, a swift beating of the air that put out the candles, and the dim patter of scattered earth failing to ground again.

"Mice," suggested the C.O. picking himself up and re-lighting the candles, "or Father Christmas. Anybody hurt?"

"No," said I, "but where is Bombs?" Bombs was clawing his way laboriously up the entrance shaft, and he called back a reassuring "Here! teacher," ere he butted into the gas sentry above. In a few minutes he reported—

"A sausage, sir, landed just behind us."

"Dear old Hun," murmured the C.O. "It's really very thoughtful of him. Rum jars, flying pigs and sausages. What other gifts could a man wish for on such a night. "Peter, my bonny youth, give my compliments to the O.C. Talk Emma and ask him to give largely of his abundance to our contributor."

I was never really fond of the noisome sausage and mentally thanked this one for its pleasing diffidence. After all, it had merely knocked at the door, when it might have violently intruded upon our privacy. I looked round the dear old dugout, grown familiar during my three days' stay in its hospitable bowels, and again felt glad that the sausage had not marred the beauty of its unexpected contours, nor upset the smiling radiance of its slimy walls. Handsome is as handsome does, and that delightful, dark, damp dugout was a great solace to my offtime anguished soul.

"I wonder what they are doing at home just now," speculated the junior sub, thoughtlessly.

"Thinking of mother's darling," suggested the second-in-command, with an air of tender sympathy.

"Think rather of Mars than of Ma's," Bombs said brightly, thinking himself witty, until the J.S. deftly filled his eye with that which went under the alias of "butter."

"Children! Children!" admonished the C.O. in pained surprise. "Remember your temporary title of Officers and Gentlemen. A little less robustness in thy fun. At what time do we dine, by the way?"

"Oh! yes, dine," Bombs echoed, brightening up again. "Let's see, didn't Peter get the odd parcel to-day?"

"He got one, but the odd one was mine," said I with a little pardonable pride. Four pairs of eyes regarded me with touching wistfulness.

"Just food"? the Second-in-Command asked lugubriously. I tilted my parcel up and it gurgled.

"It listens good."

"Did I hear a cork?" demanded Peter hopefully, as he came in a few minutes later.

"Just grape-juice, old thing. 'Come fill the cup that clears to-day of past regrets.'"

"Haven't any," Bombs declared with unnecessary vehemence.

"And future fears!" the C.O. concluded darkly.

"As to those ————."

Whoof—whe—whe—whoof—whish—wang, and again the air became animated and struck us with the sledge-hammer blows of a Mortardactyl, and again we floundered in Stygian darkness.

"More stuffing for the Christmas turkey," spluttered Bombs as he spat the mud from his mouth.

"Surely, said I, surely that is

Some one at my window lattice."

It was my turn for duty, and as a fitful flicker of the candles was renewed, I groped my way above and sought the extent of the damage, which proved nothing more serious than a few scattered sandbags and a hole in the parados. A fine, silvery rain was falling and the trenches looked very pretty in the half-light of a moon that sprayed dimly through a film of drizzling rain clouds. I looked fondly down the fire trench and thought how closely it resembled putrid Cheddar cheese. The rats, too, seemed to think so, for I heard their enthusiastic rustlings all around me. I made my tour and found all was

well in spite of Fritz's restlessness. Our lines were quiet, but he, poor nervous beggar, was evidently anticipating a jolly rush "across" to wish him the Compliments of the Season, judging by the number and amazing variety of flares and gun-cracks that he was filling the air with. Poor old Fritz, how can we hate him, poor, rabid chink of war-worn protoplasm.

I burrowed my way down to C.H.Q.

"How goes the war?"

"Oh, passing fair," said I. "It's a beast of a night, makes you think longingly of snow shoes and miles of dry white snow, and the tinkle of sledge bells."

"Or the raw edge of a fifty below!"

"I'd like to feel the sting of it."

"And overhead, green, yellow and red, the North Lights swept in bars"—Peter quoted.

"Order! Order!"

"What about the odd rum ration?" I asked plaintively. As it was on its way to my lips came the odd slip, for the night air was rent by the blast of a Strombas Horn, and the gas sentry yelled the odious warning of "GAS!"

In a trice we faced each other with our gas masks on, looking for all the world like members of the Klu Klux Klan in the 'Birth of a Nation.'

The J. S. performed a *pas seul*.

"But, I say, Oh! John——. You look so funny with your helmets on."

There was a silence, then the O.C. glanced at his watch and his voice came in a muffled growl:—

"I say, you fellows—A Merry Christmas!"

S. G. H.

To Our Master Cook.

Who gets up early in the morn
And wakes the cooks before the dawn;
Else for our breakfast we would mourn?
Why——Ramsay!

Who, with a can of M. and V.,
A biscuit and some Bully B.
Contrives a Veal and Ham Paté?
Why——Ramsay!

And also with a little flour,
Some Raisins (hardly in a shower!)
A Rainbow Pudding in one hour?
Why——Ramsay!

With Boeuf Rote and Pomme de Terre,
Salade, Fromage, Chocôlat Eclairé,
Plum Pudding a la Angleterre.
Oh——Ramsay!

And so to us it is quite clear
Of Honors, he should have a share,
For him the "Medaille Cuisinaire,"
Our——Ramsay.

So here's to him, our Master Cook—
He knows it all, just like a book,
We crown him King, all have to look
To——Ramsay!

But since he runs the wet Canteen,
The only time he can be seen
Is Pay Days, and they're long between!
Why——Ramsay?

GAS.

D for "D" Coy. the best in the Batt.
D is for "Dash" and you bet we have that!
D for the "Daring" we ever have shown,
D for "Defeat" we never have known.
D is for "Darling" or "it's getting worse."
D is for "Damn"—a comforting curse,
D is for "Dore," whose noise we deplore—
[D for "Don't" think we shall print any more.—Ed.]