

tions, which showed to the public gaze, were up to strength and well polished. Our officers saw to that.

His brass buttons, the badges of his noble calling, were the only ones left on his uniform. The others were replaced by safety-pins and short wire nails. Such an arrangement makes dressing a work of art. (If any kind lady reader, seeing this and anxious to do something for the boys out here, sends a small packet of "bachelor buttons" addressed to Corporal A. P. McCosh, Canadian Field Artillery, France, I am sure the act will be very much appreciated).

Having finally got to bed Percy closed his eyes and feigned sleep. The time passed slowly, and it was only with great difficulty that he remained awake; but he did not consider it safe to act until well past midnight.

Then he sat up in bed. From under his pillow he secured the purloined spoon, and from the combination washstand, dresser and clothes-rack at the head of his bed he got two towels. One of these he tied very tightly just above his right knee, and the other, also very tightly, just below the knee. Then he pounded his knee-cap with the tablespoon for a long time.

At last the knee began to swell, and the skin developed a red, angry rash. Apparently satisfied with his night's work, he untied the towels, replaced the instrument of self-torture, and lay down. Although in some pain, as may be imagined, he was soon asleep.

Morning came, and with it the doctor who was to make the final examination and sign the papers which would release him to the battery. Percy showed him the knee, now swollen to an enormous size. Before speaking the doctor made a thorough examination.

"How did this happen?" he asked at length.

"I slipped coming back from the mess-room yesterday," said Percy, who had all the details ready.

But the doctor had not spent months at a base hospital in France without learning anything. He had seen that thing before. He gave Percy a long lecture on "self-mutilation," courts-martial and firing squads, and wound up by marking the papers "Active," and sending him back to the battery as he was.

Percy was lame for a long time, but to the great amazement of all who knew him he did not parade sick. He had long heard the usual tales at the horse lines about the wonderful life we gunners were having up at the guns. The stories of little work, plentiful rations, palatial quarters, and our fine evenings around our dug-out fire with our gramophone grinding out tid-bits from the latest musical comedy, fascinated him. He had himself paraded to the major and asked to be allowed to learn gunnery.

Now, if there is anything our major understands, it is human nature. From the day back in Toronto, when he had seen Percy ride Angel, he had been convinced that there was something good in the boy, if he knew how to get at it. Here was a chance to try out his theory, he thought, and he gave his consent to the transfer.

That is how we came to have Percy with us up at the guns. At first we did not like it, but now we all agree that it was one of the best things that ever happened.

For a while there were no symptoms of Flanneries. It was a new life; there were many things to see and learn; and there was an average of about one-third of every day when Percy could lounge around poisoning himself with the villainous issue cigarettes, operating the gramophone or playing solitaire. This last was the craze of the moment, and I have seen no less than six games of solitaire in progress at one time.

About this time we moved to another part of the front. In our new position Percy found that there was more work than there had ever been at the horse lines. There were gun-pits and sleeping quarters to dig and strengthen; there was a dug-out to make for the major, one for the telephonist, another for the rest of the officers; and yet another to serve as officers' mess-room. As soon as we finished one we were started on another one.

We had just finished the officers' cook house and were starting on the mess cook house, when the hated Hun got after us. It seems the crest in front was not high enough to hide the flash of the guns

sufficiently at night, and Fritz got our line and range to an inch.

After the first few shots it became clear that it was not a casual affair but a concentration, and the order to scatter was given. When a battery is not firing there is nothing to be gained by staying around a gun position which is being shelled. In fact, there is everything to lose, and the order to clear out has saved many lives which would otherwise have been lost to no purpose.

Percy and I were away for water at the time, but we got the details later. The boys said that they made the hundred yards to the communication trench on our right flank in times varying from eight and one-fifth seconds to nine and two-fifths. I am well aware that this is less than the world's record for one hundred yards on the track; but I have never doubted the boys' word in the matter.

It was clear we should have to move. If it had been an ordinary bombardment, such as we have often had, with a pit or two smashed, and perhaps one gun out of action, we should probably have stayed where we were, as we have on other occasions. But this had been an unusually accurate and heavy concentration, showing that Fritz was pretty sure of his ground. A new location for the battery was selected, nearer to the line, but with a better crest to hide the flashes.

We were all pretty sick of shovels and sand-bags by this time, and thoughts of having to build a complete new battery position were very distasteful. Percy went to bed with his old complaint, the trouble



Looked frantically for something with which to defend himself.

being sick headache, I think.

To his bed of pain the word came that the major had asked for a volunteer to stay at the old position and delude the wily Hun. It was just the kind of thing to appeal to a person of Percy's temperament, and he applied for the job. It is my firm belief that if it were guaranteed that he would have no work to do except what would be incidental to feeding himself, he would bivouac in No Man's Land and stay there for the duration.

PERCY was sent to the old position at night with a fatigue party. A small, deep dug-out was made near the battery and he was installed with several days' rations. Every night that was without mist Percy would go to the ruined gun-pits and burn flares, which had been specially prepared, and make a glow above the crest like the flash of a gun. He was careful to synchronize his flares with the firing of some gun in the neighborhood.

After burning a few flares Percy would retire to his dug-out and await developments. Sometimes Fritz would respond immediately. At other times he would wait a while, perhaps a few hours or until the next day; and then, concentrating several batteries on the ruined position, sweep it with such a tornado of fire that Percy shivered with terror in his little retreat.

Orders had been given for him to count the shots; but Percy soon found that to count shots when batteries concentrate is almost impossible when one is so near the centre of the concentration. The regular observers made reports, however, and from that source it was computed that Percy drew seven hun-

dred and twenty-three rounds from the German batteries in the time he was at the position.

For this piece of work Percy was mentioned in despatches, and received the D. C. M. and ten days' leave in England. At the end of his leave he returned to us "wearied but still unsated," his money all gone, but three new addresses on the last page of his pay book, which also harbored a lady's glove and one or two other articles of an intimate feminine nature. The pay book is the soldier's safety deposit for all treasured articles which can possibly be crammed into it. Testaments have stopped bullets: the average pay book would stop a shrapnel shell.

The first few days after leave are the hardest of a soldier's life. Especially is this true of leave to Blighty from the front. Percy came back with a fit of the blues which not even his distinction of being the first man in the battery to be decorated, could alleviate. When he saw how much work there was still to be done on the new position the blues developed into a grouch. Flanneries would most certainly have followed had it not been for the order to put in a forward gun.

A forward gun is much to the liking of an adventurous soul. It is generally in advance of the rest of the battery, has usually no cover but "camouflage" or screening, and is seldom fired except in very important operations. Its main object is "targets of opportunity," which may present themselves to direct fire in a big show. Once fired its exact position is disclosed and the course of wisdom is to move as soon as possible. As for work, there is practically nothing for the crew to do on a quiet front but exist. When a forward gun was talked of in our battery, Percy hoped our gun would be the one chosen, and when "A" subsection was chosen he was bitterly disappointed. He had himself paraded and asked to be allowed to go as one of the crew, which request, in view of his reputation for nerve, was granted.

THERE were six on the crew all told; five gunners and a sergeant. For a month or so everything went just as Percy had hoped. Not a shot was fired, and there were practically no fatigues. Then suddenly Fritz made one of his periodic attempts to reach Calais.

Movements near the gun had evidently been noted, for the night before the Strafe the clump of bushes sheltering it had been shelled pretty heavily. It was part of the usual policy of marking gun positions, but leaving the actual shelling until just before an infantry attack, so that the guns are out of action when needed most.

The bombardment was at night. When two or three shots had landed dangerously close, the crew decided to move; and manhandled the gun to a hedge about fifty yards away. It was heavy work wheeling the gun through the long grass of midsummer, while a steady stream of shells plunked into the spot where it had just recently been concealed. To make matters worse, two German machine guns opened fire in the hope of catching anyone leaving the shelled position, and raked the neighborhood with streams of lead.

It was a dark, moonless night, lit only by the chemical ghostliness of the arching star-shells. The whining and zipping of bullets, the howling of approaching shells, the roaring of the bursts, and the singing of the ragged splinters overhead merged into a great stimulating tumult of sound. To sit idly waiting in such a predicament is a nervous strain of the first order; but when there is work to do, one's nerves are set like a steel trap and one works with that nervous energy which is the joy of battle.

The gun was got quickly over the grassy stretch and was just being run into the shelter of the hedge when one of the machine guns poured its deadly stream, as water from a hose, along the full length of the hedge, killing the sergeant and wounding two of the gunners. Percy was kneeling with the still quivering sergeant in his arms, examining him for the extent of his wounds, when the stuttering chatter of the gossiping machine gun broke forth once more into its tale of terror and death. Again it swept the hedge, splintering the gun wheels in several places, and putting two more bullets with convulsing thuds into the form in Percy's arms, one of the bullets passing through the fleshy part of one of the supporting arms.

The gun was just in front of the support trenches,