

"Halloa, Dick!" The gunner paused. "You haven't seen my major anywhere, have you?"

"Not that I'm aware of, but as I don't know your major from Adam, my evidence may not be reliable. What news from the seat of war?"

"None that I know of—except this cursed gun, that is rapidly driving me to drink."

"What cursed gun? I am fresh from Ciro's and the haunts of love and ease. Expound to me your enigma, my Land Crab."

"Haven't you heard? When the Germans——" He stopped suddenly. "Listen!" Perfectly clear from the woods to the north of them—the woods that lie to the west of the Woesten-Oostvleteren road, for those who may care for maps—there came the distinctive boom! crack! of a smallish gun. Three more shots, and then silence. The gunner turned to Dick.

"There you are—that's the gun."

"But how nice! Only, why curse it?"

"Principally because it's German; and those four shots that you have just heard have by this time burst in Poperinghe."

"What!" O'Rourke looked at him in amazement. "Is it my leg you would be pulling?"

"Certainly not. When the Germans came on in the first blind rush after the French two small guns