

THE BALLAD OF SHELL-HOLE IKE.

IN the midnight heart of no-man's land,
Beyond the friendly wire,
In a mud-lined, jam-tinned shell-hole fanned
By Fritz' machine-gun fire,
There sat the ancient Shell-hole Ike
Up to his knees in mire.

And as he sat on the busted door
Of the house that wasn't there,
The murky flash and the deep-mouthed roar
Of the "heavies" rent the air,
And up through the ghostly death-haze tore
The sizzling light of a flare.



Orderly: "Ullo, cookie, fall into the soup?"
Wounded Bomber: "G-I-T-R-."

And he thought of the speakers that raved at home
Of the dastardly, evil Hun,
How he must be crushed till his crafty dome
Had vanished from under the sun;
And he muttered "prunes" in his unkempt beard,
Then silently reached for his gun.

He thought of those whose duties led
Far, far from his gore-stained post,
Whose eyes never saw the streaming red
As a man gave up the ghost,
Whose thought of death at a ripe old age
Was what they feared the most.

He thought of the Staff in the dug-outs deep,
That were hatching the devilish plans
That would cause the scenery round to leap,
And the bath-mats to clap their hands,
That would probably cause the demise of a few
Of the guys who are known as the "Fans."

"Two minutes to go"—along the line
The strongest heart beat fast,
As they waited the roar of the "over" sign,
All was still, the seconds passed;
The dew of death breathed o'er the scene—
Still Ike growled "prunes" to the blast.

Then the blood-red fangs of death shot out
With a crash from the throat of hell,
As if the warring gods in a bout
Were engaged in a struggle fell,
While machine-guns rattled the kettle-drum part
In the "heavies'" earthquake knell.

The murky slime of the shell-holes round
Took on a crimson hue,
As the eager feet of the bombers' ground,
And the angry Stokes bombs flew
In an iron rain, through the rusty wire,
On Fritz and his deadly crew.

A sudden "snip"—and Ike lay still
In the mud and the slime and the gore,
But he muttered "prunes" as the leaden pill
Caused his heart's best blood to pour;
And he passed in a bound to the Shadowland
Where the "four-fives" bark no more.

In the midnight heart of no-man's-land,
Beyond the friendly wire,
In a mud-lined, jam-tinned shell-hole fanned
By Fritz' machine-gun fire;
There lay the ancient Shell-hole Ike,
Dead, on the reddening mire.

D. F. M.



Hogan (relieved in a heavy strafe): "That's me bivvy. If ye get napooed let Cpl. Dunn know where I am."

Joe Thompson's Parcel.

WHEN Joe got his parcel, all neatly sewn up in cotton and addressed in a hand which he did not recognise, he felt that inward glow that comes with the proof that one still has friends.

"People are good," he exulted, as he ripped off the cover and carefully laid it aside for rifle-rag. "Just think of folks sendin' a parcel to a man they ain't even seen. I does me heart good."

"She'll be some parcel, too, I'll bet," he continued in a sort of aside to the boys sitting in the big dug-out affecting an unconcern which they were far from feeling. "Good eats from front to back."

He dug out a pot of jam—damson jam, the label was familiar. Further research disclosed a liberal supply of bully—no, Corned Beef, as Joe was careful to point out—and a large lump of yellow cheese.

When he came across the layer of biscuits—army biscuits, warranted to keep in any climate; to keep, yes, just that—Joe was stricken speechless.

"Rations is up," came a sorrowful voice from the expectant crowd. And even Joe laughed.