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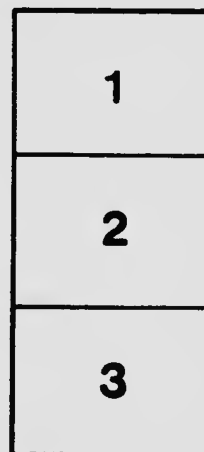

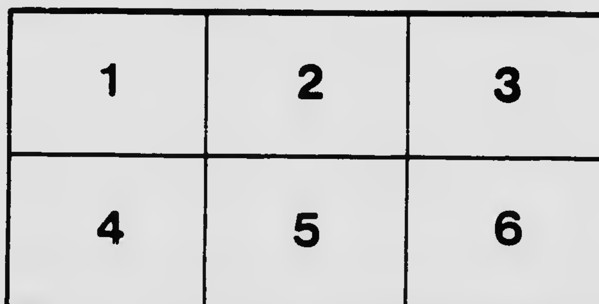

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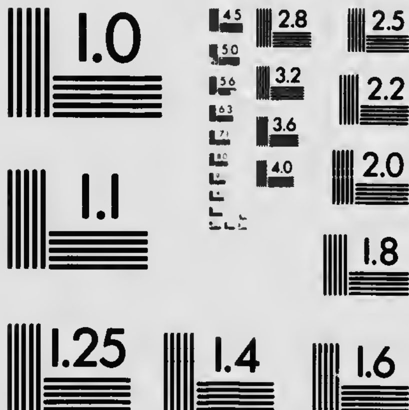

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GOG

The Story of an Officer
and Gentleman

GOG

The Story of an Officer and Gentleman

"Arma virumque cano"

BY

ARTHUR FETTERLESS

AUTHOR OF 'THE POMANDERS,' ETC.

THIRD IMPRESSION

William Briggs
Toronto
William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London
1917

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NOTE.

THIS work is fictional. That remark applies in particular to all characters, and no names of places or numbers of trenches are given to any places or trenches which may have such names or numbers.

I have, however, fought and known what it is to be a "casualty," and am therefore familiar with the operations of war, and life at the front generally. I expect to fight again.

I have sought to fashion a "whole" true picture of war as it works around the individual. To do so, it seemed necessary to include the home as well as the fighting line, and the nurse as well as the soldier. I have tried to give an honest average picture of war conditions—neither better nor worse than the reality. Troubles are borne, as far as I have seen, with marvellous good humour and cheerfulness, but things are at times unquestionably hard, and what actually results in humour for the onlooker is often deeply mingled with pathos.

It may seem, here and there, as if I have left a few edges jagged and incomplete. If it does so appear, that is not because I could not easily have done otherwise, but it is part of an effort to create the atmosphere of war, for there are so many jagged edges there.

A. F.

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PART I.

PEACE IN ARMS

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN OF BUSINESS.

BY his will, Mrs Macrae's husband had appointed three trustees to administer his affairs after his death. Two of these had died, and there remained only a London man of business.

Mrs Macrae had never met him during her husband's life. She had without hesitation taken her husband's assurance that Saunders was "one of the best," and "a very able business man." And it was to him that her husband had looked in the main for the administration of his estate.

But Captain Macrae had parted from Saunders when he was a good deal younger than at the period when Mrs Macrae first met him. That was unfortunate, for when the two did come to meet, they did not as the saying is "hit it off" very satisfactorily, and the relations of Gog's guardian and Gog's mother, not to speak of Gog himself, had become slightly strained. In the end there came to be no transactions between the parties further than was required by the transmitting and acceptance of money, the income of the estate.

Why two people, having in reality the same objects and desires, should come to be at arm's length is just one of the curious anomalies of this queer world, although in reality easily enough understood.

The whole difference arose about that strong-limbed son of a soldier whom the other fellows called Gog.

Gog from his earliest years had his own clearly conceived ideas of his mission in life, and with these ideas his mother, however regretfully in some respects, could not help sympathising. The boy's father had fallen on the Indian frontier, and the boy dreamed of soldiering and service of the Empire as the one thing for a man to do.

Honest John Saunders had no sympathy with these ideas at all. Of course soldiering was all right, and excellent fellows did it, and for people with plenty of money it was no doubt "the thing"; but for a young fellow with an income as much limited as Gog's was by his father's unhappy investments, it would never do at all. He ought manifestly to go into business. And John Saunders, having no son of his own, was quite ready to put the boy there. The ungrateful young scamp would not hear of it, and his mother aided and abetted him in his contumacy. At least old Saunders thought it was contumacy, and growled accordingly.

But just at that point, when matters were reaching a critical stage, war broke out.

From the hour when that happened, the mother read the immediate result in her son's dark eyes. In the first overwhelming rush of enthusiasm, when the declaration of war was announced, he wished to rush off straightway to join the army, somehow, anyhow, the rank didn't matter. But she checked him a little. He was young, and she asked him to wait for his twentieth birthday.

He was impatient. Yet he had agreed to wait because she—the graceful lady in black whom he always expected to understand everything, and who was "Mums"—she asked him.

Whenever the birthday passed, he was to go whatever his guardian might say.

Fortunately, however, difficulties with the guardian were not to arise, for the declaration of war affected John Saunders too; affected him powerfully.

For him the thing was a perfect staggerer. Of course he had listened to people talking about the German scare, and he had heard Lord Roberts, and been rather alarmed for a little while. But rumour and prophecy were stilled for a time, and having joined the Navy League, and sat on platforms where perspiring speakers zealously demanded ten more Dreadnoughts, and given a subscription now and then, he had always gone home comfortably believing that everything would be all right—at least if the people would keep a decent Government in power. In fact the Navy side of the question had, in his mind, rather obscured other issues, and he had tended to become a "Blue Water school" man. The army, in his mind, was not built on a scale for exercise on the Continent.

When the war broke out, and Belgium was invaded, and the Expeditionary Force went across, the whole thing fell upon him literally as a bolt from the blue.

He certainly appeared to go on with business as usual, but for a few days the family were quite concerned about him. He seemed to have grown absent-minded and—lost.

The family wondered if the war would ruin his business. But no, it was not that.

"Is there anything the matter, father?" his daughter asked one day.

"The matter! The matter!" he exclaimed amazedly. Then he broke down in laughter. The naïveness of the question was too much. "My dear, everything's the matter. The whole world's the matter. There's so

much the matter that I'm completely upset. I don't really know, and no one knows what may happen, and I feel as if things I'd been standing on for years were slipping away."

His daughter stared dubiously. She was quite aware of the war, and vaguely speculated as to its consequences, but she was not an authority on political economy or any of the other "onomies" to which men dubiously trust. "Never mind, daddy," she said irrelevantly, "it'll all come right in the end."

"I hope so, my dear. I hope so," he said doubtfully.

With the financial measures of the Government, the declaration of a moratorium, and other public steps, he again began to feel as if the world were solid earth after all. He had not altogether understood everything, but he had battled on with business with sturdy determination. In those first days men were a trifle uncertain about the next step, but unconsciously he had adopted the traditional attitude of stout-hearted John Bull.

In that fashion he got over the worst period, but the changes which had taken place had unquestionably worked also a revolution in his mind.

He had been so immersed in business all these years. Of course, he had loved his family and been proud of them, and all that. But still, business and money had been really the preoccupation. And his family hadn't seemed to trouble about it, so long as they got the money. And everything rolled on in a placid sort of way, with more money always coming in, and really there seemed nothing much else to do. Of course, he actually fulfilled a most useful purpose in the world. He made money in an honest way, and gave employment to quite a number of people, and his purse was often open for a decent cause. And he supported

Church and State, and hardly a person had a word to say against him, while many could say a lot in his favour.

But yet he was a something hard, and the war changed that. For him and for a time the romance and idealism of life had died. Now they were to live again, and he was to live to glory in them.

His daughter actually found him one night reading her childhood's history book about Drake and the Elizabethans. She looked over his shoulder as he read, and he knew she was reading. He closed an inspiring page of Drakean episode and put the book down with a bang. "Od's fish!" he cried in the energy of his enthusiasm, and in a borrowed fragment of epithet, "Money's not everything!"

"Oh, father!" his daughter shouted delightedly.

"I beg pardon, my dear," he said deprecatingly, half retreating from the results of his outburst.

"Oh, please don't!" she screamed gleefully. "I love it! I haven't seen you look so jolly for years."

He endeavoured to proceed with his explanation. "You see, my dear——"

"You needn't, father. I understand perfectly."

"Perhaps you do," he said soberly; "but I haven't had feelings like these for years, and I feel as if I were young and free again, though I'm not. What wouldn't I do to be twenty again instead of sixty?"

"I know," she answered sympathetically. Her father in this aspect was quite a new vision to her, and he was a vision which she instinctively determined from that moment was not to disappear. Indeed it was from that night that the family partnership commenced. Betty had discovered that there were two fathers. There was the stolid, placid, solemn, and genially smiling father of "peace time," and there was the man of

enthusiasm and romance now discovered in war-time. All the enthusiasm in peace-time had seemed to vanish away somewhere in an office in the city. Now the barriers of shyness and propriety and stolidity had been swept aside, and the generous heart had come uppermost again.

It was only a short time after the magic new era in the family had dawned, that a letter from Gog arrived. Betty had never seen Gog, but she had a share in the reply, which was a foregone conclusion under these circumstances.

Gog's letter was a curious example of what the pre-war strained relations could produce:—

"Dear Mr Saunders,—As war has broken out, I think it my duty to join the Army at once. My mother has asked me to write and inform you of my intention."

The last sentence was remarkably honest on Gog's part, though not altogether approved by his mother. Gog was apt to be rather fierce on the subject of his guardian, and he had himself intended to join the Army, and tell "the old blighter" after the event. However, peaceful counsels had fortunately prevailed, though they did not lessen the definiteness of the communication. The letter continued:—

"In view of the opinions previously expressed by you, we do not know what view you may take of this step, but I shall be glad to hear from you if, as my guardian, you desire to say anything in the matter.

"With best wishes from my mother and myself to you all, I remain, yours sincerely,

"Ewan George Macrae."

The "best wishes" at the end had been a sore strain on Gog's spirit, but maternal diplomacy had prevailed.

Also the query as to his guardian's views was not precisely his idea. Nevertheless he got it down, if not with joy, at all events on the principle that it didn't matter much what his guardian said. He, Gog, was bound to go in any event.

But Gog had no means of knowing the change that had come over his guardian. Nor did he know anything about his guardian's family. His main ideas about his guardian were three in number—one, that he had stacks of money; two, a vague impression, unsupported by fact, that he was a stingy old screw; and three, that he was no sportsman, and had the ideas of a pork butcher. What his father had seen in old Saunders, Gog could never comprehend; but the days of comprehension were to come.

When the much-abused old Saunders got the letter, it is not too much to say that he was filled with delight. He showed the letter to his daughter, and chuckled as he did so.

He stood with his legs apart on the rug in front of the fireplace—a slightly corpulent old fellow with hair just showing signs of grey, a resolute, but at the moment almost jolly face, and keen grey eyes—and he muttered grumbling satisfaction.

"The villain!" he muttered ironically. "The incorrigible young scamp! Just look at the way he treats me, his guardian! He doesn't say 'by your leave, sir,' or 'if you approve, sir,' or any polite thing like that. He says, '*I* think it my duty to join the Army. *I* intend to do this and that, and be hanged to you, you old curmudgeon; I'll do as I like,' or words to that effect. Oh, he's a nice polite boy—a gentle youth."

Betty laughed. "I think he's quite right," she said.

"Oh, you do, do you?" he said. "What next, I wonder?"

"Have him up here, father. It's our duty."

"Oh, *more* persons with a duty to perform!" He surveyed his daughter amusedly. There was also a twinkle in her eyes.

"Well, we'll see," he said slowly. "Perhaps I deserve a bit of a turn-up from him, though I'm sure I never meant to be unkind."

His daughter nodded.

"I'll let you see my letter to him, child, if you like, just to convince you that your poor old father is not really such a bad old man."

"I don't need any convincing," she said, "but you can let me see the letter all the same."

He nodded laughingly. "Conviction without certainty, or feminine belief," he murmured protestingly.

She shook her fist at him and went out.

He wrote the letter on these lines:—

"MY DEAR BOY,—I have been delighted to receive your letter of 18th. I could not expect anything else but that you should wish to join the Army, and if you have not already made arrangements, I shall be very pleased to do anything in my power to assist. I think there will be no difficulty in getting you a commission in one of the service battalions of your father's old regiment, and I think possibly that would be the best course to follow. In ordinary course you would have gone to Sandhurst, but I am not sure whether that would best meet your ideas now.

"But I think the best thing to do would be for yourself and your mother to come here and stay with us until the matter is settled. If you will let me know when, we shall be only too pleased to have you.

"Let me say that the coming of war has to a considerable extent modified my ideas concerning you, and I am

now only too ready to assist in any way in my power, and only too proud to hear of your readiness to serve. My one regret is that you are so young for the work, but I would not, under any circumstances, now think of holding you back. In view of what is happening, it may be that I have been at fault in opposing your wishes. If so, I am sorry, but I am sure that your father's son will have no difficulty now in forgiving what was at least meant for the best. I hope we may all understand one another better, and feel as if we were at one in the cause of truth and the Empire.—I remain, your faithful guardian,

JOHN SAUNDERS."

Betty approved the letter. When it reached Gog, there was no doubt of his answer, for his nature was utterly free from sulkiness.

His mother heard him, for he was quite excited. He had been expecting another dose of circumspect advice, and instead, he received his guardian's blessing.

"Whoop!" he yelled. "I say, mums, father was right after all. He must be one of the best. To write like that in answer to my snappy stuff is real sporting."

His mother read it, and she was glad too—in a way.

But it was just a step nearer.

So he answered, and his second letter was a very different kind of letter from his first, but that can be left to imagination.

. . . .

John Saunders cannot figure very greatly in this book, because it is a book of war, in which the leading figures must be the direct fighters and sufferers of war. Nevertheless he too was one of the great army behind the army, and he must be in the book as in life, as part of the background.

There is one thing more about him which ought to be said here, because it happened just then.

It was highly characteristic of his ideas that he did not even mention the matter to his wife or family. After consultation with a slightly dubious partner, he did it.

Betty being a somewhat ubiquitous person, one day ascertained what had happened from a perfectly outside source.

She heard words of commendation flowing from a stranger's lips, a thing which was the natural result of an uncommunicative father, and produced a quite awkward situation, which resulted in the old fellow's not getting the family approval to which he was really entitled.

"Your father has done magnificently, Miss Saunders," the stranger remarked.

"*My* father!" She stared at him.

"Yes."

She hesitated a moment between curiosity and a vaguely-formed desire not to let a stranger know that she didn't know—whatever it was.

The pause was slightly awkward.

"I beg your pardon if I'm making some mistake," he said. "But you *are* the daughter of Mr Saunders of the firm of Saunders & Gale, aren't you?"

She assented. It was his turn to stare. She waited.

Eventually he came to the conclusion that she must know, but thought nothing of it because she thought little of money matters, or they had such a pile that it was nothing to them. "I was merely referring to his paying the salaries during the war of all the members of his staff who were joining the forces."

"Oh, I see," said Betty. She did not say that she did not know. "Yes, it was good of him," she murmured.

When Betty got home, she went straight to her

father. She found him in his favourite attitude, quizzically smiling in front of the fireplace. He gazed at her as she came in, "bursting" with the intelligence.

"Look here, father," she cried, "you're just the limit!"

"The limit!"

"Yes, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Ashamed of myself?"

"Yes, you're letting about half your staff away to join the army, and you're paying their salaries during the war, and you never told us a word about it."

"Well, my dear, haven't I done what you would like?" he queried half defensively.

"Oh yes, of course," she answered warmly. "It was splendid to do it; but just fancy—my having to find it all out from a perfect stranger on the street!"

And so, though he did the right thing, just because he hadn't done it in the way a woman would have liked, poor old Saunders didn't get the warm approbation which he might have had.

However, when Betty's temporary vexation had gone, the act and the glory of it remained. And to a philosophic person (Betty was always only human) Saunders had the Scriptural justification of not letting his left hand know what his right hand did. Whether that rule applies to a man's better half and his family is a matter for argument.

CHAPTER II.

THE KNIGHT.

THE note which Gog sent in reply to his guardian's letter gave the boy's joyful assent to the suggestion that a commission should be obtained for him in his father's regiment, and Saunders set to work straightway to carry out his promise.

The War Office is not an institution which any one would accuse of undue haste, but by the time mother and son arrived in London, the commission was already on the way to being granted. All the blue papers, all the signatures, all the recommendations had been got, and there was but a short time of waiting.

While the period of waiting lasted, the family were not unkind to the coming hero.

There was not even very much strain about their first meeting. The letters which had passed between them had changed the situation, as the war had changed the people. As in hundreds of other cases, international war had produced family peace. The mighty changes of the age had in sweeping measure produced subtle changes in the heart. And while the Hun was chanting hymns of hate, and shouting blatant songs of triumph and adulation, the children of the Hun's greatest foe were loving each other more than ever before. That

is the history of a nation, which trickles through this book in the story of a few individuals.

On their first evening Nora Macrae talked to John Saunders for a long time. Indeed, they sat talking up till two in the morning. It seemed as if that talk would never cease.

They had gone to the library and they sat alone there. And they had the talk for which she had longed for years. Somehow it had always been impossible to have that talk until that time.

And they spoke of so many things that they had never spoken of before, and Mrs Macrae began to understand for the first time what it was that her husband had seen in that silent man who had always before seemed unreasonable and sometimes even formidably grim. And before they parted for the night, Mrs Macrae had given details of her husband's life in India, and how he fought and fell, and details of Gog, and a few minor items about herself; and Saunders had told of his life, and how he came to be trustee, and how the estate and the world went, and had generally expanded in a way that enabled Mrs Macrae to receive much information which she had never had before. All of which was for the best interests of everybody concerned.

While these two elder folk talked, Mrs Saunders took charge of the younger people, including Gog.

That resulted in Gog's being in charge of three ladies, Mrs Saunders, Betty, and Kitty.

Now, it is always a moot question whether masculine twenty will appreciate the other sex or not. Masculine twenty, too, is often at a rather deplorable stage, from which the world is apt to be viewed in a censorious light—the certainty of the censorship arising from the marked satisfaction of the censor with himself.

On the other hand, feminine twenty and sixteen tend to be flapperish, modish, affected, sometimes unduly gushing, and sometimes too maidenly silent.

The extremes on both sides are avoided by training and common-sense.

Amid all these terrifying possibilities, it would almost seem as if Gog had small chance of enjoying himself on that occasion, and on the whole, perhaps, the chance was not great. But against all these things, there is this to remember, even in this age of science—youth, where it is free, and highly-trained, and brought up amid high thought, is romantic; and in youth there still lives, at full press, the love of beauty and the hope of the ideal.

And but few boys born amid those Highland hills and glens, nursed among the heather, cradled with the blood of freedom in their veins, but few, so placed, can miss the glamour of romance and the thought of beauty.

And Betty and Kitty were the daughters of a Devonian father, whom the war had called to think heroic thoughts, and to dream of the tales of Drake and his merry men.

In addition, Gog had a certain slight shyness. He was not absolutely shy, but there was just that slight shyness which seemed to convey something of respect or reverence or courtliness—whatever phase it might represent—for all ladies. Perhaps it was only a habit of manner, but at least the effect was pleasing.

And so, out of all these circumstances and characteristics, I come quite naturally to what ought to be a very charming picture.

Gog had been committed to their charge with full confidence in both parties by the father and guardian.

Old Saunders had smiled genially as he left the

room. "The girls will take care of you," he had said.

And Gog had mumbled something inarticulate. The dinner had been slightly formal.

Now formality vanished.

Mrs Saunders disappeared for a time, making a good-humoured observation as she did so. Her manner to Gog had been kindly from the beginning.

So they were left, these three, and Gog was in the middle of the picture.

Betty was in the arm-chair to the right of the fire-place, and Kitty on the left. Gog, with polite self-repression, was on a comparatively uncomfortable chair in the middle.

Betty and Kitty were rather like each other, excepting mainly that Kitty was a plumper edition, and being younger, was more rushing in her movements.

Gog did not notice all the things about Betty which he insensibly came to notice before he went on his crusade.

He noticed very vividly a pair of silken shoes enclosing two feet which were attached to a very dainty pair of ankles. Around these ankles played the folds of a skirt which called to his mind the idea of gossamer. The colour was pinky—not absolute pink, but some shade or combination. He noticed these alluring trifles, not because he was an artist in such things, or had ever thought much about them, but just because they came directly in his line of vision, when that was turned on the fireplace.

And his gaze was rather apt to be turned on the fire-place, because if he looked in the direction of Betty, it seemed to produce some unexpected result. She had the advantage of him, because she did not require to turn her head to look at him. He was in her line of vision. He

unfortunately had to turn towards her. Unfortunately, because he frequently felt as if he wished to look at her, and there seemed no sufficient excuse for it. And when he did look at her, he always found a pair of hazel eyes regarding him, as if there were a twinkle in them. It wasn't unkindly, but there certainly was a twinkle.

He could not analyse all these sensations, but there certainly was a sort of magnetism about her. He was drawn to look at her, and when he did so he had to look away again. A decidedly perplexing result.

From those hurried glances, however, there was fixed in his mind the impression of a being of great charm and beauty—an impression which was not to die.

Like most others of his age, and of this age, he had "ragged" a bit with girls now and then. But he had never felt exactly what he was feeling just then: he was not uncomfortable; indeed, he felt that he desired at the moment nothing better on earth than to stay where he was, and yet, at the same time, he felt as if he were being a bit of an ass. She was so absolutely "perfect" that — well, no more needs to be said.

Perhaps only youth can have those gorgeous feelings of perfection, but in having them, surely there is immense satisfaction.

In the days after these first hours, he found time to analyse, though, I fear, but feebly, the sources of [illegible] perfection.

His imagination carried away in vivid form the recollection of the dark brownish hair which clung in curling amplitude around the gracefully poised head. Even to his young eyes, the manner of its parting to the side was unusual. Her glorious hair, her hazel eyes, the mouth that was so ready to smile, and smiled so sweetly, and the general impression of healthiness

which her carriage and trim figure produced—perhaps these express the limits of his ideas about her—all these ideas rolled up into the sense of perfection.

And what of the conversation of people, one of whom had rushed almost to adoration in an incredibly short space of time, and the other of whom was not very displeased that *he* was pleased and a little shy.

Remember he was about to go to war, and a hero in her eyes, and she was young too, and her sympathies were quick and generous.

So the conversation was——

No, it is impossible to say it. The conversation did flow like the bubbling brook, nor was it marked by the acme of cleverness. Rather did it struggle along a trifle jagged and jerky, with perhaps a sensation of uneasiness at times.

He talked of his school-days, and of soldiers and the possibilities of war, and she made him talk of himself—a little—occasionally. But he really was not talkative about himself.

And he endeavoured to raise a conversation about things in which he fancied she might be interested. But he did not alight on anything which raised her interest very greatly. Indeed she was more interested in himself at the moment than any other subject. She was perhaps unconsciously congratulating herself on having found a healthy, unspoiled boy. Of course, she was not thinking seriously about him. It was just delightful to have such an one in the house.

But with all the good feeling, the conversation was not brilliant. It was decidedly at its best when he was talking in a simple friendly way about his father, and his hopes of being like his father.

But all that was only the beginning of things. There were days ahead. Days for expeditions to the town;

days for tea in town; evenings for dinner in town; evenings for parties to His Majesty's, where Drake and his merry men played; and days and nights for lots of other things, with between them all, delightful drives in a smoothly-run car that slipped through the streets almost too rapidly.

No wonder if the boy was happy.

And she rejoiced in it all, because apart from anything else, it was her duty to give the boy a good time before he went off to the wars.

The climax of it all came with the uniform. It was not an ordinary uniform, purchased and paid for with one cheque drawn by a needy subaltern.

The Saunders family insisted on having a share in that uniform.

Mrs Macrae, of course, presented the ground-work of the thing, but old Saunders insisted on providing the kilt, and (privately) spoke over the telephone in vigorous tones to the tailor on the necessity of creating a kilt of perfect fit and in complete conformity with regimental usage. Mrs Saunders supplied the sporran. Kitty enjoyed herself over the presentation of a *skean-dhu* and kilt pin, while Betty heeded not her father's warnings as to the uselessness of swords in the campaign, and presented a claymore of high quality and temper, on which his name was prettily engraved.

When the day came on which the whole was to be seen for the first time, Betty took the boy apart. He knew that she was giving him a claymore, but he had not till then exactly understood the romantic quality of her heart, or why she was giving him that particular weapon.

Since he had come, and since she had known that he was to join the Gairloch Highlanders, she had read quite a few pages of history and romance about the

bonnie Prince Charlie, the Highland clans, knighthood, and other subjects, and her still girlish soul was full of it. And she liked him, and he was certainly to go forth as her knight.

That did not mean, of course, that he was to love her. She concluded from the pages of chivalry that a knight might go forth for a lady without being exactly in that position. Of course it might mean that, but she was not just then thinking so much of that. What she wanted was that he really should be sent forth as her knight.

But it was to be a secret. She felt that everybody else would laugh at her if they knew. So she took Gog apart. She thought he would understand.

Gog being quite a plain-sailing, sturdy boy of a healthy kind, was rather startled by her serious and half-shy manner. She wanted so much to do it, and she so wished Gog to understand, but she was so afraid ' mightn't. All that made her nervous.

"Gog, I want to speak to you," she said jerkily.

He noticed the excitement of her manner, and wondered. He said nothing, but nodded.

That only made things more difficult. If people speak, the tone of voice gives a clue to their thoughts. But Scotch silence is impenetrable.

"You see, I'm giving you the sword."

"I know. It's awfully good of you," he said warmly, but not in any romantic way.

Her lips almost quivered. Could he understand? There was no help for it, and she rushed into the explanation hot-foot. "You see, I want to give you it in a particular way, and I want you to come to the boudoir in full uniform, except the sword, before you go to any one else, and then I'll give it to you, and I'll fit it on, and after that you'll go down to the others.

You see?" The last two words were a shaky appeal to his understanding. She had sometimes found him bluntly practical. Would he ever understand romance? Despite everything, you see, she did not know him very well.

Gog, however, understood perfectly. His childhood's training gave him the clue to her ideas, and there was ample romance in his soul. It was only inarticulate.

He accepted the proposal without hesitation. "I'll come," he said quite gravely.

Although he said so little, in his heart he felt as if he were shouting. As he went up the stairs to prepare, he realised a strange medley of feeling. Up till that moment, since he had come to London, all the preparation for war had seemed to be such fun. The seriousness of a great crisis had seemed almost to be forgotten. Now in a single moment, with the quick instinct of a noble girl, she was calling him to remember that he was to go forth as a knight of truth in a great and glorious cause.

At the moment the feeling which she had raised in him was surging and tremendous, and the thoughts she had called forth were never to be forgotten in the roughest, and easy to be remembered in the sternest of the days that were ahead.

And so, as he girded himself in war's array for the first time, there was in his soul humility. Humility for his own littleness and youth in comparison with the great things which he must represent—God and the cause, his own country, the Empire, his clan, last but not least, the magnificent regiment which he was to join, and whose world-wide battle honours sparkled from the silver of the sporran which it would be his glory to wear.

Therefore it happened that he went down to the boudoir with the shy light of humility in his eyes.

She had rehearsed it all within herself before he came, but he rather upset her scheme.

She was standing on the rug in front of the fire, holding the claymore in her hand. She was still slightly excited, wondering if he understood.

When he came in, it was quite clear that he understood only too well, for he did the thing that startled her.

He knelt in front of her as if it had been his duty.

The speech she had been intending to make disappeared somewhere. His action had utterly confused her.

She stammered. "Gog," she said, and hesitated, striving to remember. Then she gave that up. "Oh, I meant to make a speech, Gog," she cried, "but I can't. You know what I mean. That's your sword."

"Claymore," Gog murmured for the honour of Scotland.

The interruption rather helped her. "Claymore, you literal boy," she said, smiling. "And you're to help the oppressed, and fight for the Empire, and succour everybody, and that sort of thing, you know——"

Gog nodded gravely.

"And you're to be *my* knight——"

Gog bowed his head.

"And that's the rose." She pinned a red moss rose in his coat.

Gog's cheeks coloured slightly, and so did hers. Amid the seriousness of the undertaking, she felt an indescribable desire to shake him for some unknown reason, but she resisted the impulse.

When she had completed pinning the rose, she took the claymore again.

"Now I'll fit it on," she said. He stood up, and together they fitted it on.

Strictly, she should have done all the fitting, but everything was new, and there were difficulties, which were pleasantly solved by working more hand in hand.

Perhaps it wasn't all in exact conformity with the laws and practice of chivalry, but at least the idea was sound, and neither of the persons concerned had any fault to find.

And I am whimsical enough to think that the purchase of that claymore was justified, although it was not to be used in war.

. . . .

As for the red moss rose, it was a very beautiful one. Gog wore it when he went downstairs to face the assembled critics. Curiously enough, nobody said anything about it, though it was an odd addition to a Highland uniform, and not at all regimental.

But Gog never wore it again.

He kept it for a few days in a glass of water. After that he pressed and kept it otherwise, and he never lost it.

CHAPTER III.

SETTING FORTH.

THERE is no aspect of war more astounding than that created by a reflection on the extraordinary complexity of interests created by it. Every phase of human life—private and national—is swept within its vortex. A chapter like the last is not in the least surprising, even in a modern war book, because on the first donning of their uniform, there were few men indeed of that gallant band who sprang to arms in the early days who did not experience some deep thrill of emotion, though it might not always have taken the slightly dramatic form which it did in the case of Gog. Yet amid all these generous emotions, the end was the same for all. They were going forward to fight, to suffer, to endure.

And so—Gog.

He was posted to the 11th Battalion of the Gairloch Highlanders, and the orders were to proceed "at once" to join his unit. On application to the Adjutant, "at once" was discovered to mean, immediately after the obtaining of his outfit.

The uniform had come, and with it the one hour of idealism and romance. After that there was the last walk in the park in the full glory of Highland garb—

"Kilted and belted and sporraned and aw,"

—an erect figure, clean-limbed and wholesome, with glittering buttons and flashing sporran and badge. Altogether a "pretty" boy in the old Highland sense; and many on the seats and in the pathway turned to glance at the athletic figure and his companions.

But that was the end of the easy days. There came the last drive, all too rapid, in that swiftly gliding car, "Good-bye," and then he found himself ensconced in the train for the North, feeling a little lonely, and with a sinking sensation somewhere. Not that he was afraid; but he had had such a great time, and—well—nobody could just throw it overboard in a minute (it wouldn't have been very nice if he had done so), and the prospect ahead, however much it was a duty, did not just then loom pleasantly.

Immixed with his recollections of the past few days in London was the knowledge that he was going up to the battalion to be the latest "wart," the genial army—also, perhaps chiefly, navy—way of referring to the latest joined. The phrase is not encouraging. Indeed it seems to carry with it preliminary indications of discouragement, and to hold out a prospect that only after many days of striving and endurance will life become a thing of beauty again.

But in these days things were different, though he did not then know it. "Warts" were joining in such numbers that the "latest" often only held that position for the space of a few days or even hours—a thing which was better for comfort, but doubtful in the matter of discipline.

As the train rolled on, Gog was startled out of his reflections by a glengarry-topped head appearing through the corridor door. The eyes of the head gazed fixedly at his tartan and sporran. After having gazed for some time the owner of the head emerged from the obscurity

of the window-blind, and appeared, also attired in a Gairloch kilt.

Gog silently appraised the appearance of the new-comer, who returned the compliment. Gog guessed that he was much older than himself. He was also taller and thinner. He was very smartly turned out, and had in general an appearance which, on first acquaintance, gave the impression of superciliousness.

The stranger broke the silence. "Oh, I say," he remarked genially, at the same moment adjusting his tie, "I just looked in, because I saw you were in the same regiment, don'tche know——"

Gog nodded placidly.

"And I thought it would be awfully beastly jolly"—more adjustment of tie—"don'tche know, if we happened to be travelling togethah."

Gog was not quite certain what manner of person he had before him, but he assented pleasantly: "Ah! chin, chin!" he said genially, using that non-committal form of greeting by way of encouragement.

The new-comer sat down opposite him in a tentative way. "I'm going up to Delsarre to join the 11th Battalion," he remarked.

"So am I," said Gog.

"Oh, by Jove!" said Forbes Graham, commonly and genially known later as "Fops" Graham, "how doocid nice. We're brothah officers!" At the same moment he held out his hand with a benevolent smile. Gog took it, and they shook hands with mutual sympathy.

Having completed this rite, Fops sat back in his seat and surveyed Gog. After a time he spoke again with the same airy drawl. "You know, I think this is frightful luck meeting you like this, because I thought I had to go the whole beastly way to some

beastly outlandish place near the North Pole all alone by myself." In the altered circumstances he continued with obvious cheerfulness: "But here we are. Two's company, and we can do or die together."

Gog was feeling more cheerful, though a trifle inclined to speculate as to the Highland connection of his companion. As it happened, Fops touched on that subject himself.

"It seems to be a frightful place to go to, this Delsarre," he continued. "I actually had to look up a map to find it. You see I've never been much in the Highlands before, except when I was young. But my mother was a Highland lady; my father was a Scotsman, and I was born in Inverness, though we've always lived in London. So, when all's said and done, I've really not a bad Highland pedigree — don't you think so?"

"Sounds pretty good," said Gog as encouragingly as he could.

Fops was not quite satisfied. "Um," he said. "I suppose you're really 'it,'" he remarked, "and at the back of your heart you think I'm a rank outsider."

"Oh, not at all," said Gog heartily.

"Well, I had doubts about it myself," said Fops; "but my mother said it was the thing, and I liked the kilt no end until I tried it on." He looked at Gog for sympathy. Then he sighed. "Ever since I've had it on in this confounded weather, I've been afraid of developing pneumonia in the legs."

Gog laughed.

"It's all very well to laugh at your time of life," said Fops almost feelingly; "but I'm over thirty, and it's a long time since I went about in shorts."

(Pause, during which Gog endeavoured to look solemnly comprehending.)

"And, 'pon my soul, I think I really deserve sympathy at my time of life, turning out to lead the strenuous life in the coldest sort of garment, just because the wretched Hun happens to have become more than usually offensive."

At the end of this speech Fops adjusted his tie, which was rather a habit of his. Gog was a trifle puzzled, but there was always a gleam of humour in Fops' eyes which somehow appealed to him. This London Highlander seemed to regard all the world, including himself, with amused tolerance.

"And the amount of chaff I've suffered from girls since I donned this costume is perfectly colossal. I ought to have an iron cross for that apart from anything else."

Gog smiled slightly. Fops was certainly not a giant Highlander!

Whatever he was, he chattered on quite gaily. He seemed to be full of friendliness. "And the other day I went out in trews, you know. I knew it wasn't the thing, but I thought I'd have a change, and give the tartan trousers an airing. And I'm hanged if I didn't meet Lucy and her mother. And as it was about the last time, I asked them to go to the theatre with me. And what do ye think Lucy said? Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Fops.

"What d'you think she said?" he repeated gaily.

Gog shook his head dubiously.

"Oh," she said, "not in these trousers, Foppy!" As he said it, Foppy burst into renewed laughter, at the same time making a double switching movement with his right arm as if brushing something away.

After that he relapsed into silence, and nothing further was said for a time. Eventually they came to talk more seriously, and Gog confided that his father

had been in the regiment. Fops, it appeared, had a brother in the army.

As the day wore on, the train whirled through stations packed with soldiers. They stood at York for a time, and there the whole place was seething with armed men, and men with fixed bayonets were acting as sentries. And huge piles of baggage and equipment were loaded on different parts of the platform. And there were trucks standing, weighted with guns and limbers. And everywhere there were the portents of the war, for which they two were hurrying to prepare.

As they rushed northward, the scenes were still the same. As the grey morning broke, while the train toiled slowly up the heights of the Grampians, they saw the sentries at the bridges, for the fiery cross had gone to every end of the island.

At last they came in sight of the hills that overlook the sea, and out upon the ocean there was war too for the dark grey forms of battleships loomed dully through the mists of a stormy day.

The sea tossed and fretted and foamed in angry blackness as they alighted at the station, and rain mingled with hail rattled on the station roof.

It was in fact a fitting commencement and introduction to the great mud war. Their apprenticeship was to begin early and thoroughly.

They had to cross to Delsarre in a boat—the Government boat, if it ran, if not, the ferry-boat.

They emerged from the station into the grim and mud-stricken streets, with their bare and uninviting houses. Their baggage was hurled into a trolley, while the travellers splashed with undue care through the puddles—alas for those prim new spats and spotless hose-tops! The warriors had entered the arena, and

there were no more gilded motor-cars to hie them off superior to all elements.

"Doocid damp, I call it," said Fops.

"It's more than a Scotch mist," said Gog.

Fops glanced at the boy humorously, despite the weather. "Is this what you're accustomed to?" said Fops.

"Sometimes," said Gog placidly.

They trudged on in silence to the pier. At the pier they waited while the mariners argued as to whether the ferry-boat should run. The Government boat was not running.

"Will ye turn the point? Will ye can land? Can ye weather it?" These, and half a dozen other queries slowly propounded to the master, they listened to with painful interest.

Previous inquiries had revealed the fact that there was not a hotel or room in the village which could accommodate them if the boat could not sail. All had been taken by warrior officers of other regiments.

Fops was obviously shivering. Indeed his teeth were chattering with cold. Gog was not much affected, though his feet were cold.

The raging of the waters almost seemed to shake the pier, although it looked as if the storm were abating.

Apparently the mariners thought so. "Aye, aye, sir, we'll tak' ye."

So they got on board a cockle-shell boat with an engine of primitive design, whose works were open to the world and the sea, and they stepped inside a cabin about ten feet square.

The master battened on the hatches, shutting them in the cabin like rats in a trap, and shouted to his crew of two.

"Gurr," went the engines, followed by a succession

of gurring noises, and in a few minutes they were out of the harbour and in the bay. "Sluice, swish," went the water across the bows of the boat. An occasional greater crash of water sent a spouting stream through an aperture in the cabin wall. The first supply caught Fops in the neck, and from that hour Gog began to like him. Fops' language when the water came was vigorous, but he was clearly out to play the game as a sportsman, a thing which counts. That appealed to Gog.

After Fops had got out of the way of the water, he made a remark. "Cheerful and refreshing, isn't it?"

Gog grinned.

"What would mother say?" said Fops. "She told me to be very careful never to get damp."

Gog laughed outright. When all's said and done, if you have a man totally unaccustomed to the kilt, travelling on a wintry night and day about 800 miles, and thereafter being douched, cold-footed, and hungry, with a well-directed stream of icy North Sea water, such a man may be a son of Piccadilly, but when he takes the thing as a joke, while his teeth chatter, he must have possibilities as a soldier.

When the time came for landing the prospect was not inviting. Six feet of sea separated the swaying boat and the jetty. The master mariner gave the directions. "When she heaves to, ye'll jump. When she flies off, ye'll wait."

They waited. "Jump!" said the mariner.

"I said we'd do or die together," said Fops drawlingly The boat was just about to recede.

"Cheer-oh!" said Gog.

"Now for it!" said Fops, and they jumped upon that slippery pier.

Half an hour later they were toasting themselves before the hotel fire.

They took the precautions of a good soldier by having

a hearty meal, and then set out for camp—a march through three miles of Highland bog. At least that was Fops' idea of the prospect.

He was not far wrong, and as the evening was beginning to fall, two pair of weary feet splashed with an oozy sound through the ankle-deep mud of the drive which led to the battalion headquarters.

It was not an inspiring introduction.

Where now the pomp and panoply of arms?

A few recruits, without arms, in blue uniforms, looking dirtier than ever from the effects of unceasingly wet weather, were to be seen moving hither and thither among the barren trees that surrounded the farmhouse. A stray pig was nosing placidly among the mud near the front door. A few hens, partly sheltered by some scrappy bushes, were poised in rear of the pig.

The farmhouse itself was old and partly thatched, and with the dulness of the day looked particularly distressing.

Everything, in fact, seemed maugre and gloomy to two hopeful officers, still painfully endeavouring to step daintily through the mud in a last hope of preserving some semblance of smartness in view of the moment when they might have to face that mighty personage—the colonel, or failing him, at least the adjutant.

As they reached the door, Gog looked at his companion, who returned the glance. Then Gog gazed at the farmhouse, and almost sighed. He had known they were in for hardship, and mud, and danger and all that, but this immediate introduction to the muddiness of war was really rather sudden after London.

It was Fops, the dandy, who bubbled hope. "Never mind, old boy," he said, "this is the real thing. After all, Napoleon's headquarters were sometimes worse than this."

Which was true.

CHAPTER IV.

TO YOUR TENTS.

As it happened, they did not meet the Colonel for a day or two; but they met the Adjutant, and rapidly learned that life under army conditions was to be no time of rest.

The Adjutant was strongly practical. He appeared to be busy. Anything more unlike the stage and "la-di-da" soldier could not have been conceived.

He spoke with precision and decision. "How d'ye do?" shaking hands; "I'm glad to see you. Have you got all your kit? It's coming up with the transport, is it? Very well. The tent for both of you is No. 4. Your servant's Macduff. You'd better get a hold of him before it's dark and get your things arranged, otherwise you'll have trouble."

A little awed, they bowed respectfully.

"You'll get your orders some time in the evening, but anyhow there'll be running drill at half-past six to-morrow. In the meantime you can run in shorts or your kilt, or what you please. I think that's every-thing. Dinner's at eight, here in the farmhouse." He smiled slightly, and left them.

They looked at each other. "I feel a trifle limp," said Fops.

Gog nodded. He understood, because he had felt that

too at first. But a different sensation was beginning to grow. It was as if he had suddenly been braced up. It was the feeling that after all they were really in for it, and no mistake. Hardship and endurance and all the rest were to be called into play as never before. There was something about the Adjutant's manner which suggested that things were to be given them to do as men—flung at them if you will—and they were to be left to do them in small things and great as soldiers.

A soldier appeared. He saluted in a way which might be described as generally. "I'm Macduff, sir," he said. "And yer tent's number fower. The Adjutant sent me to gie a han'."

Macduff had a shock of red hair, of a length not in accordance with army regulations. He also had a genial grin on his face, and appeared to view the newly-arrived officers with a mixture of awe and hesitating friendliness. Indeed, although his new masters did not know it, Macduff had been pitched into the position of officer's servant at alarmingly short notice. To give his own description to another servant, whom he consulted from time to time: "I wasna that right shooar just where I was, sae tae speak, niver havin' had tae hanle a thing like that afore. But the officer laddies, they wis gey an' pleasant aboot it aw."

As it chanced, the "officer laddies" were just about as uncertain as Macduff. It was Fops who spoke first. "Lead on, Macduff," a saying which cast a smile over the faces of some other subalterns waiting near, as also over Gog's; but the classic reference was quite lost upon Macduff, who answered promptly, "Aye, aye, sir."

As he led the way, Macduff made observations which also were not contemplated in the King's Regulations; but perhaps the fact that he had at one time been con-

nected with a country hotel might explain his communicativeness. "Yer tent's up in the field on the richt," he said. "There's a pond o' rain water in the bottom o' the field, and the rest o' the field's gey boggy, but yer tent's no in the pond just yet. Ye're no far off the pond, but if the rain continues, I daresay they'll shift the tents."

"That's cheerful," said Fops satirically.

Satire was lost on Macduff. "Oh, it's quite cheerful at times, when the sun comes oot, but I wouldna have said it was jist cheerful the noo. Hooever—" Macduff appeared to think there was no accounting for tastes.

He continued his observations. "There's a wooden floor in the bottom o' the officers' tents, so ye're off the grun', and maybe no' that bad, but the recruits that slept up in the tents on the side o' the hill—my, it was fearsome!" As he spoke, Macduff turned his face to them solemnly to emphasise his remarks. "They were aw sleepin' in their tents the other night jist on the grun' on their waterproof sheets, and ma word, if the water didna break oot o' a burn, and come pourin' doon the hillside richt thro' the tents, and it swept every man o' them oot of his bed. And" (the impressiveness of that "and" in Macduff's speech was great. He used it unconsciously with intensive force) "up they got, rushin' aboot wi' their wet blankets, and haudin' aw their things oot o' the water. And" (again) "there was a hullabub! Ye could hear the noise for miles round. And nae wunner!"

"D'you mean to say men slept in tents up on that hillside?" Fops waved his stick vaguely in the direction of a hill.

"Aye, certainly," said Macduff; "ye'll see the tents still standin' when we turn oot o' the avenue. But the men are gone. They put that company aw into the

barn for the time. . . . But the officers are still in the tents, and I wouldna say but what they might get a dose o' water from the burn one o' these days too."

Fops glanced humorously at Gog. "You think it might do us good, eh?" he murmured to Macduff.

"Oh, na, na, sir! Na! na!" Macduff turned towards them as he spoke, and he was obviously sincere. He was merely giving facts as men of his type will do, without any thought of *arrière pensée.*

As Macduff spoke the last words, they turned out of the avenue, and came in view of the field, and the tents. As Macduff had said, a pond of muddy water lay stagnant at the foot of the field. The tents ranged above it, stood out sodden and dismal above a surrounding stagnum of mud varied with occasional patches of green. Indeed the sight was bleak and not inviting.

Macduff still led on, and they splashed forwards along a muddy cart-road, and then through the field, till they came to No. 4. Macduff raised the flaps of the tent and waved them majestically within.

They stood outside the tent. Fops gazed at Gog, a gaze which he returned. Then suddenly they burst into a roar of laughter. The whole thing was so utterly unexpected, and unlike their dreams. As for its very dreadful soddenness, there was no use taking it any other way.

While Macduff stood staring, and the two officers stood laughing, a head appeared through the door of the next tent, followed by its owner.

Seeing the new-comers he stopped, and then walked towards them. "Hello," he remarked, "are you Graham and Macrae?"

They assented.

"Oh, very pleased to see you," he said amusedly,

shaking hands. "You're to be attached to my company, so that we'll likely see a lot of one another." As he spoke, Captain Seagrim glanced at them both quite keenly.

"Do our best," murmured Gog modestly.

"I'm sure," said the captain cordially. He was a little, sturdy man of the cool caustic type, and no bad soldier, though he was not the great captain whom Gog was one day to serve under. He was one of the old war-dogs whom the new battalion had welcomed to make things go.

"Cheery place, this!" he remarked sarcastically. "You'll find your tent most comfortable—I hope! The heating system is rather dependent on yourself, but there's plenty of water always turned on—dew from the mountains, one might say. No Turkish baths, but plenty of mud baths! The sanitary system—quite perfect in terms of the Field Service Pocket-Book, though, if you're accustomed to luxury, you may find it primitive and chilly." As he finished, Seagrim glanced at them inquiringly.

"I suppose it'll harden us up," remarked Gog with hopeful enthusiasm.

Seagrim smiled. "Well, I'm glad to see somebody's arrived full of ideals and enthusiasm," he observed, "because we need 'em all. Nobody needs to come here unless they've got the temperament of Mark Tapley." He paused an instant, then continued. "Well, cheer-oh. See and get settled in comfortably, and you'd better get a patent stove to heat the tent and dry things, if you haven't got one. If I can do anything to help, ask me. Bye, bye, just now." With that, Seagrim moved off towards the officers' mess.

They were left with Macduff, whose brawny arms and mighty hands were busy for some hours un-

loosening straps and unrolling beds, &c. As the evening crept on, folding the hills and fields in darkness, the work had to be continued by candle-light, which did not render matters easier.

Outside the tent, the wind howled and the rain drizzled with mournful insistence.

At eight o'clock the two quitted the tent for their first mess-dinner.

Was there ever a "latest wart" who attended a first mess-dinner without vivid feelings of some kind? I doubt it.

But the amazingly practical nature of the 11th Gairloch mess under war conditions was inimical to awe. In a way, it was trying to the new-comer. There were about twenty-five officers present, but there was little talk. The atmosphere seemed unfavourable for talk.

Across the water the German arms were achieving victories. News was scarce, and conversation stilted on that subject. Outside, the wind howled, and rain pattered on the windows of the farmhouse. That was not encouraging. Within, the mess-room was lit with lamps not too bright. The tables were of simple plank boarding, and the plates were tin and pewter or plain delf.

As Gog sat humbly in the lowest seat, the scene called curiously to his mind the recollection of a picture of knights of old or friars banqueting in the hardy old days and in the rough old way. And the thought of knighthood brought a gleam of happiness to his state, as that idea brought to his mind the recollection of Betty and his own knighthood.

And the thought was not unhappy, for they were a lusty crowd who sat around the table. They said little, but they ate as men who were hungry; not flimsy knights, but flesh and blood men of war who had to eat to fight. They were, in truth, in the position of the

Esquimaux of the Arctic, who have to eat because of the excessive cold. The tent-life under service conditions had affected them similarly, and in the weird way of war, Gog saw for the first time one of its most curious effects—the grant of appetite which in actual truth makes men eat vigorously to live, and not live as epicures to eat. It was all done gracefully through four courses, but there was no misunderstanding the disappearance of those Government rations—I say deliberately, Government rations. There were, of course, a few additions, but small in relation to the whole.

And I say, further, never in its most dignified days did the 11th Battalion show a better spirit than in the days when it lived hard and plain for the country's cause. In regard of sheer lack of luxury, perhaps it was never so great as in those first days.

When the senior officer present rose from dinner the remainder rose, and subsequently went out at their convenience.

Shortly after they filed out of the house in twos and threes, and Gog and his companion blundered and splashed their way through the darkness to their tent.

Arrived there, Fops sat on his camp-bed and stared at Gog, who followed his example. Finally Fops spoke. They were becoming quite intimate by this time. "Well, old bird," said Fops, "what do you think of it all?"

"Ripping," said Gog.

"Oh, you do!" said Fops musingly.

"Yes," Gog continued. "I never thought we'd be pitched into it like this. But it really is going to be rough and hard, and not playing soldiers."

"Um," said Fops. "That's all right for a spring chicken like you, but for me"—he paused meditatively. "I was just thinking that on a night like this at home, I have a bed with a spring mattress, the downiest of pillows,

the loveliest of blankets, with beautiful silky things about it, and a hot-water bottle if wanted. But here," —Fops waved his hand expressively while his face was a study—"I've to sleep on a stony bed, with army blankets, and I've to get up at six o'clock in the morning! Oh, ye gods and little fishes!" Fops frequently derived consolation from that observation.

Gog grinned. He was beginning to understand Fops' little ways. He flung a brand-new mess tin at the "grouser."

. . . .

The wind howled all night and the rain drizzled on the tent without ceasing, but they slept like peaceful babes.

They did not wake until Macduff had opened the tent flaps and bawled loudly, "It's past the hour, sir, it's past the hour. It's dry the day, and ye've got tae run."

There were groans of dismay from Fops, and shivers from Gog as his pyjama-clad form emerged from the covering blankets. "Some cold!" he muttered as he hastily dragged on the foundation articles of apparel.

"Doocid cold," said Fops to Macduff.

"Aye," said Macduff, "but the run'll warm ye up;" a statement which appeared to produce further groans from Fops.

Gog was uncertain of the uniform to be worn. He put his head out of the tent, and saw some other models clad in kilts and khaki shirts, and he donned the like.

"Are you going out in that?" said Fops.

Gog assented.

"Well, by Jupiter," said Fops, "I'm going to have a jacket on anyway." And he did.

Together they ran, or rather slippered across to the parade-ground, which, for that company, was a part of the cart-road.

There they found a motley host—the weird nucleus of a company of Britain's army, some kilted, some tartan-trewed, some in murky blue, some with caps, some without, some with jackets, some without—altogether a sight to attract the scorn of any member of the Prussian Guard, but to a comprehending Britisher a sight for wonder and congratulation.

Immediately after Gog and his companion came on parade Captain Seagrim appeared. Sergeants were busy calling rolls of platoons and numbering off. "Wan, twa, three, fower," &c., ran along the line. "Form fours! Re-form two deep! 'Shun! Stan' at ease!"

When all these preliminaries were accomplished, and four skeleton platoons, each about twenty strong, were drawn up in something like order, the company commander called his officers and gave them their orders. "Mr Forbes Graham, you'll take No. 1 platoon, Mr Macrae No. 2, Mr Shaw No. 3, and Mr Fergusson No. 4. Don't expect too much of the men to begin with, but on the other hand don't let them slack about. With the roads in the mess they are you can't expect them to keep their ranks as on a barrack square, but see that they keep decent order, cover off in their fours, and run properly in step. That's all."

A moment later they were in front of their platoons, fours had been formed, and they were moving off at the quick march. Three minutes later they were doubling steadily along the roads, splashing through puddles, springing over rivulets that crossed the track, and sloshing grimly through water-laden soil.

Half an hour later they were back on the parade-ground, the officers had fallen out, and the men were dismissed.

So ended Gog's first parade, the precursor of many

that were like it, part of the strange apprenticeship which thousands went through in preparing for the great war. Perhaps it was not a bad apprenticeship, for familiarity with mud came early—a valuable thing in its way, for the recruits trained among the bogs of Delsarre were not likely to be greatly shaken by the mud flats of Flanders, except that the Delsarre bogs were much more inspiring and sweet-scented.

Of course the men "groused." Small wonder if they did; and in any event is "grousing" not laid down in Magna Charta or some place as an immemorial right of the British soldier? Anyhow, no intelligent officer regards that form of recreation as inimical to the army. The cessation of grousing would be a sign of decadence.

. . . .

Yet while others groused, Gog was too fresh and hopeful even for that. A short note to Betty at this time reveals something of his thoughts. He had considerable doubts about the commencement of that letter, but he eventually achieved the opening phrase thus:—

"Dear Betty." That was a compromise between other possible openings, such as "Dear Miss Saunders, Dearest Miss Saunders, My dear Miss Saunders, My dear Betty, &c., &c."

Having accomplished the first words, the rest flowed on without too much difficulty:—"You will have seen my letter last night to mother, and you will have guessed that I am as happy here as I can be"—considerable pondering here, resulting in this—"away from London." He meditated here as to whether he should put "and you," but decided in favour of discretion. "We had a rough journey here from London, but it was really rather good fun, and with Forbes Graham

(mentioned in Mums' letter) we got through quite gaily. We are living in tents, surrounded by mud and water. Last night we had a very stormy night of wind and rain, but we slept through it all, and I woke feeling as fresh as possible. We are apparently going to be worked very hard, but it's nearly all outdoor stuff, and I expect we'll be fit for anything in a very short time. As it is I never felt better in my life. We were all at running drill at half-past six this morning (I thought of you snoozing comfortably till nine !), and had a jolly muck-about through the mud. Since then have been doing odd stunts all day till half-past four.

"I'm glad I've got Fops (Forbes Graham) in my tent. He doesn't look a bit strong, but he's an awfully decent sort.

"I hope everybody with you is as well and happy as can be.

"My best regards to all.—Salaams from your knight,

"Gog."

The last phrase, "your knight," was put down after much thought.

When Betty got the letter she was not displeased.

CHAPTER V.

DAY TO DAY.

LIFE in the new army was varied chiefly by climatic conditions. Otherwise the programme of work was apt to show great similarity. The similarity of the days indeed reminds one of the case of a certain poor fellow in hospital who found the life there rather dull, and remarked that he didn't like it, because "one day was just the forerunner of the next."

Yet, in Gog's and his fellow-officers' lives, every day had also its own little complications.

There was, for instance, the case of Private Macduff, "wi' the red hair," so called by the sergeant, because there were two Macduffs in the platoon. Macduff was, of course, none other than the officers' servant, he having to come on parade because, in the new army, no recruits were exempted from parade on such trifling grounds as being "an officer's servant." They did indeed escape running-drill in the morning, but nothing else.

Private Macduff happened to be in Gog's platoon, and came on parade with the red hair not shortened in terms of the King's Regulations. It was Gog's duty to inspect the platoon and deal with such matters.

When he came to Macduff, he hesitated. It was clearly his duty, in stern tones, to order a hair-cut, but on the other hand, Macduff was a willing servant, and

observed his master with kindly regard. So the question trickled through Gog's mind. "To be or not to be—to order a hair-cut and disgrace Macduff, or to pass on, ignoring the King's Regulations?" Certainly Macduff would feel disgraced.

Gog passed on, and the brawny red-haired Highlander stood to attention more firmly, because "Maister" Macrae had passed.

But as Gog passed on, he noticed other long-haired Highlanders. So he turned to the sergeant. "A number of these men ought to have their hair cut."

"Aye, sir; but the village is out o' bounds, and there's nae barber." So spoke Sergeant M'Manus.

Gog recoiled. One of the unexpected problems of the new army had arisen.

The sergeant waited placidly for a decision. Gog glanced in the direction of Captain Seagrim, but he was engaged. Nevertheless Gog had a suspicion that that gallant commander was perfectly aware of the difficulty.

M'Manus, a dug-out sergeant, with a strong Scotch accent, six feet high, broad in proportion, and stentor-voiced, made another remark. "There's a man in the company who *could* barber, but he hasna got a clipper."

"Tell him to buy a clipper in the village," said Gog, "and barber the platoon."

Captain Seagrim chuckled as he heard the last remark. He approached Gog, looking at him kindly. "It's a good way out of a difficulty," he said, "to put the thing right yourself, but if you're going to do much of that, it seems to me that with this new army your hand'll never be out of your pocket—see?"

Gog nodded.

"I won't interfere this time," continued Seagrim, "but

another time, while you're new to things, better come to me."

Gog reddened slightly. Seagrim glanced at him. "I'm not making a complaint," he added. "Only too glad to find a subaltern with the courage and enthusiasm to take a short cut."

"Thanks, sir," said Gog.

"Not at all," murmured Seagrim as he strolled away. But of such were the methods by which he implanted wisdom and learning in the hearts of those who were willing.

. . . .

Complications also arose from the conditions of life. These were so extraordinary at times that the wonder is that the new army was ever trained.

After the 11th Battalion had retired from tents under stress of weather, two companies went into a brick building; one company, like Cromwell's Ironsides, billeted in a church, which a certain body of Christians known as the United Presbyterians had evacuated some time before as the result of legal proceedings at the instance of another body of Christians commonly known in Scotland as the "Wee Frees"; while Gog's company billeted in the loft of a barn.

The company in the church filled every pew and corner, and even overflowed into the pulpit; in that last spot Private M'Toucan found a resting-place by curling himself in circular fashion round the base of the interior of the pulpit. His head rested upon the minister's hassock, while his feet projected into the spiral staircase leading to that throne of grace. If the pulpit door was shut (as it frequently was by malevolent spirits) Private M'Toucan was rather in a fix. His own ideas on the subject were clearly expressed. "Anythin's a gift after thae watery tents

but, ma conscience, it's no' richt to keep a man wha's got tae stan' tae attention in the mornin' crinkled up aw nicht like a curly baboon."

Similar views were expressed by other members of that company who slept on the pews and under the pews, and hung in various attitudes around the gallery.

While the opinions that were expressed about the draughtiness of that church were, it is certain, never bettered at any time by its natural congregation.

Nevertheless the company throve.

Captain Seagrim's company had other difficulties. In the lofts of the barn they lay side by side, and almost heel to heel, and I think, in those early days, there was less cubic space per man than is provided by the King's Regulations.

It was a comical place, that barn. The barn was a large one with a considerable main loft, and several smaller lofts all curiously united by devious and rickety wooden stairs. Around the top ran a narrow wooden gallery, which looked down upon a covered stone courtyard, which formed the company parade-ground on wet days. Behind the courtyard were pens for animals with, in front, three large spaces enclosed by wooden railings and entered by wooden gates. These spaces seemed to be an early attempt at the modern idea for a zoo, allowing as they did considerable space for the animals to rove about. And the animals did rove.

The floors of these spaces were covered with straw, and enclosed within them was generally to be found, in one a few pigs, a few cows in the next, and an odd stirk or two in the third.

Now these animals took the greatest interest in the making of the new army, while it may truthfully be said that the new army took an affectionate interest in them.

Under these conditions the task of Sergeant M'Manus and others like him was not rendered easy.

Stirks Nos. I., II., and III. would gaze placidly and approvingly over the railing of the central pen at various squads seriously occupied in acquiring the art of handling arms. Sergeant M'Manus (ex-Black Watch) would give the command, "Orr-durr—Ar-rms!" Or Sergeant Grillem (ex-Grenadier Guard, hired by the 11th Battalion for his skill in these matters) would give "Awda—Aips!" Sergeant M'Dowall (ex-Cameron Highlander, and very "Hielant" at that) dealt with the same theme as "Or-turr—Up!" All these varieties of command (one of the perplexities of a new army dependent on sergeants drawn from all sources) were given with the same intention, and in the hope of producing the same result, which, with limitations, they usually did. But an unexpected result arose from that barn parade-ground.

In their enthusiasm to bring these rifles down from their shoulders to the "order" (for the uninitiated, that is with the butt on the ground and the rifle perpendicular at the side), those recruits occasionally brought the butts of the rifles down upon the stone floor with a crash. They were immediately reprimanded by the sergeants, but the reprimand had no effect on the commando of stirks in the pen behind.

Stirks I., II., and III. had been at attention with their noses over the wooden railing in placid enjoyment of the scene. With the crash of arms, they turned in a body and retired in extended order to the back of the pen, executing various rear-kicking movements as they went. A bull in a close pen behind them bellowed low and ominously.

After a time the stirks advanced again, only to retire again as circumstances called for action.

Now all that was disconcerting to a man like Private Buttery, who was naturally attracted by the humour of a situation. Having got his rifle down, he felt himself entitled to have a look round at the merry stirks, and he craned his head accordingly.

That action was in the eye of Sergeant M'Manus a deliberate breach of discipline, not to say an injury, to his martial soul, and accordingly his voice echoed and thundered through the barn. "Private Buttery, eyes front!" Private Buttery rapidly fronts, endeavouring to look as if he had not so much as moved his head, at the same time removing with all speed every trace of merriment from his face, for in all these things the eye of M'Manus is upon him—the eye of a disciplinarian. M'Manus continues, "And if I catch you turnin' yer head again so much as a hair's-breadth, I'll keep ye standin' at attention all day and all night with yer eyes glued on yin spot on the wa' like a ship's barnacle."

The whole platoon stand as if petrified by this awful threat, and so the work went on, stirks and other discouragements notwithstanding. Gog often heard Sergeant M'Manus make the most awful threats, but later on, thinking things over, he could scarcely recollect an instance of one of these threats being carried out. Nevertheless, did they not produce awe and discipline?

But these were not the only methods employed by M'Manus for the making of the army. In all, perhaps he had four ways—as above, dire threat, sometimes biting sarcasm, occasionally grim humour, and now and then a sort of appeal to the men's feelings. All these he blended with remarkable skill for the good of Gog's platoon.

One instance more of his manner will suffice. It was the case of a pig of considerable dimensions (I do not

know if the Government had at that period issued economic regulations as to fattening of pigs until they attained the 40-stone standard, but at least this pig was well on the way to that achievement). Anyhow the animal escaped through the pen railings while squad drill was proceeding. His original movements were not unfavourable from his point of view, because he moved towards the outside yard in rear of the squads. He attracted attention, but nothing unseemly occurred then. It was on reaching the yard that in an evil moment he fell into the company of three unemployed recruits of a sporting character, who immediately set upon him to make life unpleasant. Having a strong desire to escape these tormentors, this pig retreated at great speed towards the parade-ground where squad drill was proceeding. He found himself in a perfect maze of squads, enfiladed, taken in rear, and faced by squads. What was exactly in the pig's mind is unknown, but he apparently decided that the proper tactics in the circumstances was a charge, which he executed with great bravery against the centre of No. 2 platoon. Private Murray was standing at attention in a rather cramped way at the moment of the charge. The appearance of the pig had created the possibilities of a smile on his face, but the quadruped's assault was so rapidly executed that the incipient smile was still growing when he received the impact of 40 stone on his right leg.

Private Murray sat down hurriedly "at ease" upon the ground in a manner not provided by the King's Regulations. The rear rank of the squad "made way" and so escaped destruction.

The pig romped home an easy winner.

But that was not good enough for Sergeant M'Manus. He eyed Private Murray severely as he rose; he also

cast a withering glance on the remainder of the platoon. He did not so much as look at the other squads whose sergeants had not troubled to check them in their laughter.

"In ma battalion, M'Manus said, "if a thing like that had happened, not a man would have moved—neither his ar-rms nor his legs, nor nuthin'—not a muscle, not an eyelid! . . . But you,"—he gazed at them with comprehensive contempt,—"ye ha na the idea o' discipline, and yer brains, if ye have any, are mair flipperty than a fishwife's!"

Having expressed his opinion of the squad's capacity, M'Manus eyed them for a little and then spoke more appealingly. "And hoo dae ye expec' to stand afore the Gairmans, Private Murray, if ye canna bear the brunt o' a gruntin' pig?"

Serjeant M'Manus had to speak on these lines at times, because the number of distractions afforded by that parade-ground were too numerous. Indeed that stern soldier preferred the dry days when the parades could be taken in the open, and the wandering minds of his squad had the opportunity of pure military development.

So from day to day the work rolled on, with running drill, squad drill, drill with arms, occasional lectures on military subjects, short route-marches, and last but not least, gymnastic exercises, or "physical jerks," which had also come to be known as "Salome" drill.

That last was a popular form of military work. The title of "Salome" drill arose from the doing of gymnastic exercises in the kilt. The nickname originally came from the officers, who drilled with the men under the gymnastic instructors. The sight of Private Buttery doing "leg raising sideways," and subsequently "three jumps turning in mid-air, and falling on the tiptoes,"

all in the kilt, struck some one as so airy and fairy a combination that recollections of far other scenes were stirred, and hence the name.

Gog, of course, and 'Pops' and twenty others like them, were (difficult though it may sound) also doing their three jumps, turning in mid-air, at the same time waving their arms heavenwards as well as many other curious evolutions, which the thoughtfulness of the War Office has, through gymnastic instructors, provided for the welfare of subalterns.

Apart from the interest of the War Office, there were naturally others, among [illegible] the Colonel, who were interested in their welfare, and in connection with that matter there arose a storm among the "subs" about this time. [illegible] chapter has dealt mainly with the training of the men, but the officers were also being [illegible] trained day by day.

Colonel Graeme, however, was not satisfied with the martial bearing [illegible] the commands of his officers. So the order went forth that all junior officers, without [illegible] previous war service should go on the recruit square under a sergeant [illegible]

Then the [illegible] arose, and there were grim thoughts in the minds of subaltern officers. Had they not been in the O.T.C.? Had they not been in the Territorial Force? Had they not done many and wonderful things which only righteous subalterns would have [illegible]?

[illegible] they thought, and the rumours of their thoughts reached the Colonel's ears.

But he was adamant. He was also a man of few but vigorous words, and the fact that they were indignant was not altogether displeasing. It was not undesirable that the officers of the Gairloch Highlanders should take a pride in themselves, but as for their not going

on the recruit square—"Gadzooks, i' faith, and by my halidome!" said the Colonel, or other stronger words to that effect.

So the tumult subsided, and the junior officers went upon the recruit square under a sergeant-major, and did all the things that Privates Buttery and M'Toucan did; they further learned to detail in words all the things that Privates Buttery and M'Toucan did, in order that, as officers, they might be able to explain to these privates the error of their ways when they went wrong; they further did and learned many other things, all for the space of about two months.

So did Gog and Fops and many another learn discipline and hardness, and Fops at the end of these months was jumping upwards in the Salome whirl with a lithe movement in complete contrast with his original more frog-like ascent.

Seriously, let there be no mistake about it. The greater control of body indicated by that lithe ascent was the silent evidence of really solid work, of which the gymnastic exercise was merely one phase.

CHAPTER VI.

LETTERS.

WHILE much physical work was being done in the battalion, much discipline of the mind and soul of the subalterns was also proceeding. In that, Gog and Fops had their share, but their discipline proceeded from more sources than the army. Living in the same tent, their action and reaction on one another, united with the existence in their souls of prior interests, combined to preserve a few softer thoughts.

Before they quitted the tent, it may be well to say a word on that.

This aspect of matters arose through Gog's unexpected entrance to the tent on a stormy afternoon.

Fops was seated on his camp-bed. A Primus stove was burning fiercely in front of him, against which he was apparently endeavouring to dry a pair of soaking brogues. But that was not his only interest at the moment.

On the wooden box which stood in the centre of the tent he had erected a photograph, on which he was gazing, at the same time crooning to himself in a mournfully pathetic voice—

"Every morn I bring thee flowers,
Every afternoon it's chocs,
Every eve I stand the supper,
Soon I'll have to buy your bally frocks."

As Gog appeared, Fops looked up, but he did not discontinue his occupation. He was not singing apparently with any feeling of regret, but merely in a meditative way.

Gog stared at the photograph.

Fops stared at him, and then smiled. "What d'ye think of her?" he said.

Gog had a vague feeling that he was gazing on Fops' most adored, and he did his best, though he really felt no great enthusiasm. She was pretty, but not—not his taste, at all events.

"Awfully pretty," he said almost too eagerly.

But Fops was a man of the world in his way, and he understood. "Just what I think myself," he said. "Nice face, don'che know, but nothing behind it—— Now—" Fops groped in a small box, "what about this?" He produced another photograph. "Another friend of mine," he explained placidly.

Gog woke to the true nature of the situation, while he gazed on the next and on several more in succession. Fops explained. "I was feeling a little lonesome, and I thought I'd just turn out my picture gallery. I used to know so many girls, and in this muddy spot we have—none."

"They're all friends of mine," he remarked, expansively waving his hand to the photographs. "And I'm in a frightful difficulty, you know, about it all," he continued in his usual wearied tones, of which all the gymnastic exercises never quite deprived him. "You see, I've thought seriously at different times of taking each of these girls seriously; but somehow—well, don't you see, I never did, and here I am leading this demned amphibious life without the remotest possibility of seeing any of them,—and—well, where am I?"

Gog smiled upon him. The two were totally unlike,

and yet they were good friends, and fighting for the same cause.

"I expect you know perfectly well where you are," said Gog, "if you'd only make up your mind."

"Ah, yes," said Fops; but there—*voilà la question*, as our French allies say. My mind has always been in a state of uncertainty. I think of Kate's beautiful hair, but then I remember Mary's lovely eyes; and while I'm on that, Jean has beautiful eyes too; and again, Ethel has a sweet, sweet way. Ah!" Fops sighed. His sigh seemed to imply that there was a great gulf fixed between himself and that "sweet way," a gulf unhappily imposed by service conditions.

There was nothing else for it under these circumstances. When Fops was in one of these sentimental moods, Gog always flung things at him. At the same time, he accompanied an air-filled cushion with advice. "Don't be an ass, Fops!" he exclaimed vigorously. So did youthful vigour treat idle sentiment.

Nevertheless that vagrant sentiment was not without its influence on Gog. Healthy youth, when kept in absolutely first-class condition by constant exercise and outdoor life, is apt to be contemptuous of sentiment and forgetful of feeling. It is certain that the photographs and sayings of Fops were an antidote to forgetfulness. Certainly Fops' photographs inspired one letter by Gog. His letter was in answer to Betty's:—

"DEAR GOG,—It is lovely of you to write us so often and tell us all about your doings. We are all so interested i[illegible]ything you do and all the things you are learnin[illegible] only wish we could come and see you and the battalion, but the place is such a long distance away and does sound rather awful with the mud and all that, and I don't know how we'd get about in skirts! But

surely you'll get leave sometime at Christmas or thereabout and come and see us again, because I've really missed my cavalier since you went away. We had such jolly times going to all the things when you were here.

"Father is frightfully busy nowadays, and we hardly see anything of him. He's connected with various committees and things relating to the war, and he really does a frightful lot.

"I feel quite sorry for him, and I'm really beginning to feel ashamed of doing nothing (but knitting socks) myself. I've asked father to get something for me to do, but he hasn't done anything so far. I really hope he will.

"Your mother left us last week. I'm so sorry she's gone, because we all got on so well together, and I think she was quite happy too here—at least, as happy as she could be without you.

"I haven't anything else to say just now. I almost envy you your work, although I know it's hard; but you always seem to enjoy it. I really must get some work to do, because I feel so 'frittery.'

"Take care of yourself.—Bye-bye, yours very sincerely,

BETTY."

When Gog received that letter it brought him back again, as her letters always did, to the recollection of her own charming self, and while Fops dreamed vaguely of his lady friends, Gog dreamed of the perfections of but one. Whether for love or war, he belonged to his type—that of the men of perfectly direct and simple minds, whose purposes are simple and whose methods are direct.

The reply to her letter contained the inspiration of Fops. Gog usually replied with a measure of prompt-

ness, and she also wrote regularly. The initial phrasing never varied.

"DEAR BETTY,—Thanks so much for yours of 18th. Thanks awfully also for the socks sent separately which you and Kitty made. I think it was awfully good of you to think of them, and they are really useful in this cold weather.

"I am sorry too that Mums has left you. I know she liked you all so much, but she couldn't very well stay always, although I know you wouldn't have minded.

"I'm afraid it wouldn't be very suitable to have you here, much as I would have liked it; but for girls the place is practically impossible, and there would be absolutely nothing to do except for the few hours when I could come round. The district is a regular desert as far as people go, and with the recent changeable weather the roads and ground are getting worse and worse. I don't know about leave yet. They say we won't get any, but I hope that's wrong.

"As leave is so uncertain, and you can't come north, I wish you would grant me a favour. I think I was foolish not to ask before I came away, but there were so many things to do then. Could you send me a photo of yourself? I should so much like to have one. Fops has half a dozen photos which he hangs out from time time, and I haven't any. Of course, I don't mean that I want to brandish your photo as against his half-dozen (I wouldn't do that), but I mean that I would like to have yours because then I wouldn't feel so—oh, I can't express exactly what I mean; but you know, I'm sure, and the tent would feel more homely if I could have your photo along with Mums'. So you will send one, won't you? And I shall be so glad to have it.

"Our tent is not a bad one despite the mud round about, but it isn't nearly as swagger as some of the other subs have. One of them has a dressing-table made by a local cabinetmaker, which looks no end of a swell thing. Another has Chinese lanterns, which light the place with purple light. Ours hasn't any specialities of that kind, but we really have everything we want except your photo!

"It's splendid to think of your father doing so much war-work. I expect, however, he enjoys it. And you thinking of work too!"

At that moment Gog hesitated; he had a wish to express admiration of her thoughts and wishes, but his occasional shyness just then overcame him and he did not say all that he might have said. He closed the letter with a few other general remarks, "Best wishes to all," and a "Yours very sincerely, GOG."

After he had finished, however, his practical mind got to work. Army life had created in him a desire for the well-applied and efficient, and he argued with himself about it. After all, what was the use of taking socks even from her, and saying pretty things about them, if they weren't just the thing or only half as serviceable as they might be. Surely she wouldn't be annoyed if he said it. It was more genuine to do so, because she might make more half-useless ones, and it would just be waste. So he argued with himself, and to him it was a considerable problem, because he did not wish to offend, or to seem ungenerous, or——. Half a dozen considerations troubled him, but eventually he added the postscript.

"*P.S.*—I'm not asking for more socks, but just in case you ever sent more, it would make the socks even

more useful if they were three inches longer, and of a thicker wool. Made on that scale, they fit under the hose-tops much better."

At that point Gog paused for further thought. He was so anxious she should not feel hurt, so he wrote again.

"The socks sent were of course beautifully made and are first-rate to wear, but I've just mentioned about the alteration, because the difference would make splendid route-marching socks. I'm afraid I really am asking for more socks after all, but I know you'll forgive me, because the home-made ones are so much better than any shop ones.

GOG."

The boy might have been surprised if he had heard Betty speaking when she got that letter. Although he had the evidences of her work before him, somehow he never thought of her as practical. Her sending of the socks to him had indeed been a sort of revelation of what she could do, but even then, to associate her with usefulness did not really enter his mind. That her tapering fingers should play the piano gracefully seemed natural, but that they should knit efficiently—it was too good to be true.

Betty's remark to her sister on the matter of socks, however, reveals quite plainly that she was eminently practical, when that virtue was called for. The idea of annoyance that he should point out the defects never entered her head.

"Kit," she remarked, "we're a silly pair of freaks. We haven't been making war-socks at all. We've been making socks fitted for Piccadilly." Which was a slight exaggeration, but contained the elements of truth.

As for the photo—*cela va sans dire.*

It went with a letter containing a gently teasing warning against the wickedness of Fops, and the evils of brandishing the photographs of trustful maidens. At the back of her heart, Betty had a vague doubt of the wisdom of the tent comradeship of her knight with Fops.

From such scraps as Gog had written, Fops tended to exist in her mind as a *blasé roué.*

When the letter and photo arrived, Gog chuckled over the warning, but the photograph he enshrined in its own place.

CHAPTER VII.

JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING.

About these days the officers of the 11th Battalion transferred from tents to huts. The mud had then grown so omnipresent and oppressive that a sergeant had even permitted a gentleman ranker on one occasion to make a joke about it. The squad had formed fours in the mud. The sergeant gave the order, "Re-form—two-deep!" The humourist, laden with a rifle and other odds and ends of weight, did not move. He was embedded over the ankles in ooze. "Why the —— don't you re-form two deep?" said the sergeant.

"I'm too deep," responded the humourist.

For reasons of that order, the transfer of the battalion was made to huts, or hutments, politely so called. Accurately described, they were smelly erections of thin lathe wood topped by corrugated iron. The smell was extraordinary. Whether it proceeded from the roof, or the floor, or the walls, no one ever knew. It was a species of catching hot air.

A large number of the men developed German measles or other ailments in these huts, whether from the huts or otherwise. But it takes more than German measles, or German anything, really to depress any self-respecting section of the British army, and considerable joy was got in these huts.

Life became collective.

There were eight camp-beds on one side and eight on the other, and sixteen subalterns, full of "beans and buck," had their existence there. Sixteen subalterns had their household gods ranged around their camp-beds, and some of the sixteen arranged their photographs on their wooden-box side-tables. Failing a private stock for exhibition, some resorted to illustrated papers, and culled therefrom a vision of beauty to live above their bedsteads, a perpetual reminder of the lost world of sweetness and light. Had they not gone forth into the wilderness? Notwithstanding their banishment, six or seven hearts each beat faithfully for one, while the other eight or nine beat faithfully in a general way. There were no woman-haters among them. Indeed, they had all taken on "their bit" rather as protectors of womanhood. Some of them might not love any woman in particular, but they were quite ready to die for them in general, with the Empire and all the rest of it, of course, flung in.

Still, the healthiness and soundness of feeling which they showed is remarkable. The glittering aphorisms of some sex-dividing modern writers found no place there. On the contrary, Gog found himself in an atmosphere where loyalty and faith were simply the common idea. Fops himself seemed to accept the "one woman" thought as the ideal; only he had got lost on the way.

Gog was quite at home in that atmosphere, and the general ideas which it expressed were only to deepen as the war proceeded.

The active joy of the hutments began very early in the morning. It is impossible to comprehend even dimly the joy of these days, if the sixteen subalterns are not imagined as in the very height of condition, each more athletic and vigorous than the other.

When in that state it seems almost impossible for a subaltern to be depressed. On the contrary, there swells up within him an uncontrollable and effervescing *joie de vivre*. Hence—trouble.

It usually began with Jimmy Shaw, a little black fellow, but of great muscle, who played the bagpipes at unholy hours. The principle of *joie de vivre* apparently necessitated that he should indulge in a particularly animated skirl about 6.30 A.M. Especially was this so on mornings when there was, for some reason, no early parade. Then would he encourage his soul with a strathspey or a lament, at the same time stepping proudly in pyjamas up and down the length of the hut. His favourite airs were "The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre" and "The Drunken Piper."

Moving up and down in purple-lined silk pyjamas, with tartan streamers hanging behind, and blowing himself "fit to bust," as the old lady said, he was rather a "sicht for sair een."

On suitable occasions his musical fervour met with a due reward, for other subalterns crept from their beds and appeared in pyjamas or shirt-tails or what they had, and danced the sword-dance or reels with suitable accompaniments of shrieks.

But generally this free concert was not approved. Hard-working subalterns escaping morning parade simply love bed, and to be wakened in the midst of their sweetest dreams was a matter demanding action.

Brogues, boots, brushes, sponges, or any other convenient missiles descended upon the devoted Shaw with youthful violence. He persisted with disdain, merely interrupting his play to inform the throwers that they were a disgrace to the country if they didn't appreciate the national instrument, which inevitably provoked the

answer that the instrument was all right, but the man behind the instrument was ——. Shaw's real or imaginary failings were pointed out with the unhesitating clearness of youth.

That scene often ended in a glorious *mêlée*, with a dozen or so whirling subalterns in the scrum.

Such affairs are part of the unapproved discipline of the British Army. Too much sameness in training tends to produce rigidity of the muscles. Elasticity is provided by practice in these minor assaults-at-arms. It is to be remembered that these gentlemen were training for war, and the variety of sources and ways which combine to fit the subaltern for his task are really surprising. It is undoubtedly out of his work on the football field and in scrum and struggle that the subaltern comes to be what he is, for Wellington's Eton maxim is as true to-day as ever.

Sometimes the morning hour or the evening hour was brightened by the soothing strains of the gramophone—an instrument despised perhaps by the ultra-cultured, but not below the level of men in the wilderness. A good gramophone, with the best and latest waltz airs, can readily inspire the vigour of youth, either pyjama-clad or in full war-paint, to dance through a few bars. And how the absence of fairer partners is mourned on these occasions! I mean the full-dress occasions. It would have done good to the heart of any maiden bereft by rude war to hear a chorus of lusty voices singing that rousing line with a force born of their bitter circumstances—

> "For we know that we most perfectly
> Ado-ore her!"

Nothing namby-pamby or love-sick about that crescendo of adoration on the word "adore," but the whole-hearted and thorough-going admiration of men

who were mostly youngsters anywhere about the twenties. In such an atmosphere, combined with the fact of absence, Gog was in considerable danger of falling in love. Odd, maybe, but it was so.

Somehow or other love, the inscrutable, will keep creeping in everywhere. In some respects warriors are perhaps the most susceptible part of mankind.

However, this chapter is really the story of the huts. The question of love has just sidled itself in as Cupid himself does.

Another form of the hut-life occurred in the days of snow and ice. Mud had for a very short time been replaced by ground hard frozen into ruts, and the whole had been covered over with a heavy mantle of snow. The occupants of A hut (the gallant 16) decided to storm the occupants of B hut (another valiant 16, some of higher rank). They selected an hour just before bed-time, when things in B hut were beginning to be confused, and gallant dug-out officers, nobly returned to serve their country, were commencing to change their garments for night-wear.

At that hour the doors at both ends of the hut were suddenly flung open, while at each of the three half-opened side windows a subaltern head appeared, quickly followed by an arm. A hail of snowy missiles whizzed through the hut.

Lieutenant Portray (aged 42 and rather crusty by nature) was doffing his tunic, when he received a snow bomb on the back of the neck. He was inclined to be testy about it, and growled about the Colonel, discipline, and other matters. But Captain Seagrim had no doubts as to his duty. In his shirt-sleeves he charged for the door, shouting to the remainder to follow. "Come on!" he yelled. "These young cubs think the dug-outs won't fight. We'll show them!"

Through the doorway, and through a heavy fire of well-aimed snowballs, he charged "like a young un," as a fellow dug-out afterwards described it. He was followed by half a dozen of the most ready.

Quite clearly the "young cubs" had not expected such prompt counter-attack and their forces were dispersed. Seagrim's eye fell upon a large ball of snow which had been intended for the final assault. Before they perceived his intention, he had sprung upon it and grabbed it in his arms. A moment later, and little Shaw, the morning piper, was buried under an avalanche of snow, while the doughty little warrior who had thrown it shook with laughter.

After that, there was a general battle royal, the result of which every one claimed as a victory.

But the most victorious person was undoubtedly "old Seagrim." He went away chuckling, and chaffing the youngsters. "Put the young cubs in their place! Getting uppish, they were! Thought the old war-horses couldn't fight!"

But the young cubs retired to bed quite happy. They had had a "jolly old scrap" taken in the spirit in which it was created, but for that they owed thanks to Seagrim, who had not quite forgotten his own "subaltern" days. A "sub" of one of the other companies expressed the idea to Gog. "Lucky beggars, you are under old Seagrim!"

"Yes, we are," he agreed cordially.

"He's the best company commander, and the best sport of the whole bunch."

"Don't we know it!" said Gog enthusiastically. Even he had seen Captain Seagrim in a new light that evening. Up till then he had always been kindly, but rather the professional soldier. Now he had appeared as one of themselves. It was by the steadiness of his

discipline, relieved by all these minor touches of humanity and comradeship, that Seagrim gave to his subalterns a true apprenticeship in the business of war. He seldom said much, but he did things.

Another aspect of Seagrim came out a few days later, which showed the sterner side. It was also on a snowy day, and his company was marching through a gorge. Lieutenant Portray's company was scattered along one of the sides of the gorge, with the lieutenant in the middle. Captain Seagrim ordered his company to march to attention, while passing C company, and every man was accordingly marching with his rifle sloped on the shoulder, and with his eyes to the front.

Suddenly they were snowballed by Lieutenant Portray's company—a breach of discipline; yet Lieutenant Portray gave no sign. A slight mutter broke out from the marching company. "Silence!" thundered Seagrim. "March on!" The company marched through in perfect order.

When they returned to camp, Captain Seagrim expressed his opinion of Lieutenant Portray's company, and Lieutenant Portray's idea of discipline, with great clearness and vigour. He was not more merciful on account of the attitude taken up by Lieutenant Portray on the night of the snowball attack on the officers' hut.

The subalterns chuckled, for Lieutenant Portray was much subdued in manner for some time. They remarked that Portray had been "lammed till he was sick."

. . . .

One more incident of hut-life, this time of the comradeship of officers and men.

The greater part of Captain Seagrim's company is gathered together in an empty hut, at the top end of which is raised a low platform. The men, about 150

in all, are packed closely together on benches. On the front-row bench are seated the officers of the company.

There is no piano or other musical instrument, for these were early days, and the refreshment tents and the heartful young ladies who came later and sang so sweetly—especially that favourite song about "Your King and your Country both need you so," and "We shall cheer you, thank you, kiss you when you come back again,"—these charming adjuncts to martial life had not then arrived.

Things had to be done in the days before without all these luxurious accompaniments.

So Captain Seagrim arose and announced that Private Buttery would sing, "Kiss me, and the world is mine," which that Private did, remarkably well, considering that he had no piano. In addition to the song, he had a certain amount of patter with it, which had a favourable reception. Buttery in civil life was a low comedian, and had dreams of some day being a revised version of Harry Lauder. On the strength of that, he was described on the programme as "Buttery, the Butter Scotch Comedian." His humour is incommunicable on paper, because the laughter it produced was entirely the result of his face, and its contortions.

Following Buttery was Sergeant Grillem, who sang a battle song full of "derring-do" and what one might call the Grenadier Guard spirit. Grillem was not a great singer without the piano, but his heart was certainly in the work.

Then came Fops with an eyeglass for the occasion, singing "The Major." Despite the handicap of a kilt, where he should have had Lancer costume, there was no mistaking the result, and a great popularity among the men descended upon Fops from that first occasion

onwards. The men never tired of that inimitable song. Well sung, there are few songs more clever, or, with patter attached, more amusing in its sidelights on army life, and Fops, with eyeglass, swagger, and drawl, was an almost perfect exponent (apart from dress) of the Major type. His "Howevah! Whatevah! What! What!" brought down the house.

After Fops had sung an encore, there followed Corporal MacVicar, a man of solemn appearance, utterly unlike a soldier, but who attained to a high degree of popularity as a singer. Why? Because he was sentimental to the core, and the British soldier loves sentiment, the more touching the better. MacVicar used to sing "Mother's Dying Babe," an utterly and almost painfully pathetic ode, but they often had the last verse over again. There was another one with a name like "Susie's Only Love," which was of the "highly-commended" order. But the pick of his repertoire was the one with the chorus, which seemed to speak to them of a time when the days of mud and blood should be over. So they all sang to its weirdly haunting air—

> "Nay, no, never, never no more,
> Shall I play the wild rover,
> Nay, never no more!"

And the hut was filled with that longing cry.

After that song had been sung Captain Seagrim spoke for a few minutes, telling a few tales of his military life, including that popular story about the differences between armies. "In the German army, of course, the officers don't lead their men in battle. They have to drive 'em into it. But in the British army, by Jove! they wouldn't tolerate such a thing. In the British army, sir, the men drive the officers into battle!"

The fact that that story is always appreciated by the

rank and file, and laughed at, is perhaps the best evidence that the British officers do indeed lead. And the officers' laughter is equally their evidence of faith that the men will follow.

After Seagrim's speech, another private sang, and then Gog put his heart into the work of singing "Macgregor's Gathering." And six or more score of Highland hearts and voices joined with him in singing "Macgregor, despite them, shall flourish for ever!" As Fops became in his way the exponent of singing "The Major," Gog became the singing exponent of the songs of the Gael.

The evening closed with Highland dancing, and piping by Shaw and others.

Not a bad evening for people with nothing but a bare hut and a wooden platform to work with. And that evening, and many another Saturday evening that followed, did much to mould together the soul of the Company, and to make for comradeship between officers and men.

B Company was advancing in these days. Not only in squad drill and discipline and handling of arms, but in the understanding and trust of all ranks, creating that spirit which is the real stuff of an army.

Captain Seagrim always laid great stress on the branches of training and army life which dealt with the incalculable matter of spirit.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAMENT.

ALL the doings and many others like them described in the last chapter were, of course, only the interludes amid periods of strenuous work, and men were steadily passing day by day from their recruit squads to their platoons, and with the platoons forming companies for higher forms of drill. And officers were also leaving the much-maligned recruit square and being permanently attached to their companies. With all that change, there was becoming visible in every rank a change of appearance. Slowly developing out of the confusion of the early days, there were emerging the signs of soldier-ship, a certain steadiness of gait and carriage which proclaimed hopefully to the Colonel that the battalion would yet be in deed and truth a war unit.

True, the subalterns drilling their platoons or drilling the company, still gave their orders at times with an air of uncertainty, and still jumbled a company with its rear rank in front, or its first platoon where its fourth should have been, or sometimes failed to give orders at the proper moment, with the result that the whole of some majestic movement lost all majesty, reduced the company to a rabble, and the Adjutant to frenzy. But these accidents were steadily growing less frequent.

Other changes there were too in the general *ménage*.

There came the days of digging and hasty entrenching with diminutive trenching implements, which in Private M'Toucan's opinion "werena worth a docken." Whatever his opinion was, he spent hours of time and wiped the sweat many times from his brow in scraping his own particular hole in the ground. M'Toucan had in some respects a slow and slightly obtuse mind. While lecturing to an audience of men on entrenching, Captain Seagrim told a story of hasty entrenching under fire during a battle on the Indian frontier. He explained to them how his then battalion lay for hours under a blazing sun, and a hail of bullets from the heights above pinged all around them, while each man slowly scraped himself in. He told them how he himself, while lying under fire, made a wonderful hole, and had just dug it about one and a half feet deep and built a little parapet around it and ornamented the parapet with tufts of grass—"in fact made a perfect garden of it—a regular work of art"—and just when it was completed the order was passed along to advance.

The obtuseness of Private M'Toucan's mind was evidenced by the fact that the conclusion he drew from the story was that hasty entrenching was no "guid whatever! The captain made a hole, and he didna have the chance to test it; and, like as not wi' the army, it would aye be the same. If ye made a hole, they'd advance; an' if ye didna mak a hole, they wouldna, because the army aye went by contraries." Besides, M'Toucan was inclined to be a fatalist, and "if a body was to be killed, they werena goin' tae think they'd shoo it awa by scrapin' a wee holie." All which was very false doctrine; but it is doubtful if even the battlefield, when it came, ever made him recant. Probably ninety-nine per cent of men change their opinions, if they have resembled M'Toucan's, when they come under fire. But not men

of M'Toucan's stamp. He did his share of ordinary trench work at the front, but his opinions he held firmly to the last with unshaken contempt of all Germans, from the Kaiser downwards, and all their works.

Another form of training that fell to the battalion's lot was that of night operations, frequently conducted by a senior captain of large experience in such matters—Captain Macandrew.

There were various forms of that class of training, but the most frequent was that in which a certain officer was supposed to command a picquet with outpost sentry groups defending a line of country. It was the officer's duty to instruct his picquet and groups in all their duties by lecture given beforehand. The night operation was the practical result of the lecture.

In order that the picquets and sentries might be trained to be alert and know their work, a few men, also previously instructed by lecture, were usually sent out to endeavour to pass through the sentry groups, and penetrate the picquet line in the darkness.

Everybody, of course, endeavoured to make the thing as realistic as possible.

In the endeavour to make things realistic, and in the failure altogether to appreciate the literal quality of the recruit mind, officers sometimes achieve curious results.

One evening Gog was placed in charge of a picquet with its sentry groups. The usual orders were given for holding the line.

Shaw supplied the men for penetrating that line, and in adjuring them (there being a considerable spirit of competition between platoons) to penetrate the line, incautiously used the phrase "at all costs." The attackers might advance as they pleased, crawling, disguised as mulberry bushes, or in any way they chose

but, whatever they did, they were to penetrate the line "at all costs." In a lecture given by Captain Seagrim at an earlier stage, he had mentioned that it was sometimes possible to rush and overpower the sentry.

Now, unpaid Lance-Corporal Macdrane (recently appointed to that rank) was zealous in the work, and of literal mind. He remembered the captain's lecture, and his orders were to penetrate "at all costs." He put two and two together, and acted accordingly. He had two men under him.

Macdrane and his two men crept up softly to within five yards of the point where M'Toucan "glowered" madly into the darkness with eyes that, if he could have seen them in a glass, literally stared out of his head.

M'Toucan thought he saw a figure, and shouted with a voice that could be heard a quarter of a mile away, "Halt!"

"Rush him!" whispered Macdrane.

M'Toucan had a fixed bayonet, but on the order being given, the two privates sprang at him. M'Toucan's bayonet quivered wildly between them, and he felt a wave of horror passing over him. So did the attackers —the bayonet was altogether too real.

Nevertheless the attackers were closing. Then M'Toucan gave a wail of agony. "Aa canna do it! Aa canna do it!" he yelled pitifully. At the same moment he dropped his rifle and bayonet. With the same action, one of his brawny arms with a sweeping movement projected one of the attackers into an unseen ditch; with his free hand he grabbed the other by the collar of his coat, while he bawled in agonised tones at the pitch of his voice, "Aa canna gie ye the bayonet, Wullie Mackay! Aa canna come tae it, but ye're ma prisoner! . . . Saintry group! Saintry group!"

Macdrane was not to be outdone. "Prisoner yersel'!" he cried. "Ye're ma prisoner!"

"Hear the body!" said M'Toucan derisively. "Come on!"

At that point the sentry group arrived, followed shortly by Captain Seagrim and Gog, who had both heard the noise. M'Toucan was officially held to have taken three prisoners, much to his satisfaction. Macdrane was cautioned anent the dangers of bayonets in the dark and a too vivid rehearsal of active service conditions.

"Sound man, M'Toucan," remarked Seagrim, as he and Gog walked off. "Excellent type of soldier. Not brainy, but courageous and unshakable."

A few days later an order came out prohibiting the use of bayonets for night operations until further notice. There had been too much realism.

. . . .

After the operations were over, and the men were dismissed, M'Toucan explained his ideas to Wullie Mackay.

"Ye see," he observed, "we were tauld tae mak the thing as real as possible. An' when you enemy folks came on as real as aw that, aa thocht mebbe aa was meant tae gie ye a real prod wi' the bayonet, no' a hard ane, but juist a little scratch like——"

"Aw, did ye?" said Wullie.

"Aye. But then when you came on sae fierce like, aa was feared aa micht mebbe prod too far——"

"Oh, were ye?" said Wullie.

"Aye. An' that's why aa took to ma auld wrestlin' tricks, and did the catch-as-catch-can style."

"Aa see," said Wullie. "Well, it was a dam' good thing for you ye didna try a prod onyway."

"Why?" said M'Toucan.

"It would a been yer last prod!" said Wullie fiercely.

"Mebbe aye, an' mebbe heuch aye!" said M'Toucan coolly.

Notwithstanding which argument they left the parade-ground excellent friends. Indeed that midnight tussle was the beginning of their friendship. It was a part of the comradeship of arms, for the days of the joust and the tussle are not perhaps so dead as some people suppose.

. . . .

It was perhaps out of these night operations that Captain Macandrew received the cold or other trouble which brought about his end, and gave to Gog the first impression of death as it appears in the army.

Death seems in some ways such a different thing there. First, there is the theory upon which all ideas of it are based—that it is an honour to die for the country, as, in fact, of course it is. Naturally the idea is not so prominent under peace service conditions. On the other hand, death is so frequent on active service, that the idea of honour tends to be forgotten, and there is the risk of death appearing common, and men becoming callous. I question if there is a better antidote to that than the military service, and Gog received his first unforgettable impression through that.

Captain Macandrew had in reality died for his country. He was old. He was one of the "dug-outs," as they are called; one of those men retired to peace and comfort who had really done their share, but who scorned inglorious ease, and preferred the way of service; one of many invaluable men who helped to make the new army.

But his physical disabilities were against him. He was thin, very thin, and the kilt which he sometimes wore hung about him loosely. The cold too affected

him severely. On some of those icy days at Delsarre, his face was literally white, while his knees grew blue with the cutting bitterness of the winds. Yet because no one else wore a coat, he refused to wear what his age might have allowed. What the men wore, he would wear. So he followed the sound army rule, but probably he suffered for it.

In the beginning Fops had looked thin and unhappy in a kilt, but the exercise and the life were broadening and strengthening him. He was young enough to grow. But Captain Macandrew was too old for that, and the bitter cold winds and the long days on the parade-ground, one day mud, the next ice and snow—all these together were too much.

So it happened that the battalion came to prepare for the funeral.

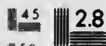
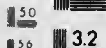
For three days they practised the lining of the route, the slow march, and the final acts, excepting the few that could not be prepared. And the sergeant-major lectured on their duties.

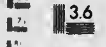
That the slow march should be maintained by every man in perfect order and in step. That every man should be silent, and behave with absolute solemnity, and so on.

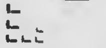
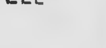
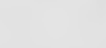
Many more details he gave before he came to the last caution, the one that is peculiarly true in its way, and expresses so well the idea of death from an army point of view. "After the funeral, the band will play a merry march, and every man will march home again, stepping off proudly and smartly as if he knew that one of his comrades had died in the service of the country and the regiment. You've expressed your sorrow and sympathy during the funeral; you march away as if you were proud to be carrying on the work he died for."

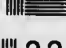
MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

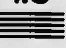
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)







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So they were taught, and so they acted.

The wail of the pipes playing "The Flowers of the Forest" sounded weird and mournful as they passed through the village street; as they passed from the village out among the trees, the music seemed to grow plaintive, and to a Highland heart there was in it the thrilling note of desolation and pain. It was all so slow, every man marching to the music in that solemn measured tread. The sound of the music was only slightly broken by the intermittent rumble of the gun carriage.

Slowly they passed on to the cemetery where the officers were ranged around the grave. There the stillness was almost oppressive until it was broken by the voice of the chaplain saying the last words.

When the chaplain had finished, and the other acts had been done, the pipers played the lament again.

All the while the sun beat down upon the glittering buttons and silver of the officers' uniform, and on the soldiers' accoutrements, and every man was standing motionless in perfect silence.

When the lament was finished, the voice of the officer in command of the firing party seemed almost to cut the air in the sharpness of the order, "Standing—Load!"

There was a rattle of bolts and a clicking of cartridges, every motion complete at the same moment; after that dead silence again until the order came to fire.

Every rifle was pointed upwards. There was a loud crack, simultaneous from every rifle, and the whole blended in a strange echo from the hills.

"Unload!" Silence again. More orders, another crack, and yet another, and then it was over, and they were filing slowly out of the green-bordered

cemetery with its oblong earthen patches, and its tombs of grey and white granite, and marble, and stone.

. . . .

When they left the cemetery they were back from the silent and the unknown to life and action again. Once more they were among the ordinary things, getting ready to march off and forming fours and all that. And they did march off, with the band playing gaily the march of the "Gairloch Highlanders." When they were allowed to march "at ease," men talked again, but quietly. Usually they sang and whistled on the march. But though they were quiet, they stepped out well, the men who were carrying on the work.

On Gog the funeral made a great impression, for he was young; also it was the only one he had ever attended, and nothing is more solemn and impressive than the military funeral.

In the letter which he wrote home to his mother, he mentioned the playing of the pipes and a few other things, but perhaps he did not say all that he thought. Of course he knew his mother would understand. About the funeral in general, he only said, "It was very beautiful."

But all that was the boy's first meeting with death, the thing that war makes.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLOW.

About these days there began to be rumours about the 11th Battalion. It was one of the later formations, and it was not even yet fully up to strength, and there was talk about it. There were rumours of change, and talk about the officers, and talk among the men. Was it so certain that they were to remain a service battalion and fight as one unit? There were doubts in the air.

It began to be rumoured that the battalion was leaving Delsarre, and that officers might go to the front singly, and it was whispered that the old hands thought it would be a "good touch" to try and get some leave in case they went sooner than was expected.

Captain Seagrim and two other officers got leave suddenly for four days. By the time they came back definite news had gone forth. They were going to the front, but they refused to tell where because their orders did not permit them to do so.

And the thing was all done so suddenly. To Gog it was rather appalling. He learned the news in the afternoon, and in the evening his commander was gone. And all that happened was, that the men of his company cheered as the Captain left the camp, and Fops and Gog and other officers saw them away at the station.

There was no crowd, no flag-waving, nothing. Just a quiet going away in the night.

Seagrim shook hands with all the officers present. To the four subalterns of his company, he said, "Good-bye, boys! I'm dead sick at having to leave you all. No commander ever had better subs, and I thought we'd all have fought side by side. But there—the War Office thinks otherwise, and we must do our job where we're put. I know you'll all do yours wherever you are. Good luck!"

There was a cheery smile on the face of the little old soldier as he waved good-bye, but he sat silent in the carriage for a long time after.

Four subalterns walked back to the camp almost in silence too.

It was a tribute to Captain Seagrim that four subalterns at least mentioned his going in their letters home, and they all wrote as if they had lost not only a soldier, but one who had been to them as an old friend.

. . . .

Other rumours followed quickly. The battalion was not to remain where it was, but was to go somewhere else. Having spent all the winter in a supremely muddy spot and learned endurance of mud, the powers that be at Headquarters had decided that with the approach of dry weather it should be placed in barracks in a barren and arid place where water was scarce. Possibly the War Office authorities had some idea of training the battalion for sand as well as mud warfare; some one may have been considering the war with a large map, and thought the battalion might be adapted for a Babylonish struggle.

Whatever the cause, the order went forth that the battalion was to gather itself together and depart, an order which created considerable activity, for it is no small thing to move a battalion with all its baggage.

The night before their departure from Delsarro there was a gathering of subalterns at the Highland hotel, at which every subaltern sang (under severe penalties for failure). There was pipe music that filled the village street with gaping urchins, who gazed earnestly up at the open windows from which proceeded the strains of fervid music. There were tales of war and the army, and there were toasts drunk, of which the most gaily received was that ancient Scottish toast: "Here's tae us! Wha's like us! Damn the yin! And they're aw deid!" Nothing can exceed the enthusiasm with which this toast is received when proposed under suitable circumstances among persons of understanding.

On the following morning gaiety had gone, being replaced by work. Macduff, the red-haired, now grown familiar with his duties, toiled earnestly in the gathering of his masters' goods, and later in deporting their kits to the loading-ground. Thence, with cracking of whips and creaking and groaning of axles, the waggons slowly filed out of the mud of the camp for the last time.

The battalion entrained for Fort Julius.

On arriving at Julius station they found themselves about two miles from the barracks, but a pleasant surprise awaited them. They were arriving at the depôt of the regiment, and the brass band of the 1st Gairloch Highlanders was waiting to play them into the Fort.

These were great moments in the life of the 11th Battalion, and the Colonel of the battalion was anxious. He rode up and down the line of the battalion as it was drawn up outside the station, giving orders here and directions there. And not till everything was in perfect order did they move off.

The battalion had not heard the music of a brass band since they joined the army. Little wonder then if, when the strains of "Annie Laurie" burst forth,

played by one of the finest bands in the army (and their band too! They, as representing the regiment, were to be in the depôt), they sprang forward and marched as if they were Gairloch Highlanders indeed. As the Colonel glanced down the line from time to time, his grim face looked not displeased.

When the brass band stopped, the pipe band of their own battalion took up the work, and skirled for the glory of the 11th. As they approached the Fort, the brass band played them into the barracks to the inspiring notes of "When Belgium put the Khibosh on the Kaiser."

Every man at attention, with eyes to the front, and rifles sloped in almost perfect line, they marched into the barrack square.

The Colonel gave the command, "At the halt, facing left, form—Mass!"

Steadily they formed up as they arrived, until all were standing motionless in that historic square. They were in the home of the regiment.

The windows that looked out on the barrack square were full of faces gazing down on the new arrivals, speculating as to what sort of men this new army formation might hold. A depôt major muttered at a window, "Not a bad show for a new army lot!" a saying which reveals something of the cynicism of the old hands.

"Fall out the officers!" They fell out and saluted. "Dismiss!" They dismissed, and the "show" was over.

M'Toucan and Macduff talked the matter over in the square for a few moments after the dismissal.

"Man, but we marched in well there," said Macduff. "Aa was lookin' ahead as we cam' up the hill through the Fort gate, and aa niver saw sich a perfec' line o' rifles in ma life."

"Aye," said the M'Toucan. "It wasna that bad, but aa dinna think we're just the equal o' the 1st Battalion yet. Man, their band was gran'."

"Aye," said Macduff thoughtfully. "Aye."

Thereafter they departed to find their own places in the sun, or more accurately to find the rooms in which they were to billet. But it will be gathered from their remarks that even they were beginning to regard themselves as part of a battalion, even of a regiment, whose honour was in their hands.

. . . .

Soon after his arrival, Gog wrote two letters, which speak for themselves.

"MY DEAR MUMS,—We have to-day arrived at Fort Julius in great form. The band of the 1st Battalion met us, and I think we really marched in splendidly, so I hope and believe we didn't do anything to disgrace Dad's regiment. I always remember how you told me how proud he was of it, and how strict they were in discipline, and I think we all really do c[illegible] to live up to the tradition. If we make any mistakes, it's not for want of trying anyway, although we miss Seagrim and the old soldiers awfully. The Colonel was fearfully particular to-day, so I expect everything really was right.

"Fops and I have got a great big room to ourselves in the barracks, so we ought to be comfortable. It's a jolly change to get out of the huts for a bit, though we lose our camp allowance, which is a pity, as it came in useful.

"Fops is cheering up his 'Mums' by letting her know the district is sandy, and he won't have any more wet feet!

"The Fort is an interesting sort of place, with great

big battlements and a moat and all that, but a long distance from anywhere. So I don't think we'll suffer from too much gaiety! However, we're always fairly happy.

"It's pretty hard luck not getting my leave, so that I might come and see you for a little while, but nobody is any better off. There are all sorts of rumours about the battalion, but nothing definite yet.

"I hope you always keep well and happy, Mums, dear. I'm glad you heard from Betty the other day.

"With love.—Always yours, GOG."

"*P.S.*—An appeal has been made for war hose-tops for the battalion. If I could I should like to equip my own platoon, about 50 men, with two pair each. Do you think you could get people who knit to make some for me? I enclose a piece of wool (the right colour) and a specimen hose-top. Hope I'm not troubling too much. I am writing to Betty too. GOG."

The letter to Betty ran thus:—

"DEAR BETTY,—I heard from Mums saying you had written her, and I had your note the other day. I'm so glad you're all so well, and that your father has not been quite so hard-worked.

"We came into Fort Julius to-day, led by the band of the 1st Battalion, and I think you would quite have liked to see us as we marched in. The music was absolutely splendid for marching purposes, and I think we really slogged it like soldiers. Anyway, as we turned into the barrack square, I could see platoon after platoon marching very steadily, and I felt as proud as could be.

"I felt quite thrilled as we stood in the barrack square, where I know Dad used to be at one time, and

saw the band of his battalion. I am going to try to find out from some of the old officers if they knew where he used to live in the barracks, as I should like to see his old place.

"We had a great concert recently in aid of our pipe band fund, in order to strengthen the band, and we raised quite a lot of money. The town hall was packed, and the concert really went off very well. Fops and I both sang—Fops as 'The Major' as usual, and I with my Highland stunts. Fops really did splendidly, having borrowed a Lancer costume from somewhere, and he had to repeat some verses as encore—that being his only song!

"The battalion is having to get all sorts of other things, and among them hose-tops for the men. I hate to worry you, but do you think you could raise any? I want to equip the men of my platoon (about 50) with two pair each. I have written to Mums, too, and I'm sure she'll get a lot, but I thought perhaps you would like to help. I enclose a specimen hose-top, and a bit of the right colour of wool. If it's too much trouble, please don't bother, but if you can help, I should be so glad if you could send a few. The men will go to the front in these hose-tops, and fight in them, and these things really are needed.

"So sorry to be a worry, but it's all in the common cause, and you've always been so ripping about everything, I thought you'd perhaps be glad to help.

"Best regards to all. Salaams to yourself and Kitty.
—Yours always, GOG."

. . . .

Two nights after he had written the above letters, Fops and Gog entered the mess anteroom just before dinner. They found the Colonel standing in front of

the fireplace. He looked at them, but he stared as if he did not see them. Almost immediately after they had entered, he left the room.

"Wonder what's wrong with the old boy?" said Fops.

Gog stared at him. "More rumours, perhaps," said Gog.

A few minutes later they entered the stately mess-room and sat down to dinner around the long table at which so many officers of that regiment had sat—at which Gog's father had sat. But though they were in a great place, and nothing about them was reminiscent of the hard old days when they were in the beginning of things, yet there was gloom at the table. The Colonel said not a word, and the dinner was passed through almost in silence.

It happened to be guest night, and the loyal toast was given, and the pipers marched around the table playing marches, strathspey, and reel, but still the Colonel was not roused. Only when the pipe-major played the lament, it seemed to harmonise with his mood, and he looked if anything grimmer and sadder. When the piper had finished, the Colonel presented the usual glass of wine, with the Gaelic toast, but the action was automatic. The Colonel seemed to be absorbed.

Eventually the cause of his absorption became known. The news filtered down through the majors and captains to the subalterns.

The battalion was no more a service battalion. It had become a reserve unit to supply drafts of men to replace the killed and wounded of earlier formations of the regiment.

So the Colonel was plunged in gloom, because he would never now lead a battalion in the field, and that had been the thought which had inspired all his work up till then.

He took it hardly that the War Office thought him too old for an active service appointment.

Yet it was but the luck of the game of war for all who were with the army that became reserve. The men and the junior officers would go, but the seniors must stay at home.

As one of the seniors remarked, "Lucky man, Seagrim, who escaped this!"

In the language of the youngsters, some of the older officers were frightfully "pilled." In particular, everybody was sorry for the "old boy"; but beyond the first day of gloom, he never gave any other sign. He "carried on" as the saying is, still striving to make those recruits like to the soldiers of the battalion that lived in his imagination—that glorious 1st Battalion with which he had once served and fought.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOPE OF GLORY.

IT is not given to mankind in the army long to remain in one place, nor is much warning given of removal. Some people think there is method in these hurried exits and rapid movements — "done to smarten the battalions, you know, for mobilisation purposes. Learn them to skip about!" Other people think that these movements are due to some evil-disposed person in the War Office, who has a mania for spring-cleanings, flittings, and other "[illegible] stunts."

Whatever the reason, the 11th Battalion were not allowed to remain in Fort Julius more than a month, when they were ejected and ordered to camp on the sea-shores.

Therefore tent-life was begun again, this time on sandy flats which had the merit of being rain-absorbent at a high rate of speed.

Under these conditions, military life took on at least one new aspect. As the weather grew warmer, companies bathed in the ocean, hardening themselves for their great task. At casual times too an instructor gave lessons in bridging expedients, and methods of crossing rivers, all demonstrated on the local river that ran down into the sea. Men, of course, perfectly understood that

this training was given in the near prospect of their crossing the Rhine.

At this stage, too, men were really "forming fours" creditably, and giving other evidences of military attainment, which justified advance in their general training. The battalion had joined with other battalions and formed a brigade, and on occasional days there were operations in which they skirmished and fought over sand-dunes merging into heather mountains. On very special occasions every man got a few blank cartridges to "bang awa' wi'."

These blank cartridge occasions were not permitted until men had had a large amount of training in the mechanism of the rifle, and spent many hours lying on their faces, perspiring freely, and making herculean endeavours to perform the feat of loading, firing, and unloading fifteen cartridges in one minute, the standard known as "rapid fire."

M'Toucan did that for many weeks before he succeeded in the great final test of all, which happened with ball cartridge at the butts.

M'Toucan did not fire fifteen cartridges in one minute on that occasion, because, as he admitted himself, "Aa couldna do't." The thing was too rapid altogether, and he had a slow mind which directed his physical movements slowly. He took advice before firing with Sergeant M'Manus, who was at the moment acting as a musketry instructor. "Fire ten good shots well-aimed," advised M'Manus, "and ye'll win through."

"Richt," said M'Toucan. He wiped the sweat from his brow, gripped the rifle with his horny hands, felt his pouches to make sure where the cartridge clips were, glared at Gog who was acting as officer at the firing point, and waited. "Fifteen rounds, rapid—fire!" said Gog, giving the command as it had to be given on

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account of temporary derangement of the targets (under ordinary conditions the targets rise and fall for this test).

"Bang! Bang! Bang!" went eight rifles. M'Toucan was firing slowly but steadily. On loading his second clip of five cartridges, he gave a great sigh, "Aa'm jammed!" he said.

But it was only for a moment. The jam disappeared and he fired on—eleven shots in all. He let off a twelfth a second after the one minute whistle had blown, for which he was rated by Sergeant M'Manus.

However, M'Toucan explained his position later, when, on the whole matter, he had ascertained that he had become a first-class shot by one mark only, and was entitled to a higher rate of pay. "Aye, aa'll pocket what auld M'Manus said along wi' ma pey, because aa'm no' sure but it was that last shot that made the differ, for aa had the target awfu' fine in my eye juist then."

Of course a shot might have been disallowed, or some other course taken, but in the exercise of their discretion the musketry officer and Gog both thought M'Toucan was not much more than "on time." They thought so all the more, as M'Toucan said that he "didna juist grasp that the whistle had been blawn."

M'Toucan, in his way, was what they call a "character" in the north.

. . . .

One more scene from these peace-training days before passing on to war.

It was almost their last act before the first of them went out to fight.

There were grand manœuvres over a large area, and artillery and cavalry and all classes of arms were represented.

And for days beforehand the battalion studied the art of bivouacking, building themselves night cover with two sticks and their waterproof sheets. They practised until they could erect these shelters so that they appeared and disappeared like smoke. One moment there would be a plain covered with shelters, ten seconds later they would be gone, and nothing but a folded sheet and sticks would lie on the ground.

Little wonder if Macduff said, "Ma conscience! We're learnin' to be awfu' smart in the army!"

That, however, was only one form of smartness. There were lessons on all sorts of other odd things, including elementary instruction on cookery.

No great wonder if Wullie Mackay was led to ruminate on the curiousness of life and the luxury of civilisation. "Efter aw this," he remarked "we can get on by oorsels. Twa sticks an' a blade o' grass and we can bile oor ain saps; twa sticks and a sheetie and ye can live oot and pey no rent." What a vision of economy is held out in these simple words! Why has there never been a recruiting poster, "Back to the Army, and the simple life!"

After all these preparations had been made, the great day of the operations came.

What a scene it was!

Nothing like it to be had on active service! The roads were blocked with motors of people visiting the scene of battle.

For hours the battalions marched and fought, and umpires rushed to and fro and held that this farm had been taken and that one had not, and this height must be evacuated and the defenders put out of action, and so on.

And the mountain guns boomed ominously, while companies fought fiercely under their fire, apparently

quite undisturbed by its imminence. And staff officers galloped across the line of fire, regardless of danger.

And the whole terminated in a grand finale at one place where a vast host of Highlanders were gathered together in the heather, opposite another vast host about thirty yards away, each blazing blank ammunition furiously into their opponents, until the umpires said the expenditure of the ammunition must stop.

"Great fun! Glorious!" as Jingle would say; but neither Gog nor any other officer ever saw anything resembling it at the front.

However, it gave the junior officers an excellent opportunity of seeing what an appalling muddle field operations can become, when units become disorganised and separated from view and the central control has been weak and improperly devolved. And of course it was all done that they might learn.

The subaltern view of the situation is quite well expressed in Gog's letter to Betty:—

"DEAR BETTY,—I promised to write you a line after the operations were over, and I feel quite like it too because we've had such a time. The old 'hands' were awfully sick about it, and bored to death with the prospect of manœuvres, but all of us, who were new, were as keen as mustard, and enjoyed it. We were away two days, and slept out in the open both nights, that is while we weren't on guard. I was with a picquet on outpost duty one night, but nothing happened at my part of the line. It was a lovely moonlight night, and really ripping. I didn't feel a bit tired, and sometimes thought of you sleeping sweetly in bed while I was patrolling about. I did get a few hours' sleep, of course, lying in a lovely clump of wood where the ground was almost as soft as a bed. I was only

sorry they didn't attack at my bit of the line, because it would have been so jolly to have a little scrap in the dark. (It wasn't really dark with the moon.)

"In the morning we joined the company and marched about six miles. After that we split up into platoons, going across the fields in artillery formation. (That's a spread-out way, so as not to lose men under shell-fire, like this | | | |, each line representing a platoon of 50 men or so.) When we got nearer, we opened out farther into skirmishing order, and started firing. We were all mixed up among woods. After a bit everybody got rather out of touch, and I found that I had about 70 men, and was fighting a battle entirely on my own. I couldn't see anybody to get my orders from—the woods and heather were very thick thereabout—and I didn't know very well where we were going, or how the ground lay. However, there was a bunch of the enemy in front, so that I thought I'd better just fight away on my own. I managed to get a few men round on the flank of this bunch and attacked them front and flank. Just as we were in the middle of it, an umpire came up and asked me what was happening. I told him; he went over, examined the enemy's position, and then came back and said that we had won. He ordered that lot of the enemy to surrender, and they became my prisoners—50 of them. I felt bucked no end. I put the 50 in charge of half a dozen men and went on to join the general battle. After marching a bit farther, we came more into the open, when I found my men were in advance of the rest of our force, and had really come through an opening where the men we took had been. I sent back a man to tell the company commander where I was, what I

was doing, and then started to attack the enemy wherever I could get him. I don't know what the result of it all was; there was a tremendous lot of firing on all sides, including artillery work. The men I had simply sat in a ditch like a trench firing away, and the enemy fired away at us from the side of a hill. After a time some umpires rode up, and the 'Cease Fire' sounded, whereupon we sat down on the edge of the ditch and ate our rations. We had had nothing to eat since six in the morning. I was as hungry as a hawk, and it was lovely to eat among the heather and pine woods. One feels so gloriously healthy and fit here.

"The umpires and commanding officers held a 'Pow-wow' while we were enjoying ourselves. I understand the leading umpire decided that the Brigadier commanding our force had not done very well, because he had wasted his force by attacking all along the line, instead of feinting and making a special effort at one point. As regards us, however, he was very complimentary, and said we were the best handled battalion in the attacking force. So the Colonel was as pleased as could be, and so were we.

"Altogether it was great fun. At the end of the day both forces were collected on a flat piece of heather-covered ground, and it was a great sight to see so many men in tartan among the heather. It quite made one think of Rob Roy and the [illegible] days. You would have loved to see it all.

"I hope I haven't bored you with all this, but I think you always like to know about things, and I felt in a mood for writing. Chin! Chin!—Yours very sincerely,

GOG."

"*P.S.*—The parcel of hose-tops has just come in. It is really splendid of you to have sent such a lot, and

awfully good of your father to have got the Ladies' Committee to take the matter up. The men will be so pleased because the tops are so well made. With the ones mother has sent, I can equip my whole platoon now, and I am so delighted. I'm sure I'll have the best hose-topped platoon in the battalion, though I don't know how I can ever repay you and your people for all their kindness.

GOG."

When Betty received that letter, she smiled. She was quite interested in the battle narrative. She liked to know how battles were fought—not as the history books tell them, but in Gog's way. But the *P.S.* about the hose-tops interested her just as much, or perhaps even more. When she came to the last sentence, she still smiled. She had her own ideas about repayment.

. . . .

After the manœuvres, the battalion returned to camp, where they continued to form fours, and re-form two deep, and do company drill, and lie on their faces on the ground practising the movement of rifle-bolts for the purpose of "rapid fire" *ad infinitum*. The consequence of all that was that the battalion began to feel stale and weary. Had it not done all these things hundreds, perhaps thousands of times already? The battalion was beginning to "grouse" and grow weary in well-doing.

Were they never to be wanted for the real thing? Were they to spend their lives practising rapid fire in the abstract, and never to practise upon the Hun? Truly there were dark thoughts in their minds. The issue of the war was certainly largely dependent on the 11th Battalion of the Gairloch Highlanders, and yet the War Office had not called for them. Men were dying daily at the front, but the men of the 11th Gairlochs

could not get the opportunity, though they desired it earnestly.

Truly a comic world! Magnificent too!

Private M'Craw was heard to observe in disgusted tones one day, "I've got twa brithers and three cousins at the front, and they've aw been killed or wounded, and yet here am I—never done a thing!"

As it happened, the War Office awoke to this injustice the very day after Private M'Craw spoke, and called for a draft of 200 men from the battalion.

Fifty men per company, and twelve or more from each platoon, to be selected by company and platoon commanders.

In the twinkling of an eye the scene was changed, and the men who had groused became men of zeal.

The lives of platoon commanders became anxious with thought. Platoon sergeants would submit rolls of men fitted for the front, and platoon commanders (Fops, Gog, and the like) would settle them with the company commander. And when the roll of Gog's twelve was complete and the names became known, then men who were not on that roll gazed upon Gog with eyes that had a pained look. Why were they not among the chosen?

And solemn men applied to the platoon sergeant, who mentioned their case to Gog, who being of a benevolent nature, received them in deputation, when Private Mactoukall said, "Beggin' yer pardon, sirr, and aa'll not want to be forward at all, but shooar, aa waas in the battalion at least a week before Private Murray, and aa canna understan' why aa should not go to fight ass soon ass he. Shooar ma people have all been fighters, and they will not can understan' why aa should not go among the first. Shooar aa am not to say a word against Private Murray, but indeed aa am ass goot a fighter as he, and wan week earlier in the battalion, and aa should wish to go."

That was but one example of the warrior spirit in the battalion. To all such deputations there was one answer only, a little commendation of the spirit of these anxious soldiers mingled with a little kindly consolation, concluded with the remark, "You'll be wanted soon enough."

The days of choosing soon passed, followed by the days of inspection and equipment, during which Gog's twelve were duly fitted with hose-tops, the work of very tender and gentle hands.

At last the night came when the draft was to go forth, and they were drawn up in the semi-darkness of a moonlit night. The camp had resounded with cheering and singing for hours beforehand.

The company and platoon commanders had shaken hands with their men, and wished them luck. Fops and Gog were standing together after they had done so. Gog felt almost a lump in his throat as he gazed on these men with whom he had been so many months. Each man as he had shaken hands with terrible grip had said the same simple thing. "Good-bye, sirr. Sorry you're not going with us;" and he had replied in the same way, "Good-bye; only wish I were with you."

It was heart-breaking this separation of officers from the men they knew, but so it happened in the reserve regiments. Fops was unusually quiet. He only said one word—"Sickening!"

The Colonel rode up, and the draft stood to attention. He addressed them:—

"Men, you have the honour to go out as the first draft of the 11th Battalion of this great regiment. It is a great pain to me that I cannot go with you to lead you, but that is not my fault nor my wish. But whether I am with you or not, the honour of the regiment is in your hands. I have known you, and I leave that honour

with you in perfect confidence that you will never fail, and that you will easily prefer death to any form of dishonour."

At that point the Colonel's voice almost broke. Then he spoke again in thrilling tones:—

"Men of the Gairloch Highlanders, for my sake, for the sake of the regiment, for the sake of King and country, and the cause which we all want to serve, make a great fight of it, and God bless you all!"

The voice of the old man was shaking with emotion as he spoke the last words.

A voice from somewhere shouted, "Three cheers for the Colonel." Three ringing cheers burst on the night air. They died into silence; the pipe band struck up the Gairloch march, and the draft fell into motion for the station.

An hour later the train bearing the draft steamed slowly out of the station amid a whirlwind of cheers and good-byes and a medley of shouting—question and answer, some jesting, some serious—"Good-bye, Wullie. Gi'e the Keyser what he's needin!"—"Aye, aye, we're havin' Christmas in Berlin!"

"Dinna forget, Jock!"—"Never fear! Aa'm no that kind!"

"Catch auld Wullie!"—"Shooar, but it's the Kroon Prince aa'm efter!"

"We're comin' soon!"—"Aye, aye, the mair the merrier! But ye'll find the Gairmans quiet by the time ye get ower!"

"We'll keep the hame fires burning'!"—"Shooar! Keep the auld lum reekin'!"

A forest of great hands and arms waved from the windows of the disappearing train, and the first draft disappeared into the darkness of the night, rushing swiftly on to a world of things as yet unknown.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DAY.

On the following day the camp was quiet, and for several days after that. The men who were left were uneasy and restless, wondering when their time was to come. Officers, too, were unsettled, and drill and other evolutions proceeded monotonously, the voices of sergeants sounding hoarse and weary as they endeavoured to spur a measure of enthusiasm into men who mostly thought they should be somewhere else.

Even Sergeant M'Manus, that excellent man of iron mould, was not so spirited as usual. His correction of a few new recruits whom he was drilling was quite feeble for him. The jokes were there right enough, but the tone of his voice lacked "tang."

"On the command 'Eyes—front!' aa want to see every head go round with a click." In the matter of carriage he gave the old saying but feebly. "Stan' up, man, stan' up! Ye stan' as if ye carried a scimitar down yer back. Aa want to see ye stand erect as if ye kenned ye were wearin' yer faither's claes made doon!"

But the instructor was weary and the recruits were weary. Even they felt as if on three weeks' training they ought to be at the front.

But the hour of every man was coming. Casualties

at the front had been heavy, and lists of casualties of the other battalions began to come in. And as they came in, it became only too apparent that few would have very long to wait.

The first call for officers came exactly a week later, and twenty went away. Then there was another call, and five more went. Finally, so far as Gog is concerned, there was a call for four more, and he and Fops were among the number.

When they heard it they packed up joyfully. "Thank goodness, we're together," said Fops.

"Yes, it's great!" said Gog.

Considering that they were on the business of war it was an exceptional stroke of luck, because war is an affair which seems to separate everybody from the people they would like to be with.

A few moments after the wire came, Macduff was very busy packing up their war-kits. The local telegraph office too was busy sending off wires. And about two hours after they got their orders the boy's mother knew, and Betty and Kitty knew, and Mollie and Dora knew that Fops was going, as well as some others.

A queer business war! All sorts of personal feelings muddled up with the fighting business.

Immediately after the wires were sent off they were laying in stocks of medicine, with the chance of life and death in them. That was just as much a part of war as anything else, and Gog's little medicine chest in fact came in very useful at a later stage.

Three hours after they had received their orders they were standing in the station surrounded by friends, the faithful red-haired Macduff watching jealously over their kits, which contained the latest form of periscope, patent wire-cutters, innumerable socks, sundry articles of a comforting character, deemed by their lady friends to be

indispensable, and many other things calculated to promote efficient battle against the Hun.

The parting of friends was comparatively quiet. By that time the departure of parties to the front had become commonplace, and many of their friends had already gone. "Good-bye, old man! Good luck! Hope to be with you soon!" That, a hearty handshake, and a parting cheer almost comprehends the parting. So soon do things become ordinary, but all the ordinariness does not hide from those who know the real feeling behind.

As the train moved out of the station the Colonel stood waving and smiling kindly. When the train disappeared he walked away with the Major. The Colonel only made one remark: "I've no doubt what Gog'll do," he said; "he's his father's son all over."

"Really," said the Major. "I never met his father, but he's a splendid fellow. So are they all."

In that way they passed out from the care of the 11th Battalion, where they had worked so long.

. . . .

It was six o'clock on the following day when the train rolled into London station. Army orders are imperative, but there was no means of reaching their destination more swiftly, so they remained the night in London.

Every one was at the station to meet them both. Fops' mother and sister were there, and he saw Mollie and Dora later in the evening. Gog's mother and Betty and Kitty were there, and they drove home together in the car.

They were all rather silent in the car for a time. His telegram had come as a surprise. Of course, they all knew he was destined for the battlefield, but war is so sudden. There had been so many delays before, it had

seemed as if he was never to go. But now, in a moment, the order was come and he was going. And he was so young, only twenty past.

The boy smiled happily in the car. He was so glad to be among them for a little before going. Betty sat opposite to him, and her eyes when they looked at him were shining with excitement, but her voice sounded blank when she spoke soon after they entered the car. "You're really going, Gog!"

"Yes," he said simply.

She gazed at him wonderingly. She noticed all the differences about him. He no longer wore a bright flashing sporran; it was replaced by a khaki apron. There was no claymore and no *skean-dhu*. But his hose-tops—ah! Her eyes brightened as she looked at them.

Gog saw her do so, and he laughed. "Yes, your ones," he said.

Gog's mother smiled too. She had her own thoughts, and she was fond of Betty.

Betty noticed, too that his spats were replaced by short khaki puttees, and in the front of the car there was a great shoulder-pack with a revolver, which she knew he would carry.

For a moment her mind dwelt on her imagination of the place to which he was going. It loomed up before her, awful and terrible, a mist of blood and horror.

And he was going there. So she gazed at him wonderingly; but there was no trace of fear about him. He was only a little excited. He was getting his chance, and he was going to fight as his father fought.

As Betty gazed, the boy's confidence even entered her, and a different scene came before her mind. Perhaps he *was* going out to glory and honour, and vague visions of the V.C. and crosses and things of that sort passed before her.

Insensibly she brightened. She had just been daunted for a moment by the suddenness and horribleness of losing him. She had never exactly come to think of what it would be to lose him.

He was talking to his mother. He didn't know where he was going. The orders didn't tell that. Only knew that he had to report to the officer at the port of embarkation. Might be France or Egypt or anywhere.

Owing to the wonderful ways of modern war, the knight was going forth upon his grand crusade in quite the ancient way—not knowing whither he was going, nor what he was to be called on to do. In old-world language, he would come to a certain point which was known by the name of ——, where he would meet a certain man attired in garments with markings thereon by which he should be recognised, and who should be called the embarkation officer, and from that person he would be furnished with further instructions as to his journey.

Indeed this affair of going forth to war was a matter of much stealth and secrecy, a thing which interested Betty. But the more mysterious it was the more terrible it seemed. For her there was something about war which almost seemed to make it entirely men's matter; women were outsiders who had to wait, not knowing much. Such thoughts troubled her. Like Gog, she was young.

While the mother and boy talked, and Betty sat somewhat silent, the car rolled up to the door, where old Saunders came down to meet them, shaking the boy's hand with unmistakable fervour.

Half an hour later they were all seated at dinner, where everything was of the best for the boy's last dinner; but somehow every one was uneasy. There was a feeling of strain in the air.

So when they asked him if he would like to do anything, he jumped at the chance. "Let's go to 'The Peerless Night,'" he said. It was the latest musical comedy running then. "All the boys are having some fun for the last night. Do let's go!"

"Yes, let's!" said Betty eagerly. She was feeling the strain too.

So they went. Gog spoke to his mother as they were going out. "I'm afraid you don't care for it, Mums; but really all you people were looking so—you know——"

His mother nodded.

"And I couldn't stand it. There's no use one getting down in the mouth about it, although I know it's awful for you."

"It's all right, dear," she said softly, "if you like it; and I believe it *is* the best thing for us all."

So they went. And the orchestra played softly, and they bought him chocolates. And there were sweet singers and dancers, who roamed in regions of Arcady dressed as shepherdesses and nymphs and fairies, and sang songs of love and war in the most charming situations.

For him it all formed one last scene from the realms of light and beauty—a scene in which he sat beside his mother and Betty, and was happy; and the scene often came back to his recollection in later days.

There was one song in particular which struck them all with its iteration of the only way. Again and again it rang in their ears—"'Tis the only, only way." But for them, despite all the smartness of the song and the singers and the difference of the circumstances, the phrase found a bearing quite different. To the mother, the course her boy had chosen was for her the only way, because he was her boy and like his father. The boy listened to the song, and he

too thought a little of the only way—without regret. He had taken it. For Betty it was the only way for the boy, because he was her knight. And yet, for the women at least, the acceptance of the fact that the only way for him was to go forth to fight did not make the thing exactly joyous. It is hard to part with some one very dear going out to danger, even when the people who do it are inspired by the loftiest motives.

. . . .

Pass over the rest of these hours. They are all gathered together on the platform. The train is just going. The mother's face is pale, but she is smiling and waving. Old Saunders is enthusiastically waving his hat. Betty's face is whiter than usual, and her eyes are rather bright, but she too is waving with a little white handkerchief. Kitty is there, less troubled than any, heartily laughing as she waves.

The train disappears. The boy has gone to war. Fops is with him. He has received his parting salutes from another window.

. . . .

The motor rolls city-wards. Mr Saunders gazes out of the window, apparently not noticing the white and drawn face of Mrs Macrae. The great effort which she had made on the platform to cheer her boy away is beginning to have its rebound. The restraint had been too much. A tear slowly rolls down her cheek, and she quivers slightly.

The car stops and drops Saunders at his office. "Cheer up, Mrs Macrae," he says gruffly as he gets out. "He'll be all right, I'm sure."

The car turns homewards, and Betty sits close to Mrs Macrae. They are silent in the car, and Betty's face is now very white. Kitty sits absolutely "mum."

Betty feels as if she must cry, but vaguely she thinks her sorrow is different from that of the boy's mother.

When they get home Mrs Macrae says, "I think I'll lie down for a little while."

"Certainly," says Betty.

Mrs Macrae goes out. Betty turns to Kitty. "Isn't it awful," she says. "I never seemed to think it would be like this."

"No," said Kitty vaguely.

It all happens because the boy has gone to war.

PART II.

WAR

CHAPTER XII.

THE STAFF OFFICER.

On the morning when Gog and his companions set out on their train journey from the northern camp to the front, Fops and he were talking quite gaily. They were animated by the same spirit as that with which they had made their first journey to join the army—the spirit of hope and zest in life. The terrors of war were not in their mind, and they thought of little but the great adventure and the great unknown towards which they were rushing. Of course they knew that war was terrible, and meant death and misery and all that to thousands, but that blissful faith in their own particular star, or that cheerful indifference to death, which has characterised so many who have gone out there, was with them too.

It could scarcely be otherwise, for it was the natural result of a training which said that service of country was the most glorious thing of all; which said in Latin, *dulce et decorum*, and in English, that if it had to be, there was no better death to die.

Of course there had been wounded officers back from the front whom they had seen, and who had told various tales, and they had read accounts of desperate things in the newspapers and all that; but it had never really made much impression, because the things referred to

had always been distant. A good many of the officers back from the front, too, had been reticent. Some said it was muddy; some said they didn't care a "tinker's curse" one way or other about it; some said, with a cool smile, that it was unpleasant; a few said they had been through perfect hell; but none of these observations or phrases gave very much information. If they had thought much about it, the lack of detail might have seemed mysterious, but then they didn't think. Their thoughts were much more directed to the fact of the glory of the speaker (whoever he was). He had been to the front, and as a warrior, he was "it." They were still among the untried.

They were going out to show their mettle.

The war aspect of things for them really dated from that first railway journey. Part of the journey truly falls under the war section of the book. and so I have gone back a little to include it here.

At one of the local stations an offi[illegible]ntered their carriage dressed in the usual khaki, with riding breeches and spurs. By his stars he was a lieutenant.

He entered the carriage in a casual way, gave a tip to the porter, flung his stick on the rack, and sat down loungingly in the corner opposite Gog, at whom he stared.

The new-comer did not speak till the train started. While he waited for the train's departure, Gog noticed him. His dress was clearly war-worn, and there were other signs of war about him, though Gog did not then know that war had created them. The lieutenant's eyes twitched, and he moved his position from time to time in a nervous jerky way. He was tall and lean, and his face was pale.

When he spoke it was in a jerky way too, just two words. "Going out?" he queried.

"Yes," said Gog. Unconsciously there was a touch of pride in his voice.

The lieutenant smiled slightly. "First time?" he said, but it was scarcely a query.

Gog nodded. The lieutenant seemed satisfied that his supposition was correct, and he was silent for a time. Then he resumed. "Which Gairlochs are you?"

"Eleventh," said Gog.

"Where do you go?"

"We don't know yet."

The lieutenant nodded idly. "I know your people," he said. "You'll go to the 5th or 6th probably."

"Nobody at home knew," Gog ventured. He did not care to dispute with a man who evidently knew.

"I'm on the Brigadier's staff," the lieutenant explained. "Your 5th Battalion is in the brigade. If you go to them I'll see you often enough."

"What luck to meet you," said Gog joyfully. He liked the lieutenant; he seemed so experienced.

"Yes," the man on the staff answered. His manner was a trifle cynical. "It's pleasant for us in a way to have men coming out full of enthusiasm and all that. I was like that to begin with too, though I'm afraid I've gone off in places." He laughed a sort of half laugh.

"How long have you been out?"

"Almost since the beginning. A deuced sight too long for me."

Gog stared.

"But I don't care now. Since I've got on the staff, I'm out of all the mud and splash, and I don't care." The lieutenant's voice sounded very tired. "It's up to you fresh young bucks to wallow in the mud now."

"I'm very glad you're out of it," said Gog, "after being so long there. It's only fair the new men should

take their turn of the——" he hesitated. He didn't know exactly what to say because he hadn't been there.

The lieutenant nodded, but in a slightly absent way. It was merely as if he understood that kindness was intended. "It's funny to look back," he said. "I remember the time when I was going out just like you, and in a fearful hurry to get there. Couldn't get fast enough, and the whole bally battalion was in the same state. And everybody was shouting about Christmas in Berlin, and tosh of that kind." He paused reminiscently, till he spoke again. "By Jove, we got our eyes opened when we got there!"

Gog listened eagerly. The speaker continued. "Never saw anything like those first days! . . . Never will again, I hope. Fighting nowadays is terrific, and when the big push comes it'll be more so; but I don't think there ever can be anything like that for our side again."

"No?" The boy was full of question and interest, but the lieutenant almost seemed to have forgotten that he was talking. His eyes were gazing into some scene far away. Gog had to remind him before he spoke again. "I-n what way are things different?"

"Different?" The lieutenant stared at him. "Oh yes." It seemed as if the fire of his narrative had died, and as if he hardly wished to say anything more. "Just this difference," he said quietly, "that in those days you couldn't kill the Boches fast enough. There were such mobs of them. No sooner had you bowled over one lot than another came rolling on after them. And all the time we were killing them, it was march-march-march day and night. And when the order to halt came, the men were so tired that they fell down and slept where they stood. And, by heaven, it was a

work to get a move on again; and you had to order other people to move, when you were so tired yourself you could hardly speak. . . . I remember the major lost his voice altogether after we'd been going nearly a week. We'd had had nothing to eat for a day and a night, and had been marching almost continuously all the same. His face had gone sort of white, and his eyes were standing out of his head a bit; when he tried to give the order, he only whispered; when he found he couldn't speak, he signed to me, and I understood."

Gog stared wonderingly at the man who had been through so much. He scarcely knew what to say to him, though he wished he would go on talking. The boy raked his mind for something to say that would keep the lieutenant speaking. Fortunately Fops joined in. "Were you ever nearly captured?" he asked.

"Ever?" The lieutenant laughed grimly. "How we ever escaped is the remarkable thing," he said. "I've never talked much to anybody about all that show," he continued. "It's only because you're new, and it brought back the memory of things, and started me. That's all. But, if you want to know, you may as well. You're soldiers, too, and you'll have to stick it sooner or later, though never as bad as that I hope. And I hope you'll be hounds instead of the hares." He paused and thought a little before he resumed. "You ask if we were ever nearly captured? . . . Looking back, I should say that there were at least half a dozen times when, from a military point of view, I wouldn't, in theory, give sixpence for the chances we had. We came out through good regimental officers and good discipline, the stubborn qualities of the British Tommy, and a big slice of sheer luck. These are the only reasons that I know that brought us through.

About the general orders, and the generalship at the top, I don't pretend to know. So far as I saw with my battalion, we fought on our own and saw precious little of anybody else—the only thing we knew we had to do was retire fighting, and we did it. . . . I can remember one narrow shave, quite like a lot of others which you might like to hear. . . . We'd been marching all morning with the Boche columns coming after us only about a mile or two behind (nearer than we thought), and we were going along a road, when we had to turn off beside a wood down a different narrow road, which formed a sort of triangle with another road, also turning off the main road about a quarter of mile farther on. We went down the narrow road forming one side of the triangle. A column of men whom we couldn't see for the woods were going down the other side of the triangle. On our right there was Boche artillery firing from some hills. It was a dark morning, but when we got past the wood which hid the other column, we saw the men marching, and they saw us, but neither side did anything but march. In the dark neither of us were certain who the others were. The Boche artillery on the right started firing on us. We had no artillery to help us, and no machine-guns. The Boche shooting was poor, but they knocked out a few men with one shell. We marched on. About a mile away lay the end of the triangle. Between the marching men and us were some fields, broken up with ditches, and the enemy were far more numerous than we. By that time we, at least, were certain that the men on the other road were Boches. Don't know what the Boches thought, but I expect they were marching to cut us off. Our column had the start by about 400 yards, but we were dead tired and losing ground. Things didn't look well, but the Boches were

cocksure in those days, and they marched on. They thought they'd got us, and we could see them urging their men on." The lieutenant paused to think for a moment. "Two hundred yards from the end of the triangle, the Boches were about 300 yards from us, and there was a stone wall between us and the Boche for the last 200 yards. Word passed down our line quietly. The major gave a signal, and before the enemy had grasped the situation, our fellows were lying in the ditch at the roadside giving them ten rounds rapid. . . . As they were in column you absolutely couldn't miss, and the front of their line went down like nine-pins. Those that were left were lying down, and getting into fighting position, but by that time our lot were doubling along to the cover of the stone wall that ran the last 200 yards. The Boches started marching on again as soon as they recovered and grasped the situation, but we had got out." The lieutenant finished quietly.

"Some fighting!" said Fops.

"Not bad," said the lieutenant, "considering that the men had had nothing to eat or drink all that day, and their boots were bursting and their feet were swollen and blistered, and some of them were marching without boots at all."

Both the listeners were silent. As the lieutenant ceased, the train stopped at a local station. "Can I get anything to eat here?" said the lieutenant. His face had a hungry look.

"Not here," said Gog. "Not for several stations yet."

"Can't I?" The voice rang with disappointment. "I started from the northmost point very early, and I'm hungry," he explained. "At the front one gets into the way of living to eat, because there's no other amusement to be had. And it isn't cheery to come home, and

be on a bally line where you can't get anything to eat. I think the recollection of the Mons days has made me hungry for life."

"Worst line I ever struck," Fops interjected.

"So I see. Four more stations," the lieutenant muttered gloomily. "I've only had seven days' leave. I've spent two of them on the train getting home since my people went to this out-of-the-way hole, and these two have been uncomfortable. . . ." He stared out of the window gloomily. Then he resumed inconsequently: "This is the third time I've had leave. Every time I go to the front my mother does a weep, and my sisters look soppy. . . . It's rank bad luck on women this war—rank bad luck. They've nothing to do but sit at home and think about it. . . . I don't care a damn; not since I'm on the staff anyway. I'm with the Brigadier at headquarters, and he runs the Mess, and we're quite well fed. We haven't any great danger more than about three days a week, and we haven't to muck about in the filthy trenches. So what's abaht it? as somebody says. This trench war's the stalest game on earth, but somebody's got ter do it. . . . I'd have been a captain now if I'd stuck in the bally trenches; but when I got a chance of going with the staff, I thought I'd done my bit in the mud, and I'd have a chance of being clean anyway."

With that remark, he turned to read a magazine.

A few stations further on he made hurriedly for the refreshment bar.

At Perth he quitted the train. He was one type of war,—one of the many whom Gog was to meet. But his talk supplied an introduction to the war. He appeared and disappeared, as men do who are in the game. "Good-bye. Good luck! . . . Glad to see you, if you come to us. . . . Cheery-oh!"

CHAPTER XIII.

POUR LA PATRIE.

THE tales of the Staff officer made their impression on Gog for the time, but with "The Peerless Night" and his mother and Betty coming after, the thought of war's hardships and horrors was dimmed. But the hour of parting had not been made easier by the Staff man's remarks on relatives. The idea of self-pity had not entered his head—he was too eager to go and too healthy for that; but the shrinking from the giving of pain to other people, and the parting from those people—that was where the thing really cut.

After the train journey from London to the port was over, he met Fops again and little Shaw, and together they boarded the cross-Channel boat. While the boat was being loaded they had time to look round. Having come on board they could not leave, for they had again passed out of the region of civilian doings, and were under military supervision.

The derricks gurgled and whirled, and the cranes lowered case after case into the steamer's hold. At the same time the boat gradually filled with a miscellaneous crowd of passengers—a few Staff officers, red-tabbed and glorious; a few nurses, some of them pale-faced and worn, and others fresh-faced and resolute, all neat and smart. Gog and his friends idly speculated about their companions. Who were the Staff men? There was a

full colonel, portly but dignified, rather of the John Bull type, a major, as lean and hard-looking as the colonel was not, and a few captains of various types.

Of the boys' talk about the nurses — well, they thought that one particularly worn-looking nurse must have been out before. That was all the talk which could be described as purely war talk. For the rest, the conversation was conducted chiefly by Shaw and Fops, though Gog listened interestedly.

There was a little group of nurses standing near them —one nurse, a pretty girl, was gazing pensively over the ship's rail into the blue water below. She was one of those happy nurses, for whom the blue uniform was a "matching" robe, and Fops' ever-ready enthusiasm was aroused.

"By Jove, she's a lovely girl!" he confided to Shaw.

"You bet she is," was the cordial assent.

"I wonder who she can be?"

Shaw shook his head gloomily.

"She looks quite like the portrait of Lady Somebody-or-other—I forget her name—which appeared in the 'Tatler' the other day."

"So she does. I wonder if she could be——"

Fops shook his head in turn doubtfully. He gazed on the vision absent-mindedly, until she turned suddenly and looked at him. He looked away with a slight start.

The vision joined her companions, and a few moments later all the nurses went below. As they went the vision remarked to one of her companions, "How nice those Highland boys look! . . . But how young!"

"Yes," said her companion, who was of a practical turn of mind, "but I wonder they don't wear their coats in this cold wind. I should think their legs must be frightfully cold."

When the nurses had gone below, there was leisure to

look at the completion of the loading and at some other passengers. These last passengers were mostly civilians; several ladies, who had the appearance of being refugees, French or Belgian, and a few men, including one of distinguished appearance. The boys wondered idly if he was a political agent, or engaged in some diplomatic work. There also came a few more nurses, marked by their talk as Canadians.

And they were all going across together on the great business of war, or for reasons connected with war. Yet the majority were chatting calmly as if nothing particular were happening. The Staff major was talking to the colonel of the last rough Channel crossing he had had, and of delay in transit generally. Part of the boys' talk has been indicated. The nurses were slightly affected by the scene; those who were going out for the first time carried themselves as if touched by nervousness, though it was well controlled; those who had been before were as emotionless as the men. The people of the refugee type seemed mainly anxious about their baggage.

Excepting the refugees, the scene was emotionless and British to the core. They were just an everyday selection of the Empire's sons and daughters going out to fight, either the enemy or the death created by the enemy.

As the boat left the quay the scene was quiet. Very few men were on the quay, and they were all in uniform. A soldier was standing with a fixed bayonet guarding the office and sheds. He stood motionless as the boat moved out. The other figures quickly disappeared, leaving the sentry alone.

As the ship disappeared he was still standing motionless, a lonely, silent figure, standing on a great quay, mutely affirming that Britain was at war.

As the ship steamed farther out, she entered a bank of mist and the white outline of the cliffs disappeared.

Most of the passengers watched till the cliffs were lost to view. Then they sat on deck covered in rugs, or went below. A few glanced at the life-belts which were hung around in case they might need them, but most troubled little, for they were sailing the sea which the Navy keeps.

. . . .

It was a dark and silent sea which they sailed. There was an air of mystery about it, but nothing happened, for Britain's greatest trench was too securely held.

A few hours later there loomed out of the darkness the outline of a great pier, on which a few scattered lights were burning, but there was little that could be seen. It was only when they had passed up the harbour and anchored that signs of life could be seen, and the first sign that greeted their eyes was that of a French sentry in a blue uniform with a fixed bayonet, also silently proclaiming France's war. But how differently he proclaimed it, and the difference is so typical.

The British sentry—still, mute, emotionless—change his garb, and he might have stood for the sentry at Pompeii's gate, whom the molten lava could not move. The French sentry, with baggy trousers, watchfully on guard, but in such a different way. His rifle and bayonet were nursed across him like a baby which he loved, and he stood in a pensive attitude benevolently surveying the landing of his Allies. I do not say that he would have moved for the lava either, but I am certain he would have been found in a different attitude.

. . . .

Out into the darkness of the night and the hurly-burly of the quay Gog and his friends plunged. Past transport waggons, past goods waggons, and engines and

shunting trains—all the confusion of a great debarkation harbour—they hurried. On to the next place where orders could be got. Then on again to the hotel, which was filled with officers going up and coming back, and all or nearly all in a desperate hurry. A hurried dinner, then on to the train for the base—"somewhere in France." Several hours of train journey, then out of the train and into the motor transport—about one o'clock in the morning by this time—then on again on foot where the transport could not go.

At last—a ghostly officer in a greatcoat, with a lantern, leading the way across sand to some tents not visible until the light displays them.

The officer talks a little in a kind though wearied way.

"Heard you were coming in late to-night. . . . Beastly system they have of sending men down at unearthly hours. However—war's war, and it can't be helped. Had anything to eat?"

Gog assented.

"Good," he murmured, "because I couldn't do much at this time of night. Got a few empty tents here; daresay you'll be able to doss down all right for the night. There they are. Got your kits? Yes. All right. Got flash-lamps? . . . Good, then you can carry on. You'll go to your depôts in the morning. Good-night. Hope you sleep well."

"Good-night!" sounded from them all. So they were placed with great literalness "somewhere in France" (they did not know where, as it had all been done in the dark), to spend their first service night on wooden tent-floors, which felt hard after the delightfully soft beds they had had in London only the night before. But they slept well.

In the morning the full glory of the scene broke upon

them. The ground amid which they were placed consisted of low undulating hills of grass and sand, to the back of which stretched great woods. To right and left and in front, as far as the eye could reach. stretched camp after camp—miles upon miles of tents of every description. White-coloured and khaki, and brown, and even green and white. Every effort of the tent-painting artist had been used to make the tents invisible to hostile aeroplanes, and the result was amazingly picturesque, blended as it all was with fine natural scenery.

As the three stood together outside the tents they literally sniffed the air, and it was good, and they felt the scene thrilling. It was almost war at last, and these were but a small part of the tents of the greatest crusade ever known, and they were to bear a share in the crusade. And already they could see columns of men marching along the roads, while the fires of the camp kitchens smoked idly in places.

"There must be tens of thousands here," said Gog.

"Shouldn't wonder if there are hundreds of thousands," said Fops.

"Cheer-oh!" said Shaw gaily. "We don't have much money but we do see life!"

A couple of hours later they were transferred to their depôt, and became for the time part of the reserve troops at the base.

And it is written in the laws of the British army that subalterns shall not be idle in war-time if that state can be avoided, so work was found for them. They were given men to handle—not small numbers like platoons—but men in hundreds, notwithstanding they were only subalterns.

And all the things that they had done at home they did here too, from Salome exercises to the latest evolu-

tions of military warfare; but these things were done even more vigorously at the base, because the adjutant of the depôt was a stern man and strong on discipline. There even came to be an occasion when a night attack was made upon trenches the like of which Gog had never seen, and was never to see again. They were, in fact, perfect trenches—the model to which man may aspire, put there for the guidance of eager subalterns. But even that night attack and defence, marvellously concocted as it was, was as nothing to the real business. Yet in those days it seemed wonderful, for there were bombs exploding, and star-shells blazing, and Maxim guns banging in concealed pits; and even, most marvellous "stunt" of all, there was a "gentle" mine which exploded, throwing up clouds of sand. Further, there was an expenditure of blank ammunition, the like of which was never seen at home.

Altogether, it was very enjoyable and amusing. People at home who do not fight, but like fireworks exhibitions, would have been delighted with the show, for the scene was certainly just as near war as is possible to be had—but for all that totally unlike war.

For Gog and his friends it was the last scene of "make-believe" war.

On the following afternoon they received orders for the front.

. . . .

There is just one scene more at the base which must be told.

The adjutant was a stern man and a great disciplinarian, but after work was completed he was the soul of kindness, as stern men often are. He therefore found no difficulty in granting leave to hard-working subalterns for the few hours after duty.

Now the base was not far from the sea, and at the

sea there was a French watering-place with cafés and hotels and other places of entertainment.

And kilted subalterns added to the gaiety of the place, and generally did their share in the *entente cordiale*. Besides, there is about soldiering, even in these days, a certain freedom and vivacity of life tending to *camaraderie* and *bonhomie*. And three subalterns, in great fighting condition and belonging to a great regiment, were absent-mindedly apt to "swing their kilts" a little, feeling perhaps a flavour of the spirit of adventure which infected D'Artagnan and his musketeers, all the more because they were engaged on that same romantic soil.

On the other hand, such French ladies as lived there were charmingly disposed to the British.

All these three subalterns were fully aware of the great command "to avoid any undue intimacy," and obeyed the order. But that is something very different from the *camaraderie* which is the true spirit of the *entente*.

For all these reasons and others it happened that Gog and his friends sometimes dined at the Hotel D'Artagnan, which was a little and very French hotel, presided over by a little old Breton lady with one charming daughter and two attractive ones—three in all. On account of the greater simplicity of French life and the calls of war, the family ran the hotel with the assistance of a few maid-servants; but the whole thing was very domestic, and between the *camaraderie* of Fops, the admiration of Shaw, and the knowledge of the French language which Gog possessed, the dinners gradually grew more social in character. And Lisette, with her brown eyes and tender smile, was nearly always there or thereabouts.

And Lisette was French, very French, and did not

well understand the thoughts and ways of these Highland boys. But she loved the kilt, and loved them all with a generous enthusiasm because they had all come to save her country. But her thoughts centred on one in particular, and she watched him with big eyes, while she watched them all, wondering a little at their ways.

She sometimes said a little what she thought, but not much. If Fops flattered — done in broken French, assisted at times by Gog, she only laughed. For "Monsieur Fops"—she did not know. He was a "*galant.*"

For "Monsieur Shaw"—he was a "*grand petit,*" but obviously did not matter.

For "Monsieur Gog"—Ah! She did not say.

But Fops and Shaw ragged Gog about it, and so it happened that when the last night came there was a chorus of shouts, "You must say good-bye to Lisette."

And Gog was a little troubled. He wondered. Because she was a charming girl, and he had no wish to hurt her.

So they all went to the Hotel D'Artagnan for the last time, and when they told Lisette that they were going up to fight, she became very quiet.

"You go up to fight," she said. "When do you come back again?"

"We cannot tell."

She stared dumbly.

When the moment of parting came she shook hands with two at the door in the darkness of the street. The third was Gog. She took his hand, then suddenly and swiftly, before he even understood, she put her arm round his neck and kissed him, while she whispered, "*Pour la patrie!*"

. . . .

I do not know whether it was altogether "*pour la*

patrie" or not. But I have told the story because there is no other of the kind that can be told.

The boy wrote home to his mother that night:—

"My dear Mums,—Just a line to say that we are going up to the front somewhere to-morrow to join the 6th Battalion. We have been very comfortable here, and had quite a good time really. We spent our last evening, and had our last dinner together in the Hotel D'Artagnan, where the people have been very kind to us. All the French people we have met have been friendly, and the hotel people were especially kind, giving us the best of everything, and they weren't at all dear in their charges. The kilt seems to be as popular here as everywhere else, which is rather nice for us.

"As we go up to-morrow, I suppose that will absolutely put an end to our 'soft' times, and there'll be no more little dinners and pleasant evenings, but we've enjoyed them while we had them. We're all as fit as fiddles and eager to buck into the work. I hope you're not worrying about me, because I've been very well off so far, and though we are going up for the real thing to-morrow, I expect we'll be all right.

"Keep well and happy, Mums, dear, and don't worry. —With love, yours always, Gog."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLEEDIN' OPTIMIST.

EACH of the three had separate orders, amounting to much the same thing. "2nd Lieutenant Macrae to conduct a draft of 4 N.C.O.'s and 80 men to the Royal Tweed Fusiliers. Thereafter at once to report to the 6th Battalion Gairloch Highlanders."

Six o'clock the following morning found Gog standing in front of 84 Fusiliers to be conducted to their battalion near the firing line. A sergeant was slowly calling the roll of the men. On completion he saluted. Papers were handed to Gog with the necessary authority. Every man received his "iron" emergency ration. Then they marched off.

Seven o'clock found them standing in the station awaiting the train. While the men were standing "at ease," they chattered and laughed at times. The draft was a mixed one. A number of them had been there before. They talked little. The new men, however, were a little excited. Some of them were keen to be there and were inclined to be noisy.

That did not commend itself to the soul of one of the corporals, a man of martial bearing and rather gaunt face. "What's all the noise about, lads?" he said. "What's all the noise about, eh?"

The noise subsided somewhat. The corporal stared

at the new hands in their boyish enthusiasm. In a way he was not displeased, but war was a grim business, the iron of which had entered his soul to some extent, and light-hearted laughter sounded strange in his ears. It was the laughter not of men of war, but of boys going up.

"Have you never heard the sergeant-major's tale?" he asked suddenly. "The man that was B company's sergeant-major?"

"Na, niver."

A little crowd gathered round the corporal, but the tale easily carried to Gog's ears, borne with the stern notes of the corporal's voice. "The story I'm to tell you is the one that's known in the battalion as the tale of the bleedin' optimist. It comes from the early days of the war, when the battalion was going out for the first time." So the corporal began the story. "When the news of war arrived, and a few days later the orders came to get ready for the front, there was some excitement in the battalion. When the night arrived before the morning on which they had to entrain for the front, half the men got wildly excited, and spent any spare time they could get in havin' a good time, and cheerin', and the like, and they kept it up right down to the starting of the train. And it was particular so in B company, and the sergeant-major, when he heard and saw it all, he only smiled in a dry way. Then he spoke to them, and says, 'Boys, there's no use being so bleedin' 'appy about it! What d'ye think's goin' to happen? Ye're only goin' to be stuck in a train, about 17 in a carriage, and kept riding all day, like enough with precious little to eat. There isn't any particular joy in that.'

"And what happened? Well, as he said we would be treated, so we wos. Things wasn't organised in those

days even as they are now, with penny cups o' tea at the stations, and bonnie lassies to hand them oot.

"Well, the next thing that happened was at the boat, and some of the lads were fearful pleased and excited, and there was quite a crowd on the quay to see us off. And half of them were shoutin', 'Berlin in a week's time,' 'What the 'ell do we care?' and wavin' 'Good-bye, Lizzie,' and the like. And the sergeant-major when he saw it all, he only smiled in his dry way, and said, 'There's no use bein' so bleedin' 'appy about it. You'll only be kept on the boat for hours, and t[illegible]d about, and battened under the hatches, because [illegible] [illegible]oin' to be choppy, and be sea-sick. And at the end of it all ye'll be put ashore and marched for hours on an empty stomach. There ain't any particular joy in that.'

"And what happened? Well, as he said we would be treated, so we wos, and about half of them were sea-sick.

"But after we'd had a night's rest on the blamed hard floor of a disused factory, the boys was happy again, and when they got to the train that was to take them to the front, they was smilin' and cheerin', and makin' a noise just like you." The corporal nodded to his hearers, then continued his tale.

"Well, the sergeant-major, he says again, 'There's no use bein' so bleedin' 'appy about it. Ye're only goin' to be put 40 of ye at once in a bloomin' truck, without any seat and not much in the way of windows, and kept there all day in a damn slow train, with precious little to eat, and a thirst that'll make ye want to empty yer water-bottle every five minutes after ye've drunk it. There ain't any particular joy in that.'

"And what happened? Well, as he said we would

be treated, so we wos. And a lot o' the men was half mad with thirst, though things wasn't so well organised for water at the stations as they are now—which is to your good.

"But after the train journey, the boys forgot it all, and began to look cheerful again, and test their bayonets, and generally look like fighting. They wos goin' to show the Gairmans things, they wos. And when they heard they were goin' right up at once, the boys was as gay as could be again. They were goin' to show their mettle. But the sergeant-major, when he saw it all, he only smiled in his dry way, and says, 'There's no use bein' so bleedin' 'appy about it. Ye're only goin' to march with a pack on yer back and 200 rounds of ammunition in front, all day and night until yer legs are sore and yer feet feel fit to burst. After that ye're only goin' to work yer rifle all day until it's so hot ye can 'ardly hold it, and while ye're doin' it ye'll get yer change in Mauser bullets, also in shell-fire, which'll blow half o' ye into smithereens. There ain't any particular joy in that.'

"And what happened? As he said we would be treated, so we wos, and worse. And the sergeant-major himself was among the men that was blown to smithereens." The corporal added meditatively, "Though I'm told he died quite cool and casual, just like as if he'd been expectin' it."

A sergeant was standing near, and he chimed in, "And seein' he's gone, aa'm no shooar but it was a good job too, for that sergeant-major was the maist awful wet blanket that ever was. It seemed as if the battalion never could do anything richt until he was gone, for his prophecies always came true. After he was gone, they did quite well." The sergeant shared with the corporal the desire to do justice to the dead,

and he too added meditatively, "But he was a grand soldier for all that."

Gog was not displeased to hear the sergeant's addition to the corporal's tale, because he was himself an optimist of a more simple type than the "bleedin' optimist." The little group of cheerful Tweed Fusiliers were in no way damped by the tale. They began to discuss what was the opposite of an optimist, and the superior education of one enabled them to decide that the tale ought to have been called that of "the bleedin' pessimist."

As far as the facts known to them went, the sergeant-major's description of the railway journey at least was not inaccurate. When the train arrived in the station, they found themselves distributed in thirty-fives in trucks of "Hommes." And they journeyed all day, and more into the darkness of the night.

It was very dark when they arrived in the station, which they subsequently knew as the last in use behind the firing line, and the rain poured down with pitiless force; there were literally sheets of water.

Gog presented his papers. The procedure was simplicity itself. The Railway Transport Officer glanced at the papers. "Tweed Fusiliers?" he said, glancing at Gog.

"Yes, sir?"

"Right. Got 'em all? . . . Got your guide? . . . Good, then march off when you're ready."

In the darkness of a siding the men were counted, and they marched forth, led by the guide.

The night was so dark that the sides of the houses of the streets through which they passed loomed up around them as great indistinguishable masses. A few transport carts here and there flashed their lamps around, giving an occasional glimpse of the surroundings.

After a time they passed out of the town and it became a little lighter. They were splashing through seas of mud on roads which so far as could be seen were flanked on both sides by open fields with ditches.

Suddenly there came a great flash of light on the roadway, coming from round a corner. Immediately after, the strong acetylene light of a motor blazed full on the draft. The men crowded to the side, and the motor growled and jerked past.

The light had somewhat startled Gog, for he did not know where he was. He turned to the guide. "How far are we behind the firing line?"

"About seven miles, sir."

Gog meditated. He had eighty men to protect. "Are we in any danger?"

"Not much, sir. Not on a night like this."

They marched on in silence. The rain was not so heavy now, and the atmosphere seemed to have grown slightly more clear. They had covered about two miles from the town when the first sound of war met their ears. From the distance on the right there was borne to them on the wet-laden air a long low sound, like a prolonged moan, "Boo-oo-oom!" It was followed by another and another at a few moments' interval. Then silence again.

Gog realised a slight feeling of tension, or suppressed excitement. There was no mistake now. He was on the verge of the real thing. Yet the boom of the distant guns had an almost luring sound. It was a case of distance lends enchantment—because the sound of guns close at hand is not enjoyable.

If Gog had been alone in command of the men, he might have been considerably excited, but the presence of the guide gave him confidence. The man marched stolidly on.

Soon after the guns had ceased to fire, the sky became illuminated periodically on the right, in the direction from which the sound of the guns had come. With the peculiar conditions of the night, the effect of the star-shells, seen from the distance, was to Gog exceedingly weird, though the time was at hand when they were to become for him, as to millions of others, among the commonplaces of night-work.

The star-shells died out for a time, and the night became darker again. It was not possible to see more than fifteen yards in front. As they tramped on, Gog stared ahead of him from time to time, but a large amount of his attention was taken up with marching—the road being so rut-broken and holed that it was not easy to walk on.

There was nothing to be heard but the swish and splash of the marching feet behind, and the intermittent murmur of men's voices as they blundered along the road. With the seas of mud underfoot, and the pouring rain, the night was hard on the men. They were very wet. Gog heard some of them talking. "What price the bleedin' optimist now, eh? No far out, if ye ask me."

"Na, but our boots arena burst yet."

"Mine are lettin' in the wa-ter onyway. That's burst enough for me."

There was no answer, and they trudged on silently.

As they marched, a voice suddenly broke the silence, "Halt!"

Gog gave the order to halt.

"Who goes there?"

"Draft of the 8th Royal Tweed Fusiliers."

"Pass draft of the 8th Royal Tweed Fusiliers."

"Advance!"

They marched on. The challenge had made the boy

start slightly. Everything impressed him. This was his first war challenge, and it seemed so sudden and different. How often at home he had instructed men in all that, but here he was challenged with it, and if they had not halted, the challenge would have been followed by a bullet.

The boy gazed at the sentry as he passed him. He was scarcely visible, his figure half-hidden in a hedge. The attitude of hiding at that place was probably more due to the rain than to a desire for concealment.

They still marched on. The way seemed interminable, and the men behind were again "grousing" at the rain and the mud and the world in general. They passed through a village in which there were no lights, but there were numerous cars with lamps and many waggons, and out of a barn there came sounds of laughter and talk. A door opened suddenly, flinging a shaft of light across the road. At the same moment there broke out the sound of a powerful voice singing roysterously, "On the Mississippi! On the Mississippi!" The door banged and the sounds died away as they marched on.

Gog caught a snatch of talk between some Staff officers beside a car on the road.

"All the drafts will be complete to-morrow?"

"Yes. They're coming up to-night."

"Then the brigade will be complete by the end of the week?"

"Yes."

"Good."

That was all he heard. It was difficult to see, but he thought that one of the officers was a Brigadier. He wondered if one of the drafts referred to was the draft he was leading.

As in so many things in war, there was no answer to his thoughts.

They passed out of the village, and about half an hour later entered a field and waded ankle-deep to a camp of tents.

A sergeant-major appeared with a flash-lamp. "The draft, sir?"

"Yes, and these are the papers."

The sergeant-major counted his men. They were all there, and Gog's task of conducting a draft to the front line was finished.

He retraced his steps in order to report to the 6th Battalion Gairloch Highlanders.

He had about four miles to go, and the road was not exactly the same. He had been guided out of the camp, but the guide had left him at the main road. "Be sure and take the second turn to the right, sir. The left leads straight into the trenches." So he had been left to paddle his own canoe (rather literally owing to the mud), and he trudged along the roads of Belgium at midnight on a pitch-dark night.

It's extraordinary how solitary vast expanses of land behind the firing line can be. He marched on and on, and it seemed endless, but he met no one. Once he saw what looked like a figure crouching in the hedge. He put his hand to his revolver quickly. He had loaded it on his way up. A moment later he half laughed at himself, for it was only a bush.

He reflected that there might be spies about, but in his fear of being afraid, he was inclined to blame himself for his precaution.

Nevertheless it was very solitary marching all alone through almost pitch darkness in a country of which he knew absolutely nothing. He was not afraid, but it was eerie.

An hour later he reached the camp, and the Highland sentry's challenge sounded familiar and pleasing in his ears.

When he lay down an hour later on the floor of the tent which the adjutant had shown him, he was glad that he had successfully finished his first war task, however simple it might appear to old hands.

In the morning he discussed things with Fops and Shaw, who had both done similar work.

"Didn't like it a bit," said Fops. "Most demned dark and unpleasant it was. And I had the shivers six times on the way back, between spectres and cold."

"I slew three Boches on the way back!" said Shaw.

"Li-arr!" said two voices emphatically.

Shaw grinned cheerfully.

. . . .

In the morning they found themselves camped deep among the inevitable mud. On the adjutant's suggestion they all transferred with joy to the comfort of a bare room in a farmhouse.

Fops, in a letter home, described the farmhouse as a dwelling "with inferior sanitary arrangements."

Gog's letter to Betty also deals with their billet.

"6th Bn. Gairloch Highlanders,
B.E.F.

"Dear Betty,—I got up here last night along with Fops and Shaw. We each brought up a draft of men for other battalions, and then returned here. As I came up, I heard the sound of what Fops calls the "jolly guns" for the first time, and saw some star-shells. The march up was fearful with mud, and I got a silly shock once coming back alone; felt for my revolver, but of course it was nothing, just a bush in the dark.

"We are now quartered in a farmhouse. My company

commander, Fops, and myself are in one room on the basement. We look out on the square of a farm-steading, in the centre of which there is a vast puddle, and a stone kennel with a savage dog, which tries to bite you every time you pass. A lot of the men are in the lofts and barns. This house has not been shelled so far, and we are quite safe, I think. The people in the house are Flemish, and very funny. We have to go through their kitchen every time we go out, and the scenes are rather comic. I need not say the ladies are not beautiful, but appear useful! They have various odd pictures and trinkets in the kitchen. Fops talks of it as the 'Baker Street Bazaar!'

"Just at the edge of our room is a small annexe to the house, where they keep a few large pigs. We are at present getting excellent bacon for breakfast, and I think there is some connection.

"We have not seen much of our company commander so far, but he looks a splendid fellow, and I'm sure we'll be all right under him.

"We are all quite jolly, and enjoying the newness of everything. We are also quite well fed, so there's nothing to trouble about at present. I believe we may go up to the front line sometime shortly.

"I do hope you're all as happy as can be. I should like to see you all sometimes, but apart from that, I feel very well and cheery. I look at your photo now and then. Write me soon. The post is irregular just now, I'm told.

"Best regards to all.—Yours always, GOG."

CHAPTER XV.

FIRST TIME UP.

THE men of Captain Napier's company were billeted in a barn abutting on the quarters where the captain and his officers (including Gog) slept. On the second morning of his arrival Gog was awakened by the sound of tones which seemed familiar, proceeding through the open window. There was a tincture of Highland accent mingled with a flavour of Glasgow Green. Gog opened his eyes wider and began to listen.

"Hev ye seen the laddies whateffer?"

"Na. What laddies?"

"The awficers."

"Na."

"They're just new oot. There's Maister Graham—the awfu' dandy they ca'd Fops, ye ken. And Maister Macrae and Maister Shaw."

"Eh, I'm glad o' that. It's nice to see a kent face amang the awficers."

"Aye. Aa wonder hoo they'll like it. That Fops chap—he'll no' be that able to be doin' the grand noo, wi' aw the mud and awthing."

Gog shook with laughter as he gazed on Fops, also awake to the conversation. Fops' face was a study in mingled humour and consternation. The fact that Cap-

tain Napier was also awake, and listening with an expression of amused enjoyment on his face, did not add to Fops' comfort.

The conversation proceeded, totally oblivious of the fact that the officers were hearing it.

"He'll no' be able to have his brass buttons cleaned any more. Macduff used to say he was awfu' pernick aboot that. . . . But I dinna think he was a bad awficer for aw his little weys."

"Na. He was a guid awficer. He had just a few cantrips o' his ain, but they didna signify."

At this point Captain Napier's smile broadened considerably. At the same moment Fops' pyjama-clad figure escaped from the cover of his Wolseley valise, and appeared at the window, from which he roared, "M'Toucan, will you stop talking, and get on with your work!"

M'Toucan was standing in the farm square, attired in his shirt and kilt, with a piece of soap in his hand, and was apparently proceeding in the direction of a bath full of water. In his amazement at the sudden apparition he dropped the soap. Wullie Mackay disappeared rapidly round the corner.

When M'Toucan had recovered his senses, he said, "Beggin' yer pardon, sir——" But Fops had gone back to cover.

M'Toucan picked up his soap ruefully. He discussed the matter with Wullie later. "I dinna think he could a been hurt, cos we didna say a thing aboot him that wasna nice. But what for did he blaw oot like that for?"

"I dinna ken," said Wullie. "Think it must ha' been deesciplin. There's a rule somewhere that ye manna speak aboot an awficer."

"Eh, aa see," said M'Toucan. "There's a feck o' rules

in the army." A thing which is very true, and has often troubled members of the new army, but it hadn't been a question of rule that time. It had been rather a matter of unconscious raillery, and it took Fops many days to recover from M'Toucan's tongue, since Captain Napier had an inconveniently good memory, and made occasional references to "people who did the grand," and who had "cantrips."

During the week which followed, the platoon commanders spent most of their time with Captain Napier, or under his eye, and they discovered that he had many qualities besides that of caustic comment.

He was an old army regular transferred to a battalion of the new army ("for his sins," was his own way of putting it). He was tall and strong, with a pair of keen grey eyes that seemed to notice everything that was going on, and the new men discovered without waiting long that he emphatically knew his work. There seemed to be few situations which he was not immediately ready to tackle. Because of all that he inspired confidence, and in time he became for Gog one of his two ideal soldiers. Seagrim had been to him for a while almost an ideal man, he had seemed so good; but for Gog it came to be that even Seagrim was not so great as Napier.

Gog's other ideal soldier was the sergeant-major of the company—a reservist (one of the dug-outs), and a man if ever there was one. Six feet high, broad and strong, standing firm in his kilt, with great knees that bore on them the scars of service done for the Empire over half the earth. His voice had in it a clarion note that alternately thundered against the slacker and cheered the weary. In the worst hour Sergeant-Major Dalziel was a man whom no danger could shake or make afraid, and on whom the most troubled had only

to look in order to gain fresh hope; in the best hour he was the most ready to be happy and joyous.

Gog met the sergeant-major first on the roadway going up to the trenches on relieving for the first time. The sergeant-major had been home on seven days' leave prior to that. Before going up, the week had been spent in reorganising the company by incorporating men of new drafts, and generally fitting them for renewed activity.

There were, however, only about 40 fresh men. The rest had been fighting off and on for months, and they were weary enough, some of them. The sergeant-major knew all that, and Gog obtained the first glimpse of his real kindliness under the fierce exterior—a kindliness which every one knew.

The march up to the trenches, at the part of the line they were taking over, was long, and the men were heavily burdened, each in "Christmas-tree order," with his pack, his rifle, his ammunition, a few sandbags, and all the other etceteras. And the road as always was slippery and sodden, with ankle-deep mud over the fields. So a few of the men were weary and inclined to lag. With the weight of their packs sagging on their shoulders, and the dead-weight of ammunition in front, all weighing down from the top, they dragged their feet wearily as each time they slopped them into a hole and dragged them out again.

Since some were inclined to lag, the sergeant-major's voice thundered again and again. "March up, there! March up!" There was the sound of fierce discipline in his tones, and every time he spoke the tired men swung forward again a little faster. But to Gog, he also spoke almost apologetically. "A've got to keep at them, sir. We must keep them going, for we can't let the discipline down. But aa canna be angry wi'

them, sir, aa canna be angry, because son o' the laddies are sair put to it, and they're doin' their best." There was a wealth of kindly understanding in the voice that spoke.

It was a sort of appeal to Gog as the officer commanding the platoon. To the boy the remark came as a great revelation, for up till then he had not understood Dalziel. He had thought of him as rather a savage N.C.O. who could only bawl at his men. Instead he found him a human soldier with a fine understanding of men. To the man who did not do his best, Dalziel was a terror. For the man who did, Dalziel had the instinct of understanding, and he knew all the men in the company as no one else did, unless it was the company commander. Gog discovered that he too seemed to have the faculty of understanding men.

The company commander had gone off to take over the trench earlier in the day, so that he was not with them on the march, and Gog was glad to have the sergeant-major beside him, because his was the leading platoon. As they marched along the earlier part of the way, nothing of importance happened. They casually heard a little badinage at a point where they were temporarily halted.

An artillery private [illegible] from behind a wall in a phlegmatic way. [illegible] up sufficiently to talk.

"Who the—(double-barrelled interjection) are you?"

"We're the Death or Glory Highlanders."

The artilleryman became sarcastic in mincing tones. "You don't say so, Charlie! Well, I 'opes you sees the glory."

"We'll see the glory as soon as we see your fizzin' shells a-hittin' anythin'."

"Will ye, Jock [illegible] artilleryman seemed tickled.

"And not so many o' yer duds either!"

"Oh, Alexander, don't be 'arsh with us!" The artilleryman's voice was gentle in its remonstrance. The voice turned to pity. "We can let ye talk a bit," he said genially, "because, after all, you 'ave our sympathy. Ye're only P.B.I."

"P.B.I?"

"Ye-es. Don't you know your own name? Poor bluggy infantry."

"Aye. And what are you? Funk Hole Artillery!"

The artilleryman laughed amusedly. "No bad for you, Jock!" he remarked largely.

The platoon at that moment showed signs of motion. He shouted a last remark, "Are ye down-hearted?"

"No!" shouted half a dozen voices.

"Well, you damn soon will be!"

The platoon marched on in dignified silence.

The sergeant-major glanced at Gog, who smiled. "There's aye a k[illegible]n the laddies," said the sergeant-major, "for aw t[illegible] hard-worked."

Soon after they resumed the march they came to a field where there was a prolonged halt, and the men had tea. While they did so the senior officers held a conference. The march had so far been uneventful, but there was considerable shelling ahead, and it had become a question whether they should advance or wait till later in the evening.

It was decided to wait some time.

While they waited, Gog had leisure to think a little. During the week of preparation there had been no shelling of their camp, and no danger, so that things had become commonplace again. But now they were actually marching into danger, and as the shelling ahead was very heavy, the faces of the senior officers were quite grave.

The boy wondered a little about it all. He did not feel afraid, but it was the thought of his platoon that troubled him most. He was so anxious not to lose any men, at least on the first occasion of going up to the trenches. Besides, the battalion held a record of never having lost a man on "relieving" trenches. He had no desire to be the first platoon commander to lose men.

He was still wondering, when the order came to fall in and advance with intervals of fifty yards between platoons. As they advanced the evening became darker, and a mist began to fall.

The sergeant-major was still beside him. "The mist'll save us," he said cheerfully. "If *it* hadn't come down, they might see us moving along the embankment we've got to cross, and there's only the one way."

"Good-oh!" said Gog. There was a shout of joy in his soul, because of that friendly mist.

They were still marching along the road when they came to a farm at a point where the road turned. When Gog rounded the bend of the road he saw shrapnel bursting a few hundred yards ahead of them.

For a moment there was almost a feeling of dismay in his soul. Was it his duty to march into that, or what? His orders were to march on. There was another company ahead of him too, which was not visible in the mist, though the man who formed the connecting file between the companies seemed still to be leading on. In his trouble the boy turned to the sergeant-major for support. That old soldier was watching him curiously.

But the difficulty was solved otherwise. The youngsters were not to be left to run into trouble, for at that moment the major came up hurriedly. "Get your men into that field quickly, and let them take cover under the wall. Wait further orders!"

In a few minutes it was done, and under the cover of the wall they hid and listened to the scream of the shells as they heard them coming from the distance and bursting with a bang just a few hundred yards ahead. Through the mist and night they could see many of the bursts—flashes of sharp light darting out and spraying the fire-tipped and death-laden points in wide-thrown falls. The sight of flash on flash, and the hissing and darting points flying through the trees, was strange and awe-inspiring in its way. Yet it was all wasted from the Hun point of view, for they struck no one.

After a time the firing ceased, and orders came to advance under the leadership of guides.

Although the Hun had had a wasteful night as regards his hopes of death, he had nevertheless been sufficiently annoying, for the transport and innumerable other things that move up and down to the firing line had been held up at different parts of the road by the shelling, and the result was that when Gog's platoon emerged from the field they found the road choked with men and waggons and horses and mules. And in the darkness it was hardly possible to see any one. Men peered into each other's faces, and crushed through narrow openings between waggons, and barged into mules kicking sporadically, and bumped into one another, and through it all muttered and cursed wearily. But they struggled on, though Private Buttery was temporarily lost in the endeavour. It subsequently appeared that he had been accidentally attached to the back of a transport waggon by some loose strap of his kit. The waggon had been going the other way, and despite Buttery's loud (but unheard) protests he had been compelled to retreat.

The noise of it all was terrific. From the distance there was the bursting of guns, though not firing at them. Near at hand there was the roll and rattle of

the transport waggons, the trampling of horses, the fierce talk of innumerable voices, and the crushing and barging of everything and everybody—all done in a pitch-dark, narrow, and mud-sodden lane.

Gog was somewhat appalled by it all. At the back of his mind were the theoretical lectures he had heard at home on trench warfare. "On relieving trenches absolute silence should be maintained." In practice the rule seemed to be that everybody should "grouse" and swear and make the most infernal row possible. Later on, and with practice, he came in a soldier's way to regard these scenes as humorous.

On emerging from Transport Lane (so called not only because the transport waggons passed up and down there, but also because of the transports of joy into which every one fell who relieved trenches by that route) the platoon came out on the embankment, which they moved rapidly across. As they did so stray bullets whistled and pinged about them, mostly overhead.

At that point the boy was not very sure where he was in a military sense. Everything he had ever learnt seemed to be upset. He had been told about all these things in theory, but none of them had ever in the least resembled this. And there was danger too in plenty. Until the whole platoon passed the embankment, he was quaking in his soul lest he should lose a man. Would they all come through safe? Unconsciously he was half praying, "Oh Lord, let them all through safe for me the first time anyway!" And they did come through.

After that they entered the Gaby Glide, a communication trench (the one leading to the main front-line trench). With his first step Gog plunged up to the knee in a sea of mud. It struck his bare knees with cold clamminess, and he almost recoiled. He shouted to the guide, "Is there no other way than this?"

"No, sir, and it's awful bad. But it's the only way."

Gog plunged on. There was difficulty not only from the mud of the trench but also from its narrowness, and the pack on his back jammed between the sides of the trench, as also did the men's (where Gaby ceased to glide). Between dragging their legs out of the mud and dragging themselves and their packs through the obstacles, the progress was very slow, and it was little wonder if the language that rolled along the trench was forcible and emphatic. But even then the men's sense of humour was uncrushed. True, there was a ferocity of grousing, and there was no strict adherence to the rule of "silence on relieving trenches," but they were amazingly good-humoured. And from the rear Gog could hear the voice of a man growling savagely, "Wish aa had the Keyser here now! Aa'd take him by the neck and souse 'im in this ruddy sink of mud! And after that aa'd 'ang 'im out to dry on the barbed-wire cloes-ropes!"

A few seconds after Gog heard the remark the guide came to a halt. They were jammed in the communication trench by a platoon of an outgoing company using a trench which they were just about to enter. The wait seemed interminable. Gog was now only ankle-deep in mud, but many of the men behind were still knee-deep. The outgoing men crushed and blundered past, slipping and muttering; but Gog's platoon had relapsed into silence, only broken by an occasional growl, "What the 'ell are we stopping for now?" curtly answered "Ja-aamed!"

At last the outgoers had passed and the platoon struggled on again. The trenches improved as they reached the front line. The mud there was only ankle-deep—enough to make a dainty lady recoil in horror, but to them comparative comfort.

They passed along to their appointed place and

relieved, a process which may be explained quite simply as that of taking the places of the platoon who are relieved, and therefore go out.

A few minutes later Gog was seated in the company dug-out reporting the relief to Captain Napier.

When he reported, he discovered that there was something in the rule of silence after all. "There was a most infernal row going on as these fellows came up," said Napier. "I expect the Huns knew we were relieving, but if they didn't we certainly advertised the fact. The relief could have been heard about a mile away, not to speak of a hundred yards."

Gog had been rather proud of his relief up to that time. He had come up without losing any men. That had been the great thing in his mind.

Under his commander's words he shrunk a little. Napier seemed so stern and soldierly. "I'm sorry, sir," he said.

Napier's face changed on the instant, and he smiled on the boy as if he had been an old friend. "Oh, I'm not blaming you this relief," he said kindly. "It was your first time up. I only meant that I must see to it before another relief."

"Thanks, sir," he said. "I'm afraid I didn't think of much but losing no men."

Napier nodded comprehendingly and went out. As he went he hummed quite cheerfully. "Got the pick of the young cubs," he said to himself contentedly.

A company commander's work is much simplified when he has sound platoon commanders.

CHAPTER XVI.

WITH HUNS BROODING THERE.

About a quarter of an hour after Gog had reported his relief complete, Fops appeared in the company dug-out, his task also having been completed. Shaw, for various reasons of mud, mules, transport, shell-fire, stupidity of guide, &c., did not complete till considerably later.

Fops entered slowly and painfully, unslung the pack from his back, dropping it heavily on the ground, and sat down saying nothing. In that attitude he surveyed his mud-cased legs with languid interest. Gog stared at him, but despite his own share of mud and other discomforts, he could scarcely conceal a smile.

Napier looked in for a minute. On seeing Fops, he smiled grimly. "Hello, Fops, got through all right?"

Fops assented.

Napier stared at Fops' muddy legs. "Been doing the grand, I see!" He chuckled as he said so.

Fops shook his head gloomily. "Mosst unfortunate!" he said. "Mosst unfortunate!" He had a way of pronouncing most as "mosst."

"What?" said Napier.

"Mother said I was on no account to get my feet wet."

Napier laughed gleefully. He loved subalterns with a sense of humour. "Good egg!" he said cheerfully, and then he went out again.

Fops turned from surveying his legs to gazing on the company dug-out. I say "company" dug-out advisedly, because the scanty number of dug-outs available compelled them all to use that one, and the dug-outs of the trenches in which they had taken root were not those blissful places (often read about but seldom or never seen in practice), capacious chambers, fifteen feet deep, shell-proof, with concrete walls and floors, and fitted out with the latest luxuries in furniture torn from Belgian *châteaux*. Happy indeed are the subalterns who have the luck to alight on a dug-out of that pattern!

The dug-out in which Fops was seated was about 8 feet long, 6 feet square, and 5 feet high—an inconvenient height which compelled the occupants to stoop. To the right front looking out was the narrow doorway. The roof was composed of three wooden rafters—one broken in the centre and bulging downwards—which sustained three sheets of corrugated iron, on the top of which was a single layer of sandbags and some loose earth. It was obviously not shell-proof. It was problematical whether it was even bullet-proof. It was certainly not rain-proof.

In the walls of the dug-out were cut a few holes for holding tins of food and papers. In the front wall was a square hole containing a tin cigarette-box, which shielded the candle which gave light to the interior. The light of the candle was further obscured by a waterproof sheet and a bit of sacking hung over the doorway; all that, of course, was to prevent the Hun from seeing the light.

The floor of the den was soppy with mud caused by rain dripping through the roof, and also, on very wet days, by streams of water pouring in from the trench. In very wet weather these streams were dammed by the inhabitants by the use of sandbags. There were also other forms of damming.

Seating and sleeping accommodation for a number limited to four, seated (well packed), two sleeping (well curled up) was provided by a narrow tier of sandbags run round the side of the walls. If really comfortable sleep was desired, sleepers were the better of possessing contortionist or prehensile habits; without these qualifications they were liable to glide off and subside in the mud below. Of course sleep could be obtained there too if the sleeper was not unduly particular.

Arrangements for mess were made by means of a two-legged table (the only article of luxury from the aforesaid *châteaux*), one side of which, the side without legs, was run into the front wall of the dug-out.

That was the underground residence on which Fops gazed. After gazing on the dwelling, he looked at Gog. "Merry spot, isn't it?" he remarked satirically.

"It's the real thing anyhow," said Gog cheerfully. "Napier said it was better than he expected."

"Jolly optimist he must be," remarked Fops placidly. "Demned cold feet I've got anyhow," he added in matter-of-fact tones.

The conversation was broken by a voice from outside. It was the cook. "Captain Napier said that you two had better have dinner now, and I'm makin' it ready."

"Cheer-oh!" they murmured simultaneously.

Incidentally Gog remembered the Staff officer who had always been hungry, and began to realise a little what it meant now. He felt ravenously hungry.

The cook continued. "There's been a late post as we were leaving camp; just handed in these." The cook produced two letters and two parcels.

They fell upon them with eager fingers—one letter and one parcel were for each. (I don't suppose people at home will ever quite realise the delight which they sometimes give by the sending of a letter or a parcel. At times

when everything is muddy and dirty and filthy, and war is stale and wearisome, these communications are often the only things which come to lighten the gloom. Be the men as good-humoured as they may, and their humour and courage are magnificent, war as it is waged now cannot but be stale at times.)

For Gog, then, the letter arrived just at a moment when they were slightly feeling the coldness of the mud and the meagreness of the conditions.

Gog tore open the envelope to read:—

"DEAR GOG,—I was so glad, as always for letters, to have your last letter, and to hear all about your doings. I am delighted to know that you are sticking everything so well, as, of course, I knew you would, and I am waiting so anxiously to hear of you from the trenches. What worries me a little sometimes is that you always write so cheerfully. I can hardly believe all you say, and how you are, one would almost think, enjoying yourself amid all the mud. Apart from you I hear a good deal about it from other people, and some of their tales are so different. When you go up to the trenches, I do hope you'll have the best of luck, but please don't make me think things are better than they are. Do tell me if you're ever feeling miserable, and I'll do anything in my power to help in any way. Papa wants me to be sure and say that if you ever need anything for yourself or your men, he can get any amount of woollen things made through the Ladies' Committees. If only for yourself, do trust me and tell me. I do so want to help. I send herewith two pair of socks done by Kitty and me. I daresay you don't need them just yet, but I don't know what else to send, and I think they ought to arrive as you're going up first time. So I hope they bring you luck.

"I must tell you something about myself, too. I've

been feeling for some time past that doing little bits of knitting was really not enough to do, when *you're* out fighting and papa is working so hard, and so many others doing so much. Papa never would get me anything to do, but I took the law into my own hands, and now I am very nearly a V.A.D. I've been attending lectures and getting some practical training, and I expect shortly to go into the Duchess of Draneshire's hospital in London. It's a Tommies' hospital ('Jocks' is the name for your Scottish kind of soldier, isn't it?), and I believe I'll really have to work hard; but I don't mind, because I don't think it'll be so dreadful as having so long to sit about and do nothing. I'll let you know how I get on.

"Of course I'm being chaffed a lot about it. Even papa teases me, and says I've joined the 'Virtuous And Dowdy' or the 'Voluntary And Desperate'; but I know he really sympathises all the same.

"However, these are all just my little concerns. Once again, dear Gog, do take care of yourself, and do let me know truly, because I can't help thinking things are always much worse than you tell.

"Your mother has been with us the past few days. She is well, and she joins me in the good advice. We know you'll be brave, but we don't want you to throw yourself away.

"Write soon.—Yours always, BETTY."

The boy turned from the letter to the parcel. It had arrived just in the nick of time. He unwound the string and removed the brown paper slowly. He was thinking, as he did so, of the soft eyes and the gentle, generous ways of Betty.

At the same time as he was so engaged, Fops was also opening his parcel.

Gog lifted out the socks. They were long, and made

of five-ply wool. They were soft to the touch, creamy and downy, and they were tied together with little ribbons of the regimental tartan.

His legs were cold and damp and his feet wet, and the socks had come exactly at the right moment from Betty. True—he had other socks, but not so soothing to feel as these.

So the sodden walls of the dug-out and the mud beneath and the discomfort and every other unhappy condition were forgotten, and the joy of life was in him, and his spirit was happy, because a charming girl hundreds of miles away had not forgotten her knight.

Gog's pleasing thoughts were not disturbed, but rather enhanced, by the actions of Fops, who was behaving in an extraordinary manner.

Before him was an open box, over which he appeared to be conducting a species of fetish. He would lift out an article and lay it on the table, saying solemnly, "Apple": this in reference to a large and rosy-cheeked fresh apple. Next followed cake; next came a tin of fruit; more apples; some chocolate; finally a bottle of port, and some illustrated papers.

Fops gazed at them arranged on the table. After some time he thumped his fist on the table and proclaimed, "It's Mollie!"

Gog stared benevolently on the viands.

"We'll have the port for dinner to-night," said Fops, "to celebrate our first night in the trenches."

"Great idea!" said Gog.

"It's mosst sporting of her, I consider," said Fops in tones of enthusiasm unusual for him—"mosst sporting! She said she'd send me things, but I never thought she meant it. Of course mother sends things; one expects that. But Mollie didn't need to, and it's mosst sporting."

"When is it to come off?" said Gog.

"What?"

"The bride was dressed in a costume of pink *charmeuse*——"

"Gog——" What Fops had meant to say was lost to the world.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!" Four shells, sharply air-cutting in their desperate haste, whizzed with hissing fury above the dug-out and crashed some distance behind. The boys stared at each other. Fops began hurriedly to put back the various articles in the box.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!" Four more whiz-bangs crashed behind the dug-out. At the same moment the candle blew out, and a quantity of earth tumbled about their ears. Fops plunged out at the door, immediately followed by Gog. The dug-out was not shell-proof.

They walked up the support trench towards the front line, where they waited and watched the shells crashing around the dug-out.

In five minutes it was all over. In a quarter of an hour they returned to the dug-out and carried on. They re-lit the candle, and found no serious damage done. All the shells had burst beyond the dug-out, but quite near enough to be dangerous. A crinkled piece of iron lay on the table.

Napier came down from the line and glanced at the shell-holes behind. "Better be very careful with the light," he remarked; then he departed again.

. . . .

M'Toucan, being in the front line, was not troubled by shells directed at the support line. They sailed whizzingly over his head, and he was therefore left in peace to read the letter the post had brought him.

"MY DERE JOHN,—This comes hopping you are still very well and strong and feelin' able for your terible work. I send with same a mufler which I hop will help you to keep the cold off. The children are all well and doing their school as usual. The money is coming in regular and I thank you very much, John, for the good way things are done.

"Now I do not know what else to say. Everythin in the papers is so terible about the fightin that one does not know what to think. Yet you always seem to manage, and write as if things are not so bad but what they might be worse. Oh, John, do take care of yourself, and come back to us somehow, because the children and me—we are all sore and anxious to have you back again. Often I lie awake at nights thinkin of the awful time you must be havin. Oh, John, I do not know what else to say. Tell me what more I can send. And oh, do not miss to come back again.

"X x x x x. The big one is from little Jeannie and the next from Mary. The rest from myself.—Your luvin wife,

MARY."

When M'Toucan received that letter, his simple stubborn soul too left the trenches, and his thoughts wandered back to a thatched cottage in a Highland glen. He methodically put on the muffler, for it was cold.

CHAPTER XVII.

NIGHT.

THE attitude of Napier and of the sergeant-major in all times of difficulty was an immense source of strength to the company, including the new subalterns. Whatever happened, Napier always appeared cool and confident and ready to meet the situation. Shaw's platoon might be late in relieving, and the matter became troublesome. Notwithstanding, Napier was not ruffled. He carried on. The dug-out might be shelled. He came down to consider the situation, and carried on. As his subalterns discovered later, there might be great danger, but nevertheless he remained cool and determined, and when the case required it, marched straight into the zone of danger.

And the sergeant-major was like him. Only there was the curious difference between them, arising from their positions in life. Napier marched into danger with a sort of contempt of death. He was a born aristocrat, belonging to a class whose honour it was, if necessary, to die for the country, and so he appeared to have become, through training and habit, as nearly indifferent to danger as man can be. Dalziel, the sergeant-major, was equally fearless of danger, but, in his case, the contempt of death seemed to arise out of his own stubborn ruggedness of character. He was a great-hearted lump

of nature's human granite—great in build as well as in heart—and the mere sight of him carried conviction to those who were with him.

After the shelling behind the dug-out, the sergeant-major, happening to come round a little later to see the company commander, talked to the boys for a few moments.

"We're gettin' it hot the night," he remarked placidly. "I was up in the front line when it started, and I thought, by the look of it, they would be droppin' aboot here."

Fops lifted the piece of crinkled iron that had fallen on the table. Dalziel gazed at it with a smile. "Ye'll be sendin' it home as a souvenir," he remarked. "Present from the Huns on our first visit to the trenches."

The boys laughed.

"But I've always said it was a poor dug-out," continued the sergeant-major, "though no one ever seems to have time to alter it. There are always so many other things needing attention afore that."

Whatever the dug-out may have been, the talk and the manner of those old soldiers entered into the spirit of the boys who were come to carry on the work. Courage the new soldiers had in plenty, but coolness, confidence, presence of mind, these were the things that could only enter into them by experience, and through the action of the old hands.

As it was, the new soldiers had already passed through a fairly exciting day, but at the end of it they found themselves cool and cheerful, and ready for the next act, which happened to be dinner.

They dined on Maconochie ration, Mollie's cake and apples, and a trifle of port. Rather a mixture, but not bad for trench life.

The dinner had a vivifying effect, too, for the effect

of food on hungry people is really remarkable. Certainly either the food or Mollie's port, combined with the curious and exciting conditions, awoke all the latent powers of Fops.

He had a knack of parody, and gazing round on the dug-out and humming the "Little Grey Home in the West," he then composed the slight parody, which became quite famous in that part of the line. It was first sung by him at this trench meal:—

"Though the way may be long,
And the mud may be strong,
I forget I was weary before,
It's a corner of Heaven in itself,
Though it's only a tumbledown nest;
And with Huns brooding there,
Faith, no place can compare
With my Little Grey Hole in the West."

Having sung his ode, Fops shortly after went on guard, the night being allotted to the officers in portions.

Imagine, then, the gallant Fops, having carefully examined his revolver, proceeding gingerly along Park Lane—the name satirically given to an exceptionally narrow and dirty communication trench—and having passed through the lane emerging into the front line trench, and there spending a considerable time gazing in the direction of the Huns.

At the moment when he left the dug-out, Gog proceeded to have his allotted portion of sleep. Now, the very small quantity of Mollie's port-wine which he had drunk had not been sufficient to raise in him more than a very slight and temporary sensation of warmth. His legs were very cold and wet and muddy, and altogether he was very tired and far from warm.

In a happy moment he met the machine-gun officer,

responsible at the moment for the machine-guns in that part of the line, who, on learning that Gog was there for the first time, immediately proceeded to perform the ceremony of induction.

The machine-gun man conducted him to the other dug-out, 8 feet long by 4 broad, and therefore a straight sleeper for one.

"Sleep there, old man. I remember I was blessed tired and hungry and cold the first night I was out, and they were mighty kind to me. Sorry I can't do much, but if you put your waterproof sheet down, stick your feet into this sack, and lie flat with your coat and blanket over you, you'll not feel so bad. Anyhow, its the best that can be done in this amphibious spot."

"Thanks awfully," murmured Gog. "But where are you to sleep?"

"Oh, I've got my guns separated a good deal, and I've got dug-outs near most of them, so I'm all right. . . . Sleep well, old man, while you can. . . . By the bye, have a tot of rum before you go to sleep. It drives the cold out of one, and let's them sleep."

The machine-gun officer produced a flask and poured out some rum. "It's ration rum, you know," he explained, "so you needn't feel too grateful. I save up my ration sometimes so that I have a drop when it's needed."

He handed Gog the top of the flask, out of which he drank the tot. It felt hot and warm in his throat. Amid all the cold and mud, it was really reviving.

The machine-gun man disappeared to watch with his guns for the night. The boy lay down as directed and fell fast asleep. He slept well, for he was very tired. At the moment when he fell asleep his day up till that time had lasted seventeen hours. As the days rolled by, he was to find with increasing force that it

was quite a common day's work while on service. He was an officer, but his day was not shorter on that account, rather the reverse. M'Toucan and Wullie Mackay also had had a seventeen-hours' day, with a sporting chance of death thrown in, all at 1s. 2d. per day. (There are people at home still chattering about eight hours per day, and extra halfpennies per hour.)

As Gog slept well, the rats which romped about the dug-out did not trouble him.

At the end of his hours of sleep, the boy, only half-awake, felt some one tugging at his foot.

"Gog! Gog!" (Fierce leg-tug here) "Get up! It's your watch!"

"My wha-at?"

"Your watch, confound you! . . . Beastly sorry to wake you up in this rotten way, when you're havin' a sleep, and all that, you know. Feel it's beastly unkind, you know, but—ah—service conditions, you know, and I've been on my stunt, and . . ."

Gog awoke to the situation. "Beastly sorry, Fops, old man!" He struggled out of his wrappings.

"Quite all right, old bird!"

"Have I kept you long waiting?"

"Not a bit. You only needed a shake."

"Ah!" Gog yawned expansively.

"Better put your muffler on," said Fops. "It's some cold out there. As far as position goes, nothin' doin'. Huns are as quiet as lambs, and the wind's blowing away from us."

"Right-oh."

Gog passed on the directions as to method of sleeping, and then departed for the firing line.

He, too, proceeded up Park Lane, crouching here and there, as Napier had warned them to do when passing

parts of the trench which had fallen away in part, or suffered from shell-fire. Upon such parts, the German snipers had rifles trained all day and night. No matter if a thousand bullets were wasted, or ten thousand, the patient Hun still let that rifle fire intermittently at these spaces all night, and if ever a person passed during the day and did not crouch, that person risked his life more than was necessary.

At the end of Park Lane the boy came upon the first sentry. Gog stood on the fire-step beside him.

The sentry had his head well above the parapet of the trench. Gog was slightly uncertain about that proceeding, but he soon came to know that there is one period of the twenty-four hours when man may gaze over the parapet with comparative safety upon the Hun line. It is the night.

Gog gazed out into No Man's Land — that place between the two warring forces. Then he gazed beyond.

The night was fairly dark, and it was difficult to see much. Immediately under his chin were the rows of sandbags mingled with earth which formed the parapet. These sandbags sloped down into the ground in front of them. That ground was littered with various articles, indistinguishable in the dark, and the next prominent object that caught the eye was the line of the barbed-wire entanglement which stretched in front about twenty yards away. Out beyond that was the open space of uneven ground until the dark line of the Hun trenches was seen, running backwards until they were hidden by hilly ground.

The whole scene was curiously still, and yet Gog was standing on a very hotbed of war. Huge battles had been fought across the very ground where he stood.

Great battles were again to be fought there, and were even in that moment preparing, but everything seemed still.

Yet beneath the stillness, hosts of men were watching on both sides, and hosts more were ready to spring into action at a moment's notice. He thought of it all—the quietness was almost oppressive—and it seemed very strange. Suddenly the quiet was broken. There was the crackling noise of several rifles, and one of the bullets pinged past them, and buried itself in the mud behind. Gog and the sentry brought their heads beneath the parapet. The bullet had been inconveniently close.

A sergeant happened to come up. "That's a dangerous spot, sir. They don't aim at you in the dark, but they seem to have a rifle trained on that point."

Gog descended from the firing-step into the trench. He reascended farther along the line. Soon after he had done so, the enemy sent up a flare light. It burst with a greenish flare, lit up the whole of the British trenches around Gog, and then fell behind them, burning fiercely on the ground for a few moments.

About a quarter of an hour later, Gog fired a Very pistol, sending up a flare light which illuminated the Hun trenches, and did it well too, but there was nothing to be seen but lines of sandbags and mounds of earth.

The nearest sentry shortly after fired a couple of rounds.

All this intermittent activity, of course, is just the polite way which each side has of saying every night to the other side, in case they might feel inclined to be actively aggressive—"No, you don't! Come on! We're ready!"

Gog discovered later that the Boches seemed to have an automatic method of firing their rifles, but the British

sentry is usually above such ideas. The reason why British sentries fire must often puzzle the Boche sadly, when he in his scientific way tries to understand why things are done.

A person without a sense of humour cannot possibly grasp British methods of war. There is such a thing as "tickling the Boche," a method of which sentries are very fond, if there is any opportunity. There is such a thing as "getting the Boche's wind up," otherwise creating in him excessive alarm. And finally, there is a method known to a private whose name I will not mention. He was seen by a fellow-spirit firing furiously in the direction of the enemy lines. He had fired so furiously that the Germans had actually "got their wind up," and had opened a blaze of rapid fire upon the British trenches. Altogether the enemy could not have fired less than a thousand or two rounds in answer to this unexplained fire from a single rifleman.

On being asked for an explanation of the rapid fire he had maintained until the Boche had "got his wind up," the said private explained that his hands had been very cold, and he had been firing his rifle in order that he might warm his hands on the barrel when it became heated!

This satisfactory explanation having been given, the news got abroad in the trenches, and every one was much pleased at the way Fritz had been excited. Such are among the joys of trench life.

After viewing the Hun line by flare light, Gog descended again from the fire-step and patrolled the whole line with the sergeant. As he did so, he passed the recumbent forms of M'Toucan (covered with a waterproof sheet and with his wife's muffler on) and Wullie Mackay and Private Buttery, all as they slept on the fire-step.

Having patrolled the line, he crawled up a sap (a trench which is advanced straight out to the enemy lines) and so reached a point about thirty yards from the Germans. He sat in the bombing post there and listened for a long time. He felt it a little eerie as he did so. He knew that at any moment a bomb might be thrown by the enemy which might burst where he was, but he was keen and full of zeal (as all the youngsters are), and he was anxious to know and learn, and besides, he thought it his duty to do such things.

As he lay there, he was almost sure he heard the murmur of the Huns as they talked, and he thought perhaps he heard the sound of spades working somewhere. But it was all uncertain, and in the eerie silence, broken only by these occasional furtive noises, it felt queer.

He crawled back to the main trench leaving the bombers to their lonely vigil, and their big chance of death, for it *was* dangerous out there. Gog scarcely yet apprehended how dangerous it was.

As he got back to the main trench he glanced at his watch and found that that part of his duty was over.

As he returned to the dug-out, he met Napier.

"Everything quiet?" said Napier.

"Very . . . I think," he answered.

"I think so too—exceptionally so," said Napier smilingly. Then he passed on.

Each new subaltern on watch that night met Napier at some hour of their watch. The boys talked of it in the morning.

"When did Napier sleep?"

It almost seemed as if the company commander had had no sleep at all. Their day had been seventeen hours, but his seemed to be singularly like twenty-four.

Which arose from the fact that he had a dangerous

part of the line to keep, and all his subalterns were new to war.

However, Napier was too old a hand at the work not to have slept at all. He had the habit of sleeping in patches.

. . . .

In the morning Gog met Shaw. "How did your platoon get up last night?" he inquired.

"Oh, I had a deuce of a time," said Shaw. "Men got lost all over the place; held up at every bally point; got a special dose of shelling when I thought I'd lose the lot, but, by sheer luck came through all right. . . . The language coming through the Gaby Glide was something cruel, and I don't wonder."

Gog nodded. "How did you enjoy the night-watch business?"

"Oh, it was priceless!" said Shaw energetically. "I don't think!" he added meditatively.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SCHOOL OF WAR.

"2ND LIEUT. MACRAE to join the instructional school at 5 Rue de Montalon, Meerhelst. Report there to-day at 4 o'clock. Servant to be taken."

Such was the order exhibited to Gog by the company commander at eight o'clock the following morning. In a moment the whole scene was changed, as things do change in war with exceptional rapidity.

The boy stared at the order rather surprised. He wondered vaguely if there was any implied censure in thus being sent to a school, but Napier's voice reassured him. "A week's holiday, old man," he said cheerfully. "Feather-bed to sleep on, excellent mess, and general luxury. Wish they'd send me for a course!"

"Does everybody go?"

"All the new men to be instructed in best and latest methods, and I can tell you our Division has got a first-class school. You'll have a week of it, my son. Go, learn, and be happy while you may."

An hour later he went, as also did Private Heafty his servant.

Napier was left with one subaltern less, which meant that both he and the sergeant-major would require to take part of the night watches, if the remaining subalterns were to get their allotment of sleep.

With his burden on his shoulder in a very literal sense of the word, Gog proceeded slowly down the support trenches to the communication trench. *Vid* the Gaby Glide he slowly waded, seeing now in daylight the slimy liquid which he had passed the night before. It pained him to think that he had put on a pair of Betty's downy socks, and this was what happened to them! Even the best boots and thick puttees were not proof against a few hundred yards of this, especially when it oozed down the hose-tops from the knees. (The Army had not at that time provided waders for the battalion, and his own pair had not come from home.)

At the end of the communication trench they came to a house shattered with shell-fire. Part of one side of it stood. The remainder was merely a collection of curiously battered masonry with odd fragments sticking out to show what had been. After passing the house, they proceeded along an open field. As they did so, Gog glanced up anxiously from time to time in the direction of the Hun trenches. The ground they were crossing seemed very open, but the enemy gave no sign. As a matter of fact they were passing too early for "hate."

The Hun has at least one human habit—he eats. In the morning he has breakfast just like other people, and at the time they were passing the enemy were so engaged. Apart from that, the Hun seldom employs artillery against individuals.

For these reasons, although they were probably within view of the German observing officers (if these persons were not too busy eating), they were not molested, and Private Heafty led on with supreme indifference to possible danger. In his case that was due to lack of imagination. Heafty was one of those big fellows who are quite cautious when actually under shell-fire, but

proceed indifferently when there is no immediate noise or appearance of danger, notwithstanding the fact that there may be considerable danger if the enemy chose to open fire.

They crossed several shell-pitted fields and passed many battered houses and other ruins of war, but the journey was uneventful. They had, in fact, crossed one of the Huns' favourite zones of fire, but for some reason known to himself, the Hun usually treated that region to shell-fire only from eleven to twelve and two to four or later in the evening.

As they tramped onward to the transport lines, Private Heafty, on securing a little encouragement in the way of question, regaled the boy with his thoughts on war. Once they halted to sit at the roadside with their feet in a ditch, and then the war-worn warrior talked. He was an old soldier who had been through several campaigns, and like many old soldiers, he could "grouse."

"Aye, sir, it's an awfu' war this. Niver seen sich a war. Aa've been through two or three in India, and aa was in South Africa with the infantry, and that was a war for marching, but lor', it was naethin' to this war." Heafty shook his head wearily.

"And me—aa had settled down thinking aa was in for a quiet life with a wife and four of a family. Aa thought ma day was done, but when the call came, aa got that excited like, naethin' would do but aa must up and back to the colours. And so aa came, and here aa am slitherin' aboot in the mud tryin' to look happy."

Gog smiled.

"And, ma wurrd, aa can say that aa've seen mair fightin' in one ordinary day here than ye might see in sax months in South Africa. . . . There never was shellin' and minin' and bombin' like this. . . . Never

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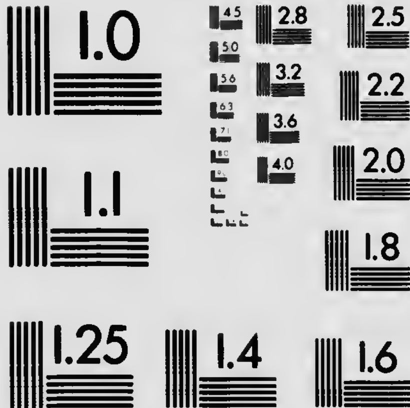

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afore!" Heafty again shook his head with renewed weariness.

Heafty was one type of old soldier. But Sloggart was another. When they reached the transport lines, their march was over. There they were provided with the mess-cart to convey them to Meerhelst, and Sloggart was the driver of that curious vehicle.

The cart was on two wheels with strong axles, and was square-shaped, open at the front with a seat in the middle, and the whole covered with a hood. It was actually an old Cape cart, and had been selected for the mess because every other type of smaller vehicle had broken down owing to the fearful condition of the roads.

As they left the transport lines the axles creaked as they jolted fiercely over stones hidden in the mud. Once on the roadway Sloggart drove while he could on the *pavé* (about 12 feet wide), but when motor transport came along it was necessary to descend into the bog of mud on the edge of the road, and then the cart heeled over perilously on its side, reeled, sunk, and then finally sloughed fearfully in the quagmire. After the waggons had passed Sloggart drove his horse gently, edging where he could, first one wheel, then another, on to the *pavé*, the while coaxing his horse. "Come on, boy! Get on, boy! Hup, man! Hup, man!" And the heavy patient brute, with slipping feet and straining sinews, answered the call.

All the while Sloggart's face wore a cheerful grin, as if the whole thing were a sort of joke provided for his entertainment, or a test of his skill as a driver. He was a soldier of the cool adventurous type to whom mud was only part of the great game. In answer to a query, he replied, "Aye, it needs driving here. I've driven in half the countries of the world, but never needed neater driving than here."

It needs driving for the motor-men too. Driving for "hair-breadth" work many a time, and magnificently they do it, these ex-London 'busmen and others.

It took Sloggart two hours to get to Meerhelst, and then the big transport horse that had pulled them was sweating and steaming and weary—only one of the thousands of horses and mules that sweat and steam and die along these roads; they are apt to be lean and hungry-looking, and shaggy too.

At Meerhelst, Gog was admitted to the school, and conducted to his room. Thereafter he was free for the day.

What a thing to be during war! He felt as if he could have danced a reel. Free! Free! Only for half a dozen hours, but yet for that time free from all discipline and restraint and mud. He could put on Betty's other pair of socks, and even (feeble you may think, but only joy available) see a cinematograph if he wished. And at night he would once again sleep on a feather-bed with white curtains around it, and there would only be a slight chance of shell-fire or bomb-dropping. And he could for one day at least have eight hours of sleep, or ten if he chose.

It was luxury. Luxury! Everyday commonplace life at home, but out there absolute luxury. No one who has been in the front line, or in rest dug-outs for however short a time, can fail to appreciate civilisation again, especially bed and bath. No one who has been "up" for a *long time* can fail to understand the case of the man who had, and satirically said, "When I go home on leave, I intend to spend all the morning in the bath and the remainder of the time in bed."

Gog was lucky in being sent down to the trench school so soon after commencing trench life. It enabled him to adjust himself to the new conditions, for at that

Divisional school he was to receive the very instruction he required for war. He was to receive it after having had sufficient experience of the trenches to understand everything that was meant and implied. All that was sound and satisfactory.

The immediate problem before him, however, was the use of those glorious free hours. Alone, with a room to himself, a table to write on, and pen and ink, there was not much doubt of the first thing, when these socks were still unacknowledged.

Having come down from the trenches to comfort, he felt in the best of spirits, which possibly affected the opening three words of his letter. They mark a stage in advance, and after again reading her letter, and setting her photo before him on the table, he had little difficulty in passing that stage.

"My dear Betty,—I was so happy to have yours of 18th, which arrived along with the socks immediately after we had entered the trenches for the first time. The socks arrived just at the right moment after I had got beastly wet coming up. It was so kind of you to think of sending them just at that time, and I am wearing a pair of them now, and they are really lovely to wear. Thanks ever so much.

"As to telling you truly about things, I think I really do, but it's a little difficult to say much owing to the censorship. Since I last wrote we were about a week in the farmhouse, and then went up to the trenches. (I can say that now since, as I explain later, I'm down at a school.) We had a fairly hot time with shelling on the way up, but no one was hit, and we got in all right, and relieved. The effect of the shelling at night in the mist was very weird. The bursts in the dark high in the air were really pretty, when one comes

to think of it after the event. At the time they were rather exciting, and I was a bit frightened lest some of the platoon might be lost. But the senior officers led us so well that we came through.

"After we had relieved the men who had held that part of the line, we had dinner in the dug-out, and later took our watches for the night and slept by turns. Everything was very quiet all night—only occasional rifle-firing, on both sides, and occasional flare-lights sent up. But it was queer to stare out into the darkness where the Boches are, knowing that there were hundreds of them waiting out there, but not able to see anything of them. The queerest thing of all was lying in the listening post. I heard noises from time to time like spades. The sentry said it was only the Boches mending their parapet.

"During my hours of rest I slept very well indeed. A machine-gun officer was kind in helping me to tumble to things generally in that line.

"To-day I'm down at an instructional school by order. This enables me to write in ink and be comfortable again, and puts me out of all danger, so nobody need worry on my account for a week anyhow. I don't know what we are to be taught, but will let you know later. In the meantime it does feel ripping to be clean and comfortable.

"I'm so interested to hear about your becoming a V.A.D. I knew you were always straining to be doing something, and therefore I'm not a bit surprised. I think it's just like you, and I'm sure the letters in your case stand for Voluntary And Delightful."

At this point he paused. He was always apt to be shy in expressing admiration, and it had been an effort. Still he let the words rest, and continued:

"I do hope you'll get on well and like the work. I don't myself yet know exactly what V.A.D.'s do, but I'll no doubt find out some day. I've heard Fops chattering about them, but he merely knows them personally—not their work.

"Thank you for the hundredth time for all your kindness and your father's. I'm not a bit miserable meantime, but if I am I will be honest and tell you. I'll inquire about the men and socks, &c., when I go back to the trenches, and if things are required, I'll let you know, so that your father and you may help us all.

"I'm seated here in a pretty little room looking out on a French church, with a cemetery attached. The landlady has just told me that one Uhlan is buried in the cemetery, and this place, where I am, was the furthest point south that the Germans reached hereabout. The Uhlan was killed while on patrol by some of our cavalry. She says she thinks the cavalry belonged to what was called locally the White Horse regiment—that is, I believe, the Scots Greys—because they rode on whitish-grey horses. It's all very interesting. I hope you are all very well. With best regards to you all.—Yours always, GOG."

The boy also wrote to his mother. Thereafter he dined and went to town, where he not only saw a cinematograph, but also a group of players called "The Frantics in their Antics."

Their particular antics may be left to the imagination of the reader. Howbeit they were amusing, and tended to free the mind temporarily from thoughts of the troubles of trench warfare.

. . . .

In the morning the war school was early at work.

Forty strong, they sat in a class-room, as if they were once again back at school, with little desks in front of them, and a book each to take notes in, and a blackboard in front of them, and round the walls of the room were large pictures, with maxims in French, proclaiming that "All good men love truth"; "The virtuous love peace"; &c., &c.

These maxims smiled cynically down upon them while Staff officers, and bombing officers, and other experts lectured strenuously on the art of making war, and the most skilful methods of blowing Huns to bits. It was only another illustration of the curious incongruities of war; not more curious, however, than the very common case of the billeting of troops in cathedrals.

On the question of accommodation the little benches of the French school-children fitted sadly with the great limbs of the Highland officers.

The work went on all day with serious vigour. They were keen, these forty soldiers of the new army, and anxious to learn how the Boche might most readily be defeated. If anything could add to their keenness, it was the arrival of the Major-General at six o'clock.

He was a tall, strong man with many decorations. His face was somewhat careworn, and his eyes were fierce, while his whole manner declared that he was in the war to fight and win, and he had come to try to inspire every man with that idea if any needed inspiration.

The General entered the room quietly. They stood up as he entered. His manner was quiet, but tense with vigour and determination. He was not an orator, but his words thrilled with the spirit of the man. "Good evening, gentlemen. Sit down, please."

When they had sat down, he gazed round on them as

if estimating the value of them all. What manner of men were these? Were they the equals of the men he had known in the service, or better or worse? Were these the men who were going to carry the old flag to victory, or where?

Perhaps he was asking himself such questions, perhaps not. In any event, after he had gazed around, he commenced to speak. "Gentlemen, it is not very often that a General has the pleasure of addressing officers in the way I am doing now. But I am very glad to do so, and I am very glad to see you all here. The adjutant will have told you the special purposes of this school, and I only wish to add a few words in a general way. The questions I suppose you have all asked of yourselves are: Why are we sent to school? What is this school for?

"The answer is (first), because you are all new army officers, and we must be assured that every one of you knows all that he ought to know about the present way of fighting, and many of you may not have had the opportunity of getting the information at home; and (second), because regimental training of officers is not enough.

"I do not propose to speak of the first reason, but of the second; I wish to say that I would like you all to understand that you, each of you, belong not only to a battalion, but also to a brigade: larger than that, that you belong to a division; larger still, to an army corps; still further, to the great whole army forming the Expeditionary Force.

"It is enough for me to speak in terms of a Division, and I would wish you to understand that while the honour of your platoons, your companies, your regiments are with you, so also part of your responsibility is the honour of the Division. It may seem distant to

you, but nevertheless the fact remains. And that is why this school exists.

"Up till this time your training has been mainly regimental. But the time has come when you must take the larger view and see in your battalion only a part of the Division, and when you must come to long for the honour of the Division as greatly as for that of the regiment. You must also come to see your battalion as a part linked up with all the other parts of the Division, and intimately connected with them. As their fate is, so frequently will your fate be. If the transport fails in its duty, if the artillery fails, if the infantry fail, if the machine-gunners fail—in any and every branch, whatever it may be, if something fails, the Division suffers." The General paused and then spoke with heat: "Passionately," he exclaimed, "I want you to understand all that and to live for it . . . if need be, to die for it!" The school was very quiet as he uttered the last words. He continued again in conversational tones: "The school will teach you the things you need to know, and on that matter have no fear of asking questions so that you may understand everything. Experts in every branch will explain to you the workings of the staff, the artillery, the cavalry, the mining and bombing work, and of every other branch, all particularly in relation to your own infantry work.

"During this period of instruction, I hope, gentlemen, you will give yourselves, as I know you will, heart and soul to the work. Have your whole thoughts on war and the making of war, and I assure you that the day is coming when this great ——th Division, glorious already as it is, will yet bear a more magnificent part in the tremendous struggle ahead of us all."

The General was silent. So also were the men who were called to victory or death.

The General gazed round on them all once again. "I am perfectly certain that you will do it," he said calmly. "Good evening, gentlemen." They stood up and cheered, and there was the ring of confidence and hope in that cheer. Perhaps they were going to death (not excluding the General), but the Division would live.

Ten seconds later there was the throbbing noise of a motor at the door. A moment after, it was racing through the darkness of the night, its white light flashing in front. The General had gone back to war.

. . . .

Day after day the class toiled at the work laid down by the General. Staff officers came, and mining officers, and artillery officers, and half a dozen other sorts of officer, and each explained his own particular section in relation to the infantry, and also explained what was expected of the infantry in relation to his section. And as they taught, gradually the whole of the army was evolved before them as one co-ordinated force.

And motors rushed them across the country back to the lines, and back to the artillery emplacements, and on to the haunts of the motor machine-gunners, till every phase of war was laid open to their eyes.

It was all wonderful and fascinating. It gave them a surprising view, too, of the country under war and not under war. The active war area extended only to about eight miles behind the firing line, but even within that area, up to within four miles of the firing line, peasants toiled in the fields. These gazed speculatively from their fields upon the troops and the horses and the transport, but otherwise remained unmoved, unless it was to seize from the general confusion some scrap of the wastage of war. Here and there an old peasant's legs were clothed in puttees, once undeniably the property of a British soldier. On one occasion they saw an old Belgian woman with a puttie as waist-belt and a Tam-o'-

shanter as bonnet. But otherwise the peasants had grown used to war, perhaps throve on it. A few old women in places a couple of miles behind the firing line risked their lives for the gain of continuing to sell trifles to the troops at excessive charges. The *estaminets* which they maintained were shell-holed and battered at the top, but propped up and defended with earth and sand-bags at the foot, and were fairly safe to live in when life was conducted, as it was, chiefly in the cellars underground. But the total number of peasants within the three- or four-mile area was certainly small.

The country generally was undulating in character, which favoured movement unknown to the Boche, but also hindered the British view of his proceedings. The undulating and, in places, wooded nature of the ground also favoured the artillery. During their instruction they discovered that the country was literally bulging with guns.

The gunner officers competed in the art of concealment. The school visited the emplacements of the "Heavies," the "Hows," and the 18-pounders. They discovered that the officer in charge of the 4-5 howitzer looked with contempt on the works of the officer in charge of the 18-pounder field-guns.

"Look at these 18-pounder fellows. You could see their emplacement a mile away. Now look round the whole of this area and find mine."

The class gazed around, but there was certainly no trace of a 4-5 "How" anywhere.

The howitzer officer beamed with contentment, and conducted them to a brick shanty half-buried in the earth. It seemed to be merely a small farm outhouse. The outhouse turned out to be the home of the "How." It was dug deep down into the ground, and the front of the outhouse was a removable board painted to look like bricks, and cunningly set among the earth. When the

board was removed the black mouth of the "How" vomited forth its missile.

From the 4-5 they passed on to the 18-pounders, where they discovered that the officer in charge regarded the contempt of the "How" officer for his emplacements with reciprocal contempt. "The 'How' man down there bucks no end about his emplacement, because he happens to have got a brick shanty to stick his gun in. But, Lord, there aren't shanties for everybody! And moreover, my four guns here have been in the same spot for months, brazen-facedly placed right under the Hun's nose, and he's never spotted them; and the proof of the pudding is that I stick here and plaster him all day and he hasn't spotted me yet, or I'd have been shelled out long ago."

On the matter of the war generally the artillery major was a trifle discontented. "D—d dull place this to be in," he remarked to the adjutant. "Where we used to be before, you could see something, but here you can hardly make out a thing. In the last part of the line where I was, you could stroll up to the observing post and perhaps see the major's servant bringing up his tea, or something like that. You could 'phone down at once, and have the fun of seeing the tea spilt and the old boy blotted out. But here you can't see a blessed thing. It's all blind work by the map. We know from the map where there's a house or a road or something like that, and we just plaster it when we feel inclined. . . . Of course we're all right for doing the trenches and backing the infantry when they 'phone down to us to loose off, and that's what you want to know, I suppose. . . . By the bye, would you like us to pop off?"

"If it doesn't interfere with your work or——"

"Oh, not a bit," said the major cheerfully. "We're always happy to let the Hun have a dose."

"Are you ready there for firing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right. Range?"

"3,200."

"Right. Pop off!"

A moment later there was a loud explosion, and the shell whizzed hissingly off.

"Another little present to the Huns," said the major smilingly.

Their last visit was to the 6-inch "How," a monster hidden in a wood. He also was invisible until the covering of branches and foliage had been removed. In the language of the old world, when the dragon was uncovered, then he stood forth, a mighty monster, steel-clad, black-mouthed, and venomous, moving on two great wheels, emitting a mighty roar of anger and vomiting smoke and flame. The monster was fed by many satellites called gunners.

Before the uncovering took place another precaution was taken. One of the gunners rushed out in front and scanned the sky anxiously for aeroplanes.

"No aeroplanes?" said the officer.

"No, sir."

"Right. Uncover!"

It seemed to be anxious work. The men uncovered with rapid movements. An aeroplane comes in a very few moments, and aeroplanes can spot guns.

Before firing the man rushed out and gazed again at the sky. Meanwhile the 100-lb. shell had been loaded.

"All clear?" said the officer.

"Yes, sir."

"Right. Fire!"

There was a flash and a perfectly deafening explosion, while the shell tore forth to worry the Huns.

"Did you see the shell?" said the officer. One of the

group thought he did. "They can sometimes be seen," the officer remarked. "It's a healthy size of shell. . . . Noise? Yes, it makes a nasty noise."

So ended the tour of the guns; but by means of the tour there was impressed upon them more clearly the work of the artillery, and also incidentally the meaning of that journalistic phrase the "iron ring" which cannot be broken, which, however, is rather a ring of flesh and blood and iron.

. . . .

At the end of that week of training the boy wrote home to his mother a letter from which this is extracted:

"We have had a magnificent week. I think I understand the work of the army now as I never did before. We have had such a splendid view of the workings of every end—artillery, cavalry, machine-guns, transport, staff, bombing, and even mining; and we have been told exactly the sort of things we ought to do in difficult cases—just the kind of things we needed to know. I feel as if I were ever so much better fitted for the work.

"We are all so delighted with the Major-General. He has come down twice to speak to us, and been so decent about everything. Our school has been directly organised by him, and I think it's pretty certain there's not a school of the kind anywhere which is better, and very few anything like as good. It is ripping to feel that we're really commanded by a man who knows the whole thing and understands us and our difficulties, and about whom one feels certain that he knows and will lead us to victory if any one will."

From which it appears that a Major-General had captivated the attention and gained for the work the whole-hearted enthusiasm of youth.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SECOND TIME.

PUNCTUALLY at four o'clock in the afternoon the mess-cart appeared at the door of Gog's billet. There emerged therefrom a muddy and weary person, whose face, however, still retained that look of refined and half-humorous tolerance of which even the brunt of war had not entirely deprived him.

"Hello, Fops," said Gog, shaking hands with cordial enthusiasm.

"Hello, old bird," said Fops wearily.

"You're looking a bit pilled?" said Gog inquiringly.

"Oh, just a little tahd," said the weary one.

"Had a bad time?"

"Oh—ah—nothing to write home to mothah about, . . . with excessive joy."

"Um!"

"We've had a few days of—ah—artillery activity, don'tche know. Nothing else in particular except a little bombing and sniping. . . . Lost a few men, and had our parapet blown away in about six places. . . . But you'll find it described much better than I can do in the official summary. 'Trenches at—— shelled somewhat heavily. Losses few. Material damage insignificant. Our artillery effectively replied.'' At this point Fops paused impressively, then resumed: "I don't—ah—like exaggeration," he said with feeling; "I don't like

straining the truth in the least, but I should like to mention that to repair that 'insignificant material damage' we've been working night and day without ceasing . . . in circumstances of difficulty . . . endeavouring to repair it."

Gog smiled. He had discovered that Fops became most satirical and drawled most in times of real difficulty. It was his method of obscuring trouble. Gog concluded that "dear old Fops" must have been having a hot time, which was true.

Shaw's description of the matter, which he received later, was terse and vigorous. "Shelled every day like hell . . . worked like galley slaves to keep things going. . . . Felt rather like a worm at times when being bombarded, but smiled on the men and appeared to chuckle with merriment, as if I were having the time of my life. . . . As I was." The last three words were added with grim emphasis. "Bombardment's all right, I've discovered, so long as it's at least a hundred yards away. But anything nearer than that's unhealthy."

That description Gog received considerably later, but at the moment he was standing beside Fops watching baggage being loaded on the cart preparatory to his return. As he said "Good-bye" to Fops, they shook hands with mutual sympathy. "Never mind, old man, you'll have a week's rest-cure," said Gog.

"Take care of yourself, old boy," said Fops. "It's pretty hot up there. Keep your head down. It's really necessary. And be there when I come back."

"I *shall* be there," said Gog with cheerful energy.

Fops proceeded to the billet and the luxurious curtained bed provided by Madame Duclaux. Gog returned *viâ* the mess-cart to the transport lines, thereafter on foot to the trenches where the battalion was.

They had gone into the trenches in the usual way two days before. When I say "in the usual way," I should mention that their march in and their relief had been quieter than on Gog's first relief. Captain Napier had addressed his company in the morning before they marched up in vigorous terms. "On the last occasion when this company relieved, there was the most infernal row while going up to the trenches. I heard it half a mile away, and the Huns could hear it as easily as I could. Men were talking and shouting and generally blowing their trumpets as if they thought the Hun trenches were the walls of Jericho. . . . Well they aren't. All that noise is simply giving the show away, and I won't have it. Men will understand that in future they are to relieve without unnecessary noise. . . . Every one of you knows as well as I do what can be avoided and what can't. See to it!"

The words were the curt words of command, but the men knew their commander and understood. The reference to the "walls of Jericho" captured their attention too, as it was intended to do, and the whole thing produced its effect in a greatly improved relief.

M'Toucan about these days became a lance-corporal and a firm supporter of authority. "Did ye hear the captain," he said, "talking aboot the waas o' Jerryko? I thought that was awful good, caase aa heard the noise masel last time, and aa thought it wasna canny like."

Gog made the same march that the company had made two nights before in order to reach the trenches. It was dark as he drew near the trenches, and he and Heafty blundered on past water-filled shell-holes, over ditches, past disused trenches, onward and slightly upward to trench 96. About a hundred yards from the entrance to the communication trench he saw a figure—half a

figure—in the darkness ahead, and he heard a muttering in a language which could be that of none but a British private.

Gog approached the figure in the darkness. With difficulty he perceived some one apparently in a shell-hole, while a distressed voice cried out: "Aw, lumme, can ye gimme a hand? Aa'm in a shell-hole full o' waa'er and mud, and aa'm stuck in the bottom, and it's that slithery wi' ma waders on, and they're full o' waa'er, that aa canna get oot."

Heafty took one hand and Gog took the other, and together they pulled—and pulled. It was a great pull, but at last he came out.

They left him in the darkness shaking himself in a hapless effort to become dry. But despite his troubles he was a cheerful soul. His teeth were chattering with cold, and he muttered as he shook himself, but the mutterings were partly philosophy, for the last that Gog heard from that weary warrior, torn from the depths of a watery four-feet-deep shell-hole were those words mournfully and ruefully uttered: "When feelin' wet and depressed, remember Jonah! Ee came out all right."

Gog and the faithful Heafty trod onwards through their own particular share of mud, and half an hour later he was once again sitting in a dug-out, but this time he was in the dug-out of the trench next to the one they had formerly held.

The night passed much as a night previously described had done.

In the morning Captain Napier called for Gog, while the hour was yet early. "You'll be full of knowledge now," he suggested smilingly.

"Well, it was a very good school," he answered modestly.

"I know," said Napier more seriously. "Anyhow,

you know the programme for the day. You'll carry on with that, see that your platoon are working properly, and specially I should like you to report to me what work you think requires to be done on your section of the line. Understand?"

"Perfectly," said the boy. He went off cheerfully to his task, and Napier smiled as he saw him going. But while the captain smiled, he bethought himself again, and called the boy back. "I say," he exclaimed, "be careful how you go about things. We're in a hot spot here."

"Right-oh," said Gog still cheerfully. He was full of enthusiasm to carry on the great work as the General had called on them to do.

Having inspected rifles and done the other things which platoon commanders daily do, the boy gazed through a periscope at the Hun trenches. There was no mistaking their location. They stretched out there in varying formation, lines of sandbags and mud, some twenty, some sixty, some a hundred yards away. Here and there little columns of smoke could be seen rising. Apparently the Hun was at his breakfast.

Through the periscope they were curious and various, these trenches, an irregular maze of human burrowing. Beyond the front line it was impossible to tell what exactly all the lines might be—communication trenches or supports, or disused trenches or what? Owing to the undulations of the ground it was impossible too to follow many of the trenches in their windings.

Beyond the trenches to the left were some woods with shell-shattered trees. Away in the distance to the right was an old windmill as yet not much battered by shell-fire. At the breakfast-hour while he gazed through the periscope everything was quiet.

From gazing at the enemy he turned about to look

backward on their own position. Behind their trench was a bleak expanse of mud and grass, interspersed with hedges and occasional bare trees. To the left was a shell-battered town, whitish in its ruin. Everything there too was very still.

The general stillness continued for over an hour, and while Gog toiled here and there, examining and considering what work would have to be done, nothing occurred to disturb his attention except the appearance of Shaw, who looked at him imperturbably. He only made one remark. "Wouldn't go about too perky, old boy," he observed genially. "If they carry on as usual, the gunners' scrap is due to start in about a quarter of an hour, and if we get it as usual, where Mary put the necklace, it's just as well to lie low for a bit."

"Right-oh," said Gog, and carried on blissfully. A few minutes later he completed his work, and presented his note for the thorough reform of the trenches to his company commander.

His modest proposals were:—

(1) Whole of parapet in bays 1, 2, 3, and 5 to be rebuilt with sandbags.

(2) Parados in whole section (gone) to be rebuilt.

(3) Four dug-outs required at least.

(4) Wiring to be done in front of whole section.

(5) Whole trench to be drained and duck-boards to be put down.

(Duck-boards are flat boards perforated in squares to allow water to pass through upwards or downwards. They are used for lining bottom of trenches.)

(6) Loopholes for snipers to be made in 3 bays.

(7) Places for reserve ammunition and bombs to be made in several bays.

(8) Two listening posts to be rebuilt.

(9) Bombers' posts to be strengthened.
(10) Three traverses to be strengthened.
(11) One sally-port to be made.

When Captain Napier saw this note he gazed upon it earnestly. Then he gazed at Gog. Finally, he smiled slightly. "This is what's required?" he said.

"Yes," said Gog hopefully.

"In other words, rebuild the whole giddy place."

"Very nearly."

"What do you consider the first thing?"

"The parapet."

"Right. Carry on. Do the necessary things first, and the others, if you can. First the parapet, then the wire. Try and do a bit of draining."

"Yes, sir."

"Before you've been long here, and when you've seen the results of the shelling and the weather, I'm afraid you'll find it becomes a case of—so much to do, so little done. But you're quite right in theory. These are the things that ought to be done, and I asked you to tell me just to find out if you understood, as you may have to run the company some day yourself."

"Thanks, sir," said Gog.

"Not at all," said Napier. He turned away to answer the telephone.

Gog returned to his platoon to carry on the work. He had determined that men should fill sandbags all day, and at night there would be a great onslaught on the parapets, which should turn them from shaky barriers of torn and riddled sandbags to solid defences, good against the hail of many bullets and much shrapnel, not to say explosive.

Alas for hope! War is the great upsetter, the one sphere in which almost everything may be relied on to turn out different from expectation.

Scarcely had he reached his platoon area when the storm burst. He had just given orders and men had collected their spades, when four whiz-bangs pitched immediately behind them. The air hummed with the concussion, and he felt as if his own hands were tingling. At the moment when the shells had whizzed overhead, he had been taking a short glance at the enemy's position through the periscope. The shells had whizzed so close above his head that the wind created by their flight had actually raised his hair.

He ceased looking through the periscope, and turned to find the men with the spades crouching behind the parapet, and gazing earnestly in his direction. Bits of earth and steel were plopping into the ground about them.

He hesitated a moment. Perhaps it was only a casual burst of fire. Two seconds later he was convinced by four more shells bursting only a few yards away.

"Tell the men to lie low meantime," he said to the sergeant.

"Yes, sir."

But the idea of work was still in his head, and he gazed around him in every direction. Was there no spot where they could fill sandbags in safety?

Over the area where his eye could range, apparently not. Shells were bursting farther along in both directions. There was nothing but to lie low. So he crouched against the side of the trench and waited. Two men were in the same bay, also lying low.

While he waited shells whizzed and hissed, or came with a burrowing noise from a distance, and all crashed upon their targets, flinging up clouds of earth and dust, and spreading steel or leaden missiles. Once, from where he stood, he saw a part of the parapet, torn sandbags, earth, stones and rubbish, flung upwards and all around,

finally subsiding in shattered ruin. There was a gap left in the parapet.

While he waited, too, there was another sound which he heard—the sound of men with anxious voices. He heard the voices while the guns were silent for a short time.

"Make way there! Make way!" The voices were anxious but imperative.

He wondered what it could be.

"Make way there! Make way!" The voices were almost angry. The trench was troublesome and narrow.

He turned to the nearest man. "What is it?" he asked.

Before the man could answer he saw. A stretcher-bearer appeared, carrying the front of a stretcher. Behind was another bearer, and on the stretcher was a man partly covered by a blanket, for he was dead.

To the boy it was strange and terrible, but just as the stretcher came in sight a wonderful thing happened.

The guns were silent. That was something, but at the moment the men passed, there was a most unusual burst of sunshine (unusual, because in that sodden, low country the sun seems never to shine). At the same moment, from far in the distance, there floated down to the trench the strains of military music. A band was playing from somewhere in the woods. It was the only band he ever heard in the trenches.

The effect on Gog was almost indescribable. Beside him was the first death which he had seen. That affected him powerfully, but at the same moment there was the sunshine and the music. The whole thing combined to bring to his recollection the memory of the first great funeral he had known, and the words of the

sergeant-major came back to him. "You will show your sorrow and respect for the man who has died for his country. But afterwards when you come away, the band will play a merry march, and you will go home proudly, as those who carry on the work."

In a flash the whole thing passed before his eyes. The result was equally quick. In a moment he had ceased to lie low. Guns or no guns, shells or no shells, he stood to attention. As the silent form passed on to the grave, he raised his hand to the salute.

When the bearers had gone, he quitted the trench and passed along proudly to carry on the work.

The two men he had left in the trench gazed at each other. "Never seen that done afore," said the one.

"Na," said the other. "Never did neither. . . . But he's a good un."

CHAPTER XX.

THE LOST LAMB.

DAY on day crept on their petty pace, and one day was very like the next or the one that went before it. And nights showed the same monotonous similarity. Every day the Hun destroyed the work of their hands or part of it, and every night they built it up again. But they were getting the better of the Hun and growing acquainted with his little ways. The casualties became fewer, because they grew to know the spots he particularly favoured for shelling. The work, too, became less futile, because they learned to know the parts of the trench which he habitually, almost daily, blew up; and so they came to put dummy parapets there accompanied with a warning notice-board, and the simple Hun not knowing these devices, expended much energy and many shells on blowing up what was not there (Irish phrase).

But even allowing for these devices the work was incessant and hard. Night after night, dark night or moonlight night, wet or dry, they toiled on with the filling of sandbags, and their erection, header and stretcher (that is, longways and shortways alternately), to form the barrier of defence. Night after night, too, men crawled like serpents through the mud, with mallets and stakes and barbed wire and "goose-

berries." With those they tapped and wound and worked with many contortions, erecting the entanglements. The "gooseberries" were circular balls of barbed wire useful for thickening the entanglement and laying down generally where it was impossible to create the ordinary netting.

"Gooseberries" are believed to be the invention of a General who worked his men on the principle that Satan always finds some work for idle hands to do. In case Satan, through any oversight (a highly improbable contingency) should find any man with some time to spare, there were always "gooseberries" to be made. Much time might be wasted under shell-fire, therefore "gooseberries." Man's spirit might be affected by shell-fire—"gooseberries."

The law had gone forth that man in the trenches must be either eating, sleeping, or working. Failing any other work—"gooseberries."

Therefore did Private Macanooley sit often like a tailor mending trousers, with the difference that he sat on a plank of wood, posed on two boxes above a pool of water, and painfully, with a perplexed expression on his face, curl barbed wire into curious formations, variously designed for Hun torture, the while he muttered to himself as he jabbed his fingers with the barbs of the wire, "Why the 'ell can't they give me a pair o' wirin' gloves? It ain't Christian to make a man torture himself wi' the things that's meant to torture ither people! Is it now?"

That complaint eventually reached Gog's ears. The person who really remedied the deficiency was Betty's father, who sent a consignment of wiring gloves, the same not being readily obtainable from other sources. Thereafter "gooseberries" grew in size and multiplied, and many men acquired quite an affection for that

once abhorred task. There is a certain resemblance to knitting in the making of "gooseberries"—a quiet contemplative recreation, not so strenuous as the filling of sandbags, diverting the attention and soothing the mind under shell-fire.

Truly there was wisdom in the general's idea of compelling people either to eat, sleep, or work. No time to think about shells and bombs.

The result of the "gooseberries" and other things gradually began to appear. Just visualise the situation a little. Napier and his company were holders of a difficult piece of ground in a "hot spot. They were labouring to make their part of the line impregnable. The "gooseberries" multiplied by day, and the wire entanglements, of which they formed part, grew by night. The parapet was growing in solidity except at a few heavily shelled spots. The parados was really beginning to exist in places. The depth of the water in the trench had been considerably reduced despite the rain. In one of the bays of Gog's parapet a loophole had been made, and observation of the Hun proceeded day and night. Now and then a bullet whistled from the loophole, and an unwary Hun disappeared either involuntarily or through his own activity. In the first case he retired from active participation in the war, in the second he became careful and thoughtful for a time.

All these things taken together marked a sensible advance in the matter of defence. In fact the atmosphere was changing from one of defence to one of aggression. The question was gradually coming to be—not whether it was possible merely to make the position impregnable, but how far the position could be used for attack.

Of course all that had taken much time and work. Three weeks of trench warfare had actually rolled by.

Many men had died for their country in these weeks, and the guns had thundered almost continually, whether the battalion was in the trenches or having their turn of rest.

But the change had undoubtedly been effected, and the change from the idea only of defence to that of aggression brought other things in its train.

Information must be had. Therefore patrols must go out.

And Gog almost prayed to Napier to be allowed to go on patrol. Strange, perhaps, but true. Such is the spirit of youth.

Fops being older was less rushing, and his opinions were expressed quite clearly. "If it's my duty to go, I'll go," he said. "But if anybody thinks I'm going out of my way to—ah—crawl on my stomach in the—ah—demned cold mud (not to mention craters full of water) for hours, . . . then all I have to say is, they're mistaken. I haven't the least desire to acquire a reputation as a muddy Sherlock Holmes. . . . I think it's a demned damp, miserable occupation."

"There certainly isn't much chance of doing the grand about it," said Napier amusedly.

"I don't care about the mud," said Gog. "Let *me* go."

After he had said that Napier mused awhile. Fops appeared to be thinking also, and after a time he started to talk again. "Well, the mud, you know," he said drawlingly, "is rathah beastly, you know. I've always thought so; but, on the other hand, I'm not so sure that perhaps it might not be more advisable that—ah—a senior and—ah—less youthful officer should be sent, because——"

"Shut up, Fops!" exclaimed Gog. (Notice the respect paid to Fops—his senior officer!) "I'm to be sent."

Napier smiled. "Well, if you are," he said, "there's to

be no skylarking, or attempts to enter the Hun trenches, or anything of that kind, at least until preliminary reconnaissance has been made. I'm not going to lose a valuable officer for nothing. Understand?"

"Quite," said Gog.

"Very well," said the commander. "You may go. "I'll send a corporal who knows the job, and two men with you."

. . . .

At eleven o'clock it was very dark, and Gog and his men crept down a sap at a point about a hundred yards from the German trenches. When they reached the listening post at the end of the sap, they were about seventy yards from the Huns.

Gog was armed with a revolver, two bombs, and a useful dirk. The men had also two bombs each, with rifles and bayonets.

One by one they emerged from the listening post at a point in the side where some sandbags had been removed to allow their passage.

Once out of the listening post they lay flat and listened. There was no sound except the usual occasional crack of a rifle. The ground was broken up in mounds, and it was very dark. Silently the men arranged themselves as ordered. Then Gog rose on hands and knees and stealthily moved forward, the men doing likewise.

He advanced about twenty yards and then lay still. He was fortunate in doing so at that moment, for a flare-light suddenly went up and blazed furiously over their heads.

They crouched still and silent with their faces down. To Gog it seemed as if the flare would never cease, but it did, and nothing happened.

Again he advanced, this time more slowly and cau-

tiously. It took much longer to cover twenty yards this time. The difficulty of crossing a piece of broken ground, covered with *débris* on a very dark night, without noise, is not small.

Once, one of the men kicked some loose article. There was a dull noise, and the whole party stopped dead. A rifle banged twice in the darkness, and they lay very still for a time, but nothing else happened.

Once again they advanced, only seven or ten yards this time. At the end of that piece the corporal touched Gog on the shoulder. The boy dimly saw the corporal's arm pointing in the darkness. He gazed steadily where the arm seemed to point. As he gazed he gradually realised that a figure was appearing and disappearing in the gloom. The figure was half on the skyline, otherwise he would not have been visible.

Silently they lay, and waited and listened.

The man was working. He was stooping and rising again. Gradually the boy realised what it was—a man working on the Hun parapet, in an advanced part of their trenches, probably lifting and laying sandbags.

Clearly the man had no idea that a British patrol was within a few yards of him, for he worked on quietly and steadily. Apparently there were other men working in the trench below, for he stopped once to speak to them, and there was a guttural muttering of voices.

Gog listened for a time, and then decided to carry on the patrol as originally intended. He carefully noted the appearance of the position where they were, so far as the darkness allowed him, and then he began to creep, with added stealthiness, a few yards in front of and along the line of wire guarding the German trenches.

It was cold and clammy work. His hands were bare

of gloves, because he wanted to feel in front of him as he moved for any stratagems of war there might be—trip-wire, or sunken devices of any sort, or wires that might lead to anything.

As they crawled along the front, the whole party were enveloped in the shadow of a convenient fold in the ground. Every few seconds Gog raised his head slowly and gazed at the black line of the German trenches, but he could see no one, nor could he hear anything.

Once, while he was so engaged, a rifle suddenly cracked only a few yards further on. He started violently, and he felt his heart thump, but he kept his head steady, and saw where the flash came from. It was from a loophole low down in the parapet, he was certain. So far as he could judge in the dark, the sentry was not more than thirty or thirty-five yards away.

Gog lay still and wondered—had they been seen? Apparently not, for nothing more happened. He concluded that the sentry's shot had merely been a mechanical part of his watch.

A minute later another flare-light whizzed up from a point about a hundred yards away. "Keep your heads down when the flares go up," had been the order. But in the circumstances no order could control the eager thirst for knowledge which filled the patrol, especially Gog. Fortunately they were still partly under cover of the fold in the ground. The flare-light burst favourably from their view point, and Gog gently craned his head up, to stare fiercely along the Hun trenches. As he did so, he was exultantly gathering information every moment. He was swallowing the formation of their line. His eye was sweeping the length of their entanglements, and measuring the distance from their parapets. Having done so, his eyes were feverishly searching for

unusual signs — visions of block-houses, machine-gun posts, and a dozen other devices of war were before his eyes, but he could not distinguish them.

The light died out, and they were still undiscovered. He meditated whether they should go back. He reflected that their progress had been very slow, but yet he thought they had been out as long as their orders allowed, and they had got some information—not a great deal, but useful in its way.

(1) No trip-wire encountered.

(2) Considerable entanglements about twenty yards in front of trenches.

(3) A sniper's loophole, probably located. (Later by flare-light, noted to be in peculiar corner bend of trench).

(4) Huns seen working on parapet. No sign, generally, that trenches were very strongly held. (This information problematical).

(5) State of Hun parapet generally seemed good by flare-light.

If they advanced farther they lost the cover of that fold in the ground, and he ruminated that the men, two of whom were new to the work, had probably had enough. "Better go back."

He signed to the corporal. It had been arranged, for several reasons, that they should return by the same route. Therefore those unwieldy units, two British privates in kilts, proceeded to "about turn." Now, that would be a delicate operation at any time. Going straight forward is comparatively simple, though cold; but "about turning," with bare knees in the clammiest of mud, manœuvring a kilt on a very cold night, is a most trying experience.

Private Ross had practically achieved the event, when the unfortunate thing happe[illegible] his [illegible]-leg, in describ-

ing the last part of the arc of a circle, disturbed an empty bully-beef tin poised on a slight mound of earth.

The noise of itself might have been mistaken for a rat, but, unfortunately, the night had grown slightly lighter, and objects not too far away were, if known, distinguishable.

Fritz, the German sentry, had that poised bully-beef tin as one of his landmarks. If he stared through the loophole, and saw that bully-beef tin on its little mound, then business was as usual, for he had gazed straight out of that loophole every night for weeks past, and seen that curious square object on the little mound. Occasionally he had sportively fired his rifle at it, without result, when performing his "one every quarter of an hour" shot.

Fritz, hearing the slight noise, now gazed out and failed to see the tin. He stared again and yet again. His hair almost stood on end, and for a second he felt thrilled with excitement. A moment later he was firing furiously at the place where the bully-beef tin had been.

As the bullets whistled around Private Ross, that stalwart man was endeavouring to contract his stature, to conform himself to the habits of the chameleon, and, if possible, to fade into the ground altogether. He had always filled a modest part in life, but probably he had never at any time realised so great a desire to be inconspicuous, and to carry on his part without undue ostentation. Gog and the others were going through similar processes, but none quite so earnestly as Private Ross, who was most nearly in the line of fire.

To add to their troubles a flare-light went up, which convinced the sentry that the bully-beef tin was gone.

The sentry's energetic fire enthusiasm became infectious and more rifles began to crack.

As the four lay motionless, the whizz of bullets was "fierce."

But rifle work was not sufficient to cope with the danger. From away back on the left there burst forth the "rat, tat, tat, tat, tat" of a machine-gun. First a burst of ten rounds or so, then another and another.

Everything was in full swing, and the Hun line was a blaze of fire.

As Gog lay on his face, he felt inclined to revise his idea that the German trenches were not strongly held.

Back in the British trenches Napier was gently cursing *sotto voce* and talking to the sergeant-major. "I knew it would happen. They've gone and tickled the Boche and got his wind up. It's good for them in the way of experience, if they come out, but if not——" Napier left the sentence unfinished.

"Ah, he's aw there, is Maister Macrae," said the sergeant-major. "I expect we'll be seein' 'im in a little."

"I hope so," said Napier fervently.

. . . .

Needless to describe the sliminess of that crawl back. Although the noise sounded terrific in their ears, and the danger "felt" imminent, they were not really in very great danger, for they had the good luck to be gathered behind that sheltering fold of ground.

Eventually the Hun grew tired of wasting ammunition for no visible cause, and gave it up.

The night settled down again into comparative silence.

In the silence and the darkness they stole away, and about an hour later, a weary, cold and wet patrol

leader slid over the edge of a trench into the arms of the sergeant-major.

"Ye're aw here?" said Dalziel inquiringly.

"We are," said Gog wearily.

"Umph!" said the sergeant-major. It was a species of satisfied grunt. "Ye seem to have worried them a bit?"

Gog grinned in the dark. "All the worry wasn't on their side," he murmured blissfully.

Farther along the trench he met Napier. "What the dickens have you been up to?" he demanded, first mentally noting that Gog was still strong and active.

"Tickling the Boche!" said Gog with cheerful insolence.

Subsequently he gave an accurate account of the night's work, which quite pleased his commander.

. . . .

Two nights later Corporal Jones and two men, belonging to the 14th battalion of the Mudlark Regiment, went out on patrol, having given A Company of the Gairloch Highlanders (the battalion next to them in the trenches) ample warning that they intended to do so.

The corporal and his men disappeared into the darkness of No Man's Land, and worked outwards in a manner not unlike to that of Gog's patrol. All patrols of course are similar in their habits, the only problems of movement being whether the patrol may be done walking, on the knees, or crawling, according to the light and the nature of the locality.

The corporal and his men were due to return at 12 P.M. or earlier by a certain sap.

They did not return at the appointed time, but for a period of their absence there broke out a heavy fire from the Boche trenches. Some time after the fire

had ceased, Corporal Jones and one man returned, reporting the other man, Private Solly, missing.

Information was sent to the Gairloch Highlanders to keep a look-out for Private Solly, and M'Toucan, as one of the lance-corporals on guard in the small hours of the morning, received the information.

Having received the information, he communicated the intelligence to some sentries, and subsequently talked the matter over with them—to two at least he chatted in his mother tongue, Gaelic. They often talked, those Highland soldiers, in that tongue, because it came easily to their lips, and it was homely.

To Private Solly (sometime draper's assistant in Pudsey, now a prospective bomb-thrower) their conversation could not be homely.

When the retiral of the patrol had commenced consequent on the enemy's fi[illegible] Solly's mind had not been very clear, and his know[illegible] of direction was nothing at all. It was his first [illegible] out on patrol, and the whole thing had been one muddy orgy of terror. He was weary too, and his companions had crawled faster than he. In a few moments they were gone, and he was all alone, perfectly unnerved and utterly lost.

In the grim and shadowy darkness among those dreadful mounds he neither knew whether to go backwards or forwards. The crack of a rifle made him lie motionless as a stone. The blazing of a flare-light almost petrified him into a stone. He felt that every light was sent up just because he was lying out there, a target for bullets. Or perhaps a Hun patrol would creep out and stab him with a bayonet in the dark. He had heard of such things.

It was terribly real to Private Solly, for he was a little fellow, who had screwed up his courage for the work, but was not very strong. He had volunteered

for the patrol, but he had never expected to be left all alone like that. The corporal, of course, had thought he was crawling hard after, just behind. So he had been, but not hard enough.

In his hour of misery Solly chose the line of least resistance. He saw a road which led through shadow and darkness, and which he thought led in the direction of the British trenches.

And true enough the way chosen led to a trench, though not his trench. He crept stealthily to it inch by inch, until at last he drew near enough to hear the sentry talking. For a moment the sound rang gratefully in his ears. Another moment, and the sound fell upon his ears like a sentence of death. He lay still as if paralysed, a cold sweat breaking over him. The language which he heard was not English, for he could not understand it, nor was he familiar with the sounds of the voices.

A paralysis of horror swelled within him. He was perfectly frozen with cold, and his limbs refused to move.

Private Solly lay out there desperately cold, and gradually freezing with the mud. Terror and cold and horror had robbed him of all capacity for further movement. And the dull grey morning, which he felt would bring his death, was almost breaking.

Just while Solly was in that state M'Toucan glanced over the parapet, expecting to see nothing, but simply as a precaution. He was about to turn away when he caught a glimpse of something like a figure. He stared hard at it. Then he made up his mind. "I'm goin' ower," he said. Another second, and he clambered over the parapet.

Five minutes later Lance-Corporal M'Toucan and Private Solly were talking within the safety of the

trench. "And ye couldna understan' the Gaelic ava?"

Solly shook his head dismally.

"Puir laddie!" said M'Toucan compassionately. "Puir laddie! I dinna wonner sae much that ye were frichted."

A quarter of an hour later the Gairloch Highlanders restored the "lost lamb" to the fold of his battalion.

. . . .

The Hun spent part of the afternoon of that day in shelling, and about four o'clock had a variety exhibition, sending across numerous interesting articles useful as souvenirs. About a dozen torpedoes, "oysters," and other forms of bomb were sent over, in response to which Napier, neglecting the mortar officer, who was anxiously hovering in the neighbourhood with a catapult in design amazingly similar to the primitive schoolboy pattern, called on the Divisional Artillery to perform—which they did with much vigour.

However, while the aerial bombing was in progress, Gog spent an active half-hour blowing his whistle to signalise the approach of the bombs. As each bomb appeared, whizzing towards any part of the trench, the occupants of that part left all and departed quickly to some far better place. By that method they avoided trouble—a thing which can be done in the case of aerial torpedoes and the like, as these are one form of missile which can be seen as it approaches.

The last bomb which was thrown was an "oyster," so called because of its shape. The "oyster" which was sent over did not burst, but lay flat on the ground. After it came over, and obviously entered the trench, there was a long pause. Eventually Wullie Mackay, who was in that part, spoke.

"I'm thinkin' it's a dud," he said.

"Better wait a while," said M'Toucan.

"Aye."

Wullie waited about three minutes. Then he grew weary and crept to the traverse. He stalked round the corner as if he expected to find a Hun. Having done so, he gazed anxiously around him in search for the bomb. At last he perceived it lying flat in the centre of the trench.

"I've got it!" he cried.

This claim to possession was slightly premature, but really represented a sort of "staking out" of his claim. It was a beautiful souvenir which, in thought, he was already treasuring to be taken home.

M'Toucan and others gathered round, but no one approached the bomb. "It's quite safe?" said Wullie. But the remark was tentative. He gazed round on the others inquiringly. Apparently no one knew.

"I'm goin' to hae a look at it," said Wullie.

"Ye're no feared."

"Ach, it's a dud," said Wullie.

He was obviously uncertain, but his desire for that souvenir was great. He had not yet got a good one, and there it lay, black, oyster-shaped, with four curious round points. He knew nothing of bombs, and he vaguely speculated as to how it could work. He was in a dilemma similar to that which once troubled the guardians of Troy, with the minor difference that the Greeks sent a wooden horse full of men, while the Huns had presented an iron oyster containing two dazzling cheddite perils. (The dazzlement takes place, as in the case of ordinary pearls, after the oyster is opened. Cheddite, dynamite, and lyddite are all similar substances.) "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*"

But surely it was a dud. "Naethin' venture, naethin' have!" he muttered. He crept round the traverse and approached it cautiously. He arrived above it, and probably came nearer his death than at any other time in his life. He was just putting his hand down to lift it, when a thought of the general warnings he had frequently received made him pause. He hesitated and meditated. An idea struck him. "I'll throw somethin' at it," he muttered.

He retreated round the traverse, and returned a minute or two later with a sandbag quarter filled. He hung behind the traverse and flung the missile. A moment later there was a deafening explosion, and Wullie crouched behind the traverse while bits of iron hurtled around.

When it was all over he looked round the corner again, but there was no souvenir now.

"It's a good job I didna lift it," he said to M'Toucan.

"Aye."

"But I dinna ken when I'm gaun tae get a good souvenir."

"Better hae a haill skin than a haill souvenir."

"Aye," said Wullie gloomily.

But he was a little discomfited, because he did not understand the problem he was dealing with. That the "oyster," if it fell flat, might occasionally fail to explode, was beyond him, because he did not know that the explosion of the "oyster" was dependent on the four percussion-cap lighters, one in each of the four tubes—the round ends of which he had seen—and that one of these caps must be fired by one of the sharp points of the four-pointed steel star buried in the centre of the "oyster," and if the "oyster" fell flat none of these points might act. If none of the caps were fired the

flash of flame would never burn up the detonator, and nothing would happen.

Wullie did not know all that, but he did not consider that ignorance was bliss. He was discomfited, or, in his own language, "disjaskit."

. . . .

On the evening of the day of the restoration of the lost lamb, and the "oyster" afternoon, the boy received a letter from Betty in which she wrote:—

"I have been really frightfully busy for me, sometimes even on night duty with the V.A.D. work, as well as part day duty, because we have been short-nanded for a time. I am being allowed now to do a little of the bandaging work in the easier cases—but you know, Gog, I feel quite frightened of it sometimes, especially if I ever think of you in connection with it. Some of the cases are so terrible. I couldn't help seeing one man fearfully wounded in the head the other day, and I nearly ran away. I'm afraid I'm rather a baby, but I'm still trying my best, and the matron is awfully kind, in fact, quite pets me, and says I do very well. So there you know! I don't feel half as brave as I thought I was, but carry on somehow.

"I think it has all made me more frightened of your being hit. So, dear Gog, do take care, and don't be unnecessarily rash. I know from your letters you're getting accustomed to things, and learning all the tricks of the game, and all that, but please, for my sake, if for no one else's, fight sensibly, and don't go looking for trouble. I know you quite well, and I see that your letters are getting more warlike, and generally read as if you were preparing for a "scrap." I know you'll do your duty and more any time, but please, please,——. You know what I mean."

There was a gentle light in his eyes as he read her letter, and he was happy. But he smiled with the wisdom of youth over her advice. He had escaped many shells and dangers, and the luck of the game was with him.

When he read the part where she said she did not feel so brave, but yet carried on, the expression on his face was more tender than ever, and he thrilled with the feeling of comradeship—a part of that great feeling of oneness which has come in a peculiar way to man and woman in this war. She was fighting in the same war. She was weary too, and her spirit flagged at times (as he knew his own had done), but she too "carried on." It was the phrase that contained the great burden and the great sustenance of them all.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LUCK OF THE GAME.

It is not permitted to infantry to become unduly comfortable, or to have too much rest. Therefore Captain Napier's company took over a different trench on the next occasion of relief. They had gone far to making trench 96 impregnable, but now they had trench 93, for their case fell under one of the two maxims of indisputable veracity which have arisen in the war: (1) That there is no rest in the war (a general reflection, and a satiric reference to periods of rest in billets), and (2) That no two shells ever fall in the same place.

Now trench 93 was a trench which had all the disadvantages that trench 96 had had, with several special additions of its own. In particular it was only one trench, not a composite of two trenches, front line and rear (or support) line with communicating trenches between, as the majority of trenches are. It was one long circular trench, formerly the support trench of a front-line trench, but the Huns had at one time broken through the front line, and they held a triangular wedge of trenches which ran through the British front line towards the single-line trench 93. The ends of 93 circled round to meet the two ends of the British front line.

This particular configuration of trench had many results, the two worst of which were that the main part of 93 was terribly subject to German artillery fire, and the other of which was that bombing "scraps" between the advanced posts of the Huns and the advanced British posts were frequent and deadly. The total result had earned for 93 the nickname of the "death-trap."

Into the death-trap Captain Napier's company went coolly, not heeding a mere name. What was that to them? Had they not a good commander, and did their battalion not have in its history the names of a hundred fights where they had stood unshaken? Nevertheless they went with the caution of men who were making war, taking carefully all the information that could be got from those whom they relieved, and posting themselves according to the experience of those who had gone before.

But those who went before had lost six men that day already. Query—Was their observation sound? Had they truly weighed the results of their experience? Questions only to be answered after observation and experience by others.

The men who went before said that they had been heavily shelled all day, but they also said that shelling almost invariably ceased at five o'clock.

Therefore things appeared comparatively safe for the Gairlochs at seven.

At 7.5 there was a heavy burst of shelling lasting about ten minutes, and directed at the centre of the trench. At 7.15 a message reached Gog that two men of his platoon had been wounded, and a large part of the parapet blown in.

In the boy's mind there was only one thing to be done. There was danger and difficulty. The men were

in trouble; the message would not have been sent unless the trouble was exceptional. He was an officer. It was his duty to be where the trouble was. Besides, there was a doubt in his mind—were his men properly posted?

Napier was not visible, so he at once went down to the point of danger. As he proceeded along the trench from Napier's dug-out to the danger area, a curious collection of thought rushed through his mind. It all flowed from that last letter of Betty's. Of course he never hesitated or doubted for a moment what he had to do, but her letter created reflection in his mind. It seemed to raise questions. She had buckled on his sword and sent him out as her knight, and he was going down the trench on a task truly part of a knight's work, to be with his men in difficulty, and, if possible, to help or guide them against the troubles of the hour. That was the very sort of thing which she had sent him out to do, so he thought. But now her letter had come, and he felt as if it were almost tugging at him to come back and keep out of the danger.

Of course he knew that there was really no contradiction between the knighthood and her letter, because he did not consider what he was doing to be venturesome. It was just his duty. Nevertheless the slight apparent contradiction between the way in which she had sent him forth and the way she now seemed to tug him back, struck him for a second as odd. Yet he knew it was easy to understand too.

When he reached his platoon area he heard from the sergeant the names of the wounded. Then he slowly proceeded along the trench, carefully considering the position of every man. At the same time he examined the damage done by the shelling. In one place the parapet had been utterly destroyed, and a great gap left in the wall of the trench. Clearly it must be built up,

or no one could pass during the daytime. There was no parados there to form a background, and a man passing would be clearly in view of the enemy.

He was still considering the question of the work to be done, the men and time required, and other similar matters, when shell-fire broke out again. In a moment the whole area around him was whizzing with shells. Whiz-bangs came, four at a time, hissing with fierce intensity. "Crash! Crash! Crash!" they burst, not forty yards away. Missiles hurtled around him and thudded into the sandbags. Earth and *débris* burst up in clouds, and rained down again in clods and tattered bags and loose soil. The whole atmosphere became thick with the nauseating smell of the bursting charges of the shells.

For a moment he felt slightly dizzy. He had never before been quite so much in the thick of bursting charges. But a second later he came to himself. He saw a man still standing too high. "Lie low! Lie flat!" he shouted, but he himself did not lie low.

Another moment and there were four more shells bursting even closer than the last. He was on the point of lying down when he suddenly felt as if his head were reeling. A stunning sensation passed over him, and unconsciously he put his hand up to his shoulder. Something had struck him there.

He reeled against the side of the trench. The air around seemed thick and lurid, and the smell was sickening.

As he leant against the side of the trench he still heard the shells crashing and bursting, and the air grew ever thicker. He was leaning on his left side. Suddenly he felt a sharp sting in his right leg.

He still leant as he was, motionless, only he slipped down the side of the trench a little more.

The shelling ceased and the air grew clearer.

His eyes were shut, but he heard a voice talking to him from somewhere. "Are you hit, sir? Are you hit?"

He awoke from his dazed dream. "I think so," he said wearily.

"All right, sir. Can you stay as you are? I'll bring the stretcher."

Then he woke up to his duty again. "The stretcher," he said. "No, I can walk down. Are there others hit?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then get them the stretchers at once. I can walk." He slowly raised himself, but he did not see clearly. "Could I have a man to lead me?" he said painfully.

"Yes, sir. I'll lead on."

The man led on slowly for the dressing-station, and the boy staggered after.

At the end of his own trench he was passed on to another man. Before that happened, however, he sent his message. "Tell Napier and Fops I'm hit. All papers in my valise or Napier's dug-out. Say I'll be all right soon and very sorry to leave them so."

Having delivered his message he staggered on through the darkness and the narrow weary windings of the trenches.

"How far now to the dressing-station?" he asked once with a gasp.

"Only half a mile now, sir," the man said cheeringly.

"Lead on!" he said firmly, but his leg was dragging painfully.

. . . .

When the messenger arrived at Napier's dug-out he found the captain and Fops. He delivered the message.

"Gog hit!" exclaimed Fops.

"Yes, sir."

The face of Fops fell as if the end of all things had happened. "Where is he?"

"Gone to the dressing-station, sir?"

"He walked down?" queried Napier.

"Yes, sir."

"Badly hit?"

"They're afraid so, sir."

"Are you going down to the adjutant's to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then be sure and find out from the doctor whether he's badly wounded and how he's getting on."

The orderly saluted and went out.

Napier's own soul was absolutely in revolt. He had loved Gog, and now the boy was gone.

There was a fierce surge of anger in his heart against the people who had created the thing, mingled with keen sorrow at the loss.

Fops was too deeply hurt to have any but one feeling. "I knew him from the beginning," he said pitifully, "and now, not even a handshake."

Napier glanced at him, fully comprehending. "Cheer up, old boy," he said gently, "he's not dead yet. We'll have the news in a short time."

Fops picked up a little. "I know I'm a fool," he said, "to be like this when it's war. But we had been so much together, and——" The sentence died away. It seemed to need no ending.

They sat silent for a time. Eventually Napier rose. "We've got to carry on," he said. Once again, the great law of war.

As he rose another orderly entered. The situation as regards the number of casualties was becoming serious, and the sergeant-major had sent a message.

Napier quitted the dug-out immediately, and as he

left it all ideas of grief fled from his mind, and there rose up once again in his soul as often before, the fierce determination to beat the "swine" who had brought all the trouble and sorrow and mud and blood on the heads of innocent people.

Unwittingly the Germans had roused Napier to the utmost, and in doing so they had called into fullest activity the powers, not of a stripling learning his business, but of a soldier versed in the arts of war, and more than a match for the acutest of the Huns; also one of those very few who seem to carry a charmed life.

He had been slowly but steadily building up the company and the trenches wherever he was, and preparing for more offensive work, but the wounding of Gog roused him to that work earlier perhaps than might otherwise have happened.

On receiving the message from the sergeant-major he went along the whole line held by his company, and discussed the situation with Dalziel.

An hour later he issued special orders to all platoons as to the manner in which the trench was to be held. The trench was a peculiar one, and his orders were experimental.

On the succeeding day they were heavily shelled all day, but there was only one casualty. On the day after they were still shelled, but there were no casualties. Not every trench is open to such treatment, but 93 was peculiar, and he had accurately gauged its peculiarities.

The captain also made special arrangements with the artillery after having a talk with the colonel For every shell that the Huns sent across the British guns sent three.

Napier was still holding that trench about a fortnight later. By that time the German guns appeared not to be so active. That, however, is merely incidental.

On the second night after Gog was hit Napier sti burned with a silent fury. Having had a comparativel easy day, he had spent considerable time examining Hun bombing-post, which he had also observed pr viously from another trench. He had further watche a bombing attack on that post, which had failed, and h had come to his own conclusions as to the failure.

The post was still occupied by the Huns. It was source of great annoyance, and it also appealed to hi as a point at which he might strike, for the post wa only about twenty yards from the British advanced pos and there was no wire around it.

Nightly the Huns flung bombs from that post into th British post, and nightly they were returned.

Napier arranged for that night that everything shoul apparently proceed in the British post as usual. Ap parently, but in fact differently.

While for the purpose of occupying the attention o the Hun bombers the appearance remained the same, a corporal and one man of the bombing section stole quietl out from another part of the trench, and lay in wait at a point which Napier had selected after careful thought The point was not more than twenty yards from the German post, and partly in rear of it, because the post was at the end of a sap run out from the German trenches.

The Hun method of bombing attack was for three men to advance into their post, rapidly hurl their bombs towards the British post, then run back down their sap to escape a return of bombs from the British post. It was partly futile work, because frequently the British post was kept unoccupied, and also, frequently, because the Hun bombers in their eager haste failed to fling into the post. But occasionally the attack created casualties.

The corporal and one man lay in wait, each man with a bomb ready to throw, and with Napier's last words in their ears, "Remember, you're practically safe if you do it right, and one bomb well thrown is worth a dozen thrown wide."

They lay waiting motionless until they heard the stealthy tread of three men's feet coming down the sap. They heard the Germans whispering in their post, and then the two waiting men raised their heads. They could see the dark shadows of the Huns about to throw, for the parapet of the Hun post was like the British one, somewhat battered. The waiting two were themselves hidden by the nature of the ground in the position which Napier had very carefully selected.

"Get ready," whispered the corporal. Both men pulled out the pins from their bombs.

"Ready?"

"Throw!" said the corporal.

The two bombs circled in the air, and dropped easily in the German post. The corporal and man again lay very silent. There sounded the terrific dull crash of a bomb and then another, while a cloud of smoke rose whitish in the darkness.

There was a single groan from the German post. Then all was still.

The corporal and the man crept stealthily away.

A few seconds later the German trenches were blazing with rifle-fire and flare-lights were streaming upwards, but it was all too late.

CHAPTER XXII.

SMILING FACES.

THE Adjutant came into the dressing-station to see the wounded boy. The dressing-station was just a square wooden hut. The wounded lay on the floor.

The doctor worked busily and cheerily. "Yes, you've got a bad hit, but no bones broken."

"That's good news," said the Adjutant.

Gog seemed dizzy. "Got a severe blow, and a bit shaken by the shock, but nothing at all you won't get over all right," continued the doctor.

"And you'll soon be home in good old Blighty," said the Adjutant.

Gog smiled. "I'm sorry to leave the company and Napier and Fops," he said.

"We'll all be sorry to lose you," said the Adjutant, "but we'll fight away till you come back."

"Right-oh," said Gog dreamily.

"And all the girls 'll fall on your neck in the meantime," said the doctor.

Gog almost laughed. They laid him down quietly on a stretcher after the bandaging was over, and he thought dreamily of Betty. He was not quite fully conscious.

Other cases came in and were dressed, but he scarcely noticed them. He was drowsy. His leg stung him, and he rolled sometimes uneasily.

The doctor came again. "Well, are you ready to march home to Blighty?"

"Right," said Gog. He made an effort to rise.

"Oh no, not quite so literal as that. We'll carry you." A couple of bearers lifted the stretcher and swung along with him. "Go steady!" said the doctor.

He heard it all in a dreamy way. "Now, careful there . . . hoist him up . . . steady now . . . let him down softly on the trolley . . . . There!"

"There you are," said the doctor. "A carriage and six horses to take you down, two healthy scars for your country, and the girls and good old Blighty to take care of you when you get home." That was the doctor's cheery way.

Gog realised that he was on a trolley dragged by six men and was to be taken down the light railway. "Are you cold?" said the doctor.

"Yes."

"Get more coats and cover him up."

The coats came, also other wounded, who were placed on the trolley to be carried down.

"Good-bye, old man," said the Adjutant. "Good luck!"

"Good-bye; good luck!" he murmured.

Then they started off, and the trolley jogged and jolted down the line.

"Whizzz! Crash!"

The boy started violently. The night of horrors was not ended. The Germans were shelling the line, and a great shell had burst about a hundred yards away.

The trolley stopped, and he heard the men discussing.

"Mebbe we ought to go back. . . . There's three wounded officers on the trolley. . . . Aa think it's safer to go on. . . . All right, let's go on at once if we're to go."

They started again immediately, and the trolley was pulled and pushed faster than ever.

"Crash!"

There was a great blaze and burst above them, and bits of shrapnel hurtled and rattled around. The boy was thoroughly awake now, and he could hear the sound he knew so well—the plug, plug of lumps of steel or lead into the ground.

Burst followed burst, but no one was hit. Nevertheless the boy on the trolley shivered. He was weak from loss of blood and weary, and did not feel equal to meeting trouble just then.

The men pushed on steadily and got through. The trolley came to the end of the line and the next dressing-station, another square hut with a few couch-like erections. Slowly and steadily once again he was lifted, taken into the station, and laid on a couch.

The doctor's face wore a kindly smile. "Hello!" he said, feeling his pulse; "how are you? Not so bad as you might be, eh? Right shoulder and right leg. Well, well. Had an injection? . . . Ye don't know. Ah, well, I'll give ye one. Meantime, have some beef-tea."

Gog drank beef-tea. The doctor looked at his arm. The boy was dreamy and not paying much attention. Suddenly he felt as if his arm had been stung. The doctor pulled down the sleeve of his coat. "There ye are. Ye've had an injection. Never knew it happened, eh? . . . Funny, isn't it? The doctor's face was cheery.

Gog smiled and dozed.

He woke up with a start to hear the doctor speaking. "Now, then, ye'll have to be leavin' us."

Waiting on the stretcher outside, he dreamily realised that the motor orderly was worn with war and work. He was pleading with the doctor. "Oh, lumme, 'ave aa got to drive down that road again. Aa've been up and

down there six times the day already and shelled every time. Lor', is there no other car on the road!"

"Everybody's the same," said the doctor. "I've been working all day and all night, and wounded men can't wait. They'll die if they're not taken down, and besides, I must have the station cleared."

The motor orderly subsided with a groan, and Gog was lifted into the car. The engines started grumblingly, and in a few minutes later they were jolting and bumping down the shell-pitted and rubbish-strewn road, naturally an uneven bit of paving, but rendered by war little more than a mud-covered assortment of ill-shapen stones. Every few minutes they would stop with a jerk to enable transport to pass, or to prevent diving into some less visible shell-hole which suddenly gaped in front of them. Before such a shell-hole there would be backing and jerking and jolting, then a fierce bounce forward again as the car swayed in the unevenness of the track. As Gog lay there he realised it all with the keenness of the sharp sting that he felt with every rolling jerk. He gripped one of the posts inside the car to prevent himself from being thrown about. Nevertheless, he felt not discontented at the moment. He was very tired, and every turn of the wheel was bringing him nearer to comfort and peace.

Suddenly he realised, with a sense of relief, a change in the road. There were no more bumps and jerks, and they were rushing along with swift smoothness. He vaguely surmised that they must be in France. He had seen few roads in Belgium that were not more or less quagmires.

A quarter of an hour later he was lifted from the car to the hospital on a stretcher. They carried him a long way, and he vaguely knew that the feet of the bearers were tramping through deep mud and water; they were

passing through rows of huts which in a queer sort of way reminded him of the old days and the huts at Delsarte.

The bearers entered one of the huts. Up and down the hut on each side were rows of beds, each of the same simple pattern. In every bed but one was a wounded man. In the empty bed Gog was laid.

The nurse came. He noticed her and she smiled. "Had a long way to come?" she said.

"Think so."

"Hit this evening?"

"Yes."

"Where are you hit?"

He told her.

"Do your wounds hurt much?"

He seemed not to know what to say.

"Poor boy!" she said gently. "We'll soon put you right. Are you cold?"

"Yes."

"I'll get you two hot bottles. Are you hungry?"

"Thirsty."

"I'll get you a hot drink." She smiled still as she spoke. "Anything else I can do?"

He shook his head. He felt as if he wished to sleep.

"You're sleepy," she said. "All right; I'll make you comfortable in a few minutes."

She examined the bandaging of his wounds and made him comfortable. He fell asleep with a sigh of content, for after the toil and strain and mud, despite his wounds, the delicious softness of a warm bed and the gentle kindness of deft hands came veritably as balm.

He fell asleep.

In the morning she came again. She felt his pulse and took his temperature. "Better to-day?" she said smilingly. He noticed that her face was pale, and she

flitted from one bed to another over the whole ward. Apparently there were only two nurses to attend to all that great ward, but none of the wounded called in vain.

"You'll have some breakfast," she said. "It'll do you good."

He had breakfast. After that he lay still and watched her flitting around the ward, until the bearers came again.

When they came, he wondered. "Where now?" he said.

"To the theatre," said one of the bearers.

"The theatre!" His mind did not grasp the idea. He thought of "The Peerless Night," and remembered being there with his mother and Betty.

Once arrived in the theatre he realised. Yet he was astonished too, for it happened to be full of people when he arrived. There were two doctors, several nurses, and a number of V.A.D.'s.

When they laid him on the table he gazed around on them. Suddenly he started violently and raised his head. "What is it?" said the doctor.

He lowered his head. "Very like her!" he said. He had seen a beautiful nurse like Betty. His eyes followed her as she went out with some of the V.A.D.'s. He remembered that Betty was a V.A.D.

The faces of all the nurses and all the V.A.D.'s seemed to be smiling with kindness. The doctor was smiling too. "You saw one of the angels," he said humorously.

"Yes," said the boy quite simply.

The doctor chuckled, but he had to get on with his work. He held up the brazen mouth. "It's best to take it quietly. Inhale slowly and steadily."

"All right." He inhaled steadily, kicked once, and lay still.

. . . .

Some time later he woke up and he was then lying in bed. He put his hand up to his shoulder. The nurse saw it and came to him. "Awake again?" she said.

"Yes."

"It's all over," she said cheerfully. She gave him a piece of cotton wool in which he felt a hard thing. "That's the bit of shrapnel the doctor took out," she explained. "You'll be able to take it home and show it."

"Good," he said.

"Don't touch your wound with your hand. That won't make it better."

He removed his hand from the bandage.

An hour later the bearers came again. "Where now?" he said.

"You're going off to the base hospital," she explained. "Too near the firing line here, you know. . . . I'll just tie your ticket on with the particulars so that you won't lose it."

He submitted peacefully to be ticketed. "Officer—one. Rank—2nd Lieut., &c., &c."

Then the bearers lifted him up. She smiled. "Good-bye," he exclaimed just as they were going. "Thanks so much."

"Good-bye," she answered. "Glad to have helped."

The bearers passed out to the white train with the red crosses, which bore them at tolerable speed down to the base. Again there was a motor journey from the station to the hospital. Bearers again, doctors, nurses, more bearers. Up the stairs to the fourth flat of a great building, and then he was laid at rest on another of those plain soft beds in a short oblong room.

She was tall, the nurse who came to him, slightly

plain-faced, but with a sincerely kind look in her eyes. He discovered she was clever in her work, her treatment firm but gentle. She inspired confidence.

She had the same easy ways of talk as the one he had already met.

"Had a long journey?"

"Yes."

"Immediately after the operation?"

"Yes."

That was hard, though I suppose it can't be helped. They must keep the firing-line hospitals clear, but it's hard on the cases who have to come down. . . . Were you sick after the chloroform?"

"Yes, on the train."

"Poor boy." She smiled sympathetically. "It's just as well to get it over though," she added. "You want to send a wire to your friends?"

"Please."

He sent off the telegram to his mother. "Wounded right shoulder and leg. Doing well. No need for anxiety."

A few hours later he received replies from his mother and Betty.

. . . .

For a week he remained in the base hospital until he learned to know the daily routine of ordered life.

There was the day nurse, tall and dark-haired, uniformed as correctly in her mode as any Gairloch officer in his. (There can be no greater compliment than that.) She came at seven o'clock and felt his pulse; also put a thermometer under his tongue and wrote upon a chart containing the line of temperature and life, which ascended and descended with unequal variation. Later she produced breakfast and did bandages; later still, lunch, tea, more bandages, and after that she dis-

appeared, whither he knew not. In her place came the night nurse, small of stature and brunette, smilingly *chic*, but not so cleverly deft as the day nurse. Her bandages had not the artistic finish or the staying efficiency of the others. Nevertheless she was very capable too. Her duties comprehended the providing of sleeping draughts for the night, and operations for soothing fevered brows. (The shock of the concussion had slightly affected his head apart from the wounds.) The night nurse, he discovered, peeped in and out stealthily at all hours of the night, for the nurses keep guard as the sentries do. If she thought he was asleep, she slipped silently away. If he was awake, she said gently, "Go to sleep, you bad boy!" or some variation of that theme. If he did not sleep within a certain time, she put his pillow straight and gave him a draught.

Apart from the two nurses, there appeared daily two sisters and the matron. All these smiled on him, each in their own way, and with a genuine and cheering kindness sufficient to make any man almost wish to be mildly wounded in order to be smiled on in that way.

The matron invariably came attended by a younger sister. The matron's deportment was correct and dignified, but dignity and her smile were not incompatible. She had one minor failing, which the great number of patients perhaps created. She nearly always made the same little joke. "How are you to-day? . . . Ah, feeling better. . . . *Still* taking nourishment." The last three words were spoken with a humorous gleam in her eyes and a quaint smile on her lips. Her patients came to know that little joke, and to speculate whether she would make it or not, and if she did, exactly how she would say it. It came to be a joke that she said just that phrase and no other, so whatever way they

took it, the result was one more gleam of light in the patients' day.

With the matron came the younger sister, Pansy. She invariably carried a long chain, a bunch of keys, and a little black book. She was sweet-faced, slimly built, and apparently young to hold so great a post. She had a way of smiling with romantic tenderness that was gently attractive. She always smiled at the matron's joke, and remained smiling until her superior went out.

The other sister who went round the patients was the second in command. She was plump and jolly in the very best sense of the term, and there was something in her manner which inevitably brought joy to the weariest patient. It was a source of satisfaction to gaze on any one like that; she seemed the embodiment of healthy happiness and humour. She frequently said to the patients, "Cheer-oh!"

Truly the patients were happy who had the good fortune to be nursed in that hospital.

Apart from the nurses, of course, the doctors made their daily rounds, quiet men, who did their work quickly and passed on.

. . . .

For Gog, weary though he was, the week passed quickly. At the end of it the order came to move for "Blighty," that place which the wounded, who are going there, pant to reach, and to which the wounded, who may not go there, long for more than any other thing.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FIVE MINUTES.

THERE were the inevitable good-byes of war at the base hospital, but they smiled on him to the last. So he passed out from the base hospital to the hospital ship.

He lay in a bunk, while below him he could hear the shout of voices, cheering and careless. Hundreds of wounded men were on the ship; yet they laughed and cheered as they waited for the ship to start. "Good old Blighty!" they shouted again and again with joyous enthusiasm.

Even the roll of the ship in a fairly heavy sea, which shortly met them, could not altogether kill their enthusiasm.

About three hours later he was lifted from his bunk, placed on the wooden platform that hung from the chain of a crane, swung in mid-air, and dangled slowly down on to the landing-stage. Alighted there, he lay for a few moments on the stretcher, pyjama-clad and rolled in blankets,—the form of garb in which he had come from the hospital in Belgium all the way to England. That garb does not clearly display the distinctions of rank.

A stretcher-bearer came up. "Are ye an awficer or a man?" he inquired.

The boy was feeling rather feeble after the journey, but he gathered his thoughts for the effort. "Both, I hope," he said mildly.

The stretcher-bearer was staggered. He murmured something incoherent, and then lifted his end of the stretcher.

The boy passed to the train for London. Arrived there, he was borne swiftly to the hospital.

As he passed through the streets, he felt as if a wave of life passed through him. There was something electric in the thought that he was back in London—home again. He gazed eagerly out through the open back of the motor, hurting his neck as he craned it to see the world of rushing life. Unconsciously he was murmuring within himself, "Good old Blighty!"

The car came to a stop before a great building, at the door of which a curious crowd was gathered. As the bearers carried him past, he heard the people talking. "My, but he's bad. . . . Aw, terrible!"

"All you know about it," he reflected. "Expect I'll be all right in six weeks."

As he completed that reflection, he passed within the hospital into the care of doctors and sisters and nurses and V.A.D.'s.

Needless to describe the hospital and their work on him. The hospital was in general similar to that at the base, except that sisters and nurses were more numerous and they were supported in their work by members of the Voluntary Aid Detachment, commonly known to fame as V.A.D.'s. That they were all in their own departments skilful and charming was a thing he expected and he was not disappointed.

Perhaps only one thing need be mentioned. It became necessary that he should take gas to admit of a further slight operation.

He did so.

When he came out of the gas he stared around in dazed fashion.

"Well," said the doctor, "what were you thinkin[g] about in your sleep?"

His face was almost fierce as he answered, "Th[e] defence of trench 93."

His soul had been too deeply marked, and he was no[t] yet quite clear of the brunt and struggle of war.

. . . . . .

It was on the day after his arrival in the hospital.

The specialist was talking to the doctor of the hospital and he was quite definite. "No," he said, "his head i[s] meantime very slightly affected, but he must not be excited. If he's to see any people it must only be for five minutes in the day, and not more than one person."

"Very well," said the doctor.

"We may relax the rule very shortly if he goes on, but there's no use taking risks"

The doctor bowed.

The matron met his mother and Betty and explained the situation. She left it to themselves to decide who should see him, and of course there was only one answer to the question, though the soul of Betty was in revolt against circumstances and tyrannical doctors and matrons. What was one minute, after all, just to see him, and *she* would never excite him. These were her reflections, notwithstanding the fact that she had spent a considerable part of the morning making herself and her attire specially attractive in order that the boy might find nothing amiss. As she waited, she felt as if she could cry with vexation. And besides, he must be much worse than they had thought, or they would never have kept him shut up like that.

While Betty was so thinking, the mother had gone to the boy to spend the five minutes which war could allow.

Five minutes for a mother to discover that the boy

was just the same. The storm and rage of war had passed over him, but his heart was still the same, and all the battering of Huns and rude thunderings of war had left him just the simple boy that he had gone out. Perhaps he was a little older, a little graver, but his smile was the same, and his speech was clear.

She had come full of fears and questioning and doubts and hope—more than all else hope. He would know her? He would understand her? He would remember everything? He would still be her boy? Not fiercely changed by war?

A hundred questions had surged within her, and now, the answer was clear and triumphant. Wounded, badly wounded? Yes, but sound, and certain to recover, and still the same.

The answer was overwhelming in its relief.

And the boy?

Weary and worn, tired from loss of strength, not very fit for fighting just then, he was so glad to have his "dear old Mums" again.

Yes, it was a great hour for them, but scarcely the place where a writer may intrude. They were rather too sacred those moments—a few of the inexpressibly gracious moments of life.

. . . .

On the following day came Betty. There were five minutes for her too in her demurest mood, because the boy must not be excited.

Five minutes of the most elusive and disappointing kind in a way—so terribly short.

She too had been so full of questions and doubts and hopes. What would he think of her? What would he have become?

Somehow she had created a mental portrait of him as a mighty warrior who would come back and look down

upon her from the heights of an iron impassivity. H
had faced shot and shell, and must more or less hav
acquired the properties of a man of iron. He would b
no longer Gog.

But he was.

The whole mists of idle imaginings vanished away
the moment she saw him, and she entirely forgot herself
and her dress and everything else in looking at him.

She slipped quietly through the door until she came
in sight. "Oh, Gog!" she cried involuntarily. And he
could only give her a left hand. The right was still
involved in the injury to the shoulder.

He was pale, and it seemed so terrible his lying
back there so still with his black hair against the
white pillow, and the white coverlet neatly folded back
under his chin.

Gradually she became accustomed to it. "I didn't
expect to find my knight here," she said weakly.

"No," he said. "I didn't either, but I did the best I
could."

"Oh, I didn't mean that," she cried. "I mean . . . I
was such a fool. . . . I always thought of your getting the
V.C. or something at first. . . . I never thought of this.
That was in the beginning of the war, and almost until I
came to nursing, . . . but now I know. . . . But, oh, I'm
so glad, Gog, your're going to come all right again."

"Yes, I've been lucky," he said.

"I suppose you have," she said dubiously. "Papa is
so glad you're going to recover completely," she remarked
jerkily, "and so is Kitty."

"I know," he said. "They were always so kind."

After that they were silent for a time, and the
moments seemed to fly away. He had little to say.
He silently admired. She had been so full of things
to say that now she couldn't say them.

She had a little brown canvas box in her hand. "Grapes from father," she explained as she put them on the side table. "I'll bring you flowers," she murmured.

"You're all most awfully kind," he said almost protestingly.

There was silence again, and that was the way throughout. Conversation would not run smoothly, and yet there was an undercurrent. He knew she was glad to see him, and she knew he was pleased to see her. They knew it unconsciously somehow.

When the time came to go away, she felt as if it had been terribly unsatisfactory, and yet, at the same time, she knew that Gog was just the same, and getting on well, and everything was all right.

But that was only the first of many conversations in the hospital, and of many more to follow in the sunny days of convalescence.

She went away with the old "ripping" smile on her face, and the gentlest words on her lips.

After she had gone, he lay back and dreamed.

. . . .

About two hours later he picked up the morning paper, which till that time he had not read. The nurse came in and turned the pages over to the casualty list. He glanced down the list and read under the heading of "Wounded": "Graham, Sec.-Lieut. J. F., 11th Batt. 6th Gairloch Highlanders."

He dropped the paper. "Fops!" he exclaimed.

He stared blankly in front of him. He felt utterly helpless lying there.

He picked up the paper and glanced at the date. "Must have been only three or four days after mine," he muttered. "Hope he's not badly hit. . . . Must get them to inquire about dear old Fops."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHURCH AND LOVE.

THERE is little time in war for love-making [illegible] of ease. The men of war go forth, they [illegible] perhaps they come back again, but if [illegible] only [illegible] a brief whirlwind of days, that rush away before [illegible] seem well begun.

Gog was more fortunate than most, [illegible] time too was short, and after he had quitted the hospital the days of convalescence sped away as happy days will. The interminable days of the trenches [illegible] replaced by the swift days of home.

Betty was not always with him, [illegible] was one fortnight of release from hospital [illegible] tracted from the matron, when his mother, Betty [illegible] Kitty were with him [illegible] south. They [illegible] ved in a house near the hospital [illegible] spending the days of convalescence.

The fortnight culminated in one day, a day that stood for much, that [illegible] and must be swiftly represented in this chapter.

To understand that day, turn back in thought for a moment to the early days of his soldiering when he first donned his uniform, and to the hour when Betty sent him forth as a knight.

Having thought of that, turn again to the stricken fields, and [illegible] of men of war, and a tale that

the boy had heard. Having all these in view, the connection between love and the church and war and Betty and romance, and his own thoughts will perhaps be understood.

. . . .

The tale of the church had recently come to him through different hands all the way from Seagrim, fighting in the Dardanelles. Because it came from Seagrim, it had a special value and attraction for him.

In one of those terrible days out there, Captain Seagrim and his men had been fighting desperately against a horde of Turks. The number of men whom he had left were few, but the Turks seemed numberless. On and on, again and again, they came, only to fall in masses under the rattling fire of a machine-gun and the rifle fire of the remaining men. But nevertheless men and more men still came on. They were brave, those T[illegible] so Seagrim had said.

The s[illegible]n was growing more difficult every moment, a[illegible] seemed almost as if sooner or later they must [illegible]e through. Already here and there Turks were forcing the entanglements, and the incessant fire of the rifles was not enough to pick every man off.

Just then Seagrim felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned away momentarily from the working of a rifle to look at the man who had taken his attention.

When his head was turned, he saw a pale-faced m[illegible] with a set face. On his shoulder he wore the stars of a *padre.* Seagrim stared.

"Can I do anything to help you?" sho[illegible] *padre.* "Can I speak to the men, or——" He [illegible] finish the sentence.

Seagrim had written that he almost laugh[illegible] he heard the remark. "Speak to them!" he

madly. "What's the use of speaking! We're fighting for our lives now. . . . If you want to do anything, take a rifle and shoot!"

So the *padre* took a rifle and shot till he was carried away wounded. The supports came up and the attack was repulsed.

That is a story of the church in war which the boy had heard.

Take another scene from the mud of Belgium, not a common scene, because war does not allow much time for that sort of thing. It only happened once to Gog.

The order came out. "Church Parade. A. Company to attend service at the Recreation Tent at 11 A.M. under 2nd Lieut. Macrae."

The rain poured down steadily as they set out for the service. Every man was fully armed, and they splashed through the mud in silent disgust.

The disgust did not arise from the fact of going to church, but from the appalling persistency and glue-like consistency of the mud.

They filed into the recreation tent and sat down. Men of other Highland battalions filed in with their officers. A Brigadier-General and a Staff major also appeared.

In the tent it was warm and dry, and the seats were comfortable to men accustomed to sitting on the ground. There was a piano there too.

"Does any man play?" said the *padre*.

A big Highlander volunteered. The *padre* handed round books of words.

He gave out the psalm—

> "I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
> From whence doth come mine aid."

The pianist gave the note and the men sang with a

will. They all knew the psalm perfectly, had known it from their earliest years. They were now in a flat bog of a country, but the psalm took them away back in thought to those Highland glens and mountains where the purple heather bloomed, and to the windows of those Highland homes on which the great peaks look constantly down.

No wonder they sang with a will, for the poetry of the Highlands was in that song, and some clearly, some deeply, but all in their own measure, knew it.

By chance Gog turned once to see M'Toucan's face behind him. M'Toucan was singing with complete zeal and utter abandonment. In his own language, he was "fair lifted up."

The *padre* gave out the text. "They looked unto Him and were lightened."

The *padre* spoke quietly, almost gently to these men of war for a quarter of an hour. After the sermon they sang again, the benediction was pronounced, "God save the King," and they filed out.

Outside the words of command rang sharply again. "Form fours! Form two deep! Form fours! Right! By the left—quick march!"

They marched off with faces inscrutable.

Yet, for a little while, unquestionably their burden was lightened. Life, under these conditions of mud and blood and weariness and strain, is apt to become faded and tawdry. For a time they had dreamed of another world; lived in a clearer air; lived, if only in a physical sense, with their feet out of the mud; and had had brought to their recollection, at least, the hope of some fairer world, the transient gleam of the ideal.

. . . .

It was partly out of the recollection of these things, combined with more ordinary ideas of sight-seeing and

knowledge, that the boy went to Canterbury. It wa
the pilgrimage of a modern knight back from th
crusades. They were living near Canterbury, an
Betty accepted the proposal with pleasure. A pilgrim
age was quite in accord with her own romantic dis
position, but even pilgrimages may be a source o
humour. "I'm afraid you can't go barefoot, Gog,'
she said gaily.

"That needn't prevent you making a proper pilgrim-age," he remarked teasingly.

"I ought to have an ass," she said defensively.

At that point Gog was overcome with laughter. "What's the matter?" she said.

"Well, *I'm* going," he said, laying stress on the "I."

Curiously enough she did not seem at all pleased that he had made a joke at his own expense. "Don't be silly," she said. "You know quite well, I meant an ass to sit on."

Gog's laughter became more pronounced than ever, until under provocation she flung the best cushion in the house at his hilarious head.

In these days of convalescence they had grown to be excellent comrades.

Mrs Macrae allowed them to go together alone, and they sat in the car side by side. The boy was once again in Highland dress, and she was befurred against the cold. They made a pretty picture sitting together in the back of that car.

On reaching the town they walked together the streets and lanes where kings and queens once walked in the early days of England's story.

From the streets they passed to the little old cathedral on the hill. And from there to the great cathedral of the archbishop.

In the cathedral they walked backwards and forwards,

this way and that, gazed on the glory of the windows, saw the arches and pillars and fanes, entered the crypt and the chapel of the Huguenots, and listened to the tales of priests and warriors long gone.

On the boy the effect of it all was curious. He had come from the wreck of cathedrals ruined by the Huns, but the story of this cathedral was a story of war and wreck and restoration too. Cavaliers and Ironsides, kings and queens and princes, had all been immixed in the things that were only now a tale.

But the thing was inspiring too. The verger's eloquence, raised to its height over the tale of Becket, was inspiring. The source was humble, but the tale was great. The boy's spirit had not failed in illness, but the message of Becket sounded as a new battle-cry. His sickness had made him more sensitive, and he thrilled to the sound of the message sent down the ages by the man who preferred to give up his life rather than his principles.

The call to battle was all the more clear when they came to the warriors' chapel with its Kentish banners. Not only were there flags of war, but the tombs in the chapel must needs be protected by sandbags. Strangest thing of all, the rude evidences of modern war had entered the precincts even of England's greatest cathedral.

After leaving the warriors' chapel, they attended evensong.

As the boy listened to the voices of the choristers his mind rushed back to thoughts of the field—to the fighting *padre* and to those Highland men singing their psalm.

For a moment it seemed as if a vision passed before his eyes,—he saw before him thousands of armed men, he heard the tramp of feet, he saw the darkness of the

night, he heard the boom of guns and the crash of arm
he saw the stretcher-bearers passing by, he saw th
smiling faces, and last of all, he heard the soft musi
that is played for warriors that are gone. It was
swift panorama of life, in which all came to the sam
end, and there was only one question—had they marche
to glorious death like Becket, or had they passed ignobl
out?

The evensong ceased.

Betty was watching the boy. "Are you well, Gog?"
she said.

"Yes, quite well," he said, smiling.

"You looked so—so—I don't know what to call it."

"I was thinking," he said.

"I knew you were."

. . . .

The day had affected them both. Human affection at its best is so curiously involved with other thoughts of the soul.

In a quiet shady room looking out upon a cool lane, they sat alone, and talked while they waited for tea.

He told her what he had been thinking of in the cathedral, and she understood. That was the lovely thing he always found in her. She was romantic enough to understand.

He told her jerkily. It was a mark of his great faith in her that he told at all, because he was slow in displaying his emotions.

"I knew you thought things like that," she said. "You're so silent you often never say, but I know you're thinking them all the same."

"Yes."

"I *did* send out a real knight," she said.

He smiled.

"Dad is like you in many ways. He understands fine things too, but he won't speak much."

"I know," said Gog.

"Dad always said you'd make a *pukka* soldier."

The boy said nothing. He thought awhile. He was troubled.

"Your dad likes me?" he said.

"Immensely," she answered.

"I'm not rich," he said.

"It doesn't matter."

What did not matter to her seemed an enormous thing to him. He was silent a long time. Apparently he made up his mind, for he turned to her. She glanced at him for a moment, then lowered her eyes.

"Betty, I love you," he said quietly.

She raised her eyes very slightly, and her face became suffused with sheer joy.

UdV

PART III.

PEACE WITH HONOUR

UdV

CHAPTER XXV.

THE RETURN.

LOVE and human affection are matters for which the Hun and his hordes have scant consideration. In a way, that does not affect other people, but the pressure of Hun ferocity compels action on the part of millions different from that which they might otherwise have pursued.

For that reason Gog once again stood on the steamer that was leaving England.

The sentry with the fixed bayonet was still standing on the pier. Officers and men, nurses and civilians, slowly came on board. Everything seemed much the same as on his first voyage, but there was a world of difference in his feelings.

On the last occasion everything had been new, and he had been keen and eager. He was still keen, but there was a greater grimness about his feeling. There was no longer the boyish curiosity and intensity of interest.

He did not watch everything and everybody that came aboard wondering what they might be. For practical purposes he knew, as did all the others like him. By glancing around it was possible to tell with tolerable accuracy who were the men who had been out before

and who had not. The new men were eagerly interested as he had been. The others were easily indifferent.

Pass over then the sea and land journey, and see the boy once again sitting in the mess-cart, with Sloggart driving.

"Ach, ye've got back," said that hardy driver of shaky vehicles. "Well, aa'm thinkin' the roads iss just ass bad ass iver, if not warse."

It proved to be entirely so. However, the cart bumped them into camp.

The first figure whom he saw was that of Dalziel. When they met the sergeant-major's face lighted up with a vivid smile. "I'm glad to see you back, sir," he cried. "Real glad!"

"I'm glad to see you still here," said Gog, as he shook hands.

"Oh aye, we're tholin' it, though it's dead sick of it we are. . . . How's the old country lookin', sir?"

"Oh, quiet. Very quiet. Where I was, they have an occasional scrap with the Zepps."

"So I see. . . . Ah, but ye're lookin' wonderful well."

"Thanks, I'm not so bad. You're looking first-rate, sergeant-major."

"Ah, the looks is the best o' me, sir, nowadays. If they'd begun the war earlier when I was young, I could have done something, but I'm that old, and wi' the rheumatism——"

"Ough!" said Gog. "You're half the life of the company, and Napier's the other."

Dalziel shook his head, but smiled with pleasure. "Ye've still the same bonny ways," he said.

Gog turned to find that Napier had just come up. "Hello!" shouted Napier, joyfully shaking hands.

"I'm glad to see you back, looking so fit. How's life at all?"

"Oh, I enjoyed myself at home immensely."

"I bet you did. Lucky dog! How's the world in Blighty?"

"Generally quiet. Amusements as usual. Picture houses and tea-shops lively. . . . Parliament still talking. Motor drives and feminine society supplied for wounded officers. . . . Who the '*lonely* subalterns' who advertise in the 'Times' are, no one knows. So far as I could discover it seemed impossible to be lonely. . . . Think that's about all," he remarked meditatively.

Napier nodded cheerfully. "They're not really getting excited about anything?" he queried.

The boy mused: "A few old ladies are believed to rush to the basements of their houses at times on account of Zepps. Otherwise no signs of excitement."

Napier nodded again. "Still a great country!" he remarked cheerfully. "I was beginning to fear from seeing an occasional shriek in some paper or other that people were positively getting excited, and that would be too disturbing to contemplate. If John Bull were really getting excited in large numbers, I should begin to think we were in danger of losing the war. . . . But I see it's all right."

"Oh, if that saves us," said Gog, "we're in no danger whatever." He smiled as he spoke.

Napier smiled too. They were both aware of the difference between activity and excitement.

"How's life here?" queried Gog.

"Oh, just the same old beastly mud puddle. Same old comic stunts. Same old reliefs, same old trenches a little bit farther along, same old wireworks, same old fireworks, and, so far as can be seen, nothing excessively different about the Huns. Shells and bombs still plentiful!"

"I see."

"I'm sure you'll enjoy it," said Napier satirically. "How're you feeling?" He inquired seriously.

"Oh, quite fit again."

"Head quite sound?"

"Absolutely, I think."

"Good egg! . . . What between your love affairs, and the blessings of peace and domestic felicity, I once almost feared you might become a slacker, but I immediately rejected the thought with disdain. . . . And events have proved me right."

"Thanks for the good opinion," said Gog.

"Oh, not at all. . . . Bye the bye, how is she, the one and only?"

Gog smiled. "She's very well."

"You were thinking about her, I rather gathered from occasional remarks which you dropped when last here."

Gog reddened slightly. He nodded.

"Going to have a war wedding?"

Gog shook his head.

"I'd do my best to get you leave, you know."

"Too young," said the boy.

Napier nodded. "Prudent boy!" he said with gentle raillery. "Bye-bye just now," he exclaimed suddenly. "I'm very busy."

"Certainly," said Gog. "Congratters on your crown." As he spoke he glanced indicatively at the major's arm. He had not known that Napier had been promoted captain in the regular army and temporary major in the new one.

"Thanks, old man." Napier disappeared, leaving Gog to "dig himself in," otherwise to find his quarters and generally subside into the mud again.

The second in command of the battalion went into the colonel's quarters.

The lieutenant-colonel commanding the battalion was a new man. For various reasons the battalion had frequently changed its commander since Gog had been out. The latest head was an ex-cavalry man, who had had experience in the trenches. Experience, however, had not given him faith.

The lieutenant-colonel was a very tall man, whose whole build and action were suggestive of cavalry. That he should command a battalion of kilted Highlanders was a thing which only the exigencies and difficulties of war could have created. Furthermore, it was improbable that he understood Highlanders. He could only apply the general precepts of discipline and hope for the best. That men should still be affected by clan considerations was a thing which he dimly apprehended was possible—he argued by analogy from English squiredom and family connection—but that anything of importance was to be derived from that he could scarcely credit. He accepted the Gairloch Highlanders as a great army regiment; but that they were also the representatives of a great clan, and still affected by Highland traditions, was a thing which he perhaps never quite realised.

Despite these handicaps to the command of a Highland battalion, the colonel was unquestionably a brave man, and he was doing his duty. But that duty presented difficulties. One of these difficulties arose with the arrival of Gog.

When Napier entered the colonel's quarters, he found the colonel seated at a table with a list of subalterns' names in front of him, staring at the list with obvious perplexity.

The colonel looked up as he entered. "Well?" he said.

"Mr Macrae has arrived, sir."

"Oh, and how's he looking?"

"Never looked better."

"That's a good thing anyway."

"Very good."

"Well, what are we to do?"

"Appoint him to the command of A Company."

"Yes, I know you think so. But just let's talk it over once again. How long experience of the front has he had?"

"Three months under me."

"Well, now, Morrison has four months and Thomson five. I don't know the men as you do; but why shouldn't we have Thomson?"

"Quite a good man for a platoon, but no earthly good for a company. Would lose his head. He's a man who needs an immediate commander above him. In trench warfare the company commander has often to act for himself."

The colonel sighed. "I know," he murmured. "You're sure of all that?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, what about Morrison?"

"He's a better soldier than Thomson, but there's only a month's experience between him and Macrae, and Macrae is an all-round better officer than he. Far more active, and has more initiative."

"Has he?" The colonel mused. "There's such a thing as too much initiative."

Napier was silent.

"What's Macrae's age?"

"Twenty."

"Umph!" said the colonel. "That's what I don't like about it. He's a mere boy. Companies used to be commanded by men who'd spent their life on the business."

Napier nodded.

"I don't myself see," remarked the colonel, "that a month or two, more or less, at the front makes much difference, but both the others are older than he."

"But weaker," Napier interjected.

"Yes." The colonel meditated.

"Macrae belongs to the clan, and has the clan spirit and tradition in him. His father was in the battalion too; and the boy is like him, and brought up with the ideas of army life. He'll never let the battalion down."

"Oh." The colonel perceptibly brightened. "His father was in the battalion. You never told me that. What rank did he hold?"

"Captain in the first battalion."

"Oh. That's something. I never knew an army man's son who didn't do well at a pinch." The colonel did not notice the clan idea, though the idea of regimental spirit is of similar type.

"I think we would all agree about that," said Napier.

"Very well," said the colonel quite cheerfully. "Better send him in, and we can talk it over with him."

Napier bowed and went out. He found Gog himself, and addressed him briefly. "Look here, you're to get command of A Company if you satisfy the colonel. I've just been talking to him about it. So come along with me."

"I to command A Company?" Gog was slightly aghast.

"Certainly," said Napier. "None of your false modesty. Pull yourself together and impress the colonel in the right way, because I've sworn by you as the only man for the post. And you are. So

make up your mind for it. . . . Undue modesty is your one pretty failing. Drop it, and take command. You're by far the best man available."

But the boy was still inclined to hesitate.

"Take it from me, you're fit for it," said Napier with energy, "even if you have doubts yourself."

Gog stared. "It's frightfully good of you," he said, "to do all this for me."

"Not a bit," said Napier. "It's not for you at all as a matter of fact. It's for the battalion."

The boy smiled.

A minute later he was in presence of the colonel. He saluted. "Ah, how do you do, Mr Macrae? Glad to see you."

The colonel eyed him closely. Apparently his examination afforded him satisfaction. "You're quite all right again?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Head quite sound?"

"Yes, sir."

"Been doing work at home before coming out again?"

"For two months, sir."

"I can take it you're absolutely fit, then?"

"I think so, sir."

"Good. Well, I suppose you know the battalion is somewhat disorganised. We're looking for commanders, and Napier tells me that you're the man for one company."

Gog was silent.

"If I'd known you for some time I wouldn't have talked like this. You'd just have been appointed. But everything's in such a rush just now. We've got to act as we can. Therefore, on Napier's recommendation, I'll appoint you to command A Company."

"Thanks, sir."

"Very well, Mr Macrae. . . . Justify the very high recommendation Major Napier has given you." The colonel smiled.

"I'll try to, sir." The boy saluted and went out.

"Well-built fellow anyway," said the colonel. "Looks like the part."

"He'll play it too," said Napier.

The colonel did not commit himself to an opinion. He reflected that he had gone a long way in making the appointment, which from his point of view was true.

In any event he heaved a sigh of relief. The sorely battered battalion was once again up to strength, with trusted men in command of the companies.

. . . .

In the evening of that day Gog found time to write two notes, telling "Dear old Mums" and "Betty, Darling," that he was no longer a mere platoon commander, but the leader of the leading company of the battalion.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TAKING OVER.

The battalion was relieving on the following afternoon, and Gog toiled all the morning preparing for the event. Constantly at his side was the sergeant-major, the man who carried on whatever happened, whom no calls, however great, could daunt, whom no danger could shake.

To Gog, whose experience as company commander was limited, Dalziel was a veritable tower of help. Was it a question of company strength in men and variety of skill? Was it a question of the number of braziers in the company? Was it a question of the deficiencies of Private Macanooley in the equipment of war? Was it a question of the number of men inoculated before the Ides of March or some other such date?

On all these matters Dalziel produced the necessary information with unfailing punctuality and impassive demeanour. Other men might get excited or harassed. For him excitement was a phase not compatible with the proper conduct of war.

There was only one occasion on which Dalziel considered the semblance of excitement allowable. That was provided for in "Infantry Training," where it lays down that in the charge "men will cheer, bugles be sounded, and pipes played."

With the preparatory work the morning passed swiftly

away. At one o'clock Gog stood with his Tam-o'-shanter on his head, a pack on his back, a revolver at his belt, and his legs encased in great trench-waders reaching up to the thigh. These waders were reminiscent in style of the great jack-boots of the Cavaliers, and they were convenient enough for riding purposes. In his hand was a stick and in one of his pockets a trench map. As company commander he had doffed the kilt.

As he stood there he was waiting for the horse that was to take him up in advance of the company, in order that he might, in war parlance, "take over" the trenches. "Taking over," if the trenches are new to the incomers, is a serious matter, involving care, careful inspection of the trenches, and much inquiry regarding the trenches taken over and the habits of the Boche opposite. If the company commander is taking over the same trenches for the fiftieth time, the work consists in having tea in the "dug-out" of the officer "handing over," and saying in bored tones, "Anything new? Any comic stunts by the Hun? Much 'strafeing' going on? &c., &c." The man handing over replies with equal boredom: "Nothing new! Nothing comic! 'Strafeing' as usual! If you want to see anything I'll go round with you, but except for improvements on the parapet and some wiring, it's the same old bleary spot."

On receiving that information the man taking over acts as his conscience may direct.

While Gog stood waiting for his horse, Grayling, the second in command, strolled up and gazed at him almost enviously. "Luxurious blighter!" he said genially. "Horse to carry you up and keep your little feet out of the mud! No bally company to look after and make one shiver!"

Gog smiled.

"Horse to carry you down too, I expect," he said

rather more enviously. "Sail proudly home in glory while we wearily stodge it in the mud. Oh, ye gods!"

Gog laughed. He had done the stodging before that time and understood the feeling.

Johnnie and Billie came up at that moment led by the orderlies. They were the officers' chargers for commanders of two companies.

The army is full of humour. "Officers' chargers" is really magnificent.

Johnnie and Billie were both chargers of the heavy draught-horse variety. Johnnie occasionally ran under Sloggart in the mess-cart, and at other times did transport work. He was large and heavily built, but bony and lean with the stress of war. As a "mount" he was powerful and took everything in his stride.

Billie was smaller in dimension, but more particular in habit. He never ran in the mess-cart. He was a strong cob, stuffy and stubby, and careful about jumps! He took them like an apoplectic fit, stopping in front of a ditch, and then taking it with fearful suddenness. It is probable that he acquired the art of taking small jumps while at the front. Billie was shaggy-coated, and war had made little impression on him, despite the arduousness of his life.

They were very useful these two chargers, and did their work excellently; but it is a mistake to suppose that company commanders at the front usually ride up on chargers whose prancing gait and caracoling habits are the admiration of all beholders.

Gog clambered into Billie's saddle. I say "clambered" advisedly. Any one who has mounted in trench-waders and full war equipment from a standing ground a foot deep in mud will understand why the orderly hung on to the off stirrup-leather while Gog did the clambering.

Once mounted, he and Sanderson (the other commander) rode off.

"Be careful how you go up, sir," said the sergeant-major passing them as they went off. "Nasty bit of ground to cross."

"Thanks, sergeant-major. We'll keep our eyes open."

They crossed a field and came to a ditch. Billie almost unseated his master in the frenzy of his effort He appeared to think it necessary to jump a three-foot ditch by a bound sufficient to carry a fence three feet high and a ditch seven feet wide.

"Some jumper!" said Sanderson, grinning. "I've had him before."

"I didn't expect that!" said Gog.

"I know," said Sanderson. "I was waiting for it."

Gog laughed. It was part of the simple amusements of the front.

They cantered on across the fields, and then by the road to the point where they were to meet the other two company commanders. The remainder of the journey had to be made on foot.

They dismounted into the mud, coming down heavily from the top-weight of a pack and the bottom-weight of trench-waders. Soon after dismounting they met the other two company commanders. All four together they set off on the foot-road to the trenches.

For once the day was warm, and the pack weighed heavily on Gog. He was now marching in the trench-waders, and of all the kinds of marching, that done in trench-waders through heavy mud is perhaps the most utterly tiring. (Ten miles in trench-waders through mud with a heavy pack and rifle would exhaust the most powerful man.)

They turned from the roadway into the marshy fields.

The marshes were worse and more treacherous to walk over than the road. Light wooden rails ran here and there across the fields, and telephone wires attached to poles were run out in a score of directions. The central point of the wires was masked by a few stray trees.

They followed one rail until they came to a notice-board. "This way to Pall Mall. This route must not be taken in daylight." The board did not say which way should be taken. Another board a little farther on said "This way to Ferne Chateau. Not more than two to pass this way in daylight."

They took a middle course, and crossed a field along the edge of which was a hedge. There was nothing particular to be seen about the hedge from the point where they were walking about sixty yards away. When half across the field they received a shock.

"Flash! Flash! Flash! Flash!" Each flash accompanied by a furiously angry-sounding bang. At the same time there was the hiss of missiles right over their heads.

Six guns at the hedge had opened fire.

"We've got right in front of a Belgian Battery," said Sanderson. "I know the terrific bang of their guns."

"The dickens we have!" said one of the others.

"It doesn't matter. We're quite safe."

So they went on. Gog had seen the black muzzle of one of the guns and the flashes of several. He had never before been in front of a gun at firing, and the sharp vomit of smoke and flame, combined with the sound, had slightly startled him.

They emerged from the field into a piece of once cultivated land, now a muddy and desolate waste. Rank grass mingled with occasional potato-plants run wild. The whole of the ground was pitted with shell craters

through which they picked their way. As they did so they knew that at any moment another crater might be made, so they spread out somewhat, walking some distant apart, but all continued in the same direction.

Ahead of them was a canal and a wooden bridge.

Sanderson was nearest to Gog. The boy saw him stop suddenly, and stand as if listening. The boy did so too.

As he stood still he realised what it was that Sanderson had heard. Up till that time he had mostly been accustomed to shelling while in the trenches. Of course he had seen shells bursting on the road and in the air, and at night, and all that. But this sensation was different.

The four company commanders were each alone in a large open space, and the shell that was coming might be for any one of them. Coming in that way, it seemed much more direct and personal, and to call far more imperatively for something to be done. There were no men to watch over. It was each for himself, with nothing to think of but the shell.

And he could hear its sing-song moan now far more distinctly as it came nearer. The shell was a very big one, for it took several seconds to come. It seemed to come burrowing through the air with a deep long-drawn tigerish growl—"Aung! Au-ung!"

It passed over their heads, still burrowing, and burst about five hundred yards away. It struck the edge of a farmhouse. There was a tremendous noise, and a great storm of masonry, stones, and dust blew up into the air, and fell again,—lumps of things falling quickly, the cloud of dust subsiding slowly.

After the shell had passed Sanderson listened again, but apparently heard nothing. "Come on!" he shouted to them fiercely. "I've seen this before. They'll work

round, and we'll be right in the middle of it, if we don't get over the bridge."

The four started to double. Then it was that they realised in full the weight of waders and packs. They staggered forward unevenly, dragging their limbs heavily over the soppy soil, and sweating with every footstep.

"Aung!" It was coming again. Sanderson waved them forward, and they continued their "double" unheeding the shell.

"Crash!" The shell burst about a hundred yards nearer.

They were almost at the bridge when that shell burst. They met there five seconds later.

"Oh Lord, I'm half dead!" said C commander. Perspiration was pouring down his face, and his mouth was dry.

"Come on!" said Sanderson, fiercely charging forward.

Over the bridge they went at utmost speed, faster over the hard planking of the bridge.

"Must get there!" yelled Sanderson breathlessly, pointing to a low mound still some distance ahead. "Can rest there!" he gasped feebly.

They sweated forwards, the packs bumping on their backs, revolver ammunition thumping on their breasts, and revolvers jerking horribly.

Sanderson arrived first, and flung himself dead-beat on the ground. Gog came next, and the others a second later.

They were too exhausted to say anything. C commander groaned. "Oh, my woolly aunt!" he murmured feebly.

"Aung!" There was no exhaustion about the shell. Sanderson gathered his attention again. The shell

was boring steadily towards the place where they had been.

"Crash!" The bridge, which they had just crossed, broke into a hundred splinters which flung around in wrecked confusion. A part of the bridge hung derelict over the canal, holding out stray broken arms of wood.

"Score for the Boche!" said Sanderson coolly.

"By Jove!" said C commander, gazing at the destroyed bridge in wakened awe. "I beg your pardon, old bird," he added to Sanderson warmly; "I was just about to say that in future I'd rather die than do another run like that. But that bridge has altered my opinion; 'pon my word, you've saved our lives."

"I was anxious about my own," said Sanderson explanatorily.

"That's a nice way of putting it, but, all the same, it's one to you, old man."

"I put my last centime on that," said D Company. "Eh, Gog?"

"I should think so," said the boy heartily.

Sanderson mopped his face with a khaki handkerchief on which his initials were beautifully worked in colour by his "dearest." The others were engaged in similar proceedings, so that eloquence did not appear to be called for. However, they had expressed themselves.

"Better get on," said Sanderson, after they had rested a short time.

They pulled themselves together and marched on. Without further trouble they worked up through a wood and came to the opening of the communication trench that led to their respective destinations.

. . . .

Half an hour later Gog was sitting in a dug-out talking to the commander of the company holding the

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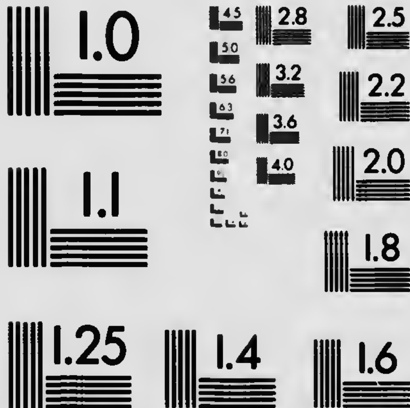

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trenches. He also drank some tea out of an enamel mug, and ate a slice of sultana cake which the company commander's "dearest" had thoughtfully provided for the company commander and his friends. (I merely mention "dearest" in this case to show the wonderful part played in the war by these charming figures, and the remarkable way in which results in hospitality and humanity flow to quite unknown, but none the less grateful, recipients.)

During tea, Gog sat on a chair without a back. The company commander sat on two filled sandbags poised against the wall, with a tolerable number of empty ones placed above to afford dryer seating accommodation. (An order had appeared on the day previous as to the waste of sandbags on purposes for which they were not intended, but the company commander thought that the provision of a dry seat for himself was surely a wise and thoughtful measure of which the Sandbag Department would have approved. This, however, is doubtful.)

After tea they visited the trench, its saps, bombing posts, and mine entries, and generally palavered as to Boche activity.

"You need to be pretty active in this trench, and keep your weather-eye open," said the company commander of the outgoers. "It's not a peaceful place."

Gog nodded.

"They 'strafe' all day, and pester all night. Apart from the Boche, generals and people are very active at this bit. Seems to be a favourite spot."

As he spoke they heard the tramp of men and sound of voices. "Ah, here's your company."

"They're early," said Gog.

"So much the better," said the commander. "I'll shoot off as soon as I can."

They smiled mutually. No one ever seems to want to remain longer in the trenches than duty requires. It is one of a company commander's disadvantages that by coming up early he spends half a day more in the trenches than other officers. The second in command, however, invariably regards that misfortune as a trifling matter compared with the soothing felicity of possessing a charger on which to ride up half the way.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DAY'S WORK.

THE night of their arrival in the new trench passed as provided for in instructions, in a "vigilant watch" upon the enemy, combined with slight repairing work. For Gog there was this difference, that whereas it had formerly been Napier who had commanded and supervised new subalterns all night, now he himself had to do as his great predecessor had done, and sleep when he could. As platoon commander his sleep had been provided for in allotments of time. As company commander, with new subalterns, he had to sleep when he could. He slept very little that night. He remembered Napier in the first days—how he had moved continually around, attracting no attention, but always about when trouble was brewing. The boy tried to imitate the master, but he forgot that Napier was much older not only in experience but also in years, which makes a difference. As a result of his vigil, in the morning the boy was tired and weary to the point of yawning continuously, but his spirit was undaunted.

The morning dragged on slowly.

The company commander sat in his dug-out writing during the greater part of it. He burst forth periodically to "strafe" up and down the trenches to see that everything was working properly.

"Strafe" is a word which a nation possessing no humour have invoked to express their feelings, and bring down the wrath of Heaven upon their enemies.

"Gott strafe England!" sung in every key, is their "jolly refrain."

The amusing result is that the term has reached the ears of their enemies' subalterns, who have placidly adapted the term to their own use, and they now "strafe" everything. They "strafe" up to the trenches, "strafe" their bully-beef, "strafe" their juniors, and for anything whatever that they do not possess a convenient word, they "strafe."

As Gog "strafed" up the trenches for the second time, the men were still at breakfast, but the Hun artillery broke out unexpectedly early with unusual violence. Whizz-bangs hissed and burst in several parts of the trenches.

At one of the points near which the shells were bursting he came upon Wullie Mackay, Jeams Mactoukall, and another, peacefully imbibing tea out of their mess-tins, apparently with great relish. At the moment when he appeared, Wullie Mackay's face was turned heavenward, his mess-tin was turned downward, and at the point of junction between the mess-tin and his lips some last sugared drops of tea were slowly trickling into his mouth. The bursting of shells was a matter to which they were not attending.

Gog turned to a sergeant. "These men had better move to a safer spot than this," he said. "The men here before us warned us that this place was dangerous."

"Yes, sirr." The sergeant gave the order.

Gog moved on, but Wullie Mackay was saddened. He was making a good, comfortable tea, a thing to be thankful for in the trenches, and what was shelling

compared to that? He sighed deeply as he prepared to move off. "Oh, lor'," he remarked sadly to Mactoukall, "can we no' even hae oor tea in peace!"

"It's for our goott, man," said Mactoukall.

"Oh, aa ken," said Wullie. "But ma view is that, if ye're gaun tae be killed, ye wull be killed."

"Aye, maybe," said Mactoukall; "but I haf neffer seen the good of staying in the place where death is, whateffer."

"Ah, ye're a poet, man," said Wullie; "neffer-whateffer."

Mactoukall paid no attention to poetry. He was thinking of shells. "Look at that now!" he said, as a considerable cloud rose near where they had been seated.

"Aye," muttered Wullie indifferently, "the auld hen's cluckin' 'ate." (For some reason the German general, Von Kluck, was supposed to be then at that part of the line. Hen is one of Tommy's methods of referring to the Prussian eagle.)

Another shell fell heavily, without bursting. It was a "dud."

"There now!" said Mactoukall.

But Wullie was quick to seize the advantage in argument. "Aye, rotten eggs!" he said contemptuously.

Another bang, and the parapet beneath which he had been sitting was smashed, and rose and fell in ruins.

"Now, what haf I told you?" said Mactoukall triumphantly.

Unperturbed, Wullie pursued his analogy from hen life. "Aye, he's scratched it up," he remarked placidly.

"But we would haf been dead!" said Mactoukall angrily.

"Na, we wouldna," said Wullie. "Aa'm no sae daft.

. . . Aa would 'ave moved afore that. Aa wasna born in Coocaddens for naethin'."

Mactoukall gave up treating Wullie Mackay to further argument. He regarded him as hopeless. Wullie peacefully gazed into the bottom of his mess-tin, apparently speculating as to whether more tea could be extracted or not. He raised the tin once again, and got another drop.

He was a wonderful man—Wullie—type of many; argumentative, as all his countrymen are apt to be, but quite shrewd enough to set aside all argument and act, if immediate necessity required. And he was sturdy.

German shell-fire, or any other German product, affected him not at all. Curious to reflect that one of the greatest of the German generals, the best of their artillery, the banners of the Prussian Eagle, and the most frenzied Hun efforts in hate, had created no more effect on him, as on many others like him, than to produce a casual reference to the peripatetic barn-door fowl in its most feebly irritating activity.

. . . .

While Wullie was still arguing, Gog continued to "strafe" along the trenches. Having finished his round he returned to his dug-out. The shelling had ceased by that time. However, he engineered some Hun "plastering" by telephoning the gunners to "retaliate." He sent one of the platoon officers to view the results, and order the good work to be carried on, if desirable.

Messages were lying waiting for him. "Please state how many Vermoral Sprayers you have in the company." He wrote the answer at once. "Vermoral Sprayers. None."

"Please state how many pairs of trench boots are required for men doing special work?"

"Sergeant-major, how many?"

"Twenty-four, sir," Dalziel replied with impassive face.

Gog wondered how he knew so accurately, but said nothing. He answered the message: "Boots required, 24."

The sergeant-major took the message. "That number completes the company," he explained. "There were just 24 laddies without boots, and they aw need them."

"Then these men are not doing special work?" said Gog hesitatingly.

"Aw yes, they are, sir, all by turns. And in any event, as they seem anxious to give us boots, we'd better take them, sir. Ye see, I'm an old campaigner, and aa ken that if ye dinna tak the boots when ye can get them, ye'll no get them when you want them."

"I see," said Gog. "Right, sergeant-major."

The sergeant-major smiled and went out. He was bringing up the youngster in the faith and practice of war.

After the sergeant-major went out, the boy sat for a few minutes resting and thinking. He had answered all messages and sent off all daily reports. What was next?

He heard a noise as of some excitement outside. He went out to look, and found all his men, in despite of orders, gazing up at the sky.

"What is it?" he said to a sergeant.

"British and German planes fighting, sir."

He gazed upwards, and saw two planes flying and apparently circling around each other. There was no gun-fire from any quarter. The gunners were afraid to fire lest they should hit the plane of their own side.

Suddenly for a single instant, Gog saw what appeared to be a spurt of fire proceeding from one of the planes,

which seemed bearing straight toward the other. With the whizzing noise of the planes and other noises nothing could be heard of the machine-gun shooting from the plane.

A moment after the spurt of flame, there rose a murmur through the British trenches. Next instant the German plane seemed to stop for less than a second in the air, circled dizzily a few times, careened over sharply and dived straight down to the earth, falling with a tremendous crash.

As it fell there broke from the British trenches a wild and exultant cheer.

From the Hun lines there burst forth almost immediately a furious artillery fire.

"By goom!" said Private Malloy, "there's 'ate, and it's us that's gettin' it. It's always us."

"Ach, what does it matter?" said Private M'Cabe, who had enjoyed seeing the fall of the Hun plane immensely. "Besides, we brought it on oorsels, because we smiled sae loud!"

. . . .

Gog returned to his dug-out. On his way he met an orderly with more messages from headquarters.

"Please note that patrols must be sent out to-night."

"Please send statement of work proposed to be done on trench."

"Please note that the Divisional General will go round the trenches to-day. He will be at your trench at 12 noon. Please arrange, and have everything in good order. Platoon commanders must be able to account for every man."

At the last message, Gog gulped. Other company commanders were at the same moment mopping the sweat from their brows, and giving orders with feverish energy.

C Company commander was hastily arranging a sort of *tableau vivant.* (A General occasionally takes on aspects more near and vivid and terrible than the Hun, and he must be appeased somehow.) There were various holes and places about C trench which were hurriedly decorated with notice-boards, which had been thoughtfully provided by some one. The boards might have lain quiet for a time, but they were now produced all glorious in their new paint, and hung tastefully. They read, "Ammunition Stores; Bomb Stores; Reserve Ammunition, &c., &c." The stores might not be there, but the boards were anyhow, and it looked like business.

Then Vermoral Sprayers. The General was understood to be strong on Vermoral Sprayers for neutralising the effects of gas. Now C Company had thoughtfully provided themselves with a Sprayer, and the commander felt that the least that could be done was to exhibit it in a prominent place, along with a jar of the solution. (It was only about half a jar as a matter of fact, because the jar was of the same type as some of the water jars, and Private Macanooley had in the dark drunk about half of the Sprayer solution. He complained that the water had tasted "queer," and he felt "bad" for some days after.)

Then loopholes and sniper-scopes. The General's pet idea was "sniping." The sniper-scope rifle (there was only one) was examined and arranged. The man who was assumed to have been firing it was posed beside it, and on the ledge beside him were collected a pleasing array of empty cartridge-cases. Any one would have concluded from that array that the sniper had been conducting fierce warfare with the Huns for many hours. He must have been having a massacre of the Huns.

Having seen to these details, C commander "strafed" round his trench, got every man working or sleeping

(it was not then eating time), and then returned to his post, where he awaited the General with a measure of hopefulness.

A few minutes after he had completed his work, the "brass hats" began to appear.

C commander saluted.

"Ah, I'm now in your trenches?" said the General.

"Yes, sir."

"Then lead on."

"Yes, sir."

C commander led on. He had an inward wish to stop and dilate on certain points of his trench which were really sound, but the General passed them rapidly, saying nothing.

The General showed signs of stopping at a particularly ill-favoured portion of the trench. C commander perceived trouble ahead. "Dangerous part here, sir," he said suddenly. "Very dangerous. Have to keep our heads down." At the same moment C commander ducked his head with a simulation of excessive anxiety. The General lowered his head, but continued to gaze at the points of the trench. "Are you working at this?" he queried.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it *needs* work."

"Yes, sir."

The General passed on. C commander internally breathed a sigh of relief. He had got over that trouble cheaply.

They came to the sniper-scope rifle. The General paused and C commander stiffened himself with pride. The General's eye fixed itself on the pile of empty cartridge-cases. "You collect your empty cases in sandbags, do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, there's a pile there!" said the General coolly. He made no remarks as to sniping at all.

Two minutes later the General stopped at the end of C trenches. "You're getting on with the wiring?" he queried.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it's very important, you know. Do it!" said the General sternly.

Then he passed on. C commander mopped his brow. He went back to the pile of empty cartridge-cases. Some of the cases were faded and dirty. Not very many were new. "I believe the old chap tumbled to it," he muttered gloomily. "However, he's gone, and we'll get peace to work now."

A fresh resolution of more desperate and terrible work than ever before burned temporarily in C commander's soul.

. . . .

Gog met the General on his quitting C trench.

"You're just back, Mr Macrae, I'm told?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I remember you at the trench school. Do you remember what I said then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, it's still the same. The honour of the battalion and of the division rests with you. That means hard work and arduous days for you every day, but you'll do it, I'm sure."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, as you've just come, I'll only pass through your trenches. You know what's needed as well as I."

So saying the General smiled kindly and walked on, leaving behind him, as always, the memory of a gentleman and soldier, stern because his work required it, but fearless of danger and generous to all who did well.

. . . .

After the General had gone there were more messages and reports to write, then lunch, more writing, more "strafeing," settlement of men to be detailed for different work, the bringing up of supplies, repairs, &c., and finally, at seven o'clock, dinner.

With dinner also came the post, that bright gleam in the weariness of the day.

Gog gazed at the solitary envelope which he received. He opened it, and took out a letter which contained a printed notice.

"Mrs St Clair
requests the pleasure of
Mr Macrae's
Company at the Marriage of her Daughter,
Katherine Mary,
with
Mr J. Forbes Graham,
at St Paul's Church, —, Belsernley,
on Thursday, [illegible] —,
at Two o'clock,
and afterwards at Buckleigh House.

R.S.V.P.

Buckleigh House,
Belsernley."

"Great Scott!" said Gog as he dropped the notice on the table. "It's Mollie!"

The sergeant-major happened to appear at the moment.

"Sergeant-major," he cried, "Fops is getting married."

"You don't say so!"

"Absolute fact. It's the lady that used to send him the parcels."

"Well, she deserves it," said the sergeant-major, "be-

cause she sent some real good things. He used to give me things at odd times, and socks to distribute and other things, and he sometimes said they were from a lady friend. That must have been the one."

"Very likely."

"Well, well," said the sergeant-major contemplatively. . . . "If ye'd care to say a word from me," he added, "when ye're writing, sirr—just that it was a pleasure like——"

"Certainly, sergeant-major, delighted!"

"Thanks, sir. He was always such a kind officer."

"Oh, Fops was one of the best."

"Aye. He's got over his trouble?"

"Yes, he's quite sound, but they probably won't send him out again, because he was a head case."

"Aye, well, he's lucky. I'm sure I hope he'll be very happy. . . . I wonder if we could send him anything?"

Gog stared at the sergeant-major meditatively.

"I've got two bits of an iron cross taken from the Huns. If one o' them was to be sent, it's the best curio I've got——" The sergeant-major was hesitating. His generous nature was burning to have a hand in a work of goodwill, but at the same time he did not wish to intrude. "Perhaps the lady might like a war curio?" he ventured tentatively.

"Might like!" shouted Gog. "It's a great idea, sergeant-major. Fops'll dance with glee, when he gets, 'With the sergeant-major's best wishes.'"

The sergeant-major's big face was bright with simple delight. "If he doesna get any other cross in the war," he said almost gaily, "he'll get half an iron cross for gettin' married."

Gog chuckled.

. . . .

In due course the news filtered down from the

sergeant-major to the sergeants, from the sergeants to the corporals, and from the corporals to the lance-corporals and the last private. It was an infinitely diverting bit of news amid the weariness of trench life.

"Have ye heard the latest?" said M'Toucan to Wullie Mackay.

"Na, what is't?"

"What d'ye think?"

"The war's ended?"

"Damn the bit!" said M'Toucan. "Hev anither try."

"Ach, away! What is't?"

"Maister Forbes Graham is gettin' married."

"Married! Ma wurrd, he's no feard."

"Not he," said M'Toucan joyfully. "I aye telt ye he was the lad."

"They'll be havin' a cairage and twa horses, and lots o' flooers!"

"Aye, mebbe. More like a motor-car, aa'm thinkin'."

"I daursay . . . Just think o' that, all the fun and flooers, and us sittin' in the mud and canna raise a dandelion!"

"Aye," said M'Toucan meditatively. "Aye," he repeated absent-mindedly. "He's still doin' the grand. He'll be in aw his braws again."

. . . .

At twelve o'clock midnight the boy sat writing letters. With new subalterns in his company he was still maintaining his vigil, as Napier had done before him, but he snatched a few minutes of the night to write. He had had no other time.

To Fops, his mother, and Betty, he wrote each a short note. "Forgive my not writing more fully," he wrote to Betty. "I will try to write more when we get back into rest, but I have really been kept frightfully busy."

After he had finished writing his letters, he picked up

half a dozen of the men's letters which were lying waiting to be censored. Censoring them was only a work of two minutes, and he felt a desire to complete everything, then he would rest.

The writing of the first which he opened seemed familiar. As he read, recollection came to him. There was no mistaking who it was, for he had censored that handwriting many a time before he was wounded. It was the writing of that fierce zealot with the strong but ungainly figure—"Auld Jeremiah." Everybody knew him. He was a drinker of water, and a chanter of psalms, and in him assuredly the Ironsides or the Covenanters would have claimed a fellow-spirit.

Gog was glad to find he was still warring on. From his writing it appeared that he fought with unabated spirit:—

"*We are ofttime sore pressed, but we batter the enemy daily. The Lord is on our side, and we shall yet smite the Philistines hip and thigh.*"

To "Auld Jeremiah" modern appliances and shell-fire were of no account. The battle was the Lord's. That was all that mattered, and on the strength of that belief he was an excellent fighter of the "Kill and spare not" order. Very useful men, some of these; full of hot indignation, with nothing of the "conscientious objector" in their religion.

The succeeding letters which he opened were not unusual. Men were "in the pink" or "fit for anything" or "lively as a cricket." Apparently their spirits were good, at least so far as could be judged from letters written with a thought of the censor *derrière la tête*. One man hinted the awfulness of things, but considerately restrained himself in view of that august personage. "*We could tell you things that would make yer hair stand on end, if it werena for the censer.*"

In the second last letter he came across an odd conception. *"I am as lousy as an auld yin, but I dinna mind, because ye canna be said to be a sodger until ye've learnt bug-catchin'."*

"Li-arr!" said Gog emphatically. He laid aside the letter for a personal interview with the writer. No man would be permitted to have that complaint in the Gairloch Highlanders, and there was no occasion for it at that part of the line. A regiment's reputation is as important in the matter of cleanliness as in any other direction.

The last letter which he picked up wound up with these dramatic words:—

"Life is no catch oot here, I can tell ye, but aw the same I am still

William the Undaunted,
No. 8564.

P.S.—*Send the parcel soon."*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

REST.

THREE days later the company were back in rest billets. Rest is often explained by philosophic people as being obtained from change. It is probably understood in this sense in the army, and accordingly this interval in "rest billets" is so described. It must not be supposed that leisure is included in the phrase. Change in the way of freedom from shell-fire may or may not be included.

At the end of a long day of these "rest" days, Gog stood at the entrance to his billet. The men had been engaged all day in mending the railway line under the direction of the sappers. The company had just come back, and tea arrangements were in progress.

It was about eight o'clock and the evening was dark.

Anything more completely dismal than the scene on which the boy looked out could scarcely be imagined.

The night was misty and gloomy, and his gaze swung round on fields of mud and water. To his right was a field of mud across which a half-broken line of wire entanglements was stretched. To his left was another field of mud, out of which stood up a dozen dug-outs made of earth and sandbags covered with turf. The entrances to these dug-outs loomed black and earthy in the dark. The dug-outs reminded him curiously of

pictures of Esquimaux "igloos," with the difference that the "igloos" were cut in white snow, while the dug-outs were black with mud.

Around the boy were the farm buildings. At his feet was a litter of straw and refuse falling away to the centre in a pool of muddy water. The teams of horses that brought up the water-carts with the water continually plunged and staggered through that mess to get to the point where the carts discharged the water. In front of him was part of the farm buildings, a low collection of stone, with some thatch. At his back was his own billet and the rest of the farm buildings.

The outhouse which he occupied was stone-floored, but the processes of war had unearthed from somewhere a spring mattress which was raised by wooden supports above the floor, and, with the addition of his Wolseley valise, formed a tolerable bed. The sides of the outhouse were much broken by shell or shock, and the roof, which had in part fallen in, was covered over with sacking nailed to remaining beams to keep the water out, which the sacking did when the water did not come down too plentifully.

Behind his outhouse was a barn where a number of the men were billeted. There was a thin wooden partition between the barn and the outhouse. Above the barn were some lofts forming part of the roof of the house. There were various gaps in the roof.

The remainder of this part of the steading was occupied by the men of an artillery battery and their officers. Around the farmhouse at no great distance the guns of the battery were placed in various dug-outs. Some of them were so near that the gunner-officer could shout his fire directions from the door of his billet.

Gog, as he stood there, heard him give an order just then. "Three thousand seven hundred!"

A moment later the boy saw the flash and heard the roar of the gun.

The gunner-officer went back to the telephone. He came out a minute later. "Three thousand seven twenty-five!" he said.

"Increased the range twenty-five yards," Gog mused. He saw the flash again. The range was increased another twenty-five yards, and the boy heard the officer say, "Register that!" Apparently they had got their target.

The gunner-officer disappeared. Gog looked round on the general scene of muddy desolation, and then entered his billet. There was a small fire burning in a brazier, and light was provided by a candle. He sat beside the fire. His second in command was beside him. Other officers were in another place.

Both of them were silent. There was no encouragement for conversation: the night was so dismal, and everything so maugre. The occasional fall of a drop of water from the roof, splashing in the tin can they had put down to catch it, was as irritating as anything else. It was just the occasion for a "grouse"!

The men in the barn behind were similarly affected, and a good "grouse" relieves pent-up feelings.

The two officers could hear the men talking through the partition, though apparently the men did not know it.

The first voice to start the chorus of melancholy was a deep bass voice. "Hear the —— rain!" he said.

"Aye. It's always rainin' in this bloomin' country."

"It's no a country at all. It's a pond o' mud flats."

"Aye."

"It gie's one the jiblins that much that aa havena laughed since aa came into it."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" This peal of laughter apparently proceeded from another corner of the barn.

"What the 'ell are you laughin' at?"

"You! . . . *You* havena laughed! . . . I saw ye laughin' like to burst the other day, and a damn funny time it was too."

"When?"

"When Tammy Nuckle died."

"Tammy Nuckle!" The first speaker spoke meditatively. "Aye, aa know what ye're thinkin'. But that was different."

"How?"

"Well, it was the queer way it happened."

"Imphm." The questioner's voice sounded disbelievingly.

"Well, it was like this. . . . Ye see aa was sitting just a few yards away from Tammy, but aa wasna lookin' at him. Aa heard some bullets go whistlin' bye, but aa didna think any one was hit. Aa happened to look up, and aa saw Tammy make a funny wriggle, and smiled like, and he said, 'That's done it,' speakin' quite quiet. Then he sort of turned on his side. But it was all such a funny-like thing that aa started laughing. Aa didna ken that anythin' was wrang. When aa'd stopped laughin' aa said, 'What's done it, Tammy?' but he said nothing. Then aa came an awful fright. I got up and walked to him and said, 'Tammy, what's the matter?' but Tammy was dead. . . . And aa've aye been sorry that aa laughed. . . . Aa wouldna have laughed if aa'd a kenned."

For some time after the story had been told there was silence in the barn.

The talk broke out again.

Another speaker opened. "It's cauld in here," he

said. The platoon were lying on their waterproof sheets above some straw and with a blanket on top.

"Aye. It's always cauld."

"We got no rum ration the night."

"Na. We're no' to get any in rest."

"Na. A fat rest it is."

"Why dae we no get a rum ration in rest?"

"Because the Young Women's Temperance Association are afraid you might get intoxicated through over-indulgence in liquor." The voice that spoke was mincingly mischievous.

There was subdued laughter through the barn.

"It's no a ration at aw, anyway. It's hardly a table-spoonfu'."

"Aye. But it's good stuff aw the same. It's grand and hot."

"Aye." This was the unmistakable sound of big Bean's voice (six foot two, and proportionately broad). "It may be good, and aa'm no' saying it's not; but, so far as its size goes, ye micht as well gie a strawberry to an elephan' as gie that to me."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" The laugher's voice sounded again.

In the smoky murk of the barn laughter sounded weird.

"Wunner why they canna gie us a brazier and some coke?"

"Aw, you're wantin' ower much," said the mischievous voice. "Content yourself, my good man, and be glad things are not worse." It was the mincing voice again.

"Content myself!" The man spoken to was not of the kind to understand chaff, and that probably irritated him into over-statement. "Why the 'ell should I content myself? Why can't we have a brazier?

Why? Because everything's wrang. Munitions is wrang, and shells is wrang, and guns is wrang. In fact, we're aw wrang thegither, and why should I content myself?"

There was no answer from the murk.

The speaker continued. "And look at the battalion. Look at how we came out, and look at what we are now. Look at the discipline, and look at the officers. We were as good as the first battalion when we started. What are we now? What sort o' officer have we got to lead us?"

"A d——d good man," said a voice which might have been that of Wullie Mackay.

"Umph! Major Napier had ten years' experience afore he tried to command us. What has this one got? . . . About six months o' forming fours. What chance 'ave we got under that?"

"Oh, you're new to him; but he was out here before, and been home wounded."

"It disna matter. It's aw the same. We're commanded by cubs that know nothing and have done nothing, and what do they care about us?"

. . . .

In the outhouse, through the partition, the second in command gazed at Gog. "That's going a bit too far," he said. "One doesn't mind a grouse, but that's a trifle over the score."

"I think so too," said Gog.

He rose, left the outhouse, and entered the barn. The second in command stared after him as he went out.

As Gog entered the barn there was dead silence in the murk.

He stood in the centre of the barn silently for a few seconds. Then he spoke. "Who is the man," he said, "who expressed the opinion that the officers of

this company know nothing and have done nothing, and care nothing about their men?"

There was no sound.

"I should like him to have the courage of his opinions, whoever he is."

Still there was no answer.

"I'm sorry the man does not come forward," he said. "As it is so, I have only to say that I am glad that the men of the company are troubled about its general state, and wish it to be better. The attack which has been made on officers has been made, I think, mainly against me, and I therefore do not propose to take any notice of it further than to say this. It is true that I have not the great experience of Major Napier; but at this stage of the war, after so many losses and with so great an army, no battalion—not even the first—can have officers of that standing in any number. The only question then is, whether you have officers fit for the work. So far as I am concerned, I think judgment was being passed too soon. In any event, criticism of the class which has brought me here is not permitted, as every one of you knows. I expect to do everything in my power for your comfort, your well-being, and your safety. Every officer of the new army as well as of the old is trained to think first of the comfort of his men, and I intend to do so. I also intend to maintain, and, if necessary, raise the discipline of the company; and as regards war work of special difficulty, I shall always have the advice and assistance of Major Napier if my own knowledge is not sufficient. . . . From you, the men of the company, every one of you, I expect the most loyal support."

Having finished speaking, he turned and left the barn. There was absolute silence as he did so.

When he came into the outhouse the second in command held out his hand. "Good egg!" he said cordially.

"Thanks," said Gog.

"It was really only a bit of a grouse they were having, but your little pie-jaw puts an effective stop to it."

"I think so."

"Think I'll go to bed," said the second in command musingly. He stood up and proceeded to undress, humming as he did so. "Discipline must be maintained," he murmured cheerfully as he got into bed. Somehow the second in command felt more cheerful. Gog had looked so young. He was younger than the second in command, but the second had got an impression that the boy could handle things.

. . . .

In the barn some of the men talked in low whispers.

"Serve ye damn well right!" said big Bean to the culprit.

"Why did ye no speak up when he asked ye?" said Wullie Mackay.

"Aye. Ye've brought discredit on the whole company," said another whisper. "We didna agree with what you said at aw. Only ye were talkin' such blether that we didna trouble to answer ye. That was aw. But now the officers 'll think we're aw disloyal, when we're not. He's a first-rate officer, Maister Macrae, and we aw know him except you."

The culprit was silent.

All of which trouble arose out of the weariness and desolation of the mud of Belgium, out of the weariness of a man who had been toiling all day on the railway, who was lying down feeling cold, and who

was finally aggravated by the mincing voice of the mischievous man.

The culprit was not disloyal in the least, indeed was destined to fight like a Trojan in the next battle. But his accumulated troubles had made him "blaw oot," and he had got over the score, as the second in command said.

. . . .

Gog followed the second in command to bed, and slept peacefully for two hours, when he woke suddenly. He dimly saw the second in command sitting up in bed. He sat up too and listened.

The burst which had awakened him was terrific. The outhouse and adjoining barn were both shaking convulsively with the shock. "Some shell!" said the second in command.

"15-inch, I should think."

"Um. Jack Johnson."

They heard nothing more and lay down again. Their heads had only been resting on the stuffed-up ends of their sleeping valises for about two minutes when there was another terrific burst and crash.

"By Jove, that's near!" said the second. "It's becoming mighty dangerous."

Gog reflected hurriedly. It was the forty men in the barn of whom he was thinking. The second in command reflected cheerfully that he had no responsibility anyhow.

They heard a sound of hurrying feet outside, then an excited voice, "It's those blasted infantry in the loft! They've shown a light again, damn them!" It was the voice of the gunner-officer. "We'll be blown out of this and our position gone before we know where we are. Where's the infantry officer?"

"Here!" shouted Gog, scrambling into an overcoat.

"Heard the shelling?" said the gunner.

"Yes."

"Well, for the love of heaven stop those men of yours making lights in the loft, or the whole lot of us'll be blown to glory. I've told them my opinion meantime, so it's all right for to-night; but you'd better get on to them to-morrow."

"Certainly."

"You see, it's worse for us than for you. It's taken us months to build up this bally position, but if they spot us we'll be outed in an hour. Apart from that, one hit on this rickety house and all your men'll be in kingdom come."

"I know," said Gog. "Do you think it's safe to leave them just now?" he queried, because of the gunner-major's greater knowledge of the place.

"You can't put 'em anywhere else," said the gunner.

So they all went to bed again and listened to the shells bursting and the house shaking. Had the ground been less muddy more damage would have been done, because ooze seems to neutralise the bursts—one war advantage of mud.

. . . .

The matter came up again in the morning. "Any prisoners, sergeant-major?"

"One, sir, for showing a light in the loft."

"[illegible] Bring him up at once then."

"Yes, sir."

Gog waited in the temporary orderly-room of the company.

"Into file, right turn! Quick march! Halt! Left turn!" Under all these orders enter Private Smith.

"Private Smith, sir."

"What's the evidence?" He glanced at the yellow charge sheet.

Corporal Bain deponed: "Sirr, last night as I was

sitting in the barn about twelve o'clock I saw a light in the loft. I went up to the loft and found Private Smith with a lighted match in his hand contrary to orders. I ordered him to put out the light at once."

Lance-Corporal Duff deponed: "Sirr, last night I was lying in the loft about twelve o'clock when I saw Private Smith with a lighted match in his hand contrary to orders. I heard Corporal Bain order him to put out the match."

Gog glanced at Smith's record of service, otherwise his conduct sheet. There was no crime of any sort whatever upon it. He had a clear record of service. He was also obviously much troubled and was slow of speech. He was a big fellow, but timid of officers.

"What have you to say, Smith?"

"Sirr," he said, "aa was sleepin' in the loft last night, when aa . . . woke up . . . with the . . . c-cold. Ma heid was very cold because aa hadna got ma comforter on. Aa . . . aa had been telt that aa was nae to light a candle . . . b-but aa didna ken that aa was nae to licht a match. . . . Aa couldna find ma comforter, and aa lit a match to look for it when the corporal came up. . . . Aa was verra careful with the match not to set the straw on fire." Private Smith relapsed into fearful silence. He had never been in that awful position before.

"Smith," said Gog, "I don't think you meant to disobey an order. If I did, I'd treat you very differently. But you did a very foolish thing. That loft with all the straw in it is a very dangerous place to light a match in. You might have set the whole place ablaze. Apart from that, a light in a high loft is seen a long way off on a dark night, and you heard the way we were shelled last night after you lighted that match. The major of the artillery came round to me expressly to complain of

it, and to point out the fearful danger you were creating. Not only might you have got yourself and the whole of your comrades blown up, but you might have got the artillery position destroyed. You see what a tremendous thing it is?"

"Yes, sirr," said Private Smith with every sign of penitence.

"Very well; you've got a clean sheet here, and I'm not going to spoil it. But no more lights, Smith! All right; march out!"

"Into file, left turn! Quick march!"

Exit Private Smith.

Gog turned to the sergeant-major. "I don't believe Smith's match had a mortal thing to do with the shelling," he remarked; "but I think I had to frighten him a bit."

"Quite, sir. Just the thing for him. He's a good soldier."

"Right. Anything else, sergeant-major?"

"There's poor Dugal, sir."

"What's that?"

"It's one o' the men, sir. The doctor we have to go to with the sick is about two miles away, and Dugal's that bad he canna march it. So he's still lyin' in his dug-out up in the wood there, and I was wonderin' if ye would maybe see him yerself. He's a rale game lad, and he's stuck to his work through awthing; but aa'm afraid he's gettin' a wee thing down-hearted, and if ye saw him perhaps it would encourage him again—or perhaps ye could help him?"

"Certainly. Where is he?"

"I'll send the sergeant with you, sir. He's in a bad dug-out, I'm afraid. It's very damp at the lower end."

Gog rose. The sergeant appeared immediately, and

led the way. On his way to the dug-out Gog visited his own billet and procured his medicine-box, a small tin box, containing all his stock-in-trade for doctoring.

When he reached the place he squeezed himself through the door of the dug-out. At the lower end of the mud hut was a small pool of water. At the upper end, where Dugal lay, the ground was covered with straw. On the top of the straw was Dugal's waterproof sheet. On that he lay swathed in two blankets. The atmosphere was saturated with damp.

Dugal was very young, younger than Gog himself. His face was white and pinched, but he gazed up eagerly when the company commander entered.

Gog gazed down on the eager face, and his own unconsciously softened into a smile. "Well, how are you this morning?"

"I've not been very well, sir, but perhaps a day's rest 'll make me well enough to fight again." Dugal spoke eagerly.

"You think so." Gog said the words automatically, but inwardly he was astonished at the spirit of Dugal. "Thinking of fighting when he was not fit to walk."

"What's your trouble?"

"My feet, sir, seem swollen, and I can't get them into my boots."

"Anything else?"

"I seem to have funny pains all over, sir."

"Are you cold?"

"I'm not warm, sir."

"Let me see your feet."

Dugal unrolled himself from the blankets, took off his hose-tops and socks and showed. He shivered as he did so. His legs were worn away, and his whole figure was emaciated, as if he had suffered famine, but his feet were large out of all proportion.

"I see. . . . All right, cover them up again." Gog turned to the sergeant. "This dug-out is no place for him. Have him transferred to one of the outhouses."

"Yes, sir."

"Room must be made somehow."

"Yes, sir."

"Have his feet washed in hot water this morning and to-night, and afterwards rubbed with foot oil. I'll give you two beef-tea cubes. Give him a hot drink now, and at night. Also he can take this pill. It won't do him harm in any event, and it'll probably do him good."

"Yes, sir."

"I'll speak to the doctor and have him transferred to the field ambulance as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir."

He turned again to the boy. "Don't worry," he said kindly. "You'll soon be taken care of."

"I'll fight again, sir?" said Dugal eagerly.

"Oh yes, you'll fight again whenever you're fit."

"Thanks, sir," said Dugal with a wild gleam of glory in his eyes, receiving the promise of battle which had already brought him nothing but pain and distress,—receiving that promise as if it had been a magnificent gift.

Gog walked away to his other tasks, wondering a little at the strangeness of things which had made of him the guide and comforter of one so little younger than himself.

There seemed a world of difference between his own powerful form and Dugal's small emaciated figure. There was a world of difference too in their knowledge and worldly wisdom, but in spirit—ah, that was where Dugal and he met. He wondered vaguely if Dugal's spirit was not perhaps greater than his own.

. . . .

One more scene from those rest days. It was on the evening before they again went into the trenches.

It would have been unreasonable not to have a celebration of Fops' wedding in some way.

The officers of the company therefore clubbed together their resources.

Eventually the menu read—

"Soup Francaise." This turned out to be suspiciously like dessicated soup.

"Saumon." Unquestionably tinned.

"Poulet Rôti." A local hen.

"Jugged Hare." Believed to be the company poacher's work.

"Poires." Tinned, obtained in time with some difficulty from the Field Force canteen.

"Biscuits and Cheese." Somebody's "dearest" had sent a tin of biscuits, which assorted with ration cheese.

There was also one bottle of port in which to drink the bride and bridegroom's health.

Not at all bad work for the front, and the cook did the culinary part well. But let no misguided individual suppose that this represents the customary *ménage* at the front. It does not. This menu was the highest point ever attained in Gog's experience in the matter of food, and it was the result of much thought and work.

When little Shaw, who had been invited from another company, saw the menu, he was cheerful but not talkative. He had dark suspicions of a *ruse de guerre*, and he had not been too highly fed lately for several reasons. After he had sampled the goods, his heart was full of gratitude (these rich feelings of joy are only obtainable under war conditions), and he expressed himself heartily. As he rose, feeling renewed for the battle, he proclaimed, "This is the laaeefe, this is the laaeefe, this is the life for me!"

"Chin! Chin!" said Gog gaily. "We've been a trifle short of cutlery, but otherwise it hasn't been half bad."

After dinner there was a concert for the men in a barn. The lights were carefully shielded, and the men packed together to hear the strains of the gramophone, singing by the officers (including Gog), and singing by the men.

Once again they sang in chorus—

> "I'll tak the high road, and you'll tak the low.
> The song that we all know,
> To remind the boys of bonnie Scotland,
> Where the heather and the bluebells grow."

Once again they sang the old song of roving, that told of the time when all their troubles should be o'er. I venture to write it again:—

> "Nay, no never, never no more,
> Shall I play the wild rover,
> Nay, never no more."

A strangely haunting song that is even more weirdly fascinating out there in the dark and stress. It seems to speak of the time when the warrior shall hang his sword up in the hall, or above the cottage fire. There is a hint too of the Viking rovers, and their wild hopes of Valhalla; and these Highlandmen were their brothers in arms, free men fighting to be free, but at the back of all their hearts, ancient and modern rises the same old cry for the sort of peace that shall be beautiful and free, and that the songs declare will one day come.

At the end of the evening, just before they dispersed, the sergeant-major rose. He had heard of the things the culprit had said two days before, and though he had

said nothing, he was burning with shame to think A Company could have done that. He was burning to retrieve what was to him disgrace. It was his company. It had always been his. Had not A Company gone into battle again and again shoulder to shoulder? Had any man ever failed? Never. There was no disloyalty in A Company, but he was so proud of his company, and their name had been tarnished. He must do something to clear it of all doubt.

He was excited as he spoke.

"Men of A Company," he cried. "I want to say a word afore we go. We've all stood shoulder to shoulder in battle. Where our officers led us, we've always gone. Where they lead us again, we'll always go. We all know that, and nobody in A Company doubts that we're all standing together as one man—the first company in a battalion of one of the finest regiments in the world. Let's all show it to-night! Let's have three cheers for the officers, and three cheers for the company!"

"Men of A Company! For the officers!" The sergeant-major was waving his big arm, leading the cheers with a great sweeping movement.

"Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!"

"For the company!"

There was another wildly exultant [illegible] of cheers. There was no mistaking the meaning of it.

"For the officers, I thank you," said Gog. "As for the company——" his eyes were bright with boyish enthusiasm—"I never doubted you for a moment."

"Three cheers for the company commander!" shouted the sergeant-major.

The walls of the barn shook with the tempestuous roar of cheering.

Gog went out smiling. The sergeant-major, that

great soldier, went to bed extremely happy, for his company had redeemed itself.

. . . .

The gunner-major met Gog.

"What on earth are you fellows up to?" said the major. "The place is shaking with that cheering worse than under shell-fire."

"Really," said Gog absently.

"Yes. . . . Your men must be in mighty good spirits."

"My men!" said Gog proudly. "I should think so." He smiled on the major in the dark. "One man of my company," he said cheerfully, "is equal to five Huns of the Prussian Guard, and ten of any other Hun collection."

The major laughed "They must be *some* soldiers," he said genially.

"You bet they are," said Gog.

. . . .

Gog went to his outhouse, the major to his room, where he found another gunner.

"Extraordinary fellows, these infantry," said the major. "After all the mud and dirt and generally beastly time they have, you'd expect to find them at least decently depressed. But there they are, cheering and howling as if the war was coming to an end to-morrow."

"Yes. Plucky devils!" said the captain.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DRAWERS OF WATER.

SOONER or later everything seems to come back to the infantry. It is almost too commonplace to say that the artillery do not chiefly fire at each other, but almost entirely at the infantry. But that is only the surface of the question. Trouble for the infantry winds round to them by a series of ramifications which they can but dimly follow. Nevertheless they always know that somehow or other and for some reason or other they are certain to get it "in the neck." And they do.

The beginning of the troubles of this chapter was probably with the transport officer of the battalion. He casually complained to the colonel that the roads had been getting knocked about more than usual, and he had difficulty in getting up his transport. That kept him late, and affected the question of the feeding of the infantry.

On the very night after he had complained, his transport was again hampered on the road, which made him an hour late, and brought him to a certain point at which he knew he ought not to be at that hour.

He heard the Boche machine-gun working ahead, slowly traversing round to the point where his waggons and horses were. He halted them.

The waggons and limbers were ranged along the

road, and partly covered by a rising of the ground on their left. The mounted men were protected, perhaps to the height of their horses' heads, but not above that.

He heard the "rat, tat, tat, tat, tat" of the gun, and the stream of bullets whizzing ahead, but steadily coming nearer. The gun would be trained on them in a moment.

"Prepare to dismount!" he shouted. "Dismount!"

The men dismounted, but he himself was tired to death, and in the sort of mood when he had the feeling, "I'd rather be shot than move for any Boche." However he leaned forward low on his horse.

"Whizz ping! Whizz ping! Whizz ping!" came the bullets. He felt one whizz above his horse's head just under his nose, then they passed him by. He breathed a sigh of relief. "Narrow shave!" he muttered. "I was an ass not to dismount!" However, he internally congratulated himself seeing it was past, that he hadn't been at the bother of dismounting.

Two minutes later the gun ceased to traverse. "Prepare to mount! Mount!" he shouted.

The transport rumbled on. Nobody had been hit. A quarter of an hour later they were unloading the rations from the waggons, and loading on the trolley of the light railway.

The transport officer walked up with the trolley to battalion headquarters. As the trolley was slowly dragged up by the men, they were sniped at from various quarters. The transport officer walked on the right of the trolley. No men were pulling on the left side, as the bullets mainly came from that direction. Against the transport officer's left shoulder was a huge side of beef done up in canvas propped against other rations.

As they moved up, the transport officer suddenly saw

the side of beef lurch. In the darkness he tried to see what had made it lurch. It was rather unevenly propped against the rations, and it would not have required much force to make it fall off the trolley.

When they reached the headquarters the transport officer examined the side of beef with a flashlight. He found a bullet sticking against a bone. "Thought as much," he muttered. "That's the second time I've just missed it to-night."

As a result of these experiences the transport officer again mentioned the matter of roads to the colonel in the hope of betterment, and that set a whole series of things in motion, which were destined to affect the infantry, and Gog's company among the rest.

Other transport officers had complained of the roads, and the complaints reached the ears of Brigadier-Generals, and Divisional Generals, and Corps Generals, until the thing came to affect a whole army. The transport officers had expected a little mending to be done to the roads, but the Generals were much more vigorous in their ideas. Mending might be done—good and well. But that was not the real thing. If the Hun was determined to spoil roads, it was time he had a lesson in manners.

Therefore, let there be a corps bombardment, and blast every road and depôt he had into smithereens.

Excellent idea from the general war point of view, but for the infantry—Wullie Mackay accurately gauged the situation when he heard of the coming bombardment. "Are we in for it?" he said grimly. "Not arf!"

Punctually at 3.30 on the following afternoon the bombardment started, and the air became sibilant with missiles for miles around. Great ones and small ones, ones that burrowed and ones that hissed, ones that sang their own peculiar song, every type of shell whizzed

across the British lines and crashed in the Hun lines or behind them. The crashes were not so deafening for the British, because the bombardment was of the roads and communications behind, and the shells fell at a greater distance away.

Mactoukall enjoyed the scene. He loved hearing the Boches being plastered with shells, and he occasionally rubbed his hands, though his forebodings for the future were gloomy. But when the last five minutes of intensive bombardment had arrived, and the noise was seethingly terrific and shells were whizzing across, it seemed almost in rows altogether, each row backed by another coming after, and when for a moment he ventured to gaze through a periscope and saw the distant bursts and clouds, whole areas a mass of bursting cloud —then he forgot his gloom, and experienced a great fury of pride in the might of the British guns. "Ach, that's the thing for them!" he cried. "Plenty of that!"

"Bide a wee," said Wullie Mackay.

When nothing particular happened by four o'clock on the following afternoon, Mactoukall began to smile on the forebodings of Wullie. "They're gettin' short of shell," said Mactoukall.

"Imphm!" grunted Wullie in a non-committal way. There was, however, a lingering hope at the back of his breast that perhaps they were.

Any doubts were entirely dispelled by five o'clock, when the Hun bombardment opened. There was this difference in the bombardments, that the Hun artillerists had apparently failed to understand that the British bombardment had been directed to roads and communications. The Hun gunners insisted in not only going carefully over roads and communications, but also in giving it to Wullie Mackay and his friends where they had expected it.

"Didn't aa tell ye?" said Wullie Mackay, as he and Mactoukall sat low in the mud peering furtively upwards at times. The noise around them was infinitely more terrific than the noise of the previous day, and the air was thick with dirt and missiles, and laden with chemical smells.

. . . .

The fact that they got it directly in the neck was not the only consequence for the infantry.

Cast the mind back for a moment to four o'clock in the afternoon at the transport lines of the battalion, about seven miles behind the trenches.

The limbers with their mule-teams are moving slowly out of the lines, loaded up with rations and other supplies. The transport officer is not with them; he is engaged on other duty.

The driver of the leading mule sits on his beast with cool confidence. He has driven that way a score of times already, and he knows the mechanical habits of the Boche like a book. He is a lean hardy fellow, not readily excited, but at the moment when he drives off he is very hot, sweating in fact, for he has been yoking the animals at top speed. The transport is late. "Come on!" he yells to the others as he drives off. "We'll have to take the low road. We're late!"

The limbers rattle out of the farm-steading, bumping unevenly through the muddy lane. Once out of the lane the mules are put to a trot, and get over the ground at a good pace. The limbers turn into the low road. It is frightfully muddy, but the leading driver thinks nothing of that. All that he sees is that the road is clear up to the bend, and that is no ordinary blessing, as the road is generally crowded. He whips up his mules again. He is in front of all the other transport. As he turned into the low road, there was

a long line of limbers and waggons coming from the other direction, all, as he knew, going to turn into the low road.

"In luck for once!" he mutters to himself as the mules trot on.

Turning the bend of the road he sees an object in the distance,—apparently stationary. "No matter," he mutters; "we can pass." He still drives on, but the road is very narrow. He continues to drive on, but more slowly, reflecting that the obstruction will probably clear before they get up.

But the obstruction did not clear, and he drove right up to it.

The obstruction was a 60-pounder gun with a team of eight horses. One of the wheels had got off the *pavé* and become set in the mud at the edge of the paving. The mud was about a foot and a half deep off the *pavé*. The gun had partly slewed round and the road was hopelessly blocked. The amount of room available for manœuvring was very small.

The transport halted. The leading driver looked at his watch. He had done that distance a great deal sooner than he expected, and he was not yet much disturbed. He dismounted, and went to talk to the gunners.

"Been here long?"

"About a quarter of an hour."

"Quarter of an hour!" The transport driver started. If they were in the road another quarter of an hour there would be trouble. The amount of time that he had to spare was about ten minutes.

He was not without sympathy for the gunners, but his own task was imperative. "Ye'll need to clear the road somehow," he said.

"Wish to —— we could!"

"There's half a mile o' transport behind us." The transport driver could hear it even then coming up.

The gunners were silent.

"Come on!" said the transport driver with sudden energy. "I'll gie ye a hand."

The gunner drivers were evidently at a standstill. "We've got to have that gun up by six o'clock," said their leader. "The major said so, and we can't get out o' this." His voice was touched with apprehension.

"Come on!" said the transport driver.

Other transport drivers came along with their whips. Some of them went to the wheels, others to the horses' heads and shouted and lashed. The horses kicked and plunged and trembled with excitement, but the gun wheel never moved.

"Back it!" said the transport driver.

"We've tried that," said the gunner.

"Come on!"

Again they shouted and pushed and struggled, but it was of no avail, and the minutes were flying round. The transport driver ceased his exertions. Perspiration was standing on his brow.

From away back down the line of transport there were the sounds of muttering. "What are they stoppin' for? Why can't we get on!"

The ten minutes the transport driver had to spare were almost up. A movement of despair passed over him. There was a time by which he must have passed a certain point. If he had not passed it by that time, it meant—very likely death—perhaps the total destruction of the transport. And the situation, if he had only known it, was worse than usual because of the coming bombardment.

"We've done all we can," he cried madly. "It'll need to go into the ditch."

"We've got to get up by six o'clock," said the gunner.

"Ye'll never get there by six."

"Ye'll need to do something," said the transport driver wildly. "Ye can't hold up the transport."

The gunner was silent. He knew it was true, but he stared dumbly at the wheel that had become locked. With that curious infatuation people sometimes show in times of difficulty, his mind was fixed on one idea—getting the gun up by six; and wheeling it into the ditch, even if possible, seemed to him likely to put them further back. That was his problem; the transport was not his.

The transport driver thought only of getting his transport past that deadly point in time, and as he saw the possibility of his failing to do so, a feeling almost of frenzy took hold of him.

For one second only he gave way almost to despair. He passed his hand over his wet brow, that was wet as much with the anguish of his thought as with his exertions, and he muttered that strange phrase only drawn from soldiers in moments of great stress. Standing beside the wheel almost knee-deep in mud, his face red with exertion and troubled with anguish, he felt utterly foiled. He had worked and driven so hard to achieve his end, and here something utterly out of his line, a wretched accident of the road, was to baulk them and possibly wreck the transport. He felt so maddened that for a moment he cried out. It was not an oath. It was a sort of inarticulate invocation of despair. "Jesus wept!" he cried.

Another transport driver standing beside him muttered too. "He would 'ave wept if He'd been here," he said.

A moment later there was the sound of a horse galloping up the road. An officer appeared. "What the

hell is this? What do you mean by holding up the transport?"

"Ordered to be up by six, sir," said the gunner.

"Don't care what you're ordered. You've no business to hold up the transport. If you can't get on, drive your gun into the ditch! Get on with it! Get crowbars or something and shift your bally gun. This is no time for delay."

About ten minutes later the gun was moved sufficiently into the ditch to allow the limbers to pass. The transport driver, once clear, drove his mules almost at a gallop, but he was late, and when he turned into the main road there were only a few minutes to five o'clock.

On the main road the transport driver continued at a steady trot, and he passed the point of danger. He slowed down a little after that, but he had reckoned without the bombardment, which was to search all the roads, and not only the spots at which he was accustomed to meet shell-fire.

At 5.15 several shells burst a few yards behind the leading limbers. The transport driver whipped his excited mules into a furious gallop. The next limber followed him, but the others did not.

The shattered mules were already turned to stillness. The wounded kicked convulsive or lay quiet.

The road was strewn with wreckage.

. . . .

About eleven o'clock that night, Gog received a telephone message from the adjutant.

"Hello, is that you, Gog?"

"Yes."

"Well, look here, the transport of C and D companies have been blown up."

"Oh, I'm very sorry."

"Yes, but what I want from you is—you've got your rations. We may not be able to get any more up to-night. I want you to keep all yours intact until further orders, and, if necessary, give half of your company's rations to one of the other companies who have none. You understand?"

"Yes."

"Good. It's rotten hard luck on the transport. All the result of that blessed bombardment."

"Really. *We* got it in the neck too."

"Oh yes, that was expected. Infantry always do. . . . Of course, our gunners absolutely rattled the Huns all over the place. Did them a lot of damage, but we can't expect to have it all our own way."

"No. Worse luck."

"Bye! Bye!"

The telephone rang off. The infantry were apparently to get it in the "tummy" as well as in the neck. They were lucky in that the question was one of half rations only and not of entirely suspended rations as it might easily have been. Feeding on "air" is not healthy or strengthening, when the air is frequently charged with exciting gases and curious vapours.

. . . .

The casualties resulting from the Hun bombardment were not thought worthy of mention in the official report. Excepting for the men of the transport who had been blown up, they were actually few. The material damage was described by the humourist on the Staff who writes these things as "insignificant." Doubtless it was very insignificant to him, and the report also was true from the battle standpoint, but from the infantry standpoint—quite another matter. "Miles" of infantry were strenuously engaged for many days and nights not in securing any added comforts for themselves, but simply

in putting up things that the bombardment had put down.

Gog had been lucky as far as his parapet was concerned, but his parados had suffered severely, and at least three dug-outs had been destroyed. This accentuated the question of covering for the men generally, as the number of dug-outs available for men was very small, and under severe weather conditions suffering was greater than necessary, and health and efficiency were affected.

All this resulted in an application for "trench stores" of various kinds to remedy the defects. "Trench stores" are everything, in the words of the old song, "from a needle to an anchor," in trench warfare, "from a sandbag to a Vermoral Sprayer," and they may be got by a company commander on presenting an indent.

In due course Gog received the reply. "Send 1 N.C.O. and 12 men for trench stores at 9 to-night."

Wullie Mackay was of the party, and also another of his friends called Shaughlin. He was an honest simple soldier, was Shaughlin, but not too deft in the handling of things.

About ten o'clock on a very dark night the party wended its way slowly back to the company, each man loaded up with stores.

Take time, if you will for a moment, to picture the men of that party as they stand there in the darkness. I think the scene is worth considering, because it represents so much of the hard, but silent, and in a sense inglorious work that goes on out there.

Each man is dressed in rubber trench-waders, reaching up to the thigh. Above the waders he wears his kilt, with khaki kilt apron over it. Higher up is his tunic, over which is placed the skeleton equipment (pack having been taken off), which contains his 120 rounds

of ammunition, and from which hangs his bayonet. Slung perpendicularly over the left shoulder is his rifle. (He cannot sling it across his back, because then it would hang cross-wise and impede him in the narrow trenches.) On his head is his Tam-o'-shanter.

Dressed in that way each man has enough work to get along in the trench-waders, for, good though they are against water, the rubber slips in the mud and makes walking difficult.

Add to each man his share of trench stores, and their work is neither easy nor light.

Gog's party of men were carrying coils of barbed wire, sandbags, and sheets of corrugated iron, each sheet six feet or so long, and about three feet wide, and unwieldy at that. (These sheets are used for various purposes, among them, the roofing of dug-outs.) The sheets were being carried between twos--one man at one end of three or four sheets, and a second man at the other. There were six men altogether carrying sheets, and in the darkness, at a little distance, the line of sheeting looked like a moving wall. It was a phalanx of corrugated iron.

On their way up from headquarters the party halted at the entrance to the communication trench, then knee-deep in mud. It is no joke to carry corrugated sheeting through a trench knee-deep in mud.

The lance-corporal in charge hesitated. "Will we go through the trench?" he said dubiously.

"Na," said Wullie Mackay. "We'll never get through the trench. Let's gang ower the tap."

The lance-corporal still hesitated. The responsibility was with him. "Have ye gone that way before?"

"Aye. Mony a time . . . Onyhoo, if we're gaun tae be killed, we wull be killed. . . . And besides, we'll get our kilts all jam wi' mud, and we'll hardly be able tae

move, so if we're gaun to get there the nicht, we'd better get up on the parapet."

"Aw richt," said the lance-corporal. He led the way up on to the parapet ledge, which was about a foot and a half wide, and very slippery. There was a mound of earth on the outer side of the ledge on which they walked, and on the inner side the ledge fell away into the trench. In places the ledge was very narrow owing to its edge having crumbled away. The parapet was not more than 400 yards away from the German line and fully in view from certain points of their line, but as the night was very dark the burden-bearers could not be seen except when star-shells went up.

Although the lance-corporal allowed them to walk on the parapet pathway, he was aware of his responsibility. When he had got on to the parapet the thought troubled him and he turned to warn the men, "If there are any star-shells go up, ye'll crouch down and remain motionless."

Wullie Mackay made some remarks, but the corporal paid no attention. The substance of Wullie's remarks was, "How the 'ell we're to crouch down on that edge, carryin' corrygated irin and barbed-wire babies" (coils of barbed wire carried baby-wise in the arms) "passes ma comprehension."

The party proceeded, and slowly and for some time with remarkable quiet, continued to walk along the ledge. Every man was fully aware of the danger they were running.

All went well till a voice, full of pained exhaustion, suddenly broke upon the night air. There was a prolonged note of anguish in the cry, "Hey, Wu . . . ullie!"

There was a breeze blowing, and the cry floated down the night air to where Gog was standing.

"Aye!" answered Wullie.

"Aa'm gaun to sta . . . awp!" It was the agonised cry of Shaughlin, accompanied by a check in movement from his end of the iron sheets, the other end of which was carried by Mackay. Wullie stopped perforce.

"What d'ye want to stawp here for? This is no place to stawp!"

"My hand's bein nipped wi' the sheets, and ma feet are slippin' doon!" There were sounds from Shaughlin's end of feet slithering in the mud. Shaughlin was at one of the narrow parts of the ledge, and was in danger of sliding into the trench.

Wullie waited. "Are ye ready?" he cried, while the luckless Shaughlin struggled.

Sounds of more struggle. Wullie tried to turn his head, but was unable. "Come on!" he cried at last, weary of waiting, and, in fact, somewhat anxious. The conversation had not been conducted in a whisper.

"March up there!" said the lance-corporal.

The luckless Shaughlin made [illegible]nal desperate struggle. Wullie gave a tug forward to the sheeting, and there was a wail of dismayed anguish from Shaughlin.

At the same moment there burst forth from the Hun lines the rapping noise of a machine-gun, and a whirl of bullets whizzed about them. One, at least, pinged through the iron sheeting.

There was a crash of falling sheeting that resounded through the night, immediately followed by the sounds of rifle-fire from at least half a dozen German rifles.

A star-shell went up, but by that time the whole of the party were in the trench, coagulated in mud. Their kilts were floated out with the mud as if they were crinolines, and they remained for a time in gloomy silence while bullets whistled over their heads.

"Aa say, Wullie!" shouted a voice. It was not Shaughlin's.

"Aye."

"D'ye hear them shootin'?"

"Aye. D'ye think aa'm deaf?"

The voice of the lance-corporal sounded. "Are we aw here?"

"Are we aw here?" echoed Wullie.

"Aye," shouted several voices.

"Then ye'll gang hame through the mud," said Wullie.

A bullet pinged on one of the sheets lying on the parapet.

"Keep yer heids down or you'll mebbe get a rikey," said the corporal. (A ricochet off the iron sheets.)

They waited until the fire had died down. Then they collected their stores, and prepared to wade through the swish of slime,—"hame."

None of them said anything to Shaughlin. Not to blame him was quite in accord with Wullie Mackay's ideas. "Give a man a fair do," was one of his sayings.

Without thinking anything about it, their loyalty to each other was wonderful. If Shaughlin's hands had been nipped, and his feet slippered down, was he to be blamed? No. It was just one of the accidents of war, to be borne in silence with unwitting philosophy.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE HOUR OF TRIAL.

The great hour of A Company, under Gog's command, came about a month later. It was not a big affair—only a "side-show," the sort of thing that appears in the papers as "Smart work of the Gairloch Highlanders. 500 yards of trench taken."

The circumstances out of which the show arose were various. At that part of the line the ground was more favourable to the Hun than to the British, which resulted in greater daily casualties than might otherwise be if the line were straightened. Also, an alteration of the line would enable the gun position to be altered favourably. Further, and most important of all, in fact the really determining factor, both parties were mining, and it seemed probable that the German mines were shortly to go off. The position was hourly becoming more critical.

Full information about the mines, of course, was only in the hands of the sappers and the staff. The infantry sat above those German mines, so near completion, knowing little of their danger. From time to time officers drew attention to what appeared to them to be noises of boring. Generally on such questions senior people are apt to be supercilious and disbelieving

Cynical memoranda have been known to appear stating that officers are not to be unduly perturbed on hearing noises. Noises, or supposed noises, of mining may proceed from many causes, and officers, eager to preserve themselves and their men from involuntary upheaval, must not jump hastily to conclusions. Officers have been reported to mistake the snore of a slumbering private for the sound of boring; the appearance of a rat-hole in the ground has aroused their dark suspicions; while one officer, suffering from palpitation and lying on his left side, is rumoured to have mistaken the beat of his excited heart for the tapping action of a Hun miner. (Let not the comfortable, who have never lain in the mud with their ear to the ground, smile too broadly. It is astonishing what noises of earth can be heard on a dark wet night under these conditions, and how easy it is to be misled as to the cause.)

Against all error there is provision made. It is declared that the infantry officer shall not immediately call for the dynamite experts, but on hearing any noise whatever, shall himself first fully investigate and smell out the devil. He may satisfy himself by laying his nose to the ground, or burrowing downwards or getting blown up, or in any way that seems good to him. By the time noises are heard, mines are generally near completion, so that the infantry officer investigating the existence and position of a mine about to blow up may be said to be in a situation full of possibilities. The less he knows about mining, and the more vivid his imagination, the more he can appreciate them.

Where Gog and his men were, the evil fortunately was known. The sappers specially inspected from time to time; but in answer to any inquiry or remark as to noises the reply was always the same: "You're quite right; there are noises, but there's nothing yet to worry

about. Keep cool, old man; we'll blow them up before they blow you up."

In the earnest hope of achieving that feat the sappers were in Gog's trench, or part of it, almost night and day. They appeared and disappeared at the mouth of a sap which led down into the centre of the earth. Its entrance was about the centre of Gog's trench. The entrance consisted of a square mouth supported by wooden struts. Looking down into the mouth the tunnel stretched downwards interminably into darkness, and the infantry men picked up strange odds and ends of stories from the working sappers as to long galleries running out from the main sap, and as to parallel Hun galleries through which the workmen heard the German miners working.

About the last days of that sort of thing the infantry above were beginning occasionally to have feelings of anxiety. It seemed to them that there were tremors from the earth. As one of the sergeants remarked, "We've got accustomed to shell-fire and bullets from the front, and we can stand being enfiladed from the right and from the left; we're gettin' used to bombing too, and we know what to do when they drop presents from above; but if things are goin' to come from below too—well, life's goin' to be a wee bit eerie."

The Staff definitely determined to put a stop to the eerieness of life in that part of the line. Therefore, the sappers worked with redoubled energy, and the day of attack came.

The orders came out: "The battalion will attack at 5.30 A.M. A Company will take mound 21."

The day before the attack Napier came up to see Gog. He had the orders in his hand. "Well, boy," he said, smiling, "it's come at last." He handed him the orders.

Gog glanced over them, then he looked up. "You've

got a stiff job," said Napier; "but there's one good thing about it, you've got an absolutely definite objective, and it's not too far away. You can't lose direction."

The boy nodded. Inwardly he was quivering with excitement. He had known the order was coming, but now it was actually upon him and the responsibility was entirely his. That's what makes all the difference. Men have been known to act splendidly as second in command and to fail completely as commander. It is the man who has the responsibility who feels the burden.

Napier guessed something of the boy's thoughts. "Anything you need to know?" he queried.

The boy stood silent. "Anything you can tell me?" he said at last.

"No, I think not. From the tactical point of view there never was anything simpler. Just get over the parapet, lead straight and cool, and fight. That's all. . . . I don't think you'll meet much opposition until you're well on to the mound, because I had the luck to meet a gunner-major who's on this game. I told him about my old company and you, and after the mines go up, during the fifteen minutes of intensive fire, he's going to blow that mound to atoms. So I think you'll have a good sporting chance."

"Oh, thanks," said the boy eagerly.

"Oh, it's all in the common cause," said Napier cheerily. "I am sorry A Company is in a way slightly separated from the other three, but the glory will be all yours."

The boy smiled. He was not thinking of his own glory at all. He was really nervous, not because he was afraid, but because he feared lest he might do anything which could harm the great name of A Company. It was always at the back of his mind—was he equal to that great command? The thought of Napier was with

him always. Napier was always so cool and serene and certain. What he did seemed almost bound to be right, and the boy felt himself always so young and unlearned in war compared to Napier.

Napier knew Gog well; he knew men well, and he understood. "Of course, you'll take the mound," he observed casually. "There's no doubt about that."

"You think there's no doubt?" said Gog eagerly.

"Absolutely none."

"Oh, that's all right then!" the boy cried. "You always know what can be done and what can't." Somehow he felt immensely relieved. If Napier said so as coolly [illegible] that, there could be no doubt. With Napier's assu[illegible] somehow the fear of responsibility seemed to leave him. Whether it meant life or death, he knew that he was to lead A Company once again to victory.

"Only one or two other things," observed Napier. "When you've got the place, don't forget to get on with digging, if it's necessary. If you find you can utilise the Hun trenches, be mighty careful of them. 'Ware machine-guns and bombers—you know their trick of putting machine-guns in blockhouses at the end of bits of straight in the trenches?"

Gog nodded.

"If you find anything of that kind bother you, send your own bombers to deal with them. . . . After your trench school training you probably know more about Hun dodges than I do myself," Napier observed smilingly, "but one has just to tackle things as they turn up. As a matter of fact, I hear our mines are so terrific that their lines will simply be blown out of existence; and after the artillery fire of the last few days and the intensive fire before the attack, I don't think there really can be much opposition. I've always thought the same —if we're determined to take five or six hundred yards

of trench, we're bound to do it, just as they in the same case can't help taking some yards of ours, if they blow us to bits enough. What you've got to look out for is their artillery and the counter-attack. Also with these beggars, *always* 'ware machine-guns. . . . Hello, here's the colonel! He's in a bit of a stew. He's so much of a regular that he never can conceive how new army men on six months' training can have discipline enough to stand the racket of a stiff show. . . . However, he'll be convinced to-morrow."

The colonel came up. "Well, Napier, have you explained everything?" he said anxiously.

Napier bowed.

"You understand everything, Captain Macrae?"

"Yes, sir."

The colonel stared at the boy. He saw no sign of excitement about him. The colonel was slightly puzzled. He did not know the difference that Napier's coming and talk had made. If the colonel had come before Napier, the scene might have been very different.

The colonel continued to stare absent-mindedly. He wondered—should he say anything or not? With the generosity and instinct of a soldier, he decided not. He was terribly young, this captain, but the best thing was not to doubt him at all. Surely he would be true to the memory of his father and the honour of the regiment.

"Very well," said the colonel. He smiled. "Go over punctually," he said.

"Good luck, old man," said Napier.

"Good luck to you," said Gog.

The colonel nodded, and he and Napier went off. "You think that's all right?" said the colonel.

"Absolutely safe," said Napier.

. . . .

The guns had been firing heavily for several miles on

both sides of, as well as opposite the trenches where the Gairlochs had taken their post. They fired intermittently during the night prior to the attack as they had sometimes done before.

Two nights before the attack a number of field-guns rattled up the roads and in the darkness were placed in positions only a few hundred yards behind the trenches. The position for the gunners in regard to the mound to be attacked by A Company was particularly favourable.

At four o'clock in the morning Gog's company were at breakfast. They were eating in the support trench. A few men remained in the front-line trench and fired periodically to maintain the illusion that the forward trench was still held. These too would be withdrawn before the intensive fire began. There would be seven minutes of intensive fire immediately after the mines exploded, followed by seven minutes of intensive fire with increased range. During that latter time A Company were to quit the rear trench and get into extended formation in double rank in the front trench. On the expiry of the second seven minutes the first rank followed by the second were to go over the parapet. They had little concern with the supports behind (who had their own orders) until the mound was taken.

Wullie Mackay on the morning of the great day acted on Wellington's war maxim, "Not to miss an opportunity of filling one's stomach."

"May be a long time before we get another bite," said Wullie contemplatively as he munched bully and biscuit. The prospect of slaying Huns had not yet come close enough to excite him. There was still an hour and a half. However, the idea was in his mind. "We'll see what's ower there anyhoo," he remarked cheerfully.

"Aye," said M'Toucan, who happened to be near.

"We'll see if they really *are* livin' in grand marble dug-oots."

"Aa'm thinkin' there'll no be much o' them left by the time we reach them, after aw the mines is up and oor guns is done." M'Toucan's sorrow for the dug-outs which might have been left for their occupation struck Wullie in a different way.

"Aye," he said. "They're gaun tae get a handlin' this time." There was the sound of satisfaction in his voice. Wullie had never been in a "push" before, and he was tired of the dulness of trench life; he was looking forward with bright hopefulness to the possibility of "doing justice to a few" himself. That is a phrase which was peculiar to himself. It does not refer to the abstract justice of the war, or any theoretical consideration, but rather to a skilful and penetrating use of the bayonet.

A little farther along the trench, Mactoukall was peacefully cleaning the bayonet standard on his rifle. He had found that the bayonet did not hold properly.

Still farther along Gog was talking to one of the platoon officers. The second in command had disappeared from the trench. He, with all other seconds in command of companies, was being kept in reserve in case the companies required commanders after the push. The sergeant-major came up and spoke to Gog for a few minutes.

"Everything and every man will be completely ready at five o'clock?"

"Yes, sir."

"The spare rations are all up, and men know where they are?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. I think that's all."

"Yes, sir." The sergeant-major was as cool as if they were merely going to change their billets without prior

fighting. He noticed that there was a touch of excitement in the boy's manner. "Ye'll be feelin' proud-like the day," he said, "havin' to lead off like this."

"Yes, I am proud," said the boy. "My father would have been proud if he had known."

At that moment Napier suddenly appeared. "Just took a last turn round," he said. "Everything going well?"

"Quite," said Gog.

"Right, then I'm off. I'll keep an eye on you from elsewhere if I can." He was about to go when Gog stopped him.

"I say——"

"Yes."

"I don't want to—to—bother, but——"

"Hurry up, old man. I haven't much time."

"I'm not thinking it, or anything like that, but supposing I were bowled out," he said quickly, "would you write to my mother?"

"Oh, certainly. It won't happen, you know. Don't think it," said Napier warmly. "But give me the address just in case."

The boy gave him a card.

"Right-oh!" said Napier perhaps a little more breezily than his wont. "Good luck!" he cried.

The boy held out his hand. "Not good-bye," said Napier. "Just a hearty shake for luck and auld lang syne."

They shook. "Good luck!" said Gog.

Napier went off hurriedly.

After he had gone everything was very quiet. At five minutes past five the whole place was still. Every preparation had been made and every man stood ready. There was no rain, but the ground was damp and the morning was cold. The light was favourable; it was

still dark but growing lighter, and the light was sufficient to allow things to be seen which were near, but not to assist a very distant view. The wind also was favourable.

. . . .

At 5.10 the tunnelling officer gave the signal to his men.

Two seconds later there was a terrific explosion on the left, and the whole earth seemed to shake with the fury of the convulsion. Another and another and another followed, four in all. Each explosion seemed more terrific than the one before. The earth had no time to recover from the one before the others tore it again, and the men standing waiting could feel the ground around trembling with the fearfulness of the gigantic struggle. The noise too was appalling.

Men did not put their heads up; but from where they stood they could see huge lumps of earth, torn and jagged, thrown convulsively upwards and hurled down again, and the air became clouded with a darkness of shadow and dust. And mingled with the noises of the explosions and the uproar of falling earth were a series of indescribable noises, a medley of sound that could not be identified.

Wullie Mackay stared at his neighbour in the trenches. Even Wullie was almost awed; there was something weirdly different from shelling or any other kind of warfare in this demonic form of onslaught.

But that was no time for speculating. The intensive fire broke out immediately, and the whole country blazed with the vomited flame of guns. The shells whizzed nearer their heads than ever before from their own side, as the guns in front were firing very low. It appeared literally as if every inch of the ground opposite must be hit, for the screaming

whirlwind of shells seemed all-searching and everywhere.

From immediately behind they heard the full-throated bursting roar of the field-guns that had been brought up near them. Somewhat in front there was the sharp crack of shrapnel overhead, and there was the hiss and whizz of every class of shell, mingled with fierce and almost continuous bursts of high explosive on the trenches opposite.

In the midst of the noise there came suddenly a pause. But A Company had no time to think. "Right turn! Quick march!" They were filing rapidly out of the rear trench into the front line. The gunners had changed the range, and once again the roar broke out.

Gog was leading the company. The sergeant-major was in rear.

After the company had filed into the front trench, there was only about one minute in which to stand still. The company stood in battle order, waiting for the great moment. Each man's bayonet was fixed, and he stood against the part of the parapet which had been prepared for his going over. The first line of the Hun trenches was not sixty yards away.

Gog stared through a periscope, but the air was so thick with the shell-bursts, dust, and semi-darkness that he could see little but jagged lumps of earth.

Wullie Mackay breathed a deep sigh. The possibility of death was for a few seconds present to his mind, but he took comfort stubbornly in his maxim—"If ye're gaun tae be killed, ye wull be killed." It was not a perfect panacea, but he somehow found satisfaction in the thought that the Huns would not in any way precipitate his fate. He had a Scotch belief in predestination.

However, that class of thought was not long in his

mind. He took a last look at his bayonet, gave it a "chug" to be sure it was fixed properly on his rifle, glanced at Mactoukall, who seemed, from the way in which he was standing, to be practising; and then, as the signal came, shouted to Mactoukall, "Noo for it!" At the same moment he went over. As he got over he turned his head for an instant to the left and saw M'Toucan, also a prompt starter, raising himself into line.

As the first line got over the parapet, the serried rifle-fire which had been breaking around it from the Hun trenches increased in volume, but they crossed "No Man's Land" at a slow double in good order. Here and there a man tumbled forwards and lay still, but the rest went on. The remainder of the battalion were acting in the same way, but under severer fire.

Apparently the Germans had been taken in part by surprise. It was only by the time the attackers had reached the first line that the Hun guns opened with vigour. And the shells screamed and burst, but still mostly behind A Company. The second line coming over and supports were suffering.

For A Company everything seemed to be going well. The noise of the battle was tremendous. The guns of both sides were now thundering furiously, but for a few swift moments A Company seemed to be curtained off from trouble. Missiles of all sorts were flying around them from all directions, but the number of men who had dropped was not more than a score, including one officer.

The mound seemed almost within their grasp. Only a hundred yards ahead it stood, and between the work of the mines and the "plastering" given to it by the gunners, it seemed to the attackers that there was no effective force left to hold it. Now they were at the

second line of the Hun trenches, and there was no opposition. A few dazed Huns raised their hands and shouted "Kamerad!" or some incoherent cry.

A Company swept on. The parapet ridge of the second-line trenches had concealed the lowest part of the mound.

It was that which deceived them. All the "plastering" of the guns, all the efforts of the miners, had not destroyed that sunken machine-gun.

Napier had said, "'Ware machine-guns!" But how could they have done other than they did?

"Rat, tat, tat, tat, tat!" The gun had been held in reserve to the very moment of effective fire. There were still eighty yards to cross.

It was not far. The rattle of the gun came to the boy as a terrible shock, but in a flash he remembered what Napier had once said: "If the distance is short, you'll lose fewer men under fire by charging right away than by lying down and trying to save them, and then charging later."

To remember was to act. He waved his arm and yelled at the pitch of his voice, "Charge!"

The sergeant-major roared from another part of the line, "Charge!"

Wullie Mackay yelled, "Coocaddens for ever!" Numbers of the men roared and cheered madly, an incoherent medley of terribly real fury, whatever the words might be.

The whole line swept forward at a run. Kilts waved madly, eyes blazed furiously, and men that dropped spun wildly or fell hardly from the fierceness of the rush. It was no longer a single line, but a jagged and serried array, with gaps here and there, and groups of men charging on independently.

Gog and the sergeant-major were both charging for

one spot—the sunken place where that gun spouted. If the gun were not stopped soon enough almost the whole company would die.

As he ran the boy dragged the pin from a bomb. There was no apparent entry to the machine-gun pit, and a bomb was the only way.

He thought nothing of himself. It was the company of which he thought. To stop that gun was to save them.

He had been a runner in his day. Now he put forth his utmost speed, and bounded ahead of the whole line. The gunners in the pit saw him clearly, and guessed his intention. A man with a rifle was there to pick such eager persons off. He fired and missed. Again he fired and missed.

The gunner became nervous, and sharply turned the gun upon Gog, saving the company. He was only twenty yards away.

The boy saw the gun turn, and zigzagged. The gun spouted, but missed.

Five yards away, the boy flung the bomb into the hole. At the same moment the man with the rifle fired.

The boy dropped.

There was a fierce explosion in the machine-gun pit, and the gun ceased to fire.

The sergeant-major, charging after the boy at the greatest speed which his weight and years would allow, came up to him.

He lifted him and looked. "Maister Macrae!" he cried, but the boy was dead.

The sergeant-major laid him down, and rose to carry on.

. . . .

A German officer at the back of the mound telephoned

to the artillery to open fire on the mound. As he laid down the telephone, a bomb or some other missile exploded near the dug-out, and the officer died. He was found some hours later, his left hand clutching the receiver with the grip of death.

But he was no coward, that Hun. He had sent his message, and the gunners were waiting for it with their guns trained on the mound. At the moment when the sergeant-major rose from kneeling, the first shell burst behind him. The next moment he had fallen beside his company commander.

. . . .

The colonel of the battalion was lying wounded on a slope about a hundred yards away. He saw the boy's act. "If that boy comes out alive," he muttered. He said no more when he saw the boy drop. He saw the big form come up and lift the boy. Then he saw the shell burst. "My God, is that the sergeant-major too!" he said.

The colonel's head dropped wearily.

But A Company were taking the mound as they had been ordered to do. And the rest of the battalion were fighting on under Napier.

. . . .

Wullie Mackay sat crouched in the bottom of a trench on the further side of the mound, trying to escape the shrapnel and lead that whirred and dropped around continually. He had forgotten his quest for a marble dug-out, but in any event he had found none. He had rather looked anxiously around for friends, but had seen none except M'Toucan, and he was away acting as a sergeant because so many sergeants had fallen.

Wullie felt lonely, and he took a bit of hard biscuit from his pocket, and munched it. M'Toucan came along.

"There's a counter-attack comin'," he said. "We've to haud the left end o' the trench wi' twelve men. Will you be ane o' them?"

"Aye," said Wullie. "Have you seen Mactoukall?" he queried.

"Na," said M'Toucan sadly. "There's a heap o' good lads down."

Wullie went to take his place. He looked at his bayonet again. As he thought of Mactoukall, he was very angry. "Aa'll make them pey for it onywey afore I die," he muttered.

CHAPTER XXXI.

COMPLETION.

THE news reached London two days later. A telegram from the War Office came first, a letter from Napier several days later.

He gave the details of the action, and wrote:—

"I have it from the colonel himself, who saw the action, that your son gave his life for the company." Enclosed in the letter was a tiny photograph of Betty, and a very small envelope which contained a few faded petals of a moss rose.

When the boy's mother had read the letter, she knew that her sacrifice had been complete. From the mother who had borne him, and the father who had led the way, he had learned his lesson completely.

With a broken heart, Betty knew that he had been in the language of the old days, "a very perfect knight."

. . . .

But Major Napier still fights on.

And if Gog, and that great soldier the sergeant-major, are now entrenched behind the white battlements of those heavenly fortresses against which the hosts of hell shall not prevail, Napier is still watching among the muddy fortifications of earth, and there is not the least likelihood that the enemy will prevail there either.

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