# CANADA IN WAR-PAINT

MULES

(see page 26)

*From a drawing by Bert Thomas.*

# CANADA IN WAR-PAINT

By CAPT.
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# PREFACE

THERE is no attempt made in the little sketches which this book contains to deal historically with events of the war. It is but a small *Souvenir de la guerre*—a series of vignettes of things as they struck me at the time, and later. I have written of types, not of individuals, and less of action than of rest. The horror of war at its worst is fit subject for a master hand alone.

I have to thank the proprietors of *The Globe* for their courtesy in allowing the reproduction of "Canvas and Mud" and "Tent Music," and of the *Canadian Magazine* for the reproduction of "Martha of Dranvoorde."

Finally, I feel that I can have no greater honour than humbly to dedicate this book

to the officers, N.C.O.'s and men of the First Canadian Infantry Battalion, Ontario Regiment, with whom I have spent some of the happiest, as well as some of the hardest, days of my life.

RALPH W. BELL.

*December 11th*, 1916.

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# CANADA IN WAR-PAINT

## CANVAS AND MUD!

To those men who, in days of peace, have trained on the swelling, lightly-wooded plains round about Salisbury, no doubt this portion of Old England may seem a very pleasant land. But they have not been there in November under canvas. When the old soldiers of the Canadian contingent heard that we were to go to "the Plains," some of them said, "S'elp me!" and some a great deal more! It was an ideal day when we arrived. The trees were russet brown and beautiful under the October sun, the grass still green, and the winding road through picturesque little Amesbury white and hard, conveying no hint of that mud for which we have come to feel a positive awe.

At first we all liked our camp; it was high and dry, the tents had floor-boards, that traitorous grass was green and firm withal,

and a balmy breeze, follower of the Indian summer, blew pleasantly over the wide-rolling land. We liked it after the somewhat arid climate of Valcartier, the sand and dust. Then it began to rain. It rained one day, two days, three days. During that time the camp named after the fabulous bird became a very quagmire. The sullen black mud was three inches deep between the tent lines, on the parade ground, on the road, where it was pounded and ridged and rolling-pinned by transports, troops, and general traffic; it introduced itself into the tents in slimy blodges, ruined the flawless shine of every "New Guard's" boots, spattered men from head to foot stickily and persistently. The mud entered into our minds, our thoughts were turbid. Some enterprising passer-by called us mud-larks, and mud-larks we have remained.

Canadians think Salisbury Plains a hideous spot. Those who have been there before know better, but it were suicide to say so, for we have reached the rubber-boot stage. When the rain "lets up" we go forth with picks and spades and clean the highways and byways. Canadians do it with a settled

gloom. If the Kaiser tries to land forces in England they hope he will come to Salisbury with his hordes. There they will stick fast. In the fine intervals we train squelchily and yearn for the trenches. What matters the mire when one is at the front, but to slide gracefully into a pool of turgid water, in heavy marching order, for practice only, is hardly good enough. Most Canadians think the concentration camp might preferably have been at the North Pole, if Amundsen would lend it, and we could occupy it without committing a breach of neutrality.

That brings us to the cold weather, of which we have had a foretaste. It was freezing a few days ago. The ground, the wash-taps, and we ourselves, all were frozen. A cheerful Wiltshireman passed along the highway. There was a bitter damp north wind; despite the frost everything seemed to be clammy. "Nice weather for you Canadians," he shouted happily. Luckily we had no bayonets. It is quite natural that in this country it should be thought that Canadians love cold weather and welcome it. But there is cold and cold. The Salisbury Plains type is of the "and

cold" variety! It steals in through the tent flaps with a "chilth" that damply clings. It rusts rifles, blues noses, hoarsens the voice, wheezes into the lungs. It catches on to the woollen filaments of blankets and runs into them, it seeks out the hidden gaps in canvas walls and steals within, it crawls beneath four blankets—when one has been able to steal an extra one—through overcoats, sweaters, up the legs of trousers, into under-garments, and at last finds gelid rest against the quivering flesh, eating its way into the marrow-bones. Like the enemy, it advances in massed formation, and though stoves may dissipate platoon after platoon it never ceases to send up reinforcements until a whining gale has seized on the tent-ropes, squeaks at the poles, draws in vain at the pegs, tears open loose flaps, and veering round brings back sodden rain and the perpetual, the everlasting mud. We know the hard, cold bite of "20 below," the crisp snow, the echoing land, the crackling of splitting trees, even frost-bite. But it is a dry cold, and it comes: "Whish!" This cold of England's creeps into the very heart. It takes mean advantages. "Give me the

Yukon any old time," says the hard-bitten shivering stalwart of the north-west. " This, this, it ain't kinder playin' the game."

It must not be thought that Canadians are complaining, for they are not. But England's climate is to them something unknown and unspeakably vile! One must have been brought up in it to appreciate and to anticipate its vagaries. Canadians feel they have been misled. They expected English cold weather to be a " cinch." But it's the weather puts the " cinch " on, not they! There will come a time when we shall be in huts, and the leaky old canvas tents that are now our habitat will have been folded and—we hope for the benefit of others—stolen away! Those tents have seen so much service that they know just as well how to leak as an old charger how to drill. They become animated—even gay—when the wind-beaten rain darkens their grimy flanks, and with fiendish ingenuity they drip, drip, drip down the nape of the neck, well into the eye, even plumb down the throat of the open-mouthed, snoring son of the maple-land.

No matter, we shall be old campaigners when the winter is over; old mud-larkers, as impervious to wet earth as a worm. Even the mud is good training for the time we shall have in the trenches!

## TENT MUSIC

It is not often that Thomas Atkins of any nationality wears his heart upon his sleeve, and it is quite certain that the British Tommy but rarely does so, or his confrère of the Canadian Contingent. Perhaps he best shows his thoughts and relieves his feelings in song.

Salisbury Plains must have seen and heard many things, yet few stranger sounds can have been heard there than the chants which rise from dimly-lighted canvas walls, when night has shrouded the earth, and the stars gleam palely through the mist. It is the habit of the Canadian Mr. Atkins, ere he prepares himself for rest, to set his throat a-throbbing to many a tune both new and old. The result is not invariably musical—sometimes far from it, but it is a species of sound the male creature produces either to show his "gladness or his sadness," and by means of which he relieves

a heavy heart, or indicates that in his humble opinion "all's well with the world." On every side, from almost every tent, there is harmony, melody, trio, quartette, chorus, or—noise! It is a strange mixture of thoughts and things, a peculiar vocal photograph of the men of the Maple, now admirable, now discordant, here ribald, there rather tinged with the pathetic.

No programme-maker in his wildest moments, in the throes of the most conflicting emotions, could begin to evolve such a varied, such a startling programme as may be heard in the space of a short half-hour under canvas—in a rain-sodden, comfortless tent—anywhere on Salisbury Plains. It does not matter who begins it; some one is "feeling good," and he lifts up his voice to declaim that "You made me love you; I didn't want to do it!" The rest join in, here a tenor, there a bass or a baritone, and the impromptu concert has begun.

Never have the writers of songs, the composers of music, grave and gay, come more into their own than among the incorrigibly cheerful warriors of the Plains. The relative

merits of composers are not discussed. They are all good enough for Jock Canuck as long as there is that nameless something in the song or the music which appeals to him. It is curious that we who hope to slay, and expect to be slain—many of us—should sing with preference of Killarney's lakes and fells, "Sunnybrook Farm," "Silver Threads Among the Gold," rather than some War Chant or Patriotic Ode, something visionary of battle-fields, guns, the crash of shells. Is not this alone sufficient to show that beneath his tunic, and in spite of his martial spirit, Tommy "has a heart," and a very warm one?

Picture to yourself a tent with grimy, sodden sides, lighted by three or four guttering candle-ends, stuck wherever space or ingenuity permits. An atmosphere tobacco laden, but not stuffy, rifles piled round the tent-pole, haversacks, "dunnage" bags, blankets, and oil-sheets spread about, and their owners, some of them lying on the floor wrapped in blankets, some seated, one or two perhaps reading or writing in cramped positions, yet quite content. Yonder is a lusty Yorkshireman, big, blue-eyed, and fair, who

for some reason best known to himself *will* call himself an Irishman. We know him as "the man with three voices," for he has a rich, tuneful, though uncultivated tenor, a wonderful falsetto, and a good alto. His tricks are remarkable, but his ear is fine. He loves to lie sprawled on his great back, and lift up his voice to the skies. All the words of half the old and new songs of two peoples, British and American, he has committed to memory. He is our "leading man," a shining light in the concert firmament. We have heard and helped him to sing in the course of one crowded period of thirty minutes the following varied programme: "Tipperary," "Silver Threads Among the Gold," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Fight the Good Fight," "A Wee Deoch an' Doris," "When the Midnight Choochoo Leaves for Alabam," "The Maple Leaf," "Cock Robin," "Get Out and Get Under," "Where is My Wandering Boy To-Night," "Nearer, My God, to Thee," and "I Stand in a Land of Roses, though I Dream of a Land of Snow." But there is one song we never sing, "Home, Sweet Home." Home is too sacred a subject with us; it touches the

deeper, aye, the deepest, chords, and we dare not risk it, exiles that we are.

Very often there are strange paradoxes in the words we sing, when compared with reality. . . . "I stand in a land of roses!" Well, not exactly, although Salisbury Plains in the summer time are, like the curate's egg, "good in parts." But the following line is true enough of many of us. We do "dream of a land of snow"; of the land, and those far, far away in it. Sometimes we sing "ragtime melodee," but that is only *pour passer le temps*. There is something which prompts us to other songs, and to sacred music. It often happens that in our tent there are three or four men with voices above the average who take a real delight in singing. One of the most beautiful things of the kind the writer has ever heard was a quartette's singing of "Nearer, My God, to Thee." Fine, well-trained voices they possessed, blending truly and harmoniously, which rang out almost triumphal in the frosty night. They sang it once, and then again, and as the last notes died away the bugles sounded the "Last Post."

Taa-Taa, Taa-Taa, Ta-ta-ti-ti-ti-ti-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta. Ti-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti-ta-ta-ta-ta-taa, Taa-Taa, Taa-Taa, Taaa, Tiii!

Verily, even under canvas music *hath* charms to soothe the savage breast.

## RATTLE-SNAKE PETE

VERY tall, thin, and cadaverous, with a strong aquiline nose, deep-set, piercing black eyes, bushy eyebrows matching them in colour, and a heavy, fiercely waxed moustache, streaked with grey, he was a man who commanded respect, if not fear.

In spite of his sixty years he was as straight as the proverbial poker, and as "nippy on his pins" as a boy a third of his age. Two ribbons rested on his left breast—the long service ribbon and that of the North-West Rebellion. His voice was not harsh, nor was it melodious, but it could be heard a mile off and struck pure terror into the heart of the evil-doer when he heard it! Rattle-Snake Pete was, as a matter of fact, our Company Sergeant-Major.

Withering was the scorn with which he surveyed a delinquent "rooky," while his eyes shot flame, and in the terrified imagination of the unfortunate being on whom that

fierce gaze was bent his ears seemed to curve upwards into horns, until he recalled the popular conception of Mephistopheles! We called him—when he was safely beyond hearing—Rattle-Snake Pete, but that worthy bravo was far less feared than was his namesake.

First of all, the Sergeant-Major was a real soldier, from the nails in his boots to the crown of his hat. Secondly, he was a man of strong prejudices, and keen dislikes, and, lastly, a very human, unselfish, kind-hearted man.

Discipline was his God, smartness on parade and off the greatest virtue in man, with the exception of pluck. He ruled with a rod of iron, tempered by justice, and his keenness was a thing to marvel at. At first we all hated him with a pure-souled hate. Then, as he licked us into shape, and the seeds of soldiering were sown, we began to realise that he was right, and that we were wrong—and that, after all, the only safe thing to do was to obey!

One day a man was slow in doing what his corporal told him to do. As was his habit, the S.-M. came on the scene suddenly, a lean tower of steely wrath. After he had poured

out the vials of his displeasure on the head of the erring one, he added: "I'll make you a soldier, lad, or I'll break your heart!" He meant it; he could do it; we knew he could, and it resulted in our company being the best in the regiment.

Shortly before we moved to France, a personage and his consort inspected us. He shook hands with Rattle-Snake, and spoke to him for several moments.

"How old are you?"

"Forty-five, Your Majesty."

"Military age, I suppose?" queried the Personage with a kindly smile.

"Yes, sir."

Never in his life was Rattle so happy as he was that day, and we felt rather proud of him ourselves.

*Our* Sergeant-Major had shaken hands with the King!

Those who had stood near enough to hear what had passed achieved a temporary fame thereby, and in tent and canteen the story was told, with variations suited to the imagination of the raconteur, for days after the event.

When we moved to France Rattle-Snake Pete came with us. I think the doctor saw it would have broken his heart not to come, although at his age he certainly should not have done so. But come he did, and never will the writer forget the day Rattle pursued him into an old loft, up a broken, almost perpendicular ladder, to inquire in a voice of thunder why a certain fatigue party was minus a man.

"Come you down out of there, lad, or you'll be for it!" And, meekly as a sucking-dove, I came!

He was wounded at the second battle of Ypres, and, according to all accounts, what he said about the Germans as he lay on that battle-field petrified the wounded around him, and was audible above the roar of bursting Jack Johnsons.

They sent him to hospital in "Blighty," an unwilling patient, and there he has been eating out his heart ever since, in the face of adamantine medical boards.

One little incident. We were billeted in an old theatre, years ago it seems now, at Armentières. We had marched many kilo-

metres in soaking rain that afternoon, and we were deadly weary. Rattle, though he said no word, was ill, suffering agonies from rheumatism. One could see it. Being on guard, I was able to see more than the rest, who, for the most part, slept the sleep of the tired out. One fellow was quite ill, and he tossed and turned a good deal in his sleep. Rattle was awake too, sitting in front of the dying embers in the stove, his face every now and then contorted with pain. Often he would go over to the sick man and arrange his bed for him as gently as a woman. Then he himself lay down. The sick man awoke, and I heard his teeth chatter. "Cold, lad?" said a deep voice near by. "Yes, bitter cold." The old S.-M. got up, took his own blanket and put it over the sick man. Thereafter he sat until the dawn broke on a rickety chair in front of the dead fire.

# MULES

UNTIL there was a war, quite a lot of people hardly knew there were such things as mules. "Mules?" they would say, "Oh, er, yes . . . those creatures with donkey's ears, made like a horse? or do you mean canaries?"

*Nous avons changé tout cela!* "Gonga Din" holds no hidden meaning from us now. We have, indeed, a respect for mules, graded according to closeness of contact.

In some Transports they think more of a mule than of a first-class, No. 1 charger. Why? Simply because a mule is—a mule. No one has yet written a theory of the evolution of mules. We all know a mule is a blend of horse and donkey, and that reproduction of the species is mercifully withheld by the grace of heaven, but further than that we do not go.

When the war began our C.O. was talking about mules. We had not crossed the water

then. He said: "I will *not* have any mules. No civilised man should have to look after a mule. When I was in Pindi once, a mule . . . Mr. Jenks"—our worthy Transport Officer—"there will be no mules in this regiment." That settled it for a while.

Our first mule came a month after we had landed in Flanders. It was a large, lean, hungry-looking mule. It stood about 17 feet 2 inches, and it had very large floppy ears and a long tail: it was rather a high-class mule, as mules go. It ate an awful lot. In fact it ate about as much as two horses and a donkey put together. The first time it was used some one put it in the Maltese cart, and it looked round at the cart with an air of surprise and regret. We were on the move, and the Transport was brigaded, and inspected by the Brigadier as it passed the starting point. James—the mule—behaved in a most exemplary fashion until he saw the Brigadier. Then he was overcome by his emotions. Perhaps the red tabs reminded him of carrots. (James was a pure hog where carrots were concerned.) At all events he proceeded to break up the march. He took

the bit between his teeth, wheeled to the left, rolled his eyes, brayed, and charged across an open ditch at the G.O.C. with the Maltese cart.

The G.O.C. and staff extended to indefinite intervals without any word of command.

James pulled up in a turnip patch and began to eat contentedly. It took six men and the Transport Officer to get him on to the road again, and the Maltese cart was a wreck.

After that they tried him as a pack-mule. He behaved like an angel for two whole weeks, and then some bright-eyed boy tried him as a saddle mule. After that the whole of the Transport tried him, retiring worsted from the fray on each occasion. One day the Transport Officer bet all-comers fifty francs on the mule. The conditions were that riders must stick on for five minutes. We used to think we could ride any horse ever foaled. We used to fancy ourselves quite a lot in fact, until we met James. Half the battalion came to see the show, which took place one sunny morning at the Transport lines. We looked James over with an appraising eye. We even gave him a

carrot, as an earnest of good-will. James wore a placid, far-away expression and, now and then, rolled his eyes sentimentally.

We gathered up the reins, and vaulted on to his back. For a full two seconds James stood stock still. Then he emitted an ear-splitting squeal, laid back his ears, bared his teeth, turned round and bit at the near foot, and sat down on his hind legs. He did all these things in quick time, by numbers. The betting, which had started at 2–1 on James, increased to 3–1 immediately. However, we stuck. James rose with a mighty heave, then, still squealing, made a rush of perhaps ten yards, and stopped dead. We still stuck. The betting fell to evens, except for the Transport Sergeant, who in loud tones offered 5–1 (on James). That kept him busy for two minutes, during which time James did almost everything but roll, and bit a toe off one of my new pair of riding boots.

There was one minute to go, and there was great excitement. James gave one squeal of concentrated wrath, gathered his four hoofs together tightly, bucked four feet in the air, kicked in mid-ether, and tried to bite his own

tail. When we next saw him he was being led gently away.

Since then we have had many mules. We have become used to them, and we respect them. If we hear riot in the Transport lines we know it is a mule. If we hear some one has been kicked, we know it is a mule. If we see one of the G.S. wagons carrying about two tons we know mules are drawing it. Old James now pulls the water-cart. He would draw it up to the mouth of the biggest Fritz cannon that ever was, but Frank Wootton could not ride him!

## "OFFICE"

"CHARGE against No. 7762543, Private Smith, J.C.; In the field, 11.11.16, refusing to obey an order, in that he would not wash out a dixie when ordered to do so. First witness, Sergeant Bendrick."

"Sirr! On Nov. 11th I was horderly sergeant. Private Thomas, cook, comes to me, and he says as 'ow 'e 'ad warned the pris— the haccused, sir, to wash out a dixie, which same the haccused refused to do. Hordered by me to wash hout the dixie, sir, the haccused refused again, and I places 'im under hopen arrest, sir."

"Cpl. Townsham, what have you to say?"

"Sirr! On Nov. 11th I was eatin' a piece of bread an' bacon when I was witness to what took place between Sergeant Bendrick an' Private Smith, sir. I corroborates his evidence."

"All right; Private Thomas?"

"Sirr! I coboriates both of them witnesses."

"You corroborate what both witnesses have said?"

"Yessir."

"Now, Smith, what have you got to say? Stand to attention!"

"I ain't got *nothin'* to say, sir, savin' that I never joined the army to wash dixies, an' I didn't like the tone of voice him"—indicating the orderly Sergeant—"used to me. Also I'm a little deaf, sir, an' my 'ands is that cut with barbed wire that it's hagony to put 'em in boilin' water, sir! An' I'm afraid o' gettin' these 'ere germs into them, sir. Apart from which I ain't got anything to say, sir!"

After this Private Smith assumes the injured air of a martyr, casts his eyes up to heaven, and waits hopefully for dismissal. (The other two similar cases were dismissed this morning!)

The Captain drums his fingers on the table for a few moments. "This is your first offence, Smith."

"Yessir!"

"But it is not made any the less serious by that fact."

The gleam of joy in Smith's eye departs.

"Disobedience of an order is no trivial matter. A case like this should go before the Commanding Officer."

Long pause, during which the accused passes from the stage of hope deferred to gloom and disillusion, and the orderly Sergeant assumes a fiercely triumphant expression.

"Twenty-eight days Field Punishment number one," murmurs the Captain ruminatively, "or a court-martial"—this just loud enough for the accused to hear. The latter's left leg sags a trifle, and consternation o'erspreads his visage.

"In view, Smith," says the Captain aloud, "in view of your previous good record, I will deal with you myself. Four days dixie washing, and you will attend all parades!"

Before Private Smith has time to heave a sigh of relief the C.S.M.'s voice breaks on the air, "Left turrn! Left wheel, quick marrch!"

"A good man, Sergeant-Major," says the Captain with a smile. "Have to scare 'em a bit at times, what?"

Battalion Orderly Room is generally a very imposing affair, calculated to put fear into the hearts of all save the most hardened

criminals. At times the array is formidable, as many as thirty—witnesses, escort, and prisoners—being lined up outside the orderly room door under the vigilant eye of the Regimental Sergeant-Major. It is easy to see which is which, even were not the "dress" different. The prisoners are in clean fatigue, wearing no accoutrements or equipment beyond the eternal smoke-helmet. The escort are in light marching order, and grasp in their left hands a naked bayonet, point upwards, resting along the forearm. The witnesses wear their belts. Most of the accused have a hang-dog look, some an air of defiance.

"Escort and prisoners. . . . Shun!"

The Colonel passes into orderly room, where the Adjutant, the Battalion Orderly Officer, and Officer witnesses in the cases to be disposed of await him, all coming rigidly to attention as he enters. In orderly room, or "office" as the men usually call it, the Colonel commands the deference paid to a high court judge. He is not merely a C.O., he is an Institution.

The R.S.M. hovers in the background, waiting for orders to call the accused and

witnesses in the first case. The C.O. fusses with the papers on his desk, hums and haws, and finally decides which case he will take first. The Adjutant stands near him, a sheaf of papers in his hand, like a learnéd crown counsel.

Not infrequently the trend of a case depends on whether the C.O. lunched well, or if the G.O.C. strafed or complimented him the last time they held palaver. Even colonels are human.

" Charge against Private Maconochie, No. 170298, drunk," etc., reads the Adjutant.

After the evidence has been heard the Colonel, having had no explanation or defence from the accused, proceeds to pass sentence. This being a first " drunk " he cannot do very much but talk, and talk he does.

" You were drunk, Thomkins. You were found in a state of absolutely sodden intoxication, found in the main street of Ablain-le-Petit at 4 P.M. in the afternoon. You were so drunk that the evidence quotes you as sleeping on the side-walk. You are a disgrace to the regiment, Thomkins! You outrage the

first principles of decency, you cast a slur on your battalion. You deliberately, of set purpose, intoxicate yourself at an early hour of the afternoon. I have a good mind to remand for a Field General Court-martial. Then you would be shot! Shot, do you understand? But I shall deal with you myself. I shall not permit the name of this battalion to be besmirched by *you*. Reprimanded! Reprimanded! Do you hear, sir!"

(Voice of the R.S.M., north front.) "Right turn. Right wheel; quick marrch!"

# OUR FARM

*July 30th*, 1916.

We are staying at a farm; quite an orthodox, Bairnsfather farm, except that in lieu of one (nominal) dead cow, we possess one (actual) portion of Dried Hun. The view from our doorway is somewhat extensive, and full of local colour! There are "steen" other farms all around us, all of which look as though they had been played with by professional house-wreckers out on a "beno." "AK" Company—what there is left of it—has at present "gone to ground," and from the lake to "Guildhall Manor" (we are very Toney over here!) there is no sign of life. A Fokker dropped in to call half an hour ago, but Archie & Sons awoke with some alacrity, and he has gone elsewhere. It is too hot even to write, and the C.O. of "AK" Coy., who *will* wash every day, is a disturbing influence. He splashes about in two inches of "wipers swill" as though he really liked it, and the nett result is that somewhere around 4 "pip

emma" the rest of us decide to shave also, which ruins the afternoon siesta.

This is a great life. Breakfast at 2 A.M., lunch at noon, dinner at 4 P.M., and supper any old time.

Macpherson—one of those enthusiastic blighters—insisted on taking me for a walk this morning. Being pure Edinburgh, Mac collects rum, whisky, and miscellaneous junk of all descriptions. When he returns to Canada he intends to run a junk shop in rear of a saloon.

The Boche was in a genial mood this morning. As we squelched along Flossy way, "out for bear," he began to tickle up poor old Paradise Wood with woolly bears, and Mount Sparrow with Minnies. Mac has no sense of humour, he failed to see the joke. "There is a pairfectly good pair of field-glasses to the left of Diamond Copse," he said mournfully, "and we cannot get them." Diamond Copse is the sort of place one reads about, and wishes one had never seen. It is about an acre and a half in extent, and was once a pretty place enough, with a few fine oak trees, and many young saplings. Nowadays,

it can hardly show a live twig, while shell holes, bits of shrapnel, stinking pools tinged with reddy-brown, and forlorn remnants of trench—not to speak of dead bodies—make it into a nightmare of a place.

"There is a sniper in Paradise Wood, and I do not like him," Mac announced gravely, after the fifth bullet, so we dodged over a grave, under a fallen oak, and into a shell-wrecked dug-out full of torn web equipment, machine-gun belts, old bully-beef, biscuits, a stained blanket, and a boot with part of the wearer's leg in it. The horse-flies were very annoying, and a dead donkey in a narrow street of Cairo would be as violets to patchouli compared with the smell. Mac kept nosing around, and finally retrieved a safety razor and a box of number nine pills from an old overcoat. "There is some one over there in need of burial," he said, "I can see the flies." The flies were incidental, but Mac is that kind of chap.

We found what was left of the poor fellow near by. There was nothing but bone and sinew, and torn remnants of clothing. It was impossible to identify the man, and

equally impossible to move him. By his side lay a bunch of letters, dirty and torn, and in a pocket which I opened gingerly with a jack-knife, a photograph of a girl—"With love, from Mary." The letters had no envelopes, and all began, "Dear Jimmy." Mac read one, and passed it over to me: "Dear Jimmy,—Enclosed you will find a pair of socks, some chewing gum, and a pair of wool gloves I knitted myself. The baby is well, and so am I. Peraps you will get leeve before long. Take care of yourself, Jim dear. The pottatoes have done good, an' I am growing some tommatos. My separashun allowence comes reglar, so don't worry. You will be home soon, Jim, for the papers say the Germans is beaten. I got your letter written in May. Alice is well. Your lovin' wife, Mary." "Och, it's a shame," said Mac, not looking at me. "A Tragedy, and but one of thousands."

We covered poor Jim over with old sandbags, as best we might, and his letters and photograph with him. Then we came back to our farm to lunch.

## AEROPLANES AND "ARCHIE"

THERE is something fascinating about aeroplanes. However many thousands of them one may have seen, however many aerial combats one may have witnessed, there is always the desire to see these things again, and, inwardly, to marvel.

Ten thousand feet above, round balls of black smoke appear in the blue sky, coming, as it were, out of the nowhere into here. After long listening you hear the echo of the distant explosion, like the clapping together of the hands of a man in the aisle of an empty church, and if you search very diligently, you will at last see the aeroplane, a little dot in the ether, moving almost slowly—so it appears—on its appointed course. Now the sun strikes the white-winged, bird-like thing as it turns, and it glitters in the beams of light like a diamond in the sky. Now it banks a little higher, now planes down at a dizzy

angle. Suddenly, short, sharp, distinct, you catch the sound of machine-gun fire. Quick stuttering bursts, as the visible machine and the invisible enemy circle about each other, seeking to wound, wing, and destroy. Ah! There it is! The Fokker dives, steep and straight, at our machine, and one can clearly see the little darts of flame as the machine-guns rattle. Our man quite calmly loops the loop, and then seems almost to skid after the Fokker which has carried on downwards, evidently hit. He swoops down on the stricken plane, pumping in lead as he goes. The twain seem to meet in collision, then — yes, the Fokker is plunging, nose-diving, down, down, at a terrific rate of speed. Our aviator swings free in a great circle, banks, and at top speed makes back to his air-line patrol, while the German Archies open up on him with redoubled violence, as, serenely confident, he hums along his way.

It is truly wonderful what a fire an aeroplane can pass through quite unscathed as far as actual hinderance to flight is concerned. Many a time you can count nearly two hundred wreathing balls of smoke in the track of

the machine, and yet it sails placidly onward as though the air were the native element of its pilot and the attentions of Archie non-existent.

It is Tommy who first gave the anti-aircraft gun that euphonious name. Why, no one knows. It must be intensely trying to be an Archie gunner. Rather like shooting at driven partridges with an air-gun, though far more exciting. The shells may burst right on the nose of the aeroplane, to all intents and purposes, and yet the machine goes on, veering this way or that, dropping or rising, apparently quite indifferent to the bitter feelings it is causing down below. It is the most haughty and inscrutable of all the weapons of war, to all outward appearances, and yet when misfortune overtakes it, it is a very lame duck indeed.

Archie is very much like a dog, his bark is worse than his bite—until he has bitten! His motto is " persevere," and in the long run he meets with some success. Halcyon days, when he wags his metaphorical tail and the official communiqués pat him on the head. He does not like other dogs, bigger dogs, to bark at

him. They quite drown his own bark, so that it is useless to bark back, and their highly explosive nature forces him to put his tail between his legs and run for it, like a chow pursued by a mastiff. No common-sense Archie stops in any place long after the five-nines and the H.E. shrapnel begin to burst around it. In that case discretion is indubitably the better part of valour.

Aeroplanes have a nasty habit of "spotting" Archies, whereby they even up old scores and prove their superiority. For even the lordly aeroplane does not charge an Archie barrage by preference.

It is when the planes come out in force, a score at a time, that poor Archibald has a rough time, and, so to speak, scratches his ear desperately with his hind leg. The planes do not come in serried mass, but, wheeling this way and that, diving off here and down yonder, so confuse poor Archie that he even stops barking at all, wondering which one he ought to bark at first! By this time most of the planes have sidled gracefully out of range, rounded up and driven down the iron-cross birds, and, having dropped their "cartes

de visite" at the rail-head, are returning by ways that are swift and various to the place whence they came. All of which is most unsettling to the soul of Archibald.

In the evening, when the west is pink and gold, Archie's eyes grow wearied. He sees dimly many aeroplanes, here and there, going and coming, and he *has* been known to bark at the wrong one! Wherefore the homing aeroplane drops a star-signal very often to let him know that all is well, and that no German hawks menace the safety of the land over which he is the "ethereal" guardian, in theory, if not always in practice.

At night Archie slumbers profoundly. But the birds of the air do not always sleep. Many a night one hears the throb and hum of a machine crossing the line, and because Archie is asleep we pay him unconscious tribute: "Is it ours, or theirs?"

Once, not a mile from the front line, Archie dreamed he saw a Zeppelin. He awoke, stood to, and pointed his nose straight up in the air. Far above him, many thousands of feet aloft, a silvery, menacing sphere hung in the rays of the searchlights. And he barked his

loudest and longest, but without avail, for the distance was too great. And the imaginative French folk heaped unintentional infamy upon him when they spoke quite placidly of "Archie baying at the moon!"

# STIRRING TIMES

At the corner of the Grande Route de Bapaume near the square, stands the little old Estaminet of La Veuve Matifas.

It is only a humble Estaminet, where, in the old days, Pierre Lapont and old Daddy Duchesne discussed a "chope," and talked over the failings of the younger generation, but nowadays it bears a notice on the little door leading into the back room, "For officers only." The men have the run of the larger room, during hours, but the little parlour in rear is a spot sacred to those wearing from one star upwards.

Madame Matifas is old, and very large.

"Mais, Monsieur le Capitaine, dans ma jeunesse. . . . Ah! Alors!"—and she dearly loves a good hearty laugh. She also sells most excellent champagne, and—let it be murmured softly—Cointreau, Benedictine, and very rarely a bottle of "Skee" ("B. & W." for choice). She has twinkling brown eyes, fat comfortable-looking hands, and we all call

her "Mother," while she calls those of us who please her "Mon brave garçon."

But La Veuve Matifas is not the sole attraction of the Bon Fermier nor are even her very excellent wines and other drinks, that may inebriate. She has two children: Cécile and Marie Antoinette. The former is, strange to say, "petite" and "mignonne"—she is also very pretty and she knows all the officers of our Division; most of the young and tender ones write to her from the trenches. You may kiss Cécile on the cheek if you know her well.

Marie Antoinette is of the tall, rather rich coloured, passionate type. She was engaged to a "Little Corporal" of the 77th Infantry of the Line. Alas, he died of wounds seven months ago. She wears mourning for him, but Marie is now in love with the Senior Major, or else we are all blind! (Uneasy rests the arm that wears a crown!) However, that is neither here not there. We like the widow Matifas, and we all admire her daughters, while some of us fall in love with them, and we *always* have a "stirring time" when we reach rest billets within walking distance of the "Esta-

minet du Bon Fermier," or even gee gee distance.

In defiance of the A.P.M. we float into town about 8 " pip emma " (the O.C. signals *will* bring " shop " into every-day conversation) and stealthily creep up the little back alley which leads to the back door of the Estaminet. We gather there—four of us, as a rule—and we tap thrice. We hear a fat, uneven walk, and the heavy respiration of " Maman," and then:

" Qui est là ? "

" C'est nous, Mère Matifas! "

The door is unbolted, and we enter. Scholes invariably salutes Maman on both cheeks, and we—if we have the chance—salute her daughters. Then we carry on to the parlour. Pelham—who thinks all women love his goo-goo eyes—tries to tell Marie Antoinette, in simply rotten French, how much he loves her, and Marie gets very business-like, and wants to know if we want Moët et Chandon at 12 frcs. a bottle or " the other " at six.

So far we have never dared to try " the other," for fear that we appear " real mean "! Maman bustles about, and calls us her brave

boys, and *never* says a word about the war, which is a real kindness to us war-weary people.

Cécile makes her entrance usually after the second bottle; probably to make her sister envious, because she always gets such a warm welcome. In fact there is an almost scandalous amount of competition for the honour of sitting next to her.

La Veuve Matifas stays until after the third bottle. She has tact, that woman, and a confidence in ourselves and her daughters that no man who is worthy of the name would take advantage of.

Last time we were there an incident occurred which literally took all our breaths away. We were in the middle of what Allmays calls "Close harmony" and Allmays was mixing high tenor, basso profundo, and Benedictine, when suddenly the door opened in a most impressive manner. That little plain deal door *felt* important, and it had the right to feel important too.

The C.O. came in.

We got up.

The C.O. turned to Cécile, who was sitting

*far* too close to Pelham, in my estimation (for I was on the other side), and said, "Cécile, two more bottles please!" Then to us, "Sit down, gentlemen, carry on." We were all fairly senior officers, but Maman nearly fainted dead away when we conveyed to her the fact that a real, live, active service Colonel was in her back parlour at 9.15 "pip emma," ordering up the bubbly.

He stayed a whole hour, and we had to sing. And then he told us that he had been offered a Brigade, and was leaving us. We were all jolly sorry—and jolly glad too—and we said so. We told the girls. "Un Général!" cried Cécile. "Mon Dieu!" and before we could stop her she flung her arms round the C.O.'s neck and kissed him. We all expected to be shot at dawn or dismissed the service, but the C.O. took it like a real brick, and Pelham swears he kissed her back—downy old bird that he is!

After he had left we had a bully time. Marie Antoinette was peeved because she had not kissed the Colonel herself, and Cécile was sparkling because she *had* kissed him. Which gave us all a chance. Mère Matifas

drank two whole glasses of champagne, and insisted on dancing a Tarantelle with Allmays, whom she called a " joli garçon," and flirted with most shamelessly. Pelham got mixed up with a coon song, and spent half an hour trying to unmix, and Scholes consoled Marie Antoinette. As for me, well, there was nothing for it—Cécile *had* to be talked to, don't you know!

Mother " pro-duced " a bottle of " B. & W." also. In fact we had a most stirring time!

We still go to see La Veuve Matifas. She never speaks to us without saying at least once, " Ah! Mais le brave Général, image de mon mari, où est il? "

I have a photograph of Cécile in the left hand breast pocket of my second-best tunic. Scholes says he is going to marry Marie Antoinette, " Après la Guerre," in spite of the Senior Major!

## SICK PARADE

"THE Company," read the orderly Sergeant, "will parade at 8.45 A.M., and go for a route march. Dress: Light marching order."

A groan went up from the dark shadows of the dimly-lighted barn, which died down gradually on the order to "cut it out." "Sick parade at 7.30 A.M. at the M.O.'s billet Menin-lee-Chotaw," announced the O.S. sombrely. "Any of you men who wanter go sick give in your names to Corporal Jones right now."

Yells of "Right here, Corporal," "I can't move a limb, Corporal," and other statements of a like nature, announced the fact that there were quite a number of gentlemen whose pronounced view it was that they could not do an eight-mile route march the next day. Corporal Jones emerged, perspiring, after half an hour's gallant struggle. Being very conscientious he took full particulars, according to Hoyle: name, number, rank, initials, age, religion, and nature of disease. The last

he invariably asked for by means of the code phrase, "wossermarrerwi*you?*"

Having refused to admit at least half a dozen well-known scrimshankers to the roll of sick, lame, and lazy, he finished up with Private Goodman, who declared himself suffering from "rheumatics hall over. Me legs is somethin' tur'ble bad."

There were thirteen names on the report.

Menin-le-Château being a good three kilometres distant, the sick fell in at 6.30 A.M. the next day. The grey dawn was breaking in the East, and a drizzling rain made the village street even more miserable-looking than it was at all times. As on all sick parades, all the members thereof endeavoured to look their very worst, and succeeded admirably for the most part. They were unshaven, improperly dressed, according to military standards, and they shuffled around like a bunch of old women trying to catch a bus. Corporal Jones was in a very bad temper, and he told them many things, the least of which would have made a civilian's hair turn grey. But, being "sick," the men merely listened to him with a somewhat apathetic interest.

They moved off in file, a sorry-looking bunch of soldiers. Each man chose his own gait, which no injunctions to get in step could affect, and a German under-officer looking them over would have reported to his superiors that the morale of the British troops was hopeless.

At 7.25 A.M. this unseemly procession arrived in Menin-le-Château. In the far distance Corporal Jones espied the Regimental Sergeant-Major. The latter was a man whom every private considered an incarnation of the devil! The junior N.C.O.'s feared him, and the Platoon Sergeants had a respect for him founded on bitter experience in the past, when he had found them wanting. In other words he was a cracking good Sergeant-Major of the old-fashioned type. He was privately referred to as Rattle-Snake Pete, a tribute not only to his disciplinary measures, but also to his heavy, fierce black moustachios, and a lean, eagle-like face in which was set a pair of fierce, penetrating black eyes.

"If," said Corporal Jones loudly, "you all wants to be up for Office you'll *walk*. Other-

ways you'll *march!* There's the Sergeant-Major!"

The sick parade pulled itself together with a click. Collars and the odd button were furtively looked over and done up, caps pulled straight, and no sound broke the silence save a smart unison of "left-right-left" along the muddy road. The R.S.M. looked them over with a gleam in his eye as they passed, and glanced at his watch.

"'Alf a minute late, Co'poral Jones," he shouted. "Break into double time. Double . . . march!" The sick parade trotted away steadily—until they got round a bend in the road. "Sick!!!" murmured the R.S.M. "My H'EYE!"

A little way further on the parade joined a group composed of the sick of other battalion units, some fifty in all. Corporal Jones handed his sick report to the stretcher-bearer Sergeant, and was told he would have to wait until the last.

In half an hour's time the first name of the men in his party was called—Lance-Corporal MacMannish.

"What's wrong?" asked the doctor briskly.

"'A have got a pain in here, sirr," said MacMannish, "an' it's sair, sorr," pointing to the centre of his upper anatomy.

"Show me your tongue? H'm. Eating too much! Colic. Two number nine's. Light duty."

Lance-Corporal MacMannish about-turned with a smile of ecstatic joy and departed, having duly swallowed the pills.

"What did ye get, Jock?"

"Och! Light duty," said the hero with the air of a wronged man justified, "but *you'll* be no gettin' such a thing, Bowering!"

"And why not?" demanded the latter scowling. However, his name being then called put an end to the discussion.

"I have pains in me head and back, sir," explained Mr. Bowering, "and no sleep for two nights." The doctor looked him over with a critical, expert eye.

"Give him a number nine. Medicine and duty. Don't drink so much, Bowering! That's enough. Clear out!"

"*He's* no doctor," declared the victim when he reached the street. "Huh! I wouldn't trust a *cat* with 'im!"

The next man got no duty, and this had such an effect on him that he almost forgot he was a sick man, and walloped a pal playfully in the ribs on the doorstep, which nearly led to trouble.

Of the remaining ten, all save one were awarded medicine and duty, but they took so long to tell the story of their symptoms, and managed to develop such good possible cases, that it was 8.45 before the parade fell in again to march back to billets, a fact which they all thoroughly appreciated!

Wonderful the swinging step with which they set forth, Corporal Jones at the head, Lance-Corporal MacMannish, quietly triumphant, bringing up the rear. They passed the Colonel in the village, and he stopped Corporal Jones to inquire what they were.

"Your men are marching very well, Corporal. 'A' Company? Ah, yes. Fatigue party, hey?"

"No-sir, sick-parade-sir!"

"Sick Parade! God bless my soul! Sick! How many men were given medicine and duty?"

"Nine, sir."

"Nine, out of thirteen. . . . 'A' Company is on a route march this morning, is it not?"

"Yessir."

"My compliments to Major Bland, Corporal, and I would like him to parade these nine men in heavy marching order and send them on a nine-mile route-march, under an officer."

"Very good, sir!"

Next day there were no representatives of "A" Coy. on sick parade!

## BATMEN

THIS war has produced a new breed of mankind, something that the army has never seen before, although they have formed a part of it, under the same name, since Noah was a boy. They are alike in name only. Batmen, the regular army type, are professionals. What they don't know about cleaning brass, leather, steel, and general valeting simply isn't worth knowing. They are super-servants, and they respect their position as reverently as an English butler respects his. With the new batman it is different. Usually the difficulty is not so much to discover what they do not know, as what they do! A new officer arrives at the front, or elsewhere, and he has to have a batman. It is a rather coveted job, and applicants are not slow in coming forward. Some man who is tired of doing sentry duty gets the position, and his " boss " spends anxious weeks bringing him up in the way he should go, losing, in the interval,

socks, handkerchiefs, underwear, gloves, ties, shirts, and collars galore! What can be said to the wretched man when in answer to "Where the —— is my new pair of socks?" he looks faint and replies: "I've lost them, sir!" Verily, as the "professional" scornfully remarks, are these "Saturday night batmen!"

Yet even batmen are born, not made. Lucky is he who strikes on one of the former; only the man is sure to get killed, or wounded, or go sick! There is always a fly in the ointment somewhere. The best kind of batman to have is a kleptomaniac. Treat him well and he will never touch a thing of your own, but he will, equally, never leave a thing belonging to any one else!

"Cozens, where did you get this pair of pants?"

"Found them, sir!"

"Where did you find them?"

"Lying on the floor, sir," with an air of injured surprise.

"*Where!*"

"I don't justly remember, sir."

Voice from right rear: "The Major's com-

pliments, sir, and have you seen his new pants?"

"Cozens!"

"Yessir."

"Give me those pants. . . . Are those the Major's?"

"Yes, sir, them's them."

Cozens watches the pants disappear with a sad, retrospective air of gloom.

"You ain't got but the *one* pair now, sir." This with reproach.

"How many times have I got to tell you to leave other people's clothes alone? The other day it was pyjamas, now it's pants. You'll be taking somebody's boots next. Confound it. I'll—I'll return you to duty if you do it again! . . . How about all those handkerchiefs? Where did *they* come from?"

"All yours, sir, back from the wash!" With a sigh, one is forced to give up the unequal contest.

Albeit as valets the batmen of the present day compare feebly with the old type, in certain other ways they are head and shoulders above them. The old "pro" refuses to do a single thing beyond looking after the clothing

and accoutrements of his master. The new kind of batman can be impressed to do almost anything. He will turn into a runner, wait at table, or seize a rifle with gusto and help get Fritz's wind up. Go long journeys to find souvenirs, and make himself generally useful. He will even "bat" for the odd officer, when occasion arises, as well as for his own particular boss.

No man is a hero in the eyes of his own batman. He knows everything about you, even to the times when your banking account is nil. He knows when you last had a bath, and when you last changed your underwear. He knows how much you eat, and also how much you drink; he knows all your friends with whom you correspond, and most of your family affairs as revealed by that correspondence, and nothing can hide from his eagle eye the fact that you are—lousy! Yet he is a pretty good sort, after all; he never tells. We once had a rather agéd sub. in the Company whose teeth were not his own, not a single one of them. One night, after a somewhat heavy soirée and general meeting of friends, he went to bed—or, to be more

accurate, was tucked in by his faithful henchman—and lost both the upper and lower sets in the silent watches. The following morning he had a fearfully worried look, and spake not at all, except in whispers to his batman. Finally, the O.C. Company asked him a question, and he *had* to say something. It sounded like "A out mo," so we all instantly realised something was lacking. He refused to eat anything at all, but took a little nourishment in the form of tea. His batman was to be observed crawling round the floor, perspiring at every pore, searching with his ears aslant and his mouth wide open for hidden ivory. We all knew it; poor old Gerrard knew we knew it, but the batman was faithful to the last, even when he pounced on the quarry with the light of triumph in his eye. He came to his master after breakfast was over and asked if he could speak to him. Poor Gerrard moved into the other room, and you could have heard a pin drop. "Please, sir," in a stage whisper from his batman, "please, sir, I've got hold of them TEETH, sir! But the front ones is habsent, sir, 'aving bin trod on!"

The biggest nuisance on God's earth is a

batman who spends all his spare moments getting drunk! Usually, however, he is a first-class batman during his sober moments! He will come in "plastered to the eyes" about eleven o'clock, and begin to hone your razors by the pallid rays of a candle, or else clean your revolver and see if the cartridges fit! In his cups he is equal to anything at all. Unless the case is really grave the man wins every time, for no one hates the idea of changing his servant more than an officer who has had the same man for a month or so and found him efficient.

Not infrequently batmen are touchingly faithful. They will do anything on earth for their "boss" at any time of the day or night, and never desert him in the direst extremity. More than one batman has fallen side by side with his officer, whom he had followed into the fray, close on his heels.

Once, after a charge, a conversation ensued between the sergeant of a certain officer's platoon and that officer's batman, in this fashion:

"What were *you* doin' out there, Tommy?"

"Follerin'."

"And why was you close up on his heels, so clost I could 'ardly see 'im?"

"Follerin' 'im up."

"And why wasn't you back somewhere *safe?*" (This with a touch of sarcasm.)

"Lord, Sargint, you couldn't expect me to let *'im* go out by 'isself! 'E might ha' got hurt!"

## RATIONS

"BULLY-BEEF an' 'ard-tack," said Private Boddy disgustedly. "Bully-beef that's canned dog or 'orse, or may be cats, an' biscuits that's *fit* for dawgs. . . . This is a 'ell of a war. W'y did I ever leave little old Walkerville, w'ere the whiskey comes from? Me an' 'Iram we was almost pals, as you may say. I worked a 'ole fortnight in 'is place, at $1.75 per, an' then I——" Mr. Boddy broke off abruptly, but not soon enough.

"Huh!" broke in a disgusted voice from a remote corner of the dug-out, "then I guess you went bummin' your way till the bulls got you in Windsor. To hear you talk a chap would think you didn't know what panhandlin' was, or going out on the stem."

"Look 'ere," said Boddy with heat, "you comeralong outside, you great long rubberneck, you, an' I'll teach you to call me a pan-'andler, I will. You low-life Chicago

bum, wot never *did* 'ave a better meal than you could steal f'm a Chink Chop Suey."

"Say, fellers," a quiet voice interposed, "cut it out. This ain't a Parliament Buildings nor a Montreal cabaret. There's a war on. If youse guys wants to talk about rations, then go ahead, shoot, but cut out the rough stuff!"

"Dat's what *I* say, Corporal," interrupted a French-Canadian. "I'm a funny sort of a guy, I am. I likes to hear a good spiel, widout any of dis here free cussin' an' argumentation. Dat ain't no good, fer it don't cut no ice, *no' d'un ch'en!*"

"Talkin' of rations," drawled a Western voice, "when I was up to Calgary in '08, an' was done gone busted, save for two bits, I tuk a flop in one of them houses at 15 cents per, an' bot a cow's heel with the dime. You kin b'lieve me or you needn't, but I *tell* you a can of that bully you're shootin' off about would ha' seemed mighty good to *me*, right then, an' it aren't so dusty naow."

Private Boddy snorted his contempt. "An' the jam they gives you," he said, "w'y at 'ome you couldn't *give* it away! Plum an'

happle! Or wot they call plain happle! It ain't never seed a plum, bar the stone, nor a happle, bar the core. It's just colourin' mixed up wiv boiled down turnups, that's what it is."

"De bread's all right, anyways," said Lamontagne, "but dey don't never git you more'n a slice a man! An dat cheese. Pouff! It stink like a Fritz wot's laid dead since de British takes Pozières."

Scottie broke in.

"Aye, but hold yerr maunderin'. Ye canna verra weel have aught to clack aboot when 'tis the Rum ye speak of."

"Dat's all right," Lamontagne responded, "de rum's all right. But who gets it? What youse gets is one ting. A little mouthful down de brook wot don't do no more than make you drier as you was before. What does de Sargents get? So much dey all is so rambunctious mad after a feller he dasn't look dem in de face or dey puts him up for office! Dat's a fine ways, dat is! An' dem awficers! De limit, dat's what dat is. I was up to de cook-house wid a—wid a rifle——"—"a dirty rifle too, on inspection, by Heck," the

Corporal supplemented—"wid a rifle, as I was sayin'," continued Lamontagne, with a reproachful look in the direction of his section commander, "an' I sees wot was in de cook-house a cookin' for de awficers" (his voice sunk to an impressive whisper). "D'ere was eeggs, wid de sunny side up, an' dere was bif-steaks all floatin' in gravy, an' pottitters an' *beans*, an' peaches an' peyers."

"Quit yer fool gabbin'," said Chicago. "H'aint you got no sense in that mutt-head o' yourn? That's food them ginks BUYS!"

Boddy had been silent so long he could bear it no longer.

"'Ave a 'eart," he said, "it gives me a pain ter fink of all that food the horficers heats. Pure 'oggery, I calls it. An' ter fink of th' little bit o' bread an' biscuit an' bacon —wot's all fat—wot we fellers gets to eat. *We* does the work, an' the horficers sits in easy chairs an' Heats!! Oh *w'y* did I join the Harmy?"

At this moment, Private Graham, who had been slumbering peacefully until Lamontagne, in his excitement, put a foot in the midst of his anatomy, added his quota to the dis-

cussion. Private Graham wore the King and Queen's South African medal and also the Somaliland. Before drink reduced him, he had been a company Q.M.S. in a crack regiment. His words were usually respected. "Strike me pink if you Saturday night soldiers don't give me the guts-ache," he remarked with some acerbity. "In Afriky you'd ha' bin dead an' buried months ago, judgin' by the way you talks! There it was march, march, march, an' no fallin' out. Little water, a 'an'ful o' flour, an' a tin of bully wot was fly-blowed two minutes after you opened it, unless you 'ad eat it a'ready. An' you talks about food! S'elp me if it ain't a crime. Rations! W'y, never in the 'ole 'istory of the world 'as a Army bin better fed nor we are. You young soldiers sh'd learn a thing or two afore you starts talkin' abaht yer elders an' betters. Lord, in th' old days a hofficers' mess was somethin' to dream abaht. Nowadays they can't 'old a candle to it. Wot d'yer expec'? D'yer think a horficer is goin' to deny 'is stummick if 'e can buy food ter put in it? 'E ain't so blame stark starin' mad as all that. You makes me sick, you do!"

"Dat's what *I* say," commented Lamontagne!

From afar came a voice crying, "Turn out for your rations."

In thirty seconds the dug-out was empty!

## OUR SCOUT OFFICER

We have a certain admiration for our scout officer; not so much for his sleuth-hound propensities, as for his completely *dégagé* air. He is a Holmes-Watson individual, in whom the Holmes is usually subservient to the Watson.

Without a map—he either has several dozen or none at all—he is purely Watson. With a map he is transformed into a Sherlock, instanter. The effect of a *new* map on him is like that of a new build of aeroplane on an aviator. He pores over it, he reverses the north and south gear, and gets the magnetic differential on the move; with a sweep of the eye he climbs up hills and goes down into valleys, he encircles a wood with a pencil-marked forefinger—and asks in an almost pained way for nail-scissors. Finally, he sends out his Scout Corporal and two men, armed to the teeth with spy-glasses and compasses (magnetic, mark VIII), to reconnoitre. When they come back (having walked seventeen

kilometres to get to a point six miles away) and report, he says, wagging his head sagely: "Ah! I knew it. According to this map, 81 × D (parts of), 82 GN, south-west (parts of), 32 $B^1$, N.W. (parts of), and 19 CF, East (parts of), the only available route is the main road, marked quite clearly on the map, and running due east-north-east by east from Bn. H.Q."

But he is a cheerful soul. The other day, when we were romancing around in the Somme, we had to take over a new line; one of those "lines" that genial old beggar Fritz makes for us with 5.9's. He—the Scout Officer—rose to the occasion. He went to the Commanding Officer, and in his most ingratiating manner, his whole earnest soul in his pale blue eyes, offered to take him up to his battle head-quarters.

This offer was accepted, albeit the then Adjutant had a baleful glitter in *his* eye.

After he had led us by ways that were strange and peculiar through the gathering darkness, and after the Colonel had fallen over some barbed wire into a very damp shell-hole, he began to look worried. We

struck a very famous road—along which even the worms dare not venture—and our Intelligence Officer led us for several hundred yards along it.

An occasional high explosive shrapnel shell burst in front and to rear of us, but, map grasped firmly in the right hand, our Scout Officer led us fearlessly onwards. He did not march, he did not even walk, he sauntered. Then with a dramatic gesture wholly unsuited to the time and circumstances, he turned and said: "Do you mind waiting a minute, sir, while I look at the map?" After a few brief comments the C.O. went to earth in a shell-hole. The Scout Officer sat down in the road, and examined his map by the aid of a flash-light until the Colonel threw a clod of earth at him accompanied by some very uncomplimentary remarks. "I think, sir," said the Scout Officer, his gaunt frame and placid countenance illumined by shell-bursts, "that if we cross the road and go North by East we may perhaps strike the communication trench leading to the Brewery. *Personally*, I would suggest going overland, but——" His last words were drowned by

the explosion of four 8.1's 50 yards rear right. "Get out of this, sir! Get out of this DAMN quick," roared the C.O. The Scout Officer stood to attention slowly, and saluted with a deprecating air.

He led.

We followed.

He took us straight into one of the heaviest barrages it had ever been our misfortune to encounter, and when we had got there he said he was lost. So for twenty minutes the C.O., the Adjutant, nine runners, and, last but not least, the Scout Officer, sat under a barrage in various shell-holes, and prayed inwardly—with the exception of the Scout Officer—that *he* (the S.O.) would be hit plump in the centre of his maps by a 17-inch shell.

It were well to draw a veil over what followed. Even Holmes-Watson does not like to hear it mentioned. Suffice to say that the C.O. (with party) left at 5.30 P.M. and arrived at battle head-quarters at 11.35 P.M. The Scout Officer was then engaged in discovering a route between Battle H.Q. and the front line. He reported back at noon the following day, and slept in a shell-hole for

thirteen hours. No one could live near the C.O. for a week, and he threatened the S.O. with a short-stick MILLS.

If there is one thing which the Scout Officer does not like, it is riding a horse. He almost admits that he cannot ride! The other day he met a friend. The friend had one quart bottle of Hennessey, three star. The Scout Officer made a thorough reconnaissance of the said bottle, and reported on same.

A spirited report.

Unhappily the C.O. ordered a road reconnaissance an hour later, and our Scout Officer had to ride a horse. The entire H.Q. substaff assisted him to mount, and the last we saw of Holmes-Watson, he was galloping down the road, sitting well on the horse's neck, hands grasping the saddle tightly, rear and aft. Adown the cold November wind we heard his dulcet voice carolling:

" I put my money on a bob-tailed nag! . . .
Doo-dah . . . Doo-dah!
*I* put my money on a bob tailed nag;
. . . Doo-dah! . . . Doo-dah!! . . . *DEY!!!*"

# MARTHA OF DRANVOORDE

Martha Beduys, in Belgium, was considered pretty, even handsome. Of that sturdy Flemish build so characteristic of Belgian women, in whom the soil seems to induce embonpoint, she was plump to stoutness. She was no mere girl; twenty-seven years had passed over her head when the war broke out, and she saw for the first time English soldiers in the little village that had always been her home. There was a great deal of excitement. As the oldest of seven sisters, Martha was the least excited, but the most calculating.

The little baker's shop behind the dull old church had always been a source of income, but never a means to the attainment of wealth. Martha had the soul of a shop-keeper, a thing which, in her father's eyes, made her the pride of his household.

Old Hans Beduys was a man of some strength of mind. His features were sharp and keen, his small, blue eyes had a glitter

in them which seemed to accentuate their closeness to each other, and his hands—lean, knotted, claw-like—betokened his chief desire in life. Born of a German mother and a Belgian father, he had no particular love for the English.

When the first British Tommy entered his shop and asked for bread, old Beduys looked him over as a butcher eyes a lamb led to the slaughter. He was calculating the weight in sous and francs.

That night Beduys laid down the law to his family.

"The girls will all buy new clothes," he said, "for which I shall pay. They will make themselves agreeable to the English mercenaries, but"—with a snap of his blue eyes —"nothing more. The good God has sent us a harvest to reap; I say we shall reap it."

During the six months that followed the little shop behind the church teemed with life. The Beduys girls were glad enough to find men to talk to for the linguistic difficulty was soon overcome—to flirt with mildly, and in front of whom to show off their newly-acquired finery. From morn till dewy eve

the shop was crowded, and occasionally an officer or two would dine in the back parlour, kiss Martha if they felt like it, and not worry much over a few sous change.

In the meantime old Hans waxed financially fat, bought a new Sunday suit, worked the life out of his girls, and prayed nightly that the Canadians would arrive in the vicinity of his particular "Somewhere in Belgium."

In a little while they came.

Blossoming forth like a vine well fertilised at the roots, the little shop became more and more pretentious as the weekly turnover increased. Any day that the receipts fell below a certain level old Beduys raised such a storm that his bevy of daughters redoubled their efforts.

Martha had become an enthusiastic business woman. Her fair head with its golden curls was bent for many hours in the day over a crude kind of ledger, and she thought in terms of pickles, canned fruits, chocolate, and cigarettes. The spirit of commerce had bitten deep into Martha's soul.

More and more officers held impromptu dinners in the back parlour. Martha knew

most of them, but only one interested her. Had he not shown her the system of double entry, and how to balance her accounts? He was a commercial asset.

As for Jefferson, it was a relief to him, after a tour in the trenches, to have an occasional chat with a moderately pretty girl.

One rain-sodden, murky January night, very weary, wet, and muddy, Jefferson dropped in to see, as he would have put it, "the baker's daughter."

Martha happened to be alone, and welcomed "Monsieur Jeff" beamingly.

Perhaps the dim light of the one small lamp, perhaps his utter war weariness, induced Jefferson to overlook the coarseness of the girl's skin, her ugly hands, and large feet. Perhaps Martha was looking unusually pretty.

At all events he suddenly decided that she was desirable. Putting his arm around her waist as she brought him his coffee, he drew her, unresisting, on to his knee. Then he kissed her.

Heaven knows what possessed Martha that evening. She not only allowed his kisses, but returned them, stroking his curly hair with a

tenderness that surprised herself as much as it surprised him.

Thereafter Martha had two souls. A soul for business and a soul for Jefferson.

The bleak winter rolled on and spring came.

About the beginning of April old Beduys received, secretly, a letter from a relative in Frankfurt. The contents of the letter were such that the small pupils of the old man's eyes dilated with fear. He hid the document away, and his temper for that day was execrable. That night he slept but little. Beduys lay in bed and pictured the sails of a windmill—HIS windmill—and he thought also of ten thousand francs and his own safety. He thought of the distance to the mill—a full two kilometres — and of the martial law which dictated, among other things, that he be in his home after a certain hour at night, and that his mill's sails be set at a certain angle when at rest. Then he thought of Martha. Martha of the commercial mind. Martha the obedient. Yes! That was it, obedient! Hans Beduys rose from his bed softly, without disturbing his heavily-sleeping

wife, and read and re-read his brother's letter. One page he kept, and the rest he tore to shreds, and burned, bit by bit, in the candle flame.

High up on the hill stood the windmill—the Beduys windmill. Far over in the German lines an Intelligence Officer peered at it in the gathering dusk through a night-glass. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the sails of the mill turned, and stopped for a full minute. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, they turned again, and stopped again. This happened perhaps twenty times. The German made some notes and went to the nearest signalling station.

Five minutes later a salvo of great shells trundled, with a noise like distant express trains, over to the left of the mill.

There were heavy casualties in a newly-arrived battalion bivouacked not half a mile from the baker's shop. The inhabitants of the village awoke and trembled. "Hurrumph-umph!" Again the big shells trundled over the village, and again. There was confusion, and death and wounding.

In his bed lay Hans Beduys, sweating from head to foot, while his brain hammered out

with ever-increasing force: "Ten thousand francs—Ten Thousand Francs."

In the small hours a shadow disengaged itself from the old mill, cautiously. Then it began to run, and resolved itself into a woman. By little paths, by ditches, by side-tracks, Martha reached home. She panted heavily, her face was white and haggard. When she reached her room she flung herself on her bed, and lay there wide-eyed, dumb, horror-stricken, until the dawn broke.

Jefferson's Battalion finished a tour in the trenches on the following night. Jefferson marched back to billet with a resolve in his mind. He had happened to notice the windmill moving the night before, as he stood outside Company head-quarters in the trenches. He had heard the shells go over—away back—and had seen the sails move again. The two things connected themselves instantly in his mind. Perhaps he should have reported the matter at once, but Jefferson did not do so. He meant to investigate for himself.

Two days later Jefferson got leave to spend the day in the nearest town. He returned early in the afternoon, put his revolver in the

pocket of his British warm coat, and set out for the windmill. He did not know to whom the mill belonged, nor did that trouble him.

An Artillery Brigade had parked near the village that morning. Jefferson got inside the mill without difficulty. It was a creaky, rat-haunted old place, and no one lived within half a mile of it. Poking about, he discovered nothing until his eyes happened to fall on a little medallion stuck between two boards on the floor.

Picking it up, Jefferson recognised it as one of those little "miraculous medals" which he had seen strung on a light chain around Martha's neck. He frowned thoughtfully, and put it in his pocket.

He hid himself in a corner and waited. He waited so long that he fell asleep. The opening of the little wooden door of the mill roused him with a start. There was a long pause, and then the sound of footsteps coming up the wooden stairway which led to where Jefferson lay. The window in the mill-face reflected the dying glow of a perfect sunset, and the light in the mill was faint. He could

hear the hum of a biplane's engines as it hurried homeward, the day's work done.

A peaked cap rose above the level of the floor, followed by a stout, rubicund face. A Belgian gendarme.

Jefferson fingered his revolver, and waited. The gendarme looked around, grunted, and disappeared down the steps again, closing the door that led into the mill with a bang. Jefferson sat up and rubbed his head.

He did not quite understand.

Perhaps ten minutes had passed when for the third time that night the door below was opened softly, closed as softly, and some one hurried up the steps.

It was Martha. She had a shawl over her head and shoulders, and she was breathing quickly, with parted lips.

Jefferson noiselessly dropped his revolver into his pocket again.

With swift, sure movements, the girl began to set the machinery of the mill in motion. By glancing over to the window, Jefferson could see the sails move slowly—very, very slowly. Martha fumbled for a paper in her bosom, and, drawing it forth, scrutinised it

tensely. Then she set the machinery in motion again. She had her back to him. Jefferson rose stealthily and took a step towards her. A board creaked and, starting nervously, the girl looked round.

For a moment the two gazed at each other in dead silence.

"Martha," said Jefferson, "Martha!"

There was a mixture of rage and reproach in his voice. Even as he spoke they heard the whine of shells overhead, and then four dull explosions.

"Your work," cried Jefferson thickly, taking a stride forward and seizing the speechless woman by the arm.

Martha looked at him with a kind of dull terror in her eyes, with utter hopelessness, and the man paused a second. He had not known he cared for her so much. Then, in a flash, he pictured the horrors for which this woman, a mere common spy, was responsible.

He made to grasp her more firmly, but she twisted herself from his hold. Darting to the device which freed the mill-sails, she wrenched at it madly. The sails caught in the breeze, and began to circle round, swiftly and more

swiftly, until the old wooden building shook with the vibration.

From his observation post a German officer took in the new situation at a glance. A few guttural sounds he muttered, and then turning angrily to an orderly he gave him a curt message. "They shall not use it if we cannot," he said to himself, shaking his fist in the direction of the whirring sails.

In the little village part of the church and the baker's shop lay in ruins. Martha had sent but a part of her signal, and it had been acted upon with characteristic German promptitude.

In the windmill on the hill, which shook crazily as the sails tore their way through the air, a man and a woman struggled desperately, the woman with almost superhuman strength.

Suddenly the earth shook, a great explosion rent the air, and the mill on the hill was rent timber from timber and the great sails doubled up like tin-foil.

"Good shooting," said the German Forward Observation Officer, as he tucked his glass under his arm and went "home" to dinner.

# COURCELETTE

"IT was one of the nastiest jobs any battalion could be called on to perform; to my mind far more difficult than a big, sweeping advance. The First Battalion has been in the trenches eighteen days, on the march four days, and at rest one day, until now. No men could be asked to do more, and no men could do more than you have done. I congratulate you, most heartily."

In the above words, addressed to the men and officers of the First Canadian Infantry Battalion, Western Ontario Regiment, Major-General Currie made it plain to all that among the Honours of the First Battalion few will take higher place than that which will be inscribed "COURCELETTE."

On the night of September 20th, 1916, the First Battalion moved up from support to the firing-line, beyond the ruins of the above-mentioned little hamlet. For the past few days it had rained incessantly, and all ranks

had been working night and day, in mud and slush, carrying material of all kinds to the front line. The men were soaked to the skin, caked with mud, and very weary, but they went "up-along" with an amazing cheeriness, for rumour had whispered that the regiment was to attack, and the men were in that frame of mind when the prospect of "getting their own back" appealed to them hugely. Although the enemy opened up an intense barrage during the relief, casualties were comparatively few, and by morning the First Battalion was, Micawber-like, "waiting for something to turn up."

Three companies, "A," "B," and "D," held the front line, with "C" Company in close support. The positions were to the east of Courcelette, opposite a maze of German trenches which constituted a thorn in the side of the Corps and Army Commanders, and which had for several days checked the advance and were therefore a serious menace to future plans. Just how great was the necessity to capture this highly organised and strongly manned defensive system may be gauged by the letter received by the Com-

manding Officer from the Divisional Commander on the eve of the attack. In it the G.O.C. expressed his confidence in the ability of "The Good Old First" to capture the position, and to hold it, and he added that it *must* be taken at all costs—"if the first attack fails, you must make a second." On the capture of this strong point hung the fate of other operations on the grand scale.

It was the key position, and it fell to the First Canadian Battalion to be honoured with the task of taking it.

Until two and a half hours previous to the attack (when the Operation Order had been issued, and final instructions given), the latest *maps* of the German defences had been all the C.O. and his staff could work upon. Then, truly at the eleventh hour, an aerial *photograph*, taken but twenty-four hours before, was sent to Bn. Head-quarters with the least possible delay. This showed such increase in the enemy defences, and trenches in so much better shape to withstand attack, that the whole tactical situation was changed, and it became necessary not only to alter the operation order completely, but also to draw

a map, showing the most recent German lines of defence. This was done.

It is difficult to single out for praise any special portion of a regiment, or any member of it, especially when *all* the units have been subjected to intense and violent bombardment prior to attack, not to mention the activities of numerous snipers. One Company alone lost half their effectives through the fire of a "whizz-bang" battery which completely enfiladed their position. The Battalion and Company runners cannot be too highly praised—they were the sole means of communication—and risked their lives hourly, passing through and over heavily-pounded trenches, and in and out of the village of Courcelette, which was subjected to "strafing" at all hours of the day and night, without cessation. Tribute is also due to the carrying parties, who took from beyond the Sugar Refinery, and through the village, bombs, ammunition, water, and rations, leaving at every trip their toll of dead and wounded.

Zero hour was at 8.31 P.M., preceded for one minute by hurricane artillery fire. Pre-

vious to this the heavy guns had carried out a systematic bombardment of the German defences, yet, as was subsequently discovered, failing to do them great damage, and not touching the main fire trench at all.

At 8.28½ P.M. the Germans suddenly opened with a murderous artillery and machine-gun fire along our front. They had by some means or other discovered that an attack was about to take place. At this time the assaulting waves were in position, "A" Coy. on the left flank, "D" Coy. in the centre, and "B" Coy. on the right flank, while a Battalion Reserve of eighteen men—five of whom became casualties three minutes later—waited for orders a little in rear. These men belonged to "C" Company, the major portion of which had already been sent to reinforce the front line. All our guns then opened up with an electric spontaneity. To such an extent that one charging company was forced to halt a full minute in No Man's Land until the barrage lifted a few hundred yards in rear of the German lines, to catch their reserves coming up.

Among the *Fragments from France* there

is a Bairnsfather picture entitled "We shall attack at Dawn" and "We DO!" The situation much resembled it.

One could hear nothing but the vicious "splack" of high explosive shrapnel, the deep "Krrumph" of 6-inch and 8.2's, "coal-boxes" and "woolly bears"; great herds of shells whined and droned overhead, and now and then emerged from the tumult the coughing, venomous spit of machine-guns. One could see myriads of angrily-bursting yellow and orange-coloured flames, and all along the front dozens of green Verey lights, and red, as the Germans called frantically on their artillery, and at the same time showed that some of their own batteries were firing short (a thing which always gives great joy to all ranks). Now and then a deeper series of booms announced a bombing battle, and the air was heavy with the odour of picric fumes and thick with smoke.

On the left flank "A" Coy. met with stubborn opposition. Four machine-guns opened on their first wave, cutting it to pieces, as it was enfiladed from the flanks. The Company reformed at once, and charged again. This

time they were met by a heavy counter-attack in force. In the cold words of official phraseology, "This opposition was overcome." It was here that two very gallant officers were lost—Lieut. B. T. Nevitt and Major F. E. Aytoun—while leading their men. The last seen of Lieut. Nevitt, he was lying half in and half out of a shell-hole, firing his revolver at the enemy who were almost on top of him, and calling to his men to come on. Major Aytoun's last words were, "Carry on, men!"

"B" Coy., on the left flank, met with little opposition, attained the whole of their objective, and established communication by patrol with the troops on their right flank, a difficult operation. Here Lieut. Unwin, a splendid young officer, laid down his life, and Lieut. MacCuddy, who had carried on in the most exemplary manner, was mortally wounded. This Company captured a German Adjutant from whom much valuable information was obtained. Thoroughly demoralised, his first words were: "Take me out of this, and I will tell you anything, but anything." On this German's reaching head-quarters he

amused every one by saying: "I come me to the West front September 22nd, 1914, as a German officer. I go me from the West front September 22nd, 1916, Heaven be thanked, as a German prisoner. For me the war is over, hurrah!"

In the centre "D" Coy. also attained their objective and captured a trophy, in the shape of a Vickers gun (which had been converted to German usage). This gun was taken by Lieut. J. L. Youngs, M.C., who bombed the crew, which thereon beat a hasty retreat, leaving half their number killed and wounded. This was one of the best pieces of work done individually in this action. Major W. N. Ashplant was wounded here, at the head of his men, and is now missing, and believed killed.

Bombing posts were thrown out at once, and manned by Battalion and Company bombers, who, time and again, repulsed German bombing attacks. "A" Coy. linked up with "D" and "D" Coy. with "B," while the Lewis gun sections worked admirably, but one gun being lost, despite the heavy artillery fire. The whole line was at once consolidated. Hundreds of German bombs,

Verey lights and pistols, many rifles, and quantities of ammunition were captured, and also forty prisoners, the great majority of whom were unwounded.

"C" Coy.'s reserve was almost immediately used up, a company of the 4th Bn. coming up in support, at the request of the Commanding Officer of the First Battalion.

"Your attack was so vicious," declared a prisoner, "that no troops could withstand it."

"Too good troops"—this from a tall, fair member of the Prussian Guard—"better than we are!"

The Germans opposed to the First Battalion were picked troops, among whom the iron cross had been freely distributed.

On capturing this network of enemy lines to the east of Courcelette, the First Battalion discovered that what was at first deemed a small stronghold, was in reality a formidable position, held by the enemy in large numbers. Not only was there a deep, fire-stepped main trench, in which they had dug many "funk-holes," but also a series of support and communication trenches, and numerous bombing posts.

During the thirty hours following the capture of this ground, numerous counter-attacks took place, all of which were repulsed with heavy enemy losses. Bombing actions were frequent along the whole line, and at least two attacks were made in force.

A small post, held by two men, on the right flank of "D" Coy., to communicate with "B," accounted for six Germans in the following manner: Early in the morning six of the enemy advanced with their hands up. Our men watched them closely, albeit they called out "Kamerad" and were apparently unarmed. The foremost suddenly dropped his hands and threw a bomb. Our men thereupon "went to it" and killed three of the Germans, wounding the remainder with rifle fire as they ran back to their own lines.

At dusk on the 23rd the Germans tried another ruse before attempting an attack in force. Two of them were sent out, calling "Mercy, mercy, Kamerad," and as usual with their hands up, and no equipment. But the officer in charge saw a number of Germans advancing behind them, and at once ordered

heavy rifle and machine-gun fire to be opened on them. This, and bombs, resulted in the attack being broken up completely. "B" Coy. dispersed several bombing attacks, and "A" Coy. broke up a heavy attack, as well as bombing attacks. Fog at times rendered the position favourable for the enemy, but not one inch of ground was lost.

Every man of the fighting forces of the First Battalion was engaged in this action, and much valuable assistance during consolidation and counter-attack was rendered by the Company of the Fourth Battalion sent up to support. For over thirty hours after the assault the regiment held on, heavy fog rendering relief in the early hours of the 24th a difficult undertaking, all the more so in view of the intense and long-continued barrage opened by the enemy during the hours of relief. In fact, during the whole tour of the First Canadian Battalion in the Courcelette sector, the regiment was subjected to intense and incessant fire.

When the remainder of the First Battalion marched out to rest, with Hun helmets and other souvenirs hanging to their kits, they

marched with the pride of men who knew they had done their bit.

The Corps Commander rode over to congratulate the Commanding Officer and the regiment, and such terms were used from the Highest Command downwards that the "Old First" knows and is proud of the fact, that another laurel has been added to the wreaths of the battalion, the brigade, the division, and the Canadian Army.

We have but one sorrow, one deep regret, and that is for Our Heroic Dead.

# CARNAGE

THERE is a little valley somewhere among the rolling hills of the Somme district wherein the sun never shines. It is a tiny little valley, once part of a not unattractive landscape, now a place of horror.

Half a dozen skeletons of trees, rotting and torn, fringe the southern bank, and the remnants of a sunken road curve beneath the swelling hill that shields the valley from the sun. Flowers may have grown there once, children may have played under the then pleasant green of the trees; one can even picture some dark-eyed, black-haired maid of Picardy, sallying forth from the little hamlet not far off with her milking-stool and pail, to milk the family cow in the cool shade of the trees and the steep above.

But that was long ago—at least, it seems as though it *must* have been long ago—for to-day the place is a shambles, a valley of Death. Those who speak of the glory of war,

of the wonderful dashing charges, the inspiring mighty roar of cannon—let them come to this spot and look on this one small corner of a great battle-field. Within plain view are villages that will have a place in history—piles of broken brick and crushed mortar that bear silent, eloquent testimony to the Kultur of the twentieth century. Round about the land is just a series of tiny craters, fitted more closely together than the scars on the face of a man who has survived a severe attack of small-pox; and here and there, scattered, still lie the dead. No blade of grass dare raise its sheath above ground, for the land is sown with steel and iron and lead, and the wreckage and wrack and ruin of the most bitter strife.

Even those who have seen such things for many months past pause involuntarily when they reach this valley of the shadow. It is a revelation of desolation—the inner temple of death. In that little space, perhaps three hundred feet long and a bare forty wide, lie the bodies of nearly a hundred men, friend and foe, whose souls have gone on to the happy hunting ground amid circumstances of

which no tongue could give a fitting account, no pen a fitting description.

Once a German stronghold, this place passed into our hands but a short while since. Two guns were tucked away in under the hill, and the infantry, suddenly ejected from their forward position, fell back on them, and taking advantage of a pause strengthened their position, and brought up reinforcements. Thereupon our guns concentrated on them with fearful results, although when the infantry swept forward, there were still enough men in the deep, half-filled in trench to put up a desperate resistance.

It is not difficult to read the story of that early morning struggle. The land is churned in all directions, two of the bigger trees have fallen, and now spread out gnarled branches above the remnants of some artillery dug-outs. Pools of water, thick glutinous mud—both are tinged in many spots a dark red-brown—and portions of what were once men, lie scattered around in dreadful evidence.

But for his pallor, one might think that man yonder is still living. He is sitting in an easy attitude, leaning forward, one hand idle

in his lap, his rifle against his knee, and with the other hand raised to his cheek as though he were brushing off a fly. But his glassy eyes stare, and his face is bloodless and grey, while a large hole in his chest shows where the enemy shrapnel smote him.

Corpses of dead Germans are piled, in places, one over the other, some showing terrible gaping wounds, some headless, some stripped of all or part of their clothing, by the terrific explosion of a great shell which rent their garments from them. In more than one place old graves have been blown sky-high, and huddled skeletons, still clad in the rags of a uniform, lie stark under the open sky.

Papers, kits, water-bottles, rifles, helmets, bayonets, smoke goggles, rations, and ammunition are scattered everywhere in confusion. Some of the *débris* is battered to bits, some in perfect condition. Shell-cases, shell-noses, and shrapnel pellets lie everywhere, and there arises from the ground that peculiar, terrible odour of blood, bandages, and death, an odour always dreaded and never to be forgotten. In one German dug-out three men

were killed as they lay, and sat, sleeping. Some one has put a sock over their faces; it were best to let it remain there. Yonder, a Canadian and a German lie one on top of the other, both clutching their rifles with the bayonets affixed to them, one with a bayonet thrust through his stomach, the other with a bullet through his eye.

At night the very lights shine reluctant over the scene, but the moon beams impassive on the dead. Burial parties work almost silently, speaking in whispers, and, shocking anomaly, one now and then hears some trophy hunter declare, "Say, this is some souvenir, look at this 'Gott mit Uns' buckle!"

## "A" COMPANY RUSTLES

WHEN we got into the bally place it was raining in torrents, and the air was also pure purple because the Colonel found some one in his old billet, and the Town-Major, a cantankerous old dug-out who seemed to exist chiefly for the purpose of annoying men who DID go into the front line, was about as helpful as the fifth wheel to a wagon. Finally, the Colonel shot out of his office like an eighteen-pounder from a whizz-bang battery, and later on the tattered remnants of our once proud and haughty Adjutant announced to us, in the tones of a dove who has lost his mate, that there were no billets for us at all, and that officers and men would have to bivouac by the river.

Under all circumstances the Major is cheerful—and he has a very clear idea of when it is permissible to go around an order. Also the Town-Major invariably has the same effect on him as such an unwelcome visitor as a

skunk at a garden-party would have on the garden-party. Having consigned the aforesaid T.-M. to perdition in Canadian, English, French, and Doukhobor, he said: "We are going to have billets for the men, and we are going to have billets for ourselves." That quite settled the matter, as far as we Company officers were concerned. In the course of the next half-hour we had swiped an empty street and a half for the men, and put them into it, and then we gathered together, seven strong, and proceeded to hunt for our own quarters.

There is a very strongly developed scouting instinct among the Canadian forces in the Field. Moreover, we are not overawed by outward appearances. In the centre of the town we found a château; and an hour later we were lunching there comfortably ensconed in three-legged arm-chairs, with a real bowl of real flowers on the table, and certain oddments of cut-glass (found gleefully by the batmen) reflecting the bubbling vintage of the house of Moët et Chandon. Our dining-hall was about sixty feet by twenty, and we each had a bedroom of

proportionate size, with a bed of sorts in it. Moreover, the place was most wonderfully clean—it might almost have been prepared for us—and McFinnigan, our cook, was in the seventh heaven of delight because he had found a real stove with an oven.

"I cannot understand," said the Major, "how it is no one is in this place. It's good enough for a Divisional Commander."

There was actually a bath in the place with water running in the taps. Jones, always something of a pessimist, shook his head when he saw the bath.

"Look here, all you boys," he said, "this is no place for us. There is an unwritten law in this outfit that no man, unless he wears red and gold things plastered all over his person, shall have more than one bath in one month. Now *I* had one three weeks ago, and I am still—— but why dwell on it?"

Needless to say he was ruled out of order.

Just to show our darned independence, we decided to invite most of the other officers of the battalion to dinner that evening, "plenty much swank" and all that kind of

thing. Would that we had thought better of it. Of course we eventually decided to make a real banquet of it, appointed a regular mess committee, went and saw the Paymaster, and sent orderlies dashing madly forth to buy up all the liqueurs, Scotch, soda, and other potations that make glad the heart of man. We arranged for a four-course dinner, paraded the batmen and distributed backsheesh and forcible addresses on the subjects of table-laying and how to balance the soup and unplop the bubbly.

Nobody came near us at all. As far as the Town-Major was concerned we might have been in Kamtchatka. The Major had gone to the C.O. (*after* lunch) and told him we had "found a little place to shelter in," and as the latter had written a particularly biting, satirical, not to say hectic note to the Brigadier on the subject of the Town-Major's villainy, and was therefore feeling better, he just told the Major to carry on, and did not worry about us in the least.

Nineteen of us—Majors, Captains, and "Loots"—sat down to dinner. It was a good dinner, the batmen performed prodigies

of waitership; the wine bubbled and frothed, frothed and bubbled, and we all bubbled too. It was a red-letter night. After about the seventeenth speech, in which the Doc. got a little mixed concerning the relationship of Bacchus and a small statue of the Venus de Milo which adorned one corner of the room, some one called for a song. It was then about 11 "pip emma."

We were in the midst of what the P.M. called a little "Close Harmony"—singing as Caruso and McCormack NEVER sang—when we heard the sound of feet in the passage, feet that clanked and clunk—feet with spurs on.

A hush fell over us, an expectant hush. The door opened, without the ceremony of a knock, and in walked not any of your common or garden Brigadiers, not even a Major-General, but a fully-fledged Lieutenant-General, followed by his staff, and the Town-Major.

In our regiment we have always prided ourselves on the fact that we can carry on anywhere and under any circumstances. But this fell night our untarnished record came very

near to disaster. It was as though Zeus had appeared at a Roman banquet being held in his most sacred grove.

The General advanced three paces and halted. Those of us who were able to do so got up. Those who could not rise remained seated. The silence was not only painful, it was oppressive. A steel-grey, generalistic eye slowly travelled through each one of us, up and down the table, unadorned with the remnants of many bottles, the half-finished glasses of many drinks. Just then the Town-Major took a step forward; he was a palish green, with an under-tinge of yellow.

"WHAT is the meaning of——" said the General, in a voice tinged with the iciest breath of the far distant Pole, but he got no further.

There was a sudden rending, ear-splitting roar, the lights went out, the walls of the château seemed to sway, and the plaster fell in great lumps from the frescoed ceiling.

That (as we afterwards discovered) no one was hurt was a marvel. It is the one and only time when we of this regiment have thanked Fritz for shelling us. In the pale light of early

dawn the last member of the party slunk into the bivouac ground. The General, where was he? We knew not, neither did we care.

But it was the first and last time that "A" Company rustled a Corps Commander's Château!

# "MINNIE AND 'FAMILY'"

WHEN first I met her it was a lush, lovely day in June; the birds were singing, the grass was green, the earth teemed with life, vegetable and animal, and the froglets hopped around in the communication trenches. Some cheery optimist was whistling "Down by the Old Mill Stream," and another equally cheery individual was potting German sniping plates with an accuracy worthy of a better cause. It was, in sooth, "A quiet day on the Western Front."

And then *she* came. Stealing towards me silently, coming upon me like a brigand in the leafy woods. I did not see her ere she was descending upon me, but others did. There came distant yells, which I failed to interpret for a moment; then, glancing upward, I saw her bobbing through the air, her one leg waving, her round ugly head a blot on the sky's fair face. The next thing that happened was that the trench gathered unto itself wings, rose and clasped me lovingly from the

neck down in a cold, earthy embrace, the while the air was rent with an ear-splitting roar, like unto a battery of 17-inch naval guns firing a salvo. After that I respected Minnie; I feared her — nay, I was deadly scared of her.

Of all the nasty things "old Fritz" has invented, the Minenflamm is perhaps the nastiest of all. She is purely vicious, utterly destructive, and quite frightful. The very slowness with which she sails through the air is in itself awe-inspiring. I never see Minnie without longing for home, or the inside of the deepest German dug-out ever digged by those hard-working German Pioneer blighters, who must all have been moles in their respective pre-incarnations. Minnie reminds one of Mrs. Patrick Campbell in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray:* all fire and flame and perdition generally.

If you are a very wide-awake Johnny, absolutely on the spot, don't-you-know—you may hear her sigh ere she leaves the (temporary) Vaterland to take flight. It is a gentle sigh, which those verblitzender English artillery-men are not meant to hear. If you *do*

happen by chance to hear it, then the only thing to do, although it is not laid down in K. R. & O. or Divisional Orders (you see they only *hear* about these things), is to silently steal away; to seek the seclusion which your dug-out grants. Later, if you are a new officer, and want to impress the natives, as it were, you saunter jauntily forth, cigarette at the correct slope, cane pending vertically from the right hand, grasped firmly in the palm, little finger downwards, cap at an angle of 45°, and say: "Minnie, by Jove! Eh what? God bless my soul. Did it fall over heah or over theah?" Which is a sure way of making yourself really popular.

Fortunately Minnie has her dull days. Days when she positively refuses to bust, and sulks, figuratively speaking, in silent wrath and bitterness on the upper strata of "sunny" France, or Belgium, as the case may be. After many Agags have trodden very delicately around her, and she has proved incurably sulky and poor-spirited, some one infused with the Souvenir spirit carts her away, and pounds her softly with a cold-chisel and a mallet, until he has either dis-

sected her interior economy, or else she has segmented *his*.

Minnie has her little family. The eldest male child is called by the euphonious name of Sausage, and he has brothers of various sizes, from the pure-blood Hoch-geboren down to the bourgeois little chap who makes an awful lot of fuss and clatter generally. I remember meeting little Hans one day, about the dinner hour, when he was a very naughty boy indeed. The Company was waiting to get a half-canteenful of the tannin-cum-tea-leaves, called "tea" on the Western front (contained in one large dixie placed in a fairly open spot in the front line), when suddenly little Hans poked his blunt nose into the air, and all notions of tea-drinking were banished *pro tem.* In other words, the Company took cover automatically, as it were, without awaiting any word of command. Personally I tripped over a bath-mat, came into close contact with an old shell-hole full of mud, and offered up a little prayer in the record time of one-fifth of a second. Instead of entering Nirvana I only heard a resounding splash, followed by a sizzling sound, like

that made by an exhausted locomotive. Little Hans had fallen into the dixie, and positively refused to explode. I think the tannin (or the tea leaves) choked him!

There is also an infant—a female infant—who deserves mention. Her name is Rifle-grenade, and, according to the very latest communication from official sources, the gentleman who states with some emphasis that he is divinely kingly, refuses to sanction any further production of her species. Like many females she is one perpetual note of interrogation. She starts on her wayward course thus: "Whrr-on? Whrr-oo? Whoo? Whoo? Whe-oo? Whe-*oo?*" And then she goes off with a bang, just as Cleopatra may have done when Antony marked a pretty hand-maid.

To sum up: Minnie and her children are undoubtedly the product of perverted science and Kultur, aided and abetted by the very Devil!

## AN OFFICER AND GENTLEMAN

He was a tall well-built chap, with big, blue eyes, set far apart, and dark wavy hair, which he kept too closely cropped to allow it to curl, as was meant by nature. He had a cheery smile and a joke for every one, and his men loved him. More than that, they respected him thoroughly, for he never tolerated slackness or lack of discipline for an instant, and the lips under the little bronze moustache could pull themselves into an uncompromisingly straight line when he was justly angry.

When he strafed the men, he did it directly, without sparing them or their failings, but he never sneered at them, and his direct hits were so patently honest that they realised it at once, and felt and looked rather like penitent little boys.

He never asked an N.C.O. or man to do anything he would not do himself, and he usually did it first. If there was a dangerous patrol, he led. If there was trying work to do, under fire, he stayed in the most danger-

ous position, and helped. He exacted instant obedience to orders, but never gave an order that the men could not understand without explaining the reason for it. He showed his N.C.O.'s that he had confidence in them, and did not need to ask for their confidence in him. He had it.

In the trenches he saw to his men's comfort first—his own was a secondary consideration. If a man was killed or wounded, he was generally on the spot before the stretcher-bearers, and, not once, but many times, he took a dying man's last messages, and faithfully wrote to his relations. A sacred duty, but one that wrung his withers. He went into action not only *with* his men, but at their head, and he fought like a young lion until the objective was attained. Then, he was one of the first to bind up a prisoner's wounds, and to check any severity towards unwounded prisoners. He went into a show with his revolver in one hand, a little cane in the other, a cigarette between his lips.

"You see," he would explain, "it comforts a fellow to smoke, and the stick is useful, and a good tonic for the men. Besides, it

helps me try to kid myself I'm not scared—and I *am*, you know! As much as any one could be."

On parade he was undoubtedly the smartest officer in the regiment, and he worked like a Trojan to make his men smart also. At the same time he would devote three-quarters of any leisure he had to training his men in the essentials of modern warfare, his spare time being willingly sacrificed for their benefit.

No man was ever paraded before him with a genuine grievance that he did not endeavour to rectify. In some manner he would, nine times out of ten, turn a "hard case" into a good soldier. One of his greatest powers was his particularly winning smile. When his honest eyes were on you, when his lips curved and two faint dimples showed in his cheeks, it was impossible not to like him. Even those who envied him—and among his brother officers there were not a few—could not bring themselves to say anything against him.

If he had a failing it was a weakness for pretty women, but his manner towards an old peasant woman, even though she was

dirty and hideous, was, if anything, more courteous than towards a woman of his own class. He could not bear to see them doing work for which he considered they were unfit. One day he carried a huge washing-basket full of clothes down the main street of a little village in Picardy, through a throng of soldiers, rather than see the poor old dame he had met staggering under her burden go a step farther unaided.

The Colonel happened to see him, and spoke to him rather sharply about it. His answer was characteristic: "I'm very sorry, sir. I forgot about what the men might think when I saw the poor old creature. In fact, sir, if you'll pardon my saying so, I would not mind much if they did make fun of it."

He loved children. He never had any loose coppers or small change long, and two of his comrades surprised him on one occasion slipping a five-franc note into the crinkled rosy palm of a very, very new baby. "He looked so jolly cute asleep," he explained simply.

Almost all his fellow-officers owed him money. He was a poor financier, and when

he had a cent it belonged to whoever was in need of it at the time.

One morning at dawn, he led a little patrol to examine some new work in the German front line. He encountered an unsuspected enemy listening post, and he shot two of the three Germans, but the remaining German killed him before his men could prevent it. They brought his body back and he was given a soldier's grave between the trenches. There he lies with many another warrior, taking his rest, while his comrades mourn the loss of a fine soldier and gallant gentleman.

## "S.R.D."

When the days shorten, and the rain never ceases; when the sky is ever grey, the nights chill, and the trenches thigh deep in mud and water; when the front is altogether a beastly place, in fact, we have one consolation. It comes in gallon jars, marked simply "S.R.D." It does not matter how wearied the ration party may be, or how many sacks of coke, biscuits, or other rations may be left by the wayside, the rum always arrives.

Once, very long ago, one of a new draft broke a bottle on the way up to Coy. H.Q. (The rum, by the way, *always* goes to Coy. H.Q.) For a week his life was not worth living. The only thing that saved him from annihilation was the odour of S.R.D., which clung to him for days. The men would take a whiff before going on a working party, and on any occasion when they felt low and depressed.

There are those who would deny Tommy his three spoonfuls of rum in the trenches;

those who declare that a man soaked to the skin, covered with mud, and bitterly cold, is better with a cayenne pepper lozenge. Let such people take any ordinary night of sentry duty on the Western front in mid-winter, and their ideas will change. There are not one, but numberless occasions, on which a tot of rum has saved a man from sickness, possibly from a serious illness. Many a life-long teetotaler has conformed to S.R.D. and taken the first drink of his life on the battle-fields of France, not because he wanted to, but because he had to. Only those who have suffered from bitter cold and wet, only those who have been actually " all-in " know what a debt of gratitude is owing to those wise men who ordered a small ration of rum for every soldier—officer, N.C.O., and man—on the Western front in winter.

The effect of rum is wonderful, morally as well as physically. In the pelting rain, through acres of mud, a working party of fifty men plough their weary way to the Engineers' dump, and get shovels and picks. In single file they trudge several kilometres to the work in hand, possibly the clearing out of a

fallen-in trench, which is mud literally to the knees. They work in the mud, slosh, and rain, for at least four hours. Four hours of misery — during which any self-respecting Italian labourer would lose his job rather than work—and then they traipse back again to a damp, musty billet, distant five or six kilometres. To them, that little tot of rum is not simply alcohol. It is a God-send. Promise it to them before they set out, and those men will work like Trojans. Deny it to them, and more than half will parade sick in the morning.

It is no use, if the rum ration is short, to water it down. The men know it is watered, and their remarks are "frequent and painful, and free!" Woe betide the officer who, through innocence or intentionally, looks too freely on the rum when it is brown! His reputation is gone for ever. If he became intoxicated on beer, champagne, or whisky, he would only be envied by the majority of his men, but should he drink too much rum—that is an unpardonable offence!

As a rule, one of the hardest things in the world to do is to awaken men once they have gone to sleep at night. For no matter what

purpose, it will take a company a good half-hour to pull itself together and stand to. But murmur softly to the orderly Sergeant that there will be a rum issue in ten minutes, and though it be 1 A.M. or the darkest hour before dawn, when the roll is called hardly a man will be absent! That little word of three letters will rouse the most soporific from their stupor!

Few men take their rum in the same fashion or with the same expression. The new draft look at it coyly, carry the cup gingerly to their lips, smell it, make a desperate resolution, gulp it down, and cough for five minutes afterwards. The old hands—the men of rubicund countenance and noses of a doubtful hue—grasp the cup, look to see if the issue is a full one, raise it swiftly, and drain it without a moment's hesitation, smacking their lips. You can see the man who was up for being drunk the last pay-day coming from afar for his rum. His eyes glisten, his face shines with hopefulness, and his whole manner is one of supreme expectation and content.

It is strange how frequently the company

staff, from the Sergeant-Major down to the most recently procured batman, find it necessary to enter the inner sanctum of H.Q. after the rum has come. The Sergeant-Major arrives with a large, sweet smile, acting as guard of honour. "Rum up, sir." "Thank you, Sergeant-Major." "I've detailed that working-party, sir." "Thank you, Sergeant-Major." "Is that all, sir?" "Yes, thank you, Sergeant-Major." He vanishes, to re-appear a minute later. "Did you CALL me, sir?" "No" . . . long pause . . . "Oh! Still there? Er, have a drink, Sergeant-Major?" "Well, sir, I guess I *could* manage a little drop! Thank you, sir. *Good*-night, sir!"

## BEDS

"THINK of my leave coming in two weeks, and of getting a decent bed to sleep in, with sheets!"

Sancho Panza blessed sleep, but perhaps he always had a good bed to sleep in; we, who can almost slumber on "apron" wire, have a weakness for good beds.

To appreciate fully what a good bed is, one must live for a time without one, and go to rest wrapped in a martial cloak—to wit a British warm or a trench coat, plus the universal sand-bag, than which nothing more generally useful has been seen in this war. Any man who has spent six months (in the infantry) at the front knows all about beds. Any man with a year's service is a first-class, a number one, connoisseur. The good bed is so rare that whoever spends a night in one talks about it for a week, and brings it up in reminiscences over the charcoal brazier.

"You remember when we were on the long hike from the salient? And the little place

we struck the third night—Cattelle-Villeul I think it was called? By George, I had a good bed. A peach! It had a spring mattress and real linen sheets—not cotton—and two pillows with frilly things on them, and a ripping quilt, with a top-hole eider-down. I was afraid to get into it until my batman produced that new pair of green pyjamas with the pink stripes. It simply hurt to give that bed up!"

And if you let him he will continue in like vein for half an hour. Recollections of that bed have entered into his soul; it is one of the bright spots in a gloomy life.

Needless to say, the farther you go back from the line, the better the beds. They can be roughly classified as follows: Battle beds. Front line beds. Support beds. Reserve beds. Divisional rest beds. Corps reserve beds, and Army Reserve beds. Beyond this it is fifty-fifty you will get a good bed, provided there are not too many troops in the place you go to.

Battle beds, as such, are reserved for battalion commanders, seconds in command, and adjutants. Sometimes Os.C. units have a look-in, but the humble sub. has *not*, unless

he is one of those Johnnies who can always make something out of nothing.

When there is a "show" on nobody expects to sleep more than two hours in twenty-four, and he's lucky if he gets that. The C.O. takes his brief slumber on some bare boards raised above the floor-level in a dug-out. The Os.C. units use a stretcher, with a cape for a pillow, and the others sleep any old where—on a broken chair, in a corner on the ground, on the steps of a dug-out, on the fire-step of a parapet, or even leaning against the parapet. One of the best snoozes we ever had was of the last variety, while Fritz was plastering the communication trenches with a barrage a mouse could not creep through.

There is one thing about battle beds; one is far too weary to do anything but flop limply down, and go instantly to sleep. The nature of your couch is of secondary importance. Possibly the prize goes to the man who slept through an intense bombardment, curled up between two dead Germans, whom he thought were a couple of his pals, asleep, when he tumbled in to rest.

Front line beds vary according to sector.

Usually they are simply a series of bunks, tucked in one above the other as in a steamer-cabin, and made of a stretch of green canvas nailed to a pair of two by fours. Sometimes an ingenious blighter introduces expanded metal or chicken wire into the general make-up, with the invariable result that it gets broken by some 200-pounder, and remains a menace to tender portions of the human frame until some one gets "real wild" and smashes up the whole concern.

In support, the "downy couch" does not improve very much. Sometimes it is worse, and it is always inhabited by a fauna of the largest and most voracious kind.

There is a large element of chance as to reserve beds. They are generally snares of disillusionment, but once in a while the connoisseur strikes oil. It will not have sheets—clean sheets, at all events—but it may possess the odd blanket, and the room may have been cleaned a couple of weeks ago. If Madame is clean the bed will be clean; if otherwise, otherwise also.

All the beds at the front are the same in some respects. They are all wooden, and

they nearly all have on them huge piles of mattresses, four or five deep. It is wisest not to investigate too thoroughly the inner consciousnesses of the latter, or the awakening may be rude. In the old days, long, long ago, when the dove of Peace billed and cooed over the roof of the world, no self-respecting citizen would sleep in them, but now with what joy do we sink with a sigh of relief into the once abominated feather-bed of doubtful antecedents, which has been slept in for two years by one officer after another, and never, never, never been aired.

C'est la guerre!

Divisional rest beds are at least two points superior to the last. They are the kind of beds run by a sixth-rate lodging-house in Bloomsbury, taken on the whole. Usually there is one bed short per unit, so some one has to double up, with the result that the stronger of the twain wraps *all* the bed-clothes around him, and the other chap does not sleep at all, or is ignominiously rolled out on to the brick *pavé*.

Every one in French villages must go to bed with their stockings on.

Judging by the permanent kinks in all the beds, they must have been beds *solitaire* for a life-time, before the soldiers came.

Once we were asked to share a bed with *bébé*, who was three. We refused. On another occasion, when we were very tired indeed, we were told that the only bed available was that usually dwelt in by "Jeanne." We inspected it, and made a peaceful occupation. "Jeanne" came home unexpectedly at midnight, and slipped indoors quietly to her room. It was a bad quarter of an hour, never to be forgotten! Especially when we found out in the morning that "Jeanne" was twenty years old, and decidedly pretty. Our reputation in that household was a minus quantity.

In corps reserve one gets beds with coffee in the morning at 7 A.M. "Votre café, M'sieu." "Oui, oui, mercy; leave it outside the door —la porte—please!" "Voiçi, M'sieu! Vous avez bien dormi?" And of course you can't say anything, even if Madame stands by the pillow and tells you the whole story of how Yvonne makes the coffee!

They are fearless, these French women!

# MARCHING

We have left the statue of the Virgin Mary which pends horizontally over the Rue de Bapaume far behind us and the great bivouacs, and the shell-pitted soil of the Somme front. Only at night can we see the flickering glare to the southward, and the ceaseless drum of the guns back yonder is like the drone of a swarm of bees. Yesterday we reached the last village we shall see in Picardy, and this morning we shall march out of the Departement de la Somme, whither we know not.

It is one of those wonderful mid-October days when the sun rises red above a light, low mist, and land sparkling with hoar-frost; when the sky is azure blue, the air clean and cold, and the roads white and hard. A day when the "fall-in" sounds from rolling plain to wooded slope and back again, clear and mellow, and when the hearts of men are glad.

"Bat-ta-lion . . . Shun!"

It does one good to hear the unison of sound as the heels come together, and a few

moments later we have moved off, marching to attention down the little main street of Blondin-par-la-Gironde, with its 300 inhabitants, old, old church, and half-dozen estaminets. Madame, where we billeted last night, and her strapping daughter Marthe, are standing on the doorstep to see us go by. "Bonjour, M'sieurs, Au revoir, Bonne chance!"

"Left, left, left—ri—left," the pace is short, sharp, and decisive, more like the Rifle Brigade trot. Even the backsliders, the men who march as a rule like old women trying to catch a bus, have briskened up this morning. Looking along the column from the rear one can see that rhythmical ripple which betokens the best marching, and instinctively the mind flashes back to that early dawn three days ago—no, four—when they came out of the trenches, muddy, dead-beat, awesomely dirty, just able to hobble along in fours.

Ninety-six hours and what a change!

"March at ease."

The tail of the column has passed the last little low cottage in the village, and the twenty-one kilometre "hike" has begun.

Corporal McTavish, mindful that he was once a staff bugler, unslings his instrument, and begins—after a few horrid practice notes—to play "Bonnie Dundee," strictly according to his own recollection of that ancient tune. The scouts and signallers are passing remarks of an uncomplimentary nature anent the Colonel's second horse, which, when not trying to prance on the Regimental Sergeant-Major's toes, shows an evil inclination to charge backwards through the ranks. The bombers are grousing, as usual; methodically, generally, but without bitterness. "They will not sing, they cannot play, but they can surely fight."

"A" Company band consisting of the aforesaid Corporal McTavish, three mouth-organs, an accordion, a flute, and a piccolo, plus sundry noises, is heartily engaged with the air "I want to *go* back, I WANT to *go back* (*cres.*), I want to go back (*dim.*), To the farm (*pizzicato*)," which changes after the first kilometre to "Down in Arizona where the Bad Men are." They are known as the "Birds," and not only do they whistle, but they also sing!

" B " Company is wrapped in gloom; they march with a grim determination, a " just-you-wait-till-I-catch-you " expression which bodes ill for somebody. Did not a rum-jar—a full jar of rum—vanish from the rations last night? Isn't the Quartermaster—and the C.S.M.'s batman too—endowed with a frantic " hang-over " this morning? This world is an unfair, rotten kind of a hole anyhow. The Company wit, one Walters, starts to sing " And when I die." He is allowed to proceed as far as " Just pickle my bones," but " in alcohol " is barely out of his mouth when groans break in upon his ditty, coupled with loud-voiced protests to " Have a heart."

For six months past " C " Company has rejoiced in the generic title of " Scorpions." Their strong suit is limerics, the mildest of which would bring a blush to the cheek of an old-time camp-follower. Within the last twenty-four hours their O.C. has been awarded the Military Cross. His usually stern visage —somewhat belied by a twinkling blue eye—is covered with a seraphic smile. Cantering along the column comes the Colonel. The artists of the limeric subside. Pulling up, the

C.O. about turns and holds out his hand. "I want to congratulate you, Captain Bolton. Well deserved. Well deserved. Honour to the regiment . . . yes, yes . . . excellent, excellent . . . ahem . . . thank you, thank you. . . .!" With one accord the old scorpions, led by the Company Sergeant-Major, break into the refrain "See him smi-ling, see him smi-ling, see him smi-i-ling just now." And Bolton certainly does smile.

By this time we have marched for an hour, and the signal comes to halt, and fall out on the right of the road. The men smoke, and the officers gather together in little groups. It is wonderful what ten minutes' rest will do when a man is carrying all his worldly goods on his back.

A few minutes after starting out again we see ahead of us a little group of horses, and a red hat or twain, and red tabs. The Divisional Commander *and* the Brigadier. The Battalion takes a deep breath, slopes arms, pulls itself together generally, dresses by the right, and looks proud and haughty. There is a succession of "Eyes Rights" down the column, as each unit passes the reviewing

base, and then we all sigh again. *That's* over for to-day!

On we march, through many quaint little old-world villages, every one of which is filled with troops, up hill and down dale, through woods, golden and brown, tramping steadily onward, a long green-brown column a thousand strong. Cussing the new drafts who fall out, cussing the old boots that are worn out, cussing the war in general, and our packs in detail, but none the less content. For who can resist the call of the column, the thought of the glorious rest when the march is done, and the knowledge that whatever we may be in years to come, just now we are IT!

"BONN joor, Madame!"

"Bonjour, M'sieu!"

"Avvy voo pang, Madame?"

"Braëd? But yes, M'sieu. How much you want? Two? Seize sous, M'sieu."

"*How* much does the woman say, Buster?"

"Sixteen sous, cuckoo!"

"Well, here's five francs."

"Ah, but, M'sieu! Me no monnaie! No chanch! Attendez, je vous donnerai du papier."

Madame searches in the innermost recesses of an old drawer, and produces one French penny, two sous, a two-franc bill of the Commune of Lisseville, stuck together with bits of sticking-paper, a very dirty one-franc bill labelled St. Omer, and two 50-centimes notes from somewhere the other side of Amiens.

"Je regrette, M'sieu," Madame waves her hands in the air, "mais c'est tout ce que j'ai. . . . All dat I 'ave, M'sieu!"

The transaction, which has taken a full ten

minutes, is at last completed. They are very long-suffering, the natives, taken on the whole. In the first place "C'est la guerre." Secondly, they, too, have soldier husbands, sons, and brothers and cousins serving in the Grandes Armées. Is it to be expected that they be well treated unless *we* do *our* share? And—these British soldiers, they have much money. And they are generous for the most part.

So Madame, whose husband is in Champagne, gives up the best bedroom to Messieurs les Officiers, and sleeps with her baby in the attic. The batmen use her poële, and sit around it in the evening drinking her coffee. Le Commandant buys butter, milk, eggs—"mais, mon dieu, one would think a hen laid an egg every hour to hear him! Trois douzaine! But, Monsieur, I have but six poules, and they overwork themselves already! There is not another egg above eleven dans tous le pays, M'sieu. Champagne? But yes, certainement. Bénédictine? Ah, non, M'sieu, it is défendu, and we sold the last bottle to an officier with skirts a week ago. Un très bon officier, M'sieu; he stay two days, and make love to Juliette. Juliette fiancée? Tiens, she

has a million, M'sieu, to hear them talk, like every pretty girl in France. So soon you enter the doorway, M'sieu, and see Juliette, you say 'Moi fiancé, vous?' You are très taquin —verree bad boys—les Anglais!"

Sometimes there is war, red war. Madame enters, wringing her hands, her hair suggestive of lamentation and despair. She wishes to see M'sieu l'Officier who speaks a little French.

"Ah, M'sieu, but it is terrible. I give to the Ordonnances my fire, my cook-pots, and a bed of good hay in the stable, next to the cows, and what do they do? M'sieu, they steal my gate that was put there by my grandfather—he who won a decoration in soixante et six—and they get a little axe and make of it fire-wood! And in the early morning they milk the cows. Ah, but, M'sieu, I will go to the Maire and make a réclammation! Fifteen francs for a new gate, and seventeen sous for the milk that they have stolen! And the cuillers! Before the war I buy a new set, with Henri, of twenty-four cuillers. Where are they? All but three are volées, M'sieu! It is not juste. M'sieu le Capitaine who was here a week ago last Dimanche—for I went

to Mass—say it is a dam shame, M'sieu. I do not like to make the trouble, M'sieu, but I must live. La veuve Marnot over yonder, two houses down the street on the left-hand side, *she* could have a hundred gates burned and say nothing. She is très riche. They say the Mayor make déjà his advances. But me, what shall I do, my gate a desecration in the stoves, M'sieu, and the milk of my cows drunk by the maudits ordonnances!"

Note in the mess president's accounts: "To one gate (burned) and milk stolen, 7.50 francs."

All over France and Belgium little stores have grown and flourished. They sell tinned goods without limit, from cigarettes, through lobster, to peaches.

Both are practical countries.

In nearly all these boutiques there is a pretty girl. Both nations have learned the commercial value of a pretty girl. It increases the credit side of the business 75 per cent. In the Estaminets it is the same, only more so. Their turnover is a thing which will be spoken of by their great-grandchildren with bated breath.

More cases than one are known where the

lonely soldier has made a proposal, in form, to the fair débitante who nightly handed him his beer over the bar of a little Estaminet. Sometimes he has been accepted pour l'amour de sa cassette—sometimes " pour l'amour de ses beaux yeux! "

In a little hamlet several days' march behind the firing-line, lived a widow. She was a grass-widow before Verdun, and there she became " veuve." She was a tall, handsome woman, twenty-seven or twenty-eight perhaps, and her small feet and ankles, the proud carriage of her head, and the delicate aquiline nose bespoke her above the peasantry. She kept a little café at the junction of three cross-roads. The natives know her as Madame de Maupin.

Why " de " you ask? Because her father was a French count and her mother was a femme de chambre. The affair made an esclandre of some magnitude many years ago. Madame de Maupin was fille naturelle. She married, at the wishes of her old harridan of a mother, a labourer of the village. She despised her husband. He was uncouth and a peasant. In her the cloven hoof showed little. Despite no advantages of education

she had the instincts of her aristocratic father. The natives disliked her for that reason.

Madame de Maupin kept a café. Until the soldiers came it did not pay, but she would not keep an Estaminet. It was so hopelessly "vulgaire." After closing hours, between eight and ten, Madame de Maupin held her Court. Officers gathered in the little back room, and she entertained them, while they drank. She had wit, and she was very handsome. One of her little court, a young officer, fell in love with her. Her husband was dead.

Her lover had money, many acres, and position. He proposed to her. She loved him and—she refused him, "because," she said simply, "you would not be happy."

He was sent to the Somme.

Madame de Maupin closed her Estaminet and vanished.

There is a story told, which no one believes, of a woman, dressed in a private's uniform of the British army, who was found, killed, among the ruins of Thiepval. She lay beside a wounded officer, who died of his wounds

soon after. He had been tended by some one, for his wounds were dressed. In his tunic pocket was a woman's photograph, but a piece of shrapnel had disfigured it beyond recognition.

But, as I said, no one believes the story.

## "OTHER INHABITANTS"

THERE is a little story told of two young subalterns, neither of whom could speak the lingua Franca, who went one day to the Estaminet des Bons Copins, not five thousand miles from Ploegstraete woods, to buy some of the necessities of life, for the Estaminet was a little store as well as a road-house. Both of the said subalterns had but recently arrived in Flanders, from a very spick and span training area, and neither was yet accustomed to the ways of war, nor to the minor discomforts caused by inhabitants other than those of the country, albeit native to it from the egg, as it were.

They entered the Bons Copins, and having bought cigarettes and a few odds and ends, one of them suddenly remembered that he wanted a new pair of braces, to guarantee the safety of his attire. But the French word for braces was a knock-out. Neither himself nor his friend could think of it, and an Anglo-

French turning of the English version met with dismal failure.

At last a bright idea smote him. He smiled benignly, and vigorously rubbed the thumbs of both hands up and down over his shoulders and chest. Madame beamed with the light of immediate understanding. "Oui, Monsieur, mais oui . . . *oui!*" She disappeared into the back of the store, to return a moment later, bearing in her hand a large green box, labelled distinctly: "Keating's Powder!"

There are few things that will have the least effect on a vigorous young section of "other inhabitants."

Those good, kind people who send out little camphor balls, tied up in scarlet flannel bags, and tins of Keating's without number, little know what vast formations in mass these usually deadly articles must deal with. We have suspended camphor balls—little red sacks, tapes, and all—in countless numbers about our person. We have gone to bed well content, convinced of the complete route of our Lilliputian enemies. And on the morrow we have found them snugly ensconced—grandmamma, grandpapa, and their great-great-

grandchildren—right plumb in the centre of our batteries. Making homes there; waggling their little legs, and taking a two-inch sprint now and then round the all-red route. What is camphor to them? This hardy stock has been known to live an hour in a tin of Keating's powder, defiant to the last! What boots it that a man waste time and substance on a Sabbath morn sprinkling his garments over with powders and paraffins. He is sure to miss a couple, and one of them is certain to be the blushing bride of the other.

From deep below the calf comes the plaintive wail, spreading far and wide, to the very nape of the neck: "Husband, where are you? I am lost and alone, and even off my feed!" With no more ado hubby treks madly down the right arm and back again, hits a straight trail, and finds the lost one.

And the evening and the morning see the grandchildren.

Grandpa leads them bravely to the first collision mat, an area infected with coal-oil. "Charge, my offspring!" he cries, waggling his old legs as hard as he can, "prove yourselves worthy scions of our race!" And the

little blighters rush madly over the line—with their smoke-helmets on, metaphorically speaking—and at once set about establishing a new base.

Henry goes to Mabel, and says: "Mabel, darling! I have found a sweet little home for two—or (blushing!) perhaps *three*—in the crook of the left knee. Will you be my bride?" And Mabel suffers herself to be led away, and duly wed, at once. So they dance a Tarantelle under the fifth rib, and then proceed to the serious business of bringing up little Henrys and Mabels in the way they should go!

There is only one way to deal with them, cruel and ruthless though it be. Lay on the dogs! Remove each garment silently, swiftly, relentlessly. Pore over it until you see Henry hooking it like Billy-oh down the left leg of your—er, pyjamas. Catch him on the wing, so to speak, and squash him! Then look for Mabel and the children, somewhere down the other leg, and do ditto! Set aside two hours *per diem* for this unsportsmanlike hunt, and you may be able to bet evens with the next chappy inside a couple of months! Even then the odds are against you, unless you hedge

with the junior subaltern, who gets the worst —and therefore most likely to be tenanted —bed!

If you see a man, en déshabille, sitting out in the sun, with an earnest, intent look on his face, and a garment in his hands, you can safely bet one of two things. He is either (1) mad, (2) hunting.

It adds variety to life to watch him from afar, and then have a sweepstake on the total with your friends. You need not fear the victim's honesty. He will count each murdered captive as carefully as though he were (or she were!) a batch of prisoner Fritzes. There is a great element of luck about the game, too; you never can tell. Some men develop into experts. Lightning destroyers, one might say. A brand-new subaltern joined the sweepstake one day, and he bet 117. The chap had only been at it half an hour by the clock, too!

The new sub. won.

You can always tell a new sub. You go up to him and you say politely: "Are you—er . . . yet?" If he looks insulted he is new. If he says, "Yes, old top, millions of 'em!" and wriggles, he is old!

There was a man once who had a champion. He said he got it in a German dug-out; anyhow, it was a pure-blooded, number one mammoth, and it won every contest on the measured yard, against all comers. He kept it in a glass jar, and fed it on beef. It died at the age of two months and four days, probably from senility brought on by overeating and too many Derbies. Thank heaven the breed was not perpetuated, albeit the Johnny who owned it could have made a lot of money if he had not been foolishly careful of the thing.

He buried it in a tin of Keating's—mummified, as it were—and enclosed an epitaph: "Here lie the last ligaments of the largest louse the Lord ever let loose!"

Some people think Fritz started the things, as a minor example of frightfulness. One of them caused a casualty in the regiment, at all events. A new sub., a very squeamish chappie, found *one*—just one!—and nearly died of shame. He heard petrol was a good thing, so he anointed himself all over with it, freely. Then his elbow irritated him, and he lighted a match to see if it was another!

He is still in hospital!

## BOMBS

We counted them as they came up the communication trench, and the Commander of "AK" Company paled; yet he was a brave man. He cast a despairing glance around him, and then looked at me.

"George," he said (you may not believe it, but there can be a world of pathos put into that simple name). "*George*, we are Goners."

By this time they had reached the front line.

My thoughts flew to the Vermoral sprayer, last time it had been the Vermoral sprayer. Was the V.S. filled, or was it not. . . .?

They came from scent to view, and pulling himself together with a click of the heels closely imitated by the S.I.C., the O.C. "AK" Coy. saluted.

"Good morning, sir!"

The General acknowledged the salute, but the ends of his moustache quivered. G.S.O.

one, directly in rear, frowned. The Colonel looked apprehensive, and glared at both of us. The Brigadier was glum, the Brigade Major very red in the face. Two of those beastly supercilious Aides looked at each other, smiled, glanced affectionately at their red tabs and smiled again.

It was exactly 2.29 "pip emma" when the mine went up.

"Discipline, sir," said the General, "discipline is lacking in your company! You have a sentry on duty at the head of Chelwyn Road. A sentry! What does he do when he sees me? Not a damn thing, sir! Not a damn thing!"

Of course the O.C. "AK" made a bad break; one always does under such circumstances.

"He may not have seen you, sir."

G.S.O. one moved forward in support, so that if overcome the General could fall back on his centre.

A whizz-bang burst in 94—we were in 98—and the Staff ducked, taking the time from the front. The Aides carried out the move-

ment particularly smartly, resuming the upright position in strict rotation.

The General fixed us with a twin Flammenwerfer gaze.

"What's that? Not *see* me? What the devil is he there for, sir? I shall remember this, Captain—ah, Roberts—I shall remember this!"

Pause.

"Where is your Vermoral sprayer?"

Like lambkins followed by voracious lions, we lead them to the Vermoral sprayer.

I was at the retaking of Hill 60, at Ypres long months ago, at Festubert and Givenchy, but never was I so inspired with dread as now.

Praise be to Zeus, the V.S. was full!

We passed on, until we reached a bomber cleaning bombs. The General paused. The bomber, stood to attention, firmly grasping a bomb in the right hand, knuckles down, forearm straight.

"Ha!" said the General. "Ha! Bombs, what?"

The bomber remained apparently petrified.

"What I always say about these bombs,"

the General continued, turning to the Brigadier, "is that they're so damn simple, what? A child can use them. You can throw them about, and, provided the pin is in, no harm will come of it. But"—looking sternly at me—"*always* make sure the pin is safely imbedded in the base of the bomb. That is the first duty of a man handling bombs."

We all murmured assent, faintly or otherwise, according to rank.

"Give me that bomb," said the General to the bomber, waxing enthusiastic. The man hesitated. The General glared, the bomb became his.

We stood motionless around him. "You see, gentlemen," the General continued jocularly. "I take this bomb, and I throw it on the ground—so! It does not explode, it cannot explode, the fuse is not lit, for the pin——"

Just then the bomber leapt like a fleeting deer round the corner, but the General was too engrossed to notice him.

"As I say, the pin——"

A frightened face appeared round the bay, and a small shaky voice broke in:

"Please, sir, it's a five-second fuse—an' *I 'ad took HOUT the pin!*"

After all the General reached the traverse in time and we were not shot at dawn. But G.S.O. one has gone to England "Wounded and shell-shock."

## SOFT JOBS

THIS war has produced a new type of military man—so-called—to wit: the seeker after soft jobs. He flourishes in large numbers in training areas; he grows luxuriantly around headquarters staffs, and a certain kind of hybrid —a combination of a slacker and a soldier— is to be found a few miles to the rear of the firing line in France and Flanders. There are some of him in every rank, from the top of the tree to the bottom. If he is a natural-born soft-jobber he never leaves his training area —not even on a Cook's tour. Should the virus be latent, he will develop an attack, acute or mild, after one tour in the trenches, or when one of our own batteries has fired a salvo close by him.

If he is affected by very mild germs he may stand a month or two in the firing line in some sector where fighting troops are sent for a rest and re-organisation. Broadly speaking, therefore, he belongs to one of three

classes, of which the second class is perhaps the worst.

There are some men who join the army without the least intention of ever keeping less than the breadth of the English Channel between themselves and fighting territory. Not for them the " glorious " battle-fields, not for them the sweat and toil and purgatory of fighting for their country. Nothing at all for them in fact, save a ribbon and a barless medal, good quarters, perfect safety, staff pay, week-end leave, with a few extra days thrown in as a reward for their valuable services, and—a soft job!

They are the militaresques of our armies. The men who try hard to be soldiers, and who only succeed in being soldier-like beings erect upon two legs, with all the outward semblance of a soldier. Yet even *their* lives are not safe. They run grave risks by day and by night in the service of their country.

Zeppelins!

There is an air of bustle and excitement around the officers' quarters in the training camp to-day. Batmen—hoary-haired veterans with six ribbons, whom no M.O. could be

induced to pass for active service, even by tears—rush madly hither and thither, parleying in odd moments of Ladysmith, Kabul to Kandahar, and "swoddies." Head-quarters look grave, tense, strained.

In the ante-room to the mess stand soda syphons and much "B. & W." There are gathered there most of the officers of two regiments—base battalions, with permanent training staffs. In the five seats of honour recline nonchalantly two majors, one captain, and two subalterns. (O.C. Lewis gun school, O.C. nothing in particular, Assistant O.C. Lewis gun school, Assistant Assistant Lewis gun school, Deputy Assistant Adjutant.) They are smoking large, fat cigars, and consuming many drinks. Are they not the heroes of the hour? When the sun rises well into the heavens to-morrow they will set forth on a desperate journey.

They are going on a Cook's tour of two weeks' duration to the trenches! (So that they can have the medal!) In the morning, with bad headaches, they depart. In Boulogne they spend twelve hours of riotous life. ("Let us eat and drink," says the O.C. nothing in

particular, "for to-morrow, dont-cher-know!") They arrive in due course at Battalion battle H.Q. The majors have the best time, as they stay with the C.O., drink his Scotch, and do the bombing officer and the M.G.O. out of a bed.

The rest of them are right up among the companies, where they are an infernal nuisance. About 11 "pip emma" Fritz starts fire-works, and finishes up with a bombing attack on the left flank. The O.C. nothing in particular stops at B.H.Q. The O.C. Lewis gun school mistakes the first general head-quarters line (one kilometre in rear) for the front line, and goes back with shell-shock, having been in the centre of a barrage caused by one 5.9 two hundred yards north. The Assistant Assistant gets into the main bomb store in the front line, and stops there, and the Assistant O.C. Lewis gun school remains in Coy. H.Q. and looks after the batmen. The Deputy Assistant Adjutant gets out into the trench, finds some bombers doing nothing, gets hold of a couple of bombs, makes for the worst noise, and carries on as a soldier should.

After the show the O.C. nothing in particular tells the Colonel all *his* theories on counter-attack, and goes sick in the morning for the remaining period of his tour; the other twain stand easy, and the Deputy Assistant Adjutant makes an application for transfer to the Battalion. Incidentally he is recommended for the military cross.

When the four previously mentioned return to England they all of them apply for better soft jobs, on the strength of recent experiences at the front. The one man who threw up his soft job to become junior subaltern in a fighting regiment is killed in the next "show" before his recommendation for a decoration has been finally approved.

*Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum.*

## "GROUSE"

We aren't happy; our clothes don't fit, and we ain't got no friends! Rations are not up yet—confound the Transport Officer—it's raining like the dickens, as dark as pitch, and we've only got one bit of candle. Some one has pinched a jar of rum, that idiot batman of mine can't find a brazier, and young John has lost his raincoat. In fact it's a rotten war.

We had lobster for lunch; it has never let us forget we had it! The Johnny we "took over" from *said* there were 7698 million bombs in the Battalion grenade store, and there are only 6051. The Adjutant has just sent a "please explain," which shows what you get for believing a fellow.

The little round fat chap has left his gum boots (thigh) "Somewhere in France," and fell into the trench tramway trying to wear an odd six on the right foot, and an odd nine on the left. George has busted the D string of the mandoline, and A. P. has lost the only pack of cards we had to play poker with.

It's a simply *rotten* war!

John has a working party out of sixty "other ranks" and says they are spread in two's and three's over a divisional frontage. He has made two trips to locate them, and meditates a third. His language is positively hair-raising. If he falls into any more shell-holes no one will let him in the dug-out.

Those confounded brigade machine gunners are firing every other second just in front of the dug-out. Heaven knows what they are firing at, or where, but how a man could be expected to sleep through the noise only a siege artillery man could tell you.

George went out on a "reconnaissance" recently. George is great on doing reconnaissances and drawing maps. This time the reconnaissance did *him*, and the only map he's yet produced is mud tracings on his person. Incidentally he says that *all* the communication trenches are impassable, and that no one but a cat could go over the top and keep on his feet for more than thirty seconds. (N.B.—George fell into the main support line and had to be pulled out by some of John's working-party.) George says that if the

Germans come over it's all up. Cheerful sort of beggar, George.

My new smoke-helmet—the one you wear round your neck all the time, even in your dreams—is lost again. This is the third time in the course of six hours. The gas N.C.O. has calculated that with the wind at its present velocity we should be gassed in one and three-quarter seconds, not counting the recurring decimal.

John has just told a story about a bayonet. It would be funny at any other time. Now, it simply sticks!

The cook has just come in to say our rations have been left behind by mistake. Troubles never come singly. May heaven protect the man who is responsible if we get him! John has told another story, about an Engineer. It can't be true, for he says this chap was out in No Man's Land digging a trench. No one ever knew a Canadian Engineer do anything but tell the infantry how to work. It's a rotten story, anyhow.

Just look at this dug-out; a bottle of rum on the table—empty. The odd steel helmet, some dirty old newspapers, and a cup or two

(empty!), and a pile of strafes from the Adjutant six inches thick. My bed has a hole in it as big as a "Johnson 'ole," and there are rats. Also the place is inhabited by what the men call "crumbs." Poetic version of a painful fact.

John says this is the d—est outfit he has ever been in. John is right. My gumboots were worn by the Lance-Corporal in No. 2 platoon, and they are wet, beastly wet. Also my batman has forgotten to put any extra socks in my kit-bag. Also he's lost my German rifle—the third I've bought for twenty francs and lost.

This is a *deuce* of a war!

The mail has just arrived. George got five, the little round fat fellow *nine*, A. P. two, and John and me shake hands with a duck's-egg. Still the second mentioned has his troubles. One of his many inamoratas has written to him in French. He knows French just about as well as he knows how to sing! Nuff said!

John has "parti'd" to his triple-starred working-party. The men have not got any letters either. You should hear them! The

most expert "curser" of the Billingsgate fishmarket would turn heliotrope with envy. George is feeling badly too. He lent his flash-light to dish out rations with. That is to say, to illuminate what the best writers of nondescript fiction call the "Cimmerian gloom!"

A. P. has had letters from his wife. Lucky dog! She takes up four pages telling him how she adores him.

This is a *beastly* rotten war.

Fritz is a rotter too. My dug-out is two hundred yards north by nor'-east. Every time I have to make the trip he never fails to keep the Cimmerian gloom strictly "Cim." And the bath-mats are broken in two places, and I've found both of them every time.

Another strafe from the Adjutant. May jackals defile his grave, but he'll never have one in France, anyhow. "Please render an account to Orderly Room of the number of men in your unit who are qualified plumbers."

We haven't any.

If we had we should have mended the hole in the roof, which leaks on John's bed. It has only just begun to leak. It will be fun to hear

what John says when he comes back. Only he may be speechless.

The little round fat fellow is still reading letters, and A. P. is hunting in his nether garments. "Kinder scratterin' aroun'!" So far the bag numbers five killed and two badly winged, but still on the run.

Somebody has turned out the guard. Yells of fire. After due inspection proves to be the C.O.'s tunic. It was a new one! May his batman preserve himself in one piece.

More yells of "Guard turn out!" Support my tottering footsteps! Our—that is to say *my* dug-out is on fire. . . . Confusion. . . . Calm. . . . I have no dug-out, no anything. . . . This is, pardonnez-moi, a Hell of a war!

## PANSIES

THERE are some pansies on my table, arranged in a broken glass one of the men has picked up among the rubble and débris of this shattered town. Dark mauve and yellow pansies, pretty, innocent looking little things. "Pansies—that's for thoughts."

Transport is rattling up and down the street—guns, limbers, G.S. wagons, water-carts, God knows what, and there are men marching along, mud-caked, weary, straggling, clinging fast to some German souvenir as they come one way; jaunty, swinging, clean, with bands a-blowing as they go the other. It is a dull grey day. There is "something doing" up the line. I can hear the artillery, that ceaseless artillery, pounding and hammering, and watch the scout aeroplanes, dim grey hawks in the distance, from the windows of the room above—the broken-down room with the plasterless ceiling, and the clothes scattered all over the floor.

"Pansies—that's for thoughts."

The regiment is up yonder—the finest regiment God ever made. They are wallowing in the wet, sticky mud of the trenches they have dug themselves into, what is left of them. They are watching and waiting, always watching and waiting for the enemy to attack.

And they are being bombarded steadily, pitilessly, without cessation. Some will be leaning against the parapet, sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, some will be watching, some smoking, if they have got any smokes left. I know them. Until the spirit leaves their bodies they will grin and fight, fight and grin, but always "Carry On."

Last night they went up to relieve the —th, after they had just come out of the line, and were themselves due to be relieved. Overdue, in fact, but the General knew that he could rely on them, knew that THEY would never give way, while there was a man left to fire a rifle. So he used them—as they have always been used, and as they always will be—to hold the line in adversity, to take the line when no one else could take it.

We have been almost wiped out five times, but the old spirit still lives, the Spirit of our

mighty dead. There are always enough "old men" left, even though they number but a score, with whom to leaven the lump of raw, green rookies that come to us, and to turn them into soldiers worthy of the Regiment.

Dark mauve pansies.

I knew all the old soldiers of the Brigade, I have fought with them, shaken hands with them afterwards — those who survived — mourned with them our pals who were gone —buried many a one of them.

This time I am out of it. Alone with the pansies . . . and my thoughts. Thomson was killed last night; Greaves, Nicholson, Townley, between then and now. Nearly all the rest are wounded. Those who come back will talk of this fight, they will speak of hours and events of which I shall know nothing. For the first time I shall be on the outer fringe, mute . . . with only ears to hear, and no heart to speak.

Perhaps they will come out to-morrow night. Or, early, very early the following morning. They will be tired—so tired they are past feeling it—unshaven, unwashed, and covered with mud from their steel helmets

down to the soles of their boots. But they will be fairly cheerful. They will try to sing on the long, long march back here, as I have heard them so many times before. When they reach the edge of the town they will try to square their weary shoulders, and to keep step—and they will do it, too, heaven only knows *how*, but they will do it. Their leader will feel very proud of them, which is only right and proper. He will call them "boys," encourage the weak, inwardly admire and bless the strong. And he will be proud of the mud and dirt, proud of his six days' growth of beard. Satisfied; because he has just done one more little bit, and the Good Lord has pulled him through it.

When they get to their billets they will cheer; discordantly, but cheer none the less. They will crowd into the place, and drop their kits and themselves on top of them, to sleep the sleep of the just—the well-earned sleep of utter fatigue.

In the morning they will feel better, and they will glance at you with an almost affectionate look in their eyes, for they know—as the men always know—whether you have

proved yourself, whether you have made good—or failed.

"Pansies . . . that's for thoughts. . . ."

And I am out of it—out of it *ALL* . . . preparing "To re-organise what is left of the regiment."

For God's sake, Holman, take away those flowers!

# GOING BACK

A LARGE crowd packed the wide platform, hemmed in on one side by a barrier, on the other by a line of soldiers two paces apart. The boat-train was leaving in five minutes. That a feeling of tension permeated the crowd was evident, from the forced smiles and laughter, and the painful endeavours of the departing ones to look preternaturally cheerful. In each little group there were sudden silences.

Almost at the last moment a tall, lean officer pressed through the crowd, made for a smoking-carriage, and got in. He surveyed the scene with a rather compassionate interest, while occasionally a wistful look passed over his face as he watched for a moment an officer talking with a very pretty girl, almost a child, who now and then mopped her eyes defiantly with a diminutive handkerchief.

"All aboard."

The pretty girl lifted up her face, and the lonely one averted his eyes, pulled a news-

paper hastily from his overcoat pocket, and proceeded to read it upside down!

As the train pulled out of the station a cheer went up and handkerchiefs fluttered. The sole other occupant of the carriage, a young—very young—subaltern who had just said good-bye to his mother, muttered to himself and blinked hard out of the window. The Lonely One shrugged himself more deeply into his seat, and abstractedly reversed the newspaper. A paragraph caught his eye: "Artillery activity developed yesterday in the sector south of Leuville St. Vaast. An enemy attempt to raid our trenches at this point was foiled." He smiled a trifle, and putting down the paper fell to thinking. Unable to contain himself any longer, the boy in the corner spoke.

"Rotten job, this going back show," he said. The other assented gravely, and they fell to talking, spasmodically, of the Front. Pure, undiluted shop, but very comforting.

Finally the train arrived at the port of embarkation. A crowd of officers of all ranks surged along the platform, glanced at the telegram board, and passed on towards the

boat. The Lonely One stopped, however, for his name in white chalk stared at him. He got the telegram eventually and opened it. It contained only two words and no signature: "Good luck." Flushing a trifle he walked down to the waiting mail-boat, and getting his disembarkation card passed up the gangway.

An air of impenetrable gloom hung over the dirty decks. Here and there a few men chatted together, but for the most part the passengers kept to themselves. The lonely man found the young lieutenant waiting for him, and together they mounted to the upper deck, and secured two chairs aft, hanging their life-belts on to them.

A little later the boat cast off, and they watched the land fade from sight as many others were watching with them. "Ave atque Vale."

"I wonder . . ." said the youngster, and then bit his lips.

"Come below and have some grub," the other said cheerily. They ate, paid for it through the nose, and felt better. Half an hour later they were in Boulogne.

As they waited outside the M.L.O.'s office for their turn, the younger asked:

"I say, what Army are you?"

"First."

"So'm I," joyfully, "p'raps we'll go up together."

"I hope so, but we shall have to stop here the night, I expect."

Even as he said so a notice was hung outside the little wooden office: "Officers of the First Army returning from leave will report to the R.T.O., Gare Centrale, at 10.00 A.M. to-morrow, Saturday, 17th instant."

"That settles it," said the elder man, "come along, and we'll go to the Officers' Club and bag a couple of beds."

"Nineteen hours," wailed the other, "in this beastly place! What on earth shall we find to do?"

"Don't worry about that—there is usually some one to whom one can write." It was both a hint and a question.

"Yes—ra—*ther!*"

They had tea, and afterwards the boy wrote a long letter, in which he said a great deal more to the mother who received it than

was actually written on the paper. The Lonely One sat for some time in front of the fire, and finally scribbled a card. It was addressed to some place in the wilds of Scotland, and it bore the one word "Thanks."

After dinner they sat and smoked awhile. The Lonely One knew much of the life-history of the other by now. It had burst from the boy, and the Lonely One had listened sympathetically and with little comment, and had liked to hear it. It is good to hear a boy talk about his mother.

"What shall we do now?"

"We might go to the cinema show; it used to be fairly good."

"Right-oh! I say"—a little diffidently—"last time I was on leave, the first time too, I came back with some fellows who were pretty—well—pretty hot stuff. They wanted me to go to a—to a place up in the town, and I didn't go. I think they thought I was an awful blighter, don't-you-know, but——"

"What that kind of chap thinks doesn't matter in the least, old man," interposed the other. "You were at Cambridge, weren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, you may have heard the old tag? Besides, I don't think—some one—somebody . . ." he hesitated and stopped. The youngster flushed.

"Yes, I know," he said softly.

They boarded the train together, and shared the discomforts of the long tedious journey. Every hour, or less, the train stopped, for many minutes, and then with a creak and a groan wandered on again like an ancient snail. Rain beat on the window-panes, and the compartment was as drafty as a sieve.

It was not until the small hours that they reached their destination, a cold, bleak, storm-swept platform.

"This is where we say good-bye," the youngster began regretfully, "thanks awf'ly for——"

"Rot," broke in the other brusquely, taking the proffered hand in his big brown one. "Best of luck, old man, and don't forget to drop me a card."

"A nice boy, a *very* nice boy," he mused, as he climbed into the military bus, and was

rattled off, back to the mud and slush and dreariness of it all.

"Have a good time?" asked the Transport Officer the next morning, as the Lonely One struggled into his fighting kit, preparatory to rejoining the battalion in the trenches.

"Yes, thanks. By the way, any mail for me?"

"One letter. Here you are."

He took it, looked an instant at the handwriting, and thrust it inside his tunic. The postmark was the same as that of the wire he had received at the port of embarkation.

# THREE RED ROSES

In the distance rose the spires of Ypres, and the water-tower, useless now for the purpose for which it was built, but still erect on its foundations. The silvery mist of early April hung very lightly over the flat surrounding land, hiding one corner of Vlamertinghe from sight, where the spire of the church still raised its head, as yet unvanquished. A red sun was rising in the East, and beyond Ypres a battle still raged, though nothing to the battle of a few short days before. Hidden batteries spoke now and then, and the roads were a cloud of dust, as men, transport, guns, and many ambulances passed along them. Overhead aeroplanes droned, and now and again shells whistled almost lazily overhead, to fall with a thunderous "crrumph" in Brielen and Vlamertinghe.

By the canal there was a dressing-station. The little white flag with its red cross hung listless in the still air. Motor ambulances drove up at speed and departed with their

burdens. Inside the dressing-station men worked ceaselessly, as they had been working for days. Sometimes shells fell near by. No one heeded them.

Beyond the dressing-station, down the road, the banks of which were filled with little niches hollowed out with entrenching tools, hurried a figure. He was but one of many, but there was that about him which commanded the attention of all who saw him. His spurs and boots were dirty, his uniform covered with stains and dust, his face unshaven. He walked like a man in a dream, yet as of set purpose. Pale and haggard, he strode along, mechanically acknowledging salutes.

Arrived at the dressing-station, without pausing he entered, and went up to one of the doctors who was bandaging the remnants of an arm.

"Have they come yet?" he asked.

The other looked at him gravely with a certain respect and pity, and with the eye also of a medical man.

"Not yet, Colonel," he answered. "You had better sit down and rest, you are all in."

The Colonel passed a weary hand over his forehead.

"No," he said. "No, Campbell; I shall go back and look for the party. They may have lost their way, and—they were three of my best officers, three of my boys. . . . I—I——"

"Here, sir! Take this."

It was more of a command than a request. The Colonel drained what was given him, and went out without a word.

Back he trudged, along the shell-pitted road, even now swept by occasional salvos of shrapnel. He took no notice of anything, but continued feverishly on his way, his eyes ever searching the distance. At last he gave vent to an exclamation. Down the road was coming a stretcher party. They had but one stretcher, and on it lay three blanketed bundles.

The Colonel met them, and with bowed head accompanied them back to the dressing-station.

"You found them—all?" It was his only question.

"Yes, sir, all that was left."

The stretcher was taken to a little empty dug-out, and with his own hands the C.O. laid the Union Jack over it.

"When will the—the graves be ready?" he asked the doctor.

"By five o'clock, sir."

"I will be back at 4.30."

"You must take some rest, Colonel, or you'll break down."

"Thank you, Campbell, I can look after myself!"

"Very good, sir."

As he went away Captain Campbell looked after him rather anxiously.

"Never would have thought *he could* be so upset," he mused. "He'll be in hospital, if——"

Straight back to Brielen the Colonel walked, and there he met his orderly with the horses. He mounted without a word, and rode on, through Vlamertinghe, until he reached Popheringe. There he dismounted.

"I shall be some time," he said to the orderly.

He went through the square, up the noisy street leading to the Vehrenstraat, and along

it, until he reached a little shop, in which were still a few flowers. He entered, and a frightened-looking woman came to serve him.

"I want three red roses," he said.

It took the saleswoman several minutes to understand, but finally she showed him what she had. The roses were not in their first bloom, but they were large and red. The Colonel had them done up, and left carrying them carefully. The rest of his time he spent in repairing as well as might be the ravages of battle on his clothes and person. At 4.20 he was again at the dressing-station.

A quiet-voiced padre awaited him there, a tall, ascetic-looking man, with the eyes of a seer.

They carried the bundles on the stretcher to the graves, three among many, just behind the dressing-station.

"Almighty God, as it has pleased Thee to take the souls of these, our dear brothers . . ." the sonorous voice read on, while the C.O. stood, bare-headed, at the head of the graves, holding in his hand the three red roses. The short burial service came to an end.

The Colonel walked to the foot of each

grave in turn, and gently threw on each poor shattered remnant a red rose. Straightening himself, he stood long at the salute, and then, with a stern, set face, he strode away, to where the Padre awaited him, not caring that his eyes were wet. The Padre said nothing, but took his hand and gripped it.

"Padre," said the Colonel, "those three were more to me than any other of my officers; I thought of them as my children."

## ADJUTANTS

If Fate cherishes an especial grievance against you, you will be made an Adjutant.

One of those bright beautiful mornings, when all the world is young and, generally speaking, festive, the sword of Damocles will descend upon you, and you will be called to the Presence, and told you are to be Adjutant. You will, perhaps, be rather inclined to think yourself a deuce of a fellow on that account. You will acquire a pair of spurs, and expect to be treated with respect. You will, in fact, feel that you are a person of some importance, quite the latest model in good little soldiers. You may—and this is the most cruel irony of all—be complimented on your appointment by your brother officers.

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the preacher!

As soon as you become the "voice of the C.O.," you lose every friend you ever possessed. You are just about as popular as the

proverbial skunk at a garden party. It takes only two days to find this out.

The evening of the second day you decide to have a drink, Orderly Room or no Orderly Room. You make this rash decision, and you tell the Orderly-Room Sergeant—only heaven knows when *he* sleeps—that you are going out.

"I will be back in half an hour," you say.

Then you go forth to seek for George—George, your pal, your intimate, your bosom friend. You find George in your old Coy. head-quarters, and a pang of self-pity sweeps over you as you cross the threshold and see the other fellows there: George, Henry, John, and the rest.

"Come and have a——" you begin cheerily. Suddenly, in the frosty silence you hear a cool, passionless voice remark,

"Good evening, SIR!"

It is George, the man you loved and trusted, whom you looked on as a friend and brother.

"George, come and have a——" again the words stick in your throat.

George answers, in tones from which all amity, peace, and goodwill towards men have vanished:

"Thanks very much, sir"—oh baleful little word—"but I've just started a game of poker."

Dimly light dawns in your reeling brain; you realise the full extent of your disabilities, and you know that all is over. You are the Adjutant—the voice of the C.O.!

Sadly, with the last glimmer of Adjutant pride and pomp cast from out your soul, you return to Orderly Room, drinkless, friendless, and alone.

"The Staff Captain has been ringing you up, sir. He wants to know if the summary of evidence . . ." and so on. In frenzied desperation you seize the telephone. Incidentally you call the Staff Captain away from his dinner. What he says, no self-respecting man—not even an Adjutant—could reveal without laying bare the most lacerated portions of his innermost feelings.

You go to bed, a sadder and a wiser man, wondering if you could go back to the Company, even as the most junior sub., were you to make an impassioned appeal to the C.O.

About 1 A.M. some one comes in and awakens you.

"Message from Brigade, sir."

With an uncontrite heart you read it: "Forward to this office immediately a complete nominal roll of all men of your unit who have served continuously for nine months without leave." That takes two hours, and necessitates the awakening of all unit commanders, as the last Adjutant kept no record. In psychic waves you feel curses raining on you through the stilly night. Having made an application—in writing—to the C.O., to be returned to duty, you go to bed.

At 3.30 A.M. you are awakened again. "Movement order from Brigade, sir!"

This time you say nothing. All power of speech is lost. The entire regiment curses you, while by the light of a guttering candle you write a movement order, "operation order number"—what the deuce *is* the number anyhow. The Colonel is—shall we say—indisposed as to temper, and the companies get half an hour to fall in, ready to march off. One Company loses the way, and does not arrive at the starting-point.

"Did you specify the starting-point quite clearly, Mr. Jones?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you say it was?"

"One hundred yards south of the 'N' in CANDIN, sir."

"There are *two* 'N's' in CANDIN, Mr. Jones; *two* 'N's'! How can you expect a company commander to know *which* 'N'? Gross carelessness. Gross carelessness. Go and find the Company, please."

"Yessir."

You find the Company only just out of billets, after scouring the miserable country around the wrong 'N' for fifteen minutes, and falling off your horse into one of those infernal ditches.

The battalion moves off half an hour later, and the C.O. has lots to say about it. He also remarks that his late Adjutant was "a good horseman"—a bitter reflection!

There is absolutely no hope for an Adjutant. If he is a good man at the "job" everybody hates him. If he is feeble the C.O. hates him. The Brigade staff hate him on principle. If he kow-tows to them they trample on him with both feet, if he does *not* they set snares for him, and keep him up all night. He is

expected to know everything: K. R. and O. backwards and forwards, divisional drill, and the training of a section. Routine for the cure of housemaid's knee in mules, and the whole compendium of Military Law. He is never off duty, and even his soul is not his own. He is, in fact, The Adjutant.

Sometimes people try to be nice to him. They mean well. They will come into the Orderly Room and say: "Oh, Mr. Jones, can you tell me where the 119th Reserve Battery of the 83rd Reserve Stokes Gun Coy. is situated?" Of course, Adjutants know *everything.*

And when you admit ignorance they look at you with pained surprise, and go to Brigade.

"I asked the Adjutant of the —th Battalion, but he did not seem to know."

Adjutants die young.

## HOME

THERE is one subject no man mentions at the Front unless it be very casually, *en passant.* Even then it brings with it a sudden silence. There is so much, so very much in that little word "Home."

If a man were to get up at a sing-song and sing "Home, Sweet Home," his life would be imperilled. His audience would rise and annihilate him, because they could not give vent to their feelings in any other way. There are some things that strike directly at the heart, and this is one of them.

You see the new officer, the men of the new draft, abstracted, with a rather wistful look on their faces, as they gaze into the brazier, or sit silently in billets when their work is done. You have felt like that, and you know what is the matter. The symptoms are not to be encouraged in the individual nor the mass. They lead to strong drink and dissipation, for no man can preserve his inward calm for long, if he dwells much on his dearest recollections of Home. There is but one

remedy: work, and lots of it, action, movement, anything to distract.

Many a man has committed some small "crime" that brought him to Orderly Room because he allowed his mind to wander . . . Home—and realised too fully the percentage of his chances of ever seeing that home again. The Front is not a garden of Allah, or a bed of roses, or even a tenth-rate music-hall as some people would have us believe. It has to be made bearable by the spirit of those who endure it.

There is enough that is grim and awe-inspiring—aye! and heart-rending, without seeking it. That is why we do not like certain kinds of music at the Front, why the one-time student of "intense" music develops an uncontrollable predilection for wild and woolly rag-time strains, and never winces at their execution however faulty. That is why the Estaminets sell so much bad beer, and so much *vin mousseux* under the generic title of Champagne.

Men want to forget about Home, for they dare not think of it too much. I have never heard a man speak of Home without a little hush in his voice, as though he spoke of something sacred that was, and might not be again.

How often one heard the remark, a kind of apologia: "One must do something." Yet, in spite of all they do to forget Home, they are least happy who have none to forget. Fortunately they are few. It is a strange provision of Providence that lends zest to the attempt at oblivion, and induces a frame of mind that yearns through that attempt for the very things it would fain forget!

After all, it is very much like the schoolboy who longs for privacy where he can blubber unseen, and is at the same time very glad that he has not got it, and *can't* blubber, because his school-fellows would see him!

A superficial observer might think that the men at the Front are purely callous, intent on seizing lustily on every possible chance of doubtful and other pleasures that they can obtain. He may think that war has brutalised them, numbed their consciences, steeled their hearts. Or he may class them as of low intellect. In all of which he is wrong, and has utterly failed to grasp the morale of the man who lives to fight to-day, never knowing of a certainty if he will see another dawn.

The soldier knows that he may not dwell in his heart on all he holds most dear. It

"takes the stuffing out of him." So, according to his lights, he works very hard indeed to keep up his spirits; to forget. Not *really* to forget, only to pretend to himself that he is forgetting.

What good is it for the man whose sweetheart ran away with the other fellow to think about it? Therefore, Tommy rises above his thoughts, he puts them away from him—as best he can. And if that best is not all that people at home might wish it to be, surely some allowance may be made for what may be called the exigencies of the military situation!

Perhaps it is the last thing some people would imagine, but homesickness is a very real disease at the Front, and he may count himself lucky who escapes it.

"Wot price the Hedgeware Road?" says Bill, ruminatively, as he drinks his glass of mild—very mild—beer.

And his pal sums up *his* feelings in the one word "Blimey!"

If you have seen men go into action, not once, but many times; if you have heard them sing, "Oh *my*, I *don't* want to die; *I* want to go Home," "My Little Grey Home in the West," and many other similar ditties, then you will understand.

The very trenches shout it at you, these universal thoughts of Home. Look at some of the names: Oxford Street, Petticoat Lane, The Empire, Toronto Avenue, Bayou Italien —even the German trenches have their Wilhelmstrasse! Each nation in arms is alike in this respect. Every front-line soldier longs for Home.

A singer whose voice was chiefly remarkable for its sympathetic quality, gave a concert within sound of the guns. A battalion, just out of the trenches, went to hear her. She sang several bright little songs, every one encored uproariously, and finally she sang one of those beautiful Kashmir love songs which go straight to the depths. There was a moment's tense silence when she had finished, and then the " house " rocked with applause, followed by a greater trumpeting of handkerchiefed noses than was ever before indulged in by any regiment *en masse*. She had awakened memories of Home.

There are many who rest beneath foreign skies for whom all earthly homes are done with. *They* have been gathered to the greatest Home of all.

# ACTION

"MESSAGE from Head-quarters, sir." The runner was breathing hard, and his eyes were strained and tense-looking. He had not shaved for days. Fritz's "thousand guns on the Somme," that the papers talk of so glibly, were tuning up for business.

Major Ogilvie took the message, read it, and handed it on to me. "Zero hour will be at 6.30 P.M. AAA. Our artillery will bombard from 5.30 to 6.20 P.M., slow continuous, and from 6.20 to 6.29 P.M. hurricane fire AAA. You will give all possible assistance, by means of rifle and machine-gun fire to ULTRAMARINE, and arrange to re-inforce, if necessary, in case of heavy counter-attack AAA. ULTRAMARINE will indicate that objective has been gained by firing two red rockets simultaneously AAA. Please render situation reports every half hour to B.H.Q., A.21.d.1.4½.AAA."

We looked at each other and smiled a little grimly. To be on the flank of an attack is

rather worse than to attack, for it means sitting tight while Fritz pounds the life out of you.

"You stop here," said Ogilvie, "in this glory-hole of ours, while I go up and see Niven. He will have to put his men in those forward saps. If you get any messages, deal with them, and make sure that Townley keeps those bombers of his on both sides of the road. They *must* stop there, as long as there are any of them left, or the Hun might try to turn our flank. So long."

He set out towards the north, leaving me in "AK" Coy.'s "head-quarters." The latter consisted of a little niche, three feet wide, ran back a foot, and was four feet high, cut in the parapet of the front line. The runner, Thomson, one of our own company, was curled up in a little cubby-hole at my feet, and had fallen asleep.

It was lonely in that trench, although there were invisible men, not thirty feet away, on both sides of me.

The time was 5.25 P.M.

Our guns were still silent. Fritz was warming up more and more. He was shelling our

right most persistently, putting "the odd shell" around head-quarters.

Punctually to the minute our artillery started in. Salvos of heavies, way back, shrapnel all along the front line and supports.

A wickedly pretty sight along a thousands yard front: Fritz began to get irritated, finally to be alarmed. Up went his red lights, one after the other, as he called on his guns, called, and kept on calling. They answered the call. Above us the air hissed unceasingly as shells passed and exploded in rear. He was putting a barrage on our supports and communication trenches. Then he opened up all along our trench. High explosive shrapnel, and those thunder-crackling "woolly-bears." I wondered where Ogilvie was, if he was all right, and I huddled in close to the damp crumbling earth.

It was 5.50 P.M.

"Per-loph-UFF." An acrid smell of burnt powder, a peculiar, weird feeling that my head was bursting, and a dreadful realisation that I was pinned in up to my neck, and could not stir. A small shell, bursting on graze, had lit in the parapet, just above my head, ex-

ploded, and buried me up to the neck, and the runner also. He called out, but the din was too great for me to hear what he said. I struggled until my hands were free, and then with the energy of pure fear tore at the shattered sand-bags that weighed me down. Finally I was free to bend over to Thomson.

"Are you hurt?"

"No, sir, but I can't move. I thought you was dead."

I clawed him out with feverish haste. The air reeked with smoke, and the shelling was hellish. Without any cessation shells burst in front of, above, and behind the trench; one could feel their hot breath on one's cheek, and once I heard above the din a cry of agony that wrung my torn and tattered nerves to a state of anguish.

"Get out of here," I yelled, and we crawled along the crumbling trench to the right.

"Hrrumph!" A five-nine landed just beyond us. I stopped a second. "Stretcher-bearer!" came weakly from a dim niche at my side. Huddled there was one of my boys. He was wounded in the foot, the leg, the chest, and very badly in the arm. It took

five minutes to put on a tourniquet, and while it was being done a scout lying by my side was killed. He cried out once, turned, shivered, and died. I remember wondering how his soul could go up to Heaven through that awful concentration of fire and stinging smoke.

It was 6.15 P.M.

There were many wounded, many dead, one of those wonderfully brave men, a stretcher-bearer, told me, when he came crawling along, with blood-stained hands, and his little red-cross case. None of the wounded could be moved then, it was impossible. I got a message, and read it by the light of the star shells: "Please report at once if enemy are shelling your area heavily AAA." The answer was terse: "Yes AAA."

Suddenly there was a lull. One of those inexplicable, almost terrifying lulls that are almost more awesome than the noise preceding them. I heard a voice ten yards away, coming from a vague, shadowy figure lying on the ground:

"Are you all right, 'P.'?" It was Ogilvie.

"Yes. Are you?"

We crawled together, and held a hurried conversation at the top of our voices, for the bombardment had now started in with violent intensity from our side, as well as from Fritz's.

"We'll have to move to the sap, with Niven . . . bring . . . runners . . . you . . . make . . . dash for it."

"How . . . 'bout Townley?"

"'S'all right."

Then we pulled ourselves together and went for it, stumbling along the trench, over heaped-up mounds of earth, past still forms that would never move again. On, on, running literally for our lives. At last we reached the saps. Two platoons were out there, crowded in a little trench a foot and a half wide, nowhere more than four feet deep. Some shrapnel burst above it, but it was the old front line, thirty yards in rear, on which the Germans were concentrating a fire in which no man could live long.

The runners, Major Ogilvie, Niven, and myself, and that amazing Sergeant-Major of ours, who would crack a joke with Charon, were all together in a few yards of trench.

Our fire ceased suddenly. It was zero hour. In defiance of danger Ogilvie stood up, perfectly erect, and watched what was going on. Our guns opened again, they had lifted to the enemy supports and lines of communication.

"They're over!" we cried all together.

Machine-guns were rattling in a crescendo of sound that was like the noise of a rapid stream above the roar of a water-wheel. The enemy sent up rocket upon rocket—three's, four's, green and red. Niven, as plucky a boy as ever lived, watched eagerly. Then a perfect hail of shells began to fall. One could almost see our old trench change its form as one glanced at it. It was almost as light as day. Major Ogilvie was writing reports. One after another he sent out the runners to headquarters, those runners every one of whom deserves the Victoria Cross. Some went never to return.

All at once two red rockets burst away forward, on the right, falling slowly, slowly to earth.

ULTRAMARINE had attained the objective.

It was then 6.42 P.M.

Curious, most curious, to see the strain pass momentarily from men's faces. Two runners took the message down. It proved to be the earliest news received at H.Q. that the objective was reached.

But the bombardment did not cease, did not slacken. It developed more and more furiously. Niven, one of the very best—the boy was killed a few weeks after—lay with his body tucked close to the side of the trench. I lay with my head very close to his, so that we could talk. Major Ogilvie's legs were curled up with mine. Every now and then he sent in a report.

My conversation with Niven was curious. "Have another cigarette?" "Thanks, Bertie." "Fritz is real mad to-night." "He's got a reason!" "Thank the Lord it isn't raining." "Yes." Pause. "Did you get any letters from home?" "Two. . . . Good thing they can't see us now!" "*Jolly* good thing!" "Whee-ou, that was close!" "So's that," as a large lump of earth fell on his steel hat. Pause. "I must get a new pair of breeches." "When?" "Oh, to go on leave with." "So must I." We relapsed into silence, and

from sheer fatigue both of us fell asleep for twenty minutes.

I was awakened by Ogilvie, who kicked me gently. "I have had no report from Townley or Johnson for nearly two hours"—it was past eleven. "I want you to go up to the right and see if you can establish communication with them. Can you make it?" "I'll try, sir." Our guns had quieted down, but Fritz was still pounding as viciously as ever, and with more heavy stuff than hitherto. My experience in travelling perhaps a quarter of a mile of trench that night was the most awful that has befallen me in nearly two years of war at the Front.

The trench was almost empty, for the men had been put in advance of it, for the most part. In places it was higher than the level of the ground, where great shells had hurled parapet on parados, leaving a gaping crater on one side or the other. Fear, a real personal, loathly fear, ran at my side. Just as I reached the trench an eight-five exploded on the spot I had crossed a second before. The force of the explosion threw me on my face, and earth rained down on me. I knelt, crouching,

by the parapet, my breath coming in long gasps. "Lord, have mercy on my soul." I rushed a few yards madly, up, down, over; another pause, while the shells pounded the earth, and great splinters droned. I dared not move, and I dared not stay. Every shadow of the trenches loomed over me like the menacing memory of some past unforgettable misdeed. Looking down I saw a blood-stained bandage in a pool of blood at my side, and I could smell that indescribable, fœtid smell of blood, bandages, and death. As I went round a traverse, speeding like a hunted hare, I stumbled over a man. He groaned deeply as I fell on him. It was one of my best N.C.O.'s, mortally wounded. An eternity passed before I could find his water-bottle. His face was a yellow mask, his teeth chattered against the lip of the water-bottle, his lips were swollen and dreadful. He lay gasping. "Can I do anything for you, old man?" With a tremendous effort he raised his head a little, and opened wide his glazing eyes. "Write . . . sir . . . to my . . . mother." Then, his head on my arm, he died.

On, on, on, the sweat streaming from me,

the fear of death at my heart. I prayed as I had never prayed before.

At last I found Johnson. He gave me his report, and that of Townley, whom he had seen a few moments before. I went back, another awful trip, but met Major Ogilvie half-way.

After nine and three-quarter hours, during which they threw all the ammunition they possessed at us, the German gunners "let up." And Ogilvie and I went to sleep, along the trench, too weary to care what might happen next, to wake at dawn, stiff with cold, chilled to the bone, to face another day of "glorious war!"

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