EIGHT YEARS ON THE EDGE OF DEATH

BY F. N. PICKETT

Mr. Pickett is a young Englishman who has been aptly named the Dump King for his work in clearing the ammunition left in the war areas of France and Belgium.

When the last shot was fired in the war and the troops began to demobilize, most people thought that the whole business was over. But the task of clearing up after four years of death and destruction was only beginning, and though it is eight years since the signing of the Armistice it requires still another year of dangerous labor before the fighting areas of France and Belgium can be regarded as safe for habitation.

It was a crazy idea of mine that took me to France shortly after the war. I had invented a magnet with which I hoped to be able to handle the huge stocks of metal in the ammunition dumps. Once in the war zone, however, I abandoned my original scheme and devoted all my energies to solving the problem of clearing up the battlefields.

Order Out of Chaos.

At that time the breaking up of the huge ammunition dumps, with their hundreds of thousands of "live" shells, bombs, and cartridges, was in the hands of the British, French, Belgian, and American Governments, and it was soon apparent to me that their methods were unsystematic and wasteful of material and human life. Twenty fatal accidents a day occurred at that time. The British Government was in most cases merely collecting the shells and dumping them into the sea. Much the same wasteful policy was adopted by the Belgians and Americans.

I believed the task could be handled in a more business-like way, and persuaded the respective Governments to give me sole charge of the operations. The British Government demanded an initial payment of £250,000, and regular instalments of large sums to follow. However, by selling the brass and copper which I knew the dumps to contain in large quantities to British and French manufacturers, and persuading them to make a part cash payment in advance. I was able to meet my first bill for a quarter of a million pounds. Now, after eight years' work, I have paid the British Government nearly two million pounds, the French a million, and the Belgian half a million.

The scenes of my activities were just behind the old Front Line, and between Boulogne and Etaples. The dumps consisted of the stored ammunition of the fighting forces, including English, French, Belgian, American, and a few German dumps left behind after their last retreat. One dump consisted of 80,000 tons of ammunition covering an area of thirty square miles, or approximately the size of London. These miniature counties of explosives were dotted all along the line, and the task of clearing them up necessitated the employment of thousands of laborers.

A Modern Poo-Bah!

My first labor was indentured—that is to say, the workers were bound to stay with me for a fixed period. Afterwards I employed a motley collection drawn from all the races, including a thousand Chinese, a few hundred Negroes, Nigerians, Swedes, Poles, Portuguese, and a fair sprinkling of the "down-and-outs" of Europe. When the work was at its height over ten thousand men were engaged.

The problem of controlling these men was a difficult one. At a spot near Ypres where the shells were so numerous that there was scarcely a field that didn't contain two or three thousand half buried, we had to erect our own dump, and, in fact, build a small town. We made roads across the shell-pitted areas, laid a railroad for transporting workers and goods, installed electric light and a water supply, generated our own current, besides building factories and dwellings for a thousand people.

To maintain order, I formed a Police Force and set up my own court. The cases I tried were usually of two kinds, petty theft and attempted murder. The former were usually dealt with by my assistant, the superintendent of the dump, who, besides filling that position was also Lord Mayor, Chief Magistrate, Counsel for the Crown, Head Jailer, Home Secretary, and Director of Public Prosecutions!

When a case was more serious it was brought before me. Stabbing cases were frequent, and our justice was rough and ready. If guilty, the man was clapped into the prison he had helped to build, where he served his term on bread and water and one blanket!

My Life of Thrills.

If, however, a death occurred on the dumps, whatever the cause, I was arrested—by the French authorities—and "bailed out" pending the inquiry. It was a Gilbedtian situation, for after the official inquiry had effected my release, I was called upon to make another as being the only man who knew anything about the affairs in my little "kingdom."

At one time my wage bill was £30,000 a week! Just after the war France experienced a shortage of Treasury notes, and by arrangement with the Chamber of Commerce I was allowed to issue my own currency. These notes were printed slips bearing the words: "Good for One (Five or Ten) Francs . . . F. N. Pickett," and were accepted for exchange throughout France.

The actual work of breaking up the dumps never lacked thrills. The shells had to be split by a special machine, the explosive extracted, and the metal set aside. The metal—brass, copper, and steel—found a ready sale, but the explosives were useless, and millions of pounds' worth had to be burnt. Despite the dangerous nature of the work I lost only twenty men during eight years.

A Terrible Task.

All the time I was in France my sole partner was my five-year-old son; incidentally he was the "fils" of Messrs. Pickett et Fils! One day he came running back to my house saying that all the workers were fleeing from their posts. I hurried out to discover the cause. A burly Chinese was standing near a large pile of shells. He was picking them up one by one and, holding the fuse in his hand, crashing the brass holders to the ground, thus breaking them up twice as quickly as the machine ordinarily used for the purpose, and about a million times more dangerous. It was only a miracle that saved the whole countryside from being blown up.

Vincent Richards, "Babe Ruth," Suzanne Lenglan and Walter Hagen on the roof garden of Vancouver hotel just before Hagen played his exhibition match on the new "Langara" golf course at South Vancouver.

THE PLUMMERS' WORKROOM

Caleb and his daughter were at work together in their usual working-room, which served them for their ordinary living-room as well; and a strange place it was. There were houses in it, finished and unfinished, for Dolls of all stations in life. Suburban tenements for Dolls of moderate means; kitchens and single apartments for Dolls of the lower classes; capital town residences for Dolls of high estate. Some of these establishments were already furnished according to estimate, with a view to the convenience of Dolls of limited income; others could be fitted on the most expensive scale, at a moment's notice, from whole shelves of chairs and tables, sofas, bedsteads, and upholstery. The nobility and gentry and public in general, for whose accommodation these tenements were designed, lay, here and there, in baskets, staring straight up at the ceiling; but in denoting their degrees in society, and confining them to their respective stations (which experience shows to be lamentably difficult . . .), the makers of these Dolls had far improved on Nature, who is often forward and perverse; for they, not resting on such arbitrary marks as satin, cotton-print, and bits of rag, had superadded striking personal differences which allowed of no mistake. Thus, the Doll-lady of Distinction had wax limbs of perfect symmetry; but only she and her compeers; the next grade in the social scale being made of leather; and the next of coarse linen stuff. As to the common-people, they had just so many matches out of tinder boxes for their arms and legs, and there they were—established in their sphere at once, beyond the possibility of getting out of it.

There were various other samples of his handicraft, besides Dolls, in Caleb Plummer's room. There were Noah's Arks, in which the Birds and Beasts were an uncommonly tight fit, I assure you; though they could be cramped in anyhow, at the roof, and rattled and shaken into the smallest compass. By a bold poetical license, most of these Noah's Arks had knockers on the doors; inconsistent appendages perhaps, as suggestive of morning callers and a Postman, yet a pleasant finish to the outside o the building. There were scores of melancholy little carts which, when the wheels went round, performed most doleful music. . . . There were little tumblers in red breeches, incessantly swarming up high obstacles of red tape, and coming down, head first, on the other side; and there were innumerable old gentlemen of respectable, not to say venerable appearance . . . . flying over horizonal pegs, inserted, for the purpose, in their own street doors. There were beasts of all sorts; horses in particular, of every breed, from the spotted barrel on four pegs, with a small tippet for a mane, to the thoroughbred rocker on his highest mettle. As it would have been hard to count the dozens upon dozens of grotesque figures that were ever ready to commit all sorts of absurdities on the turning of a handle . . . for very little handles will move men and women to as strange performances, as any Toy was ever made to undertake. In the midst of all these objects, Caleb and his daughter sat at work. . . .

The care imprinted in the lines of Caleb's face, and his absorbed and dreamy manner, which would have sat well on some alchemist or abstruse student, were at first sight an odd contrast to his occupation, and the trivialities about him. But trivial things, invented and pursued for bread, become very serious matters of fact; and, apart from this consideration, I am not at all prepared to say, myself, that if Caleb had been a Lord Chamberlain, or a Member of Parliament, or a lawyer, or even a great speculator, he would have dealt in toys one whit less whimsical; while I have a very great doubt whether they would have been as harmless.—From Dickens, in "The Cricket on the Hearth."

Father to Son.

Willie—"Pa, the teacher wants me to bring in a sentence using the word 'tradition.' What is tradition?"

Pa—"Tradition is something handed down from generation to generation."

And Willie wrote, "My pants are a tradition."

WORK WORN PEOPLE

Find New Health by Improving Their Blood.

If you feel run down, it means that your blood is thin and watery, that your vitality is low. You do not sleep well and are tired when you rise in the morning. You find no pleasure in your meals and are listless and dispirited at your work. You have no energy to enjoy yourself.

Thousands of men are run down by anxieties of work. Thousands of women are broken down by their household toil, with tired limbs and aching backs. Thousands of girls are pale, listless and without attraction. It all means the same thing—thin and watery blood, vitality run down, anaemia, poor appetite, palpitating heart, short breath.

Do not submit to this. Get new blood and with it new vitality. There is no difficulty in doing this. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills build up and enrich the blood, which brings with it new health and vitality. The man, woman or girl who takes Dr. Williams' Pink Pills is never run down. Their friends notice how energetic they are, what a fine appetite they have and how much they enjoy life.

You can get these pills through any dealer in medicine, or by mail at 50 cents a box from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

Java Woman, Chemist, Holds Post as Sugar Scientist.

Miss G. Wilbrink, of Cheribon, Java, holds a rare position for a woman. She is the chief director of the important governmental sugar control station.

Last Should Be First.

"Is it not peculiar that the encores are so much more enjoyable than the listed numbers on the program?"

"So much so that I think they should be given first."

The Sisters.

The Martha-in-me filled her days
With tasks devoid of joy and praise:
She polished well the furniture;
She made the locks and bolts secure;
She rubbed the ivory of the keys;
She filled the lamps with barren ease;
She made the windowss shine and glow;
She washed the linen clean as snow.

The Mary-in-me did not stay
At home, as Martha did, each day;
She held aloof like some wild bird
Whose music is but seldom heard.
My Martha felt a little shy
Of Mary, as she passed her by,
And one day hid the cloth and broom
With which she garnishes my room.
When Mary saw, she paused and pressed
A hand of Martha to her breast,
And whispered: "We must learn to do
Our labors side by side, we two."

So have the sisters found delight
In doing fireside tasks aright:
Together they have come to see
The meaning in mahogany,
Which now they rub that there may pass
A pageant in its looking-glass;
They shine the windows that the bloom
Of earth be brought within my room;
They polish the piano keys
In readiness for harmonies. . . .

Mary and Martha in sisterhood
Dwell in me as sisters should:
They fashion a garment and kiss its hem,
And my house is in order because of them.

—Louise Ayres Garnett, in "Eve Walks in Her Garden."

Longer Pilgrimage.

Men and women live longer now than did those of half a century ago. The life span has been increased by seventeen years. The gain is the result of knowledge.

Sneezing?—Use Minard's Liniment.

Canadian World's Grain Champion

When Herman Trelle, of Wembley, Alberta, commenced homesteading in 1920, he confessed that he knew very little about farming. But when the awards were made at the 1926 International Live Stock Exposition and Grain and Hay Show at Chicago, Herman Trelle had broken a world's record; he had won the grand championships in both wheat and oats and was the first exhibitor to win both of these crowns.

The new wheat and oats champion was born at Kendrick, Idaho, 31 years ago and came to Alberta with his parents in 1900. He was educated at Edmonton and graduated from the University of Alberta as a civil engineer. During the war, he served with the Canadian Air Force, and in 1920, while on a survey in the Peace River country, northwest of Edmonton, he located on his original homestead of 160 acres. He now farms 800 acres and in ten years has made him self independent, in this new agricultural area where millions of acres of good land still await settlement.

In the sixteen years of the International competitions at Chicago, this is the fourteenth time the award of the grand championship has come to a Canadian. Trelle's prize-winning wheat was of the Marquis variety, which was originated at the Canadian Government Experimental Farm at Ottawa, by Dr. Charles Saunders in 1904. It was a sample from a 58-acre field, which yielded about 4,000 bushels or approximately 70 bushels to the acre. His prize-winning oats were Victory strain which yielded about 150 bushels to the acre.—Canadian National Railways photograph.

Indigestion.

The term does not imply the complete failure of digestion, but rather imperfect or faulty digestion. The symptoms of indigestion are not always clear, and uncomfortable sensations or even severe pain in the stomach may be present when digestion is normal. Indigestion results from one or more of four conditions. Either the stomach acts too rapidly and pushes the food on into the intestine before it is ready for the second part of digestion, or it moves too slowly, so that the food does not reach the intestine promptly for the completion of its digestion there, or else the secretion of gastric juice is at fault, too much causing acidity, and too little requiring a long time to digest the ordinary meal. Sometimes the stomach is of improper shape, and the unfortunate possessor of such an organ will be more or less of a despeptic all his life, since the misshapen stomach is unable to pass the food along promptly, and its secretion is also usually defective.

Pain is one of the most common symptoms of indigestion, but it is also an unreliable one, for it may be due to a variety of conditions, some of them entirely independent of the stomach; thus, a displaced kidney, an ulcer of the intestine or even chronic appendicitis may cause intermittent or continuous stomach ache. Nausea or vomiting is also a prominent symptom in many cases of beginning indigestion.

In all longstanding cases a very painstaking and thorough examination should be made to determine the underlying fault and to make sure that the trouble is really in the stomach and not in some other abdominal organ. Chronic dyspeptics are nearly all of low vitality, and they usually suffer from an insufficiency of lime in the system, in consequence of which they are likely to fall victims to infectious disease whenever it appears in epidemic form.

The treatment of dyspepsia depends so entirely on the nature of the casual condition that it is impossible to give an outline of it that would apply generally; but naturally it is largely dietetic. Sufferers usually know from sad experience what sort of food to avoid and what they can take with comparative freedom from pain and discomfort.

CHILDHOOD CONSTIPATION

Constipated children can find prompt relief through the use of Baby's Own Tablets. The Tablets are a mild but thorough laxative which never fail to cerning them Mrs. Gaspard Daigle, Dedriving out constipation and indigestion; colds and simple fevers. Concerning tem Mrs. Gaspard Daigle, Demain, Que., writes: "Baby's Own Tablets have been of great benefit to my little boy, who was suffering from constipation and indigestion. They quickly relieved him and now he is in the best of health." The Tablets are sold by medicine dealers or by mail at 25c a box from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

"Pips," "Peeps," and "Pep-pis."

The old controversy as to the correct pronunciation of Samuel Pepys' last name has been revivied as the result of the christening of Pepys Avenue, in Barnet, Eng.

Some years ago, A. H. Blake, after an investigation of evidence, reported to the Library Association in London in favor of Peeps," but this was in direct opposition to the practice of the Cottenham Pepys, one of whom, when addressed as "Peeps," retorted, "My name, sir, is Peppis." One, at least, of the diarist's contemporaries would have recognized neither of these. James Carcasse clerk in the office of Pepys, in his "Lucida Intercalla," published in 1679, rhymes Pepys with lips, clearly suggesting that he knew his chief as "Pips."—Manchester Guardian.

Minard's Liniment,—ever reliable.

An Old-Time Inn.

At such a time, one little roadside inn, snugly sheltered behind a great elm-tree with a rare seat for idlers encircling its capacious bole, addressed a cheerful front toward the traveler, as a house of entertainment ought, and tempted him with many mute but significant assurances of a comfortable welcome. The ruddy signboard perched up in the tree with its golden letters winking in the sun, ogled the passer-by from among the green leaves, like a jolly face, and promised good cheer. The horse-trough, full of clear fresh water, and the ground below it sprinkled with droppings of fragrant hay, made every horse that passed prick up his ears. The crimson curtains in the lower rooms, and the pure white hangings in the little bed-chambers above, beckoned, Come in! with every breath of air. —Dickens.

Sifting the Evidence.

Lawyer—"Have you any grounds for straining the points in this case?"

Witness—"Only to make it more clear, sir."

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Wild Grapes for Jelly.

I saw them, among peaches and melons and early apples, on the fruit stand of a Greek. They were set humbly at one side of a brilliant display—a straggly, leaf-strewn heap. Pyramids of domesticated fruits, with their tidy red-and-yellow glaze, put to shame those unkempt clusters, and tame grapes, packed so neatly in their fresh splint baskets, cast scorn upon them. . . . I sniffed their spicy fragrance, weighed a dusky bunch in my hand, picked off a longlegs scrambling atop of the pile, and ender by transferring all I dared of it to my kitchen table.

Now if I were to advise any one as to the best of all ways to make wild-grape jelly, I should say, begin by gathering the grapes yourself. This will give you a start in blossoming time, when you can locate your vineyard by its smell, for not all vines that look thrifty bear grapes. You will find occasion to pass that way now and then during the summer, to take a wary glance at those swelling balls of jade beneath the leaves. . . . At length comes a golden day, which your heightened conscience tells you is the very time: while the sun is still hot in mid-heaven, but the wind blows cool against your cheek, with a touch of frost. And you go to bring in your crop. Perhaps you will make the expedition a little family festival, with provisions in baskets, and a book for the half-hour rest; perhaps it will be a quiet morning jaunt with a friend. In either case, the world is well lost, for the time. . . . With what pride in your harvest do you come laden home! . . .

The sense of intimacy with those grapes goes into your jelly-making, and even, in some mysterious way, into your jelly. It is all your own, from twig to table. For wild grapes are every man's harvest, choosing their own trellis of boundary fences and stone walls along the roadsides. They yield their riches to those who know them best and who most desire them. If you have found them, then it is you only for whom they have ripened, a free gift of nature's bounty.

Even though I had to gather my grapes from the fruit-stand, the jelly-making itself was a joy, from the moment I turned the basket on its side, and watched the tiny woodland insects scurrying for cover, to the moment of pasting the labels on the glasses with "Wild" written particularly large and plain. It took me out of the house to half-forgotten country lanes; and brought me home again to visions of little epicurean feats I should plan for the discriminating, with wild-grape jelly as the crown—a dainty to stir the imagination as well as to please the taste. . . . The subtle play of colors in the dark globes, turning royally to purple as they drained, their bloomy roundness and firmness, their perfume, like that of a sun-smitten vine, their sharp, wild taste, even remembered sounds, songs of birds and hum of bees above the wild-grape tangle, these were the material of poetry as well as of jelly.—From "Speaking of Home," by Lillian H. Tryon.

Fishing Through Ice.

The Eskimos have a novel idea for comfort. They build their igloos on the ice, then cut a hole through the floor, and have fresh fish for supper.

This is where a number of us got the idea of fishing through the ice in more comfort than ordinarily is possible in cold weather. We construct a house of canvas or old grain-sacks, large enough to hold a bench or two, and have it on runners. The roof must slope well to carry off rain. A hole is cut in the floor of ice and everything is set for the party. If one wishes, a small stove may be kept in the house to make fire for warmth and to cook fish while catching more. Frequently the best fishing comes during windy or stormy weather, but the fisherman who is equipped like this can keep right on. Six or eight lines can be hooked to the edges of the benches for each man. If the wind moves the house, anchor it to the ice by catching a hook in a hole cut for the purpose.

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