

KITCHENER'S MOB



By Jas. NORMAN HALL.

CHAPTER VIII—(Cont'd.)

"Missed the blighter!" he said. Then he told me that it wasn't a good place for a sniper's nest at all. For one thing, it was too far back, nearly a half-mile from the German trenches. Furthermore, it was a mistake to plant a nest in a solitary clump of willows such as this: a clump of trees offers too good an aiming mark for artillery, much better to make a position right out in the open. However, so far he had not been annoyed by shell fire. A machine gun had searched for him, but he had adequate cover from machine-gun fire.

"But, blimy! You ought to 'a' eard the row 'en the bullets was a smack-in' against the sandbags! Somebody was a knockin' at the door, I give you my word!"

However, it wasn't such a "dusty little coop," and he had a good field of fire. He had registered four hits during the day, and he proudly displayed four new notches on a badly notched butt in proof of the fact.

"There's a big 'ole 'ere the artill'ry pushed in their parapet last night. That's 'ere I caught me bloke one, 'bout a 'arf-hour ago. A bloke goes by every little while 'en fergets to duck 'is napper. Tyke yer field-glasses an' watch me clip the next one. Quarter left it is, this side the old 'ouse with the 'ole in the wall."

I focused my glasses and waited. Presently he said, in a very cool, matter-of-fact voice:

"There's one comin'. See 'im? 'E's carryin' a plank. You can see it stickin' up above the parapet. 'E's a-go'n' to get a nasty one if 'e don't duck 'en he comes to that 'ole."

I found the moving plank and followed it along the trench as it approached nearer and nearer to the opening; and I was guilty of the most unprofessional conduct, for I kept thinking, as hard as I could, "Duck, Fritz! Whatever you do, duck when you come to that hole!" And surely enough, he did. The plank was lowered into the trench just before the opening was reached, and the top of it reappeared again, a moment later, on the other side of the opening. The sniper was greatly disappointed.

"Now, wouldn't that give you the camel's hump?" he said. "I believe you're a Jonyer to me, matey."

Presently another man carrying a plank went along the trench and he ducked, too.

"Grease off, Jerry!" said the butt-notcher. "Yer bringin' me bad luck. 'Owever, they prob'ly got that place taped. They lost one man there an' they won't lose another, not if they knows it."

I talked with many snipers at different parts of the line. It was interesting to get their points of view, to learn what their reaction was to their work. —The butt-notchers were very few. Although snipers invariably took pride in their work, it was the sportsman's pride in good marksmanship rather than the love of killing for its own sake. The general attitude was that of a corporal whom I knew.

He never fired hastily, but when he did pull the trigger, his bullet went true to the mark.

"You can't 'elp feelin' sorry for the poor blighters," he would say, "but it's us or them, an' every one you knows over means one of our blokes saved."

I have no doubt that the Germans felt the same way about us. At any rate, they thoroughly believed in the policy of attrition, and in carrying it out they often wasted thousands of rounds in sniping every yard of our parapet. The sound was deafening at times, particularly when there were ruined walls of houses or a row of trees just back of our trenches. The ear-splitting reports were hurled against them and seemed to be shattered into thousands of fragments, the sound rattling and tumbling on until it died away far in the distance.

III. Night Routine

Meanwhile, like furtive inhabitants of an infamous underworld, we remained hidden in our lairs in the daytime, waiting for night when we could creep out of our holes and go about our business under cover of darkness. Sleep is a luxury indulged in but rarely in the first-line trenches. When not on organized line working parties, and sent out in front of the trenches to mend the barbed-wire entanglements which are being constantly destroyed by artillery fire; or, in summer, to cut the tall grass and the weeds which would otherwise offer concealment to enemy listening patrols or bombing parties. Ration fatigues of twenty or thirty men per company went back to meet the battalion transport wagons at some point several miles in rear of the firing-line. There were trench supplies and stores to be brought up as well, and the never-finished business of mending and improving the trenches kept many off-duty men employed during the hours of darkness.

The men on duty in front of the trenches were always in great danger. They worked swiftly and silently, but they were often discovered, in which case the only warning they received was a sudden burst of machine-gun fire. Then would come urgent calls for "stretcher-bearers" and soon the wreckage was brought in over the parapet. The stretchers were set down in the bottom of the trench and hasty examinations made by the light of a flash lamp.

"'Ere's 'e caught it?" "Yer 'e, through the leg. Tyke 'is puttee off, one of you!"

"Easy, now! It's smashed the bone! Stick it, matey! We'll soon 'ave you as right as rain!"

"'E'r Gavd's sake, boys, go easy! It's givin' me 'ell! Let up! Let up! Just a minute!"

Many a conversation of this sort did we hear at night when the field-dressings were being put on. But even in his suffering Tommy never forgot to be unrighteously indignant if he had been wounded when on a working party. "What could he say to the women of England who would bring him fruit and flowers in hospital, call him a "poor brave fellow," and ask how he was wounded? He had enlisted as a soldier, and as a reward for his patriotism the Government had given him a shovel, 'an' 'ere I am, workin' like a bloomin' navvy, fillin' sandbags full o' France, w'en I up an' gets plugged!" The men who most bitterly resent the pick-and-shovel phase of army life were given a great deal of it to do for that very reason. One of my comrades was shot in the leg while digging a refuse pit. The wound was a bad one and he suffered much pain, but the humiliation was even harder to bear. What could he tell them at home?

"Do you think I'm a go'n' to s'y I was a-carryin' a sandbag full of old jam tins back to the refuse pit w'en Fritz gave me this 'ere one in the leg? Not so bloomin' likely! I was afraid I'd get one like this! Ain't it a rotten bit o' luck?"

If he had to be a casualty Tommy wanted to be an interesting one. He wanted to fall in the heat of battle, not in the heat of inglorious fatigue duty.

But there was more heroic work to be done: going out on listening patrol, for example. One patrol, consisting of a sergeant and a corporal and four or five privates, was sent out from each company. It was the duty of these men to cover the area immediately in front of the company line of trench, to see and hear without being discovered, and to report immediately any activity of the enemy, above or below ground, of which they might learn. They were on duty for from three to five hours, and might use a wide discretion in their prowlings, provided they kept within the limits of frontage allotted to their own company, and returned to the meeting-place where the change of reliefs was made. These requirements were not easily complied with, unless there were trees or other prominent landmarks standing out against the sky by means of which a patrol could keep its direction.

The work required, above everything else, cool heads and stout hearts. There was the ever-present danger of meeting an enemy patrol or bombing party, in which case, if they could not be avoided, there would be a hand-to-hand encounter with bayonets, or a noisy exchange of hand-grenades. There was danger, too, of a false alarm started by a nervous sentry. It needs but a moment for such an alarm to become general, so great is the nervous tension at which men live on the firing-line. Terrific fusillades from both sides followed while the listening patrols flattened themselves out on the ground, and listened, in no pleasant frame of mind, to the bullets whistling over their heads. But at night, and under the stress of great excitement, men fire high. Strange as it may seem, one is comparatively safe even in the open, when lying flat on the ground.

Bombing affairs were of almost nightly occurrence. Tommy enjoyed these extremely hazardous adventures which he called "carryin' a 'app'orth o' 'ate to Fritzle," a half-penny worth of hate, consisting of six or a dozen hand-grenades which he hurled into the German trenches from the far side of their entanglements. The more hardy spirits often worked their way through the barbed wire and, from a position close under the parapet, they waited for the sound of voices. When they had located the position of the sentries, they tossed their bombs over with deadly effect. The sound of the explosions called forth an immediate and heavy fire from sentries near and far; but living close under the very muzzles of the German rifles, the bombers were in no danger unless a party were sent out in search of them. This, of course, constituted the chief element of risk. The strain of waiting for developments was a severe one. I have seen men come in from a "bombing stunt" worn out and trembling from nervous fatigue. And yet many of them enjoyed it, and were sent out night after night. The excitement of the thing worked into their blood.

Throughout the summer there was a great deal more digging to do than fighting, for it was not until the arrival of an active service of Kitchener's armies that the construction of the double line of reserve or support trenches was undertaken. From June until September this work was pushed rapidly forward. There were also trenches to be made in advance of the original firing-line, for the purpose of connecting up advanced points and removing dangerous salients. At such times there was no loosing until we had reached a depth sufficient to protect us both from view and from fire. We picked and shoveled with might and main, working in absolute silence, throwing ourselves flat on the ground whenever a trench rocket was sent up from the German lines. Casualties were frequent, but this was inevitable, working, as we did, in the open, exposed to every chance shot of an enemy sentry. The stretcher-bearers lay in the tall grass close at hand awaiting the whispered word, "Stretcher-bearers this way!" and they were kept busy during much of the time we were at work, carrying the wounded to the rear.

(To be continued.)

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Making of Glass Mirrors First Developed in Venice. They say that a man's first thought on entering a room is, "Where is there a place to sit down?" but a woman's first thought is, "Where is there a mirror?" It has been woman's thought from time immemorial, for from time immemorial there have been mirrors.

It is only since the beginning of the sixteenth century that mirrors have been used as articles of household furniture and decoration, and there are few women of the present day who do not realize and make use of their artistic value in adorning their homes.

The mirrors of antiquity were principally of bronze, highly polished and about the size of an ordinary hand mirror. They were usually provided with a handle and sometimes were mounted on a stand. The principal feature of these ancient mirrors was the design incised on the back. They belong to the period about 400 to 500 B.C.

During the middle ages, from the twelfth to the end of the fifteenth century, pocket mirrors or small hand mirrors carried at the girdle were considered a necessary part of a lady's toilet.

The method of backing glass with metal for mirrors was well known in the middle ages, though steel and silver mirrors were almost exclusively used. It was in Venice that the making of glass mirrors on a commercial scale was first developed.

Fill your leaky hot-water bag with sand instead of water. Heat the sand in the oven and pour it into the bag through a funnel. It will retain the heat and do the work just as well as water.

"Good morning, Mrs. McCarty! How are all of your folks?" "All pretty well, exceptin' my old man. 'E's been enjoyin' poor health for some time, but this mornin' he complained of feelin' some better."

Food Control Corner

Rationing is a subject that is receiving much newspaper attention in Canada at present. It is a thing that is as new to us in theory and practice as war was three years and a half ago. That must be the only excuse for some things which are written.

The general assumption is that rationing can be carried out, just as some people thought price-fixing could, by a mere wave of a magic pen. When it is remembered, however, that Canada's seven and a half million people are scattered over an area greater than Europe the question at once arises: "Who is to see to the carrying out of the rationing scheme?" For rations mean that each family would be under an obligation not to eat more on any day or in any week than a certain set amount of particular foods.

It would not be hard to make a rule that so much bread should be used by each person at a meal. But how many million police would be wanted to attend to the execution of the order? Even the making of orders that would be fair in a large city as compared with a country home offers difficulties little thought of. In the Maritime Provinces fish is plentiful and comparatively cheap as in the West are wheat and beef. But more fish is not needed "at the front" to anything like the same extent that wheat and wheat most urgently are wanted.

What rationing plan could ignore the "customs of the country"? Yet immediately here a discrepancy arises. One might prescribe the use of beef and wheat in Canada by decree but its incidence would be unequal from the first. There is, however, one way in which the food saving could be made which is the whole end and object of rationing. It is by a voluntary pledge of each home. In three words this is nothing else than by unremitting patriotic saving of the foodstuffs that are known to be wanted by the allies. No amount of talking can make up for this. It is not a legal question at all but a moral one, which must be left to the conscience of each household head. There is no better way for the present in which those who cannot go to the trenches can actually help in the fight in

Europe for moral uprightness and pure ideals of life than in practicing in each home at all times of the day that honest carefulness to avoid waste which would have to be done under a compulsory rationing scheme. In a way this is a new factor which hitherto it has not been possible to utilize. The Canadian women is here especially indicated to aid. So far woman's work in the Dominion has had to do with Red Cross and similar works of mercy. This opens out the field enormously. Every woman who saves bread, beef and pork products is in fact and deed wielding an unseen weapon in the war as truly as her sisters behind the trenches are in caring for the broken and the maimed.

HOSPITAL EXPANSION IN B. C.

New Construction Adds 350 Beds With Augmented Treatment Facilities. Increased military hospital accommodation in British Columbia is being provided by the Military Hospitals Commission at Esquimalt and Vancouver. Approximately 200 beds are to be added to the Esquimalt centre, with augmented treatment facilities. In Vancouver about 150 beds are being added to the Shaughnessy Military Convalescent Hospital and a building for the accommodation of hydro-therapeutic equipment is under construction at the Military Annex of the Vancouver General Hospital.

The decision to develop the Esquimalt Hospital as a large centre for the care of Vancouver Island patients requiring special treatment, has been arrived at after much deliberation and visits to the premises by the Commission's architect and engineer. A standard wing of 150 beds is to be placed immediately north of the present administration building, while by erecting a new kitchen and dining pavilion and remodelling the administration building additional ward space to the extent of 50 beds will be obtained. A recreation hall is also to be erected on the adjacent grounds providing accommodation for concerts and entertainments, dances, and gymnastic games.

At Shaughnessy Military Convalescent Hospital 150 beds are being added by remodelling the entire upper floor, which in the early days of the building when it was used as a school, was abandoned as a useless attic.

Vocational training buildings are being erected at both Shaughnessy and Fairmont Hospitals, while the special treatment facilities for this district will, of course, be found at the Vancouver General Hospital Military Annex.

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The Unknown Quantity.

A young and pretty school teacher had some visitors one afternoon and thought she would show them what a good class she had. Calling up a bright little boy at the rear of the room she said to him:

"Johnny, if I gave you two cents and your father gave you three cents, how many would you have?"

"Seven," promptly replied Johnny.

The teacher blushed with embarrassment, but tried again. "You can't have understood, Johnny," she said.

"Listen, and I will repeat the question. If I gave you two cents and your father gave you three, how many would you have?"

"Seven," said Johnny again.

"I am surprised at you, Johnny," said the teacher. "How on earth could you have seven?"

"I got two in me pocket," said Johnny.

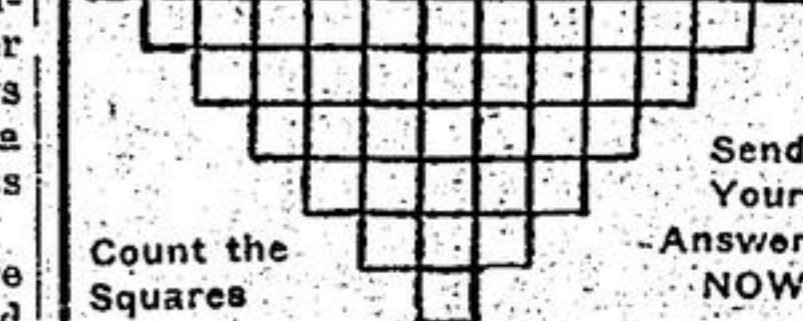
Where He Was At.

A certain British soldier's letter, according to PUNCH, runs thus: "I am sorry I cannot tell you where I am, because I am not allowed to say. But I venture to state that I am not where I was, but where I was before I left here to go where I have just come from."

Seed oats are likely to sell higher this spring and be harder to find than in any season within memory.

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The Housewife's Corner

WAR AND FOOD SERIES. No. 10—VEGETABLES

Generally speaking, people are more inclined to eat vegetables in summer than in winter. For one thing they are not so easy to get; for another thing, the system does not seem to demand them to the same extent.

To stop using vegetables in winter is to deprive the body of the best of tonics and, in war time, it means using more than one should of other foodstuffs which ought to be going overseas.

It is patriotic to eat vegetables. It means that you save meat and wheat. When you eat potatoes and carrots and onions you are not depriving the soldiers of anything, but you are saving meat and flour for them.

In Canada great quantities of vegetables are grown. On the farms especially the cellar is usually well stocked in winter with potatoes, carrots, onions, turnips and cabbage.

Great variety can be given to the daily menu by the use of vegetables. They are excellent for the children, more especially if they are mashed and put through a sieve. Doctors claim that the tired-out feeling that comes over people as spring approaches is due to lack of vegetables which contain much mineral matter, are invigorating and serve as a tonic to the system.

The winter vegetables are particularly good when combined with meats to make savory stews. Who could conceive of a tasty stew without its quota of carrots and onions?

The winter vegetables lend themselves to many forms of cooking. They can be used in stew, with soup, or covered with a simple sauce. The water in which vegetables are cooked should never be thrown away. It can be saved for soup or gravy.

It is best of all to bake or steam the vegetables. Then the valuable salts are not wasted. It is real patriotism to use vegetables. It is a rule that both the farmer and the city dweller may safely follow.

Dinner No. 6.
Pork Pie Baked Potatoes
Scalloped Cabbage with Cheese
Apple Fritters

Dinner No. 7.
Minced Ham with Gravy
Browned Potatoes
Cold Slaw
Dutch Apple Cake

Dinner No. 8.
Pork Croquettes Creamed Potatoes
Cabbage and Celery Salad
Apple Tapioca

Dinner No. 9.
Browned Hash Potato Soup
Cabbage and Olive Salad
Apple Pudding

Dinner No. 10.
Baked Ham Stuffed Baked Potatoes
Fried Cabbage
Apple Sauce Cake

Dinner No. 11.
Fried Ham with Cream Dressing
Mashed Brown Potatoes
Cabbage and Green Pepper
Apple Charlotte

Dinner No. 12.
Rolled Stuffed-Steak Riced Potatoes
Steamed Cabbage with Drawn Butter Sauce
Apple and Date Salad

Dinner No. 13.
Broiled Steak French Fried Potatoes
Creamed Cabbage with Cheese
Apple Sauce with Sponge Cake

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