

# WAR

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

## Stories

### "VANISHING CARAVANS"

Thrilling Novelette of War-Flying  
in the East, by  
CURTIS MITCHELL

AUG. 1st

20c

In Canada

25c

### "THREE LOUSY BUCKS"

Fighting Action Novelette  
By  
ANTHONY AUTUMN



EVERY OTHER THURSDAY

# WAR STORIES

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NEXT NUMBER ON SALE AUGUST 1st

JOIN THE BIG THREE GANG! Read:

WAR NOVELS

WAR BIRDS

# Bandages

By

WILL R. BIRD

Author of "Allied Tonsils," etc.

**Ever since Company H had come to the Nollens sector some nemesis seemed to stalk them. Strange, unexplainable catastrophies shattered their ranks. And now, the rest of the company, gripped by superstitious fear, threatened mutiny unless they were relieved.**

THERE was a glimmer of candle-light from a blanketed doorway. From a shell hole in a near-by wall came a glow of red as the sky behind it was lit by gun flashes. Up ahead Very lights rose and fell in their weird, wavering fashion. Night had settled again on the Nollens Front, another night of tense expectancy, and Sergeant Wayland halted a moment before the blanket door to glance about before stooping to enter the cellar. He mistrusted every shadow. He had reason to be wary. Ever since company H had come to the Nollens sector some nemesis seemed to stalk them.

On the night they had come into the line sinister luck had caused the Boche to send a rapid succession of whizzbangs into the trench they traveled, creating a panic and a welter of casualties. They had changed their plan of relief at the last hour, so it seemed hardly possible that the information could have reached the enemy, yet why did he shell the old disused trench they followed and completely ignore the usual route? And this relief catastrophe had only been the first of a series that followed. Each day of the four they had been in the Front trenches they had had heavy casualties, and these in spite of every precaution.

The sergeant descended the cellar steps and saluted his company commander, Captain Howard. "You sent for me, sir?" he inquired.

Captain Howard had a well-worn trench map before him. He looked up, a lean, soldierly man, now haggard and weary-eyed. "I did, sergeant," he answered. "Something has got to be done to check our—our mishaps. If we continue to lose men as we have the last four days the morale of the company will be ruined. I want you to consider yourself on special duty from now until the mystery is solved. I've arranged it so that you are free from all routine duties and I want you to play sleuth and check our losses."

"But, sir, I'm afraid you've picked the wrong man."

"No, sergeant. You are an original of the company. You know every man in it, and you have the reputation of being a parade soldier."

"Yes, sir," said Wayland. "I try my best with the drill."

The captain sat forward and there was an eagerness in his voice. "That's just why I want you, sergeant. You are supposed to be a drill hound and no one will suspect you of trying to be a spy catcher."

"Spy catcher! Spies, sir?"



*Wayland caught one of the wounded men. "Your name?" he shouted, his voice penetrating the tumult.*

Captain Howard's jaw tightened. "You said it, sergeant," he said grimly. "There are spies in this company, there must be, and I want you to locate them."

"It must be a mistake, sir," protested Wayland. "I know every man. They're as good a lot as ever I've seen."

"Nevertheless we lost eighteen men coming in—on a route that hadn't been shelled in a month. The next night we lost a wiring party, every man killed by a burst of machine-gun fire—and the gun would have had to be specially placed after nightfall in order to range on them. Our ration party went out by the sunken road on the next night,

a much longer walk than needed, in order to avoid shell fire. Yet they were caught at the corner as they returned, and the Boche couldn't have timed his shooting unless he had information."

"It's been bad, sir," Wayland admitted. "But wasn't there an officer here to make investigation? It was rumored along the trench."

"Lieutenant Ellis was sent from regimental headquarters at my request. I asked him to make investigations."

"Did he find anything worth while, sir?"

"I'll never know," returned the captain. "He was killed as he was coming to report."

Wayland tensed. He had not heard this news. "How did it happen, sir?" he asked, puzzled by the captain's manner.

"Through carelessness, I'd say, if the other things hadn't happened. He was out inspecting the place where the wiring party was killed, and slipped a Mills bomb into his pocket before he went. When he came back he forgot the bomb and was coming back this way when in some manner it detonated in his pocket."

"That's strange," said Wayland. "I've carried them in my pocket many times. The safety pins can't work loose. And every grenade we have has been tested."

"The officer was killed just the same. Mangled frightfully in that short communication trench that crosses just back of the medico's place."

"It's queer business," said Wayland, shaking his head. "I'll do what I can, sir."

"Good," said the captain. "Don't tell anyone what you are doing, and report here in the morning. There'll be another officer here from headquarters and I want you to go around with him."

Wayland left the dugout with a new sense of responsibility, determined to do or die.

**L**IEUTENANT HART reported the next morning. He was the officer from headquarters and he followed every clue in connection with the unfortunate Ellis with the keenness of a questing hound. Sergeant Wayland accompanied him to the trench in which the officer had been killed and they soon found the identical spot. There was a sickening amount of blood spattered about the packed earth floor and the walls of the trench were partially wrecked. Even bits of uniform were clinging to the clay. "One wouldn't think a Mills grenade had so much power," said Hart after his examination. "They're bad medicine."

Wayland agreed with him, but his mind gripped on the detail. They went to the front trench and passed from post to post, asking endless questions. The sentries seemed anxious to assist

in any way, but could tell nothing of account and each and every man was superstitious. "This bloody hole is haunted," growled one. "They say the Krauts killed a bunch of prisoners here and that bad luck follows every guy that comes in. I wish I was to hell out of it."

"They say he's got one of our planes and his airmen come over in it and take pictures of everything," said another, "and that's how he knows exactly where we're at."

Every soldier was jumpy. A day or so more of the unusual and they would not be reliable. It was serious.

"Is there any place from where I can have a good look at the enemy trenches?" asked Hart.

"On the left flank, sir," said Wayland. "We have a machine-gun post there, and a lane in the wire for our patrols to use."

They went to the spot. The trench had entered an old cellar and in the extra space the gun crew rested. There were six men in the post and it was one of the most advanced strong points on the company front. Directly in front, a long depression reached to the German lines, low ground that only the cellar gun could sweep. It was an important defensive position. Yet, in some miraculous manner, there had not been a single casualty near the cellar.

A stretcher-bearer was snuggled in a sunny nook in one corner, engrossed in a book. He was a lanky, lazy-appearing fellow, with blond hair.

Hart used a cunning peep hole between the sandbags and looked long toward the enemy. "No-Man's-Land is certainly littered with wreckage at this corner," he remarked. "But the rest of it affords little cover for patrols."

"You're right, sir," said the corporal in charge of the post. "We can sweep our area with this gun, and the Krauts can shoot up every yard in the center. There's hardly a shell hole out there deep enough to hide a man. It's hard, chalky soil."

"Have you ever investigated these ruins directly in front?" asked the officer.

"Yes, sir," said the corporal. "We went out there the first night, but there's nothing suspicious. Just a coupla cellars with a lot of rubbish around them. At night we always spray a few rounds there every half hour to make sure the Krauts don't crawl in. We keep them out of it."

"But he used to have a post there once, sir," spoke up one of the men. "There were some stick bombs and one of his gas masks there, and Jim found a water bottle the other night."

"Who's Jim?" asked the officer, rather sharply.

The stretcher-bearer grinned. "That's me, sir," he said. "I'm Jim Buck. I was out the first night with the patrol and I went out again to see if everything looked the same."

"Hmm!" said Hart. "I didn't know that this company put stretcher-bearers on patrol work." He had another look through the peep hole, then left the post, requesting the corporal to follow him.

When they were a few bags distant he halted. "Why do you allow that man to go out alone to those cellars?" he demanded. "And why does a stretcher-bearer go out with the patrols?"

"We—well, sir, it's this way," stammered the corporal. "Jim always goes with the patrol because he likes that work, and he has the best sense of direction of anyone in the platoon. He sneaked out the other night to look for souvenirs. He's always after them, sir."

"I can vouch for him, sir," added Wayland. "Captain Howard has recommended him for bravery. He went out and brought in a wounded man the last time we were in the trenches."

"Yes, sir, he's one of the best," the corporal added eagerly. "He always stays on a front post and we're glad to have him, for he's as lucky as they make them. There's never been a shell or anything landed near us, and the last crew that was in there lost over half their men. The Krauts used to shoot there all the time."

"I'm glad to hear of your luck," said Hart. "I know you're using your judgment all the time. There's really no

harm in what Buck's done, but it's a little out of the ordinary. There's no telling what these boys will do for souvenirs——"

It was fairly quiet along the lines and the officer sat on a sun-warmed firestep and related several incidents of men collecting souvenirs in odd places. He was very friendly and talkative and the corporal spun several yarns in turn. As they rose to go Hart smiled in a genial manner. "Corporal," he said lightly, "I'll bet that Buck has been out there every night, pawing over those old timbers and brick."

The corporal grinned rather sheepishly. "You're right, sir, he has. But I'll hold him in for a while."

"No," said Hart quickly, and his smile faded. "Don't tell him a thing I've said or asked, and let him go on as he has been doing."

"Very good, sir." The corporal saluted and returned to his post. Wayland stared at the officer. "I'll gamble my life on Jim," he said earnestly. "He's one of the best."

"So was Ellis," retorted Hart. "And in a case of this kind we've got to play safe. Now I'm going to turn in and I want you to arrange for a demonstration of some kind on the right flank as soon as it is dark. Have the trench mortar crew put over a short barrage, that will do it. As soon as it is dark I'm going out to those cellars and I don't want you to tell corporal of the post or anyone that I am going there."

"Very good, sir," said Wayland. He saluted and left. He could not understand the officer's motive, and his mind had held to the place in the trench where Ellis had been killed. He went there and climbed the banks to make a complete search. He was rewarded. In a hummock of weeds he found the top of a Mills grenade. It was intact, and the safety pin was still in position. He had proved what he had suspected. The bomb that Ellis had carried in his pocket had not accidentally detonated, but had been exploded by the concussion of another grenade. Some person had hurled a bomb at the officer with deadly aim. Who could have done it?

The trench was straight and wide and in broad daylight no man could approach without being seen.

Wayland went back to the front and asked questions of the sentry on duty at the mouth of the C.T. The soldier reported having seen Ellis go up the trench on the previous afternoon, but declared that no one had followed him. That cleared all chance of any person stealing up behind the victim.

The sergeant climbed the trench sides again and explored. He found only one possible concealment for a bomb thrower, a shell crater not far back of the dressing station. Wayland slipped back to the trench and walked the roundabout way to the aid post. It was a concrete emplacement that had been a strong point when the Boche occupied Nollens. Now it was useful to shelter the wounded, though nearer the front than was usual for dressing stations. Blood-blackened stretchers by the doorway were grisly proof of H. company's disasters. Inside the pill-box Captain Smythe, the kindly, hard-working medico, had everything in readiness for the casualties of another night. He was a broad-shouldered, dynamic man, working alone much of the time, gentle as a woman, strong as a bear. His blue eyes were gimlet points whenever he faced malingerers, but his zeal for the welfare of the men was well-known. The darkness of the big chamber blurred things for Wayland but he saw the medico by a small window in the pill-box wall, an opening that was the top of a walled-in doorway, walled up when the front had changed to the rear. The medical officer had a hand mirror and by the small ray of sunlight was evidently trying to observe his throat.

"Good morning, sir," said the sergeant. "Anything wrong with your windpipe?"

Captain Smythe smiled. "Not yet," he said, "but I've a touch of sore throat and the way things have been happening up here I've been expecting poisoned water or food. We've had more than double our share of bad luck."

The medico was fiercely in earnest.

"Something does seem wrong," Wayland agreed. "But what?"

"Spies!" The doctor's hiss was sibilant. "There's dirty treachery up here somewhere. Some one should investigate. Why doesn't headquarters do something?"

"They tried to," said the sergeant. "They sent Ellis, the officer who was killed by a bomb over there in Smoke Trench, and they've sent another here to-day, Lieutenant Hart."

"Hart, eh! I'm glad they're doing something. I heard about Ellis, and I'll bet that was another spy trick. That bomb must have been tampered with or it would never have exploded in his pocket. I hope this new man is sharper."

"I believe he's clever," said Wayland. "Tell me, has Jim Buck been here this morning?"

"No," said Smythe, after a moment's thought. "I haven't seen him since yesterday afternoon. He was here just before Ellis was killed, for it was he who answered the call they sent for first aid. Did you want him?"

"Yes," said Wayland, "but I'm going up to the front trench and I'll see him there. Some of the boys are complaining of gas sickness."

The sergeant surprised himself by the ease with which he constructed his excuse. He hated the suspicion that had nagged him regarding the blond stretcher-bearer, but after knowing that Buck had been at hand when Ellis was killed he could not still it. Yet not for worlds would he let the medico know what he was thinking. Smythe was impetuous, and had always evinced particular admiration for company H. If he had an inkling of the existing suspicions he might make drastic moves.

"We'll have to watch the boys," said the captain. "The poor devils will trump up anything to get clear of this area and one can hardly blame them."

Wayland agreed, then hurried away. In case the medico might later ask questions he hunted out Buck and advised him not to listen seriously to any sick pleas the men might make during

the day. Then he went to his dugout to sleep.

IT was night and misty black when the sergeant emerged. He had slept longer than he had intended and now lost no time in getting to the front trench. He passed along the posts, warning sentries to keep alert, but such cautions were not needed. Every man was as taut as a bowstring. Probably each was wondering where the next casualties would occur, and praying that he would not be there. Wayland went along to the cellar post and a brief inspection showed that Jim Buck was absent. "He slipped out to have a look in that third hollow," said the corporal in a low voice. "It's so dark he isn't taking much of a chance. He knows every foot of the ground and we won't shoot till he's back."

The sergeant did not answer. He knew that Lieutenant Hart was also out in the misty dark and he wondered if they would meet. Suddenly, sharp and clear above the usual night strafing, came the quick reports of an automatic. Then another chimed in. Wayland darted out the patrol lane. "Don't shoot," he called as he went.

He remembered the lay of the land and ran to his right, escaping all the depressions and had blundered into the first ruin before he realized it. There were scuffling sounds just ahead of him and he ran that way, his pistol ready. "Who's there?" he demanded.

Jim Buck's voice answered, after a brief pause. "It's me, sergeant, Jim Buck. Come and give me a hand, will you?"

Wayland found his way among the loose brick and débris, hurrying, fearful lest the Boche should start shooting. Buck was supporting Lieutenant Hart. The officer was unconscious and had an ugly welt on his head as if he had been struck by a blunt instrument. Just a few feet away were two dim figures. The sergeant bent over them. They were both Germans and both had been riddled by bullets.

Wayland and Buck carried the officer in and took him to the dressing

station. Captain Smythe examined him and then shook his head. "I can't do anything for him here," he said. "He's got a bad head bruise. There's an ambulance due at the crossroads—I've got a couple of casualties for it—and we'll ship him right along."

The medico himself assisted in carrying the stretchers to a sunken road up which the ambulances could come at night. Wayland was disappointed. He did not think that Hart was severely hurt and he wanted very much to hear his report. But he helped in putting the three stretchers in the ambulance. Both the other casualties were trench-mortar men. They had put on the small strafe, as ordered, but the quick retaliation had caught them. One man seemed almost dead and his mate was simply swathed in bandages.

When they had gone the sergeant went to hear Buck's story. "I was crawling around that brick heap out there when I heard voices," he said. "I listened and knew they were speaking German. I was watching to see what they were up to, and wished that I had a bomb or rifle, when, bang went a pistol not ten feet from me. One of the Germans got up and fell again, but was shooting all the time. The man who fired first had cover, though, and he emptied his pistol into the pair. Then he rushed over to them. He got there too soon, for the Krauts had life enough to tangle with him and one of them must have knocked him out. They were piled in a heap when I got to them. You know the rest."

There did not seem to be anything that Wayland could do. He whispered with the corporal and verified the fact that Buck had gone out unarmed. It was impossible to get out again to examine the dead men for the Boche machine guns had become hysterical and flares went up intermittently. He went back to Captain Howard's dugout and reported all he had learned. "You should have told Hart about the bomb head you found and then he would have been on his guard," said the captain.

"Then you think it was Jim Buck who hit him?" asked Wayland.



"I do," said the captain. "We'll only wait until we hear Hart's story, but we can't wait long so you must get a passage right now to the clearing station where they took him. Get his report and come right back, so that if Buck is the man we can stop him before he pulls any more stunts."

The sergeant hurried on his mission. He was now fully roused to the import of his work and a cold certainty that Buck was the man they sought had implanted itself in his mind. He secured a sidecar from headquarters and they traveled with such speed that he was at the hospital shortly after the ambulance arrived. An orderly took his papers—and Wayland was astonished at the speed with which two officers arrived to meet him. One was a major. "Come this way," he ordered. "We were just going to get in touch with your regiment."

In bewilderment the sergeant followed. On a stretcher, just as he had been removed from the ambulance, lay Lieutenant Hart, dead!

The colonel pointed and as Wayland's eyes followed the finger the sergeant gasped in amazement. Dark blood stains discolored the officer's tunic breast, and a small, blood-crusting slit was very distinct. He had been stabbed to death!

"The driver says that he never halted on his way and that he had only three casualties on board. Perhaps he tells the truth, but look over here." The colonel pointed again.

On a second stretcher lay one of the men the sergeant had helped place in the ambulance, the trench mortar man who had been so badly wounded. He, too, was dead, ghastly white beneath his bloody bandages. The major pulled back the blankets that hid the man's hands. They had been clinched in agony as he relinquished life—and in one was a small German trench knife, its blade darkened with blood!

Sergeant Wayland gasped again. He was baffled, astounded. At length he composed himself enough to ask after the third man who had ridden in the ambulance. They took him to a ward

where the fellow lay and it needed no second glance to see that he was in a very precarious condition. "But who did it?" blurted Wayland. "I saw these men put in the ambulance and neither of them had strength enough to kill Hart. Who did it?"

"There's the mystery," said the major. "Meanwhile you must identify yourself and sign an affidavit I will prepare. There must be a thorough investigation."

Briefly, Wayland explained his errand to the hospital, then signed the papers and returned to his company. The driver of the ambulance was detained for more questioning.

Captain Howard could not remain seated as the sergeant told him what had happened. The officer paced his dugout. The menace that hung over his command was plainly unnerving him. "As soon as it's morning we'll go and investigate the trench-mortar crew," he said sharply. "You go up front and keep as close a watch as you can over Buck. Be careful, sergeant, and trust no one. And whatever you see or hear that's not according to Hoyle, come and tell me. If you don't, it may be too late. You'll remember that Tucker, who was at the cellar post, asked permission to see me as soon as he came in from that wiring party. I've wondered if he had seen anything out of the way. It was strange that all that party should have been wiped out the way they were. Even if the Boche did have his machine gun in an unusual position, you'd think that some of the men would have had time to dive to a crater or some cover."

"It was an exposed place where they were working, though," said the sergeant. "They were closing that old patrol path on the right, but as you say, some of them should have had time to duck."

"Well, it was too bad," said the captain. "I do wish I knew what Tucker wanted to tell me. I believe he must have discovered something."

Wayland went forward again and made another tour of the posts. Each sentry seemed very anxious to have him stay and talk with them. They all had heard of the murder of Hart and fresh

fear was haunting them. The sergeant was as cheering as he could make himself be and mentioned to every one the fact that they had only one more night in the trenches. "And I hope we never see this cursed hole again," said the first man he talked with. All along the line his words were echoed.

AT dawn Wayland went back to the captain and found his commander tense with excitement. "Here's a message that's just come from the battalion on our right," he said. "Listen. 'A prisoner captured last night reports that enemy intend attack on Pimple. Date uncertain'."

The "Pimple" was a knob of high ground at the rear of the company area. The concrete stronghold used as a dressing station had been its chief post. Other well-built defenses ringed the slope and had not been demolished. Owing to the peculiar lay of the ground in front, the Pimple was of no particular value to the Americans, but when occupied by the Germans it afforded a sweep of fire that dominated a valley entrance behind Nollens and gave a vantage point for observation. There had been several strenuous attempts to recapture it, but the Americans had always held their ground and now had the position thickly wired and deeply entrenched. It seemed almost impregnable, but the series of calamities that had befallen company H had sapped its fighting spirit. In a crucial test all would depend on the conduct of the men.

"Come with me," said the captain. "We'll go to the trench mortars dugout, and from there we'll inspect every possible place in which a telephone could be concealed. We must take no chances. Just one more night, one night—" Howard mopped his forehead with his handkerchief. He was wan and drawn and his eyes were feverish. The strain was taxing every fibre of his body.

Their quest at the T.M. dugout was fruitless. The crew were pitifully anxious to help clear matters, but knew nothing of import. One and all swore that the man found with the knife could

not have killed Hart. Outside, in the trench, the captain turned to Wayland. "Let's go and see Smythe," he said slowly. "He may be able to tell us something about Buck. If he can't, it seems as if we'll have to grill every man in this sector, individually and collectively. We've got to find how they send information—the spies, I mean."

Captain Smythe looked almost as haggard as Howard. He had worked all night, as casualties had come in at every hour, and seemed under high tension. "Can't something be done?" he demanded as soon as he saw them. "These poor chaps are damn near crazy." He pointed to two men who had just been brought in, sentries caught by a sudden burst of machine-gun fire. "They're up there on post suffering all kinds of torture, each man sure that the Boche knows exactly where he is standing. And that murder of Hart was beastly, atrocious. Something must be done."

The captain poured forth all he knew about Buck, evidently resolved to make the medico an ally in his search, and as Smythe heard of the suspicions his blue eyes darkened with hate. "Have him stopped right now," he thundered. "He'll be having more men slaughtered, if it's him. And as sure as we're in France, there's some spy in this company."

"But I must have the proof," said the captain. "We haven't enough evidence to take action."

"Are those two dead Germans by the ruins yet?" asked Smythe. "You might find some clue if you searched them, and Buck would never suspect your motive—if he is innocent."

"That's something I'd almost forgotten," snapped Howard. "We'll go right now and see if they can be got in, even if it is daylight."

"If you'll wait a few minutes I'll go with you," said the medico. "The whole ghastly business has got under my skin so that I couldn't sleep if I did turn in."

As they waited Wayland cursed his own thick-headedness in not thinking to have the dead Boche brought in. It was possible that they had been recovered by their own side. The morn-

ing was very quiet for that part of the line. The air was fresh and cool and would have revived them like wine had they not been weighed with their thoughts. From the dugouts came odors of tea and bacon. The men were having breakfast. Only the main posts of the trench were held in strength.

They had reached the front line and turned left along it when they heard the screaming whine of near shells and an entire salvo of whizz bangs burst not sixty yards beyond them. Showers of clods and bits of sandbags fell in the trench and black smoke mushroomed in the sunlight. There was a second and then a third salvo, all close-ranged on the left flank. Then came a pause. It lengthened, the firing had ceased as abruptly as it began. There were low calls along the trench. "First aid—first aid."

Wayland and the two captains had huddled by a parapet as they heard the shrill warning of the shells and now they waited, tense and speechless, for a fourth salvo. It did not come, and the voices still called. They rose and hurried to the scene of havoc. Some of the shells had registered fairly on the cellar post. The others had ranged close in front of it, pitting the ground with craters. Four bodies were broken and dismembered under the débris of the post. A fifth man had been hurled over the trench wall and into the wire, where he sagged lifelessly. It was the corporal of the post. The sergeant made his way to the corner where Jim Buck usually snuggled with his book, and cleared the wreckage. There lay the stretcher-bearer, horribly crushed. They would never force any secret from his lips.

Captain Smythe made a quick examination, but every man had been instantly killed. He dressed two other sentries who had been slightly wounded. Howard arranged for a clean-up of the place and a strengthening of the post, but did not order it to be occupied. Such an order might result in open mutiny. Instead, he had a machine gun set up in the next bay and only half a crew on duty at a time. Then he

warned all to expect a German attack and, worn, fear-haunted, he and the sergeant went back to their dugouts. The medical officer seemed the most depressed of the trio. He saw to it that all the victims of the shelling were carried to the rear and he tried to induce Captain Howard to apply for a relief that night. "Every hour now is torture for the men," he said bitterly. "We should at least have reinforcements."

But the captain was not the type of officer to appeal to others. He had done everything possible to solve his problem, and having done so, now declared that company H would see it through. "Just one more night," he said determinedly. "The officers and N.C.O.s of each platoon, as well as you and I, Wayland, will be in the front trench from dark until dawn. I feel it in my bones that something is going to happen that will bring matters to a head, and if my men have half a chance they're not quitters."

"There's one more thing we might do," suggested the sergeant. "We might place snipers between the first and second trenches. We could post them where they could see without being seen and perhaps they might spot something during the day."

"That's a good idea," said the captain. "Have them placed before you turn in."

Wayland got four men who were expert shots and observers. One was stationed in the crater near the T.M. post, another was hidden among refuse on the left, a third was placed in the shell hole near the dressing station. Their orders were to shoot anyone seen overland among the trenches. The last sniper crawled out to a cavity on the right. He had full view of the patrol land that had been closed. The sergeant went out with him to see that he got well hidden, and discovered that the unfortunate wiring party had all been buried near where he lay. He cursed as he saw that an enemy shell had almost unearthed one of the corpses and looked at the name on the low wooden cross. "Private Tucker." It was the man who had possibly "known something."

Wayland crept nearer to scrape loose earth over the dead man. A swarm of flies buzzed about. He hastened with his task but in spite of his repugnance could not help gazing at the dead man. He was not mangled in any way and his head bandage was crudely wrapped. Wayland could see under it. He poked with a stick and the slight wound revealed would never have caused the man's death. There was not a trace of concussion. Shuddering at the contact, the sergeant reached over and pulled open the blouse and shirt. Holding them with his stick, he peered, then started. Blood-crusted so as to be unmistakable, clearly traced and directly over the heart, was a knife wound. The man had been stabbed!

The sergeant stared a full moment. Then he examined the shirt. It had not been punctured. The head wound must have rendered Tucker unconscious and a murderer's hand had inserted a knife beneath the clothing and made the deadly thrust. In the hurry of recovering the bodies and burying them no one had stopped to make examinations. But for the accident of shell uncovering the victim no one would ever have known but that the soldier had died by an enemy bullet.

Wayland went to his dugout but he could not sleep. He was fevered by his discoveries, and baffled by the circumstances. Buck must be the guilty party insofar as Tucker was concerned, but who killed Hart? And if Buck were a spy why was he in the cellar post when it had been so suddenly and vindictively erased. Not a shell had fallen near it since. The more the sergeant puzzled the more he was bewildered, and his sleep was fitful and broken.

**T**HE trick attempt of the Germans at Nollens is now a matter of history. It failed—by a very narrow margin—because Sergeant Wayland had a one-track mind. He had not forgotten for one moment the careless bandage that had so easily deceived the burial party. When he passed by the dressing station he felt a desire to inspect the

dressings of the trio of casualties who sat there.

The attack was made at dusk. There was a sudden heavy barrage on the American trench. The cellar post was almost obliterated by a succession of salvos. Parapets were blown in. Machine-gun posts were up-heaved. There were many casualties. Yet, despite the suddenness of it all, and the losses, the men were quickly organized. Wayland had let it be circulated that he had the spy cornered and the news was a tonic of tremendous value.

Machine guns that had escaped the tornado of shell fire were established so that they could sweep the area in front. The artillery responded gallantly to an S.O.S. and laid down so determined a barrage that the enemy fire slackened to occasional shells. Captain Howard was buried under a parapet but was not seriously hurt and he worked like a Trojan to repair his defenses. All the while the rattle of the Maxims continued. Their bullets cut the air with a stinging vigor above the American trench, yet no attacking wave hove in sight. No vague figures reached the wire. Was the shelling a bluff? Were there any attackers?

Wayland had had two narrow escapes from shell bursts but he remained watchful and cool. He was one of those whom the test of battle seemed to strengthen. At the first burst of fire he thought of his snipers and rushed to get them to cover. They had escaped unscathed, except the man near the dressing station. He was dead. There was no shell crater to tell of a near explosion. Wayland touched the man's hand, then started. It was cold and stiff. The sniper had been dead for hours!

There was a small bullet hole in the side of the head, possibly from a sniping enemy. Who had that enemy been? From which direction did he shoot?

The battery supporting H company kept a hot barrage on the German trenches. Shells roared overhead. The patter of machine guns and the crackle of rifle fire merged into a deafening din. Flares and rockets were soaring every-

where. Every unwounded man in the sector was watching the dark spaces in front for the expected attackers, and most of them were shooting. Wayland wanted to shout encouragement. The Boche could not possibly gain through such a defiance. Then he stopped. He had forgotten the low, narrow bit of ground that only the gun at the cellar post could govern. Had it survived? He crowded along the trench, eager to get to the cellar. Pressed against a firestep he watched some men in swathing white bandages, early casualties apparently, hurrying by on their way to the rear. Instantly he thought of Tucker's fake head dressing. As he watched them he was thrilled queerly. A dozen had passed, lurched by, and all had head wounds—and their bandages were remarkably white and clean. Like splashing molten fire, a dreadful suspicion gripped him. He caught at a wounded man whose head was wrapped like a turban. "Your name?" he shouted, his voice penetrating the tumult.

The man groaned and tugged to get clear. Wayland held him firmly. "Your name?" he shouted again.

The man with the bandage struck like a snake. He broke from the sergeant and snatched a rifle from a surprised doughboy. Wayland shot him down in the very nick of time. Then he cupped his hands and shouted in a great, bombing, parade-ground voice. "The Germans are in the trench—the Germans. They have bandages on—bandages!"

His cry was repeated in every bay and there ensued such fighting as war-battered Nollens had never seen before. It was impossible to tell how many of the enemy were in the trench. They were conspicuous by their bandages, head wrappings mostly which gave them a perfect means of identifying each other. But the marking also helped the Americans. They ruthlessly attacked all who bore such a bandage, and seldom made a mistake. In the narrow confines there was little room for free bayonet work and it was as dangerous to friend as to foe to shoot, so that it was a case of man to man, body to body, a

raving, screaming, cursing nightmare of carnage, a confusion indescribable. The tangled mob fought like snarling animals. Arms and legs and heads were mingled amid clubbed pistols and trench knives. Striking, jabbing, thrusting, slugging, kicking, it was minutes before the victors were recognized.

Wayland was not engulfed by the battle. After killing his first opponent he sprang over the parapets and, keeping on his hands and knees, made his way as rapidly as possible to the cellar post. Twice he saw dark figures with swathed heads try to swarm overland in a wild attempt to escape the trench fighting, and each time he shot without inquiry. There was no time to take chances.

Five still forms, conspicuous by their white head wrappings, lay on the trench floor near the last machine-gun post. Another trio had cornered a lone American and were at him like snarling wolves when the sergeant attacked from the rear, using a clubbed rifle. In a moment he and the lone soldier were in charge of the bay. "Bombs," yelled Wayland, seeing a shelf of them. "This way. Let's stop them."

He leaped to the cellar, hurling the grenades as he went, and saw splashes of orange-red as they exploded amid a scramble of dark figures, each decorated with a big white bandage. There were agonizing cries. He threw more bombs, slinging them overhead. Then men panted in close behind him, a handful who had bested their attackers, most of them without their steel helmets, bloody and bedraggled, but full of scrap—and Captain Howard was leading them.

His right arm hung useless and his shoulder was bared by a great tear in his tunic, but he was elated, eager. In a moment he had established a gun in the cellar itself and its mad music was heartening as it cleared all the approach to the post. The remnant of Germans left in the trench were eliminated. The captain issued more orders and a platoon from reserve lines was hurried into bays. Then a strong post was arranged directly back of the cellar. The machine gun could sweep the ground in

front as well as from the cellar, and would be out of range, of counter-shelling, as the whizz-bang battery was evidently registered on the old post.

Then a dozen of the men, headed by the captain and Wayland, raced toward the dressing station in pursuit of bandaged enemy who had got by. They were just in time. A score of the camouflaged Germans were grouped at the rear of the pill-box, working like ants. The Americans hurled their bombs as they charged and the bunched target could not be missed. The effect was devastating. The majority of the workers went down in a heap. Others writhed and groaned just outside the smoking shambles. A few staggered clear. The sergeant rushed among these with his clubbed rifle. He crushed skulls like egg shells. Three ran away, with the doughboys in pursuit. One tried to use a spade in defense and the captain shot him with his revolver. Before another move was made the fleeing ones were caught and brought back, chorus-ing "*Kamerad! Kamerad!*" The fighting was over.

Wayland made a hurried search of the place where the Germans had been working, and yelled his amazement. They had just uncovered a neat boarded cache of two Maxim machine guns and a stack of ammunition and stick bombs. "Put there before they cleared out in the big attack," said the captain peering down. "By the pipers, if they'd got loose with all this and caught us in the rear we'd all be prisoners or in the glory land. That bandage stunt almost worked. Now who in hell——" He paused and looked at Wayland.

"Same here, sir," said the sergeant. "Who was working with them on this side? Let's see Captain Smythe. He must have been in a tight corner."

They rushed over to the trench and hurried up to the entrance of the dressing station. No light came from its blanketed doorway. "I'll bet the brutes have cleaned it out," panted Captain Howard.

Wayland had not time to answer. His hobnailed boots slipped from under him as he struck the concrete approach. He

fell, pitched to one side—and thereby his life was saved!

Three shots came from the blanket door, almost as one, and each bullet would have drilled the sergeant had he been on his feet. "Hold!" roared the captain. "We're friends. Who's there?"

"Thank God!" Captain Smythe staggered out into the trench. His tunic was torn, his face was blood-streaked. He was holding a German automatic in readiness and he gazed in every direction, fearfully, apprehensively. "What happened?" he gasped.

The captain pushed inside, stooping to inspect, by the light of a match, two slumped figures just inside the blanket. They were Germans, both bullet-riddled, both adorned with head bandages. He lighted a candle and looked around. "What happened here?" he said gently.

The candlelight showed that not a casualty was in the chamber. "I was working as fast as I could to keep this place empty," said Smythe, seating himself heavily as if he were weakened by the excitement, "when half a dozen walking wounded pushed in and had surrounded me before I could make a move. They produced Lugers and ordered my hands up. I hadn't even a club in the place so there was nothing I could do but put by hands up. Then they hustled every one of our poor boys out and carried the stretchers down the trench a way. I think they were intending to use this as a post. I was backed into a corner and ordered to stay there. Two stayed guarding me and the rest grabbed the shovels that stood outside for burial parties, and then climbed out of the trench and I heard them working somewhere behind this building. Then, just a few minutes later, there came all the shooting and smashing of bombs up front, and I knew that a scrap was on in our lines. My guards heard it, too, and one chap jumped to the door. As he did I threw a bottle I snatched up and struck the remaining chap in the face. He was so dazed I was able to grab his revolver from him and in an instant I had shot the both of them. I put my light out and crept outside, but ran foul of a

group in the trench and had desperate work to get back. Since then I waited just inside, ready to shoot anyone that came. That's all, now, tell me, what in the devil happened up front?"

Captain Howard described tersely the discovery of the bandaged Germans, and while he talked Wayland slipped outside.

"All's well that ends well," said the captain, "and I'm glad we handled this situation. You've done remarkable work here, Smythe. It's a damn shame that medical men have to fight for their lives, and I'll recommend you for a decoration. But what's got me is the fact that we're no nearer knowing who the dirty dog is that's playing spy. I'd give anything to bag him before we are relieved."

"It must have been Buck," said Smythe, "and I think the Boche made this attack as soon as he found that their agent was out of action, and they might have feared that we had learned something from him."

"But who killed Hart?"

"I don't know," said Smythe wearily. "It's a puzzle all right. I'm glad we're relieved to-morrow evening."

There were hurried steps outside and Wayland returned.

"The Krauts carried the wounded to the turn," he announced, "and there's none of them knows what happened. They're still dizzy with the suddenness of everything. But I found out something—the sniper who was shot before dark was killed by somebody near this pill-box."

"How do you know?" asked Howard harshly. "That's saying quite a bit."

"Two of the others heard the shot, heard it distinctly."

"I heard a shot near here myself," said Smythe. "It was late in the afternoon. Perhaps it was the fellow himself that fired."

"That is probably what the killer hoped we would think," said Wayland, "but I've examined his rifle, and it's never been fired since he cleaned it."

Captain Smythe got up and opened a vent at the rear of the chamber. "The air is bad," he said, "and I'm damn tired."

"Yes," said Howard, "so am I." "Come, sergeant. We may as well turn in as soon as we have a look over the posts. I don't think the Germans will attack again to-night."

SERGEANT WAYLAND did not turn to leave. Instead he quickly and easily produced his revolver, one of army issue, and pointed it straight at the medico's heart. "Sit down again, Captain Smythe," he ordered grimly. "I want to say a few things to you."

"What in the devil do you mean?" Captain Howard stared at the two men, then reached to pull Wayland back. "Are you crazy, sergeant?" he asked angrily.

"Judge me after I've had my say, please," said Wayland. "Captain Smythe, where is your corporal, where is the orderly who usually helps around this station at night?"

The medico's blue eyes had narrowed to slits. All trace of his usual friendliness had vanished, nor did his tired appearance remain. Instead, he looked like a tiger watching its keeper. "The corporal, I regret to say, was killed early in the evening. He was——"

"I know how he was shot—from behind—in this trench," Wayland's words were like pistol shots. "Where's the orderly?"

"Really, Captain Howard, have I got to answer this fellow?" demanded the medico in a snarling voice. "I refuse."

"If you have nothing to hide, why can't you answer him?" asked Howard, and his voice was hard as chilled steel.

"The orderly was also shot—from behind—in this trench," said Wayland. "Sit still, Smythe, or I'll shoot."

The sergeant seemed suddenly the commanding officer, he fairly towered over the medical man. "Listen. Why did you shoot at me after you had heard our voices? Why did you send all our boys who had head wounds to the rear *without bandages*? Why did you hustle every casualty out of your way and leave them at the foot of the trench where they must wait two hours for the ambulance. Captain Smythe—you are a spy!"

A leap, with the swiftness of a striking rattler; a shot, the table overturned, the candle out, Howard's voice as he called out in warning, then a match was struck and as the powder fumes drifted to the ceiling the light revealed the pseudo medico on his back in the middle of the floor. Wayland was watching him closely, his revolver ready.

Smythe was conscious. He opened his eyes slowly and looked up, without curiosity, without appeal. "You've won," he whispered.

Wayland's lips shut tight and grim, then he relaxed and spoke in quick, crisp recital. "You shot the sniper, you planned the attack, you killed your orderly and corporal. It was you who killed Hart as you helped put him in the ambulance and then you put the knife in the other man's hand—who was probably dead then. You threw a bomb and killed Ellis because you thought he had learned something from Buck, and you had Buck's crew and himself wiped out for fear he would betray you——"

"But—how could Smythe do these things?" panted Howard. He was drinking in every word, eagerly, avidly, and relief was already softening lines around his eyes.

"He signaled to the German trench every fine day," grated Wayland, "through that opening, with a mirror he's

got. They call it heliograph, I think. I caught him with the morror one morning, but didn't catch on, and never suspected until they told me that poor Tucker had been on a sniping post that was directly in line with this pill-pox. Even then I couldn't figure it out, till I found the sniper dead in that crater. Smythe shot him because he had spotted the signaling—he was lying in that position, and Smythe was so sure of his plans working that he never troubled to crawl out and straighten the poor chap around into his proper post."

Smythe shuddered, and lay still.

Captain Howard stuck out his hand and gripped the sergeant's big palm. "You've done splendid work," he said heartily. "You've saved my command."

"It—it was nothing," stammered Wayland. "It was just luck, sir. After I found Tucker I had bandages on the brain, couldn't think of anything else, and when I saw so many to-night, all on the head, they just rung a bell. It was just luck, sir."

The captain shook his head, and grinned. He was faint with pain and exhaustion, but the old confidence he had shown before they came to the Nollens sector was lighting his eyes. "They always say the winner is lucky," he said but both of us know that no one ever mixes bandages with luck."

