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WAR

Stories

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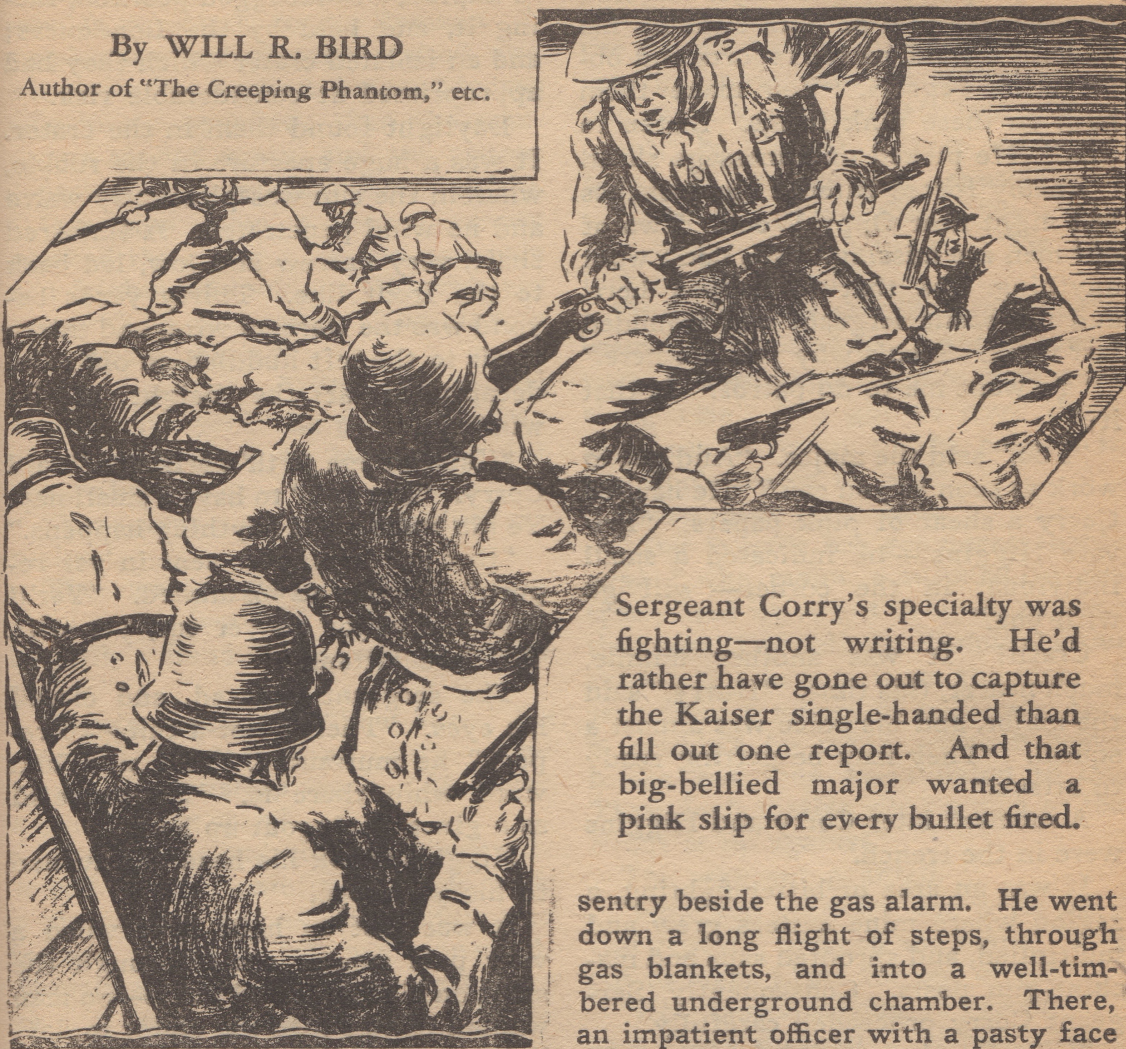
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NEXT NUMBER ON SALE-JUNE 3RD

Strike Me Pink!

By WILL R. BIRD

Author of "The Creeping Phantom," etc.



Sergeant Corry's specialty was fighting—not writing. He'd rather have gone out to capture the Kaiser single-handed than fill out one report. And that big-bellied major wanted a pink slip for every bullet fired.

AS THE fiery trail of a Minenwerfer shot up into the dark, Sergeant Tim Corry watched apprehensively. The glowing arc of its flight was easily followed, but in case it dropped in his direction there was not much choice of escape. The trench was deep and the sides slippery; he could go only ahead or back.

The "minnie" fell some distance to his left, however, and after the explosion he hustled on. He was seeking a company headquarters of the London Scottish. A yawning dugout entrance faced him on a turn, and he ducked into it after questioning the

sentry beside the gas alarm. He went down a long flight of steps, through gas blankets, and into a well-timbered underground chamber. There, an impatient officer with a pasty face and a protruding stomach sat at a table and frowned. Another minnie detonated somewhere overhead, and the officer started perceptibly. Signalers with phones, a quartet of runners, various maps, and a pile of pink and yellow forms surrounded the perturbed major.

"Are you the sergeant the colonel sent down?" The fat major's voice trembled slightly.

"I am that, sir," said Corry. He looked like a gorilla man, with thick shoulders and long arms, a short neck, and bold, rugged features.

"You're just in time." The major's voice was still shaky. "The enemy

has been strafing as if he intends an attack, and we must have reports on the situation."

"Reports, did ye say?"

"Yes, reports." The major fingered nervously a pile of pink slips on his table. "I want patrol reports and observation reports. You make them both on these pink forms. Listen to this." He picked up a message sheet. "'Enemy forces entered our trenches last night near Oppy Wood. Two of our men are missing.' We don't want anything like that to happen here, and my scout sergeant was wounded last week. That's why you are here."

"Ye want me to do patrol? Is that it?"

"I do," said the major. "And get to work as soon as you can." He handed Corry a sheaf of pink papers. "Private Higgins"—he indicated a small individual in the corner—"will go with you."

Crash! It was another minnie, much nearer, this time. "Hurry," said the major, and his voice was almost a squeal. "They may be getting ready to attack."

A moment later Corry and Higgins were in the trench.

It was an area of bitter fighting, a region where mine craters grew and multiplied, and sprouted saps and machine-gun posts. Consequently, Sergeant Corry proceeded carefully.

"What kind av a gink is your ould man down there?" he asked as soon as they were safely in the front trench.

"'E's a perishin' nut, 'e is," came the fervent answer. "'E gives yer the camel's 'ump, 'e does. 'E's dahn there like a bleedin' ground'og and 'e won't come out. 'E wants reports, wants yer to send 'im them bleedin' pink slips all the time."

"Now kin ye beat that?" said Corry softly. "Pink notes is me side line, whin I'm not busy, ye'll understand. Now git ahead and show me th' posts."

They made a circuit of the Front. It was much like the others in that area near Loos. The line ran through

a jungle of old wire, powdered brick, charred ruins, and a wilderness of old trenches. The main points were a strong German post, known as the "Pimple"; a sandbagged position, facing it, and held by the Londoners; and an isolated crater which they had appropriated at considerable risk.

Daylight found them in the crater. It was a huge aperture in the rubble, wherein the sun was pleasantly warm and no wind penetrated. A timbered shaft, very narrow and low, led back to the front line. Thirty yards beyond was the German wire, and thirty yards to the left huddled an old ruin, decapitated at the height of its windows.

"Kape an eye to th' periscope," said Corry. "I'm goin' to have a small nap. Ye kin wake me if anything happens."

"But yer 'ave never sent in yer report," Higgins expostulated. "Yer'll have the major on yer ear, yer will. 'E'll 'ave kittens."

The sergeant grunted, and closed his eyes. "There's not a thing to report," he murmured. "I'll sind him word whin there is. 'Tis peaceful as a general's dugout up here."

Higgins shook his head and turned to his periscope.

It was just an hour later when a very pale runner came through the shaft on his hands and knees—no man wanted to go out to the crater in daylight—and hastily wakened Corry. "The major's boilin'," he panted. "He wants yer report."

The sergeant turned and opened one eye. "Tell him there ain't any," he grunted, and closed the eye.

Higgins and the runner sighed in unison. "Yer'll 'ave to send 'im somethin'," said the Cockney.

"I couldn't go back without it," gulped the runner.

"Not so much gabbin'," said Corry. "I can't slape. Make him a report yersilf, if ye want one." He tossed the pink slips the major had given him to the chalky bottom of the crater. "Ye kin put me name to it." Then he snored gently.

The runner and Higgins watched him for five minutes and then picked up one of the sheets and placed it on a brick. The runner had a stubby pencil and, guided by Higgins, he worded an epistle to the Romans. A graphic account of posts visited, and wire tested and sounds listened to was laboriously penciled; then the composers sighed again, and the runner departed. The sergeant snored softly.

One hour later, a second runner reached the crater. He, too, was pale and frightened-looking. "Where's yer report?" he whispered. "The major's fair cookin', he is."

Corry stirred. "What th' hell is wrong with yez?" he growled. "Me report wint back an hour ago. Git out av here."

"Yer myte took it," Higgins explained.

The runner groaned. "Did 'e 'ave it? Lumme, wot luck! 'E was 't dahn by Sally's Bend. 'E never got to the major."

Higgins groaned. "Wot luck," he echoed. He looked at Corry. The sergeant was asleep again. "'Ave yer a pencil?" he asked.

The runner had one, and there followed another painful struggle with a pink paper, and another report was formed. Then the fellow disappeared. Shortly afterward Higgins woke Corry. "I 'eard somethink like a bloke 'ammerin'," he whispered.

Corry opened his eyes and listened. He heard nothing. "Make a report," he said sarcastically. "Wan av thim pink wans." And he slept again.

At noon, a third man crawled into the crater. He was whiter than any of his predecessors, and he was whispering sibilantly. "Yer to come," he told Corry, who had stirred again. "The major's fit to be tied. He wants yer report."

"Are yez a cuckoo joint down there?" grated Corry as he sat up. Three messengers were three too many. "Where's th' other lad?"

"He had cheese in his pocket, and it got messy," came the tremulous ex-

planation. "He couldn't make out the paper hisself."

SERGEANT CORRY left the crater and went to the lion's den. The major was safe in his dugout, but the furtive look he had acquired during the house-warming of the previous evening had not left him. "Sergeant," he blurted, "where have you been? Where are your reports?"

"I sint thim," said Corry, "by a runner, intire and complete. 'Tis bad luck he was hit, sir."

"But—but you should have brought them before stand-to. Good heavens, man, I need reports more than anything else. I've got to have them. How can I report to the colonel if you don't report to me?"

Corry made no answer.

"And brigade has got unreasonable again," the major continued in despair, "and we've got to try to capture that post they call the Pimple. I can show you where it is on the map. I sent them a report in triplicate, that it couldn't be taken without heavy losses, but they won't listen to me. They don't realize what a man at the Front is up against."

The sergeant grunted.

"Now you sit down and write me a full report," finished the major. "I've got to make plans for our attack."

"But there's nothing to report, sir," said Corry earnestly. "Niver a thing ye'd notice did we hear or see, and savin' th' minnies, ye'd niver know there was a war on."

"Did you go on patrol?" The major had popped out of his chair in his anxiety.

"Patrol!" exploded Corry. "Sure, and we did nothin' ilse till daylight. I know th' Front as if I'd been raised on it, sir."

"Then wri-write a report," stammered the major. He was a desperate man.

The sergeant appeared horrified. "Are ye meanin' me to stay here and do it?" he demanded. "Not twenty minutes back, we could hear noises

like hammerin'. Do ye not want me to kape attention to me business?"

"Hammering?" The major was more agitated than ever. "You—you said there was nothing to report. Get back. Yes, go quickly. Fill out your report up there"—he handed Corry more pink forms—"and get them right back to me."

Back in the sunshine of the crater, Corry handed the slips to Higgins. "Put down what ye like," he grunted, "but fill thim in. That ould bird down there should be in a billin' office."

"'E should be in a blinkin' bird 'ouse," said Higgins hotly. "'E's orful, strite 'e is." Then he bent forward, listening. "There's that poundin' again," he whispered. "Wot are the perishers a-buildin' of?"

Faint thudding sounds reached them. The enemy was at work on something near the front line, and work in daytime had an ominous meaning. There must be some special urge.

The sergeant shifted the periscope and looked over the left lip of the crater. The decapitated house ruin, a section of long-deserted trench, and a maze of rusty wire met his eye. He studied the wreckage a long time, however, and then stepped back and gazed at the crater rim. Finally he picked up a spade and tested the chalky clay. "Higgins," he said curtly, "git busy with that pick. Help me make a hole through here."

"A 'ole!" gasped Higgins. "Wot for? Jerry'll see yer."

"He won't if ye kape yer diggin' down a couple av feet," said Corry sharply. "An 'tis only a small hole I'm wantin', jist big enough for th' two av us to crawl through."

Higgins' eyes seemed to bulge. "Lumme, yer can't mean it," he faltered. "Ye'll be plugged if yer puts yer 'ead out."

The sergeant spaded in grim silence. Presently they broke through the crater edge, and the opening was made. They shed their equipment, steel hats and gas masks, and took

only their revolvers and Mills bombs. The sergeant went through first in a quick dive, and grunted his satisfaction as he made a survey from where he crouched. A bank of shell-piled earth gave them cover from the Boche parapet as soon as they were away from the crater.

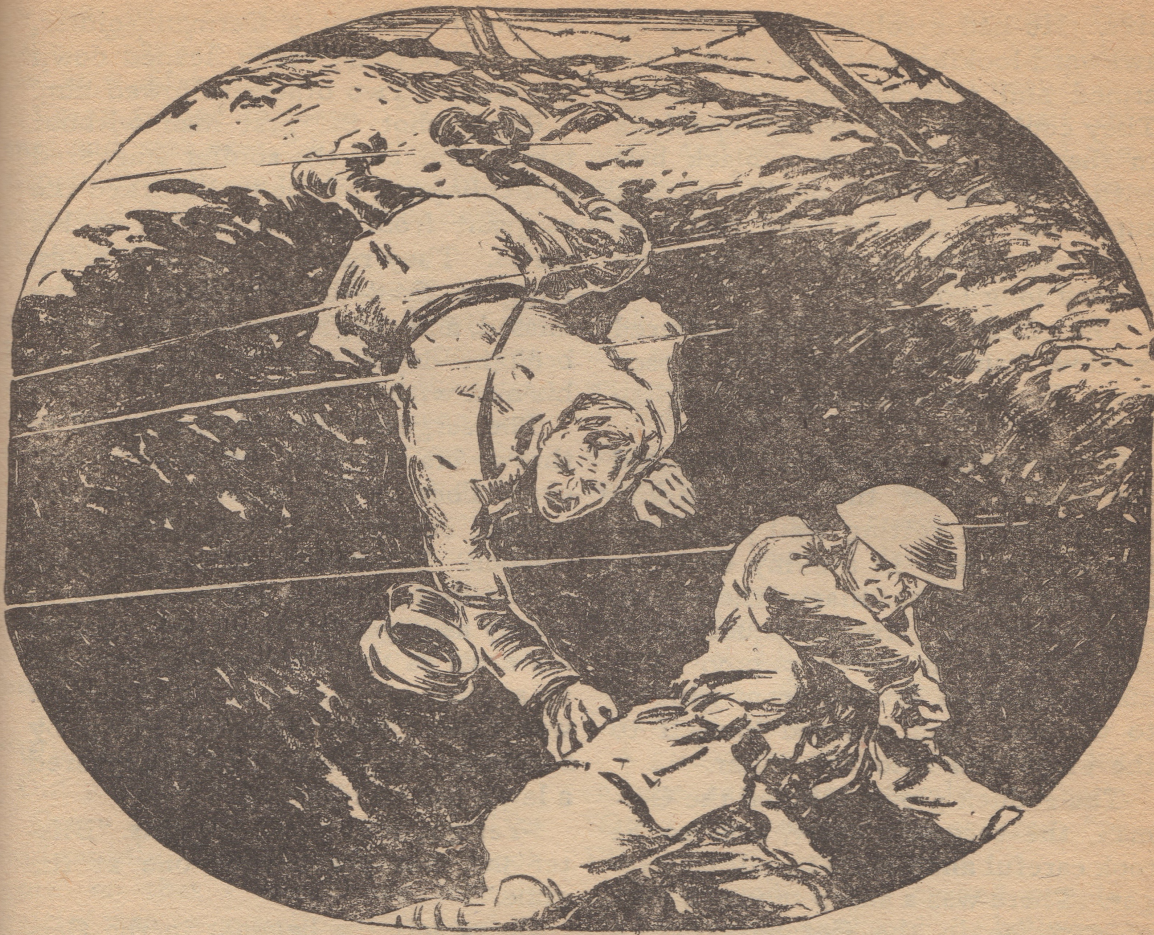
He wriggled forth and wormed his way under the rusting wire. It was tedious work, for the long barbs caught at his khaki and he had to be careful not to make a noise. Higgins, being small, had no difficulty in following him. They dropped into the bit of old trench, riveted with French stick work and paved with brick. Skeletons of forgotten fights, rat-eaten and hideous, staggered Higgins and turned his stomach, but Corry calmly passed them by and crawled on to the house ruin.

He reached it without accident and slipped inside. Wreckage, old tins and bottles, and a discarded French rifle and bayonet lay on the floor. They wormed over to a shell-broken corner, peered out—and looked directly into the German trench!

Higgins gulped and stiffened. The sergeant grunted softly. They could see the enemy. Perspiring, gray-coated privates were carrying up coils of wire and supplies of machine-gun ammunition. Others carried a long wooden frame, which they deposited beside a fire step. Corry made out several gaps in their wire, lanes through which attacking parties could venture.

Back of the trench, near their support line, were several other ruins and some of the Germans were going to them. Beyond that, the ground dipped to a railway embankment. "Higgins," whispered the sergeant, "if we had that bank we could hould th' intire country hereabouts. Iverything would be in our favor."

"Didn't yer think we knowed that?" breathed Higgins. "They 'ad an attack up 'ere. Tryin' to tyke the bloomin' plice, they were, but old Jerry 'e knows wot's wot, an 'e's got



that Pimple crowded with machine guns. It were a bleedin' murder. Our chaps were wiped out before they were proper started."

Corry looked at the Pimple. It was a little rise occupying a most strategic position between the first and second trenches of the enemy lines. It bristled with wire barricades, and its guns could sweep the entire area. There was much truth in Higgins' assertions.

Then the sergeant stared at the house ruins, and nudged his companion. A German officer and his *Feldwebel* were in plain view. The officer was a stout man with a scar on one cheek and medal ribbons on his tunic. His non-com had a coarse brutal appearance. He carried an ax, and under apparent directions of the officer, proceeded to demolish a door frame. Thud-thud-thud! The sounds they had heard were explained. "Wot

are they a-doin' of?" whispered Higgins.

"They're after boards to make another av thim contraptions ye kin see in their trench," said the sergeant. "Thim's mats to put over our wire whin they come over."

"Come over?" parroted Higgins. "Do yer think——"

"I do not," snapped Corry. "I know. Me sinses tell me. 'Tis an attack they're up to, as soon as possible if not before. What th' divil——"

He backed hastily from the corner, and picked up the rifle and bayonet as he went. Higgins kept with him. They had need to move. A head had been thrust up from the parapet so near them, and after a cautious look at the Londoners' lines, a German officer had clambered up and was wriggling under the wire—headed for the ruin.

They crouched a long time in the cellar before they heard the officer ar-

rive. He had a soldier with him, an awkward-looking lout of a fellow, unarmed and without his pot helmet. They could see him through openings in the floor. He wore a black belt with "*Gott mit Uns*" on the buckle, supported at the back by two buttons, and his pants were tucked into clumsy long boots.

The officer examined the shattered window frames and worked to loosen them. He kept watching the English lines.

Corry waited patiently. He hated the smells about the ruin. Moldy house plaster, rotting wall paper, debris a foot deep in a slimy corner—all gave odors peculiarly their own, and impressive. Higgins squatted beside him like a scared puppy. The officer stamped around from window to window, then lowered himself to the steps and into the cellar.

The sudden gloom blinded the German, the sergeant knew, and so he took careful aim before he pulled trigger. There was a sharp report, a look of surprise in the German's eye, a jerk of his body as he clenched his hands and caught at his breast; then he crumpled in an inert heap, dead.

The soldier overhead had been tugging at a timber. He rushed to the stairway and asked a guttural question. His officer had tumbled to one side in the dark cellar, and could not be seen. The soldier dropped down on the broken steps, bent, and peered. Crack! Corry had fired again. His victim pitched down headfirst and lay sprawled, while his arms and legs made queer stiff motions.

"Now," said the sergeant, "we had best be gettin' out av this. Me nose is bein' insulted."

HE CREPT to the stairs and was halfway up when he ducked back, bumping violently into Higgins. They caught hold of each other and crouched near the dead men. There were heavy steps above them, and a harsh voice called some question. The sergeant answered indistinctly and

the next moment a German soldier, with his bayonet ready, leaped down the steps. Two others followed him.

Corry shot the first man without taking aim, and the soldier staggered and collapsed, but he had blocked the sergeant from getting a shot at his mates. They rushed from both sides. Higgins fired—and missed. Corry missed, and caught up the rifle he had brought down, just as Higgins got his man with a second shot.

The sergeant slipped as he tried to throw his bayonet on guard, and every fiber of him recoiled from expected contact with the German's weapon. But instead of tearing steel in his flesh, he felt his own weapon steady as if guided, and then it jolted his arms as the bayonet hilt brought up against something solid. The rifle was almost torn from his grasp by a sudden struggle, as if he had speared a large fish on its point.

"Yer got 'im," piped Higgins. "Blister me, but yer a neat one at the gime."

Corry left the bayonet in the German, caught up his revolver, and plunged up the steps. His first glance showed him that the coast was momentarily clear, and without hesitation he plunged from the ruin toward the bit of deserted trench. From there he scrambled under the wire, taking slight precaution, sacrificing everything for speed. They just made it. He yanked Higgins in through the hole in the crater rim just a split second before a volley of rifle bullets thudded into the chalk around it.

They blocked the hole with sandbags and sat down to recover their breath. Then the sergeant focused the periscope on the forward position that faced the Pimple. He looked at it a long time; finally he turned to Higgins. "What do ye think th' Heinies would do first, supposin' they had our bit av trinch out there?" he asked.

Higgins peered through the glass. "They'd bleedin' well dig a couple

av saps back to their front line," he said. "They're 'ot for 'avin' connectin' saps, first off."

Corry turned to leave. "Kape yer ears and eyes open," he ordered. "I'm slippin' over to see th' byes out in that post, and if there's time I'll be meetin' th' major."

The sergeant was not long at the sandbagged oblong out in front, but he argued earnestly while he was there. When he left, he had the satisfaction of seeing its garrison get busy with spades and entrenching tools in an apparent effort to undermine the rear wall of their position, while two of the men followed him back to the main trench. "There's straw in one of the dugouts," they said. "The boys have it to sleep on, but they'll let us have it."

The major greeted him eagerly. "Where are your reports?" he asked. "Did you use pink ones?"

Corry saluted. "I'm sorry, sir," he said rapidly, "but there's been so much goin' on that I overlooked intirely gettin' wan av yer slips. I'll send ye a dozen directly. Ye see we've been lookin' around a bit and I want to tell ye that Jerry's comin' over. I saw him gettin'—"

"Coming over? Good heavens, man, write it down, put it in a report." The major was frantic. "That's what those forms are for." He groaned. "I can't make plans for our attack, because you've not given me reports. Write them down, sit down—" His hysteria slumped as he faced the stairway. A brigadier, with blood in his eye and a coterie of brass hats in tow, had come to interview him.

"What's wrong up here?" came the brigadier's throaty growl. "Your colonel says you haven't sent him a report on your Front."

The major saluted hurriedly. His flabbiness had become florid and torrid. "I—er—this sergeant has held up everything," he spluttered. "He's a special scout loaned us for this trip, and I've trusted him to get me reports."

The brigadier broke in roughly. He pointed a finger at Corry. "You," he barked. "Where have you been?"

"I was under their wire half th' night and part av th' day," said the sergeant, "and I was jist here to report seein' thim—"

"To report, man! What do you mean? Write it down, on a form, a pink one, quick. Don't stand there like a—a fish and talk. Put it down, write it down."

"But, beggin' your pardon, sir, there isn't th' time to spare. I could see th' Jerries gettin' timbers an' makin' mats to put across our wire. They'll be over at dark, sir. And I had me eyes on an officer and his beauty, that were—"

The brigadier shouted his wrath. "Are you deaf?" he thundered. "Write it down."

A gilded assistant stepped from his retinue and spoke sternly to Corry. "Obey the general," he ordered, "or I'll put you under arrest."

The brigadier had turned purple. "Who are you, anyhow?" he bellowed. "Where are you from?"

Corry saluted again. "That's aisy," he said. "Sure, and I'm Acting Sergeant Timothy Corry, sir, loaned to th' London Scottish by the South Wales Borderers, who got me from th' 'Van Doos,' th' Frinch Canadians, av which I'm an original, though me father was an Irishman, and distant blood on me mother's side is Eytalian and barrin' th' fact that I was born in Boston, Massachusetts. Me regimental number is—"

He stopped. The brigadier had sat down weakly, and an orderly was loosening his collar. The general appeared to be on the verge of apoplexy. In the background, the major was the color of dirty lard. The ambitious gilded officer grasped Corry by the collar and guided him up the dugout stairs. "I'll bring a report immediately," he flung back at his fellows.

"Now," he rasped when they were in the trench, "come along to your

observation post and tell me all you saw, and I'll show you how to write out a report in the proper way, so that you will know how it is done. Surely you didn't get frightened and leave your post? Did you say you saw two Germans?"

"I did that," said Corry softly. "Wan was an officer with a scar on his bugle and a pot belly and two decorations; and th' other wan had a face like a birthmark, and th' way he handled an ax, ye could tell he was wan av thim Junkers ye hear about."

The staff man gasped. "Don't talk so fast," he panted, as they hurried up the crater sap. "You are too mixed up in your language." Then he ducked. "What was that?" he gulped.

"'Tis a low place in th' trinch," said Corry. "Wan av thim snipers took a shot at ye."

"But I had no idea your trenches were so shallow," came the somewhat shaky response. "No wonder you were frightened. Is your—ah—post quite—er—safe?"

"It's as safe as any av thim," said Corry more softly than before. "Th' crater jist ahead av us is not so good, but if ye duck lively through the hole in th' wall, ye'll soon reach a place where ye kin make out your reports."

The sergeant shot ahead and yanked the sandbags from the hole in the crater rim as he gave Higgins—who was rabbit-eyed with alarm—a look that completely silenced the little Cockney.

Corry's dive landed him well outside the hole, and in an instant he had reached the slight cover afforded by the shell-piled débris. He looked back. The staff man had made a gallant plunge and had sprawled his length from the opening. A fusillade of bullets barely missed him, and as he wriggled to Corry, his face was as gray as ashes and his teeth chattered. "I say," he whispered shrilly, "where are we?"

"Halfway there," said the sergeant. He pointed to the house ruin. "'Twas

there I got frightened," he said softly, "and ye kin see grand from there."

The staff man fairly groveled in the dirt. Rifles and machine guns were spitting bullets in all directions, and several ricocheted from the rusty wire barricade beside them. Corry wormed under it, and after a few whimpered protests, the officer followed him. He was none too soon. A gun over on one flank had got the range, and its bullets tore up earth where the staff man had lain.

The sergeant reached the strip of old trench and slid into it with alacrity. He took position in the deepest corner and watched the staff man arrive. The officer had lost his helmet and scratched his hands and torn his tunic under the wire. He was covered with grime, and his face was ghastly. Plup! He dropped beside one of the dead men.

"Ugh! Ooo—ug—good heavens—I——" The staff man was very sick.

Corry watched him with interest. Then he kept a sharp watch around their immediate locality.

IT WAS almost evening. In the short bit of trench, Corry gazed with concern at the officer beside him. He had not figured on the man collapsing so completely. They had not spent a pleasant two hours, but it had been a picnic to some the sergeant had survived. There had been some shelling just back of the front line. Every now and then there had come great rushing noises, followed by the roar of an explosion; then sullen clouds of black and yellow fumes would mushroom above the brick-strewn craterland. But no shells had come near them—not very near.

Of course there had been hideous smells, and flies—big buzzing blue ones—and a few red-eyed rats. But there were always smells on forward posts, and a man should not be so delicate; at least a soldier shouldn't, reasoned Corry. He looked at the end of the plank on which they sat. It bore dried pools of blood and stained



cotton wads, and at the end lay a dead man, his dull unobservant eyes full on them. The staff officer shivered every time he looked at him.

The sergeant tried once more to rouse the gilded one. "Are ye ready to make a try for in?" he asked. "'Tis dark enough now. Do ye want to go first or not?"

The staff man whimpered helplessly. "I—I can't go at all," he said.

"All right," agreed Corry. "I'll tell thim where ye are, and we'll be comin' and gettin' ye whin it's rale dark."

"No, no." The officer sat up. "You can't leave me here. I order you——"

"Whisst yersilf," grated Corry, "or ye'll be nursin' a stick bomb. Listen, ye kin hear th' Heinies gettin' ready for th' attack. Are ye comin', or are ye goin' to rist here with this gintleman?"

The staff man took another look and decided to go. He followed the sergeant under the wire, and with Corry

pushing, managed to reach the hole in the crater edge. Higgins almost bayoneted him as he plunged in without giving warning. The staff man lay as he had tumbled, and Corry snorted. "Me pink beauty has fainted," he said. "Pour yer water bottle over him."

"Lumme!" ejaculated Higgins. "Wot 'it 'im? Where 'ave yer been? Yer not 'arf for it. Ten blokes av been at this blinkin' crater awskin' for yer. Wot a war."

"Catch hould av this duke," snapped Corry. "In tin minutes, thim Heinies'll be over."

He miscalculated slightly. They had not reached the main trench before there arose a tremendous clatter of machine-gun fire. Then rifles punctuated the din, and there was the ping of exploding bombs. The attack was on.

They flung the staff man into a hole in the trench side and raced to firing positions. A flurry of flares soared

aloft—reds, greens, then reds, greens—and suddenly it was evident that the signaling spelled success. A dozen fleeing Londoners fell into the trench, and they had been the garrison of the forward post.

"They've 'ooked it," groaned Higgins. "Now we're bleedin' well for it. We'll 'ave to tyke it again."

Corry sprang to meet a hurrying sergeant and then raced to talk with another party. Bombers and bayonetmen, led by non-coms, had materialized as if by magic, and they seemed ready for action. Then men came with machine guns, which were placed on the parapet in such a position that Higgins gasped with surprise and grasped at Corry. "The blokes are barmy," he shrilled. "They'll be hittin' low on them sandbags, and that's no bloody good."

The sergeant shook him off. "Git yersilf an armload av bombs," he jerked back. "Ye'll learn a trick or two afore ye are much older."

A long wait followed. The firing had quieted down, and the only sound was the noise of hasty picks and shovels just beyond the captured post.

Rat-tat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat-tat! The two machine guns that had been set in such a low position suddenly spouted fire. Each gun fired two long bursts as their handlers swung them slowly; then the waiting parties rushed up the sap directly at the post.

It seemed a suicidal effort, but not a bullet or bomb met them. Sergeant Corry was among the first to enter the strong point, and he fell over tumbled bodies piled as if stricken by a sudden plague. The Londoners gasped their awe as they saw the dead men. Then they separated, one party going up a newly dug sap to the left, and the other up the one to the right. Both led into the German trench, and they were able to reach it almost unchecked.

The night was dark and the enemy sentries seemed entirely confused by the sudden firing, as no bullets had whizzed and sung over them. Ap-

parently they thought that the double garrison that packed the post quite capable of repulsing any counter attack—and they were roused too late.

Corry bayoneted a big gunner who had jumped to his gun. He clubbed another, missed a lunging point by a fraction, and then drove his rifle butt into an upthrust face. Twice Lugers were fired at point-blank range, but he was only singed by the bullets, and twice he clashed his steel on a German bayonet in time to ward off a deadly thrust.

It was a wild mêlée. The Londoners were at such close quarters that only fists and bayonets and clubbed rifles prevailed, and the element of surprise was in their favor. One party reached the left-embankment post with only three casualties. The others had more trouble, but a third party had come to the rescue and was spreading all along the enemy Front, securing all the embankment positions in turn.

At two posts the German gunners stayed to the last, but were blown out of existence by rifle grenades. Then there was a bitter cat-and-dog fight around a bombing post, and little Higgins emerged with an arm in a sling and a great cut over one eye. He was happy as a lark. "Strike me, sarge," he squealed, "but we didn't 'arf go for them, did we? Every blinkin' post in the bag, and more dead Jerries nor yer can count. See yer in Blighty." And he was gone.

Dead men were pitched out of the trench, and the wounded were carried out by prisoners, with impatient Londoners prodding them from the rear. Then the sergeant looked at the Pimple. They were around it, but he remembered its bristling wire and field of gunplay. Then he saw a fleeing Boche headed for the sap that led to it, and by a sudden dash he captured the fellow. "Niver mind yer hurry," he panted. "I take it there's a nasty dirty crowd up yonder, and I'm wonderin' if ye'll be so kind as to take th' head Mick these pink

slips. I want ye to git me a report, me son."

As he talked, Corry searched the prisoner's pockets hurriedly and roughly. He thrust a sheaf of pink papers into the German's hands, and booted him toward his refuge. The young goose-stepper fairly flew into the gloom.

Wham! A flashing redness at the Pimple. Corry and a party of eager hot-breathed fighters tumbled into the place in a headlong rush. Here and there a gray figure lurched to meet them. Crash, crunch, thwack! Curses, moans— "*Kamerad! Kamerad!*"

"Hould yersilves, byes." Corry got to his feet from a mad tangle of arms and legs. "They're surrenderin'. Give thim a chance unless ye are wantin' to do all th' carryin'."

There was a moment of quick examination. Dead men were dragged to one side, and the wounded to the other; the few remaining unhurt were searched and then given tasks. In an amazingly short time, the Pimple was transformed into a strong point facing the opposite way.

Then the sergeant limped back to headquarters. A wildly flung rifle had struck his instep. On the way he passed a lone shivering figure, groping along in the flurry of wounded and prisoners, talking to himself and to any one who would listen, in an aimless, hysterical fashion. He was like a man shell-shocked, and Corry did not stop with him.

HE FOUND the major watching the blanketed entrance of the dugout as if he expected almost any dread monster to appear. "I'm back again, sir," said Corry, "and if ye have wan av thim pink slips left, ye kin take down me report. I've mislaid thim wans ye give me."

"Mislaid!" The major had recovered from his shock of surprise at seeing the sergeant again. "No reports!" he yelled. "You're under arrest. They—they're attacking us,

man, and I haven't any plans, any reports. You're a——"

"Wan minute," said Corry gently. "'Tis a report I'm tryin' to give ye. Th' attackin' part is over, and I've been superintendin' th' same, and if——"

"Where is that captain who went with you? Where's his report?" The major was distracted.

"He was up in th' trinch as I come by," said the sergeant calmly. "He did not care for th' triffin' mix-up we had, and he stayed by himsilf. He'll be here after a spell, I'm thinkin'."

"But—the report?" The major was almost incoherent. His signalers sat by their phones, looking equally abject; and the three runners were slumped together as if for support. "Did the enemy get our post?" he groaned. "This is awful. We have to attack the Pimple to-night, and I have no plan." He faced Corry in a trembling rage. "You—you—it's you that's caused the trouble. Sit down at that table. Yes, you will, and write me a report."

"But I'm tellin' ye," protested Corry, "that th' attack was a wash-out. We have th' post again, ye see."

"We have? Is it manned?" The major stopped his raving for a moment.

"No, sir," said Corry. "Ye see we have not th' men to spare, as there's so many extry new posts at th' embankment."

"The embankment! But how—who——" The major sank to his seat, staring at the sergeant as if he were something alien to warfare.

"Ye see, we let th' Heinies have that post in front, sir, jist scrappin' enough to fool thim, ye might say. And whin they had packed in there, two thick, and had dug thimsilves nice tranches back to th' main wan, our Lewis guns opened up purty and got ivery mother's son av thim. Ye see, 'twas a grand scheme we had. Th' lads pulled out th' sandbags three bags down on th' parados, and braced

thim up with timbers, filling with bags with straw in thim. Our men jist shot through it, and there ye were; niver a man they missed at all. Thin, ye see, bein' as iverything was mixed like, we continued, ye might say. We wint on into their trenches."

"You—you attacked?" The major held to the edge of his table for support.

"We did that," admitted Corry, "and it was intirely successful, ye might say."

"But—you—there were no plans." The major was horrified.

"Niver a wan," said the sergeant. "I thought av that, but ye see there wasn't th' time to make thim, and I was wonderin' if ye couldn't fix thim up afterward."

The major turned a deep crimson. He strangled, but Corry rambled on.

"Then, ye see, I remimbered ye wantin' th' Pimple, and there was a young Heinie hoppin' that way, so I stopped him and——" the sergeant clapped a hand to his pocket—— "twas there I mislaid thim slips ye give me. I give thim to him, with a kick in th' pants, and says, 'Report to th' officer.' He jist had th' time, sir, for I'd put a few Mills bombs in his pockets, as I searched him. Long-fused they were, and th' report was terrific."

The major was opening and shutting his mouth like a fish out of water, but no sound came.

"After th' explosion, we wint in to have a look and attend to th' survivors, and 'tis a first-rate post ye have there now. And that's all me report, sir."

"You—captured all the line, the embankments, and the—the Pimple? It seems impossible." The major looked like a drunken man.

"It does that," agreed Corry, "but whin yer luck's with ye, ye always

want to kape goin', sir. And, yis, I nearly forgot thim. There's a matter av twenty-six prisoners, countin' wan major that I had to crown with a shovel in order to divert his attention, ye might say."

"Twenty-six prisoners? A major?" The major was utterly dumfounded. His eyes rolled. Then he managed to get a hand on a pile of pink slips. "Come," he gasped, "sit down. Reports, quick. All the details, pink——"

Corry shook his head. "I've told ye iverything now," he said, but the major's arms were like those of a man drowning.

"You will," he insisted.

The sergeant's rugged features reddened slowly. "I niver had yer pink disease," he began, "and if ye must know it, I can't write a word."

"Can't write!" The major flopped. Detestation, abhorrence, aversion, stark horror spread over his jellylike features. He gurgled and hissed and sputtered.

What was the use of any one who could not write? The war was lost. Only his last few words were coherent. "—back to your unit." But they were all that Corry wished to hear.

He departed swiftly.

Up in the trench, he stumbled against a shambling figure that was headed for the major's dugout. The man did not look at him but kept talking to the world at large in a voice that was growing weaker, like rain on a tin roof.

A Londoner was watching him. "Wot's the matter with that bloke?" he whispered to Corry. "'E sounds like 'e were orf his nut."

"It's jist a disease that made him that way," said the sergeant grandly as he passed by. "'Tis a pink weakness that develops in deep dugouts, me bye." And he was gone.

