

## CHAPTER XII

### A VILLAGE AND A HELMET

KENTUCKY decided that it was as useless as it was unnecessary for him to remain alone in his exposed position, and forthwith proceeded to crawl back to where he knew that at least he would find someone. So, keeping as low as possible, he started back, dodging from shell hole to shell hole. In about the fourth one he came to he found a group of several men, all dead, and plainly killed by the one low-bursting shell. He could see that they were Stonewalls, too, and began to wonder if the reason for his failing to find the line was the simple one that the line no longer existed. It was a foolish supposition perhaps, but men are prone to such after long day and night strain in a hot action, are even more prone to it under such circumstances as brought Kentucky to this point of crouching on the edge of a shell hole with sudden death whistling and crashing and thundering in his ears, spread horribly under



his eyes. He shivered, skirted round the pit, and over into the next one, just as another man stepped crouching over its edge. Kentucky saw him, and with a sense of enormous relief recognised him too as one of the Stonewalls' officers. Here at last was someone he knew, someone who knew him, someone who would tell him perhaps what had happened, would certainly tell him what to do, give him simple orders to be simply obeyed. The officer was a boy with a full quarter less years to his age than Kentucky himself had, a lad who in normal life would probably still have been taking orders from a schoolmaster, who certainly, instead of giving, would have been taking orders or advice from a man his equal in education, more than his equal in age and worldliness, as Kentucky was. And yet Kentucky saw him with something of the relief a lost child would feel to meet his mother, and the officer was as natural in giving his orders as if Kentucky were the child. There is nothing unusual in all this. I only mention it because its very usualness is probably odd to anyone outside the Service, and is likely to be little realised by them.

'I'm mighty glad to see you, sir,' said Kentucky. 'I thought I'd clean lost the battalion.'



'The battalion's strung out along here,' said the officer. 'But I'm just passing along orders to retire a little on the supporting line behind us. So just push along back, and pass the word to do the same to any of ours you run across.' He moved on without further word, and Kentucky continued his rearward journey. He was aiming for the same lot of men he had passed through on his way forward, but in the broken litter of ground missed them, and instead ran on another group of half a dozen sheltering in another deep shell-crater. He explained to them what in obedience to orders he had retired to join their line.

'Well, you got to keep on retirin', mate,' said one of them sulkily, 'if you're going to hitch in with us. We just got the office too that we're to take the back track.'

'Hope it's all right,' said another doubtfully. 'Seems so dash crazy to push up here and then go back for nix.'

'That Curly's such a loose-tiled kid, he might easy have mistook the order,' said another.

'Anyway,' said the first, 'this bloke says 'im an' 'is cobbers is hittin' out for the back paddock, and——'

'What's that?' several interrupted simul-



taneously, and moved eagerly to the crater edge. Clear through the rolling rifle and gun-fire came a shrill 'Coo-ee,' and then another and another, louder and nearer. Kentucky scrambled to the edge with the others and looked out. Down to their right they could see figures climbing out of shell holes, starting up from the furrows, moving at the run forward, and again they heard the shrill 'coo-ee's' and a confusion of shouts and calls. Kentucky saw the half-dozen Anzacs scrambling from their hole like scared cats going over a fence, scuffling and jostling in their haste, heard them shouting and laughing like children going to a school treat. 'Come on, mates . . . mix on the back track . . . play up, Anzacs. . . .' For a moment Kentucky was puzzled. He had plain orders to retire to the support line. 'Come on, cully,' shouted the last man out, looking back at him—but if the support line was advancing—'. . . your bunch is mixin' it with us.' He paused to catch up and fling along the line the coo-ee that came ringing down again, hitched his rifle forward, and dobled off after the others. Kentucky climbed out and followed him. At first the whistle and shriek and *snap-snap* of bullets was continuous, and it seemed impossible



that he should continue without being hit, that each step he took must be the last. He wondered where the bullet would hit him, whether it would hurt much, whether he would have to wait long for the stretcher-bearers. He slackened his pace at sight of an Anzac officer rolling on the ground, coughing and spitting up frothy blood. But the Anzac saw his pause, and gathered strength to wave him on, to clear his choking throat and shout thickly to 'Go on, boy; go on. I'm all right. Give 'em hell.' Kentucky ran on. The bullets were fewer now, although the roar of firing from in front seemed to grow rather than slacken. His breath came heavily. The ground was rough and killingly slippery. He was nearly done up; but it was crazy to slow down there in the open; must keep on. He caught up one of the groups in front and ran with them. They were shouting . . . where did they get the wind to shout . . . and how much further was it to the trench? Then he saw the men he ran with begin to lift their rifles and fire or shoot from the hip as they ran; he saw grey coats crawling from a dug-out a dozen yards to his left, and with a shock realised that there was no trench to cross, that the shells must have levelled it, that he was



actually into the enemy position. He ran on, heavily and at a jog-trot, without a thought of where he was running to or why he ran. He didn't think; merely ran because the others did. He stopped, too, when they stopped, and began to fire with them at a little crowd of Germans who emerged suddenly from nowhere and came charging down at them. Several Germans fell; the others kept on, and Kentucky saw one of them swing a stick bomb to throw. Kentucky shot him before he threw—shot with his nerves suddenly grown steel strong, his brain cool, his eye clear, his hand as steady as rock. He shot again and dropped the man who stooped to pick the bomb that fell from the other's hand. Then the bomb exploded amongst them. There were only four standing when the smoke cleared, and the Anzacs were running at them with bayonets at the level. There were only three Anzacs now, but the Germans threw their hands up. Then when the Anzacs slowed to a walk and came to within arm's length, with their bayonet points up, one of the Germans dropped his hand and flashed out a pistol. Kentucky shot him before he could fire. He had not run in with the others, and was a score of paces away, and one of the Anzacs half-hid the



man with the pistol. But he shot knowing—not believing, or thinking, or hoping, but *knowing* he would kill. It was his day, he was ‘on his shoot,’ he couldn’t miss. The other Germans dropped their hands too, but whether to run or fight—the bayonet finished them without a chance to answer that. ‘Come on, Deadeye,’ shouted one of the Anzacs; and when Kentucky joined them, ‘Some shootin’, that. I owe you one for it too.’

They went on again, but there was little more fighting. Anyhow, Kentucky didn’t fight. He just shot; and whatever he shot at he hit, as surely and certainly as Death itself. There were a great many dead Germans lying about, and the ground was one churned heap of broken earth and shell holes. They came suddenly on many men in khaki, walking about and shouting to each other. Then a Stonewall corporal met him and pointed to where the Stonewalls were gathering, and told him he had better go join them, and Kentucky trudged off towards them feeling all of a sudden most desperately tired and done up, and most horribly thirsty. The first thing he asked when he reached the Stonewalls was whether anyone had a drop of water to spare; and then he heard a shout, a very glad and cheery shout that



brought a queer, warm glow to his heart, 'Kentuck! Hi, Kentucky!'

'Pug,' he said. 'Oh, you, Pug! My, but I'm glad to see you again, boy.'

They talked quickly, telling in snatches what had happened to each since they separated, and both openly and whole-heartedly glad to be together again.

'I got a helmet, Kertuck,' said Pug joyfully, and exhibited his German helmet with pride. 'Tole you I'd get a good 'un, didn't I? An' I downed the cove that 'ad it meself. We potted at each other quite a bit—'im or me for it—an' I downed 'im, an' got 'is 'elmet.'

Now the capture of the village was a notable feat of arms which was duly if somewhat briefly chronicled in the General Headquarters dispatch of the day with a line or two enumerating the depth and front of the advance made, the prisoners and material taken. The war correspondents have described the action more fully and in more enthusiastic and picturesque language, and the action with notes of the number of shells fired, the battalions and batteries employed, and nice clear explanatory maps of the ground and dispositions of attackers and defenders will no doubt



in due course occupy its proper place in the history of the war.

But none of these make any mention of Pug and his helmet, although these apparently played quite an important part in the operation. Pug himself never understood his full share in it—remembered the whole affair as nothing but a horrible mix-up of noise, mud, bursting shells and drifting smoke, and his acquirement of a very fine helmet souvenir. Even when Pug told his story Kentucky hardly understood all it meant, only indeed came to realise it when he added to it those other official and semi-official accounts, his—Kentucky's—own experience, and the mysterious impulse that he had seen change the Anzacs' retreat into an attack, into the charge which swept up the Stonewalls and carried on into and over the village. To get the story complete as Kentucky came to piece it out and understand it we must go back and cover Pug's doings from the time Kentucky left him and the others in the shell hole to carry the message back to the artillery F.O.O.

After the German counter-attack was caught in the nick of time and driven back with heavy loss, a good many of the counter-attackers instead of



risking the run back to the shelter of their trench dropped into shell holes and craters, and from here the more determined of them continued to shoot at any head showing in the British line. The men of the latter were also scattered along the broken ground in what at one time had been the open between two trenches, but was now a better position and in its innumerable deep shell-craters offered better cover than the wrecked fragment of a trench behind them. On both sides too the gunners were ferociously strafing the opposition trenches, but since they dare not drop their shells too near to where they knew their own front lines to be located the tendency on both sides was for the front line to wriggle and crawl forward into the zone left uncovered by bursting high-explosive shells and shrapnel. The German and British infantry naturally did their best to discourage and make as expensive as possible the forward movement by the opposition, and industriously sniped with rifle and machine gun any men who exposed themselves for a moment. But when the counter-attack fell back Pug was for some minutes too busily engaged in helping to bandage up a badly wounded man to pay much attention to what the Germans were doing. When the job



was completed he raised his head and looked out of the shell hole where he and the others were sheltering and peered round through the drifting smoke haze. He caught dim sight of some moving figures and raised his voice lustily. 'Stretche-e-er!' he shouted, and after waiting a minute, again 'Stre-tche-e-er!' Amidst all the uproar of battle it is not probable that his voice had a carrying power of more than scanty yards, but when no stretcher-bearers immediately materialised in answer to his call Pug appeared a good deal annoyed. 'Wot d'you 't'pose them blanky bearers is doin',' he grumbled, then raised his voice and bawled again. He shouted and grumbled alternately for a few minutes with just the growing sense of annoyance that a man feels when he whistles for a taxi and no taxi appears. Two or three times he ducked instinctively at the hiss of a close bullet and once at the 'Cr-r-ump' of a falling shell and the whistle of its flying splinters, and when he stood to shout he took care to keep well down in his shell hole, raising no more than his head above its level to allow his voice to carry above ground. Apparently, although he thought it unpleasantly risky to be above ground there, and in no way out of place for him not to



expose himself, he took it quite for granted that stretcher-bearers would accept all the risk and come running to his bellows. But in case it be thought that he expected too much, it ought to be remembered that it is the stretcher-bearers themselves who are responsible for such high expectations. Their salving of broken bodies from out the maelstrom of battle, their desperate rescues under fire, their readiness to risk the most appalling hazards, their indifference to wounds and death, their calm undertaking of impossibly difficult jobs, these very doings have by their constant performance been reduced to no more than the normal, have come to be accepted as the matter-of-fact ordinary routine business of the stretcher-bearers. Pug in fact expected them to come when he called, only because he had seen them scores of times answer promptly to equally or even more risky calls.

And the stretcher-bearers in this instance did not fail him. A couple appeared looming hazily through the smoke, and at another call laboured heavily over the broken ground to him. They saw the wounded man lying before Pug had time to make any explanation of his call, and without stopping to waste words, slid over the edge of the



crater, dropped the stretcher in position beside the wounded man, ran a quick workmanlike glance and touch over the first field-dressings on him, had him on the stretcher and hoisting up out of the hole all well inside a couple of minutes.

Pug returned to his own particular business, and settling himself against the sloping wall of the crater nearest the Germans took a cautious survey of the ground before him. At first he saw nothing but the rough churned-up surface and a filmy curtain of smoke through which the resuming British bombardment was again beginning to splash fountains of shell-flung reek and dust. But as he looked a figure appeared, came forward at a scrambling run for a score of paces and dropped out of sight into some hole. At first sight of him Pug had instinctively thrust forward his rifle muzzle and snapped off a quick shot, but the man had run on apparently without taking any notice of it. Pug was a fair enough shot to feel some annoyance. 'D'jer see that?' he asked his neighbour. 'Beggan never even ducked; an' I'll bet I didn't go far off an inner on 'im.' The neighbour was taking a long and careful sight over the edge of the pit. He fired, and without moving his rifle gazed earnestly in the direction



he had shot. 'Wot's that, Pug?' he said at last, jerking out the empty shell and reloading. 'Who ducked? Ah, would yer!' he exclaimed hastily, and pumped out a rapid clipful of rounds. Pug joined in with a couple of shots and the dodging figures they had shot at vanished suddenly. 'Wot's their game now, I wonder,' said Pug. 'D'you think they're edgin' in for another rush?' He had raised himself a little to look out, but the venomous *hiss-zizz* of a couple of bullets close past his head made him bob down hurriedly.

'You gotter look out,' said the other man. 'A lot o' blighters didn't bolt when we cut up their attack. They just dropped into any hole that come handy, an' they're lyin' there slipin' pot shots at anyone that shows.'

Pug banged off a shot, jerked the breech open and shut and banged off another. 'See that,' he said. 'Same bloke I potted at afore. Not 'arf a cheeky blighter either. Keeps jumpin' up an' runnin' in to'ards us. But you wait till nex' time—I'll give 'im run.' He settled himself nicely with elbow-rest, wide sprawled legs, and braced feet, and waited with careful eye on his sights and coiled finger about the trigger. Two minutes he waited, and then his rifle banged again, and



he exclaimed delightedly, 'I gottim, chum. I gottim that time. See 'im flop?' But his exclamation changed to one of angry disgust as he saw the man he supposed he had 'got' rise from behind his cover, beckon vigorously to someone behind him, and move forward again another few steps.

Pug blazed another shot at him, and in response the man, in the very act of dropping to cover, stopped, straightened up, and after staring in Pug's direction for a moment, turned, and lifting the helmet from his head repeated the beckoning motion he had made before.

'Well of all the blinkin' cheek,' said Pug wrathfully; 'take that, you cow,' firing again.

'Wot's up?' said his companion. 'Is some bloke stringin' you?'

'Fair beats me,' said the exasperated Pug. 'I've 'ad half a dozen clean shots at 'im, an' 'e just laughs at 'em. But I've marked the last place 'e bogged down into, an' if 'e just pokes a nose out once more, 'e'll get it in the neck for keeps.'

'Where is 'e?' said the interested chum, 'show us, an' I'll drop it acrost 'im too when 'e pops out.'

'No,' said Pug firmly, 'fair dinkum. 'E's my



own private little lot, an' I'm goin' to see 'im safely 'ome myself. S-steady now, 'ere 'e comes again. Just 'avin' a look out, eh, Fritz. Orright, m' son. Keep on lookin' an' it'll meet yer optic—plunk,' and he fired. 'Missed again,' he said sadly as he saw a spurt of mud flick from the edge of the German's cover. 'But lumme, chum, di'jer see the 'elmet that bloke 'ad?' The German, it may be remembered, had drawn attention to his helmet by taking it off and waving it, but Pug at that moment had been too exasperated by the impudence of the man's exposure to notice the helmet. But this time a gleam of light caught the heavy metal 'chin-strap' that hung from it, and although the helmet itself was covered, with the usual service cover of grey cloth, Pug could see distinctly that it was one of the old pickelhauben type—one of the kind he so greatly coveted as a 'souvenir.'

'That settles it,' said Pug firmly. 'I'm goin' to lay for that bloke till I gets 'im, an' then when we advance I'll 'ave 'is, 'elmet.'

He lay for several minutes, watching the spot where the German was concealed as a cat watches a mouse-hole, and when his patience was rewarded by a glimpse of grey uniform he took steady aim,



carefully squeezed the trigger until he felt the faint check of its second pull-off, held his breath, and gave the final squeeze, all in exact accordance with the school of musketry instructions. The patch of grey vanished, and Pug could not tell whether he had scored a hit, but almost immediately he saw the spike and rounded top of the helmet lift cautiously into sight. Again Pug took slow and deliberate aim but then hesitated, 'Tchick-tchicked' softly between his teeth, aimed again and fired. The helmet vanished with a jerk. 'Lookin' over the edge of 'is 'c'e, 'e was,' said Pug. 'An' at first I didn't like to shoot for fear of spoilin' that 'elmet. But arter all,' he conceded cheerfully, 'I dunno' that it wouldn't maybe improve it as a fust-class sooven-er to 'ave a neat little three-oh-three 'ole drilled in it.'

Did you drill it?' asked his companion directly.

Dunno,' admitted Pug, 'but I'm keepin' a careful eye on 'im, an' I'll soon know if 'e moves again.'

But in the process of keeping a careful eye Pug was tempted for an instant into keeping a less careful head under cover than the situation demanded. A bullet leapt *whutt* past within an inch of his ear and he dropped flat to earth with



an oath. 'That was 'im,' he said, 'I saw the flash of 'is rifle. Looks like 'e's got me piped off, an' it's goin' to be im' or me for it.

Chick and another man in the same hole had been busy shooting at any mark that presented, but when their every appearance above ground began to be greeted by an unpleasantly close bullet, they ceased to fire and squatted back in the hole to watch Pug and the conducting of his duel. A dozen times he and the German fired, each drawing or returning instant shot for shot, Pug moving from one spot to another in the shell-crater, pushing his rifle out slowly, lifting his head cautiously an inch at a time.

Over their heads the great shells shrieked and rushed, round them crackled a spattering rifle fire, the occasional hammering of a machine gun, the rolling crash and whirr of bursting shells and flying splinters. Wide out to right and left of them, far to their front and rear the roar of battle ran, long-thundering and unbroken, in a deafening chorus of bellowing guns, the vibrating rattle of rifles and machine guns, the sharp detonations and reports of shells and bombs and grenades. But Pug and, in lesser degree, his companions were quite heedless of all these things, of how the



battle moved or stayed still. For them the struggle had boiled down into the solitary duel between Pug and his German; the larger issues were for the moment completely overshadowed, as in war they so often are, by the mere individual and personal ones. Pug insisted in finishing off his duel single-handed, declining to have the others there interfere in it. 'It's 'im or me for it,' he repeated, 'fair dinkum. An' I'm goin' to get 'im *and* 'is 'elmet on my blinkin' own.'

He decided at last to move his position, to crawl along and try to catch his opponent in flank to stalk his enemy as a hunter stalks a hidden buck. Since he could not escape from the crater they were in without exposing himself to that watchful rifle, he scraped down with his entrenching tool a couple of feet of the rim of the crater where it formed a wall dividing off another crater. When he had cleared the passage he came back and fired another shot, just to keep his enemy watching in the same spot for him, and hurriedly crawled over into the next crater, squirmed and wriggled away from it along cracks and holes and folds of the torn and tumbled ground in a direction that he reckoned would allow him to reach the German sheltering in his hole and behind a broken hillock



earth. But before he reached such a position as he desired he found himself looking over into a deep crater occupied by an officer and half a dozen men with a machine gun.

The officer looked up and caught sight of him. 'Hullo, Sneath,' he said. 'Where are you off to? You're moving the wrong way, aren't you? The order was to retire, and you're moving forward.'

Pug wriggled over into the crater and crouched puffing and blowing for a moment. 'I 'adn't 'eard nothin' about retiring, sir,' he said doubtfully.

'That's the order,' said the officer briskly. 'I don't know what it means any more than you do, but there it is. You'd better wait now and move back with us.'

Pug was annoyed—exceedingly annoyed. This retirement looked like losing him his duel, and what was more, losing him his coveted helmet. Retirement was a thing he had not for an instant calculated upon. He had taken it quite for granted that if he could slay the wearer of the helmet, the helmet was his, that he had only to wait until the line advanced to go straight to it and pick it up. With a vague idea that he would have managed the affair much better on his own, without these interfering directions of his move-



ments, he began to wish he had never come across this officer, and from that passed to wondering whether he couldn't give the officer the slip and finish off his programme in his own way.

At that moment the British artillery fire redoubled in intensity and the rush of shells overhead rose to a roaring gale.

'Sharp there,' said the officer. 'Get that gun picked up. Now's our chance to get back while the guns are socking it into 'em.'

He was right, of course, and their chances of retirement were likely to be improved by the heavier covering fire. Pug was also right in a half-formed idea that had come to him—that the covering fire would also lessen the risk of a move forward, or as he put it to himself—'With all them shells about their ears they'll be too busy keepin' their heads down to do much shootin' at me if I chance a quick rush; an' most likely I'd be on top o' that bloke wi' the 'elmet afore 'e knew it.'

The others were picking up the machine gun and preparing to move, and Pug took a long and careful look over the edge of the hole to locate his helmet wearer. With a quick exclamation he snatched the rifle to his shoulder, aimed, and fired.



'That'll do,' said the officer sharply turning at sound of the shot. 'Cease firing and get along back.' But Pug was gazing hard in the direction of his shot. 'I've got 'im,' he said triumphantly, 'I'll swear I got 'im that time. Showin' a fair mark 'e was, an' I saw 'im jerk an' roll when I fired.'

'Never mind that,' said the officer impatiently. There's their rifle fire beginning again. Time we were out of this. Keep down as well as you can all of you. Move yourselves now.'

The men began to scramble out of the hole, and in an instant Pug's mind was made up. They were retiring; so far as he knew the battalion might be retiring out of the line, out of the battle, and out of the reach of chances of German helmets. And meantime there was his helmet lying there waiting to be picked up, lying within a hundred yards of him.

He climbed up the near wall of the crater, halted and spoke hurriedly to the officer. 'I won't be 'alf a mo', sir,' he said. 'Something there I want to pick up an' bring in,' and without waiting for any reply turned and bolted across the open towards his helmet. The officer was consumed with a quick gust of anger at such disobedience.



'Here,' he shouted and scrambled out of the pit. 'Hi, come back you'; and as Pug gave no sign of having heard him, he shouted again and ran a few paces after him.

And so it was that about a dozen Anzacs rising sullenly and grumblingly out of a big shell-crater in reluctant obedience to the order to retire, saw a khaki figure rise into sight and go charging straight forward towards the enemy, and a second later the figure of an officer bound into sight and follow him.

Two or three of the Anzacs voiced together the thought that rose to all their minds.

'Who said retire. . . . What blundering fool twisted the order . . . retire, Gostrewth, they're advancing . . . us retire, an' them goin' forward . . . .'

To them the position required little thinking over. They could see some men advancing, and distinctly see an officer too at that. And how many more the smoke hid——

In an instant they were swarming up and out of their crater; there was a wild yell, a shrill 'Coo-ee,' a confused shouting, 'Come on, boys . . . at 'em, Anzacs . . . Advance Australia,' and the dozen went plunging off forward. Out to right



and left of them the yell ran like fire through dry grass, the coo-ees rose long and shrill; as if by magic the dead ground sprouted gleaming bayonets and scrambling khaki figures. Every man who looked saw a ragged and swiftly growing line surging forward, and every man, asking nothing more, taking only this plain evidence of an advance, made haste—exactly as Kentucky's companions made haste—to fling into it. Straight at the flashing rifles and the drifting fog-bank of shell smoke that marked the German position the shifting wave swept and surged, the men yelling, shouting, and cheering. Bullets beating down upon them, shells crumpling and smashing amongst them cut them down by dozens, but neither halted nor slowed down the charging line. It poured on, flooded in over the wrecked trenches and dug-outs, the confused litter of shell holes big and little, piled earth heaps, occasional fragments of brickwork and splintered beams that alone remained of the village. The flank attacks that had been launched a few minutes before and held up staggering under the ferocious fire that met them, found the weight of their opposition suddenly grow less, took fresh breath and thrust fiercely in again, gained a footing, felt the resistance weaken and bend and break,



and in a moment were through and into the tumbled wreckage of a defence, shooting and stabbing and bayoneting, bombing the dug-outs, rounding up the prisoners, pushing on until they came in touch with the swirling edges of the frontal attack's wave, and joining them turned and overran the last struggling remnants of the defence. The village was taken; the line pushed out beyond it, took firm grip of a fresh patch of ground, spread swiftly and linked up with the attack that raged on out to either side and bit savagely into the crumbling German line.

These wider issues were of course quite beyond the knowledge or understanding of Pug. He had come uninjured to the spot where his German lay, found he was an officer and quite dead, snatched up the helmet that lay beside him, and turned to hurry back. Only then was he aware of the line charging and barging down upon him, and understanding nothing of why or how it had come there, noticing only from a glimpse of some faces he knew that men of his own battalion were in it, he slipped his arm through the chin-strap of his captured helmet, turned again and ran forward with the rest. With them he played his part in the final overrunning of the village—the usual confused



scuffling jumble of a part played by the average infantry private in an attack, a nightmarish mixture of noise and yelling, of banging rifles, shattering bomb reports, a great deal of smoke, the whistle of passing bullets, the crackling snap and smack of their striking ground and stone, swift appearance and disappearance of running figures. He had a momentary vision of men grouped about a black dug-out mouth hurling grenades down it; joined a wild rush with several others on a group of grey-coated Germans who stood firm even to a bayonet finish. Scrambling and scuffling down and up the steep sides of the smaller shell-craters, round the slippery crumbling edges of the larger, he caught glimpses—this towards the end—of scattered groups or trickling lines of white-faced prisoners with long grey coats flapping about their ankles, and hands held high over their heads, being shepherded out towards the British lines by one or two guards. All these scattered impressions were linked up by many panting, breathless scrambles over a chaos of torn and broken ground pocked and pitted with the shell-craters set as close as the cells of a broken honeycomb, and ended with a narrow escape, averted just in time by one of his officers, from firing upon



a group of men—part of the flank attack as proved—who appeared mysteriously out of the smoke where Germans had been firing and throwing stick-grenades a moment before.

Through all the turmoil Pug clung tightly to his helmet. He knew that there had been a stiff fight and that they had won, was vaguely pleased at the comforting fact, and much more distinctly pleased and satisfied with the possession of his souvenir. He took the first opportunity when the line paused and proceeded to sort itself out beyond the village, to strip the cloth off his prize and examine it. It was an officer's pickelhaube, resplendent in all its glory of glistening black patent-leather, gleaming brass eagle spread-winged across its front, fierce spike on top and heavy-linked chain 'chin-strap' of shining brass. Pug was hugely pleased with his trophy, displayed it pridefully and told briefly the tale of his duel with the late owner. He told nothing of how the securing of his prize had assisted at the taking of the village, for the good reason that he himself did not know it, and up to then in fact did not even know that they had taken a village.

He tied the helmet securely to his belt with a twisted bit of wire and at the urgent command



oi a 'sweating and mud-debaubed sergeant prepared to dig. 'Are we stoppin' 'ere then?' he stayed to ask.

'Suppose so,' said the sergeant, 'seeing we've taken our objective and got this village.'

Pug gaped at him, and then looked round wonderingly at the tossed and tumbled shell-riddled chaos of shattered earth that was spread about them. 'Got this village,' he said.

Lumme, where's the village then?'

Another man there laughed at him. 'You came over the top o' it, Pug,' he said. 'Don't you remember the broken beam you near fell over, back there a piece? That was a bit o' one o' the houses in the village. An' d'you see that little bit o' grey wall there? That's some more o' the village.'

Pug looked hard at it. 'An' that's the village, is it,' he said cheerfully. 'Lor' now, I might 'ave trod right on top o' it by accident, or even tripped over it, if it 'ad been a bit bigger village. You can keep it; I'd rather 'ave my 'elmet.'