

# THE DIGGER

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## THE REAR-GUARD.

Groping along the tunnel, step by step,  
He winked his prying torch with patch-  
ing glare  
From side to side, and sniffed the un-  
wholesome air.  
Tins, boxes, bottles, shapes too vague  
to know,  
A mirror smashed, the mattress from a  
bed;  
And he exploring fifty feet below  
The rosy gloom of battle overhead.  
Tripping, he grabbed the wall; saw  
someone lie  
Humped at his feet, half-hidden by a  
rug,  
And stooped to give the sleeper's arm a  
tug.  
"I'm looking for Headquarters." No  
reply.  
"God blast your neck!" (For days he'd  
had no sleep).  
"Get up and guide me through this  
stinking place."  
Savage he kicked a soft, unanswering  
heap,  
And flashed his beam across the livid  
face  
Terribly glaring up, whose eyes yet wore  
Agony dying hard ten days before;  
And fists of fingers clutched a blacken-  
ing wound.  
Alone he staggered on until he found  
Dawn's ghost that filtered down a shaft-  
ed stair  
To the dazed, muttering creatures un-  
derground  
Who hear the boom of shells in muffled  
sound.  
At last, with sweat of horror in his  
hair,  
He climbed through darkness to the twi-  
light air,  
Unloading hell behind him step by step.  
WIRERS.  
"Pass it along, the wiring party's going  
out!"—  
And yawning sentries mumble, "Wires  
going out."  
Unravelling; twisting hammering stakes  
with muffled thud,  
They toil with stealthy haste and anger  
in their blood.  
The Poche sends up a flare. Black  
forms stand rigid there,  
Stock-still like posts; then darkness, and  
the clumsy ghosts  
Stride hither and thither, whispering,  
Tripped by clutching snare of snags and  
tangles.  
Ghastly; dawn vaporous coasts  
Gleams desolate along the sky, night's  
misery ended.  
Young Hughes was badly hit; I heard  
him carried away,  
Moaning at every lurch; no doubt he'll  
die to-day.  
But we can say the front-line wire's  
been safely mended.

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