SMITHY, NOBBY AND CO.

BY

EDGAR WALLACE

Smithy Nobby And Co.

THE NEW OFFICER

"The officer," said Private Smithy, of the 1st Anchesters, "is a new officer. It isn't the new kind of uniform, or the new Salvation Army cap, or the new silly way of wearing his shoulder sash. He's a changed officer, if you understand. He don't look no different, and in many ways he's not altered a bit. He still plays polo an' bridge—what's bridge?"

I explained.

"Well, he still does all these things just about as much as ever he did, but I tell you 'e's an astounding blighter in many ways."

"It ain't so long ago," reflected this monunment of the First Army Corps, "when officers used to come on parade at 10 a.m.—commanding officers' parade drill order—and we used to look at 'em hard to discover whether we'd seen 'em before. They used to troop down from the officers' mess buttoning up their brown gloves and hooking on their swords under their patrol jackets. They'd stand about for a minute or two yawnin' their blankey 'eads orf an' then the bugled sound 'Officers come and be blowed,' an' they'd fall in.

"Well, the colour-sergeant was always waitin' for 'em.

" 'What's on this mornin',' says me fine captain.

" 'Battalion drill, sir,' says the flag.

" 'Oh, dash battalion drill,' sez the captain, walkin' round an' inspectin' the company. Take this man's name, colour-sergeant, for wearing his pouoh on the right side.'

" 'Beg pardon, sir,' sez the flag, 'they're wore on the right side.'

" 'So they are,' sez the intelligent captain, givin' a casual glance along the line. 'Well, take his name for 'aving a dirty belt.'

" 'Right, sir,' sez the colour-sergeant.

DRILL—OLD STYLE

"When the inspection was over the officer would draw his sword and read the writin' on it, and draw noughts and crosses with it on the ground; then fall in six paces ahead of the centre of his company. Bimeby he'd see something 'appening to the company ahead of his.

"What's gain' on there, "colour-sergeant'?' he'd ask.

" 'Formin' fours, sir, sez the colour-sergeant.

" 'Oh, I forgot all about, that, sez his nibs. 'Company! Form fours!' an' not a man moves

" 'You 'aven't numbered 'em, sir,' sez the colour-sergeant.

" 'Hey?' sez the captain, gettin' red. 'Then why the dickens ain't they numbered when they fall in? Number off from the right, an' be quick about it.'

"Then comes the battalion drill," continued Smithy, with a sad, reminiscent smile. "The colonel shouts something.

" 'Wbat's that he saad, colour-sergeant,' sez the officer.

" 'Into line, right form, sir,' sez the flag.

" 'What do I do?' sez the captain.

" 'Turn half-right, sir, and wait for the word "march,"' whispers the flag.

"And right through the drill it was the same. Sometimes the captain was right, sometimes he was wrong. Sometimes he had the whole company jumbled up in horrid confusion, and the colonel would come prancing atong and say things he was probably sorry for afterwards.

"Well, an hour of this sort of thing went on, and then it was 'Right turn—Dismiss,' and the officer would run away and change his sword an' uniform for a Sunday suit an' a panamar hat, and we didn't see him again till to-morrow."

CONVERTED OFFICERS

Smithy raised himself on his elbow and addressed the orderly man staggering tentward with a big kettle of steaming tea.

Would the orderly man be so kind as to give Smithy a basin of tea and save him the trouble of coming to the tent for it. Without checking his career, the orderly man remarked, "Oh, yes, why not, not 'arf. Would Smithy like him (the orderly man) to drink it for him (Smithy)? Did he want waiting on? Should he fetch it in a feeding bottle?" and sundry other ejaculations of a bitterly satirical character.

Whereupon Smithy, realising that the enemy was rapidly getting out of range, delivered a rapid feu de joie of personalities, calculated to annoy and distress a young and ambitious orderly man.

" 'Pon my word," said Smithy gloomily, "these blanked Brodericks are gettin' worse an' worse; the men 'ave changed as much as the officers."

"How have the officers changed?" I asked.

"I was going to tell you,' said Smithy. "As I said before, it's only' an inward change. You know soldiers, don't you?"

"I do."

"Well, you've seen Tommy get converted—get religion, haven't you? He drops the wet canteen, and spends his time in the library playin' bagatelle with other bun-wallahs. The cloth is always torn, and the cues 'ave no tips," added Smithy inconsequently. "He goes to chapel on week nights and shows up the regiment by prayin' in public; joins the Templars with fancy grips and passwords and sashes. Well, beyond giving up booze and saying 'confound' instead of '——' or '——' or '——', there ain't much difference, outwardly at least. He still parts his hair; he still mashes the girls; he still does all things 'uman—except swear and drink.

"So it is with the officer—'e's changed inwardly. He plays polo and golf—which is a, rotten game in my opinion—and motors.

"But somehow we seem to see more of him than we used. He comes nosing around at all hours of the day. He does colour-sergeants' work and corporal's work—in fact, he knows as much about soldiering now as we do. He doesn't make mistakes on parade; he turns up at the rifle range even when it ain't his turn for duty; he'll take a dozen chaps out into the country and teach them how to sketch; he spends a lot of his spare time learning flag-wagging—in fact, in fact," said Smith, struggling for a climax, "he's a more astoundin' person than ever."

TACTICS UP TO DATE

Smithy refilled and relit his pipe and ruminated for some moments.

"Yesterday," said he, "the little man French had us out attackin' or defendin'—I don't know which—a bit of a village, over there.' Smithy pointed vaguely. "I was with a half company under Mr. Brick- Taylor—he gets his company next month. We've got a new colour-sergeant from the second battalion who's been used to giving officers tips all his life.

"We were scoutin' ahead, and we sighted the enemy outside a pub near Frinham. We could see them, they couldu't see us.

" 'Git into that donga,' sez the officer, pointin' to a big, deep ditch.

" 'Beg pardon, sir,' says the flag, 'I think you ought to extend the men and retire, sir.'

" 'Oh, you do, do you?' sez the orficer, 'well, I don't; get into the donga as quick as you can.'

" 'Beg pardon, sir,' sez the flag, 'but the book sez—'

" 'What book?' sez the orficer.

" 'Drill book, sir,' sez the colour-bloke.

" 'Never read it,' sez the little man as calm as you please.

" 'I'm takin' cover and hidin', because I once got plugged in the neck by a Mauser bullet for not doin' so. I am not retiring in open order accordin' to the book because I tried something like it at Magersfontein and appeared in all the London papers the next mornin' as 'dangerously.'

A bugle call rang out sharp and clear, a, dozen tents disgorged one or two men, who buttoned their coats as they hurried to the guard tent.

"Defaulters," said Smithy, shifting his position to one of greater comfort; "all young soldiers, an' punishment's good for 'em—it's surprisin' how a few kicks help a man in the Army."

THE CLAIRVOYANT

"Do you believe in ghosts?" asked Private Smithy.

"What kind of ghosts?" I asked cautiously.

"There's a chap in H Company," explained Smithy—"his name's Turner, Mouldy Turner, we call him, owin' to his havin' been a moulder by trade. You never saw such a chap in your lifo," said Smithy enthusiastically. "Give him a pack o' cards an' a table an' he'll tell you things about your past life wot you've never heard before.

"He charges tuppence a time, an' it's worth it. I had twopenn'orth myself the other day.

" 'Smithy,' he sez, dealin' out the cards all over the table, you're expectin' a letter from a dark man.'

" 'No, I ain't,' I sez.

" 'Well, you'll get it, he sez. 'It will bring good news.'

"An' sure enough," said Smithy, impassively, "that very afternoon Spud Murphy paid me two shillin's he borrered on the manoeuvres."

"But," I expostulated, "that wasn't a letter."

"It was better than a letter," said the satisfied Smithy.

"Well, old Mouldy counts the cards, seven to the left an' seven to the right.

" 'There's a fair woman wot loves you,' sez Mouldy.

" 'How fair?,' I sez, thinkin' of all the red-haired gals I know.

" 'Pretty fair,' sez Mouldy, 'you're goin' on a long journey acrorse the sea.'

WHAT NOBBY SAW

" 'Battersea?' sez Nobby, who was lookin on.

" 'You shut up, Nobby,' I sez, 'go on, Mouldy.'

" 'Tho nine o' spades,' sez Mouldy, scowlin' like anything at Nobby, 'is a sign of death. You'll hear of a friend dyin'. Not much ot a friend, either, but a ignorant chap with big feet,' he sez.

" 'You leave my feet alone,' sez Nobby.

"All the chaps used to come to Mouldy, an' he was doin' well. I could see Nobby didn't like the way Mouldy was rakin' in the iron, an' one night, when me an' a few chaps was in the canteen torkin' about how teetotallers die when they get into a hot climate, Pug Williams came dashin' in, lookin' as white as a ghost.

" 'Nobby Clark's took ill!' he sez, an' we rushes over to the barrack-room to find old Nobby sittin' on his bed with a horrible stare in his eye.

" 'Wot's up, Nobby?' I sez, and just then Mouldy Turner comes in.

" 'I see,' sez Nobby, in a moany sort of voice, 'I see a public house.'

" 'You'vo seen too many public houses,' sez Mouldy, hastily.

" 'The inside of a public house, sez Nobby.

" 'That's the part I mean,' sez Mouldy.

" 'I see a man with side whiskers an' a big watch-chain,' sez Nobby moanily; 'he's servin' be'ind the counter, an' there's a red-faced gel with yeller hair a-countin' money. Her name's Gertie,' sez Nobby, holding his for'ead. "Old Mouldy's jaw dropped an' he went white.

" 'Where's my George? Where's my soldier boy?' moans Nobby, 'that's what she's a-sayin' of.'

"Mouldy's face got red.

" 'Boys,' sez Mouldy, in a scared voice, 'old Nobby's got second-sight; he's a seein' the pub I go to up in London an' my young lady.'

" 'Where's my brave soldier?' sez Nobby, groanin'; 'that's what she's a- sayin' of; where is my brave soldier wot rescued the colonel at Paardeberg?'

" 'He's a wnnderin' now,' sez Mouldy, blushin'.

" 'Let's take him to the, hospital,' sez Pug Williams, but just at that minuto Nobby sort of woke up.

" 'Where am I?' he sez faintly.

"We told him what he'd been sayin', an' tried to persuade him to go to bed an' sleep it off.

"The next day the news got about that Nobby was second-sighted, an' when me and Nobby went to got our dinner pint all the chaps crowded round an' asked him to give a performance.

"It appeared from what Nobby told 'em that he'd always been second-sighted, an' when he was a kid he had to wear spectacles.

FORTUNES

" 'Can you tell fortunes, Nobby?' sez Oatsey.

" 'I can with hands, sez Nobby, lookin' at Mouldy; 'not with cards. Cards,' he sez, 'is swindlin'.'

"Can you tell mine, Nobby?' sez Pug Williams, holdin' out hid hand.

" 'Certainly,' sez Nobby, who'd known Pug all his life, an' went to school with him.

" 'You was born under an unlucky star,' sez Nobby, lookin' at the hand.

" 'That's quite right,' sez Pug, qhite proud.

" 'At School you was always gettin' into trouble,' sez Nobby, who happened to know that Pug did six months at a truant school.

" 'That's right!' sez Pug, highly delighted.

" 'You've had a lot a trouble through a dark man,' sez Nobby, knowin' that Pug got forty-two days for knockin' a nigger about, when the reg'ment was in India.

" 'Marvellous!' sez Pug.

"From that day Nobby made money. Chaps used to come from every company to get their fortune told. Mouldy an' his cards did no bus'ness at all.

"Nobby charged thruppence a hand, cash on the nail; fourpenco if he 'ad to wait till pay day.

"For sixpence Nobby used to have a fit an' see things. Sometimes two chaps would club together, an' then Nobby would have two fits for ninepence.

"One day up comes Ugly Johnson, of 'D.'

" 'I want you to tell my fortune, Nobby,' he sez.

" 'Cross me hand with silver, pretty lady,' sez Nobby.

" 'Don't snack a chap about his face,' sez Ugly, very fierce.

" 'No offence, Ugly,' sez Nobby.

" 'And I ain't go'in' to cioss your bloomin' hand with silver,' sez Ugly, ''cos I've only got three'apence.'

" 'That'll do, sez Nobby, who never let a customer go.

" 'You've got a long life in front of you,' sez Nobby, lookin' at the hands.

" 'Ah,' sez Ugly.

" 'You've 'ad a stormy career in the past,' sez Nobby, 'but all will come right!'

" 'Ah,' sez Ugly.

" 'You've been crorsed in love,' sez Nobby.

" 'That's a lie,' sez Ugly.

" 'So it is,' sez Nobby, lookin' close at Ugly's paw, 'wot I thought was the crorsed-in-love line is only dirt. You've got a sensitive 'art, you think everybody's passin' remarks about your face,' sez Nobby.

SPIRITS

" 'Never mind about my face,' snarls Ugly.

" 'I don't mind it,' sez Nobby, 'even if other people do,' he sez.

"Well, old Ugly got mad an' went round puttin' it about that Nobby couldn't tell fortunes for nuts, and Mouldy sez that Nobby was tellin' a lot of lies an' makin' fun of the chaps, an' business began to fall orf.

"One afternoon Nobby sez to me, 'Smithy, trade's bad.'

" 'Is it?' I sez.

" 'Yes,' he sez, 'it's about time I had another fit.'

" 'Have it now,' I sez, 'don't mind me.'

"That night, when we was all cleanin' up for commondin' officer's parade, an' the barrack-room was full, Nobby suddenly stood up, moanin' like anything.

" 'I see!' he sez starin' about him, 'a man with a ugly mug. 'E's a- standing' on the blink—I mean brink of destruction.'

"We all walks over an' looks at Nobby. He was a ghastly sight, rollin' his eyes an' moanin'.

" 'I see a chap,' sez Nobby, twistin' about as if he'd swollered a corkscrew, 'wot pretends to tell fortunes by cards. 'E's standin' on the brink of destruction too.'

" 'Wake up, Nobby,' I sez, soothin' him; 'it's all right.'

" 'I see,' began Nobby again, an' just at that minute in walks the colour-sergeant.

"He looks at Nobby rollin' an' squirmin' about, an' then sez to me:

" 'Are you the oldest soldier here, Smith?'

" 'Yes, colour-sergeant,' I sez.

" 'Well,' sez the colour bloke, 'take a couple of men an' put Private Clark in the guardroom.'

" 'Wot for?' sez Nobby, wakin' up sudden from his trance.

" 'Drunk,' sez the colour-sargeant.

" 'I ain't drunk,' roars Nobby, very indignant.

" 'Pretendin' to be drunk, then,' sez the colour-sergeant; 'that's worse.'

" 'I'm seein' spirits,' sez Nobby.

" 'You've, been drinkin' 'em,' sez the colour bloke, an' Nobby was so wild that it took six of us to get him to the guairdroom.

"You might say seven," added Smithy, "for Old Mouldy did the work of two men."

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

The War Office requests Officers Commanding Units to submit photographs and films suitable for conversion into lantern slides.

—War Office Memorandum.

The Officer Commanding wishes to notify N.C.O.'s and men in possession of cameras that all reasonable facilities will be given them for the purpose of securing photographs portraying Army life.

—"A" Company's orders.

"It appears," explained Private Smith, "that they want to advertise the Army with a magic lantern. They've got a bit tired of showin' a picture of a soldier in marchin' order, an' callin' it 'the advantages of the Army.'

"We was talkin' about it the other night down in the '0le in the Wall, me an' Nobby Clark an' a new chap of 'A'—I forget his right name for the minute, but we call 'im Smiley—an' Spud Murphy, an' 'Appy Johnson.

" 'Wot's the idea, Nobby?' sez Spud, who's been gettin' on friendly terms with me an' Nobby lately; 'wot do they want our photos for?'

" 'I don't know,' sez Nobby, 'but me an' Smithy are goin' in for it—ain't we, Smithy?'

" 'No,' I sez.

" 'Me an' Smithy's got a camera,' sez Nobby, takin' no notice of wot I said, 'an' to—morrer we are goin' round barracks to see what we can do in the photo line.'

"I thought old Nobby was coddin', but 'e wasn't, for up 'e comes next mornin' with one of them ooncertina machines that pull in an' out, an at ten o'clock up goes Nobby to the Orderly Room an' asks to see the old man.

NOBBY VOLUNTEERS

" 'Well, Clark,' sez the Colonel, 'what do you want?'

" 'Beg pardon, sir,' sez Nobby, 'but me an' Smithy's got a camera, an' we'd like to take a few photos for the War Office,'

"The old man was as pleased as Punch. 'Very good; very good, indeed,' sez 'e. Sergeant—Major, see that Smith an' Clark are excused all parades for a week,' 'e sez. 'Is that what you want?'

" 'Yes, sir,' sez Nobby.

"So me an' Nobby walked about for the rest of the week doin' nothin, an' the other chaps was very wild.

"We used to go an' watch 'em on parade an' pretend to take snapshots of 'em.

"Nobby caused a bit of unpleasantness by sayin' to the Adjutant that 'e'd like to take a photograph of the regiment on parade in full marchin' order.

" 'You ought to know better,' sez Spud Murphy, very fierce. 'I'm surprised at you, Nobby. There ain't another marchin' order parade for a month, an' 'ere you've been an' got orders put in for one to—morrer.'

"All the chaps in the room who was busy cleanin' their straps an' packin their valises said 'Ear, 'ear,' but me an' Nobby sat on a bed cot doin' nothin'.

" 'You wait till you see yourselves in a magic lantern,' sez Nobby. 'An', besides,' 'e sez, 'I'm goin' to take a lot of you chaps by yourselves to—morrow.'

" 'Free?' sez Spud, eagerly.

" 'Don't be a miser,' sez Nobby, sternly; 'don't be, a miser, Spud, A tanner won't break you, will it? It costs me that.'

" ''Ow do you do it, Nobby?' sez Smiler.'

HOW IT IS DONE

" 'It's as simple as drinkin', sez Nobby, gettin' down 'is camera. I point it at yoU, push this button, an' you're took in a minute.'

"Well, Nobby kept the regiment standing half an hour on parade next morning waitin' for the sun to come out.

"Me an' him was in the corner of the parade ground, 'im 'olding 'is camera, me waggin' my 'ead backward an forward, tryin' to look as if I knew all about it, an' the battalion standin' stiff to attention."

"Bimeby the sdjutant sings out:

" ''Ave you taken it?'

" 'No, sir,' sings out Nobby.

" 'Well, 'urry up,' sez he; an' Nobby obeys orders an' pushes the button.

" 'I want to see that picture to—morrer,' sez the Adjutant.

" 'Yessir,' sez Nobby.

"Some'ow old Nobby was a bit depressed all that day. After tea 'e sez to me:

" 'Smithy, come for a walk in town; I want to 'ave a bit of a chin wag.'

" 'Smithy,' 'e sez when we got out that night, 'do you know anything about photos?'

" 'No,' I sez.

" 'No more don't I,' 'e sez, with a sort of sigh.

" 'What!' I sez.

" 'No,' 'e sez, 'I don't know a bloomin' thing about it. I bought this camera from a chap down the 'Igh Street. 'E sold it cheap, bein' sligh'ly damaged. It 'adn't got one of its parts. I forget which. Any'ow, the chap said it didn't matter.'

THE PHOTO SHOP

" 'Look 'ere, Nobby,' I sez, stoppin' in the street, 'ave you got the monkey box with you?'

" 'Yes,' 'e sez, 'I never let it out of my sight,' an' 'e pulls it out of his overcoat pocket.

" 'We'll take in to that chap that takes photos, an' see what's wrong withit.'

"So we took it into the photo shop; an' Nobby tells the chap all about it. The chap looks at the camera for a bit, an' me an' Nobby looks at 'im very anxious.'

" 'What do you want me to do?'

" 'Take out the photos we've took,' sez Nobby.

" 'You've took, Nobby; not me,' I sez.

" 'We're both in, Smithy,' sez Nobby."

" 'There ain't no photos,' sez the photo chap.

" 'No photos!' sez me an' Nobby together, an' Nobby went pale.

" 'No,' sez the photo chap, 'their ain't no films.'

" 'Hey?' sez Nobby.

" 'Nor no lens neither,' sez the photo chap.

" 'Does that make any difference?' sez Nobby.

" 'You've done it!' I sez, an' I told the photo chap all about 'ow Nobby took the picture of the regiment on parade, an' ow the Adjutant sez 'e wanted a copy of the photo to—morrow.

" 'Where was it took?' sez the photo chap.

" 'On parade,' I sez.

A SCOTCH REVIVAL

" 'I've got a photo of a regiment at' 'ome took on that very parade,' sez the photo chap. 'I'll tell you what I'll do when I get 'ome to—night; I'll! send it on to you. You can say you took it, an' it'll be all right.'

"Old Nobby brightens up wonderful.

" 'Is it our regiment?' 'e sez.

" 'No,' sez the photo chap; 'but it's so small, you can't tell what regiment it is.'

" 'That'll do,' sez Nobby. 'Send it straight to the Adjutant.' An' we both went back to baracks 'ighly satisfied.

"Next mornin' we was sent for to the orderly room.

" 'Good mornin' Clark; good mornin', Smith,' sez the Adjutant, when 'e saw us. 'Nice photograph that you sent us.'

" 'Yes, sir,' sez Nobby; but I said nothin'.

" 'Took it yourself?' sez the Adjutant.

" 'Yes, sir,' sez Nobby.

" 'Ah,' sez the Adjutant, very affable, 'the Colonel is very interested in it.'

" 'Very glad to 'ear that, sir,' sez Nobby.

"The Adjutant took the_ photo from 'is pocket an' 'anded it to Nobby.

"Nobby looks at it: so did. Then we saluted an' went back to the barrack—room.

"Nobby didn't speak for a long time. When 'e did, 'e said something about the photo chap, an' then——

" 'Was there anything I said to the photo chap last night that'd make 'im think we was 'Ighlanders, Smithy?'"

BERTIE

"You don't 'appen to know our Bertie, do you?" asked Private Smith; "'E's a new chap only just joined from the depot: 'ighly educated an' all that: one of the struck-pa-with-a-roll-of-music-and-enlisted sort of fellows."

Smithy paused to ruminate upon the accomplished Bertie.

"I've 'eard 'im use words that wasn't in any dictionary," Smithy continued with enthusiasm, "an' 'e's settled arguments we've 'ad in the canteen without so much as lookin' in a book.

"There was a bit of a friendly discussion the other night about 'ow much alch'ol there was in beer, an' 'ow many pints it'd take to poison a chap. Gus Ward, the medical staff chap, worked it all out on a bit of paper, but some of the other chaps said 'e was talkin' through 'is 'at.

"To settle it—none of the other chaps would come outside when Gussie invited 'em—we sent over for Bertie.

"Over comes Bertie with a wot-can-I-do-for-you-my-poor-child sort of smile, an' we puts the question to 'im.

" 'Twenty-two gallons an' a pint,' sez Bertie prompt.

" 'You're a liar!' sez Nobby, an' the medical chap asked Bertie to come outside an' settle the question.

" 'Don't be absurd,' sez Bertie. 'Nobody can tell me anything about alch'ol: it was discovered by a monk in 1320, when 'e was searchin' for the philosopher's stone. It is known at Lloyd's as a deadly sporadic an—'

" 'Shut up,' sez Nobby; 'we don't want to know the geography an' 'istory of it, we want to know 'ow many pints of beer it takes to kill a chap.'

" 'Thirty-one gallons an' two pints, as said before,' sez Bertie, huffily; 'an' in future, Private Clark, I don't want you to send for me to settle canteen controversialities.'

" 'Wot's that last word?' sez Nobby, after Bertie had gone. 'Somethin' insultin', I'll lay.'

BERTIE'S ALMA MATER

"Me an' Nobby 'appened to be over at the coffee shop next night—it was the night before pay day, or we wouldn't 'ave been wastin' our time—when in comes Bertie.

" 'E's got an 'orrid languid way of lookin' round, an' it was a minute or two before 'e spots me an' Nob.

" 'Ullo, Clark,' 'e sez, with a nod just the same as if 'e was an officer. 'Ullo, Smithy.'

" 'Ullo, face,' sez Nobby, who's always got a kind word for every one.

" 'I'm gettin' tired of this sort of life,' sez Bertie, in a weary voice. 'I've got too much wot the French call savoir faire.'

" 'See a doctor,' sez Nobby, 'or take plenty of exercise, like I do.'

" 'You misunderstand me, Clark,' sez Bertie, with a sad smile. 'But, there, 'ow should you know, my poor feller?'

" 'Bertie,' sez Nobby.

" 'What?' sez Bertie.

" 'Don't call me a "pore feller,"' sez Nobby, 'or I'll give you a dig in the eye.'

" 'Don't lose your temper, Clark,' sez Bertie, hasty. 'What I meant to say was, you can't be expected to comprehend 'ow it feels for a chap who's drove 'is own brougham to be ordered about by cads of officers, cads an' bounders that my alma mater wouldn't 'ave in 'er set.'

" 'Who's she?' sez. Nobby.

" 'My rich aunt,' sez Bertie.

" 'Livin' in the Marylebone Road?' sez Nobby.

" 'No,' sez Bertie, carelessly: 'Porchester Gate.'

" 'Ah,' sez Nobby, thoughtful, 'that's a work'ouse that must 'ave been built quite lately—'ow London grows, to be sure.'

"Bertie smiled an' shook 'is 'ead.

" 'Ah, Clark!' 'e sez with a pityin' look, 'there's a good old French sayin' that goes, "Ontry noo sivvoo play," which means, "Don't argue with a fool.'

" 'There's another good ole French proverb, sez Nobby, 'that sez, "Chuprao soor."'

" 'What does that mean?' sez Bertie surprised, so Nobby told 'im.

THE BUN-WALLAH

"Bertie wasn't what you might call popular with the troops. For one thing 'e used long words that nobody even 'eard before, an' for the other, 'e was a bun-wallah of the worst kind."

(It is, I might say, one of the wilful fallacies of the Army that teetotallers live entirely on lemonade and buns.)

"We don't mind so much a chap bein' a teetotaller; every man to 'is taste, an' I've known some very good chaps in that line, but Bertie used to carry 'is fads a bit too far.

"For instance, 'e got me an' Nobby one night down to an A.T.A. (Army Temperance Association) meetin', an' so worked on Nobby's feelin's, by promisin' to lend him 'arf a crown till pay day, that Nobby ups an' signs the pledge.

" 'I feel a diff'rent man already,' sez Nobby, after Bertie 'ad parted with the money, 'I do, indeed.'

" 'Ah,' sez Bertie, proudly, 'you'll feel better when you've 'ad a week of it. Don't let your boon companions lure you back to the old 'abit,' 'e sez.

" 'No fear,' sez Nobby, putting the 'arf-crown in 'is pocket.

" 'Not so much of the boon companions, Bertie,' I sez, knowin' what 'e was eayin' was a smack for me.

" 'When: they offer you the pot—refuse it like a man,' sez Bertie, working hisself up to a great state.

" 'I will,' sez Nobby.

" 'Look 'ere,' sez Bertie, excitedly, 'come up to the canteen now, an' put yourself to the test.'

" 'Right you are,' sez Nobby, quick; 'let's 'urry up before it's shut.'

"So we all went up to the canteen, an' the first thing that 'appened when we got inside was Dusty Miller offerin' Nobby 'arf a gallon can. _ "'Drink 'arty, Nobby,' sez Dusty.

"Nobby looks at the can, then looks at Bertie, an' Bertie was smilin' 'appily all over 'is face."

" 'No,' sez Nobby, chokin', 'no, Dusty, you mean well, but I'm on the tack—on the lemonade tack,' 'e sez. 'Good Nobby,' sez Bertie.

" 'Let me take one last look at the cursed stuff,' sez Nobby, takin' the pot in 'is 'and; 'one last sniff,' 'e sez, 'one last taste o' the poison,' 'e sez, an' before we knew what 'ad 'appened 'e'd 'arf emptied the can.

" 'It's no good, Bertie,' 'e sez sadly, 'the temptation is too strong, it's in me blood,' 'e sez. 'You can 'ave your 'arf-crown back on pay day."

"What chaps didn't like about Bertie most was the way 'e was always goin' on about 'is come-down in the world, 'ow e might have been livin' up in the West End, goin' to theatres every night of 'is life, an' drinkin' port wine with 'is meals, if 'e 'adn't been such a fool as to enlist.

"One night when 'e was' playin' billiards in the library Nobby got Bertie to settle a point whether an earl was an 'igher rank than a countess,

" 'A countess, of course,' sez Bertie.

" 'For why?' sez Nobby.

"Bertie gave a pityin' sort of laugh.

" 'A countess is a lady count, an' a count is next to a marquis,' 'e see.

" 'Ow do you know?' sez Nobby.

"Bertie gave a sort of a tired sigh, an' looked at the ceilin'.

" 'My dear Clark,' 'e sez, 'it ain't for me to boast of the people I met before I come down in the world, but I might say I've met certain parties—no names mentioned—that our officers ain't even on speakin' terms with.'

" 'In shops?' sez Nobby.

" 'No, in country 'ouses,' sez Bertie stiffly.

" 'Leave off pullin' Bertie's leg,' sez Spud Murphy, who always likes to get a rise out of Nobby. 'Anybody can see Bertie's mixed with 'igh-class people.'

"We was all silent for a bit, watchin' Dusty Miller, who was playin' Mouldy Turner a hundred up, tackle an' 'ard-lines cannon.

"We was very interested in it, epecially Bertie, who, couldn't take 'is eyes from the cloth.

"Dusty fluked 'is cannon an' missed the next shot, an' then Nobby got a sort of inspiration, an' calls out to. Bertie:

" 'Call the game, marker!'

" 'Seventy-six plays forty-two: spot to play, sir,' sez Bertie, absent- mindedly.

ERUDITION

"It was read out in reg'mental orders," said Smithy, "on the 9.30 parade, that a new lot of books 'ad arrived for the lib'ry. 'Suitable books for the Soldier,' it said, so that afternoon me an' Nobby goes over to the coffee-shop where the lib'ry is to 'ave a look. There was lots of other chaps there, an' we 'ad to take our turn.

"All the chaps was shoutin', 'Come on, Mac, give me that red one,' an' poor old Macmanus got 'isself all tied up in a knot tryin' to put dawn the names of the chaps that took out the new books. When it come to me an' Nobby's turn there was only two books left. Nobby got a blue one an' I got a red one.

" 'Wot's yours, Smithy?' sez Nobby, an' I read it out: 'Temp'rance Statistics of the Army in India.'

" 'Who Stat What's-'is-name?' sez Nobby.

" 'Some bloomin' teetotaller,' I sez. 'Wot's yours?'

" 'Ydraulics for Garrison Artillery,' 'e sez. 'Whose she, I wonder?'

"Spud Murphy got a book about 'Tactics in the Crimea,' George Botter (of 'G') got a yaller book about 'Afghanistan in Relation to the Frontier Question,' Mouldy Thompson got a big book about 'The 'Istory of the Army Service Corps,' whilst old 'Appy Johnson got the best of the lot, 'Records an' Nicknames of the British Army.'

"We all takes our books to the barrack-room, an' there was me an' Nobby an' all the rest of the chaps sittin' down 'oldin' our 'eads tryin' to understand what the books was about.

"When we gets over to the canteen that night everybody was tryin' to show off.

"Spud comes strollin' up to where me an' Nobby was sittin'.

" 'Ullo, Nob,' 'e sez.

" 'Ullo!' sez Nobby; 'what do you want, funny face?'

"Spud sits down alongside of me an' Nobby.

" 'Talkin' about the Crimea—' 'e sez, like a chap sayin' a piece.

" 'I wasn't talkin' about the Crimea,' sez Nobby.

" 'Ave" you ever noticed that a great strategic opportunity was lost—'

"Nobby puts down the can 'e was drinkin' out of.

" "Old 'ard,' 'e sez. I think I grasp your meanin', Spud. You're referrin', unless I am mistaken, to the time when the garrison artillery didn't start workin' their 'ydraulics in a proper manner.'

" 'No, I ain't,' snaps Spud. I'm talkin' about the tactics in the Crimea.'

" 'An' I'm talkin' about 'ydraulics,' sez Nobby, as calm as a cucumber, 'becos that's the book that I'm a-readin'.'

"It was pretty sickenin'," explained Smithy, "wot with George Botter tryin' to pretend 'e knew all about Afghanistan, an' 'Appy Johnson wantin' to make bets about who was the first colonel of the Anchesters. Mouldy Thompson got to 'igh words with a driver of the A.S.C. about the Army Service Corps.

" 'I suppose you don't know, Cocky,' sez Mouldy to this chap, 'that the old A.S.C. used to be called the Muck Train?'

" 'No, I don't,' sez the A.S.C. chap nastily, 'an' wot's more, I don't see no call to go makin' personal remarks.'

" 'Where no offence is meant, it is 'oped that no offence will be took,' sez Mouldy. 'Well, as I was sayin', the Muck Train—'

" 'Shut up,' sez the A.S.C. chap, 'or 'I'll shut you up.'

"Just before 'fust post' me an' Nobby was sittin' in the corner talkin' about 'ydraulics and drink, when in come Gus Ward of the R.A.M.C.

"Up goes Mouldy to 'im as pleased as anything.

" 'D'you know what they call the Medical Staff?' sez Mouldy.

"The medical bloke looks over 'is pot an' sez nothin'."

"They call 'em the "Linseed Lancers,"' sez Mouldy, laughin'.

"The medical finished 'is beer, puts down 'is pot, and sez to Mouldy:

" 'Do you know what I call you?' 'e sez.

" 'Don't be naaty,' sez Mouldy; 'this is in a book.

" 'In a book, is it?' sez the medical. 'Well, you homoeopathic, subcutaneous mnemonic, what I'm going to call you won't be found in any book.'

"So then the medical chap started callin' Mouldy all the things 'e could remember at the minute, an' finished up with a few words out of the sick report.

"You must understand," explained Smithy, "that all the bloomin' battalion was on the same lay. There they was the next afternoon lyin' in their cots a readin' an' a mutterin' an' gettin' ready to show off.

"Wastin' their time"—Smithy was indignan—"an' well knowin' that we 'aven't got a decent bowler in the regiment. I didn't see anything of Nobby till I went over to the canteen that night. Everybody was talkin' about everything—all talkin' together. Suddenly I 'eard Nobby's voice:

" 'No, you're wrong, Mouldy,' 'e sez; 'you're wrong about the artillery.'

" 'Wrong!' sez Mouldy, very indignant; ''ow do you know?'

" 'Because I do,' sez Nobby, 'an' what's more, Spud Murphy's wrong about the army in the Crimea, an' George Botter's talkin' through 'is 'at about Afghanistan, an' Dusty Miller's silly when 'e sez that Athens is in Germany (Dusty got a book on the decay of the classy or somethin' of the sort), an' when Billy Mason gits up an' talks about Africa—I've got a word to say.'

"An' with that old Nobby starts to criticise everybody, not confinin' hisself to 'ydraulics, you understand, but goin' all over the shop.

"Bimeby, old Spud Murphy, who'd been dazed by Nobby tellin' 'im a lot about the battle of Alma, strikes 'is for'ead an' shouts:

" 'Old 'ard, Nobby—I see your little game—it's A's what your talkin' about.'

" 'What d'ye mean?' sez Nobby, goin' red.

" 'Why,' sez Spud, excited, 'you're talkin' about Abukir an' Abyssinia an' adjutants an' ants—they're all A's,' roars Spud.

" 'Well,' sez Nobby, 'wot about it?'

" 'Ask 'im a C question, somebody,' shouts Spud, gleeful.

" 'Wot about crocodiles?' sez Dusty.

"Crocodiles an' alligators are all the same,' sez Nobby. 'Everybody knows that.'

" ''Ear, 'ear,' I sez; an' the other chaps said the same.

" 'Well,' sez Spud, thinkin', 'I'll give you a "M"—wot about monkeys?'

"Nobby thought a bit.

" 'Apes,' 'e begins, 'was first invented—' 'Monkeys!' sez Spud.

" 'Apes an' monkeys are all the same,' sez Nobby.

" 'Well, tell us somethin' about Colonels—that's a C,' sez Spud, who was gettin' wild.

"It took Nobby a long time to think this out, then 'e starts:

" 'Adjutants was first invented—'

" 'I thought so,' sez Spud, joyful. 'P'raps you'll tell me when 'Cyclopaedias was invented—fortnightly 'cyclopedias, wot you buy for sevenpence,' sez Spud.

"An' Nobby looked quite uncomfortable."

NOBBY'S PART

"I didn't see you at our piece," remarked Smithy.

"I mean," he explained, "the Grand Amateur Performance of The Soldier's Revenge, played by the Regimental Dramatic Club, on behalf of the new wing of the Anchester Lunatic Asylum." Smithy stopped to clear the stem of his pipe with a hairpin. I regarded him suspiciously—and the hairpin with inward misgivings.

"There was about two dozen of our chaps in the piece," he resumed, "and the band was goin' to play durin' the intervals. Some of 'em—our chaps, I mean, not the band—was goin' to be soldiers, some of 'em was servants, some of 'em was villagers, but half of 'em was 'rioters' in the last act. "'B' Company and 'F' tossed up to see who'd be rioters and 'B' won, so 'F' had to be policemen. "Nobby Clark comes to me the day before the performance an' sez, 'Look here, Smithy, come an' act.' "'The goat?' I sez.

" 'No,' he sez, 'come an' be Mike Dolan, the Escaped Convict, in Act IV.,' he sez; 'Fatty can't get into the clothes,' he sez.

" 'No, thanks,' I sez. 'If you want Escaped Convicts, apply to "C" Company — there's lots of chaps there that would do it natural,' I sez.

" 'Don't you be gay,' sez Nobby, 'or else you'll strain your funny bone. I'm goin' to be a gentleman visitor in Act II.—one of the 'ouse party.' "'One of the gentlemen that washes up the plates?' I sez.

" 'Loud larfter,' sez Nobby, sarcastically. 'I'm goin' to be a good shepherd in the last act,' he sez, 'an' when the rioters are goin' to bash the police I say,

"'Old! what would you do, rash men?" an' then I tell 'em to think about their wives an' children,' he sez. "It was pretty sickenin' them last two days in barracks before the performance. There was Jimmy Spender walkin' about holdin' his head an' mutterin'; 'My lord, my lord, the enemy is on us; fly for your life!' an' Smiler Williams walkin' up an' down the square after 'lights out' talkin' to hisself, 'Come, comrades, let us drink to the 'ealth of our noble commander,' till Smiler's company officer, Captain Darby, gave him seven days for creatin' a disturbance in barracks after lights out. Ugly Johnson broke his collar-bone when he was rehearsin' his rescue from a burnin' buildin'.

"A lot of chaps was supposed to catch him in a blanket as he jumped out of a winder, sayin', 'A British soldier fears nothin'; but the chaps who was holdin' the blanket larfed so much at Ugly's mug, that they hadn't the strength to catch him." Smithy laughed, too, at the recollection.

"Well, the night come, an', havin' bought two seats in the gallery, I goes round to the house where Nobby's girl lives an' asked her to come an' see the play.

" 'Nobby won't like my goin' out with you,' sez Nobby's girl.

" 'Don't worry about that,' I sez; 'he'd have sent you a ticket hisself, only he's so shy,' I sez. So she put on her things," said Smithy, vaguely, "and went." "We got two front seats where we could see everything, an' after the band gave a selection and the officers an' their ladies, an' the Bishop, an' the Mayor had come in, the curtain went up, an' there was Nobby strollin' about with a gun under his arm, pretendin' to be an actor. "Bimeby the old squire come in with his lovely daughter. 'Ah, Captain Beecher,' she sez to Nobby—she was a real actress, too—'why, it seems like old times to see you at "Silverton Grange."

" 'Bai Jove!' sez Nobby, twistin' his moustache like he'd seen his superiors do. 'Bai Jove,' he sez, an' then he forgot what to say. "'The pleasure is mutual,' sez a holler voice from behind the, scenes.

" 'The pleasure is beautiful,' sez poor Nobby, still twistin' his moustache.

"After a bit the old squire was murdered by Monty Warne, of 'H,' dressed up like a burglar, an' he did it well, too," commended Smithy, "stranglin' him so much that they had to send out for three-pennorth of brandy to bring him round.

"In the second act Nobby was supposed to be a visitor in evenin' dress.

" 'Don't he look fine?' sez Nobby's girl.

"Nobby didn't have much fo say in that act, except when young Fisher, who's got a baker's shop in the Highstreet, was falsely accused of murder,

an' then Nobby seized his hand, an' said, 'I believe you to be an innocent man,' an' we all said, 'Hear, hear.' "It was really Smiler Willinms who ought've said that line, as Nobby was really supposed to be a villain, an' Smiler an' Nobby had words about it afterwards, till Nobby explained that young Fisher had promised him a job when he left the Army, an' he wanted to keep in with him.

"But the last scene was best," continued Smithy, "when the hungry rioters of 'B' come face to face with the policemen of 'F,' an' Nobby comes down to the footlights dressed up as a parson, and says, 'Hold!' "Just as he started to say his little piece one of the policemen, tryin' to be funny, hit him in the chest with a truncheon.

" 'Hold hard,' sez Nobby, forgettin' all about the piece; 'wot are you tryin' to do, Corky?'—speakin' to Corky Speddings, who hit him.

" 'Go on with the piece,' sez Corky, who was wild because had had nothin' to say in the play.

"Nobby took orf his parson's hat an' raised it an' said, 'Hold! What would you do, rash—' then another policeman threw a bit of bread at him. "Before anybody know what was happenin', Nobby dropped his hat an' landed the nearest policeman on the nose, an' then there was the most realistic riot that has ever been on a stage.

"Next mornin' Nobby asked me what I thought of his performance.

" 'Fine,' I sez.

" 'Do you think so?' he sez, very pleased, 'Don't you wish you could act, Smithy, an' take the part of a young lord or something?'

" 'I can act,' I sez. 'I was actin' last night—The Absent Soldier.'

" 'Talk sense,' sez Nobby, puzzled; 'you hadn't got a part.'

" 'Oh yes I had,' I sez.

" 'What part?' sez Nobby.

" 'Your part,' I sez.

"But Nobby didn't understand."

THE CHEF

"The thing about the Army, that's the most curious," said the informing Smithy, "is that you never know what a chap's been before he enlisted.

"You see a smart-lookin' chap, smart tunic, white belt, little boots, an' a nice curl down over 'is for-'ead, an' you say to yourself, 'That chap was a gentleman before 'e enlisted, I'll bet;' but the chances are he was only a costermonger.

"Similarly you see a chap untidy, a chap who don't like shavin', an' generally keeps hisself to hisself, an' you put 'im down as a corner boy, when the chances are he's 'ad a good education, an' as likely as not 'e's been a chap like you—made 'is livin' by puttin' bits in the paper.

"There's quite a lot of respectable young fellers in the Army supposed to be single who dursen't go near a work'ouse for fear 'arf a dozen little 'eads will pop over the wall an' start shoutin' 'Father!' an' visa versa.

"I don't trouble my 'ead very much about what a chap's been, although I've often wondered what Nobby was before 'e enlisted.

"We 'ad a bit of an argument about it the other day when Nobby was out, an' Spud Murphy said he thought Nobby must 'ave been somethin' that gets money without work.

" 'I'll bet,' sez Spuds, 'if you look on Nobby's attestation paper you'll see 'im described as a "labourer," like all chaps are that don't like work.'

"Dusty Miller thought Nobby must 'ave been a railway porter, because 'e never gets pally with a chap unless 'e's got some money.

"At any rate," said Smithy, with a faint grin, "the question was, in a manner of speaking settled, for a few days after Nobby was sent for to the orderly-room an' paraded before the Adjutant.

" 'I see,' sez the Adjutant, who was looking over Nobby's papers, 'that you describe yourself as a "cook"—is that right?'

" 'Yes, sir,' sez Nobby, without battin' an eye.

" 'What sort of a cook are you?' says the Adjutant, lookin' 'ard at Nobby.

" 'Very good, sir,' sez Nobby modestly.

" 'Well,' sez the Adjutant, 'we're tryin' a new system of messin', so you can report yourself to the master cook for duty—you're "B" Company's cook.'

"There was tremendous excitement in 'B' when it got out that Nobby was the new cook. Spud Murphy went up an' saw the Adjutant, an' asked to be transferred to another company.

" 'I don't want to say anything about Private Clark, sir,' 'e sez, 'but I'm a very delikit eater, an' Clark an' me ain't good friends.'

"All the chaps got round Nobby in the barrack room, an' started firin' questions at him.

" 'What are you going to make us, Nobby?' they sez.

" 'Wait an' see,' sez Nobby, cautious.

" 'Are you a French cook, Nobby?' sez Weary Thompson.

" 'A bit French,' sez Nobby, 'an' a bit Spanish. I'm what you call a chef.'

" 'What's that, Nobby?'

" 'That's the bit of French I was tellin' you about,' sez 'e.

"Nobby went into the town an' bought a cookery book that tells you 'ow to take stains out of silk dresses an' 'ow to clean old pictures, an' started studyin' this for all 'e was worth.

"Nobby took over the duty on Monday, and after havin' a few words with the master cook about some kit the sergeant missed as soon as Nobby come on duty, he sort of calmed him by tellin' him about a few French dishes ed learnt about.

" 'We'll 'ave some " Poulett de Anchester" to-day,' sez Nobby.

" 'What's that?' sez the master cook—Sergeant Brown, the fat sergeant, you know.

" 'Roast chicken an' caper sauce,' sez Nobby, proudly.

" 'Don't be a fool, Clark,' sez the sergeant, nastily. 'We 'aven't got any chicken, you know that.'

" 'Then we'll have pot pourri,' sez Nobby very quick.

" 'What's that?' sez the sergeant, bewildered.

" 'Anything we got,' sez Nobby.

"Everybody was talkin' about the dinner, an' we was all wonderin' what we'd got in the way of food.

"Spud Murphy got his name took on the ten o'clock parade for speakin' in the ranks.

" 'This afternoon,' 'e sez, very gloomy, 'the pioneers'll be wheelin' a barrer round the square, ringin' a bell an' shoutin' "Bring out your dead," the same as it was at the great fire or London.'

"When the cook-house bugle went there wasn't a man of 'B' left in the canteen—they was all sittin' tight in the barrack-room waitin' for the orderly man to bring in the dinner.

"It come up all 'ot and steamin'.

"There was potatoes an' cabbage an' a curious-lookin' lot of meat an' stuff. Spud Murphy looks over it, sniffs, an' sez: 'I'll have some potato and cabbage.'

"As a matter of fact," explained Smithy, "the dinner was very nice indeed, an' Spud began to feel small when we told 'im how we was enjoyin' it.

"When we'd nearly finished it, there was a bit of a commotion outside, an' in rushes a chap from 'C' Company. He dashes up to the table an' takes a long look at the tin the dinner come up in, an' then shouts:

" ''Ere! you bloomin' thieves, you're got our dinner, an' we've got yours.'

" 'Well.' sez the corporal, very kindly, 'you're welcome to it.'

" 'Ho are we!' sez the 'C' man, shakin' his 'ead fiercely. 'Well, just come an' 'ave a look at the stuff we've got.'

"So we all finished up our dinner quick, with the 'C' chap lookin' on with tears in his eyes, an' walks over to 'C' Company room. The dinner was steamin' on the table, an' everybody was standin' a long way off lookin' wild an' hungry.

" 'What's up?' sez our corporal.

" 'That,' sez the corporal of the otner room, very agitated, 'that's what's up,' sez 'e, pointin' to the dinner.

"We all looked at it; it looked all right. We smelt it; it smelt all right.

" 'Taste it,' sez the other corporal.

"Our corporal 'esitated a bit, then sampled the gravy.

"Just then the orderly officer arrived to ask if there was any complaints. 'E was just goin' to ask when 'e saw our corporal.

" 'What's the matter with Corporal White?' 'e sez; 'is 'e took ill?'

" 'No sir,' sez the other corporal, an' then explains about the dinner, whilst me and another chap assisted our corporal into the fresh air.

"When we got back the officer was talkin'.

" 'Send for Private Clark,' he sez. So they did, an' in a minute in walks Nobby lookin' very pleased with hisself —one of our chaps had told him what a success our dinner was, an' he thought the orderly officer had sent for 'im to show the 'C' cook 'ow to make a dinner.

"I will say," said Smithy, enthusiastically, "old Nobby looked every inch a shef! White coat, white 'at, an' very nearly white apron.

" 'Clark,' sez the orderly sternly. 'did you prepare this?'

"Nobby was surprised to see 'B's dinner in 'C's room, but 'e looked at it, an' sez, 'Yes.'

" 'What do you call it?' sez the officer.

" 'Pot pourri,' sez Nobby, boldly.

" 'Why pot pourri?' sez the officer.

"Nobby thought a bit.

" 'Because it's poured out of a pot,' 'e sez.

"The officer looks very 'ard at Nobby.

" 'What's this?' 'e sez, stirrin' a curious lookin' thing round with 'is cane.

"Nobby looks at it an' gasps, an' just then the master cook, who'd been sent for;, come in.

" 'Sergeant!' Nobby sez, quite excited, 'look at this!' The sergeant looked, an' he gasped,

" 'P'raps,' sez , Nobby, sternly. 'you'll apologise now for accusin' me or stealin' your blackin' brush.'

THE NEW RULES

"You mustn't think," warned Smithy, "that soldiers are soft or silly, or easily got over, just because Nobby Clark's got a way of takin' 'em in."

"Nobby's got what I call an artful way, an' there's no doubt at all," added Private Smith, impressively, "that what Nobby don't know ain't worth knowin'.

"We was havin' a talk the other night about cricket. Well, everybody knows that 'B' Company is the worst cricket company in the regiment, an' the other chaps was chaffin' me an' Nobby about it.

" 'Look 'ere, Spud,' sez Nobby, solemnly, 'when you talk about us not knowin' how to play cricket you're only showin' up your ignorance. It's you that don't know how to play cricket—real cricket.'

" 'How so, Nobby?'sez Spud.

" 'Why, sez Nobby, 'you chaps don't play accordin' to the new military rules.'

" 'What new rules?' sez Spud.

"So Nobby explained a few of the new rules for military players, an' everybody was very surprised' to hear 'em.

" 'Where did you pick 'em up?' sez Spud, suspiciously.

" 'When I was a referee,' 'e sez.

" 'You mean umpire,' sez Spud.

" 'It's called referee under the new rules,' sez Nobby, calmly.

" 'It's my belief,' sez Spud Murphy, 'you don't know anything about the new rules.'

"Still," explained Smithy, with an admiring wag of his head, "it was easy to see that a lot of chaps believed old Nohby—especially chaps of our

company—when Nobby told 'em that if the game'd been played under proper rules they wouldn't 'ave lost a match last year, an' the end of it was our company agreed to play 'G'—the best cricket company in the regiment—an' Nobby offered to be referee.

"Spud Murphy wanted two referees, but Nobby said that wasn't allowed under the new rules. So Spud. 'ad to be content—although 'e groused! like anything an refused to play for us.

" 'Let 'im play for "G"," sez Nobby, and Spud was allowed to play for the other side.

"There was lots of bets on the game, an' Spud made a bit of row because he 'eard that Nobby was backin' 'B' company very heavy.

" 'Umpires ain't allowed to bet,' sez Spud, an' Nobby referred 'im to the new rules. Spud went all over the town tryin' to buy a book of the new rules, but couldn't.

"Everybody went over to the cricket ground to see the match, an' Nobby was there with a book under his arm.

"The other side won the toss, an' Crawley an' Spud Murphy was the first men in, an' I could see Spud didn't 'arf like it.

" 'None of your larks, Nobby,' sez Spud.

" 'Go on, my man,' sez Nobby, very haughtily, 'attend to your business, an' don't talk to the referee.'

" 'If you give me out,' sez Spud, wettin' 'is hand, an' catchin' hold of the bat, 'you just look out for yourself.'

" 'Out!' sez Nobby.

" 'What for?' roars Spud, an' all the chaps come runnin' up.

" 'I warn you off the field,' sez Nobby, firmly, 'for threatenin' the referee.'

"There was an 'orrible row, an' one of the chaps went over an' brought Corporal Mason, who's a football referee, to decide it. 'E come over 'an said 'e didn't know anything about cricket, but if Spud insulted the referee, 'e'd have to leave the field, which Spud did amid loud cheers from 'B' Company.

"In one way an' another," said Smithy, "Nobby got all the 'G' chaps out for eleven.

"Spiky Brown was put out for hittin' a ball outside the boundary, old 'Ampshire Giles got run out naturally, Billy Pain was out for makin' remarks to the referee, two other chaps was out for hittin' the ball with the wrong side of the bat, an' the rest was out under one of Nobby's new rules.

"Me an' 'Appy Johnson was the first to bat for our side, an' Billy Pain was the bowler.

"The first ball I got I just managed to touch, an' it" sort of glanced off my bat into Spud Murphy's hands.

"How's that?' yells Spud.

" 'Not out!' sez Nobby.

" 'It is out!' roars Spud, indignantly.

" 'What did you want to ask me for?' sez Nobby, 'if you knew all about it? Go on with the game.'

"But they wouldn't go on until Nobby explained the rule. It appears, by Nobby's rule, a chap that's been warned off the field by the referee ain't allowed to get a man out, either by catchin' or bowlin'.

" 'It's part of the punishment, Spud,' sez Nobby, sadly. 'I can't help you, my poor feller; I didn't make the rules,'

" 'I don't know so much about that,' sez Spud, fiercely.

"We went on with the game, an' bimeby a ball come along an' sent my middie stump flyin'.

" 'How's that?' sez the bowler.

"Nobby hesitated for a bit an' looks at the stumps, an' then looks at me.

" 'How's that!' shouts 'G' Company, very wild.

" 'Out,' sez Nobby, 'quite out, by the rules of the game.'

"After this 'G' Company began to brighten up a bit; they could see there was something in Nobby's rules after all.

"There was a bit of sensation in court, in a manner of speakin', a few minutes after, when 'Appy Johnson gave 'is bat a swing backward an' knocked the bails off.

" 'How's that?' shouts the wicket-keeper.

" 'Not out,' sez Nobby, very prompt.

" 'Why not?' shouts Spud Murphy, gettin' red in the face. Nobby turns on 'im sternly. 'I've 'ad to speak to you once before, young feller, an' if I 'ave any more cheek from you, I'll deal severely with you.'

" 'But why ain't 'Appy out?' sez Spud, very persistent.

"Nobby thought an' thought, while everybody stood waitin', an' then, when 'e couldn't think of anything to say, 'e sez: 'I refuse to discuss the matter; go on with the game.'

" 'Appy got out after a bit by bein' clean bowled, an' although Nobby said it was a 'no ball,'e allowed 'Appy to go out, becos the other side was doin' so badly.

"The game stood eleven all when our last man, Dusty Miller, went in, an' the excitement was intense.

"Before the play atarted, Nobby goes up to Dusty an' starts givin' him tips.

" 'What you want to do, Dusty,' sez Nobby,, 'is to keep well in front of the wicket, an' if you see the ball comin' straight for the stumps, put your bat down so as it can't get past. Get a bye if possible, because that's easiest, an—'

" 'Ere!' interrupts Spud Murphy, who was gettin' quite vexed, ''ere, Nobby, you're the bloomin' umpire; you ain't allowed to give tips.'

" 'Ho! ain't I?' sez Nobby, indignant. 'Ain't allowed to give tips, when I've got four shillin's on the game?'

" 'No,' roars Spud.

" 'Proceed with the game,' sez Nobby politely, 'an' keep your face closed, Mr. Murphy, if you please.'

"Dusty ciid very well," commended Smithy. "All the balls that come straight for the wicket 'e stopped, either with his bat or with his leg, an' Nobby patted him on the back once and said 'Bravo.'

" 'Then a nice slow ball come along, an' Dusty, bein' encouraged by what Nobby said, went 'arf way down the pitch to meet it.

" 'E gave it such a sort of swingin' round-about cut an' drove it be'ind 'im.

"It would 'ave got a boundary, only Nobby appeared to be standin' in the way.

"The ball caught 'im in the middle of the chest, an' down dropped Nobby, blue in the face an' gaspin'.

"We all gathered round, an' Gus Ward, who was lookin' on, gave Nobby some artificial—what-do-you-call-it?—sort of dumb-bell exercise for drownded people.

"Bimeby Nobby came round, an' 'e glares at Dusty.

" 'Are you 'urt, Nobby?' sez Dusty, anxious.

" 'Urt!' gasps Nobby, faintly; 'yes, I am,' 'e sez, 'but you!—you're "out" an' warned orf the field by the new rules,' 'e sez."

EMPLOYING THE SOLDIER

PRIVATE SMITH TALKS VERY SERIOUSLY

"It's only nacheral," said Smithy, "that a feller that's been doin' nothin' for a livin' for seven years gits the idea into his 'ead that as soon as 'es out of the Army 'e can go on doin' nothin' an' live comfortable.

"A chap generally enlists because 'e's very 'ard up, or there ain't no work to be got. If you understand me rightly, a chap's pushed into the, Army by the crowd of out-of-works behind him, an' by the time 'e's got his breath, 'an' is full up with Army rations, an' finds 'e's got plenty of elbow room, 'e begins to forget all about the crowd outside, an' when his seven years' service is nearly in 'e begins to fancy that 'e really enlisted for the love of the thing, an' not because 'e was feelin' peckish.

"Then the Colonel sends for 'im.

" 'Ah, Thompson,' sez the Colonel, 'eartily, 'I understand you're goin' away on the reserve?'

" 'Yes, sir,' sez Thompson.

" 'Do you think that's wise?' sez the Colonel.

"Ho, yes,' sez the clever chap, oockily.

" 'It's very 'ard in civilian life just now,' sez the Colonel. 'What are you goin' to do for a livin'?'

" 'Anything,' sez the clever Chap, prompt.

" 'Humph!' sez the Colonel; 'that means "nothing"—are you sure you won't sign on for another five years?'

" 'I'll watch it,' sez the clever chap.

BACK TO CIVIL LIFE

"So he goes away in a pair of loud check trousis an' a Trilby 'at, an' a tuppenny cigar, to show 'is independence.

" 'E gits up to London, goes 'ome to see his people, 'as a couple of drinks, goes to a music-'all, an' spends a sovereign as free as you please. For a week 'e's as 'appy as a king. Gets up what time 'e likes, an' don't shave unless 'e wants to.

" 'E's got no sergeants an' corporals to bully 'im, no officers to salute, no fatigues, an' no drills, an' when 'e goes out in town 'e needn't look clean unless 'e feels inclined.

"After a week of riotous livin', most of 'is money bein' spent, 'e pops off to look for work in 'is loud check trousis with the beer stains, an' 'is Trilby 'at a bit out of shape.

" 'Want a job, do you?' sez the ohap where 'e goes to. 'What can you do?'

" 'Anything,' sez the clever chap.

" 'Outside!' sez the chap at the works. 'We don't want "anything" fellers here.'

" 'What's your last job?' sez another feller 'e applies to.

" 'Army,' sez the clever chap, producin' 'is discharge.

" 'What can you do?' sez the foreman.

"The clever chap's learnt a lesson, so 'e's a bit cautious.

" 'Messenger,' 'e sez.

" 'We've got boys for messengers, sez the foreman.

" 'Timekeeper,' sez the clever chap.

" 'We've got a clock for that.'

" 'Caretaker,' sez the clever chap.

" 'We don't want no sleepin' partners,' sez the foreman.

" 'Well,' sez the clever chap, desperate, 'hall porter.'

" 'We ain't got a hall,' sez the foreman.

"What some of these clever jossers want," said Smithy, scornfully, "is a job where there ain't any work to do—jobs you can lay down an' watch; old men's jobs, boys' jobs, jobs that don't blister a chap's 'ands, an' that's why all the bloomin' Soldiers' 'Elp Associations in the world won't do any good, because there ain't enough of them jobs to go round.

FREEDOM

"The other day Spud Murphy gave it out that as soon as his seven years was in he was going to leave. He was" talkin' to me an' Nobby about it.

" 'No more bloomin' soldierin' for me, thank you,' sez Spud.

" 'Don't thank me,' sez Nobby.

" 'I'm goin' to be a free man.' sez Spud, 'like I was before I enlisted.'

" 'Ah!' sez Nobby, lookin' up to the sky with a smile.

" 'When you chaps are bein' turned out of bed at six in the mornin' I shall be gettin' my eye down, nice an' snug.'

" 'Ah!' sez Nobby.

" 'No more church parades, no more kit inspections, no more bloomin' guards,' sez Spud.

" 'No,' sez Nobby, getting up—we was eittin' oh the grass in the cricket field—'No,' sez Nobby, sadly. 'You'll be a free man, free to get your livin' or starve. There won't be no kit inspection, 'cos you'll 'ave no kit to show, nor no guards either, becos' nobody would trust you to guard a threepenny-bit. Pore feller,' sez Nobby, shaking his 'ead an' lookin' at Spud, 'pore old Spud.'

"Spud ain't goin' away," Smithy went on to explain, "because Nobby put it about in barracks that 'e was only leavin' the army because the doctor wouldn't pass him for an extension of service, an' just to show Nobby was a liar Spud went an' took on for another five years.

"If you understand," said Smithy earnestly, "it ain't the chap's fault that 'e can't get a job when 'e leaves the service, it's the Army's. A chap that 'as to leave civil life because 'e ain't got a trade in his 'ands can't expect to go back to civil life an' find a job sittin' up on its 'ind-legs an' beggin'"

"WHAT CAN YOU DO?"

"The Army don't teach 'im nothin'," continued Smithy, seriously, "except to turn about by numbers, an' not to talk back to his superiors, an that's not much use for civil life.

"When 'is time's up 'e goes out an' asks Civil Life to find him work.

" 'What can you do?' sez Civil Life.

" 'Stand erect, with me feet at at an angle of forty-five degrees, 'ead up, shoulders back, an' me 'ands 'ung loosely by me side, thumbs in rear of the seams of me trousis,' sez the Army.

" 'Very sorry,' sez Civil Life, but we 'aven't got a job like that. Can you do anything else?'

" 'Yes,' sez the Army, 'I can challenge all persons approachin' my post between tattoo an' reveille, turn out the guard to generals an' all armed parties, an' take charge of all Government property in view of me post,' sez the Army.

" ' Can you fix a 'lectric bell?' sez Civil Life.

" 'No,' sez the Army.

" 'Can you drive a traction engine?' sez Civil Life.

" 'No,' sez the Army.

" 'Can you make a box, or set a line of type, or draw a plan, or make out a specification, or do anything that the crowd round the docks can't do?'

" 'No.' sez the Army.

" 'Well,' sez Civil Life, regretful, 'you'd better join the mob at the docks—an' you'll find the Salvation Army shelter down the second turnin' on the right.'

"Seven years!" said; Smithy, reflectively, "an' about two years of that spare time. A chap could learn anything in seven years—if there was anybody to teach 'im.

" 'Teach me a trade,' sez the Army.

" 'Good gracious!' sez the Country, 'orrified. 'I couldn't think of such a thing— don't I clothe you, an' feed you, an' pay you?'

" 'Yes,' sez the Army; but teach me something—if it's only makin' mats, like you do in prison, or carpentering, like you do in work'ouses an' reformat'ry schools.'

" 'But,' sez the Country, very agitated, 'if I teach you this you'll be competin' with the taxpayer.'

" 'That's all right,' sez the Army, 'I want to be a taxpayer myself.'"

PRIVATE CLARK'S WILL

"Nobby Clark went to hospital mainly on account of fruit bein' cheap," explained Private Smithy, of the 1st Anchester Regiment.

"Him an' another chap—a fellow named Beaky, of 'H,' went out into town one day, an' brought back two pound of apples fresh from the orchard.

"Nobby said he bought 'em, an' told the farmer chap who came into barracks an' said he could almost swear it was Nobby that he must have been mistaken.

" 'To prove my words,' sez Nobby, very indignant, an' pullin' some money out of his pocket, 'here's tenpence. I went into town with one an' tuppence, an' that's all I've got left.'

"The farmer went away grumblin', an' said he'd shoot any more thievin' soldiers he found in his orchard, an' Nobby said if the farmer chap wasn't careful he'd make him prove his words.

"Nobby was 'ighly delighted with the apples, an' ate most of his share an' half Beaky's, an' the consequence was that next mornin' Nobby was carried orf to hospital, an' the Medical Staff chap said that Nobby hadn't got a boy's chance.

"All the chaps was very sorry to hear about it, especially the sergeant cook,, who's very sentimental, an' keeps funeral cards of all his relations stuck up in the cook-house.

" 'I'm afraid,' sez the sergeant cook, shakin' his 'ead mournful, 'Nobby's goin' to leave us.' An' I tell you," said Smithy, in a hushed voice, "when I heard

him say that, it gave me a bit of a turn, for our sergeant cook's very lucky at predictin' things of that sort.

"I got a message from the hospital that Nobby wanted to see me, so I goes up. an' there was poor old Nobby in a special ward by hisself , an' bein' treated so kindly by the Medical Staff chap that I knew it was serious.

" 'Hullo, Smithy,' sez Nobby, an' very weak an' white he looked.

" 'Hullo, Nob,' I sez, sadly, 'how goes it?'

"Nobby shook his 'ead with a sad smile. "'I'm afraid I'm booked, Smithy,' he sez.

" ' Cheer up,' I sez; but Nobby took no notice, an' didn't speak for a bit.

" 'Smithy,' he sez at last, bright'nin' up a bit, 'I think I'll make a will.'

" 'What for?' I sez.

" 'To leave somethin'.'

" 'Don't worry about that,' I sez, tryin' to soothe him. 'You'll leave it, whether you make a will or not.'

"But Nobby wouldn't be put orf, so I got a pen an' a bit of paper an' wrote what Nobby said.

" 'Put down that I'm a sound mind an' understandin'.'

" 'Everybody knows that, Nobby,' I sez, to cheer him up.

" 'Put down I leave all my kit to Private Murphy.'

" 'What for?' I sez.

" 'They won't fit you, anyway,' sez Nobby.

" 'Put down I leave all my money to Smithy.'

" 'How much have you got?' I sez.

" 'It ain't what I've got,' sez Nobby, 'but what's owed to me.'

"It appears from what Nobby said that 'arf the regiment owed him money. Spud Murphy owned him one pound four an' tuppence, Pug Taylor owned him nine an' a penny, Tiny White owed him seven shillin's—in fact, all the money that was owed to Nobby took up two sheets of paper.

"I noticed, though," Smithy hastened to explain, "that the fellers who owed Nobby money were fellers he wasn't very friendly with.

"At last Nobby signed the will an' gave it to me.

" 'Take it,' he sez, 'an' go out an' see if you can get 'old of any of the money these fellers owe to their pore dyin' comrade.' So I shook hands with Nobby an' went back to barracks.

"I put it about that Nobby'd made a will an' told the chaps I was goin' to read it to 'em in the canteen that night, an' there was a big gatherin', because Nobby's a very popular chap.

"I started readin' it, an', when I got to the bit where Nobby left all his kit to Spud Murphy, Spud got very sentimental, an' said Nobby was a honest, straightforward feller, who wouldn't 'urt a fly.'

"Then I got to the part where Nobby left all his money to me, an' all the chaps who knew Nobby hadn't got anything to leave come forward and said Nobby had done the right thing.

"Then I read a bit further, an' gave a list of the fellers who owed Nobby money, an' a sort of silence fell on the crowd, and Billy Mason, who's name wasn't on the list, stepped up, an' said, 'Friends an' comrades all: I hope the chaps who owe money to pore old Nobby will be men enough to pay their debts to our departed comrade'—which was a very nice speech.

"Spud was a bit dazed.

" 'Nobby ain't departed yet,' he sez; 'read that little bit again, Smithy.' So I did.

" 'One pound four an' tuppence,' sez Spud, agitated. 'I don't owe no one pound four an' tuppence, an' what's more, I ain't goin to pay.'

"All the fellers in the crowd who wasn't on the list shouted 'Shame!' an' Billy Mason, shuttin' his eyes, stepped forward, an' sez, 'Friends an' comrades all: I hope the chaps who owe money to pore old Nobby will come forward like men an' pay their debts to our gallant comrade who fills a soldiers grave.'

" 'You shut up!' snapped Spud; 'you don't owe him anything, an' I keep on tellin' you he's not departed, an' he don't fill anything—except hisself with green apples. I ain't goin' to pay!'

"An' some of the other fellers on the list said the same.

"One or two of 'em, though, paid up like gentlemen, an' said they didn't remember borrowin' it, but they supposed it was all right.

"But Spud was wild, an' wilder still next day when it got all over barracks that he was tryin' to rob a dyin' comrade.

"He come to me an' said that before he paid he'd see pore Nobby—he didn't say 'pore Nobby'—to the other end of Hull, but I wouldn't argue with him.

" 'You know your own conscience best,' I sez. 'I don't think I'd risk bein' haunted for the sake of a miserable one pound four an' tuppence; an' Spud got very wild, an' went over to the hospital an' asked if him an' Pug Taylor could see Nobby.

"They got permission, an found Nobby lookin' very bad.

" 'Look here, Nobby,' sez Spud as soon as he got in the ward, 'what about this money?'

" 'What money?' sez Nobby in a tiny, weak, squeaky kind of voice.

" 'The money you say I owe you,' sez Spud.

"Nobby groaned.

" 'What do you mean by sayin' I owe you money?' sez Spud, very wild.

"Nobby shook his head, very weary.

" 'I'm surprised at you, Nobby,' sez Pug Taylor, sorrerful, 'saying I borrered nine shillin's to send to my pore old mother. I ain't got no relations.'

"But Nobby only groaned.

" 'You must have been wanderin' in your head,' sez Pug.

" 'No, I warn't,' sez Nobby, very quick. 'Don't try to get out of it that way. I was of sound mind an' understanding wasn't I, Smithy?'

" 'Never more so,' I sez, prompt.

" 'Fancy a man,' sez Spud, 'a man layin' on a bed of sickness, tellin' a lie like that! Where do you expect to go to, Nobby?'

" 'Don't worry me, Spud,' sez Nobby; 'don't disturb my last day or so. Pay Smithy what you owe me, an' say no more about it,' an' then Nobby began to groan an' make faces. Spud picks up his cap an' glares at Nobby.

" 'Don't you make no mistake, Nobby,' sez Spud; 'I ain't goin' to pay it, whether you 'aunt me or not.'

" 'You've got a hard 'art,' sez Nobby, feebly; an' Spud came back to barracks wilder than ever.

"Next day I went up see Nobby.

"He was sittin' up in an arm-chair readin'.

" 'Hullo, Smithy,' he sez, 'how much did you collect on the will?'

" 'Seven an' fourpence ha'penny,' I sez.

" 'Hold on to it,' sez Nobby; 'I shall be out of hospital to- morrow.'"

THE FAITH OF PRIVATE SIMPSON

"You quite understand," said Private Smith, of the 1st Anchester Regiment, "that it took us a long time before we got the hang of this here Union Jack Club.

"The Army is full up of soldiers' institutes, and the places where soldiers can get a Bright 'Arf Hour, an' one or two more or less don't make much difference.

"But when me or Nobby get an invitation to a Bright 'Arf Hour we always read the bill through to see if hymn books are provided, an' if they are, we don't go—see?"

Smithy was in a hurry to explain.

"Don't think it's because me an' Nobby are down on religious tea-fights an' bun struggles because they're religious, because you'll be fallin' over yourself. I take my religion with the band on Sunday mornin'—parade at 10.30 in church parade kit, an' march away, to the admiration of the town. 'A' company bein' the first company on parade, an' the first to march into church, we're nearer the pulpit, so, in a manner of speakin', we get more religion than the other fellers.

"But the mistake that people make is that you can't do good work without a hymn book, and that's where the 'soldiers' home' business goes to pot.

ON SOLDIERS' HOMES

"Soldiers don't like bein' rescued all the time; they don't like bein' saved from theirselves, an' that's why you find 'soldiers' clubs' never do the same roarin' business as 'The Artillery Arms.' A lot of people run away with the idea that he's a desperate character. They have special meetin's for him, an' likely as not they get up a subscription an build a home with a bagatelle board and an 'armonium to keep him out of the nice, comfortable public houses.

"An' there's meetin' of the Young Soldiers Botanical Class on Wednesdays, an a choir practice on Thursdays an the temperance section has a meetin' on Fridays, and there's an enjoyable Sankey sing-song on Saturdays, an' coffee is provided at moderate prices.

"There was a chap of oure named Simpson—Snark Simpson of 'A'. He used to go in for politics; before he joined the Army he was a waiter at the Deptford Liberal Club, and what he didn't know about Gladstone wasn't worth knowin'. He was aiways grousin' about things—about the Army, an' the officers, and how it ought to be run. He was down on soldiers' clubs, because he'd got a funny idea that a feller could be good without singin' hymns. But mostly bis grumblin' took the form of sayin' 'What's the good?' Sometimes we called him 'What's-the-good Simpson,' an' it used to be quite a sayin' in 'A' Company, 'What's the good?'

WHY SIMPSON LAUGHED

"When all the papers was full of the Dargai business, an' people at music-halls was singin' about the 'Gallant Gordons on the Dargai Heights,' old Simpson used to laugh an' sneer till me an' Nobby nearly hit him.

" 'That's all right,' he sez, laughin', 'but what's the good of fellers chuckin' their lives away? People will forget all about it by Derby Day, an' if one of

them gallant Highlanders goes into a private bar an' asks for a drink for a hero, the girl behind the counter will tell him that they keep a special bar for 'eroes—the bottle an' jug department.'

" 'Well, old Simpson went on, an' went on, sneerin' an' grousin', an' said that if he ever had to choose between bein' a one-legged 'ero an' a two-legged shirker, he knew what he'd do.

"The war broke out, an' we was sent from Malta to the Orange Free State. We had one or two little fights, but nothin' to speak of.

"One mornin' Nobby sez to me, 'Smithy,' he sez, quits grave, 'there's goin' to be a big scrap to-day. I heard old Umfreville say so. 1 wish you'd keep your eye on Snarky Simpson. 1 don't want him to show up the company. As like as not he'll bolt.

"It started at daybreak an' went on till the afternoon. We got in a tight corner with four pom-poms playin' on the regiment. We sat tight for six hours, an' then advanced against the kopje where the Boers was. You'd hear fellers squeal like rabbits an' go spinnin' round an' drop, an' the regiment was absolutely white to a man—but we kept advancin'.

"WHAT'S THE GOOD—?"

"I kept my eye on Simpson, but he didn't look worse than any cf the others. Then we charged—we charged a hill, an' we got half-way up when the Boers opened out on us. Ten men in my section wont down. Two of the officers dropped. Poor little Captain Grey... a horrible sight. The fire was worse than you can think of. The regiment stopped an' sort of hesitated—but Simpson didn't stop; I can see him now, with his bayonet fixed an' his khaki helmet on the back of his bead, stumblin' along over the loose stones. He didn't seem to realise be was advancin' alone, an' when he did, he stopped an' looked back. Then, above all tbe cracklin' an' tick-tookin' of tbe rifles, you could hear his voice: 'Come on, you blighters. What's the good...?'

"We laughed, yes, we actually laughed, an' then the company rushed forward, scramblin' over the rocks an' firin' steady at every chance. It was Nobby who caught hold of Simpson just as he was fallin'.

" 'Hold up.' sez Nobby.

" 'What's the good?' sez Simpson, talkin' like a man in his sleep; an' we laid him down.

"Then the grass on the bill caught fire, an' the medical staff worked like devils to get the wounded out before they was burned. Yes," said Smithy, seriously, "the old Linseed Lancers were heroes that day, an' I forgive them for all tbeir sins. They came out black an' scorched, draggin' the wounded with 'em, but me an' Nobby brought old Simpson out. We got him down to

the field hospital an' into the marquee. There was lots of chaps laid flat that day, an' it was nearly nine o'clock that night before the doctor could see old Simpson.

UNDERSTANDING

"Me an' Nobby was sittin' with him when tbe doctor came. Nobby was was holdin' his hand, an'—an' I—"

I waited.

"I was readin' to him," eaid Smithy, quietly, 'a-readin' a bit of the Bible. The doctor looked at Simpson an' said gently :

" 'You're badly hit, Simpson.'

" 'Am I dyin'?' said Simpson.

"The doctor nodded his head, an' by an' by went away.

"Simpson lay for a long time an' said nothing; then after a bit he said:

" 'Smithy, I know what's the good now,' be said.

" 'What about?' I asked him.

" 'About soldiers dyin' in action. Why,' he said, 'if chaps like me an' you didn't die, nobody would take any notice of them that live—don't you see, Smithy? Civilians'll think a lot more of soldiers because chaps like me...' He stopped, but Nobby and me understood.

"At four o'clock in the mornin' he asked for a drink, an' then he said:

" 'What's that?'

"It was firing—the pickets were engaged, an' there was a little fight going on: so we told him.

"He smiled a little.

" 'Perhaps them chaps are wonderin' what's the good, too,' he said, an' shut his eyes. I think Nobby was cryin, because he was very fond of Simpson.

"When he opened his eyes again he said, 'The people at home will think a lot of us...' An' then I heard the regimental assembly go, an' knew the Anchesters was falling in.

" 'We've got to leave you now, old feller,' sez Nobby. But Simpson took no notice, because he was dead.

UNCLE JOE'S TRACT

"Nobby Clark," explained Private Smith of the Anchester Regiment, "has got an uncle who's fairly good. He keeps a ham and beef shop in Lewisham Highroad, and naturally, being a bit well off, can afford to be eccentric.

"He's a very fine old chap," said Smithy, warmly. "If 'e gets a side of bacon that's gone off, or a tub of butter a bit high, do you think he throws it away? Not he. He gives it to the pore."

Smithy glowed.

"He sends Nobby lots of letters of advice and tracks, and sometimes he slips in half a dollar in stamps. Nobby is always anxious to get his uncle's letters, but I've known him to have a slice of bad luck for six letters runnin'.

"One mornin' the postman brought a fat letter in. 'Private Clark,' he sez, and Nobby nipped along the barrackroom, but his face fell when he saw how fat the letter was.

" 'It's a bit too heavy to be any good,' he sez very bitter, and, weighin' the letter in his hand; 'if this is another Straight Talk to Enquirin' Sinners, Smithy, something will 'ave to be done.' He tore open the letter very careful an' took out a printed paper. 'Track,' he sez bitterly, 'a track about drinkin' an' quarrellin'."

"Then he took out another paper.

" 'Track,' he sez bitterer than ever, 'a track about smokin'. Then he took out another paper.

" 'Tra—' he stopped, 'no it ain't here, Smithy, what's this?' Nobby was all of a tremble, an' so was I, for if it wasn't a fiver, a real white crinkly fiver; I've never seen one.

"Nobby was quite shook up, an' so was I.

" 'Smithy,' sez Nobby, his voice all broke, 'pick up them beautiful tracks that my dear Uncle Joe sent me.'

" 'I can't, Nobby,' I sez, 'you chucked 'em on the fire.'

" 'Did I—did I?' sez Nobby, horror struck, 'did, I throw away my dear uncle's tracks—did I burn them lovely words—oh, horrow!'

"Then one of the fellers chipped in.

" 'Spud Murphy's got the one about drink; 'e picked it out of the fireplace, Nobby,' he sez.

"Nobby stood lookin' at the banknote, crinklin' it an' looking at the watermark.

" 'Spud Murphy's got no right to my dear uncle's track— but he's welcome to it. I only 'ope,' Nobby went on very solemn, 'that the words in that there track will do him good.'

"There was a letter along with the other goods, and Nobby read it.

" 'My dear nephew,' read Nobby. 'This comes hopin' to find you—um—um—um. I am glad to hear you go regularly to—um—um—um, but am sorry to hear you are ashamed to go to the meetings because you've got no money to put in the plate... Can quite understand it... I don't see why you should wait till I die before getting some of my money, so as a reward. ... I am sendin' you ten pounds.'

" 'What,' I sez, an' Nobby read it again. 'Ten pound,' he sez, an' pulled the banknote out of his pocket to examine it.' It was 'Five' right enough as plain as plain. 'I promise to pay...' etc.

" 'Dear uncle's made a mistake,' sez Nobby, all trembly, 'or else the other five is comin' on.' He turned the envelope inside out, but there was nothin' in it.

" 'Go on 'with the letter,' I sez.

" '...Ten pounds,' read Nobby slowly, 'but certain persons havin' said that you don't read my little tracks—' Nobby stopped and went white.

" 'Go on,' I sez.

" 'Certain persons havin' said you don't read my tracks nor my letters either, I—have—put—the—other—five—pound—'

"Nobby sort of collapsed on to the nearest bed cot

" 'Where?' I sez.

" 'Between the last two pages of the track on drink an' quarrellin',' he sez, in a holler voice.

"I tell you," said Smithy, seriously, "it shook me an' Nobby up a bit, but bimeby Nobby pulls hisseff together and jumps up. 'Smithy,' he sez, 'that low feller Spud bas got my dear uncle's track wot he sent me—I want to read that track; it'll do me more good than Spud. Where is he?'

"Then somebody said he'd seen Spud going over to the canteen, so me an' Nobby run as hard as we could to find him.

"Sure enough there he was, but our 'earts went down into our number nines when we saw him—he was sittin' by hisself drinking lemonade and looked very pale.

" 'Cheer-o, Spud,' sez Nobby, in a chokin' voice. 'How goes it? What are you drinkin'?'

"Spud shook his head sorrerfully.

" 'I've given up the cursed drink,' he sez, in a humble voice.

" 'Since when?' sez Nobby, very loud. 'Since when, you low hypocrite?'

"Spud didn't take no offence. He only sighed.

" 'Since reading your dear Uncle Joe's track,' he sez.

" 'Spud,' sez Nobby, droppin' his voice an' shakin' Spud by the hand, 'Spud, you make me feel ashamed of meself. Perhaps I ought to give it up too; perhaps them beautiful words might be the makin' of me; let's have a look at my uncle's track wot I lent you—'

" 'Wot you chucked away,' sez Spud, very gentle.

" 'Wot happened to slip out of my hand an' was picked up by a low thief who happened to be passin ,' sez Nobby, very ferocious, but managed to get hisself under concrol again; 'so, therefore, dear Spud, let me have a dekko at them lovely words.'

" 'I haven't quits finished with it yet,' sez Spud, sippin' his lemonade and smacking his lips. 'This is the stuff to drink, Nobby. If I'd read your uncle's track earlier I might have been pounds in pocket.'

"I thought Nobby would have a fit. He got red in the face an' he gnashed his teeth.

" 'Spud,' he sez after a bit, 'Spud, old feller, are you goin' to see a comrade continue on what I might call the down-grade without raisin' a hand to help him. And any way,' he went on, gettin' wilder and wilder, 'it's my bloomin' track; it was sent to me by my dear Uncle Joe an' if you don't 'and it over, I'll give you a wipe on the jaw.'

"All the fellers in the canteen began to gather round on the off chance of a fight.

" 'Wot's up, Nobby?' sez Fatty Green, a very nice young fellow with a curly head.

" 'This perishing recruit's got a track of mine,' roars Nobby pullin' off his coat, 'a beautiful track about drinkin' an' quarrellin' an' won't 'and it over, so I'm goin' to knock his 'ead off.'

" 'Give the man his track,' sez Fatty, who was an off-an'-on teetotaler, an' all the other fellers said the same.

"Things looked a bit rough-housish when suddenly the bugle sounded orf for 'orderly men,' an' Nobby staggered back.

" 'That's me,' he sez, an' I felt sorry for him. In a manner of speakin' he was tore between love an' duty, as the song sez.

" 'Smithy,' he whispers to me, 'I've got to go an' draw the groceries; keep your eye on this blighter, an' don't let him out of your sight.'

"When Nobby had gone I sez to Spud:

" 'Spud, me lad—I want a few words with you.'

" ''Ave 'em here,' sez Spud, sippin' his lemonade, but I took his arm an' walked him down to the back fteld, where there nobody about.

" 'Spud,' I sez kindly, ''and over Nobby's uncle's track.'

" 'For why?' sez Spud, looking round for someone to take his part.

" 'If you ain't enough of a gentleman to understand that when a feller gets a private track from his uncle he don't want nobody else to read it, I can't explain,' I sez.

"Just then Nobby came runnin' back from the parade ground, 'avin' got another feller to draw the groceries.

" 'Come on,' he sez, an' so we gave Spud a number two ju-jitsu push.

" 'You 'old his legs, Smithy,' sez Nobby, who was sittin' on Spud's 'ead; 'now, you mouldy 'ighway robber, where's that track?'

" 'Lemme get up,' sez Spud, strugglin', but Nobby wrnt carefully through his pockets.

" 'Here it is,' he yells, an' pulls out the paper. Sure enough, snug between the last two leaves was the other fiver.

" 'I'll report this,' sez Spud when we let him up.

" 'Do,' sez Nobby, very cheerful 'do.'"

NOBBY AND HIS LETTERS

"How's them war correspondents going on?" inquired Private Smith. "Are they still somewhere in the North of France, or have they left Boulogne? I'm only askin' because I thought I saw a letter of Nobby Clark's in the paper this mornin' signed 'Sister Agnes.'

"This is a soldiers' war all right. Soldier 'bus drivers, soldier engine- drivers, soldier mud-larks, an' soldier war correspondents. Before. I 'stopped one' on the Aisne. I often used to regret I hadn't any relations to write home to, givin' full particulars of me heroic deeds an' the terrible way I was killin' Germans. It's grand to see the way Tiny White an' Spud Murphy an' other gallant fellers of 'B' Company have been slaughterin' the foe, an' only them that know the true facs realises how much they've got to thank Nobby Clark who, so to speak, was the originator of the idea for the most interestin' feature in the newspapers.

"I don't say that Nobby Clark foresaw the day when the public would be fed up with such items as:

'On the Lyser there was an artillery duel.'

'At Alas we have made progress.'

'In the Allgonne there is nothin' to report.'

"But what Nobby did know was that war correspondents wouldn't be allowed.

"It was when we was in billets on the Marne that Nobby sez one night suddenly:

" 'I wonder where Hector is tonight?'

" 'Who's Hector?' sez Spud Murphy.

" 'Hector,' sez Nobby very deliberate, 'is me young brother.'

"It happened that Sergeant Hasty, the orderly-room sergeant, was billeted with us in the handsome an' commodious barn we was supposed to sleep in.

"Sergeant Hasty is—or was—one of them sharp-faced fellows who do sums in their heads, an' can tell you the date of the Great Fire of London without so much as lookin' at an almanac.

" 'Clark,' he sez, 'accordin' to my memory, an' havin' seen all your papers, you haven't got any relations except an uncle.'

"Nobby didn't turn a hair.

" 'Hector,' he sez again, 'is me brother, sergeant, an' if I haven't mentioned it, it's because of me family pride. Hector's got two shops of his own...'

" 'What sort of shops?' sez Spud.

" 'Boot shops,' sez Nobby, 'where you sell boots. Naturally enough, bein' a master man an' highly respected, he don't want the neighbours to know that he has a brother servin' as a common soldier.'

" 'That's what I call him,' sez Nobby, 'only I prefer to call him a bootmaker.'

"Never havin' heard of Nobby's brother I was a bit surprised until Nobby told me that he thought of writin' a letter to him givin' full particulars about the retreat from Mons.

" 'The only difficulty is that I don't know his address,' sez Nobby, 'but I'm goin' to get over that in a highly novel way. I'm sendin' the letter to the Editor of the Daily Tribune.'

"That was a bit hot, because it's a court-martial crime to write to the papers, but Nobby had arranged to get over that.

" 'I'm sendin' a letter to the editor,' he sez, an' showed it to me when I was doin' my bit of trench diggin.

Dear Sir,—The following letter composed by me is written for my brother Hector Clark. Esq. Not knowing his address, will you publish same and pay my brother for same when he calls, as same belongs to him only I haven't

got his address? My brother will say, "Please give me the money for my brother's letters," and you will pay the same over. P.S.—My brother will be dressed as a soldier the same as me.—Yours truly, N. CLARK.

" 'There's a good many "sames" in that lettor. I sez, 'an who is your brother, Nobby?'

" 'Me an' him are the same,' sez Nobby Clark.

"Nobby was very proud of his grand idea an' talked to a lot of people about it. All the troops agreed it was fine, except Spud Murphy.

" 'It looks to me like daylight robbery an' fraud,' he sez.

" 'That's a natural way for you to look at things,' sez Nobby, 'but all honest people will call it "stratagem of war" as the poet says.'

"It was soon after this that letters began arrivin' for the troops—the first mail we had had since we had been in the country—an' a reg'lar epidemic of letter-writin' set in.

"You couldn't walk up the village street where we was billeted, without twenty fellers sayin': 'What's another word for terrible? I've used it six times an its gettin' monotonous.'

"Sometimes it was 'terrible' an sometimes it was 'heroic' an' sometimes 'undaunted,' but-gen'rally it was somethin' about theirselves they was writin'.

"It was about this time when Nobby Clark an' Spud Murphy fell out over a question of money. It appears that Nobby had bought a pair of boots from Spud an' had borrowed ten shillin's on the top of it. Nobby bad sworn to pay it back before the regiment left England, an' when he didn't he explained on the boat comin 'across) that a rich uncle bad sent him a note sayin that the money would be forwarded. Naturally, after the letters came, Spud hung round Nobby a lot.

" 'It's no good your worryin' me,' sez Nobby. 'Me dear uncle's letter not havin' arrived, I can't do anythin for you.'

" 'I don't believe you mean pay in me,' sez Spud.

" 'The things you don't believe,' sez Nobby, 'would stock a library.'

" 'I suppose you was hopin' I'd "stop one,"' sneers Spud. 'That's the sort of man you are.'

" 'Don't you see I'm busy?' sez Nooby sternly. 'What d'ye mean by worryin' me when I'm writin' to me dear brother?'

"But Spud wasn't to be put off. There was a rumour that we was goin' to march into Paris, an' he wanted to buy a few things to send home. He got so

persistent that Nobby told him all about the letters he was writin' to the Daily Tribune.

" 'I'll make lashin's of money,' he sez. 'an' all you've got to do is to be patient.'

"That sort of talk put Spud in a better temper, an' he said he'd wait.

"Them letters of Nobby was certainly worth money. You've probably seen 'em in print. There was one which began:

'Midnight approached an' nought can be heard but the sound of a sentry scratchin' his head as he peers fiercely into the night with one hand, an' grasps his rifle firmly with the other, singin' a low melody between his clenched teeth as his sleepin' comrades moan in their sleep thinkin' of home.'

"Letter followed letter in quick succession. Nobby's description of the takin' of Mons, an' his description of the fight at Landrecies, an' Nobby's grand bit about the takin' of the guns at Compiègne are pretty well famous.

'Dear Hector, how can I describe the events of the past week. Words fail me. I cannot describe them. They are indescribable. I will tell you what happened...'

" 'They're mountin' up,' sez Nobby. 'That's four letters I've sent an' I'll bet you they won't pay less than a pound each.

"Nobby described things he'd seen, an' things he'd heard about, but the most popular letters was them that told of things that nobody had ever heard of. It was Nobby who described how him an' another feller was carried off by Zeppelins an' rescued in mid-air hy a French aeroplane. It was Nobby who saved the regiment by blowin' up a bridge an' swimmin' across the river carryin' a German prisoner in his teeth.

"When I was sent home I used to buy the Daily Tribune an' read about Nobby's deeds till I was dizzy.

'We have received another vivid letter from Private C—— of the —chester Regt. (sez the paper), an' we doubt if any of our readers will be able to peruse the followin' story of a British soldier's gallant an' successful attempt to spike a 16-inch German howitzer without feelin' violently ill.'

"I used to get letters from Nobby. He told me that the papers was payin' two pounds for each letter, an' that Spud Murphy was worryin' him for money, an' what he was goin' to do to Spud, an' similar gossip

"Then one day—about a month ago—I got a letter from the Union Jack Club in the Waterloo Road, an' to my surprise it was from Nobby!

"He had come over with an officer of ours who was carryin' dispatches, an was goin' to be in London for three days. I went up to see him—I'd got sick furlough, an' could walk about quite nicely with a stick.

" 'Smithy,' he sez, "we'll go round to the Daily Tribune office, an' draw my money—at least my brother's money,' he sez, an' then he asked me if I'd seen Spud.

" 'Is he home?' I sez.

" 'Yes,' sez Nobby, 'rheumatism-in the leg,' he sez. 'At least that's what he sez it is.'

"Curiously enough we met a chap of ours in the Strand who'd just seen Spud.

" 'Which way did he go?' sez Nobby interested, and the chap pointed to the Charing Cross end of the Strand.

" 'He is the one fellow I don t want to meet,' sez Nobby cheerful, 'We'll go the other.'

" 'The fact is,' sez Nobby. 'I owe Spud two pound odd—I tossed him double or quits, an' he won, an on a joyous day like this, with me treasury chest flowin' with milk an' money, it'd be little less than a disaster to meet anybody I owed two pound to.'

" 'Why don't you pay him?' I sez.

"Nobby looks at me pittyin'ly.

" 'Gettin' wounded has turned your brain. Smithy,' sez he.

"At the office of the Daily Tribune everybody was very decent, an' we was taken up in the lift to one of the editors.

" 'So you're Private Clark's other brother, are you?' he sez, an' handed over four pounds. 'There was eight due to you;' he sez, 'but your younger brother called an' collected half.'

" 'My younger brother!' sez Nobby.

" 'Yes,' sez the editor chap. 'He told me you'd be callin' for the rest in a day or two—here's his receipt.'

"He pulled out a bit of paper.

'Received with deep thanks, £4—'

"An' it was signed—

'SPUD MURPHY CLARK.'

"Nobby came out of the newspaper office in a sort of dream, clutchin' the money in his right hook.

" 'Smithy,' he sez in a holler voice, 'which way did that chap say Spud Murphy went?'

"So I told him, an' he called a taxi.

" 'Drive toward Charin' Cross,' he sez to the driver, 'an' stop at the first ironmonger's you come to—I want to buy an axe.'"

THE END