# SMITHY ABROAD BARRACK ROOM SKETCHES

BY

EDGAR WALLACE

# Smithy Abroad Barrack Room Sketches

## I. — THE ARMS STORE

SMITHY sat on the edge of his cot and sorted his belongings. The solid black trunk that a paternal Government provided for the reception of the soldiers' worldly possessions was wide open, and the inside of the lid was a picture gallery of cigarette pictures. "When Nobby became my bed chum," reflected Smithy, "I had three pairs of socks—I had two new blacking brushes and a bit of scented soap—likewise a brand new shavin' brush."

Private Clark, stretched full length on the adjoining cot, immersed in the mysteries of an elementary French grammar (Nobby is studying for a first-class certificate) treated the insinuation with silent contempt.

"A man who wastes his time tryin' to learn a language wot nobody speaks except French people," complained Smithy, bitterly, "ought to have time to go through his kit, an' sort out stolen property: a man who can afford to buy——"

"I have not the socks of my friend," interrupted Nobby, dreamily. "I have not seen the socks of my comrade. Ah, nong, jammy."

"I lent you——" disputed Smithy hotly.

"Have you the pen of my sister, no but I have the paper of my aunt. Be'old! I have the chalk of my cousin," murmured Nobby.

"Have you got my socks?" demanded the wrathful Smithy.

"Nong, mais j'avvy——"

"Talk English, you big-footed barman."

"I haven't got your socks, an' I'd be very sorry to be seen wearin' 'em," said the exasperated Nobby. "If that ain't English enough, I'll talk Lal Sahib to you."

Smithy grinned.

"Never heard about Lal Sahib, have you?"—he smiled grimly—"he was the chap to talk English." Smithy waited for his audience to collect and prefaced his narrative with a homily on soldiering.

"There's three kinds of soldiers." said Smithy. "There's old soldiers, recruits, an' soldiers—just soldiers. You can always tell the 'roosters' by their silliness: you don't often see 'em in the streets because they're mostly in hospital with heart disease, an' lunacy, an' any old disease that'll get 'em a ticket.* The old soldiers you can generally spot: they're the chaps who come round for the washin' on Monday mornin's. They also get charge of fatigue parties that do work that a lance-corporal wouldn't bemean hisself to do.

The soldier—well, anybody can tell a pukka soldier. A fine- lookin', healthy upstandin'—well, take me for example.

* Ticket: i.e., discharge certificate.

"Young soldiers spend their time wantin' things that ain't good for 'em, and the thing they mostly want is foreign service an' a war.

"Any hour of the day you can hear 'em sayin' 'Roll on the big ship an' the white helmet,' an' they're no sooner abroad than they're singin', with tears in their eyes—

'Motherland. Motherland!

See thy exiled children stand,"

or words to that effect.

"When we was stationed in Peshawar, which is half way between India an' hell, our second battalion was at Gib. an' we got a draft of young chaps sent to us. They was the haughtiest draft you could ever imagine. Half a dozen of 'em was sent to 'B' Company. One of the chaps, whose name was Sigee, fairly made your head ache to listen to him.

"We always try to be nice an' polite to new chaps, so, just by way of makin' him feel at home, Nobby told him all the news, how there was a lot of cholera about, an' how Fatty Pink was down with sunstroke.

"'Heat don't worry me,' sez Sigee, very cocky. 'I'm used to foreign service—been on the Rock a year.'

"'But this heat,' sez Nobby.

"'Nothin' to the Rock,' sez the young feller.

"'An' the cholera,' sez Nobby.

"'Nothin' to the enteric you get on the Rock,' sez Sigee.

"'There's a lot of gun-runnin' ' sez Nobby.

"'You ought to see the smugglers nippin' over to La Linea from the Rock,' sez Sigee, an' that made Nobby wild.

"'What Rock?' he sez.

"'Gibraltar,' sez the other.

"'Where's that?' sez Nobby, innocent. 'In the Isle of Wight?'

"You see," explained Smithy, "it's very hard to convince a chap who's never been further out of England than Douglas, Isle of Man, that Gibraltar ain't abroad.

“We had a long argument about it the night the draft arrived, an’ Nobby said that ‘abroad’ didn’t begin till the nacheral colour of the inhabitants of the place was black, an’ that brought up the question of Black and White.

“Sigee was one of them chaps that’s prepared to argue always on the other side. He waited till he saw we was all in agreement about the question, then he hopped in to prove that the native was twenty times a better man than the white.

“‘He’s our black brother, too,’ he sez.

“‘He ain’t no brother of mine,’ sez Nobby.

“What made me an’ Nobby so cross was the way Sigee took up with Lal Ra—‘Lal Sahib’ the natives called him.

“He was a pukka Pathan, that some silly old General had found when he was a kid. I forget what expedition it was on, but it was one of them shoot-quick-an’-get-away fights that we’re always havin’ in the hills. The General found this little Pathan an’ took him home. Got to like him, an’ havin’ more money than sense had him educated like a proper sahib. Went to Oxford, this kid did, an’ learnt Greek an’ algebra and mathematics, an’ when the old feller died he come back to Peshawar an’ started a native school in the city. To hear him talk, you would think you was listenin’ to a real gentleman. Somehow our officers didn’t cotton on to him, so he tried the men, an’ we wasn’t takin’ him either. But Sigee stuck on to him like a fly on treacle, and it made us sick to see ’em walkin’ through the bazaar together as thick as thieves.

“‘He’s a gentleman, born and bred,’ says Sigee, ‘I’ve seldom met a better.’

“‘That I can quite understand,’ sez Nobby, politely.

“What put the tall hat on Sigee was the order that came out that the native town was out of bounds, and that soldiers were practically confined to barracks.

“‘It’s a bit of spite,’ sez Sigee, ‘to prevent me meetin’ my friend.’ As a matter of fact, our Colonel, who gave the order, didn’t know anything about Sigee, but what he did know was, that there was going to be a bit of trouble down in that part of the world.

“We chaps didn’t know what the game was fully till one afternoon, the order came out that there was to be double guards on all the outlying posts. Then we smelt bloodshed.

“An’ it came all right.

“That night, when me an’ Nobby was sittin’ outside the canteen with a lot of chaps, an’ watchin’ the twinklin’ lights of the native town down below the

hill, we hears a shot, then another, an' in a minute we heard the sentry on the main guard shout, 'Guard, turn out!'

"Then the Adjutant came pelting across the square, an' we could see in the moonlight he had a revolver in his hand. 'Assembly!' I heard him shout, then he went off like a streak in the direction of the Arms Store, which is just on the edge of the cantonment.

"We didn't wait for the assembly to sound. Me an' Nobby jumped for our bungalow. The Colour-sergeant, as white as a sheet, was opening the ammunition locker.

"He chucked half a dozen packets at me an' Nobby.

"'Take your rifles and double as hard as you can to the Arms Store,' he shouted, and in a minute there was half a dozen of us runnin' like mad in the direction the Adjutant had taken.

"He was there with a file of the guard when we reached him, bending over something on the ground.

"It was poor little Jayson, of 'H.'.... a horrible sight.... They had smashed in the door of the store and got away with a dozen rifles.

"There was a double guard on after that night, but the worst was to come.

"The Arms Store is a fairly lonely post. Ammunition is stored there, an' naturally it's got to be a certain distance away from the barracks. There was a lot of bad Pathans in the Town, who wanted to get rifles. When I say 'bad Pathans' I mean extra bad, because I've never met a Pathan that was good for anything but murder.

"It appears that there was trouble brewin' on the frontier somebody was preachin' a Holy war, and rifles was selling at 200 rupees in the town.

"'I've known about this for weeks,' sez Sigee, very proud—he was just goin' on guard—'my friend, Lal Sahib, told me that owin' to the foolish and shortsighted policy of the Government——'

"'Dry up,' sez Nobby, 'we ain't interested in your nigger pal, nor what he says.'

"Nobby has never forgiven hisself for snappin' pore old Sigee's head orf, for next mornin', when the corporal of the guard went to relieve Sigee an' his chum, they found 'im stark and dead, with an Afghan knife laying care¬lessly round to show how it was done.

"We buried poor old Sigee that night, and his black pal, Lal Sahib, sent a wreath with some Greek poetry on it. After that, Arms guard got a bit too jumpy.

“Sigee was killed on the Tuesday night. On the Friday night Harry Bayle, of ‘C,’ and young Turner were laid out on the same post, practically in sight of the camp, an’ nobody was any the wiser. At neither time did the Pathans manage to get away with rifles except the guns of the poor chaps they slaughtered.

“And the curious thing about it was that although there was a strict battalion order that the sentries were never to separate, but to stick together throughout their guard, they were always found one on one side of the Arms building, and the other poor chap on the other.

“On the Sunday night, me and Nobby was sent for to the officers’ quarters.

“The Adjutant took us to his room.

“‘Smith,’ he sez, ‘I am putting you and Clark on Arms guard to-morrow—and you’ll be first relief. I’ve sent for you two, because, being old soldiers, I can depend on you.’

“‘Yessir,’ sez me an’ Nobby.

“‘You can be depended upon to carry out orders,’ he sez, slowly, ‘an’ these are your orders: if anyone approaches your post challenge them once—then fire or use your bayonet.’

“As this was the ordinary regulation, we was puzzled at the Adjutant sendin’ specially for us.

“‘Understand,’ he sez more slowly, ‘if you challenge an’ the person you challenge can’t give you the countersign straight off—you’re to kill him.’

“We nodded.

“‘Even,’ sez the Adjutant, ‘even if it's me! ’

“Nobby was very troubled as we walked back to our barrack-room.

“‘These murders have got a bit on Uncle Bill’s mind,’ he sez, ‘surely he ain’t goin’ dotty?”

“I thought it was rum, too.

“We fell in for guard at Retreat next night, an’ the Adjutant inspected us.

“‘You remember what I told you?’ he sez, ‘an’ don’t forget you are not to separate, even if I order it!’

“‘That’s done it,’ sez Nobby, as we was marchin’ off. ‘Uncle Bill’s been in the sun.’

“But I had my own views about Uncle Bill, an’ I said nothin’ at all.

“The first relief was from six to eight, an’ nothin’ happened. It’s not nice to do a guard on a place where four chaps have been murdered—four chaps

you knew quite well an' have laughed an' joked with. The Arms Store is a little square buildin' on a risin' bit of ground, and durin' the day time there's two sentry boxes, one each side of the door. When the store's locked up, the sentry boxes are pushed in front of the door—or had been since the Pathans made their first attack.

"'What I can't understand,' sez Nobby, ' is why them chaps left each other, an' I don't mind tellin' you, Smithy, that if I catch you tryin' to leave me, I'll beat your head off with the butt end of me rifle.'

"We was relieved at eight, an' nothin' further happened till just as I was dreamin' somebody had left me a million pounds an' a feather bed, the corporal of the guard shook me up.

"'Come on, Smithy,' he sez, 'it's your turn.'

"It was black dark when me an' Nobby took over the post, and there was only just enough light from the stars to see how dark it was. We walked round the buildin' twice, and then took up our position in the boxes.

"We stood for a long time sayin' nothin', for somehow the silence of the night didn't invite conversation.

"By an' bye Nobby whispered:

"'Smithy, what's the word again?'

"So I whispers 'Bristol,' which was the countersign of the night.

"I don't know how long we stood there, but after a while Nobby sez:

"'Let's walk round again.'

"I'd just slung my rifle to the slope, when I heard somebody coming along the path. Not stealthily or quietly, but just steppin' out briskly an' whistlin'.

"We dropped our rifles to the charge and saw a man coming towards us.

"We could hear the 'slap slap' of his sword as it hit against his leggings.

"' Halt! Who comes there?' I shouted.

"'It's all right,' he sez, an' I recognised the Adjutant's

voice. Then like a flash I remembered his warnin'.

"' Stand, sir!' I sez, quick, 'and give the counter¬ sign!'

"He laughed.

"'Oh, all right, my man, I'm just looking round—one of you men go to the other side of the building and see if all's clear.'

"Nobby was startin' when I grabbed his arm.

"'It's against, orders, sir,' I sez. I could see he was comin' to test us.

“Then suddenly at my side I could hear Nobby breathing hard, an’ he started a little forward.

“‘Don’t come nearer,’ he sez, harshly, ‘give me the countersign!’

“‘Oh, rot!’ sez the officer, an’ came walkin’ casually toward us.

“Before I could stop him, Nobby had shortened his rifle and as the officer came nearer, I saw the flash of Nobby’s bayonet leap out toward him.

“It struck him with a soft thud, and I heard him sob as he slid down on his knees.

“‘My God!’ I whispered, ‘what have you done?’

“‘Killed him,’ sez Nobby, ‘accordin’ to orders,’ then ‘Look out!’ he shouted and I saw three crouching figures coming up the rise.

“I shot the first and got the bayonet home on the second, and the third Nobby settled.

“Then we heard the guard runnin’.

“‘Smithy,’ sez Nobby, very solemn, ‘I’d give ten million pounds to hear the Adjutant’s voice damning somebody’s eyes.’ He got it for nothin’ in a minute, for well ahead of the guard came the Adjutant in his pyjamas with a little electric lamp in his hand.

“‘Halt!’ shouts Nobby, an’ the Adjutant stopped.

“‘Thank God,’ I heard the officer mutter ; then he gave the word.

“‘Are you all right?’ he sez.

“‘We’re all right,’ sez Nobby, anxious. ‘Are you all right?—because, sir, hopin’ there’s no offence, I put eight inches of bayonet through your chest a few seconds ago.’

“The Adjutant flashed his lamp over the dead man at Nobby’s feet.

“He was dressed in a proper officer’s uniform, but his face was as black as the ace of spades.

“‘Lal Sahib!’ sez the Adjutant.

“‘I always suspected him,’ sez the officer a little while later to the colonel, ‘especially after I’d heard that his voice was so like mine that you couldn’t distinguish the difference in the dark. It was easy enough for him to deceive the men on guard; sending one to the other side of the building where his friends were, whilst he knifed the other. He was the Lord High Gun Runner in this part of the world—you can’t educate a Pathan out of his Pathanism.’”

## II. — THE BAPTISM OF STEVENS

THOSE who make a close study of the human mind, and the devious processes of its working, inform me that years of research and study do not return such satisfactory results as a week's acquaintance with the average regiment of the line.

When, as I sometimes do, deliver a lecture on the adventures of war-corresponding, I am invariably asked by somebody at the end of the lecture what, in the course of my wild and questionable career, I might regard as being my most exciting adventure, I invariably reply my introduction to semaphore signalling. For in the early days, when men switched off the wagging flag, and took to waving their arms like windmills to give expression to their thoughts, it chanced that I was practising the new method unconscious of the fact that there was passing on the road below the hill on which I stood, a wild Irish regiment. I thought nothing of the incident save that the men regarded me with scowls and mutterings.

That night a picket of the Royal Artillery rescued me from a gang of infuriated Irishers, who had risen to slay "the black-hearted Orangeman who mocked them by crossing himself as good Catholics passed." Those who understand the gyrations that semaphore signalling calls into play, will appreciate the incident. Discussing this matter with Smithy, passed by easy stages to theology—theology in words of one syllable.

Now it is a very serious fact that there are two subjects taboo in a barrack room; the King and religion. There may be regulations, and probably are, which prohibit such discussions, but regulations are nothing where two or three soldiers are gathered together. Rather is it from an innate sense of delicacy that these matters are avoided. As Kipling will tell you, there are other dangerous matters, such as casting doubt upon your comrade being "legitimate issue," as the lawyers have it. This is an indiscretion invariably settled with bloodshed, great uproar, a hurrying of armed men, and sometimes a frog-marching procession to the guard room. Harking back to religion:

"When we was at the Cape," said Smithy, "we was stationed at Wynberg. 'B' Company was detached for duty at Simonstown, which, as everybody knows, is one of the cushiest* stations abroad. There's a couple of guards, one on the artillery barracks an' one on the magazine kloof, an' as in them days there was only room enough outside the barracks to fall in one company, it follered there wasn't much drill. There's a few engineer chaps, a lot of Garrison Artillery, an' whips of sailors.

* Cushiest, i.e., easiest.

“There was a couple of the medical staff, a corporal of the Army Service Corps, an’ an Army pay chap. It was what Nobby called an ideal Army corps, where nobody did any work, an’ the food was good.

“As a matter of fact there wasn’t enough work, an’ the consequence was that one half the detachment took to drink an’ the other half got serious mainly because of Stevens—Jimmy Stevens. Stevens is a chap who’s a big thinker, an’ most of his thinkin’ is about what’s goin’ to happen to him when he dies. I never knew a chap to change his religion as often as Jimmy has.

“He started Church an’ turned Wesleyan; then he become a Baptist, an’ then went back to the Church. Then he became a Plymouth Brother, an’ a Congregationalist, an’ a Christian Sciencer, an’ a Unitarian. He’s only had two checks, once when he tried to be a suffragette under the impression it was a new religion, an’ once when he tried to turn R.C.

“He went up an’ saw Father O’Leary, an’ pulled a long face, an’ said he’d seen the errer of his ways, but the Father cut him short.

“‘Phwat are ye wantin’?’ sez Father O’Leary. ‘Is it religion ye want, ye ecclesiastical chandler’s shop? or is it the flat of me boot ye’re askin’ for?’

“You see, Father O’Leary knew everything about everybody, an’ all he knew about Jimmy wasn’t worth worryin’ about. Soon after that the regiment went to Burma, an’ Jimmy took up Buddhist outfit. Used to sit on his bed cot for hours fixin’ his eye on the ceilin’ an’ saying nothin’.

“‘What are you doin’?’ sez Nobby.

“‘Searchin’ me soul,’ sez Jimmy, very solemn.

“‘You search it very careful,’ sez Nobby, fiercely, ‘an’ if you find a blackin’ brush marked No. 7,143, it belongs to Private Clark.’

“Nobby had been losin’ things.

“Well, I was tellin’ you about Simonstown. Three weeks after we arrived Jimmy got mighty serious on the question of his soul. What always worried him was he could never find any kind of sec’, Christian, Mahommedan, or Buddhist, that gave him all the peace of mind he wanted without his havin’ to do somethin’ he didn’t want.

“‘I’ve tried ’em all,’ he sez, very melancholy, ‘it’s no good bein’ a Christian because you’ve got to give up drinkin’; no good bein’ a Buddhist, cos you’ve got to give up eatin’; no good bein’ a Jew unless you’re born that way, or made so, and Mahommedism the same.

“I don’t know where he got the idea from unless it was from one of them encyclo-who-is-its that used to come out in monthly parts, but he got struck with the idea of bein’ a ‘cynic.’

“It’s a foreign word as far as I can understand that means grouser. The way to be a cynic is to keep on sayin’ ‘Ah, yes! I dessay!’ in a pityin’ kind of voice when anybody makes a pleasant observation. Or suppose you’re writin’ home to your girl an’ Jimmy knew it, he’d talk about absence making the heart grow fonder—fonder of the other feller. He quite enjoyed this sort of thing for a month, an’ used to go cynicin’ round, till one day Nobby an’ him fell out over this question of a bit of cynicisation concernin’ Nobby’s feet. Nobby’s very sensitive about his feet, an’ I must say he’s got a lot to be sensitive about.

“Jimmy wasn’t very much hurt, but the wall where his head hit was a bit dented. But it changed Jimmy’s religion. I felt sorry for him in a way. You see, he’d gone through the whole lot, an’ there was nothin’ for him to be except a Socialist—an’ that’s politics.

“For a fortnight or more he used to mouch about barracks an’ go wanderin’ about the hills by hisself, an’ then one night, when me an’ Nobby was takin’ a friendly pint in the Artillery canteen Jimmy stuck his head in the door very mysterious, an’ beckoned us out. We went. He was waitin’ for us on the little slopin’ square that leads down to the hospital.

“‘Smithy,’ he sez, ‘an’ Clark—I don’t bear no ill-will.’

“‘Quite right,’ sez Nobby.

“‘But,’ sez Jimmy, ‘feelin’ you take a bit of an interest in me I want you chaps to do me a favour.’

“‘Owin’,’ sez Nobby, ‘to me bein’ put under stoppages for a new shirt——’

“‘It ain’t money,’ sez Jimmy, bitterly, ‘it’s a sympathisin’ an’ friendly act.’

“‘Certainly,’ sez Nobby, very relieved.

“‘You see before you,’ sez Jimmy, mournful, ‘a man that’s misunderstood, a man that’s suspected——’

“‘I found them socks,’ sez Nobby, generously, ‘an’ I beg your pardon for thinkin’——’

“‘A man that’s suspected of tryin’ new religions for what he can get out of ’em,’ sez Jimmy, ‘so I’ve decided to commit suicide.’

“‘Go on?’ sez Nobby, ‘you’re jokin’?’

“‘No,’ sez Jimmy sadly, ‘I’ve seen enough of this life—I’ve had my whack of joys an’ sorrows. I’ve sipped the—the, you know what I mean. I’ve seen the wonders of India, an’ a dam rotten hole it is, too. I’ve been to Burma, I’ve been to Africa, I’ve got me second class certificate—there’s nothin’ worth livin’ for.’

“He went on like this walkin’ back to barracks, an’ kept it up for half an hour, an’ at last he told us his plans. He was goin’ to chuck hisself into the sea, an’ he wanted me an’ Nobby to come along an’ see fair play.

“The next mornin’ it was goin’ to be—at four o’clock, before anyone was about.

“Nobby was fairly excited, an’ started askin’ questions, an’ makin’ suggestions.

“‘How are you goin’ to do it?’ he sez, very anxious. ‘Walk straight in an’ get it over—or go out in a boat an’ drop overboard! A very good way,’ sez Nobby, musin’, ‘is to get two big stones, or pinch a couple of weights from the meat store——’

“‘We’ll see,’ sez Jimmy, rather coldly, I thought; ‘you wait till to-morrer—you don’t mind gettin’ up at four?’

“‘Not a bit,’ sez Nobby, eager, ‘make it three if you like.’

“‘I’ll wake you,’ sez Jimmy, very gloomy.

“‘Don’t worry,’ sez Nobby. ‘I’ll stay awake all night so as not to miss this treat—I mean so as not to miss helpin’ a friend.’

“I don’t know whether Nobby did stay awake, but at any rate he was the first one up. We had to move quiet for fear of wakin’ the other chaps. I forgot to tell you that Jimmy was actin’ company storeman, so he had a little room to himself. It took Nobby quite a time to wake him up, an’ when he did, Jimmy sat up rubbin’ his eyes an’ askin’ what was the matter.

“‘Come on, old feller,’ whispers Nobby, ‘it’s time for the job.’

“Jimmy didn’t look too pleased, but he struggled into his clothes. He was an awful long time dressin’, but we got him out at last. It wasn’t two minutes walk to the beach, but Jimmy said he thought we’d best go a mile or so along the road where nobody could see us.

“‘That’s right,’ sez Nobby, admiringly; ‘we’ll go up by the fort; there’s a rare current there for pullin’ a chap under—can you swim he sez, anxious.

“‘Yes, a bit,’ sez he, a bit sulky.

“‘Then,’ sez Nobby, ‘we’d better tie your hands.’

“‘You’ll do nothin’ of the sort!’ snarled Jimmy.

“He was mighty hard to please was Jimmy. First one place wouldn’t suit because there was no rocks, an’ another place wouldn’t do because it was too near the sewer. Then he wanted a bit of beach near where there was some grass an’ flowers.

"'So,' he sez, 'when they find me body it will be reclinin' just as though I was asleep amidst the simple flowers.'

"'You get on with the suicide,' sez Nobby, very short, 'leave me an' Smithy to make you ornamental.'

"He was a terrible time before he decided, then he chose a place, an' started takin' his coat off.

"'What's that for?' sez Nobby.

"'I don't want to get my clothes wet, do I?' snaps Jimmy.

"'Of course not,' sez Nobby, brightenin' up. 'That's very thoughtful of you, Jimmy—I suppose me an' Smithy can have our pick, can't we? I'd like your jacket, if you don't mind.'

"But Jimmy was slowly peelin'.

"'It's a far, far better thing that I do—or am goin' to do—perhaps, than I have ever done before,' he sez.

"'Hurry up,' sez Nobby.

"'Here lies one who fought an' failed,' sez Jimmy, takin' off his weskit. 'One cut off in the prime of his strength, so to speak. A bit of wreckage—human wreckage—driven by a coldhearted world——'

"'Get your trousis off,' sez Nobby.

"'I say this,' sez Jimmy, standin' on the beach in his shirt an' shiverin'. 'I say this, that it would be a brighter, happier universe if love and kindness was shown to the unfortunate——'

"'Good-bye, old feller,' sez Nobby. 'It's all for the best.'

"Jimmy walked towards the water, an' a little wave struck his feet an' he nipped back.

"'My word! it's cold,' he sez, with his teeth chatterin'. 'An' they call this sunny Africa!'

"'Go on—don't lose heart,' urged Nobby. 'Them trousis are mine, Smithy,' he hissed; 'an' keep your hand out of the pockets.'

"'Farewell, life,' sez Jimmy, 'farewell, Army; farewell, "B" Company: farewell——'

"'Say etcetra,' sez Nobby.

"'Farewell, Captain Umfreville; farewell, Sergeant-Major Towns; farewell, Colour-Sergeant——'

"'Look here, Jimmy,' sez Nobby, very angry, 'you don't expect me an' Smithy to sit here whilst you call the roll, do you?'

"'It's a far, far better thing that I no now,' sez Jimmy.

"'Do it!' sez Nobby. 'Don't talk about it. Be a man.'

"Jimmy looked at him an' looked at the water.

"'I will,' he sez. 'I will be a man. Give me them trousis.'

"'What for?' sez Nobby.

"'Is it manly?' sez Jimmy. 'Is it manly to seek a watery grave? Is it manly to slink out of the world an' me for duty to-morrer? Is it manly to give everybody a lot of trouble? No! Give me them trousis.'

"Nobby was struck all of a heap.

"'What!' he sez, very fierce. 'Do you mean to say that you ain't goin' to do it?'

"'No,' sez Jimmy, very firm. 'It's cowardly. It come over me like a flash when I was lookin' at the water. Somethin' seemed to say to me——'

"'Look here,' sez Nobby, very earnest. 'Me an' Smithy specially got up to give you a hand, didn't we?'

"'You did,' sez Jimmy, 'for which I'm much obliged.'

"'Never mind about that,' sez Nobby. 'You thought it all over, and considered this was the best thing you could do, didn't you?'

"'Yes,' sez Jimmy, 'In me excitement I thought—'

"'Never mind about your excitement,' sez Nobby; 'but you lured us down here to see fair play an' assist, didn't you?'

"'I did,' sez Jimmy, shiverin' in his shirt.

"'Very well,' sez Nobby, grabbin' him by the scruff of his neck. 'Very well, then, me an' Smithy are goin' to assist you.'

"'Leggo,' sez Jimmy.

"'Not so,' sez Nobby, holdin' him tight. 'I'm not goin' to see a chap spoil a good mind. Catch hold of his legs, Smithy.'

"'Help! Murder!' yells Jimmy, strugglin' hard.

"'It's a far, far better thing,' sez Nobby, 'that me an' Smithy are doin' now than we have ever done before. In with him!'

"It's a very easy beach. You can wade out for a dozen yards without wettin' your knees. But Jimmy got wet because he fell on his back. You might have heard his yell ten miles away as he jumped up an' made for the beach.

"'No, you don't,' sez Nobby. 'Think of yourself lyin' as if asleep amongst,' he sez 'the buttercups an' daisies an' pig lilies.'

"So we chucked him in again.

“He yelled blue murder this time, but he might have saved himself the trouble.

“‘Nobody can hear you,’ sez Nobby. ‘Farewell, Jimmy; Farewell, Stevens; farewell, Buddhist; farewell, Wesleyan ; farewell, follow-the-band; farewell, passive resister——’

“Jimmy made a dart, an’ Nobby jumped to catch him, an’ missed him, an’ Jimmy scuttled along the beach in his shirt as hard as he could lick.

“‘Stop!’ shouts Nobby. Then ‘Pick up them clothes, Smithy,’ he sez. An’ we grabbed Jimmy’s kit an’ pelted after him.

“He got on to the main road an’ run like mad me an’ Nobby follerin’.

“Through the little bit of town an’ up the hill to the main guard he run, an’ bimeby we could see the sentry an’ the sergeant of the guard comin’ out.

“‘Stop that man!’ shouts Nobby. ‘He's an escaped suicide! ’

“No,” reflected Smithy, “solderin’ wouldn’t be very comfortable if chaps was allowed to go in for all kinds of fancy religions every time their livers got a bit out of order. Fellers that think too much about their souls generally don’t think enough about their bodies ; an’ I’ve known a No. 9 pill turn a rank Atheist into a Presbyterian —I’ve known a good kicking to have the same effect. Jimmy Stevens has forgiven Nobby now.

“‘Nobby,’ he sez, one day, ‘havin’ a charitable ’art, I believe you when you say that my kit dropped into the sea and was lost. I believe it, although every time I see Smithy wearing my braces, an’ you with my trousis on, it makes me homesick. But you pointed out the right way. A Baptist I am, an’ a Baptist I’ll remain, he sez.”

## III. — THE ROTTEN AFFAIR

MY knowledge of India being limited to all that can be acquired in a brief visit to Bombay, I must perforce take my description of Nurpore from Smithy. According to that veracious chronicler, Nurpore is as picturesque as the floor of a baker's oven—and as hot.

Many years ago, when the regiment was stationed in this out-of-the-way corner of India, strange rumours filtered through to the Pall Mall clubs regarding the "unsatisfactory condition" of the battalion—a vague enough stricture, but one which suggested the gravest possibilities. If a good churchman learnt that the Archbishop of Brighton kept a "separate establishment," or a bank director was informed that his head cashier had lost £20,000 on the St. Leger, the combined agony of their feelings is as nothing to the shame and sorrow that come to men who love their army, when the news is abroad that such and such a regiment is "unsatisfactory." For it may imply anything from slackness to mutiny, from uncleanliness to cowardice.

The "unsatisfactory condition" of the Anchesters had filled me with dismay, and I had sought far and wide for the inner truth of the rumour, going so far as to beard in his den at the War Office, the suave, hand¬some gentleman, who administers the internal affairs of the Army. From him I received soothing and comforting assurances. Outside, in Pall Mall, a thought struck me—had not the Anchesters a new colonel?

I crossed to my club, and, looking up the back files of the Gazette, I discovered the entry:

'Anchester Regiment. To be second in command, Major Fallock-Ruttin, from the 33rd (Duke of Straburg's Own) Dragoon Guards, April 14th.'

Pursuing my investigations to a later date I learnt that "Lieut.-Col. Samson, C.B., of the 1st Anchester Regiment, had been granted leave of absence for six months," and putting the two notices together, I drew my own conclusions. I knew the 33rd Dragoon Guards. So does everybody else in the army. Frankly and briefly, it is a rabble. An undisciplined, uncleanly, untrust-worthy, and altogether an undesirable collection of larrikins. It is a tradition that the regiment has always been so; and most ignobly does it live up to its tradition. So that its rank and file are the scourings of the streets, and its officers the groundlings of Sandhurst.

Now as to Major Fallock-Ruttin. "When he came to us," said Smithy, who only recently gave me the full story, "we didn't grouse because we thought he must be such a decent feller that he couldn't stick the 33rd any longer. I think, now, that he must have been a bit too thick, even for them!

“We was at Nurpore when he came. It wasn’t much of a station for a soldier an’ there was little or nothin’ to do except a guard or so, an’ a day-break parade every mornin’.

“His comin’ didn’t make much difference for a bit. You see he wasn’t used to a foot-sloggin’ crush like ours an’ he was a bit astray, an’ then, of course, our colonel is one of them chaps that don’t stand any interference from seconds-in-command. So we got along all right till the colonel went on leave. The old man’s train was hardly out of the station before his nibs started in to reorganise the regiment.

“He had us on parade the next mornin’ and gave us an hour’s battalion drill, and when it was all over, he formed us into a hollow square, an’ addressed a few unfriendly remarks to us.

“I can see him sittin’ on his horse now. He was a strong- built chap with one of them sulky faces that gets into the illustrated papers occasionally. He had a heavy, black moustache an’ straight, black eyebrows that ran from one side of his face to the other without stoppin’ at his nose, an’ when he spoke it was like a peacock singin’ the ‘dead march.’

“‘What I have to tell you, men, is this,’ he sez, ‘your drill is as bad as it can be; you’ve no more idea of smartness than my horse has of playing draughts; the regiment wants waking up—there will be another parade at sunset.’

“We was flabbergasted at him.

“‘I like that feller’s nerve,’ sez Nobby, as we was goin’ back to the bungalow, ‘why, he ain’t got the smell of the 33rd stables out of him before he comes bargin’ about the decentest regiment he’s ever been in. I wonder what our officers think about it?’

“Accordin’ to Fatty Wilkes, who’s Umfreville’s servant, what the officers said couldn’t be repeated in respectable society. But this here Major Rotten wasn’t upset by what anybody thought. He was out to make trouble an’ he made it. Two parades a day, all kinds of foolish fatigues, lectures in the hot afternoons, an’ kit inspection as often as was disagreeable. And that wasn’t the worst of it. He took it into his head that the non¬commissioned officers was screenin’ the men, and he prowled about lookin’ for crime. Dozens of chaps was run in for little things that ain’t worth talkin’ about. He broke two sergeants an’ a corporal by forcin’ ’em to answer back to him an’ then tryin’ ’em by court martial. He gave us a lecture—‘ B ’ Company—one day on tactics. He asked questions, an’ was particularly down on poor old Spud Murphy. After he’d fairly mixed up Spud with questions about field strategy, he sez:

“‘What is the function of Dragoons?’

"'Beg pardon, sir?' sez poor Spud.

"'Don't you understand English!' he roars. 'What are Dragoons for?' he sez.

"'God knows,' sez Spud, very earnest. He got ten days for that.

"He ran in Nobby for not salutin' properly.

"'The slovenly way you men behave would disgrace a militia regiment,' he sez. 'You want smartenin' up. I'd like to transfer you to the 33rd for a month.'

"'If it's all the same to you I'd rather go to prison, sir,' sez Nobby.

"'You're an impertinent scoundrel,' shouts Major Rotten, 'an' you'll go to cells for seven days!'

"'Thank you, sir,' sez Nobby.

"'An' another three days for your damned cheek,' sez the Major.

"When Nobby came out of cells he didn't say much about Rotten.

"'His ways ain't our ways,' he sez, quite philosophic, which wasn't like Nobby at all.

"The colonel hadn't been on leave three months before the regiment was as nice a little hell upon earth as you could wish. Full of chaps wishin' they was dead, an' you couldn't talk to a corporal or a sergeant without gettin' your head snapped off.

"There was a sergeant by the name of Biron, a good-natured, soft kind of chap, who had only recently joined us from the 2nd Battalion. He'd been married about a year an' brought his wife out with him. When Major Rotten inspected the married quarters, Sergeant Biron was the only N.C.O. that didn't get nasty remarks thrown at him. In fact, the Major was quite polite to Mrs. Biron.

"She wasn't what you'd call popular in the regiment. Too fond of complainin' about the life, an' talkin' about the good home she left, an' how she wished she hadn't. She was pretty in a slim, white kind of way. I only spoke to her once, before Major Rotten came. Me an' Nobby was on duty at a gymkhana. To be exact, we was servin' drinks in the sergeants' tent, an' she complained about the claret cup.

"'It tastes like vinegar,' she sez.

"'Very likely,' sez Nobby, 'that's what claret's supposed to taste like.'

"'Not the claret I'm used to,' she sez, 'but I suppose you don't know the difference between good an' bad?'

"'No, m'am,' sez Nobby, 'I always make my claret cup out of beer.'

“I didn’t see her again till the sergeant was ordered down to Poona for a course of signallin’, an’ then I was sent up to the married quarters to get his kit. We had a bit of a talk. ‘I suppose you’re sorry to be left behind,’ I sez.

“She laughed a bit careless.

“‘I can’t say that I am,’ she sez, ‘I shall be rid of Biron for a bit.’

“It’s not nice to hear a woman talk like that, so I changed the subject.

“‘I wish I had a chance of gettin’ away from this hole,’ I sez, ‘an’ that kind, Christian Major of ours.’

“She flushed up in a minute.

“‘It seems to me,’ she sez, hotly, ‘you don’t know a good officer when you see him. Major Ruttin has a very good heart.’

“‘Perhaps he has,’ I sez, ‘an’ I only hope I’m present at his post-mortem to see for meself.’

“Well, Sergeant Biron went, an’ his wife got haughtier an’ haughtier.

“Nobby was the only chap who took any interest in her, an’ I had to speak to him about it.

“‘You keep away from the married quarters,’ I sez, ‘or you’ll find someone there who’ll give you a bit of trouble.’

“‘That’s all right,’ he sez, ‘I saw someone there last night who’s given me all the trouble I want.’

“We hadn’t much time to notice Mrs. Biron, however, for we was too much took up with our own troubles. The C.O. went from bad to worse, and things came to a head one mornin’ on parade. He used to march us out on to the plain so as we should have to march back in the sun, an’ he’d kept us there that mornin’ marchin’ an’ doublin’ till the sun was well up an’ then he fell us into a hollow square to have his usual palaver. Somethin’ had happened to put him out. One of the officers had answered him short, so he was all for takin’ it out of us.

“He slanged us for ten minutes by the clock an’ finished up with tellin’ us we was street-corner loafers who had joined the army because it was easier than goin’ into the workhouse.

“‘You’re lazy,’ he shouts, ‘you’ve been havin’ too easy a time, no one has ever got the better of me yet, and I’ll teach you to be soldiers if I have to break every one of you.’

“He stopped short an’ you could have heard a pin drop—when a voice from the rear files of ‘B’ Company said quite distinct, ‘What about Mrs. Biron?’

“‘Who was it?’ he gasped, mad with temper, ‘who was the blackguard?’

“But nobody answered.

"'If I find the man—' screamed the Major, when the adjutant came trottin' over.
"He rode straight to where Nobby stood.
"'Fall out, Private Clark,' he sez, quietly, 'it was you who spoke.'
"Nobby stepped forward and a couple of chaps fell in on each side.
"'Was it you, you dog?' sez Rotten.
"'Yes,' sez Nobby.
"Quick as a flash the officer's hand came up, but it was Umfreville who got the blow for he sprang between them.
"'You must not do that, sir,' he said, breath in' hard, 'this man has no right to speak in the ranks— he has already lodged a complaint.'
"Complaint,' roared the Major, 'what the devil do you mean?'
"'He has reported certain occurrences to me—I needn't go into the matter here. He considered it was his duty to a comrade—to Sergeant Biron.'
"I saw the Major stagger. He pulled himself together with an effort.
"'March the men back to barracks,' he sez.
"As we turned into the gates of the cantonment I saw three strange officers standin' by the guard-room. One was very tall, with a face burnt brick red an' curious light blue eyes.
"'That's Kitchener,' whispered somebody. 'Look at him scowlin'!'
"We swung into column on the parade an' 'K' walked round the ranks as silent as the grave, the Major explainin' things in a flustered way.
"Bimeby, 'K' spoke, an' we chaps in the front company could hear every word.
"'How long have you had this command, Major?' he sez.
"'Three months, sir,' sez Rotten.
"'K ' nods his head thoughtful.
"'An' a damned fine mess you've made of it,' he sez.
"They didn't try Nobby by court martial an' they didn't try Rotten by court martial. Nobby got seven days' C.B. for talkin' in the ranks, an' a sort of inquiry was held over the Major.
"One mornin' the Major didn't turn up at parade, an' in general orders that night it read:

**RETIREMENT**

'Anchester Regiment: Major Fallock-Ruttin, from June 17th; the King having no further use for his services.'

## IV. — THE BACHELORS' CLUB

SMITHY'S foreign service covers India, South Africa, and the Far East. It also embraces the Western circuit. You must know that there is a sort of Military-Cook's-Tour, that begins pleasantly at Bermuda, continues luxuriously to Halifax, N.S., goes on to Jamaica and the islands about, and ends unsatisfactorily in South Africa. Unsatisfactory because in South Africa it sometimes takes a new lease of life, and wanders from the Cape to Natal, then to Mauritius, and from there to Colombo, Singapore, Hong Kong, and so home. In the days of which Smithy speaks there used to be a regular itinerary for the corps that missed India. Smithy does not count Gibraltar as foreign service; he has his doubts about Malta, and Egypt is only "foreign" in the hot months.

"Crete's a rum place, an' so is Aden, Suez is—well, everybody knows what Suez is; Singapore ain't so bad. One of our chaps, under the influence of drink, drowned a Chinaman in a water-butt an' got fourteen days' cells for pollutin' the water supply. Hong Kong's foggy, and Barbadoes is too full of land-crabs to be pleasant. Bermuda's too much like home an' Colombo's too much like abroad. South Africa ain't so bad, but Natal's hot. There isn't what you'd call an ideal foreign station, because where beer's cheap there ain't other things, and where other things can be picked up for next to nothin' beer's a tanner a pint. It's what Wattsey calls 'the infernal lore of contemplation.'

"When you hear a chap ravin' about a station, what a splendid place it is; what magnificent walks you can get, an' how the climate makes you skip like a goat, you can bet a pair of socks to a tin hat he's got a girl somewhere round the corner. It's wonderful what effect a girl has on the climate. There was a chap of ours—Burkey his name was—wot got married to a chee-chee girl in Mauritius. As white as you an' me, she was, an' whiter, but her grandpa's dial must have been in mournin'. He married her an' left the regiment an' went to live in some out-of-the-way corner of the island, near Curepipe it was. Three weeks before the regiment left they brought him into Port Louis on a stretcher. He was dosed with fever an' as thin as a cigarette paper. I went to see him in hospital. He was nearly gone an' was ravin', but he recognised me.

"'Splendid climate, Smithy,' he sez, very weak. Then he added, 'Grow any kind of vegetables. The sunsets are simply wonderful, an' she's been a good wife to me.'

"I went to his funeral.

"Nobby Clark was very sarcastic comin' back.

"'Bein' in love,' he sez bitterly, 'blinds a chap so that he can't tell a pertater-barrer from the Cafe Royal. An' it upsets his taste an' his smell an' his sense generally. Drink's bad enough, but not so bad as love. Love don't make a chap want to fight, it only makes him want to lie down in a quiet place an' snivel. It's worse than that pipeshop orf the Queen's Road, where you lay down an' smoke dope till you see the New Cut fried fish shops an' other lovely visions. It's worse——'

"'Close your face, Private Clark,' sez the sergeant, who was marchin' alongside, an' Nobby took the hint.

"Soon after this we went to Wynberg, an' that's where Nobby started his Bachelors' Club.

"We were in the canteen one night, a lot of us chaps— Spud Murphy, Little Green, Tiny White, Pug Wilson, and the rest of 'em, an' Spud was talkin' about the standoffishness of girls at the Cape.

"'There's a girl,' sez Spud, 'that lives on the main road. Her father's a carpenter. Him an' me got friendly owin' to our havin' both come from the same part of England—no, it ain't Whitechapel, Nobby—and asked me down to his house to tea.'

"Nobby sniffed.

"'Asked me down to his house to tea,' sez Spud, with relish, 'an' there was the girl.'

"'She didn't see you comin', perhaps?' sez Nobby.

"'There was the girl,' sez Spud, very impassive, 'a-sittin' down at the table with a nice white dress on, an' a gold belt, an' one of them wide, feathery hats, an' kid gloves all up to the nines.'

"'What about her boots?' sez Nobby.

"'I sez to her,' sez Spud, takin' no notice. 'I sez, ' Good evenin', miss; hope you're quite well.'"

"'As it leaves us all at present,' sez Nobby.

"'I hope you're quite well, miss,' I sez.

"'Very well, thank you, how are you?' she sez.

"'Oh,' I sez, 'I'm so-so—'

"'She could see that,' sez Nobby.

"'So I sez, "What a lovely evenin' for a walk!"'

"'Yes,' she sez, 'but it looks a bit threatenin'.'

"'She was referrin' to you,' sez Nobby, impatient.

“Don’t keep us all night, Spud, monopolisin’ the conversation about what ‘she sez’ an’ what ‘I sez’—other people want to talk. Did she go out with you?”

“‘No, she didn’t!’ sez Spud, sulky, ‘she don’t walk out with soldiers.’

“‘There’s soldiers an’ there’s soldiers,’ sez Nobby, ‘but you can be sure of one thing, Spud. She ain’t in love with you. If she was she’d walk out with you.’

“‘Any fool knows that,’ sez Spud.

“‘Because,’ sez Nobby, ‘love is as blind as a bat under chloroform, an’ she’d have to be very blind, in addition to being naturally silly, before she took on a lop-sided woman-hater like you.’

“‘I ain’t a woman-hater!’ sez Spud, very indignant.

“‘Yes, you are,’ sez Nobby, calmly. ‘All chaps that girls won’t walk out with are woman-haters.’

“There was something about this girl, Laura Haste was her name, that sort of fascinated our battalion. Her father got to be the most popular civilian in the camp owin’ to chaps wantin’ to be pleasant an’ friendly an’ be asked home to tea. She was as nice as nice could be, too, used to listen an’ say “Ah, yes!” an’ “Oh, no!” to all they had to say, an’ laugh an’ joke, but when the feller sez, ‘What a beautiful evenin’ for a walk,’ she used to get up an’ say, ‘Well, I won’t detain you, Mr. So-and-So,’ an’ that’s where hislittle plan came unglued.

“Me an’ Nobby kept a list of the chaps who went to the house to tea. Sergeant Mandy of ‘H’ went, Corporal Toms of ‘G,’ Yatesy went, an’ so did ‘Click’ Morris, an’ dozens of other chaps I could name. Me and Nobby used to sit on a gate near the house every Sunday night an’ watch ’em comin’ away. When they came up to us, Nobby used to say quite innocent, ‘Fine evenin’ for a walk, sergeant,’ or ‘corporal,’ as the case might be, and the chap would scowl and say somethin’ about goin’ to rain.

“An’ the rum thing about it was, as Nobby pointed out, that it didn’t matter what the weather was, wet or fine, blowin’ a south-easter, or so bloomin’ hot that walkin’ was a horrible an’ upsettin’ business, these chaps who went to tea all thought the same thing—that it was just the weather for a little walk, which proves that Nobby wasn’t a man of umgumption.

“It was after there were a dozen or so fellers wanderin’ about barracks lookin’ as if they didn’t care whether it snowed, that Nobby got his idea for a Bachelors’ Club. Everybody who wanted to remain a bachelor was invited to join an’ pay a penny a week.

“‘Wot’s that for?’ sez Spud, highly suspicious.

"'Well, it's like this,' sez Nobby, slowly. 'I've noticed that a lot of young chaps have been hangin' round Miss Haste, tryin' to kid her to go for a walk——'

"'Not me,' sez Spud, very loud. 'I went there to oblige her father.'

"'I went down to see the old man, too,' sez Fatty Wilkes, an' all the others took their oath that they'dnever asked the girl to go out with 'em.

"'As a matter of fact,' sez Spud, carelessly, 'I hardly noticed the girl—what's she like?'

"'It ain't so much a question of what she's like,' sez Nobby, very careful, 'as what she likes; an I'm thinkin',' sez Nobby, 'that maybe one of these days she'll take a sudden fancy for one of you chaps, an' then the pennies we put by will make a sort of sweepstake for the lucky feller.'

"Nobby's got a terrible oily tongue, an' the way he persuaded them chaps to part with their pennies was worth goin' a long way to see. Nobby called it a Bachelors' Club, but, as a matter of fact, it was a sort of lucky dip, an' the chap that got the girl got the prize.

"I wouldn't come into it at first, because I didn't think it was playin' the game with the girl, an' I told Nobby so, but he said it was a sort of tournament where a lot of gallant knights in armour chopped each other's heads off just to show they loved some young lady sittin' in the pit stalls.

"'It's chivalry, that's what it is!' sez Nobby, enthusiastic; 'an' it simply makes me thrill to see Sir Fatty de Green an' Sir Tiny de White go ridin' forth to capture the lovely Laura de Haste.'

"'What about you?' I sez.

"'Me?' sez Nobby, sadly. 'I'm too old for that sort of thing, Smithy; I'm a hermit in a manner of speakin'. It cheers my old heart to collect——'

"'You're collectin' their money, ain't you?' I sez.

"'That's what I was goin' to say,' sez Nobby. So I joined the club for Nobby's benefit.

"The Bachelors' Club was a big success from the start. Fellers who hadn't tried their luck joined it because they thought there wasn't a girl on earth that could say 'no' when they said 'Let's go for a walk.' An' chaps who had tried and didn't get any further forward, they came in to try their luck again.

"Miss Laura Haste got to hear all about it. Some girls would have taken offence even after Nobby had explained she was doin' the Oueen of Beauty act; but Miss Laura Haste wasn't that sort of a girl. It took a lot of worship to upset her.

"'I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Clark,' she sez, 'for tellin' me, an' I think your friends are very silly—don't you?' an' she gave him the goo-goo eye.

"'I do,' sez Nobby, very serious, an' that seemed to annoy her. (We was down one Thursday afternoon lookin' at the old man's pigeons.)

"'I'm glad you think so, Mr. Clark,' she sez, sweetly. 'I can't imagine you being so silly,' she sez.

"'I can,' sez Nobby, an' she brightened up.

"'I got sunstroke in India,' sez Nobby, very solemn, 'an' sometimes I'm not quite all there.'

"She tossed up her head an' said, hadn't we better be goin' into the garden to see the Blue Rocks an' Dead Homers.

"She had another cut at Nobby before we left.

"'Father,' she sez, 'why don't you ask Mr. Smith an' Mr. Clark to come to tea next Sunday?' So the old man did.

"'Thanks,' sez Nobby, 'I don't mind if I do—so long as I can get away at six o'clock.'

"'You're always in such a hurry to get away, Mr. Clark,' she sez, very tart.

"Nobby didn't speak for a minute; he was standin' thinkin'. Bimeby, he sez, 'It's a nice evenin' for—'

"She jumped in eagerly.

"'I'm sorry——' she started.

"'For this time of the year,' sez Nobby, very solemn.

"From the look she gave Nobby, I gathered she was vexed.

"Some of the fellers saw us comin' out of the house an' one of them started chippin' us.

"'Hullo, Nobby,' sez one, 'this ain't Sunday.'

"'No,' sez Nobby, 'we've been havin' a sort of matinay,' he sez.

"I had a talk with old man Haste in the week.

"'Ain't you gettin' tired of the military display in your house?' I sez.

"He shook his head.

"'It'd be the same thing if I was,' he sez, very gloomy; 'she's her mother all over again—you didn't know her mother, did you?'

"He shook his head again, an' started sighin'.

"'My daughter's a very nice girl,' he sez, in a melancholy tone of voice, 'and I shall miss her when she's married; but,' he sez, 'if I miss her too much I'll move up near the barracks, where I can hear people shoutin' words of command from mornin' till night.'

“Nobby got hisself up very spruce for Sunday; borrered a tunic from one chap an’ nice squarpushir* boots from another, white gloves from Bill Mason, who borrered ’em from a young lady friend; an’ we started off.

* A Graeco-Indian (?) word for “captivating.”

“She said she was very glad to see us, an’ pretended she’d forgotten we was comin’, an’ we had a pleasant afternoon.

“When she was pourin’ out the tea, she sez to Nobby, ‘I’ve been hearing all sorts of things about you, Mr. Clark.’

“‘Oh!’ sez Nobby, very polite.

“‘I’ve heard you’re a great lady’s man,’ she sez, with a knowin’ smile.

“‘First time I’ve heard about it,’ sez Nobby, very interested. ‘Tell us some more.’

“‘They say you’ve been engaged twice,’ she sez.

“‘That’s right,’ sez Nobby, ‘once by a doctor, an’ once on a Pickford’s van: I used to take round the medicine for the doctor, an’ got chucked out for leavin’ the corn plaster at the house of a lady with the toothache.’

“‘I mean engaged to girls,’ she sez, huffily.

“Nobby shook his head.

“‘The only girl I was ever engaged to,’ he sez, ‘was a girl in a piece called ‘The Soldier’s Vengeance,’ that we played at Aldershot on behalf of the Soldiers’ Home. Little Tyke Allison was the girl, an’ looked it, but got a little too much to drink on the night of the play, an’ when I was a-rescuin’ her from a watery grave (the ship havin’ been wrecked), she stood upon one of the waves an’ wanted to fight me for the price of two drinks. It took six chaps to get her off the stage, an’ then we had to clout her with the moon (which happened to be lyin’ about),’ he sez.

“Up went her head.

“‘Iv’e been misinformed,’ she sez, very cold.

“‘You have,’ sez Nobby. ‘Anybody who knows me will tell you that I can’t stand girls at any price. I’d sooner walk from here to Simonstown on my lonely than I’d step across to the other side of the street with a feminine.’

“‘I think you’re very rude,’ she sez.

“‘I know I am,’ sez Nobby; ‘it’s me only pro¬tection.’

“All through tea time she was lookin’ at him curiously. When the meal was over, she sez, musin’ly:

“‘What a lovely evenin’.’

"'Is it, miss?' sez Nobby, lookin' out of the winder.

"'Just the evenin' for——' she sez, an' stopped.

"'For what, miss?' sez Nobby, innocently.

"'Nothin'!' she snaps.

"Goin' home that night Nobby was as pleased with hisself as a cat with two tails.

"'That prize money's as good as mine, Smithy,' he sez. 'We'll call down at the house on Wednesday an' I'll walk her up to hear the band.'

"On Monday night he came round to see me—'B' Company were in two separate bungalows at Wynberg.

"'Smithy,' he sez, 'I've been countin' up the subscriptions, an' the fellers think I ought to hand it over to somebody who's quite impartial,' he sez.

"'Is that what they said?'

"'They ain't the exact words,' sez Nobby, carelessly 'They said somethin' about wantin' to be sure they got the money when it was due—anyhow, I don't mind.'

"He told me he'd handed the funds—seven and twopence—over to old Drum-Corporal Browne. 'It don't matter much who has 'em for the present,' he sez. 'It's as good as in my pocket. Let this be a lesson to you. Smithy,' he sez, 'never run after gels. Treat 'em proper an' they'll run after you.' I didn't see him the next night because I was busy, but on Wednesday he called for me, an' we made our way down town. He was in a light-hearted mood an' kept givin' me good advice, which is the only thing Nobby ever gives away—except hisself occasionally.

"'Haughtiness pays in the long run,' he sez. 'So does standoffishness; nobody never wants anythin' till it's impossible to get. That's why dead people are always such good chaps, an' everybody wishes they were alive again.'

"When we got to the house, there was the girl waitin' as if she expected us; an' I could see Nobby simply swellin' with pride at hisself.

"We talked about the weather for a bit, and then Nobby asked after the pigeons, an' when we'd been speakin' for half an hour without saying anything particular she turns suddenly on Nobby.

"'Doesn't the band play to-night?' she sez.

"'I believe it does,' sez Nobby.

"'I should like to hear the band play,' she sez, thoughtfully.

“‘Would you?’ sez Nobby.

“‘I should,’ she sez, ‘if there was anybody to take me.’

“‘What a pity there ain’t,’ sez Nobby.

“She sighed.

“‘Of course,’ she sez, ‘if I asked somebody to take me they couldn’t very well refuse, could they?’

“‘Not very well,’ sez Nobby—an’ I could see that inside of him he was dancing for joy—‘could they, Smithy?’

“‘No,’ I sez.

“She thought a bit.

“‘Isn’t there a ridiculous prize for the first soldier who is seen walkin’ with me?’ she sez, with that saucy toss of her head.

“‘There is,’ sez Nobby, quite overjoyed.

“She thought a bit more.

“‘Well,’ she sez, slowly, ‘will you take me up to hear the band?’

“‘Certainly, Miss!’ sez Nobby, smilin’ all over his face.

“There was a pause.

“‘I wasn’t talking to you,’ she sez, icily; ‘I was talking to Mr. Smith—will you, Mr. Smith?’

“‘Yes,’ I sez, like a shot.

“‘I like you,’ she sez, dreamily. ‘You don’t talk so much as your friend Nosey.’

“‘Nobby!’ sez Nobby, very fierce.

“‘An’ you’re so much smarter,’ she sez, nicely.

“‘Will you wait till I get my hat on?’”

## V. — WHY "FEATHERWEIGHT JACKSON" ENLISTED

IF you complain that I serve for your amusement no other army fare than the extremes of tragedy and broad farce, and if you demand, pathetically, querulously, curiously, or idly: Is there no humdrum via media between laughter and tears in everyday barrack life? I answer: Very possibly there is. For there are washing days and spring-cleaning days, when the appalling odour of military soap-suds and regimental fresh paint per-meates the social atmosphere, and life becomes a tedious and insupportable burden. Days of pipeclaying and scrubbing, coal-carrying and whitewashing; preparations for G.O.C.'s inspection, when men grow crochetty and short of speech, when the canteen is a wilderness smelling of sawdust, and the "library" a desert redolent with the aroma of last night's coffee. Days of dreadful busy¬ness, when the soldier complains bitterly that he is earning his shilling.

Yet (if you will forgive the platitude) there is a silver lining to every cloud, and I have known a gloomy battalion all spick and span, belted, strapped, immaculately blancoed and polished, geometrically trussed in its Slade-Wallace equipment, ready for the bugle to sound the "fall in" for C.O.'s inspection, to be suddenly transformed into an ecstatically joyful, almost hysterical band of happy schoolboys.

Picture the scene. The helmeted men putting the last touches on their toilette—a dab of pipeclay here, a rub of the rag there; then:

"It's rainin'!" says a voice. A hush falls on the room. Men crowd to the windows. Down comes the rain, a steady, persistent drizzle.

No man dares to voice his hope, the gloom continues that the gods may be propitiated, for a too premature demonstration of joy might arrest the downpour.

Three minutes to parade time—two minutes—a minute, then, from the barrack square, a staccato bugle call, to which some imaginative soul has put suitable words:

'There's no parade to-day!There's no parade to-day!

The colonel has the stomach-ache—the adjutant's away'

A cheerful yell from every room—you can hear the faint cheering from the furthermost barrack quarters.

What though they have spent days and, perhaps, weeks preparing for this particular function? What though all their labours, their whitening, their blackening, their brushing, polishing, boning, rolling, and strapping, have been to no purpose? What though their efforts have gone for naught? This is their compensation: that somebody has been fooled. Somebody in a cocked hat, with a cross-hilted sword, who expected to see them on parade, in

marching order, has been foiled, and last, but by no means least, Mr. Atkins has got out of doing something that he ought to have done!

"You understand as well as I do," said Smithy, "that soldiers hate workin' at their job, they hate soldierin', they hate goin' on guard an' lookin' nice an' pretty. There was a feller once—was it you?—who wrote a lot of stuff about the ideal uniform for a soldier, but he went wide of the mark, because the ideal uniform would be a green an' blue-striped jersey, an' ole pair of kharki trousis, a pair of pink carpet slippers, an' a golf cap. An' if that was the uniform, he'd probably think the green an' blue jersey was a bit too quiet an' go in for something more tasty. If you ask me, the kit some fellers get into when they're slack prevents the army ever gettin' humdrum. There's a chap by the name of Miggs, in 'H,' who brought down a girl's motor-cap, bein' under the impression that it was the newest thing in civilian hats, an' another chap in the same company, who wore suspenders to keep his socks up till his colour sergeant found him out and ran him before the old man for bein' in possession of civilian clothin'. The greatest dandy we ever had in ours, an' the biggest surprise packet was a chap who joined us at 'Gib.' His name was Jackson—Walter Jackson, which is a rotten name because there's no possibilities in it, except Wally.

"From his roof to his basement he was the neatest, dapperest, squarpushir you could hope to meet. All his clothes was specially altered to fit him like a glove. Used to wear socks with little fir-trees runnin' up each side, silk shirts, ball-bearin' braces, an'——(Smithy's details as to underwear need not be enumerated).

"Nobby used to sit on his cot quite fascinated whilst Wally was gettin' hisself up.

"'You oughter been a girl, Wally,' he sez.

"'Think so?' sez Wally, partin' his hair with a little silver-mounted brush.

"'I do,' sez Nobby, 'except,' he sez, thoughtful, 'that your dial ain't all it might be.'

"'It's the best I've got,' sez Wally, cheerful.

"'Have you tried pummice stone?' sez Nobby.

"Wally laughed. He was a good-natured sort of chap.

"'Or parin' bits off,' sez Nobby.

"Wally looked at Nobby.

"'Judgin' by results,' he sez, lookin' at Nobby's face very critical, 'I ain't encouraged to try the experiment.'

"'I want none of your insultin' remarks,' sez Nobby, very severe.

“Wally was sprayin’ some scent over hisself—he was a perfect gentleman in his way, was Wally.

“‘If any of you chaps would like a pint,’ he sez, in his lordly style, ‘I’ll be down on the Waterport, at —.’

“Don’t trouble to tell us where,’ sez Nobby, ‘we’ll be able to smell you.’ If a feller keeps hisself nice an’ clean an’ tries to make hisself look smart, he’s bound to make more enemies than if he stole other chaps’ kits. It’s human nature. Therefore you can bet there were dozens of men layin’ for Wally. They used to call him Hikey, and the Duke of Westminster, an’ all sorts of insultin’ names, but he took it all good-natured.

“One night, in the canteen, Spud Murphy started gassin’ about Wally.

“‘He’s a disgrace to the regiment, that’s what he is.’

“He spoke so mysterious that we knew he’d got some yarn to spin.

“‘I could tell you somethin’ about him that’d make your bloomin’ hair stand up an’ beg,’ he sez.

“We waited patiently for Spud to go on, but he kept winkin’ and noddin’.

“‘Switch yourself off,’ sez Nobby, ‘If you’re waitin’ for us to give you free drinks for information received you’ve gone past the house—try back.’

“After a lot of hummin’ an’ hawin’ Spud told us.

“Some friend of his—a chap in the Marines—had seen Wally with a girl in a nice lonely part of the Europa-road.

“‘She’s a lady, too,’ sez Spud, very triumphant, a pukka Spanish lady, mantilla, fan an’ everythin’, an’ the way they was lookin’ at each other was too terrible for words.’

“‘Like how?’ sez Nobby.

“‘Like this,’ sez Spud, lookin’ languishin’.

“‘Ah, I see,’ sez Nobby, ‘drunk.’

“‘No, not drunk,’ sez Spud, ‘but just like this,’ an’ he gave another imitation.

“‘If they looked like that,’ sez Nobby, ‘you can bet pore old Wally had been eatin’ crab-apples—what’s the scandal part?’

“This was what Spud had been waitin’ for.

“‘She’s married,’ he sez.

“‘How do you know?’ asks Nobby.

“Then it came out that Spud had seen her one day when he was on guard at Government House an’ she was the Senora Maria Castiano de Piaz.

"'Her husband's a little chap, in the shipping line', sez Spud.

"Afterwards me and Nobby had a talk about it.

"'It's no business of mine or yours,' he sez, 'the only real hard part about it is, that Wally ain't you or me.'

"Nobby's very broad-minded as I've always said, 'it's easy enough to shut up Spud—but if these scorpions* get talkin' there'll be trouble for Wally.'

* "Rock Scorpion" is the popular nickname of the excellent civilian citizens of Gibraltar.

"It's curious how things happen," moralised Smithy, "I once met a chap named Oggley. I'd never met anybody by the name of Oggley before, but before the day was over I'd met two other chaps named Oggley, an' neither of 'em was related. It's what they call the 'odd chance.' The next day was Sunday, an' me an' Nobby went for a walk to Europa Point. When we was crossin' the Alameda, Spud Murphy came up.

"'Hullo,' he sez, 'walkin'?'

"'No,' sez Nobby, 'we're ridin' on the top of an omnibus.'

"'I asked a civil question,' sez Spud, 'are you walkin'?'

"'To be exact,' sez Nobby, very polite, 'at the present moment, we're lyin' down in bed—tell the slavey to call us in time for tea.'

"'Well, I'll walk along with you,' sez Spud.

"'I don't mind,' sez Nobby, 'if we meet anybody we know, we'll pretend you're sellin' matches.'

"'Don't you want me?' sez Spud.

"'I'd sooner take the dog for a run,' sez Nobby, 'but if you're anxious to be seen in respectable society, you can come along.'

"Spud started straight away to talk about Wally, an' 'his carryin' on.'

"'I can't think,' he sez, 'what a lady can see in that feller.'

"'You wouldn't,' sez Nobby.

"'He ain't good lookin',' sez Spud.

"'Except about the face,' sez Nobby.

"'He does things that I wouldn't do,' sez Spud.

"'Washes hisself twice a day, for one thing,' sez Nobby, 'changes his shirt, an' never gets drunk—yes, you're right.'

"Spud was goin' to say something rude but we suddenly turned a corner of the road, an' he stopped dead, an' grabbed my arm.

"'There they are!' he gasps.

"And sure enough there they was strollin' ahead of us, arm in arm, my bold Wally an' a girl.

"They heard our footsteps an' Wally dropped her arm quick, and they both looked round.

"There was no doubt about it—she was pretty, with a fair complexion, like you see in lots of the Southern Spaniards, an' eyes that laughed all the time.

"They stood still to let us pass an' Wally just nodded. There's something about Nobby that's very fine at times. He didn't stare at her, but just as he was passin' he lifted up his hand to the salute, an sez, 'Buenos días, señora.'

"She smiled, not a bit put out, and said, 'Buenos días, señor.' Then, with a twinkle in her eyes, she sez, 'Habla usted español, senor?'

"'Una poquito,'sez Nobby, very modest.

"We only checked our walk, because Nobby was afraid she'd find out he didn't know much about the language.

"'Adiós,' he sez, an' we went on.

"You see Nobby, like all the other chaps at 'Gib.' knew enough Spanish to say 'Good day,' and when anybody asked him, 'Do you speak Spanish?' to answer, 'A little.'

"'If she'd gone any further I'd have been stumped,' he sez. We'd forgotten all about Spud, but he was absolutely twitterin' with excitement.

"'Did you see that?' he sez, jumpin' with joy. 'What did I tell you? Did you catch what she sez when we went away?'

"'Walter, mio,' she sez, 'why——'

"'Spud,' sez Nobby, very stern, 'my advice to you is never interfere between man an' wife.'

"'She ain't married to him!' sez Spud.

"'I didn't say she was,' sez Nobby. 'I said man an' wife—an' he's the man!'

"If Spud had took that bit of advice it might have saved trouble. I've never understood why it was that he disliked Wally so much. Perhaps it was because—but it's no use guessing. It's pretty certain that Spud was one of the people who was down on Wally. It came to a head one night in the barrack room, when Wally happened to come in just as we was gettin' ready for next day's parade. Everybody was busy and messy with pipeclay an' cleanin' rags, an' Wally, who looked as if he'd just come out of a glass case

that had previously been used for holdin' otter of roses, was a bit out of place.

"It was unfortunate that the subject we was discussin' just as Wally came in was a bit Mike Hogan had seen in a Sunday newspaper how strict Spanish women are looked after by their husbands.

"'Ho!' sez Spud, very loud, as Wally came in, 'a fat lot that chap on the newspaper knows.'

"'What about?' sez Wally, quite innocent.

"'About Spanish women,' sez Spud. 'I know a thing or two,' he sez. Nobby was polishin' his buttons. He put his coat down an' walked over to Spud.

"'Dry up,' he sez, quiet.

"'What for?' sez Spud.

"'To save that funny face of yourn,' sez Nobby.

"'What's the game?' sez Wally, lookin' very puzzled.

"'Nothin',' sez Nobby, 'hop it—you.'

"As Wally was walkin' out the temptation was too strong for Spud.

"'How's Maria?' he sez, an' Wally whipped round.

"He came straight back to Spud.

"'What did you say?' he asks.

"'How's Maria?' sez Spud, bold as brass.

"'Meanin',' sez Wally, very careful, 'the Donna Maria de Piaz?'

"'That's her,' sez Spud.

"'She's very well,' sez Wally, calmly. 'How are you?'

"Spud grinned.

"'I'm all right,' he sez.

"'That's a lie!' sez Wally.

"Smack!

"Nobody saw Wally's arm move, but Spud was on the floor. It was a treat to see Wally strip. Took off his white gloves an' folded 'em. Unbuckled his belt, an' laid it on Nobby's bed, undid his tunic, took it off, folded it inside out, an' put that on the table—blowin' the dust off the table. Slipped off his ball-bearin' braces an' rolled back his silk sleeves.

"Spud got up by this time, lookin' dazed.

"'If you'll take of your boots, Spud,' sez Wally, very anxious, 'I'd be obliged, because I don't want mine scratched.'

"'What do you think you're goin' to do?' sez Spud.

"'I think I'm goin' to give you a lot of trouble,' sez Wally.

"'You're not big enough for me,' sez Spud. 'I can't fight a little chap like you.'

"'Don't worry,' sez Wally, 'you'll be feelin' small enough this time ten minutes.'

"It's no use my tryin' to describe the scrap," said Smithy. "You might say that Spud got up an' was knocked down about twenty times, an' at last he decided that the best thing to do was to stay down.

"'Had enough?' sez Wally.

"'Thank you,' sez Spud, who ain't a bad feller at heart, 'I've had two or three helpin's too much.'

"Wally nodded an' started dressin' again just as careful as possible. When he'd finished he said:

"'Make yourself as free as you like with me—I like it. Only keep other people's names out of your mouth, Mister Spud.'

"Spud was still dreamin' when Wally left. He sat on the edge of his bed sayin' nothing, but thinkin' hard. Bimeby, he said in a wonderin' sort of way:

"'He belted me an' down I went; I got up, an' he belted me again. I tried to get home on his jaw, an' got about half-way when the floor came up an' hit me. The question is,' sez Spud, musin', 'Have I lost my dash?'

"He got up slowly and went out of the room. He was gone ten minutes, an' when he came back his other eye was black, but he was very cheerful.

"'I've been to see Bill Hackett,' he sez. 'I whipped Bill with one hand, in a manner of speakin'; pushed him all over the room, an' nearly knocked his head orf, so I can't have lost me dash.' He thought a bit an' shook his head. 'And Wally's only about nine stone.' He shook his head again. 'It's supernatural, that's what it is.'

"A fortnight after that we had our cricket match against the R.A., an' everybody turned up to see it.

" Nobby an' me was discussin' the fieldin' of Fatty Green, and was saying what a pity Jessop couldn't see him, or George Robey, or some other chap who likes to see comic things, when Nobby stopped short an' sez:

"'Well, I'm blowed!'

“An’ well he might be, for who should come into the field but Wally, an’ walkin’ with him was the Spanish lady.

“They strode along as though they didn’t know that everybody was lookin’ at ’em, an’ sayin’ the same as Nobby.

“Wally spotted me, an’ walked the girl toward us.

“‘Hullo, Smithy,’ he sez, as cool as a meat store; ‘how’s things?’ Before I could get my voice he beckoned to someone, an’ I looked round to find it was Spud Murphy.

“‘This is Spud Murphy, a pal of mine,’ he sez to the girl in English, an’ she gave Spud a smile that’d make a bloomin’ aloe flower all the year round.

“‘I have been talking to Walter,’ she sez, an’ she spoke English as well as I could. ‘I’ve been telling him he ought to let you know.’

“‘I’m sure, ma’am,’ sez poor Spud, lookin’ very uncomfortable, ‘that I’m very sorry I’ve made any remarks that’s given offence——’

“She laughed.

“‘You're the only sufferer, Mr. Murphy,’ she sez,, ‘and I'm very angry with Walter, but I want to tell you a story.’

“‘I’m sure, ma’am, we all believe——’ sez Spud.

“‘Years ago,’ she sez, ‘I was left an orphan—oh, yes, I'm English—with only a brother a few years older to look after me. He was a good boy and a brave boy, for he worked hard when he was only a little chap to feed and clothe me. When he was seventeen he began to earn a lot of money, because a gentleman had seen him boxing at a gymnasium and “took him up.” It wasn’t very long before his name was in all the papers as a champion light-weight. When I was eighteen I met Senor de Piaz, my husband. He proposed to me, and I accepted him, for he is a charming gentleman—isn’t he, Walter?’

“Wally nodded.

“‘When I told Walter, he said, “You’re going to be a lady now, Ria, and I’m not going to disgrace you by remaining a professional boxer. I’ll go into a business where fighting means glory.” So he enlisted—didn’t you, Walter?’

“Wally nodded.

“‘I tried to persuade him, but he was determined, and so to keep his sister——’

“Spud started forward an’ looked very earnest at Wally.

“‘You ain’t “Featherweight Jackson,” are you?’ he sez.

“‘That’s me,’ sez Wally, with a grin.

“Spud drew a long breath.

“‘It appears,’ he sez, thoughtfully, ‘that when I took you on I was entertainin’ an angel unawares, in a manner of speakin’.’”

## VI. — NOBBY'S LOVE STORY

SOME there are who collect china and faded prints and grow ridiculously enthusiastic over aged soup tureens and improper pictures. Some collect postage stamps—an ignoble pursuit. One man I know has an unrivalled collection of writs and judgment summonses in one room, and a rainbow variety of bookmakers' tickets in another. He calls one room Cause and the other Effect. From the material standpoint my own collection of curios is insignificant: a war drum from Bolengi, spears from the Upper Congo, an execution knife from the N'Gombi country, a Spanish sword or two, a dozen Kaffir sticks, and an ornamental dressing-gown jellab from Fez; these comprise what Smithy would call my "parcel."

But, in the secret places of my heart, I have a collection which I am jealous of sharing, a collection of army memories, of marches, of canteen conversations, of sun-scorched battlefields, where bullets pattered like hail, and good men went out into the dark Beyond, knowing little of what had struck them, and caring less. In this hidden store-place there are pictures more precious than Titian ever drew or Rubens painted; gorgeous colourings than Paul Veronese lifted from palette to canvas for the joy of the eye. Rosy flushes of sunlight on virgin snows, evening skies of primrose and claret red, plains of purple darkness cut across by twisting silver ribbons of water.

Smithy set the train of thought running by his reference to South Africa, and more especially to Johannesburg. I had met the regiment in the golden city, but a war correspondent, harassed by a thousand and one Press regulations, and with the responsibility of "covering" the whole of the Transvaal, had little time to interest himself in the domestic problems of the 1st Anchesters. Least of all did I know the circumstances attending Nobby Clark's love affair. That a man on active service should have either sufficient leisure or opportunity for love-making is, on the face of it, extra¬ordinary enough; but the South African War was a peculiar one.

"You'd be marchin' in the wilderness one day, in a manner of speakin'," said Smithy, "with Boers snipin' at you from every randlje, an' cowguns comin' into action every half-hour. The next day you'd be in Johannesburg takin' afternoon tea at a cafe an' wonderin' whether you was dreamin' or not."

"The day after we fought De Wet outside Bloem¬fontein me an' Nobby went to the theatre an' saw 'Sweet Lavender.' But being stationed at Johannesburg was the queerest, because there was fightin' goin' on all round the town up to the very last, an' it was always a toss up when you woke up in the mornin' whether you was goin' to the races or sudden death.

“Two companies of ours was up at the Fort; an’ ‘B’ was one of ’em, so we were practically in the heart of the town, an’ anythin’ that was goin’ in the way of amusement used to come our way.

“There wasn’t much at first, because the theatrical companies couldn’t get passes to come up, an’ local talent wasn’t the earth, but there was quite enough English people in the town to make things lively. We was one of the first regiments to reach the city. The streets were practically deserted, all the shops were barricaded, an’ most of the houses empty.

“‘A,’ ‘B,’ ‘D,’ an’ ‘H’ companies were told off for police duty. So many chaps were quartered in each district, an’ our section was sent to a place called Parktown, which is on the outskirts of the city.

“The adjutant paraded us.

“‘You’ve got your orders,’ he sez. ‘You are to stop lootin’ an’ any kind of violence, an’ you mustn’t hesitate to shoot any man dead, Briton or Boer, who breaks the law.’ There was a sort of country lane, with a dozen or so houses at intervals, an’ that’s where me an’ Nobby was sent. It was a quiet sort of a job, for the houses was empty as far as we could see, an’ after we’d walked up an’ down three or four times, me an’ Nobby sat down underneath a tree to yarn.

“‘I’ve often wanted to be a policeman,’ sez Nobby; ‘it’s a nice, lazy kind of life. What a pity,’ he sez, regretful, ‘that Spud Murphy or some bad character don’t come along and give us a chance of pinchin’ him.’

“He was silent for a bit, then he sez:

“‘Did I ever tell you about my cousin wot’s in the Manchester Police?’

“I’d heard about most of Nobby’s relations, but not about any of ’em who was in the police. In fact, most of his family seemed to be quite the contrary.

“‘Well,’ sez Nobby, settin’ hisself down comfortable, “my cousin was——’

“‘Soldier.’

“It was such a nice, quiet, soft voice that I don’t think Nobby heard.

“‘… he was what I’d call a…’

“‘Soldier.’

“I looked up.

“We were sittin’ under an hedge, an’ behind that was the garden of one of these deserted houses.

“‘Who’s that?’ I sez, an’ jumped up.

“I saw the greenery of the bushes move as if they was bein’ pulled aside, an’ then I saw a girl’s face.

“I don’t go out of my way very often to gas about pretty girls, but this one was beautiful. She was pale, an’ had big, sorrerful eyes like you sees in pictures—especially the pictures in the churches of Malta. That’s what mostly struck me—her eyes, grey an’ big an’ solemn.

“‘I’m afraid! Oh, I’m afraid’! she sez, an’ there was no doubt about it—she spoke ther truth.

“‘What’s the matter, miss?’ sez Nobby. He was starin’ at her as if she was a ghost.

“The girl looked over her shoulder an’ shuddered.

“‘My mother is ill in the house,’ she said, falterin’ like, ‘an’ there’s a man—he’s—he’s the doctor,’ an’ she shuddered again.

“Then we heard a voice callin’, a nice, smooth, fat voice: ‘Miss Vanhys—where are you?’

“Nobby was always a chap for an emergency.

“‘Look here, miss,’ he sez, quick, ‘don’t you be afraid of any bloom—I mean blessed feller; we shall be here, off an’ on, for a week, an’ when we ain’t here a pal of mine—well, not exactly a pal, but a chap named Spud Murphy’ll be hereabouts. Have you got a whistle?’

“She nodded.

“‘Well, you blow it if you want military assistance. See?’

“‘Wherever have you got to, Miss Vanhys,’ sez the voice on the other side of the hedge, an’ the girl disappeared.

“We stood listenin’.

“‘Why do you run away from me, eh, child?’ it sez. ‘I was distracted——’ an’ then we couldn’t hear any more. That night, when Tubby Wilkinson an’ Spud Murphy came to relieve us, Nobby took Spud aside an’ told him.

“‘All right,’ sez Spud.

“‘I know,’ sez Nobby, kindly, ‘that you ain’t to be trusted with money, an’ all that, an’ you’re a flat-footed rooster generally, but you’ll keep your eye on that house.’

“‘I might,’ sez Spud, careless.

“‘You will, dear comrade,’ sez Nobby. ‘If you don’t I’ll come along in the mornin’ an’ beat your thick head orf.’

“‘Able’s a good word,’ sez Spud, quite calm.

“Next mornin’ he said nothin’ had happened. We prowled about for half a day tryin’ to get a glimpse of the girl, but it was no go.

“We’d found out something about her from an old chap who was left in charge of one of the houses higher up. Her mother was an Englishwoman, who had married a Hollander gentleman. He’d lorst most of his money in a gold mine—well, it wasn’t exactly a gold mine, but he thought it was. Then he went an’ died. We was talkin’ about it, or, at least, I was. Nobby seemed to get silent all of a sudden.

“I was tellin’ him what a bad sign it was when a feller with his nacheral gift of conversation dried up, when I heard a fairt sound; Nobby heard it too.

“‘It’s the whistle,’ he sez, between his teeth, an’ was over the edge in one jump. I followed him.

“There was a broad lawn an’ flower beds an’ a narrer path that led to the house.

“We raced up to the door. It was shut. As we were tryin’ it the whistle went again, an’ Nobby put his shoulder to the door an’ I put mine.

“‘Heave!’ sez Nobby, an’ in went the door with a crash. Upstairs we flew. We could hear her cryin’ out.

“‘It’s the room at the end of the passage!’ shouts Nobby, an’ we made for it. As we reached it, it was flung open an’ a man came out.

“He was a tall chap, with a thick, black moustache an’ heavy eyebrows.

“‘What d’ye want?’ he snarls, an’ the girl darted under his arm an’ came flyin’ out of the room.

“‘Save me!’ she gasps, an’ fell all of a heap at Nobby’s feet.

“The man made a leap, but Nobby’s fist caught him under the jaw an’ he went down like a log. It took us some time to pacify her. She was all broken up with terror….

“It wasn’t a nice tale, an’ him a doctor an’ all, even though he was only a Polish chap who got his American degree for tuppence-ha’penny. He was the only doctor they could get at the time who’d come out an’ stay with the mother….

“We had to guess half the story, an’ it didn’t want much guessin’….

“The curious thing was she sort of clung to Nobby as though she’d known him for years, an’ he was as gentle an’ sweet with her as if she was a little child, pattin’ her hand an’ talkin’ softly. I can see her now, she was only a little thing, with her white face against his soiled old khaki jacket, an’ his big, raw hands smoothin’ her hair.

“The doctor feller had got up, but he didn’t try to escape. In his agitation he sort of dropped into broken English.

“‘This voomans she’s a spy,’ he sez, ‘her brother he fights wit’ Delarey’s commando.’

“I didn’t say anything.

“‘She von Boer—yes,’ he sez, ‘a dam Boer, vat you tink?’

“‘It don’t matter to me,’ I sez, steady, ‘if she was the wors’ kind of spy, an’ if her brother was De Wet—you’ve got to come outside.’

“I pointed the way, an’ he walked ahead.

As I turned to go down the stairs, I looked back for a second. Nobby had one of the girl’s little hands in his an’ was kissin’ it as if it had been the hand of a queen.

“The relief piquet came at six o’clock, an’ I reported:

“This man attempted to commit a crime at the house with the sunblinds. I arrested him an’ he tried to escape, so I shot him.’

“You see I was the oldest soldier, an’ in a manner of speakin’ responsible, so I didn’t say anything about the duel with rifles him an’ Nobby had fought—me standin’ by to see fair play, an’ the girl cryin’ at the bedside of her dead mother.

“The next day when we went on duty there was a little Dutch boy waitin’ with a note for Nobby.

Dearest friend,—I have left to join my brother, now that my dear mother has gone, there is no one in the world to care for me. Some day I shall meet you again. God bless you.

“Nobby was cut up in his silent way. He said nothin,’ starin’ at the house, an’ hardly spoke the whole of the day. He cut a little twig off the bush where he had seen her first, an’ put it inside his coat.

“Two days afterwards we was relieved by the Derby’s an’ went down the line to Krugersdorf. There wasn’t much time for sentimental worry because old man Delarey was bein’ as lively as a flea, an’ if you ask me my opinion, I’d say that De Wet was a cabhorse compared with Delarey, for the old man had a knack of hittin’ at two places at once without seemin’ly bein’ at either.

“We took a convoy down towards Klerksdorp, an’ got cut up, lost half of ‘H’ Company an’ more than we could spare of ‘ B.’ Then we joined Methuen an’ had two months’ fightin’ on end. All the time we—me and Nobby—was trying to get news of the girl. When we got prisoners we used to ask ’em if she had come to their commando, but they all said, ‘No.’ Delarey didn’t allow women

with him like the other generals, an' if they came he sent 'em back. Which proves that the old man was a better soldier than most of 'em.

"Then we struck a bad streak, fightin' an' snipin' from mornin' till night, and from night till mornin'.

"There was a little commando under a chap called Joubert that hung on to us, an' punished us. We could never get at him. He caught the Wigshire Yeomanry an' wiped 'em out, he came down on to the railway an' smashed up the Taunboro' Militia, an' we spent all our time nippin' round tryin' to catch him.

"We'd nearly given it up when he gave himself away. I suppose he'd been a bit too successful and got careless. We found him on a kopje, an' he had plenty of time to get away, but he must have gone a bit daft, for he sat down tight an' waited for us.

"We did nothin' for half a day, but our heliographs was winkin,' an' the telegraph wires a-hummin,' an' down came Morant's Column, guns, horses, an' men by special train an' forced march, an' before Mr. Joubert knew what was happenin', we was round him. Then the fun began.

"The guns opened at 3,000 yards an' under cover of a horse battery the Anchesters went up the kopje at a run. They fought game, but we was sick of marchin,' an' in ten minutes it was white-flag- an'-hands-up. It was dusk when we started in to collect the dead an' wounded. Nobby an' me went round with a lantern. 'Here's one,' sez Nobby, an' we pulled out an old Boer with a long white beard, who was shot through the mouth. There we found a boy, quite a young chap, lyin' in his face.

"'Poor kid,' sez Nobby, an' felt his hand. It was warm. Nobby turned him over gently.

"'He ain't dead,' he sez, 'show a light, Smithy.'

"I showed the light.... then I took it away for decency sake, for Nobby was lyin' flat on the ground sobbin' like a child....

"We got her down to the field hospital—she looked so tiny in her boy's clothes—an' the doctor made an inspection.

"'She'll live,' he sez, cheerful, an' she opened her eyes an' seein' Nobby smiled.

"He had his arms round her all the time, holdin' her so that the doctor could make his examination, an' she turned her face an' laid her cheek against his for a minute....

"Her brother got her away to the coast. It appears she'd joined the commando on the day before we surrounded Joubert.

“After the doctor had said she would live me an’ Nobby went back to our work. Nobby was all shook up, but he stuck to his job.

“Toward midnight, when a light rain was fallin,’ we heard a groan, an’ found Spud Murphy between two rocks with a bullet through his leg.

“We put down our lanterns an’ got him out. When we’d laid him on the stretcher he sez to Nobby in a wonderin’ way:

“‘Nobby, you blighter, how did you manage to get me out without hurtin’ me?’

“Nobby shook his head.

“‘It takes a lot to hurt a chump like you,’ he sez, gruffly.

“‘It ain’t that,’ sez Spud, ‘someone’s been teachin’ you to be gentle,” he sez.

“And that’s the truth.

“Someday or other she an’ Nobby will meet again, please God.”

## VII. — THE CHUCAJEE PLATE

THERE was once a man, wiser, saner, and more erudite than myself (said Edgar Wallace, modestly), who remarked that the morality of an action depended upon the motive of the actor. I put forward this dogma to all and sundry who take exception to the lapses of Private Clark and to the indecorous, reprehensible, and altogether undisguised admiration and approval of his friend, Private Smith. The justification of both lies in the morality of intention. The good St. Augustine asks: Why do you blush to confess what you did not at all blush to commit? Smithy blushes neither at the confession nor at the commission. The exact measure of his sin raises, therefore, a nice ethical point.

Speaking as a man of the world, and one, moreover, who has for many years been supporting a number of eminent bookmakers, it seems to me that the affair of the Chucajee Plate was as flagrant a "ramp" as ever I have read about or seen, and I know what a "ramp" is, for I was at Hurst Park when—but no matter.

"It was when we were up in the Punjab," said Smithy, in telling the story, "We'd been havin' a nice, easy time, with nothin' to do but count the days when we'd be goin' home. One day there came an order to move—an' we moved, d——quick. We weren't bein' attacked by hillsmen, an' there wasn't any wars, nor any riots. But at a camp twenty miles away, where the Wigshires lay, there was a colour-sergeant named Button who was late for parade. To be exact, he didn't turn up at the daybreak parade at all, so the sergeant-major sent for him, an' found him just before he died. Before night two other fellers was buried, an' as cholera moves faster than sound—when so inclined—our old man shifted us. We marched to a place called Chucajee, a little village on the plains. We got there in two days, an' sat down waitin' for the cholera to pass.

"As camps go, it wasn't a bad place; plenty of sweet water an' enough greenery to keep you from thinkin' you was the Children of Israel wanderin' in the wilderness.

"The officers got together an' arranged a programme of amusements to keep the young recruits from thinkin' about death, an' lots of chaps you'd never have suspected found out they could sing.

"'Cholera-dodgin's bad enough,' sez Nobby, very despairin', 'but the concert "A" Company is goin' to give nex' Saturday, in a manner o' speakin', makes you realise there's worse things than cholera.'

"We had gymkhanas an' cricket matches, an' bun fights an' sports till every bloomin' day was like a holiday on Blackheath.

“Then Tubby Mainland gave out that he was the catch-as-you- like-but-no-biting champion of Chucajee, an’ issued a challenge to Hackenschmidt, Madrali, or Pybosco to wrestle ’em for the championship of the world an’ ten rupees aside.

“In the unavoidable absence of Hackenschmidt, Nobby Clark took him on, an’ shook the rupees out of him in three minutes. Tubby said it was only a lark, but Nobby said that there’s no lark when money’s mentioned, an’ if he didn’t weigh out the ten he’d put a Bobby Bums rib hook on him. Nobby took four rupees, three annas, an’ a pair of old trousis, an’ settled with him for that.

“At that time me an’ Nobby an’ a lot of other celebrated people in ‘B’ Company was goin’ through our M.I.* course, so we had more to occupy our time than the other chaps. My horse was called ‘63’ in the books, but me an’ Nobby named him ‘Alfred’ after a cousin of Nobby’s, who had the same kind of long, solemn nose.

* Mounted Infantry.

“ Nobby’s horse was the pick of the squadron. I think he’d been in a circus, because he used to sit up on ’is hind legs an’ beg like a bloomin’ dog. Nobby called him a new name every day, except one day when this here horse bit him playfully in the leg, an’ then Nobby found a new name for him every minute. But the name that Nobby mostly stuck to was ‘Pie Dog,’ an’ the way that horse understood Nobby was simply wonderful.

“Used to foller Nobby about like a child—an’ would have caught him too, only Nobby was a bit nippy on his feet.

“I remember one morning, after Nobby had hit ‘Pie Dog’ on the nose with a broom handle to show him who was master, that affectionate horse followed Nobby for half a mile; in fact, from the stables to the nearest fence, wot Nobby climbed up. There wasn’t any stables in Chucajee, an’ Nobby used to tie up ‘Pie Dog’ to the biggest tree; he said you never know when a tree’s likely to be struck by lightnin’, an’ he’d like ‘Pie Dog’ to have the first chance.

“It was when the sports was gettin’ a bit tame that Nobby had his great idea, an’ went an’ saw the sergeant-major. The S.M. took him up to the Colonel, an’ after the officers had had a bit of a pow-wow it was settled.

“There was goin’ to be a race—a real horse race, with M.I. horses and jockeys, proper an’ regular.

“Any feller could enter his horse for a rupee, an’ the officers made up the stake to fifty rupees.

“‘It’s the “Chucajee Plate,”’ sez Nobby when he explained it, ‘for horses that ought never to have been born, with fifty rupees added. I’m enterin’ “Fiery Dragon”——’

“‘Who’s she?’ I sez.

“‘“Fiery Dragon’s” the Sunday name for “Pie Dog,”’ sez Nobby, calmly; ‘he gets a breedin’ allowance, because he ought to have been born a pig, an’ I expect to win in me famous light blue, purple sleeves, primrose an’ green cap.’

“It was one of the most successful ideas Nobby has ever had, because it wasn’t goin’ to be run for a week, an’ what with the excitement of trainin’ an’ the excite¬ment of handicappin', the sports an’ concerts went away right into the background.

“Nobby wanted to do the handicappin’, because the idea of the race was his, but the sergeant-major only looked very hard at him an’ said: He thought not.

“When the handicap came out there wasn't much difference in the weights, although Nobby said ‘Pie Dog,’ bein’ the worst horse in the lines, oughtn’t to have more than about six ounces to carry.

“As I was sayin’, the excitement was extr’ordinary. There was forty horses in the squadron, an’ there was forty-one entries, owing to Billy Mason enterin’ his horse ‘Julep’ under two names to see wot got the least weight.

“The adjutant struck out a lot of the horses. He struck out Teddy Doyle’s because he was in hospital, an’ Tubby’s, because Tubby tried to pass off a bad rupee for his entrance. What with duty horses an’ horses too fat to run, we got the entry down to twelve.

“We ran a little printin’ press in those days, for printin’ battalion orders an’ such like, an’ the printer got out a full list of probable starters. I’ve still got the list:—

“‘Nobby’ Clark’s ‘Noble Roman.’

“‘Spud’ Murphy’s ‘Beautiful Dewdrop.’

“‘Tiny’ White’s ‘Has Been.’

“Private Smith’s ‘Alfred.’

“Gus Ward’s ‘Sneezing Fairy.’

“‘Ginger’ Brown’s ‘Chilblain.’

“‘Dusty’ Miller’s ‘Gadjet.’

“Yatesey’s ‘Walworth Road.’

"'Jiggy' Jones's 'Promtheus.'

"Alf. Williams's 'Wormwood Scrubbs.'

"'Cadger' Cox's 'Mad Horse.'

"Sid Taylor's 'Spavins.'

"I said there was a week to train in, an' we started next mornin'. I didn't take any trouble with 'Alfred,' because I knew exac'ly where he'd be in the race; but Nobby was very much took up with the chance of 'Pie Dog.'

"'That horse,' sez Nobby, 'has got points about him; points you could hang your hat on. I'm goin' to train him.'

"'What you've got to do when you first start trainin' a horse,' sez Nobby, 'is to feed him properly—Smithy, run down to the canteen tent an' get a bob's worth of Quaker Oats.'

"Nobody could have looked after a racehorse better than Nobby did 'Pie Dog.' Nothing was too good for him. Oatmeal for breakfast and a pint of milk at dinner¬time, an' any little scraps of meat that was lyin' about. I've often seen Nobby walkin' down to the horse lines with a mutton bone wrapped up in the 'Times of India.' Not that 'Pie Dog' was a delicate feeder: anything that happened to come his way was good enough for him. After finishin' his Government ration he used to start eatin' the manger; he once ate a pair of Nobby's braces when Nobby wasn't lookin'.

"'Pie Dog's' as fresh an' as frisky as a two-year-old,' sez Nobby, the second day of the trainin'. 'We'll take him out to-morrer mornin' an' give him a spin.'

"So next mornin' we took him out. Spud Murphy met us on the way. He was ridin' 'Beautiful Dewdrop,' an' he pulled up when he saw us.

"'Where are you goin'?' he sez.

"'We're goin' to have a secret trial,' sez Nobby. "'I'll come along an' see it,' sez Spud. 'Where's the horse?'

"'I'm sittin' on it,' sez Nobby, shortly, an' Spud begged his pardon. 'We don't want no race-course touts hangin' round us,' sez Nobby, 'so the best thing you can do is to hop it whilst you're safe.'

"Spud was very indignant.

"'I'm a Nownor!' he sez, 'an' a trainer,' he sez, 'an' I'm entitled to see all the trials.'

"We couldn't shake him off, so we pretended he wasn't there.

"Bve an' bye:

"'This seems a nice bit of country,' sez Nobby. 'Smithy, you be the starter.'

“So I got an handkerchief an’ tied it on to a stick.

“‘Are you ready?” I sez, wavin’ the flag in front of ‘Pie Dog’s’ nose. ‘One, two——’

“By this time ‘Pie Dog’ was tryin’ to stand on his head.

“Stop wavin’ that flag!’ shouts Nobby, with his arms round ‘Pie Dog’s’ neck. ‘What are you tryin’ to do?’

“‘I’m tryin’ to start you,’ I sez.

“‘You’ve started us all right!’ sez Nobby. ‘Whoa! you one-eyed basket—stop jumpin’, you walkin’ bit of cats’ meat!’

“There was two or three chaps present, an’ they managed to get ‘Pie Dog’ quiet, by holdin’ on to him.

“‘Now,’ sez Nobby, when he was peaceful again, ‘don’t wave the flag—the flag’s been done away with—say “Go”—now.’

“So I sez ‘Go!’ very loud.

“Nobby gave ‘Pie Dog’ a whack, but ‘Pie Dog’ looked round, admirin’ the scenerv.

“‘Go!’ I sez again, an’ Nobby fetched him a clip on the ribs, but ‘Pie Dog’ just sniffed an’ tried to scratch his ear with his hind leg like a real human dog.

“‘What you want,’ sez Spud Murphy, ‘is a ’bus bell an’ a policeman to say “Higherup”!’

“‘What I don't want,’ sez Nobby, very red in the face, ‘is any advice from a low down private soldier. You be careful, young feller, or I’ll have you warned off.’

“Just about then ‘Pie Dog’ warned off Nobby. He sort of doubled hisself up an’ jumped twenty feet in the air, an’ come down again on his hind legs.

“Nobby came down later.

“That night, when we was in the canteen tent, Nobby told me he had another trial in the afternoon when nobody was about.

“‘Are you much hurt?’ sez Spud, very anxious, but Nobby took no notice.

“‘I always said “Pie Dog” was fast,’ he sez, very enthusiastic, ‘an’ the way he galloped was wonderful. He simply flew, that “Pie Dog” did! I’ve never seen anythin’ like it.’

“‘I don’t suppose you have,’ sez Spud, ‘if the truth was told.’

“Nobby’s second secret trial got all over camp, an’ when Yatesey scratched ‘Walworth Road’ an’ started makin’ a book, ‘Pie Dog’ was favourite. There

wasn't another horse backed. Everybody backed 'Pie Dog' or 'Noble Roman,' to give him his fancy name.

"'Have you backed him?' I sez to Nobby.

"'No,' sez Nobby, 'I'm goin' halves with Yatesey.'

"That set me thinkin'.

"'If pore old "Pie Dog" don't happen to win,' sez Nobby, in a thoughtful voice, 'if he can't run as fast as I think he can; if "Sneezing Fairy," or "Wormwood Scrubbs," or any of them thoroughbreds win, Yatesey will have a sharin' out that'll make a co-op. dividend look sick.'

"'You're not goin' to lose on purpose,' I sez, sternly, 'don't tell me, Nobby Clark, that you're goin' to chuck the race away!'

"Nobby looked around to see if anybody was listenin'.

"'Smithy!' he sez, very solemn, 'I give you me word that I'm not goin' to try to lose—"Pie Dog" will do all the tryin' necessary, and,' he sez, 'as a friend, let me advise you to have a few rupees on "Pie Dog," because even if you don't win, you can be pretty sure that the money will do somebody a bit of good.'

"I didn't back 'Pie Dog.' But I was one of the few that didn't—why, even the officers had a bit on!

"If you think it's strange that officers should act the goat, you don't know what officers will do when it comes to a question of keepin' a cholera-scared battalion amused.

"The night before the race Nobby nearly got into clink owin' to his havin' forgotten to bring in a bucket of sand for cleanin' purposes, but the colour-sergeant overlooked it. Me an' Nobby an' a tailor chap named Sinks was sittin' in a tent. We was makin' up Nobby's racin' colours out of an old signallin' flag an' a shirt.

"'Smithy,' sez Nobby, all of a sudden, 'do you know that the whole bloomin' regiment's backed my horse?'

"'Nearly everyone,' I sez.

"'Everyone,' sez Nobby, 'including the other chaps who are ridin' in the race: we've got over two hundred rupees comin' to us if we lose.'

"'What about if you win?' I sez.

"'Don't trouble your fat head about that,' he sez, politely.

"The day of the race was a hot 'un, an' the sports started with a tug of war between 'H' an' 'G' companies. Then there was a sack race, an' an egg an' spoon race. Then came the Chucajee Plate.

“Eight runners weighed out, an’ the Adjutant was clerk of the scales—borrered from the meat store.

“The colours the chaps wore was fine. Spud’s was ‘white with black spots,’ an’ although the ink never washed out of the shirt afterwards he was very proud of hisself. Ginger Brown was yaller, with black sleeves, made out of an old khaki jacket, an’ Alf. Williams was yaller, with broad arrers.

“The course had been marked out over the plain with little flags, an’ Lieutenant Forster, of ‘G,’ was the starter.

“Me an’ Nobby rode down together.

“‘I like your colours, Smithy,’ he sez, admiringly, an I must confess I was rather took with ’em miself. They was made out of an old chair cover that I’d got from the steward of the officers’ mess, an’ was Faded Blue, with Faded Red flowers, with Grease Stains.

“‘Who’s goin’ to win?’ I sez, but Nobby shook his head.

“‘I don’t know,’ he sez, ‘but I can tell you who ain’t.’ We was the last to ride down to the post, an’ all the boys cheered us.

“‘Good ole “Pie Dog!”’ ‘Bravo, Nobby!’ An’ you could hear Yatesey’s voice shoutin’ ‘Here! Two to one “Pie Dog!”’

“The other horses was waitin’ for us at the post.

“‘Come along, you two,’ sez the starter, ‘get in line. Clark, you go in the middle, where we can see you.’ An’ he put Nobby between Spud Murphy an’ Tiny White.

“There was a bit of delay, owin’ to ‘Pie Dog ’ tryin’ to eat ‘Sneezin’ Fairy’s’ tail.

“‘Now then, you fellers,’ sez the starter.

“‘It’s Clark, sir,’ sez Gus Ward, indignant; ‘his horse is bitin’ my horse’s brush.’

“After a while we got into line.

“‘Now, then! ’ shouts the starter, ‘Go!’

“And off we went.

“For some mysterious reason ‘Pie Dog’ started with the rest of ’em.

“‘Here, Spud!’ sez Nobby, turnin’ in his saddle, very fiercely, ‘What cher mean by stickin’ a pin in my horse?’

“‘I’ve backed him,’ sez Spud, very gently.

“We kept together for the first furlong, an’ then Nobby started to pull ‘Pie Dog’ back.

"'What are you doin'?' sez Spud, indignant.

"'I'm judgin' the pace,' sez Nobby.

"'So am I,' sez Spud, an' he gave 'Pie Dog' a whack over the head that sent him nearly six lengths ahead.

"'Don't do it!' sez Nobby, reinin' in, but as soon as he'd got back to the others, Tiny White leant over an' gave 'Pie Dog' a belt on the other side.

"Then suddenly.

"'Stop him!' yells Spud, 'he's tryin' to run out of the course!'

"So Gus Ward headed him off, an' with Gus whackin' 'Pie Dog' on one side, an' Spud stickin' a pin that he'd got fastened to a stick in the other side, an' Alf Williams an' Ginger Brown layin' into 'Pie Dog' with long sticks from behind, Nobby passed the winnin' post first, to the cheers of the excited fellers that backed him.

"I felt very sorry for Nobby and Yatesey. 'Pie Dog' was so warmed up to his work that Nobby couldn't pull him up till he had gone another half mile, an' round a sand hill.

"When Nobby came back the cheers was deafenin'. Everybody was dancin' with joy, except old Yatesey, who looked like a chap who'd been arrested at a funeral. Nobby got off 'Pie Dog' very slowly and careful.

"'Well, Clark,' sez the Adjutant, 'you've won.'

"'Yes, sir,' sez Nobby, followin' the officer to the scales.

"There was a big crowd round the tent door to see Nobby weigh in.

"'Let me see,' sez the Adjutant, "your weight is ten stone, isn't it?"

"'Yes, sir,' sez Nobby.

"He sat on the scales an' the Adjutant looked at the dial.

"'Hullo!' he sez, "what the devil's happened?'

"Nobby's weight was 13 stone 8 pounds!

"'Why, you're over three stone overweight,' sez the Adjutant.

"'Yes, sir!' sez Nobby, calmly, 'ridin' always makes me put on flesh.'

"The Adjutant shook his head.

"'I don't know what monkey tricks you've been up to,' he sez, 'but you've lost the prize.'

"'Don't say that, sir,' sez Nobby, with tears in his eyes.

"'But I do say it,' sez the Adjutant, an' he went to the door of the tent an' shouted, 'Clark's horse is disqualified for carryin' overweight—the prize goes to Private Murphy's "Beautiful Dewdrop"!'

"When Nobby came out of the tent you could have heard a pin drop. The fellers looked at him with their mouths open, too upset to speak.

"We got back to our tent. There was nobody there, an' he stooped down an' unfastened two strings that was tied round his trousers' legs.

"An' then about half a hundredweight of sand came pourin' out into two little heaps.

"'There's a lot of sand behind that sand hill,' he sez, 'an' I remembered the Colour-sergeant wanted some,' he sez."

## VIII. — THE WANDERER

THE influence of trades upon features, of professions upon physiognomy, have from time to time inspired learned articles in the expensive, but incomprehensible reviews. A well-known writer of fiction has based a notable creation upon the esoteric indications of servitude. Thus:—

"That man is a policeman; large feet, heavy tread, sleepy eyes—you know my methods, Watson?" You may not tell the soldier in mufti by any malformation of thumb, stoop of shoulder, or from the fact that he carries a stethoscope in his top hat and has Baker-street mud on his patent shoes. None the less he is unmistak¬able. I can distinguish a soldier by the parting in his hair; whether he be cavalry or infantry by the shape of his moustache; whether a non-commissioned officer or a private by the carriage of his arm. The ex-non¬commissioned carries his right arm a little forward in walking, being conscious of his chevrons.

Mostly you may tell the old soldier by his cleanliness, his gait, and the fact that he is out of work.

The army stamps a man with an indefinable "some¬thing," it implants in him in a surprisingly short space of time a new sense of patriotism, a curious dignity, and unimagined moral qualities.

It takes a weedy youth from the street corners. He is not a pleasant looking youth. He is thin, pale, anemic, smokes cheap cigarettes, wears a choker and has a large sized "boy on his back." He has a smattering of education. For seven years a despairing board school master has been engaged in implanting a medley of the multiplication table and a knowledge of Shakespeare's plays into his unreceptive mind. He can read well enough to study the probable starters and jockeys, and write sufficiently legibly to convey to an opulent book¬maker that he desires to back "Santo Strato 1s. each way, any to come Canonite 1s. to win, all on Yentoi."

Then comes the recruiting sergeant, jocose and sarcastic: What, join the Army? he'd watch it! says our pallid youth. Perhaps, hints the wily recruiter, he hasn't the chest or height or weight? Thus challenged, the boy shuffles one fine morning before an Army doctor, who strips him, taps him, measures him, and makes him hop on one leg, all of which being satisfactorily accomplished, the weed becomes a soldier.

Six months are supposed to elapse, as the play bills say, and our youth reappears one day in his old haunts. But what a change! Such a swaggering, chest-throwing, straight-backed youth! Such a quick stepping, head erect, arm swinging warrior, full of such mysterious phrases as "chance my arm," "chewing the mop," "fed up" and surprisingly conversant with foreign

languages, calling bread “rutee” and water “pawney,” and telling younger brothers to “chuberow” when he desires silence.

In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the recruit falls into the new life as though his childhood had been spent in making preparation for the event; he becomes amenable to discipline, conforms to military custom, and in course of time goes forth to war or foreign service with the blasé air of a man whose whole life has been engaged in warfare and travel.

But one man in a hundred is a misfit. He doesn’t suit the army or the army him. His career is marked by a succession of errors, his defaulter's sheet runs into three editions: punishments and good advice are alike thrown away on him. If by chance he escapes being discharged with ignominy, he pursues his military career serenely superior to all misfortune, a constant worry to his colour-sergeant, a nuisance to his comrades, and a source of anxiety to his commanding officer. He may be a bad character out of sheer devilry or from sheer indifference. Such a man was “Wandering” Monks.

“Old Wanderer wasn’t a bad sort,” explained Smithy. “He seldom drank, never fought, never did a mean, rotten thing like I’ve known other chaps to do. He’d lend his last bob to a pal at a push. But he was what you might call unresponsible for his actions. I don’t know whether that quite hits off Wanderer, because if he wanted to do a thing, there was nothin’ on earth or in the King’s regulations that stopped him.

“I shall never forget the first time I ever heard him buckin’ up against the Army. It was down Aldershot, just about a year before the war. Corporal Smith—Tom Smith, him that’s got a Government billet in Malta—was orderly corporal, an’ came into the barrack room to ‘warn’ the duty men.

“‘You’re for guard on Thursday, Clark,’ he sez. ‘Smith, you’ll be orderly room orderly on Thursday; Monks, you’re for town piquet.’

“‘I’m sorry,’ sez Wanderer, quite calm, ‘but I’ve got another engagement on Thursday.’

“‘You’ll have to postpone it,’ sez Tom, smilin’—he was the best chap in the world was Corporal Smith, a strong built feller, with hair goin’ a little grey, an’ a little moustache.

“‘I can’t,’ sez Wanderer. ‘You’ll have to get some¬body else for piquet on Thursday.’

“Any other corporal would have put Wanderer straight into clink, but Tom just talked to him like a father; showed him what a silly ass he was in quite a nice way. It was the only time I’ve ever known Wanderer to be influenced, an’ perhaps it was because Tom happened to say that if Wanderer didn’t turn up, he might get into trouble.

“Anyhow, Wanderer turned up at the piquet parade all right.

“I want to say about Wanderer that he was a good, clean soldier, an’ I’ve seen him spend hours sittin’ on his bed cot burnishin’ his bayonet, an’ doin’ his straps, but somehow he’d got an idea that one man was as good as another, an’ perhaps better, an’ that nobody in the Army or out of the Army had any right to order anybody else about.

“‘It stands to reason,’ he sez, ‘whether a chap’s a colonel or a colour-sergeant or a bloomin’ drummer boy, he’s only a human bein’ like you an’ me with two legs an’ two eyes.’

“‘You’re talkin’ out of the back of your head,’ sez Nobby. ‘One man’s bound to be better than another. I’m better than you.’

“‘For why?’ sez Wanderer.

“‘Because I could take you by the scruff of your neck, an’ chuck you from here to the married quarters,’ sez Nobby.

“‘That don’t prove anything,’ sez Wanderer, very calm, ‘except that you’re a liar,’ he sez, thoughtfully.

“He got his name of ‘Wanderer’ from his habits. He used to go for long solitary walks. He never knew where he was goin’, but as soon as he got out of barracks he used to turn to the right or left, an’ keep goin’ until he was tired. He was never worried about not getting home. Once he walked from Aldershot to Winchester, an’ slept at Winchester. Next day he walked on towards Bournemouth, but changed his mind—if he ever had a mind—an’ went round to Salisbury. Four days later the military police arrested him outside a pub in Andover, an’ he got ten days for bein’ absent without leave. A month after he went out of barracks an’ the brilliant idea came to him to walk to London. He got as far as Surbiton an’ was collared by the civil police for not bein’ in possession of a pass. He got ten days for that, too.

“One afternoon Corporal Juggy Jones warned him for guard.

“‘When?’ sez Wanderer.

“‘To-morrow,’ sez Juggy, who was a bit of a rotter. ‘Make it Sunday,’ sez Wanderer, ‘I’m goin’ to Frimley to-morrow.’

“‘If you give me any of your lip,’ sez Juggy, ‘I’ll put you in the guard room.’

“‘All right,’ sez Wanderer, ‘put me there.’

“‘I’ll give you one more chance,’ sez Juggy.

“‘I’d sooner go to the guard room than take favours from a feller with a face like yours,’ sez Wanderer.

“He got seven days for that.

“He had plenty of luck, because he didn’t often come to grips with chaps like Juggy, but that didn’t save him from trouble.

“‘I’m a born Wanderer,’ he sez to me one day; ‘it’s in me blood. I like to go walkin’ through country, an’ see the flowers, the hedge roses an’ blue bells, an’ I’d sooner walk on the grass than walk on velvet—it’s nature.’

“‘It’s insanity,’ sez Nobby. ‘Fancy walkin’ anywhere when you can take a ’bus.’

“‘I like to hear the little birds a-singin’,’ sez Wanderer, ‘an’ smell the ’ay in the fields.’

“‘Then take my tip,’ sez Nobby, ‘buy yourself a canary an’ a truss of green meat, it’ll come cheaper in the long run.’

“But Wanderer kept wandering.

“I don’t know what would have happened, only the Boer War broke out an’ we went off to the front, an’ as there’s no chance of a chap strollin’ off for a ten-mile ramble on a troopship, he kept fairly free from crime. But he still managed to wander.

“He wandered down into the stoke hole one day, an’ wandered up to the mast head one dark night; there wasn’t a part of the bloomin’ ship from the captain’s cabin to the refrigerator where he didn’t wander into.

“‘I’ll put you in irons,’ sez the adjutant, very wild, ‘if you don’t stop your infernal wanderin’.’

“Next mornin’ Wanderer was missin’ from parade. We hunted the ship from bow to stern an’ we couldn’t find him. We looked into lockers, an’ under doormats, but still couldn’t find him, an’ a report went round that poor old Wanderer had been walkin’ in his sleep an’ had gone for a short stroll over the side.

“We found him at last. He’d gone for a wander into the engine-room an’ had fallen down a hole amongst some machinery. It’s a wonder he wasn’t smashed to little bits. They had to stop the ship an’ scotch-up the engines before they could get him out.

“‘After this,’ sez the adjutant, ‘there’s only one thing to be done.’

“So they put leg-irons on old Wanderer, an’ a special sentry was told off to keep him from straying. When we got to Cape Town, we were entrained.

“‘Have you got a prison van or a dog box?’ sez the adjutant to the railway chap, ‘because I’ve got a man with unreliable legs.’

“We managed to get him up to the front, an’ as we was marchin’ an’ fightin’ every day, the life suited old Wanderer to a T.

“He had all the walkin’ he wanted, an’ all the variety, too, an’ it wasn’t till we began sittin’ down tight on station duty that he got restive.

“We was stationed at Krugersdorp for two months, holding a line of blockhouses, an’ the life got a bit too monotonous for Wanderer.

“‘I’m gettin’ fed up with this,’ he sez to Nobby. ‘Doin’ nothin’ day after day—why, we might as well be Grenadier Guards,’ he sez.

“‘It suits me,’ sez Nobby.

“‘It don’t suit me,’ sez Wanderer. ‘Look at them Boers,’ he sez, wistful. ‘That’s the sort of life! Free an’ easy; no parades, goin’ about all over the country. They don’t have to shave an’ they don't have to wash— it’s a gentleman’s life.’

“When a chap like Wanderer begins to brood he does it quick. Other fellers I know would brood an’ brood an’ brood for days on end. Wanderer never brooded longer than two seconds, because, by the end of that time, he’s either made up his mind or else something comes along to distract his attention.

“There is a little hotel in Krugersdorp near the kirk an’ there’s a sort of livery stable attached.

“One day the hotel keeper came to see the colonel to collect an account.

“‘What account?’ sez the Colonel in surprise.

“‘For that Cape cart an’ two horses you had yesterday an’ haven’t returned,’ sez the hotel chap.

“‘What!’ sez the Colonel.

“‘For a case of whisky, two tins of biscuits, twenty-tins of potted tongue an’ a jar of jam,’ sez the hotel chap, readin’ from a list, ‘also for six pounds of tobacco an’ two dozen matches.’

“‘But I’ve never ordered ’em,’ sez the Colonel, ‘an’ never had ’em.’

“‘Oh, yes, you have,’ sez the hotel feller, ‘you had ’em yesterday. Your servant came to the hotel an’ took ’em—he drove the cart away himself.’

“‘My servant,’ sez the old man. ‘Why, my servant’s in hospital—what was he like?’

“The hotel man thought a bit.

“‘A chap with an habit of yawnin ’,’ he sez, ‘rather tall an’ thin, an’ stoops a little.’

“‘Monks!’ sez the adjutant, who was standin’ by—for Wanderer had been missin’ since the previous night.

“That afternoon a little Boer boy brought a note to the adjutant. Chummy Briggs, who’s the adjutant’s batman, copied it out when the adjutant was on parade.

‘Dere Sir,

‘This comes hopping to find you quiet well, I have left the army owing to me going to be a Bore. Trusting you are the same, with love to all,

‘Your sincere private,

‘W. Monks.’

“This was one of the most astonishin’ things that has ever happened in the Anchester Regiment. There wasn’t a man, from the Colonel down to Spud Murphy, who wasn’t knocked out of time by what Wanderer had done.

“I heard the adjutant speakin’ to Major Groves.

“‘It’s not treason or treachery—it’s just downright mad folly,’ he sez. ‘I’d give a month’s pay to have met him on the road—I’d have given him the biggest thrashing he ever had and sent him back.’

“When I told some of our chaps this, they didn’t agree.

“‘It’s High Treason an’ desertin’ to the enemy,’ sez Spud Murphy, ‘an’ from what I know of Courts——’

“‘What you know of Courts,’ sez Nobby, ‘especially Courts where you’re fined seven-an’-six or seven days for bein’ drunk an’ disorderly, ain’t worth discussin’; the question is what made old Wanderer go an’ do a silly ass trick like this?’

“We tried all sorts of ways to get him back. The Colonel sent four signallers in various directions, knowin’ that Wanderer was a first- class signaller, an’ they spent hours with the helio an’ lamp, tryin’ to get into communication with him, but it was useless.

“We heard nothing of him for about six weeks. Boer prisoners knew nothing either, an’ it seemed as though Wanderer was just loafin’ through the wilderness with the cart he borrered an’ the whisky an’ jam he’d pinched, enjoyin’ hisself to his heart’s content. Then came one of the big ‘drives,’ when we, with ten other regiments, started clearin’ the country around Krugersdorp. It was hard work. Trekkin’ an’ fightin’, day an’ night. The Boers just spread an’ let us through, then closed up again behind us. It was like fishin’ for whitebait with a torpedo net. The only good it did was to keep the Boers movin’, but as it also kept us movin’ it had, what I might call, disadvantages. And all the time never a word did we get of Wanderer.

“One night the regiment was camped at a place called Brakpan. It was right in the middle of the veldt, with a long range of hills three miles away to our

right front, and another two miles off on our left front. Our job was to prevent the enemy doublin' back through the valley.

"The hills on the left were held by the Kents, an' the hills on the right was supposed to be too difficult for the Boers to try. On the other side of the left hills was Morant and the Australians, so, generally speakin', we had the Boers coopered. We stood to arms most of the night. I was on duty with 'B,' who held a trench in advance of the camp.

"Toward midnight a storm broke on the other side of the left hill. You could see the lightning zig-zagging, an' the thunder, practically speakin', never ceased.

"The adjutant an' two of our officers were up by me. They were lying on the rough trench lookin' ahead through their glasses.

"Nobby was by my side an' suddenly he said:

"'Beg pardon, sir—that was a gun!'

"The adjutant looked round.

"'Thunder, I think,' he sez.

"'It was guns,' sez Nobby; 'there it goes again on the other side of the hill.'

"The adjutant was undecided—an' so was I, for it's hard to tell which is a gun an' which is thunder at a distance. Then:

" omp—oomp—oomp!

"'Guns, by jove!' sez the adjutant, jumpin' up; 'that was a pom-pom.'

"He turned to the signaller.

"'Send a message to the camp,' he sez. 'Morant is in action.'

"But the signaller was starin' into the darkness ahead.

"'What is the matter?' sez the adjutant, sharply.

"'Someone's signallin' ahead, sir,' sez the chap.

"Sure enough, miles away on the hills to the right, a little light was winkin'.

"'What, in the name of fate, is this?' I heard the officer mutter.

"'Callin' Anchester Regiment, sir,' sez the signaler.

"'Answer O.K.,' sez the adjutant, an' then the lamp in front began talkin', an' as it talked the signaller read it:

"'Anchester Regiment.—Kind regards from Wanderer How's this for a penny lamp and a biscuit tin? Boers are moving back on your right, not on your left. There's a road half-way up the mountain. Give my love to Nobby. I am having a fine holiday. I have not joined the Boers—there are too many

bosses. Don't forget the Boers are on your right with two guns. One lot just passed. Give my regards——'

"Then the light went out, an' the adjutant whistled. Have you ever seen a regiment move out of camp at midnight, leavin' its equipment behind? Have you ever seen companies of men hurryin' through darkness without a word?

"Have you ever seen guns dragged by hand over two miles of rough country, so as the horses shouldn't neigh an' give the show away, or harness jingle? Well, if you have, you know what it was like when we took up our new position on the right. Now the curious thing was that nobody thought of doubtin' Wanderer's word. He was a deserter, he'd gone over to the enemy, an' if he'd have been caught he would have been shot,—but we believed him, the Colonel believed him, an' changed his whole scheme, on Wanderer's word.

"At last we was fixed up.

"The storm had passed away. The guns were goin' on our left quite distinct, an' the thunder was only a rumble. Then the moon came out an' we could see the side of the hill quite plainly.

"'Two thousand yards,' sez the gunner captain, an' at two thousand yards our guns opened with common shell. But the Boers were nearer than we thought. A party of horsemen came swervin' down the hill right on to the guns.

"'Steady, Anchesters! Fire steadily—don't get flurried!' You could hear the Colonel's voice clear above the yellin' and chatterin'.

"An' steady we was.

"Three hundred surrendered, an' we buried twenty-seven. The Boer commandant was a gentlemanly feller. When it was all over he sat on a box smokin' a cigar an' chattin' with the officers.

"'Oh, by the way,' he sez, after a bit, 'I'm afraid we rather messed up a poor chap of yours.'

"'Yes?' sez the adjutant, quietly.

"'We found him signallin', an' when we tried to capture him he turned his rifle on to the commando—killed two men before we could stop him—we shot him down, of course.'

"'Of course,' sez the adjutant.

"He turned to the Colonel.

"'That would be Private Monks, sir,' he sez; 'Shall I send a party out to bury him?'

“‘Yes,’ sez the Colonel.

“The adjutant thought a bit.

“‘With military honours, sir?’ he sez.

“‘With military honours, of course,’ sez the Colonel, gravely.”

## IX. — THE FIGHT

THE learned Erasmus, if we accept Udall's transla¬tion literally, created an apothegm to the effect"That same man that runnith awaie, mai again fight an other daie." I state the truth when I affirm that the Anchester Regiment wots little of Erasmus the Beloved, that great scholar, though with this particular apothegm they are familiar enough, and even Smithy, who is no whale at the science of Inductive Logic, pulverised the philosopher's argument in a few well-chosen words.

"It's not worth two penn'oth of gin," he said, "because what's the sense of runnin' away from a fight, if there's another fight waitin' round the corner for you? Might as well get it over at once."

"I've never been in a fight yet, though," confessed Smithy, thoughtfully, "where I didn't want to run—but I've never had the pluck. It takes more courage to bolt than lots of people think. It's much easier to lie down flat on your chest an' imagine what a horrid mess a jagged bit of iron would make, if it hit you fair in the stomach, than it is to get up an' start runnin'. It's easier to go forward than go backward, because it's a slower job an' ever so much more satisfactory. You've got cover, for one thing, which is what you wouldn't have if you was tryin' to beat Walker's record in the direction of Home an' Mother. An' then it's six to four you'll get in amongst the enemy, sooner or later, with the bayonet, an' have a chance of puttin' in some fancy fightin'.

"To most chaps fightin' is easier than runnin'. If it's even money against a feller bein' a John L. Sullivan in warfare, it's a hundred to one against him bein' a champion sprinter, an' Pretty Polly at six stone can't beat a bullet for speed.

"I've only known the runaway game pay once, an' then it didn't really pay, an' that was when Chatty Wilson was challenged by Private Augustus Toms. Gustus was one of those fellers who disgraced hisself by joinin' the Army. In case you didn't know it, or forget it, he used to tell you so every day. Since he left his country-seat in the Brixton-road an' took the shillin', his family disowned him. His Pa was a city merchant, an' his sisters was young ladies at the same shop, an' naturally when Gustus said he wasn't goin' to foller in his father's footsteps an' say, 'What can we do for you to-day, miss—underwear?—Mr. Riggs, forward!' the old man got the needle an' cut Gustus out of his will.

"As Gustus said, it meant a clear loss of twenty pound to him, but he up an' joined the Army.

"If you've got any broodin' to do, Gibraltar's the place to do it. With the exception that it keeps perfectly still an' steady, in the worst kind of

weather, it's a ship an' a prison an' the private ground of a lunatic asylum all combined. There's nothing to do, an' no walks to go. Once you've been out to Europa Point an' climbed up to the Moorish Castle an' loafed round the Alameda Gardens listenin' to the band, you've done Gibraltar, an' there's nothin' else to do but to sit down an' wonder why you wanted to go abroad.

"I'm not sayin' that Gustus was a brooder; as a matter of fact, he had his mind, in a manner of speakin' fully occupied. For he was a smart young feller, an' very soon saw that the only way to get out of doin' hard work in the Army is to go in for promotion, an' he was workin' day an' night for the dog's leg.* But he used to find time to tell us of his adventures, an' from what he said he was a bit of a dog in his civilian days.

* The Lance-Corporal's chevron.

"'I've been chucked out of the Empire,' he sez, 'three times; the last time it took four men an' a police¬man to get me out.'

"'What a terror you must have been,' sez Nobby, very awe-struck.

"'Iwas one of the finest boxers in Brixton—at eight stone,' sez Gustus. 'Ionce had a fight with a cabman, an' he was in hospital for nine weeks.'

"'Delirium tremens?' asks Nobby.

"My experience is," Smithy reflected, "that in the Army, just like anywhere else, people take you at your own value, an' if you give out that you're a fightin' man, an' say it often enough, chaps won't interfere with you, because although you're probably pullin' their legs, it might cost a black eye to find out you're speakin' the truth—an' nobody wants to buy information.

"So in his spare time Gustus worked up quite a reputation, what with his tales of what he used to do an' his fightin', an' he might have been one of the popular heroes of the regiment, if Chatty Wilson hadn't come to us from the 1st Battalion.

"I say 'might' because it's two chances to one that Nobby would have run foul of him sooner or later, an' Nobby's got no respect for reputations.

"Chatty was one of them fattish chaps you some¬times see. If he was in civilian clothes you wouldn't be able to tell whether he was the Terrible Greek or a retired publican. I got the first news about him from Nobby.

"'Have you seen this feller Wilson?' he sez. 'He's down in the canteen tellin' the chaps how he saved the life of Lord Dewberry's beautiful daughter when she was attacked by wild Indians in something—boco. I can see Gustus takin' a back seat.'

"Chatty was one of them men who've done everything. He was one of the most remarkable chaps in the world—an' wasn't above ownin' up to it. He

used to stand in the canteen with all the other chaps sittin' round with their mouths wide open drinkin' down all the lies he told 'em, an' askin' for more, an' Gustus's face was a picture.

"'Iremember,' sez Chatty, very solemn, 'when I was second mate of the Inky Belle—bound from Liverpool to Australia. We was goin' through the Suez Canal an' a storm was ragin'. All the stairs of the ship was battered down, an' the sailors was a- rollin' about the floor some¬thing awful. I was standin' on the bridge by the wheel, when suddenly the chap at the masthead shouts out, "Rocks ahead!" We had forty thousan' bags of dyna¬mite stowed away in the hold, an' I knew if we ran against a rock there would be an explosion. What did I do?'

"'Woke up?' suggested Nobby.

"'What did I do?' sez Chatty. 'The waves was runnin' mountains high, an' I waited till I saw a big one comin' up behind. Then I went ahead full speed. The wave caught us an' lifted us about as high as Mount Misery. We went clean over the rock without touching it! I remember another time when I was lying at——'

"'That don't take much recollecting,' sez Nobby, 'for I don't suppose there's a place in the world where you haven't lied at or lied about.'

"Gustus, who'd stood as much as was humanly possible, pulled Chatty up short.

"'Where was this?' he sez.

"'In the Suez Canal,' sez Chatty.

"'There ain't no rocks an' there ain't no storms in the Suez Canal,' sez Gustus.

"'Have you ever been there?' sez Chatty.

"'No—but I've got a geography——'

"'Here's a feller,' sez Chatty, fiercely, 'who as good as calls me a liar on the strength of a geography book.'

"That was only the beginnin' of the feud. After this Gustus turned up regularly at the canteen when Chatty was talkin'. It was always a question of geography. First of all, Gustus contradicted Chatty about Bon-us-Airs. Chatty said it was in South Africa, an' told a yarn how he was nearly ate by cannibals there.

"'They're a savage, blood-thirsty tribe called the Walloo-Walloos,' sez Chatty. 'I 'appened to be strollin' through the island——'

"'You said it was in South Africa just now,' sneered Gustus.

"'It's a little island near South Africa,' sez Chatty.

"'You're a liar,' sez Gustus.

"'Have you been there?' sez Chatty.

"'No,' sez Gustus, 'but I've got a map.'

"'A map!' sez Chatty, with a bitter larf. 'Why, I helped to draw that map!'

"'That settles the bloomin' map,' sez Nobby.

"The feud got fiercer and fiercer. Whenever Chatty stood up to tell a yarn, Gustus was there to contradict him. It was like an Atheist meetin' in Hyde Park. There wasn't a part of the world Chatty hadn't been to, an' Nobby, who kept count of the three years Chatty had served before the mast, an' the two years he had been prospectin' gold in Siberia, an' the twelve months he had been huntin' bears in the Rocky Mountains, reckoned up Chatty's age to be 107.

"But Chatty's best stories was about his fights. He told 'em so seriously that I believed 'em, an' the other chaps believed 'em—all except Nobby, who never believed anything unless he read it in the newspapers. Gustus took the scrappin' stories very much to heart—you see, Chatty was, in a manner of speakin', poachin' on his preserves.

"'The best fight I ever had was with a chap named Fitzsimmons,' sez Chatty, modestly, "Bob, his name was, an' in America he was a bit of a champion. I 'appened to be stayin' in Monty Vidy-oh——'

"'Where's that?' sez Gustus.

"'When you leave Noo York, you turn to the left an' it's the first town on the right,' sez Chatty, quite calm, an' that staggered Gustus.

"'I was havin' a glass of beer in one of the public-houses in the High-street, when a chap came out of the bar-parlour and sez, "Hello, Chatty——"'

"'Yah,' sez Gustus, very wild; 'there ain't any High-street in Monte Video—it stands to reason. It's a Spanish town. What's Spanish for High-street?'

"'Uptopo Streetarato,' sez Chatty quick, an' was goin' on when Gustus stopped him.

"'Chatty,' he sez, 'you never was in Monte Video; you never was the captain of a ship; you never shot lions in Kentucky, or was ate by cannibals in Bone-us-Airs. You never fought Bob Fitzsimmons or Corbett—you're a liar first an' last, an' if I wasn't goin' to be a corporal I'd bite your ear off.'

"Chatty began to take his coat off slowly.

"'You've brought this on yourself,' he sez, ' an' all because you've got a cheap little geography book an' think you know better than people of experience—like me an' Nobby——'

"'Don't ask me to father your adventures,' sez Nobby.

"'I'm not goin' to hurt you very much,' sez Chatty rollin' up his sleeves. 'I'll give you a punch like I gave to Gunner Moir when we was stationed together at Aldershot—an' one of the taps I dropped on to young Josephs when we fought ten roun's at Wonderland. You won't feel it,' he sez, takin' off his braces; 'you'll be unconscious.'

"Gustus was very pale, an' so was Chatty—in fact, Chatty was the palest.

"'Don't mind me,' he sez to Nobby; 'my teeth always chatter when I start fightin.' I once killed a navvy in Somerstown, an' I'm always afraid of what's goin' to happen. I remember when I knocked out Bill Anderson, of Walworth——'

"'Get on with it,' sez Nobby, impatient; 'we'll listen to the history of your bloomin' life another time.'

"Gustus was takin' off his coat, an' his knees was tremblin', too.

"'This reminds me,' he sez, in a shaky voice, 'of when I put Harry Bagg to sleep in fourteen rounds at the Polytechnic—pore old Harry, he never got over it.'

"'Hurry up,' sez Nobby, helpin' him off with his coat; 'you'll have the canteen sergeant here in five minutes.'

"'Ain't he here?' sez Chatty, very pale.

"'No,' sez Nobby.

"'Then,' sez Chatty, determined, 'I'm not goin' to get him into trouble—I'll fight out of barracks to-morrer.'

"We tried our best to persuade him to get it over, but he wouldn't hear of it an' Gustus sort of backed him up.

"'The sergeant's got a wife an' family,' he sez firmly, 'suppose I kill this putty-faced blighter? What's the first question they'll ask at orderly room? "Where was the canteen sergeant?"'

"An' he put on his coat.

"'Quite right,' sez Chatty, 'one of the first questions the doctor will ask when he sees this linen draper will be: "Where did this pore feller meet with his shockin' injuries."'

“It was arranged that the fight should come off the next day in a quiet place up the Mount, behind South Barracks—but it didn’t. At the last minute Chatty wouldn’t fight unless a purse or a stake was put up.

“‘I’m a professional fighter,’ he sez, ‘an’ if it got about I was scrappin’ for love, I should lose me license.’

“A lot of us chaps got together and put up a purse of ten pesetas, but then Gustus jibbed.

“‘I’m not goin’ to lose my amateur standin’,’ he sez, ‘by fightin’ for a purse—if it leaked out at the Polytechnic that I was fightin’ for money, I’d lose my amateur certificate—what I’ve got at home in a gold frame.’

“Then we arranged that the purse was only for Chatty, but they both said that wasn’t fair.

“For one reason an’ another the fight hung fire for a fortnight, an’ just as we’d got it fixed up Chatty said he wouldn’t fight without four ounce gloves an’ Gustus wanted ten ounce gloves.

“‘I always wear four ounce gloves,’ sez Chatty, ‘that time when I killed a chap I was wearin’ ten ounce gloves an’ I’ve never——’

“‘Look here!’ sez Nobby, very exasperated, ‘me an’ Smithy, an’ a few other sportsmen have done our dabdest to bring you two champions together—are you goin’ to fight or ain’t you?’

“‘There’s plenty of time,’ sez Chatty, ‘I ought to go into trainin’ for a month: When I fought young Jennings, of Oldham——’

“‘Half-a-mo,’ sez Nobby, ‘don’t let’s go into your bloomin’ dream-fights: Are you an’ Gustus goin’ to scrap?’

“‘As soon as the articles are signed,’ sez Chatty.

“‘I see what you mean,’ sez Nobby, with one of those nasty glitters in his eye. ‘I take your meanin’ exactly.’

“That night, when we was standing in the canteen talkin’ about the fight, an’ sayin’ what a national calamity it would be if it didn’t come off, Spud Murphy came rush in’ in excitedly.

“‘They’ve had their fight!’ he sez.

“We couldn’t believe our ears.

“‘They’ve just brought Chatty in,’ sez Spud agitatedly, ‘two artillery chaps leadin’ him—he can only see out of one eye.’

“‘What about Gustus?’ I sez.

“‘He’s stayin’ behind to find two of his teeth wot he’s lost,’ sez Spud.

"'Run an' tell Nobby,' sez somebody, an' at that minute in come Gustus lookin' as if he'd been run over.

"He walked up to the counter without a word an' ordered a pint of beer.

"Everybody held their breaths. By-em-by he turns round.

"'Had my fight,' he sez, an' his voice was a bit thick, 'Met Chatty an' Nobby in a quiet place. Chatty didn't want to fight, no more did I. Nobby said we was afraid, an' we called him a liar.'

"He drank up his beer.

"'W'e didn't fight, me an' Chatty,' he sez, after a bit.

"'But what about your face?' I sez.

"He looked at me.

"'Nobby did that,' he sez."

## X. — THE MISER

ONCE I walked the mountainous streets of Toledo in quest of a house. From the great public square, a little hill fell steeply, and a short distance down, a small unlovely casa held a precarious foothold on its uneven foundations. I made my pilgrimage because in that house Cervantes discovered the truth about the army—which has undergone no change since. For what is true of the Pedros and Bombitta Chicos of the sixteenth century, is equally true of the Smithys and Nobbys and Spuds of this.

"The Army," said the wise Cervantes, "is a school in which the niggardly become generous, and the generous prodigal; and if there are some soldiers misers, they are a kind of monster, but very rarely seen."

I had half-written the story of Nobby Clark's Patriotism when a chance-used phrase brought to my mental vision the picture of Grimmer—"Miser" Grimmer of "H" Company. Therefore, I put aside the tale of Nobby's International Outrage for another day—and relate Private Smith's story of the Miser.

"Old Grimmer came to the battalion when we was in Gib.," said Smithy, "an' one of the first things that struck me an' Nobby about him was his stand-offishness. Not one of the 'haw-haw' sort, mind you: no grumblin' about the food or the work, or havin' to obey orders. That wasn't Grimmer's line. My own experience is that when a feller comes into the army, an' starts cursin' his grub, an' sayin' what a rotten life soldierin' is, he's a feller who's spent his valuable life at servants' entrances an' sayin', 'Here's-the-plate-an'-thank-you-mum.'

"Grim's game was altogether different. He was stand¬offish in the worst sense of the word. He never went out with people, he never entered the canteen, wet or dry, and he never spent money.

"If they was to feed you up like they do at the Ritz Hotel, soldiers would always buy extras for breakfast an' tea. I've known Nobby Clark to get as much as four separate penn'oths of butter in one week. Nobby is a very managing sort of chap, an' that's how we first found out that Grim was a miser.

"Nobby had a pal in town, who was in the provision line of business—a short, fat, little chap. We was takin' a 'bock' down at the 'Glass Barrel' when this feller, whose name was Nathan—one of the Scotch Nathans—sez:

"'Look here, Mr. Clark, don't your friends eat eggs?'

"'Rather,' sez Nobby.

"'Well,' says Nathan, 'We've got a line of eggs that have just arrived, new laid 'uns, that we can do cheap; why don't you buy 'em up an' get your pals to buy 'em from you?'

"That was the sort of idea that, in a manner of speakin', appealed to Nobby, an' he was all over it in twice. Nathan let him have the eggs on credit, an' they was to be sent up to barracks after Nobby had prepared the troops for the treat that was comin'.

"It was pay-day next day, an' Nobby started at breakfast time to get the ground ready, so to speak.

"'What's for breakfast?' he sez to the orderly man.

"'Kippers,' sez Spud.

"'Kippers!' sez Nobby in a horrowfied tone of voice. 'Why, I thought that kippers had been barred.'

"'What for?' sez Spud.

"'Oh, nothin',' sez Nobby, careless, 'only a feller in "E" Company was poisoned last week with kippers—one of the deadliest fishes known, kippers is.'

"By this time Spud had served out two kippers a man, but the chaps didn't start to eat 'em; they just looked at 'em very suspicious.

"'Many a chap,' sez Nobby, speakin' loud so that the fellers of the new draft that had just come out from England could hear, 'many a chap has found a soldier's grave in a far off foreign land, far from his relations an' girl, owin' to kippers.'

"Spud looked at his an' turned 'em over with the point of his fork.

"'What's wrong with 'em?' he sez.

"But Nobby shook his head. "'I'm not well up in these medical words,' he sez, 'but from what I heard the doctor sayin' to the colonel the other day, the heat of the sun brings out a sort of microbe, called the microbinks kipperino, that makes you come out in yaller spots.'

"'I don't believe it,' sez Spud.

"'Of course, you don't,' sez Nobby, gently, an' carefully picked up his own kipper with a bit of paper. 'Smithy,' he sez, ' run an' borrer a spade from the pioneer sergeant; we'll give this pore kipper a decent buryin'.'

"The rest of the fellers said they didn't believe it neither; but somehow they didn't eat their kippers.

"'You ain't gettin' on with yours, old friend,' sez Nobby, an' Spud turned on him.

"'I ain't no friend of yours,' he snarls.

"Nobby smiled sadly.

"'I want to be friends,' he sez. 'I don't want people to say I made your last hours unhappy,' he sez.

"'The fact is,' sez Spud, 'I don't fancy kippers this mornin,' I was out late last night. I'll go down to the dry-canteen an' get some potted beef.'

"'Potted beef!' sez Nobby, 'don't do it!'

"Then he went on to give a full description of how potted beef was made: that settled potted beef.

"'In fact,' sez Nobby, thoughtfully, 'there's only one thing that a feller can eat with safety—an' that's eggs.'

"'Eggs!' sez Spud, wrathful, 'who can afford tuppence apiece for eggs?'

"Nobby got very indignant.

"Tuppence!' he sez, 'why, that's robbery. You can get the best eggs in the market for a penny apiece. Smithy, why don't you write to your friend Mr. Nathan, an' ask him to send us some up?'

"I didn't write, but the eggs turned up all the same—two big baskets of 'em, an' Nobby sold 'em out in half- an-hour.

"It was a bargain day in eggs.

"'I could have sold another basketful,' sez Nobby, regretfully. 'Every chap in the company bought some—except that blighter Grimmer.'

"Nobby couldn't persuade Grimmer to take 'em, anyhow. He offered him seven for sixpence. He offered him three cracked ones for a penny—but Grim just shook his head. That's what first drew Nobby's attention to Grim.

"'He's a feller you can't get a cent, out of,' sez Nobby, very bitter; 'a chap like that oughtn't to be in the army.'

"Nobby didn't say much more about Grim just then, for his mind was occupied by complaints about the eggs.

"It made Nobby's life a perfect misery. We'd be sittin' down to tea when in would come one chap after the other. You didn't need to ask what they'd come about. You could, in a manner of speakin' hear 'em comin'. Harry Gray, who'd been a pretty liberal buyer, came in with six at one meal.

"'What d'ye call these, Nobby?' he sez.

"'Eggs,' sez Nobby, calmly.

"'Look at 'em!' sez Harry, indignantly.

"'I can see 'em,' sez Nobby, very hasty, 'from where I am—don't bring 'em any closer.'

"'Do you call these eggs?'

"'Certainly,' sez Nobby, as bold as brass. 'What did you think I called 'em—Welsh rabbits?'

"Once the orderly officer was makin' his meal-time inspection. He came into our room.

"'Any complaints?' he sez; then he stopped an' sniffed.

"'What's the matter with the drains?' he sez, an' the room-corporal explained that it was Nobby's eggs.

"After that an order came out that every egg in barracks was to be collected, an' Nobby was told off to dig a hole an' bury 'em.

"Then, as the newspapers say, it subsequently transpired that Grimmer had bought two from a feller named Cohen for a penny. Cohen had paid a penny each for these eggs, but when he got them into his room, an' tried to look through 'em before the gas, he saw somethin' movin' inside, so, bein' a very careful chap, he cut his loss an' offered Grimmer the bargain.

"'I want my money back,' sez Grimmer.

"'I'm very sorry,' sez Nobby, 'but not bein' a client of mine I can't oblige you; we don't change second-hand goods.'

"The way Grimmer carried on was something frightful. You'd have thought it was the last penny he had in the world—in fact, he got so excited that Nobby did what I've never known him to do before—parted with money.

"'It's perfectly sickenin' to see what a hold the accursed money has on Grim,' sez Nobby, solemnly, an' Nobby knew a thing or two about holdin' cash.

"Grimmer continued to keep hisself to hisself, an' hoardin' every penny he could get.

"I've got an idea that he used to work in his spare time for a little bootmaker on the Romps.

"One thing he never did was to read a newspaper, not even when it was lent to him, an' when Nobby read out the police-court cases, an' the inquests an' murder trials, an' other fashionable intelligence, Grimmer used to skip out of the room.

"Another thing was, he couldn't sleep for more than a couple or three hours at a time. We found that out on guard, an' the chap that slept in the next cot to him in his barrack-room said the same.

"'Grimmer's got somethin' on his conscience,' sez Nobby one day. 'I'll bet that years an' years ago he gave away half a sovereign in mistake for a sixpence.'

"The rummiest thing of all about Grimmer was this: he was quite a decent feller, except where money was concerned; pleasant to talk to, quiet an' retirin', an' as handy with his fists as the next man.

"Now, I've always said that the army is the queerest place in the world, because you never know exactly who you're goin' to meet. Grimmer was a curious bird, but a more curiouser bird was Simmy.*

* I presume the gentleman's name was "Sims."—E.W.

"Simmy came out with a draft from England. He was one of them fox-faced chaps that nobody cares much about. Had a shufflin' way of walkin,' an' used to look at you sideways. He perduced a bad effect on Nobby by trying to borrer a bob till pay-day, but he perduced the worst effect of all on Grimmer.

"Grimmer happened to come into our room by accident, an' came face to face with Simmy. Miser's face went white, an' he staggered back as if he was shot.

"Simmy just grinned.

"'Hullo, Jack, so this is where you've got to!' he sez, 'fancy meetin' you!'

"Grimmer sez nothin'. He just turned on his heels an' walked out of the room.

"'He don't seemed pleased to meet an ole pal,' sez Simmy, still smilin'. 'What's he call hisself here?'

"Somebody told him.

"'Grimmer, eh?' sez Simmy, 'an' a very nice name, too.' He was remarkably curious about Miser Grimmer, wanted to know what he did with hisself an' all that. When we told him—it was Spud who told him, as a matter of fact—what a miser his pal was, he larfed an' larfed, in a chucklin' kind of way.

"As far as I know these two chaps didn't meet again, till they came together in the canteen a week later. It was unusual to see Miser Grimmer in the canteen spendin' his own money, but we'd had a bit of excitement that day, an' everybody was doin' unusual things.

"Somebody had broken into the orderly room an' forced the safe. There was only a few pounds in it, so it didn't seem quite worth the trouble.

"Simmy was givin' his opinion about the robbery when Grimmer came in.

"'It's a fair show-up for the regiment,' sez Simmy, very indignant. 'Fancy only a couple of quid in the regimental safe—why, it makes us look like paupers.'

"'It's a funny thing,' sez Nobby, 'but that side of the question never struck me.'

"Just then Grimmer walked up.

"'I want a word with you, Simmy,' he sez, but Simmy just stared at him.

"'Got anything to say, say it here,' he sez.

"'Oh, I'm not afraid to say it,' sez Grimmer, 'it's this: Don't come that game again.'

"'What game?'

"'You know,' sez Grimmer, and his face was white with passion, 'don't do it again, that's all.'

"'I don't know what you are talking about,' sez Simmy, very cool. 'Me an' Nobby was talkin' about the burglary when you stuck your nose in. I was tellin' him that it reminded me of a job down in Essex, done by two brothers by the name of Clancy. One got caught an' got seven years, the other sneaked away an' ain't been seen since.'

"I could see Grimmer's hands closin' an' unclosin' like a man in a fit.

"'That's a lie,' he sez in a low voice. 'There was only one brother in it—the other burglar was a low thief— a dirty little Whitechapel hound, who led the boy away. The other brother was straight—he was a fool, but he was straight.'

"Simmy larfed.

"'You seem to know a lot about it,' he sez, with a sneer, an' turned his back on Grimmer.

"Miser stood for a bit, then he caught my eye an' walked out. I went out after him.

"'Smithy,' he sez, 'where will I find the colonel ? '

"'He's at mess,' I sez, wonderin'.

"'I'm goin' to see him,' he sez.

"'But you must get a N.C.O. to take you,' I told him.

"We walked across the square to the mess. We met a chap who had just seen the old man go into his quarters, an' we followed that direction, me tryin' to persuade him to see a sergeant. As luck would have it, we found the colonel an' Major Morris sittin' in front of the quarters smokin'.

"'Who's that?' sez the old man, for it was dark.

"'Private Grimmer, sir,' sez Miser.

"'Who is with you?'

"'Private Smith, sir,' I sez.

"'What do you want, Smith?' sez the Colonel.

"'Private Grimmer wants to speak to you, sir,' I sez, feelin' a bit blue.

"'Why, what's the meaning of this?' sez the Colonel, 'you know this is against regulations—you should have seen the sergeant-major.'

"Before I could say anything Miser spoke.

"What he said I don't know to this day, but I think it was in French, because he talked through his nose, but when he'd finished the Colonel sez:

"'You needn't wait, Smith,' an' I left Grimmer talkin'.

"When I got back to the canteen Simmy was still on the subject of the burglary down in Essex.

"'Seven years that young bloke got,' he sez, 'an' the stuff he pinched wasn't worth seven pence. A green young chap, quite the gentleman that burglar was: his first 'click' an' he made enough row to wake the dead. That's why he was caught. His brother was awful upset about it: he didn't know——'

"'Thought you said he was the other burglar?' sez Spud.

"'That was only my kid,' sez Simmy. 'Well this—'

"The canteen door opened an' in walked Sergeant Jackson.

"He walks up to Simmy.

"'I want you,' he sez.

"'What for?' sez Simmy, without battin' an eyelid.

"'About twenty things,' sez the sergeant. 'Makin' a false statement on attestation for one thing; callin' yourself Sims when your name is Pilker for another; bein' concerned in burglary for another.'

"Miser had walked in after the sergeant.

"'Oh, it's you, is it?' sez Simmy, calmly, 'you've give me away—why, his brother's doin' seven years!' he said, pointin' to Miser.

"'We know all about that,' sez the sergeant, 'an' we know who put 'im there.'

"'All right,' sez Simmy, careless. 'It's a cop an' I'll go quiet.'

"Two men fell in, one on each side of him.

"'Saw your brother before I came out, Jack,' he sez to Grimmer. 'Went to have dekko at him in Wormwood Scrubbs.'

“Miser said nothin’.

“‘I gave him away all right,’ sez Simmy, as cool as a cucumber, ‘it was a case of givin’ him away or givin’ myself away—but he didn’t know that when I saw him.’

“Grimmer stood with his head bowed.

“‘He told me,’ Simmy went on, ‘that you’d got a Government job somewhere, an’ was savin’ up money to make a start in a new country when he came out of prison. Have you saved much, Miser?’

“He grinned as they marched him away, an’ when he’d left nobody said a word.

“Then Nobby came up to Grimmer.

“‘Grim,’ he sez, ‘you an’ me had a little dispute over eggs—I’m willin’ to admit that I was in the wrong—I owe you tuppence.’

“It was the only time that Nobby was ever known to offer to pay back money he’d got from a chap.

“‘Thanks, Nobby,’ sez Grimmer with a smile, ‘but there’s no need any longer: the colonel is going to help us when I leave the army.’

“Walkin’ back to barracks Nobby was very thoughtful.

“‘Smithy,’ he sez, ‘it’s rum that I’ve never thought of touchin’ the colonel for money—it opens up what I might call vistas.’”

## XI. — NOBBY, LIMITED

"I HAVE every reason to believe," stated Captain Umfreville, of the Anchester Regiment, in his evidence before the Court of Enquiry, "that Private Clark was animated by a most sincere, however mistaken, sense of duty and patriotism."

I am referring to the Court that was held in Aldershot in 1902 to enquire into an act of sacrilege preferred against certain men of the Anchester Regiment.

This sounds very serious, but it is not quite so serious as it sounds. I do not intend making a long story of Private Clark's deed—it may be told in a few words.

When the Anchester Regiment returned to England at the close of the South African War, the transport was six hours out of Gibraltar, to which port she had called to land the Kent Regiment, when something happened. Whether it was her propeller that went konk, or her water tubes that went phutt, I have never been able to discover, and I am prepared to brain the man who would enlighten me. Certain it is that the ship put into Cadiz, that in Cadiz is the Church of Emanuel of Saragossa, that in this church are certain tattered standards captured from an old enemy, and that one of these standards is the King's colours of the 109th, which to-day is known as the Anchester Regiment.

It is not difficult for me to appreciate the state of mind in which Nobby Clark smuggled himself ashore with the object and intention of pinching the lost colours. I know that to relieve the tedium of the wait Major Morris had lectured to the men on the history of Cadiz, and that he had been sufficiently ill-advised to mention the fact that the old-time colours of the regiment graced the walls of the Inglesia de S. Emanuelo de Saragossa.

Nobby went ashore, and came back. Round his waist and beneath his coat was wound a faded rag inscribed with mystic words. He had had a difficulty in getting away with his booty, for the church is popular with sightseers.

But he had succeeded. Later came the news to the ship that an act of sacrilege had been committed, some felonious and unknown person had stolen a banner specially designed so that it might harmonise with the solemn interior of the church—a banner with this strange device (in Spanish):—"Visitors are cautioned to beware of pickpockets." As to the captured standard of the Anchesters, it had long since been removed to Seville.

Somehow, poor Nobby's "errow," as he described it bitterly, became "public property" in the regiment, hence the Court of Enquiry held behind closed

doors, before five prejudiced officers, all anxious to find excuses for the unhappy soldier who stood before them.

In view of the evidence which is known to have been given, the finding of the Court is a curious one:—

"1. We find that Private Clark, of the Anchester Regiment, carried away from the Iglesia de S. Emanuelo a banner, the property of the church.

"2. We find that he did this in error, and that he had no intention of stealing this banner.

"3. We censure him for going ashore without leave at Cadiz, but exonerate him from all knowledge of the character of the banner he inadvertently brought away with him."

Now, I hold this finding to be equivocal, but in the best of taste. Furthermore, it is devilishly ingenious.

I tell you this story for a reason.

If at any future time I refer carelessly to Nobby Clark's three mistakes, you will understand that this was one of them. There was another, about which I will some day write, and yet another, the particulars of which are hereunder set forth.

"Did ever I tell you about a chap called Nathan?" asked Smithy. "His real name was Higgins, but he knew enough about the army to call hisself a Jew when he enlisted. When other fellers was gettin' ready for kit inspection on Saturdays, Mr. Bloomin' Nathan would be strollin' down town lookin' for religious instruction, an' on Sundays, when we'd be toilin' to church in our best Sunday clothes, he'd be loafin' in the High-street waitin' for the Gentiles synagogue to open at 1 p.m. It was Nobby who found out this chap was a Christian—never mind how he found it out—an' Nobby had a very great respect for Higgins ever after. In fact, Nobby would have changed his religion quick but for certain reasons I needn't go into.

"'It's the artfullest idea I've ever heard of,' sez Nobby, admiringly; 'he has two Sundays a week, an' all sorts of fancy holidays chucked in—it's hard on two Christians like you an' me, Smithy.'

"It was Nobby who found out his name was Higgins—or said he'd found it out, which comes to much the same thing, for what Nobby sez, he believes.

"Now, about that affair at Cadiz, Nobby made two mistakes, one of 'em you know all about, an' the other was over this chap Higgins, or Nathan.

"Nathan was a terrible financial chap—knew all about how to make money out of nothin', how fire assurances was run, an' things like that, an' when

we got up the indignation meetin' over our flag, it was Nathan's idea that we should run a sort of limited company.

"As a rule, Nobby can do all the money gatherin' that has to be done, but he was sort o' hypnotised by Nathan, an' before we knew where we was the company was formed, Nathan got a lot of shares for nothin', and voted hisself a salary on the top of it.

"'What sort of business do you call that?' sez Nobby.

"'High finance,' sez Nat.

"'Thanks for the tip,' sez Nobby.

"Long after the affair at Cadiz had been done with, I could see there was somethin' on Nobby's mind. I thought it was the row he got into, but that wouldn't depress Nobby.

"An' he was depressed.

"All the time we was in England before the order came for the regiment to go back to Gibraltar, whatever it was, it sort of made him downhearted.

"One night down at the 'Glass Barrel' I asked him what was bitin' him, an' he up an' told me.

"'It's that turn-up in Cadiz,' he sez, an' when I started to comfort him, he sez: 'Oh, it ain't not gettin' the flag, or any fool nonsense like that—it's the money part of it.'

"He paused a bit.

"'Look here,' he sez, 'I didn't get the flag, did I?'

"'No,' I sez, 'You got a winder blind with "Beware of——"'

"'Never mind about that,' sez Nobby, very lofty. 'I did me best. I spent money, didn't I?'

"'You did,' I sez. 'Some of my money.'

"'An' none of the shareholders didn't get anything back?'

"'No,' I sez; 'Spud Murphy sez it was a swindle.'

"'Forget Spud Murphy,' sez Nobby, who's a bit touchy at times.

"'Well, nobody got anything out of it—except Nathan.'

"'Did he?' I sez.

"'He did,' sez Nobby, very emphatic. 'He got half-a-quid out of it, an' made out I owed him another—now how do you account for that?'

"Not knowin', I couldn't give my opinion.

"'It's high finance,' sez Nobby, very impressive. 'It's puzzled me, but that's what it is. I've just got a book on it; it's a new lay, an' I'm goin' to try it meself.'

"Now Nobby's got a reputation throughout the regiment for makin' money, an' fellers'll sit for hours listening to him when he spins a tale. Them two are Nobby's great gifts, an' if there's another chap in the army who can make tuppence go farther than Nobby I'd like to meet him.

"I think it must have been Nobby who brought the conversation round to hisself that night at the canteen, for after he'd been talkin' for half-an-hour, Billy Mason sez:

"'I'll bet you've got a fine old stockin', Nobby.'

"'I have,' sez Nobby, which was rather surprisin', for I've never known him to give his private affairs away before.

"'How much have you got pouched?' sez Billy.

"'Hundreds of pounds,' sez Nobby, prompt.

"'How much do you reckon to make a week?' sez Billy.

"'Two or three pounds,' sez Nobby; an' I gasped. "'You're a wonder,' sez Billy, shakin' his head, 'an' you've never been found out?'

"'It ain't a question of bein' found out,' sez Nobby, rather huffily; 'all my business is square an' above board. It's high finance.'

"'Is that another name for stealin'?' sez Spud Murphy.

"'You can all do the same,' sez Nobby. 'You can all have a share in the profits if you want it.'

"An' then he explained what high finance was, an' how they could take shares in him. Nathan was the first to jump at it.

"'Turn yourself into a company, Nobby,' he sez, quick. 'I'll float you .'

"'Thanks,' sez Nobby, very cold, 'but if there's anything to be made out of this job, I'd rather make it meself.'

"But Nathan was very nice about it. He said he didn't want to make a cent, but was willin' to give Nobby all the advice for nothin', an' the end of it was Nobby turned himself into a company, an' me an' a lot of other fellers took shares in him. Nathan wrote down the arrangements. We handed our money over to Nobby, an' he was to use it to the best advantage.

"Business went on splendid. The first night Nobby made twenty-eight shillin's at nap; the second day he sold a lot of eggs (what I've told you about), the third day he backed two winners at the pony races, an' the company was in a flourishin' condition.

"'It's the greatest idea that ever was,' sez Nathan, very enthusiastic, 'an' I'm glad I'm a preferential share¬holder.'

"'What's that?' sez Nobby, suspicious.

"'Why, what I told you when we formed the company,' sez Nat.

"'I remember,' sez Nobby, slowly, 'you told me there was two kinds of shareholders, them that get money, an' them that get a balance-sheet.'

"'That's right,' sez Nathan. 'I'm one of them that get money.'

"'What am I?' sez Nobby, 'an' what do I get?'

"'You'll get a vote of thanks from the shareholders.'

"I don't think Nathan quite understood Nobby's fine temperament. Come the end of the week, Nobby Limited was the successfullest business in Gibraltar.

"We turned up in the canteen for our dividends, an', to everybody's surprise, we got paid out. It was one of the curiousest things that had ever happened. Every¬body was satisfied except Nathan.

"'I think you've made a bit of a mistake, Nobby,' he sez.

"'No, I haven't,' sez Nobby.

"'My share's twice this,' sez Nathan, 'I'm a preferential shareholder.'

"'Oh, no, you're not,' sez Nobby, as bold as brass, 'you're one of the ordinary ones. I've reconstructed meself!'

"You see Nobby had learned a thing or two from the book. Nathan swallered something in his throat.

"'What about them Articles of Association?' he sez.

"'I've lost 'em,' sez Nobby, very calm.

"Nathan pulled hisself together, an' talked quite pleasantly. Asked what was the prospects for next week, an' how much money he had in hand.

"Nobby had nearly six pounds.

"'We ought to have a good week next week,' sez Nobby. 'I know a horse that's a certainty for the Gibraltar Hunt Cup, an' I'm thinkin' of startin' a new secret society that ought to be good for a pound.'

"On the Monday night, just as Nobby an' me was gettin' ready to go down town to see a chap about buyin' a job lot of cards—"What is home without a bulldog," an' things of that sort—Nathan strolled into the room. There was nobody there but us three, an' Nathan sat down at the table.

"'I've got an idea, Nobby,' he sez, 'that might help the funds of the company.'

"'What's that?' sez Nobby.

"'Why don't you play "spot the lady" on the troops,' sez Nathan, an' pulls out three cards; 'it's the easiest way of makin' money.'

"'It's too easy,' sez Nobby.

"'It's not so easy,' sez Nathan, shufflin' the cards awkwardly. 'Now, I'm no expert, but I'll bet you couldn't pick out the Queen of Diamonds.'

"'What'll you bet?' sez Nobby, quick. He saw a way of getting money, an' he never lost an opportunity.

"'Ten pesetas,' sez Nathan, an' Nobby whacked down the money, an' picked a card.

"It was the deuce of spades.

"'It's not so easy, is it?' sez Nat, pocketin' the money.

"'Let's see you do it again,' sez Nobby, an' Nat placed the cards an' shuffled them like lightnin'.

"'That's it,' sez Nobby, pointin'.

"'What'll you bet?' sez Nat.

"'Four dollars,' sez Nobby, an' picked up the card.

"It was the three of clubs.

"Nobby had five pounds in his pocket, an' had lost another.

"'Try me again,' he sez.

"So Nat shuffled the cards, an' Nobby chose one.

"'For how much?' sez Nat.

"'For a quid,' sez Nobby, an' picked the deuce of spades again.

"Things were pretty serious for Nobby. Two pounds of the 'stock money' was gone, an' I could see the perspiration standin' out on his forehead.

"'I'll have another go,' he sez, an' lost another two quid in the twinklin' of an eye.

"Nat was smilin' as sweet as an angel.

"'Try again,' he sez.

"'Yes,' sez Nobby, very slow, 'but you've got to give me odds.'

"'I'll bet you two to one,' sez Nat, an' shuffled the cards.

"'Wait a bit,' sez Nobby, an' went to his box, an' fished out three more quids. 'It's six pounds or nothin',' he sez.

"Nat shuffled the cards again.

"'Now,' he sez.

"Nobby looks at the cards.

"'If I'm to believe me own eyes,' he sez, 'it's the one in the middle, but it can't be that one, or you wouldn't let me see it. So it must be one of the other two, an' I'll toss for it: heads right, tails left,' an' he flicked up a peseta.

"'Left,' he sez.

"I saw Nat frown, but Nobby's hand was on the card an' turned it over; it was the Queen of Diamonds. Nat sort of staggered.

"Nobby wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"'Nat,' he sez, as he picked up his six pounds, 'I've made another mistake in regard to you,' he picked up the cards from the table an' put 'em in his pocket, 'I thought you was a gentleman.'

"He walked sorrerfully from the room an' me with him."

"When we got down to the waterport he brightened up.

"'That was nearly a fatal errow,' he sez; 'did you see Nathan palm the Queen of Diamonds off the table into his pocket?'

"'No,' I sez, in surprise.

"'He did,' sez Nobby.

"'But,' I sez, a bit bewildered, 'the Queen of Diamonds was on the table, you turned it up yourself.'

"Nobby was silent for a bit.

"'Nathan ain't the only chap who can palm,' he said, very mysteriously, 'I found a Queen of Diamonds in my box when I was gettin' out the money. It's a good job Nathan didn't want to see the back of the card.'

"He was silent again, then he said with a sigh:

"'High finance is a bit tryin', Smithy—but I think we'll pay a dividend this week.'"

## XII. — AN ACT OF WAR

YOU are very much mistaken if you imagine that the British soldier is a person whose foreign relations have to do with coloured ladies and gentlemen exclusively. Generally speaking, his business is with people who have not yet arrived at a point where clothing is regarded as a necessity, who worship strange images, occasionally cannibalize, and from time to time slay a missionary. A simple, pastoral, light-hearted people with primitive amusements.

We also know that Mr. Atkins is brought into the closest touch with the fellaheen, being on familiar terms with descendants of Pharoah, and as well acquainted with the masterpieces of Cheops as you or I are with St. Paul's Cathedral or the Memorial Hall. His way lies through historic Eastern cities, to rub elbow with the Ayrian races. He knows the Taj Mahal by sight, but not to speak to, and if there is one shop in Calcutta where good beer is sold you may be sure that he knows all about it, and can take you by the hand and lead you to it. He has an encyclopædic knowledge of strange things that do not appear in any respectable guide book—mostly I grant, about countries and peoples in the vicinity of the equator. He has not interfered in European politics since 1857, so it may be that he is a little rusty so far as the Continent is concerned.

When I say "has not interfered" I mean, of course, publicly interfered. Interfered in such a manner as would attract the attention of the public press, or effect in any way the insurance risks at Lloyds.

But there are curious stories in vogue in the army concerning unofficial happenings, in which it would seem that the little British Army has really committed most outrageous and unlawful acts, calculated not only to disharmonise the concert of Europe, but to render totally incapable the big drum of Germany, the double bass of St. Petersburg, and the little tin whistle of a certain southern state which shall be nameless.

I liken the concert of Europe to an itinerant brass band that performs at street corners. Once, when that band was playing a soul-stirring triumphal march, there came before it a small boy sucking a visible lemon—and the band went out of business, temporarily.

It is betraying no confidence when I say that the small boy was none other than Private Smith, of the Anchester Regiment, and that he was aided and abetted by Nobby Clark, of B Company.

The principal instrumentalist in the band for the time being was a certain M. Vladyskisch, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Southern state which shall be nameless.

Smithy told me the story, and I have no reason to disbelieve it.

“Do you know Croto?” he asked. “It’s where the castor oil comes from. It’s a bit of an island about so far from Cyprus an’ so far from Malta—direct sailin’. It don’t belong to nobody, this island don’t, so everybody claimed it. Italy claimed it, an’ Russia, an’ France said that now you come to mention it, she lost an island somewhere about there in B.C. 45; an’ Germany said ‘No, there was some mistake, because she’d left an island in exactly the same spot hundreds of years ago, an’ she recognised it by some green spots an’ blue mountains.’ So all the Powers called a conference, and whilst they was arguin’ the point England nipped in an’ pinched it.

“We didn’t say we pinched it. We said we occupied it as a temp’ry measure, but everybody knew what that meant, an’ the conference broke up in a hurry an’ bolted for the island to pick up the scraps that England left.

“After that there was another conference, an’ it was decided that it belonged to all the countries, an’ so there was an international force sent to occupy it. All this time nobody thought of the people of Croto themselves, an’ when they asked if the country didn’t belong to them as they happened to be livin’ there, all the Powers said, ‘Certainly not,’ an’ cussed ’em for bein’ ungrateful.

“There was a sort of movement amongst the Croto people for independence, but the Powers sat on the head of that, an’ after a while, the trouble sort of died down, an’ troops was withdrawn from the island, bit by bit, till there was only a skeleton force of British, French, German, Russian, Greek, Turkish, Italian, Austrian, an’ Spanish troops left.

“We were stationed at Malta at the time, an’ H Company was on duty at the Island. They was very cocky about it, an’ said they’d been chosen to represent the British Army because they was the smartest company in the battalion, but, as a matter of fact, when H went to Croto, there was a danger of a massacre, an’ the colonel sent the company that he could spare the best.

“The night before the company sailed we had a farewell ‘barney’ at the canteen, an’ Nobby made a speech to the H chaps who were there—an’ they were all there, owin’ to the drinks bein’ free.

“‘Friends an’ comrades,’ sez Nobby; ‘You are about to sail for a foreign land, from which very few of you will ever come back alive. We shall miss you sadly. There’ll be nothin’ left for the adjutant to grumble at. When you are gone the honour of being the dirtiest crowd on parade will be taken up by C Company.’

“Nobby bein’ a verv agile feller, escaped from the canteen before they got at him, but poor little Tubby Wilson—they fairly danced on him.

“We saw ’em away from the harbour next day, the band playin’ ‘Will you no’ come back again?’—a very sarcastic tune that was—an’ H Company cheerin’ themselves like one o’clock.

“In two days we’d forgotten all about H, an’ all about Croto.

“What brought ’em up again was a discussion we was havin’ in barracks one night about politics.

“Spud Murphy was sayin’ what a good thing it would be if there was a big war.

“‘Fat lot of good that would do,’ said Nobby, who always waits to hear what Spud sez an’ then takes the opposite side of the question. ‘What’s the sense of shootin’ white people?’

“‘Loot,’ sez Spud, very emphatic. ‘That’s where the sense is. Suppose you’re fightin’ in Europe. You go into a town after the scrap’s all over, walk into the bank, an’ come out with pockets full of five pound notes.’

“That was an argument which entirely shut up Nobby. Anything with money in it appealed to him.

“Next day I found him in the library with a bit of pencil an’ a paper workin’ out how much gold a chap could carry.

“‘Four sov’reigns weigh an ounce,’ he sez, thoughtful; ‘sixteen ounces one pound—that makes £64 a pound. Now, I think I could carry about a couple of hundred¬weight, which is about £7,000. Smithy, there’s somethin’ in what Spud sez.

“Then he worked out that a chap could carry half a million in £5 notes, an’ a million in tenners, an’ ten million in hundred pound notes.

“That night, when we was lyin’ in bed after lights out—Nobby always sleeps in the next cot to mine—he was makin’ up what he would do with the money; how he would put it in envelopes addressed, N. Clark, Esq.—to be called for—an’ post it to the Penny Bank in the Old Kent-road, an’ how he would buy a pub in Walworth, an’ drive about in a motor-car.

“He rambled on till the corporal asked him if he was talkin’ in his sleep.

“‘No,’sez Nobby; ‘I’m goin’ over me financial affairs.’

“‘Then close your port,’ sez the corporal, ‘or you’ll be goin’ over to the guard room.’

“Just before I went to sleep I heard Nobby’s voice mutterin’, ‘Six fours is twenty-six—six an’ carry two; two hundred times twenty-six is——’

“I must have been asleep two hours when something woke me.

“It was the noise of feet on the barrack square, an’ the voice of the adjutant.

“A little while later in came the colour-sergeant, half-dressed, an’ carryin’ a lantern.

“‘Rouse up you fellers,’ he sez, ‘as quietly as you can; fall in in an hour’s time, full marchin’ order.’

“Just then we heard a faint bugle call from the Wigshires lines.

“‘There’s the noisy Wigshire blighters,’ sez the colour-sergeant, bitterly. ‘Can’t go out to war without advertisin’ it.’

“‘War?’ sez Nobby, jumpin’ out of bed an’ blinkin’ at the light. ‘War, colour-sergeant? Six fours is thirty-two, four thirty-twos is a hundred an’ sixty, ten——’

“‘Wake up, you!’ said the colour chap, an’ Nobby started hurryin’ into his clothes.

“‘Smithy,’ he sez;’ I’ve been dreamin’ about this. It’s come, Smithy. I’m goin’ to put the notes in me haversack, an’ the gold in me valise. No silver or coppers to be taken away, cheques——’

“‘You’ve got your trousis on inside out,’ I sez, for I was not in any Dolly Daydream mood, not at one o’clock in the mornin’!

“A torpedo boat had come in from Croto with the news that the Croto people was out of hand, an’ was attackin’ the international force, an’ two battalions, ours an’ the Wigshires, were ordered to embark on a couple of battleships for the scene of action.

“It was just before daybreak when the Anchesters got aboard the old Caliope, an’ the sun was just comin’ up when we moved out of the harbour.

“We got to Croto on the second day.

“The town we landed at was called Ampea, an’ it was lively landin’, for all the time we was bein’ rowed ashore some patriotic Croto gentleman was snipin’ us from the hills. It was no good the battleship shellin’ ’em, because they was in ones an’ twos.

“There was no sign of the allied forces. They’d retired hurt into the interior of the island, an’ was very busy settlin’ the question amongst theirselves as to who was in command. The French officer sez he was, an’ the Italian sez he was, an’ the German asked where he came in, an’ the Austrian refused to take orders from the Turk, an’ the Englishman wouldn’t take orders from anybody. The streets of the city was deserted. Some of the shops were burnt, an’ others had been looted, an’ bits of cloth an’ boots an’ things was strewed all over the town. The general, who had come with us from Malta, formed three strong piquets to patrol the town, an’ B was one of ’em.

“With fixed bayonets an’ our magazines charged we marched to the east end of the town, keepin’ to the broad streets an’ avoidin’ the narrow ones.

“It was as quiet as death, just a few wanderin’ dogs, an’ an ole woman, that’s all we saw until we came to a big square.

“It was a public square with a garden an’ a statue an’ a fountain in it, an’ at one of the big houses standin’ out by itself a flag was flyin’.

“‘That is an Embassy,’ I heard our officer say, an’ just then a little man came runnin’ out an’ stopped dead at the sight of us. He had a big leather wallet in his hand, an’ he stood by a bit, hesitating as though he wasn’t decided whether he should come on or run back.

“Then he slowly walked over to us.

“‘I’m M’sieur Pollysnitch,’ he sez; ‘I’m the Minister for Blamongia.’

“Our officer saluted.

“‘I desire to see the general,’ sez the little man, very eager. ‘My Government has a bank here, an’ we are most anxious to get a guard——’

“‘You’ll find the general on the quay,’ sez the officer. “Where is your bank?’

“‘I will lead you to it,’ sez the little chap, an’ starts hoppin’ off ahead. We followed him till we came to a stone buildin’. Most of the winders was smashed, but there was shutters up on the inside.

“The little chap opened the door with a key, an’ I noticed his hand shook.

“‘I’ll put up a couple of men inside,’ sez the officer. ‘They can hold it till the town is quietened down—where are all the people, by the way?’

“The little chap waved his hand to the hills.

“‘There,’ he sez, an’ then he hesitated again, ‘couldn’t your men hold this buildin’ from the outside?’

“‘No,’ sez the officer sharply, ‘I can’t leave two men in the open street to be shot down by your friends.’

“‘Not my friends,’ sez the little man, quick; ‘they are wicked rebels.’

“The officer nodded—it was Major Morris.

“‘I understood things were very quiet in Croto,’ he sez, ‘that the population was disarmed; that no rifles was comin’ to the island, an’ the sale of ammunition was stopped by law—where did they get their guns from?’

“The little chap shrugged an’ shrugged, till I thought he’d break his collar-bone.

“‘Who knows?’ he sez.

“The officer was lookin’ over the company.

“‘Fall out, Smith an’ Clark,’ he sez, ‘you two men will go inside this building, an’ will hold it. You will shoot down any person attemptin’ to enter——’

“‘Except me,’ sez the Ambassador, quick.

“‘Except his Excellency,’ sez the officer, ‘an’ if you are attacked you will defend yourself as well as you can until you are relieved.’

“Again the little feller tried to persuade the officer to leave us outside, but Nobby, who was all a-twitter with excitement, put his spoke in.

“‘Beg pardon, sir.’ he sez, ‘it would take a couple of hundred chaps to hold this buildin’ from the outside.’

“‘I think it would,’ sez the officer.

“The upshot of it was that we went in, an’ the door was shut on us.

“Nobby almost collapsed when we was safe inside.

“‘Smithy,’ he gasps, ‘it’s come!’

“I looked round the big room we was in. There was a lot of desks an’ stools an’ scales, but I didn’t see no bank-notes. I told Nobby so.

“‘Besides,’ I sez, ‘you can’t pinch things you’re set to guard.’

“‘I know that,’ sez Nobby, who’s a great feller for reasonin’ things out, ‘but you must understand, Smithy, that this is a Government bank, an’,’ he sez, as the brilliant idea struck him, ‘perhaps it’s the enemy’s bank. Pr’aps this is where the enemy puts its money by.’

“I tried to show him what a silly ass notion it was, but he was very enthusiastic about it.

“‘At any rate,’ he sez, after a bit, ‘we can look round an’ find out where the money is in case it turns out that what I say is right.’

“So we loafed about, lookin’ under tables an’ tryin’ the drawers of the desks.

“Then we tried the doors leadin’ out of the office, but they was locked.

“All except one.

“That was locked, too, as a matter of fact, but the chap that locked it must have been in a hurry, for he had turned the key before the door was shut close, an’ when we pushed it, it swung open, an’ showed us a flight of steps leadin’ down to the cellar.

“Nobby struck a match, an’ led the way down, an’ then he made his discovery.

“We found ourselves in a big cellar. There wasn’t any need for matches, because a dim kind of light came from a gratin’—which was a sort of ventilator.

“Piled up round the walls was long boxes—there must have been two hundred.

“Somethin’ was stencilled on ’em, an’ they were all sealed with red sealin’ wax.

“‘Gelt,’ read Nobby, ‘what does that mean, Smithy?’

“‘Gilt,’ I sez.

“‘Gilt!’ sez Nobby, very excited, ‘why, that’s slang for gold!’

He tried to lift one of the boxes, an’ it was as much as he could do.

“We looks at each other.

“‘Smithy,’ sez Nobby, very solemn, ‘there’s a million pounds here—what a pity old Pollysnitch ain’t the enemy.’

“He reached up to one of the top layers of boxes, an’ lifted it up.

“‘Gilt,’ he sez, mournful, ‘enough bloomin’ gilt to gild the dome of St. Paul’s.’

“I don’t know how it happened, but he must have pushed it out of its place.

“‘Look out!’ I sez, an’ he jumped back as the box toppled over, an’ crashed to the ground.

“Smashed it was, an’ there was somethin’ wrapped in oiled paper inside.

“As soon as he saw what he’d done, all the loot business went out of Nobby.

“I don’t suppose he’d ever thought serious of lootin’, for Nobby’s too good a soldier.

“‘Here’s a mess!’ he sez, ‘help me lift it up.’

“He stooped down, then jumped up quick.

“‘Gilt!’ he sez, ‘why, Smithy, these are rifles!’

“An’ so they were—boxes of ’em, an’ ammunition stored in most of ’em.

“Nobby whistled, an’ just then there came a bang at the bank door.

“‘Up you get, Smithy,’ he sez, an’ we raced up together.

“There was a little trap hole in the door—a sort of place like a pay box at a theatre, an’ Nobby looked out.

“‘It’s Pollysnitch.’ he whispers, an’ Spud Murphy’s with him.’

“Then he yelled out:

"'Don't come any nearer or I'll fire,' an' Pollysnitch skipped back.

"'What's the game?' sez Spud, comin' up to the hole.

"'Spud,' sez Nobby in a low voice, 'what's happened?'

"'You're relieved,' sez Spud, 'this here ambassor has decided there's no need for a guard, so the adjutant sent me along with him to tell you.'

"'I mean,' sez Nobby, 'what's happenin' in the town?'

"Spud shook his head.

"'Blowed if I know,' he sez, 'these blokes are goin' in for their independence, there's thousands of 'em outside the town, an' I heard the colonel say to the adjutant that if we can't stop 'em from armin' before to-night they're goin' to have "coody tar" (coup d'etat)—what's that?'

"'Some horrible foreign drink,' sez Nobby—but I think he got the idea, for he opened the door, an' saluted the little ambassador.

"'Won't you come in, sir?' he sez, an' Pollysnitch walked in.

"Then Nobby suddenly slammed the door, an' grabbed him by the neck.

"'Pollysnitch,' he sez, 'you're for the high jump.'

"Polly struggled like mad, but Nobby had got him well fixed.

"By an' bye we tied him down to a chair. He was white with rage.

"'My man,' he sez—he spoke English as well as me or you. 'My man, you will get into serious trouble—do you know that this is an act of war?'

"'I do,' sez Nobby, calmly. 'Spud,' he sez, 'nip back to the piquet, an' tell the major I've located the enemy, an' captured his bloomin' ammunition train.'"

## XIII. — THE FOOTBALL MATCH

I DO not deny that the Wigshires give themselves airs They refer to themselves modestly as the "Old and bold, ever fighting, never-failing 175th." This, to the intense indignation of the rest of the army, and more especially to the 5th Northumberland Fusiliers, from whom they have stolen the nickname.

The Wigshires have a very bad reputation in the Army. They are called "The Cuckoos," partly because they calmly appropriate the treasured traditions of others, and partly because—but we need not discuss the other reason, which is probably untrue. From what I know of the Wigshire Regiment, it is a very sound, hard-marching, straight-fighting corps, and its amiable weakness may well be overlooked in the light of its manifest qualities, but the rest of the Army would not share my views.

As you know, the "honours" of a regiment are the names of the battles in which it has fought, and which are inscribed on its colours. Some regiments have thirty or so, and are vastly puffed up in consequence. The Rifle Brigade has forty (I speak from memory), but has no colours to put them on. The Anchesters have twenty-three—but the Wigshires have only four, and this is a very sore point with the regiment.

When they marched into North Camp in '94, some wag of the Anchesters displayed a sheet from the barrack-room window on which was inscribed,

THOUGH SHALT NOT KILL

and the subtle, if irreverent, jibe is remembered to this day.

Therefore, I do not blame the childless Wigshires if they insist upon adopting the children of more favoured corps.

I remember that when they were stationed in Malta, they called themselves "The Holy Boys," and the Norfolk Regiment in far-off Belgaum was blissfully unconscious of the blatant plagiarism. Then at Wynberg, taking a mean advantage of the absence of the 17th Lancers, they took the style of the "Death or Glory Boys."

One very bad mistake they made, and that was at Dover, four years ago, when they blossomed forth as 'The Die-Hards." Now the regiment entitled to that distinction is the Middlesex Regiment, and it happened that the Middlesex were stationed at Chatham; and it was the worst of bad luck that the Middlesex and the Wigshires should have been brigaded together for the autumn manœuvres.

For it came to pass that, learning of the outrageous liberty taken by the Wigshires, the Middlesex descended upon them one night, and beat, belted, and kicked them into a realisation of their sinfulness.

None the less the Wigshires turned up nothing daunted next day, and instantly and unblushingly converted to their own use the style and title of "The Old Guard."

"What always annoyed us about the Wigshires," explained Private Smithy, "was the fact that they got an idea that they was the most sportin' regiment in the Army. They once got in the final for the Army Cup. Nobody knows how it happened, unless they got in when nobody was lookin'.

"They were beat by 19 goals to nothin', but that didn't upset 'em. They gave out that they was the undefeated champion footballers of the Army. Whilst they was stationed at home this didn't matter very much, because everybody knew the Wigshire class an' only larfed, but when they got abroad, it became serious, especially when they came to Wynberg an' used to stand round our football field, passin' sarcastic remarks about our play.

"One afternoon we had a company match, 'H' against 'B.' It was a walk-over for 'B,' because Nobby was playin' in hobnailed boots.

"I was standin' by, watchin' the match. There was a bit of an interval whilst the doctor was givin' artificial restitution to Toby Martin, wot Nobby happened to tread on, an' one of the Wigshires, who was standin' by, sez to me:

"'What are your chaps playin'? '

"'Football!' I sez.

"'Oh!' he sez, very polite, 'I thought you was preparin' for the military tournament.'

"When Nobby came off the field, this chap goes up to him an' sez:

"'Are you the captain of this team?'

"'I am,' sez Nobby.

"'Well,' sez the chap (whose name was Mudley), 'any time you'd like to see how football's played, you can come over to our field an' watch our regimental team!'

"'Thanks,' sez Nobby, very politely, 'I'll put on an old suit that won't get soiled by walkin' through your lines, an' look you up.'

"'Our lines are as clean as yours,' sez the chap, firin' up.

"'Not so clean as they was before you came,' sez Nobby, nicely.

"'We can teach you somethin' about football, any¬way,' sez the Wigshire feller.

"'I shouldn't wonder,' Nobby sez, 'regiments that never do any fightin' have plenty of time to learn football.'

"'We was in the final for the Army Cup,' sez the Wigshire man, swellin' with pride.

"'So I'm told,' sez Nobby, 'though I've never believed it.'

"'Why, it was in all the papers!' sez young Wigshire, very indignant.

"Nobby shook his head.

"'Don't you believe everythin' you read in the papers,' he sez.

"The upshot of this was that we got a challenge from the Wigshires that same night.

"It was brought into the canteen, an' posted up.

"The Wigshires offered to play the best team we could get together for anything we liked, an' Nobby accepted the challenge.

"There was a bit of a row afterwards because Nobby wasn't the captain of the regimental team by any manner of means, but he managed to smooth down Sergeant Pike, who's the real captain, an' started to get the team together.

"The Anchesters have got a lot of chaps who can play good football, an' Nobby persuaded most of 'em to come into the team; an' there were some artillery fellers....

"'It's a walk-over for us,' sez Nobby. 'Smithy, stroll over to the Wigshire's canteen an' see if you can find anybody who bets.' So me an' Yatesey turned up at the Wigshire's bar an' took all the bets that was goin'.

"The match was to be played on a Saturday, an' on the Friday night Nobby came to see me in a state of agitation.

"'Smithy,' he sez, 'd'ye know when I asked the Wigshire feller if they minded us playin' an outsider? '

"'Yes,' I sez.

"'They sez they didn't; so I got two chaps of the R.A., an' the Wigshires sez they'd get in a chap or two, as well.'

"'Yes,' I sez.

"'Well,' sez Nobby, 'they've got Baggs, the civilian goalkeeper of the Capetown club, an' Hiker, the centre- forward of the Caledonians, an' they've borrered the half-back chap from the Rondebosch team—in fact, the whole bloomin' team's made up of African league players!'

"It didn't want much explainin' after that why the Wigshires come over in their thousands that night tryin' to get bets about the match. Nobby met the captain from the other side.

"'What about a referee?' sez Nobby.

"'How would our Sergeant-major do?' sez the Wigshire feller.

"'Not at all,' sez Nobby, 'how about our Sergeant-major?'

"'Let's keep the game as honest as we can,' sez the Wigshire man, earnestly. 'I've been thinkin' about the referee: now we don't want a chap who will favour us, an' you don't want a chap who will favour you——'

"'Speak for yourself,' sez Nobby, 'never mind about what we want.'

"'I've been talkin' to our team——'

"Nobby larfed sarcastic.

"'Our team,' sez the Wigshire captain, 'thinks that for the honour of the old corps, the Ever Fightin', Never Failin'——'

"'Don't try that game on with me,' sez Nobby, 'your team! Why, they're bloomin' civilians! Fat lot they care about the honour of the Wigs—an' anyway, there ain't enough honour to go round. Let's settle the referee—how would I do?'

"This staggered the Wigshire chap so that he couldn't speak for a minute or two.

"'You?' he gasps.

"'Me,' sez Nobby, 'I can't play, I've sprained me knee.'

"After the Wigshire chap had said where he'd see hisself before he let Nobby referee, an' where he'd see Nobby, an' the 'ole of the Anchester Regiment, Nobby struck in:

"'When you've finished arskin' someone to take away your eyesight,' he sez, very severe, 'perhaps you'll listen to reason. Suppose I'm referee. I can't favour our side, can I? Wouldn't everybody say "Nobby Clark's workin' it for the Anchesters?" It stands to reason that if I'm referee the Wigshires'll have a better show than if you got a chap from another regiment.'

"This seemed to strike the Wigshire man as bein' very sensible. It took him a long time to convince the other Wigshire chaps, because he couldn't talk as glib as Nobby.

"At first they wouldn't hear of it, then they wanted to appoint one of their own men, on the same lines—but Nobby said he wouldn't put temptation in any man's way.

"Our own fellows was beside theirselves with joy when Nobby was appointed referee.

"'It's a pinch for us,' sez Spud Murphy, 'with you refereein' an' '

"'Why?' sez Nobby.

"'Because,' sez Spud, 'we'll be able to——'

"'You won't be able to do anythin',' sez Nobby, shortly.

"'When I'm a referee I'm a referee—don't let that silly idea of yours get about.'

"The mornin' of the match came: it was Saturday, an' Nobby had got permission for the team to be excused parade. Umfreville, the adjutant, sent for Nobby.

"'What is this match you're playing?' he sez, so Nobby explained.

"The Adjutant looks straight in Nobby's eye.

"'Some of the officers were talking about going down to the field to see it,' he sez.

"Nobby looked uncomfortable.

"'I'd rather they didn't, sir,' he sez.

"'Why?' sez the Adjutant.

"'Well, sir,' sez Nobby slowly, 'there'll be a lot of rough play, an' pop'lar feelin' may run high.'

"'Um,' sez the Adjutant, suspicious, 'who's the referee?'

"'Me, sir,' sez Nobby, modestly.

"'Thank you,' sez the Adjutant, prompt.

"There were no officers present that afternoon, an' very few non-coms.

"Nobby turned up in a beautiful pair of knickers that he borrered from a chap, an' he had one of the loudest whistles he could buy.

"When he went on to the field, blowin' his whistle to let everybody know he was there, he got one of the biggest receptions I've ever seen a referee get. The Wigshire fellers cheered him because he was goin' to do the fair thing to them, an' our fellers cheered him because they thought he was goin' to do the fair thing to us, an' as little Jerry Jordan said, 'bar a miracle we couldn't be beat.' I don't know too much about football. I've watched it, an' played it, an' read about it, but I don't know the delicate touches like Nobby does.

"First thing Nobby did was to make the Wigshire chaps change their goalkeeper.

"The Wigshires was a bit surprised, an' especially the professional fellers who were playin', but Nobby pointed out that by order of the Army Council no chap over five foot four was allowed to keep goal, and the civilian professionals took it all in good part.

“Then the game commenced.

“The Wigshires took the ball straight up to our goal, an’ my heart went up into my mouth.

Suddenly, Nobby’s whistle blew.

“‘What’s up?’ sez the Wigshire captain, very wrathful.

“‘Foul,’ sez Nobby; ‘foul against the Wigshires.’

“‘Why?’ sez the Wigshire feller.

“‘Never mind why,’ sez Nobby, an’ the foul had to be allowed. To show how impartial Nobby was, soon after that he gave a foul against the Anchesters.

“It’s true, the ball was right up the other end of the field, an’ there was not any danger to us from a penalty, but Nobby gave it, an’ this made the Wigshire people more easy in their minds.

“They got hold of the ball again, an’ carried it like lightnin’ into our country. Then there was a wild an’ desperate mix-up with Nobby in the middle of it, blowin’ his whistle.

“‘What’s the matter now?’ shouts the Wigshire chap.

“‘Offside!’ sez Nobby.

“‘It’s not offside,’ yells the Wig.

“‘Then it’s hands,’ sez Nobby, calmly; ‘it’s the same thing.’

“Somehow our chaps couldn’t keep the ball away from our goal try as hard as they could, an’ the Wigshires would have scored only Nobby happened to get in the way of the ball once or twice.

“Just before half-time the Wigshire captain got a beautiful shot, an’ took it. He missed the ball an’ went sprawlin’.

“To this day,” asserted Smithy, solemnly, “nobody knows the truth about that accident. Some say Nobby tripped him up, an’ others say he fell against him by accident. Anyway the Wigshires yelled like blazes, an’ one of the professionals sez Nobby was a disgrace to the umpirin’ business.

“At half-time the game stood at ‘love-all,’ an’ Nobby was loudly cheered by our chaps in consequence.

“The Wigshire captain had a few words to say to Nobby.

“‘I thought you was a gentleman,’ he sez, bitterly.

“‘Whatever made you think that?’ sez Nobby, an’ that floored the Wig.

“The finest player on the other side was a chap called Shaw, but Nobby soon settled him in the second half. Just as the Wigs was pushin’ the ball towards our goal—they did this all the afternoon—Nobby’s whistle blew.

“‘Shaw,’ he sez, very stern, ‘that’s the second time I’ve had to warn you. If it occurs again I shall order you off this field.’

“‘What have I done?’ sez poor Shaw.

“‘Never mind,’ sez Nobby, an’ blew his whistle.

“By some accident our chaps got hold of the ball, an’ rushed it down to the Wigs’ goal, an’ kept it at that end for five minutes. All this time Nobby’s whistle didn’t blow once, not even when the Wigshires asked for ‘offside.’

“A good many of our fellers think Nobby lost a big chance by not givin’ a penalty kick or so, but Nobby said he did think of it, but couldn’t trust any of our fellers to kick straight enough.

“When Spud Murphy took a runnin’ kick at the Wigshire captain an’ the Wigshires yelled ‘foul!’ some¬body shouted from their side, ‘Have you lost your whistle?’ but Nobby took no notice, an’ when the ball came down to the Anchester end again he jolly soon showed ’em that the whistle was in good order.

“That’s where he warned Shaw off the field an’ cautioned Hackitt, an’ gave three fouls against the Wigs, all in about three minutes.

“I don’t know any other regiment that Nobby would have dared take such liberties with.

“What I might call the climax of the game came just before the close of play. Nobby had given a penalty kick against the Wigs, an’ all the fellers were clusterin’ as thick as bees round the Wigs’ goal.

“Nobby’s whistle blew, an’ the ball fell amongst ’em. You couldn’t see the ball, only a lot of strugglin’ an fightin’ chaps in football jerseys, and Nobby dived right in amongst ’em.

“He disappeared, but by an’ bye, the crowd fell apart, an’ the ball came flyin’ out, smack! right into the Wigs’ goal!

“Our fellers nearly went mad with delight. You couldn’t hear anything for the cheerin’ an’ shoutin’: you couldn’t have heard Nobby’s whistle if he’d been blowin’ it. As a matter of fact, he was havin’ a terrible argument with the Wigs’ captain.

“‘Who shot that goal?’ sez the Wig, fiercely.

“‘Spud Murphy,’ sez Nobby.

"'You're a liar,' sez the Wig, as wild as wild. 'You shot that goal, you big-footed thief.'

"'As a referee,' sez Nobby——

"'Never mind about referee,' sez the Wig captain, almost tearin' his hair. 'As man to man I tell you you're a liar. I see you do it, you robber. I see you push aside "Corfy" Jackson an' kick it.'

"'If, in the excitement of the moment,' sez Nobby, 'I happened to touch the ball—an' I don't believe I did—I apologise. I see somethin' on the ground that looked big an' round an' empty an' I kicked it. But I was under the impression at the time that it was your head.'

"The Wigs got even, because they sent an account of the match to the 'Cape Times.' I've got the bit about it to this day. Here it is:—

"'An interesting match was played yesterday between a thirteen of the Royal East Wigshires (the Fighting Pompadours) and fourteen picked men of the Anchesters. The novices of the Anchesters played as well as possible, but stood little chance against the veterans of Wigshire. Private Clark scored the only goal of the afternoon. The game was played without a referee.'"

## XIV. — THATCHER'S BROTHER

SUPERIOR young non-commissioned officers, possessing first- class certificates, are wont to take me to task from time to time for misrepresenting the Army.

Now by Allah and The Prophet, and by Ali, his unfortunate but most worthy son, I swear I do not heed the strictures of any N.C.O., for I secretly dislike young N.C.O.'s, and am a private at heart.

I regard the private soldier as the backbone of the British Army, the commissioned soldier as the brains, and, to pursue the anatomical simile, I look upon the superior young non-commissioned officer as the nerves of the junior service.

In my life I have seen truly great soldiers of non¬commissioned rank, who could never secure the coveted "first," fine corporals and soldierlike sergeants, born leaders of men, to whom this education test is an insuperable barrier.

In my soldiering days, I took my "first" without batting a lid. Had I borne an exemplary military character, instead of having behind me the record of two terms of imprisonment for military offences, I might well have been made corporal, sergeant, or the like, although I was no more fitted to command men than the proverbial tom-cat. But a "first" was dead easy for me, because I was one of those lazy beggars who would sooner read than work, and naturally I had a pull over the men who loved soldiering for soldiering's sake, and had no time to fool round after the sensational details of Wat Tyler's rebellion.

The story of Thatcher proves nothing. It was an extraordinary incident. Thatcher may, or may not, have had a "first"—he probably had. Smithy has lately supplied me with particulars regarding the affair at Pretoria.

You may not have heard it. I, previously, knew little more of the affair than was half revealed in a two-line paragraph in the "Times" newspaper. Later I saw a more detailed account in the "Johannesburg Star," but Smithy has filled in the gaps of that story, which is now fully set forth for the first time.

"War," said Smithy, philosophically, "is wilful murder on a large scale. You can look at it any way you like, an' it works out the same. It's just as though it came out in orders like this.

**BATTALION ORDERS**

Nov. 1, 19——.

1. Owin' to a slight disagreement between us an' Blanmongia, the followin' structural alterations to the Ten Commandments will be carried out:

For 'Thou shalt not kill' the following words will be substituted:

'Soldiers in action are reminded that the most vital spot in the enemy's body is his stomach; soldiers firin' high will be tried by Court Martial on a charge of wasting ammunition.'

By Order.

"It stands to reason that war upsets a feller. All his life he's been brought up with the idea that beyond hittin' his young brother, or jumpin' on his wife, there's very little violent exercise that the law allows. He's taught that murder is a horrid thing, only to be read about in the Sunday papers, an' that nobody uses firearms except American policemen an' Instructors of Musketry.

"In the Army they give him a rifle, but if they find him in possession of ammunition they run him into the 'clink.' They teach him to shoot the wild bull's-eye, an' the fierce magpie, but more often than not he hits a wanderin' outer. It's when he don't hit nothin' that they get upset: it's when you can hear his bullet 'whow-w-w-in' in the air that the musketry officer gets sick.

"'Good heavens!' he sez, as pale as death, 'where did your bullet go, you careless feller?—perhaps you've hit somebody on the other side of the hill!'

"An' he's taught that he mustn't point his rifle at anyone, an' mustn't fix his bayonet in the barrack-room, an' mustn't do anything that's likely to hurt anybody.

"Now, this is all right in a way, because you get chaps into the Army who ain't fit to trust with a catapult, never mind about rifles.

"Nobody in their senses could complain because the Army was cautious, but it only goes to prove what I say—that all the trainin' the young soldier gets is in one direction—that the wickedest thing in the world to do is to hurt anybody else.

"Then comes the war an'—whack! goes the trainin' of a lifetime.

"'Do you see that Afridi?' sez the officer; 'that one in the white shirt on the little hill? Him that's wavin' his arms?'

"'Yes, sir,' sez the young soldier.

"'Well, put him out of mess,' sez the officer; 'aim at his belt—range 850 yards—allow a foot for windage—now.'

"'Bang!'

"'Very good,' sez the officer, 'I rather think you hit him in the head, there's another one. Don't aim so high—now! '

"'Bang!'

"'That's better,' sez the officer, very pleased. 'That got him fairly; try that old chap with the whiskers.'

"An' so it goes on.

"A war might last a week, an' it might last three years. When it lasts a week it's called a 'punitive expedition,' an' it means that you come on the enemy unawares, catch him a swipe in the jaw, an' run away like blazes before he recovers hisself.

"When the war lasts longer, like the South African war did, it upsets a chap more than a short war, because a short war's a sort of horrible dream, an' it's all over before you've time to change your habits.

"But three years of war does no good for the young soldier, because it comes at the time when he's, so to speak, formin' his character.

"He's got the habit of takin' his rifle an' shootin' quick; he's got the habit of countin' his success by the number of chaps he's killed, an' that's not healthy.

"When the South African war broke out there was a corporal of ours, named Thatcher, a big feller with a loose lip an' a scowl that never seemed to leave him. He wasn't exactly popular. He'd been a colour-sergeant in the Wigshires, an' had been reduced to corporal for some affair with a woman. They transferred him to us in India, because he said he couldn't soldier as a corporal in a regiment where he'd been colour-sergeant, and from the very first day he came to us he was hated.

"You'd think you could get even with a chap like that, who was unpopular all round, but as a matter of fact, it was impossible unless you did somethin' particularly low-down, an' none of our chaps would do that. For Corporal Thatcher was a good soldier, an' knew his work from A to Z, an' there wasn't any change to be got out of him.

"He'd a bitter tongue, an' had the instinct for findin' out a feller's tender spots.

"He fell foul of Nobby the first day he was in the regiment. 'You talk too much,' he sez to Nobby, 'you're like an old woman.'

"'Do I, corporal?' sez Nobby, innocent.

"'Yes, you do,' sez the Corporal; 'perhaps you don't know it.'

"'I don't,' sez Nobby. 'I don't know how an old woman talks, or young woman either; I never go to the married quarters.'

"Nobby's got a nasty tongue of his own, I might say, an' I saw Thatcher go white with rage at Nobby's hint.

"After that, Thatcher got Nobby 'set'—always givin' him dirty little jobs to do.

“One day when there was only Thatcher, Nobby an’ me in the bungalow—we was in Bombay at the time—Nobby walks up to the Corporal an’ sez:

“‘Corporal, can I have a word with you?’

“Thatcher looks at him as though he was a new kind of insec’.

“‘You get on with your work,’ he sez.

“‘Never mind about the work,’ sez Nobby, ‘what I wan’t to know is, are you a man? ’

“‘What!’ roars Thatcher.

“‘Because, if you are,’ sez Nobby, ‘an’ will drop your rank for ten minutes, I’ll push your face round to the back of your head’—or words to that effect.

“‘You heard that!’ sez Thatcher to me, an’ ran to the bungalow door yellin’ for the guard.

“They came across at the double, an’ Nobby’ was taken to the guard room in quick time. Next day, at orderly room, I was called as evidence.

“‘Did you hear this, Smith?’ sez the adjutant.

“‘Hear what, sir?’ I sez.

“‘Hear Private Clark threaten the Corporal?’

“‘No, sir,’ I sez.

“‘What!’ sez Thatcher, ‘didn’t you hear him threaten to strike me?’

“‘No,’ I sez; ‘from what I gathered he was addressin’ his remarks to me.’

“The adjutant looks at me.

“‘But I thought you an’ Clark were such good friends,’ he sez, suspicious.

“‘We used to be,’ I sez, regretful, ‘but we had misunderstandin’s lately.’

“That got Nobby off, and Thatcher never forgave me.

“Soon after this we went home, then came the war, an’ we was ordered to hold ourselves in readiness for South Africa. There was some delay’ about our leavin’ Aldershot, because we were expectin’ a draft from the other battalion in Egypt, an’ the news went round that amongst the draft was Thatcher’s brother.

“‘Bloomin’ fine regiment this will be,’ sez Nobby, gloomily, ‘bad enough with Thatcher—what’ll it be with a deuce of ’em?’

“The strange thing about it was, that most of us had a likin’ for young Thatcher before he arrived, an’ the reason was that somebody had heard the Corporal talkin’ about him one night in the Corporal’s room.

"'He's a mealy cub,' sez Thatch, 'been tied up to his mother's apron strings too long. The old woman's dead now, an' he's come into the Army. I'll make him sit up.'

"The draft arrived three days before we sailed for Africa, an' young Thatcher was the sickliest lookin' of the lot. How the doctor came to pass him for Egpytian service is one mystery, an' how our doctor marked him fit for active service is another. He was more like a girl than a man, a timid, pale-faced boy, shy an' awkward.

"I was in the room when he came in to see his brother.

"'Hullo, Bill,' he sez.

"'Not so much of the Bill,' sez Thatch; 'I'm Corporal Thatcher to you my boy, an' don't you forget it.'

"This enthusiastic reception so staggered the kid that he didn't say another word.

"I don't know any of Thatch's private business, but there must have been bad blood between the two, jealousy, or somethin' of the sort, for the Corporal started makin' the boy's life a hell.

"All the rotten things he used to give Nobby to do he gave to the boy.

"He wasn't a good sailor, an' that made it worse, for it was on the voyage out that Thatcher started his pranks.

"'I'll make a man of you,' he sez, an' started to put work on to him that a low-caste sweeper wouldn't have stood. Half the time the kid was seasick, an' the other half he was gettin' over it, an' somehow Thatcher always chose the most disagreeable jobs for his brother. It got so bad that Nobby went to Thatch.

"'Corporal,' he sez, quietly, 'I want you to take me before the Commanding Officer.'

"'What for?' sez Thatch.

' I'm goin' to make a complaint about the way you treat your brother,' sez Nobby.

"'Look here,' sez Thatch, through his teeth, 'you keep your nose out of my business or it'll be the worse for you.'

"'Never mind about that,' sez Nobby, 'I want to see the Commanding Officer.'

"'Suppose you see him?' sez Thatch with a sneer, 'where's your evidence?'

"'Your brother's evidence's enough,' sez Nobby.

"Thatch laughed.

"'You fool, do you think he's goin' to give evidence against me—did Smithy give evidence against you?'

"That upset Nobby's plan—he knew he couldn't depend on the brother, because he'd already sounded him, an' found him shy of chargin' Thatch.

"Toward the end of the voyage, the youngster had a better time because the Corporal nearly met with an accident.

"One night, when he was leanin' over the ship's side, Billy Mason fell against him an' nearly knocked him overboard.

"'You did that for the purpose,' gasps Thatch, with a face like a taller candle.

"But Billy swore he tripped over a bucket an' couldn't help it, an' there was the bucket on the deck to prove it. I know it was there, because I saw Nobby an' Billy put it there.

"Nobby said the idea was to frighten Thatch, an' that was probably true.

"Anyhow, the youngster had a more peaceful life till the ship reached port, an' we entrained for up country. Then the dog's life began all over again.

"The boy was a weaklin', but he'd got plenty of grit. He'd march on one leg sooner than chuck it up. But whatever he did, nothin' satisfied his brother. It was nag, nag, nag from day to day, an' things worse than naggin'. He'd post him on the lonesomest post he could find, send him out scoutin' whenever he happened to be in his sections.

"The kid was plucky under fire, an' so long as a fight was goin' on, but when it was all over, an' it came to collectin' the dead an' wounded, I've seen him beg, with tears in his eyes, to be excused the duty of bringin' in the casualties.

"'I can't stand it, Bill,' he sez, once. 'I can't bear to see people in pain.'

"'I've told you about Bill-ing me,' sez the Corporal. 'Now, do as you're told—go out with No. 3 party, you miserable little worm.'

"This sort of thing went on for the best part of three years, an' somehow the kid got quieter an' quieter, an' he used to sit broodin' for hours at a time.

"One day he turned on his brother.

"'You're tryin' to make me as big a brute as yourself,' he sez, 'an' it'll be a bad day's work for you when you succeed.'

"The Corporal 'run' him for that; charged him usin' threatening language to a superior. I believe our Colonel was a bit shocked at one brother chargin' the other, because although that sort of thing is all right in story-books, it don't look so nice when it actually happens.

But the charge was proved, an' young Thatcher awarded 'field punishment,' which meant that he had to be tied up to the wheel of an ammunition waggon for two hours.

"Till the war was all over, the youngster said nothin' an' did nothin.' We went into barracks at Pretoria, an' settled down for a bit to a quiet, peaceful life. One day the whole secret about Thatcher an' the boy came out.

"It was over a letter—we was all sat round the table peelin' 'em for dinner, when in walked Thatcher with the letter in his hand. He walked straight up to the youngster who was sittin' at one end of the table, an' the boy didn't lift his eyes.

"'Here—you,' sez Thatcher, roughly. 'I've got some news for you—father's dead.'

"'My father?' sez the youngster, jumpin' up.

"'No—my father,' sez Thatcher, with a sneer; 'don't try to kid us you don't know who your father was.'

"The youngster looked dazed.

"'You don't suppose you was kicked round at home for nothin', do you? You don't suppose my father had a down on you because you was his son, do you?' sez Thatcher. 'Why you——'

"He used a word that ain't allowed in a barrack-room, an' Nobby reached out an' caught him by the collar.

"'Hands off,' shouted Thatcher, an' sprang back.

"I don't know why it was but nobody moved as the boy staggered to his bed cot an' fumbled like a blind man at the arm-rack. Before we could get near him he had his rifle in his hand and the breach open. I heard the cold tinkle of the cartridge fallin' into its place.

"'Bill,' he sez, and the Corporal seemed paralysed with fear. 'Bill,' he sez, 'father's in Hell, go to him an' tell him why I sent you.'

"Thatcher was dead before he touched the ground."

## XV. — THE INVENTION CRAZE

IN compiling military text books, it frequently happens that mistakes occur, but your military text book being an unimaginative and wholly utilitarian production, such mistakes are inartistically but effectively corrected by a slip pasted at the beginning of the book. It is as well that this should be done. For in a little manual on regimental routine, I once read the following astounding instruction:—

"The burglar on duty should be wakened half-an-hour before reveille by the sergeant of the guard, so that he should more effectively and punctually perform his duty."

But for the amending slip that prefaced the volume I should have gone through life under the impression that the Anchester Regiment, so far from discouraging, actually fostered crime. But the slip reassured me. It ran:—

"Para 24. line 6. For 'burglar' read 'bugler.'"

In the days when the Anchester Journal appeared, such printer's errors were a source of considerable annoyance. The Anchester Journal was the regimental magazine. It was published monthly at 2d., and was worth the money. Especially was it precious in the days when Private Clark undertook its composition. For one learnt of such interesting happenings as:

"the reGMentall sportS went of WITH graet suCesS."

And

"a New Drajt Has arriven froM anchEsters."

Nobby, I must explain, took on the duty of compositor at a time when Jinky—very properly and naturally called "Inky"—Taylor went into hospital with a broken rib, acquired at great expense one pay night at the "Glass Barrel."

Nobby had never set a line of type before, but he was very willing, and the result was creditable. Though Captain Umfreville objected, somewhat captiously, I think, to the abbreviation of his name to "Cap. Umf.," Nobby's explanation that he couldn't find the box with the "l's" in was accepted.

"The thing that everybody's got to remember about Nobby," defended Smithy, "is that he's willin'. It don't matter what sort of job's offered to Nobby he'd take it on, if he'd never seen it done before. When we got to Belfast, in the Transvaal, durin' the war, we found a lot of railway engines, an' the general called for volunteers who knew somethin' about engine-drivin' to come forward.

"Nobby was one of the first chaps to stand out.

"'What do you know about engines, Clark?' sez the adjutant.

"'Everythin' that's known,' sez Nobby, prompt.

"'Can you drive one?'

"'Drive 'em, sir?' sez Nobby, very much amused at the idea of his not bein' able to drive 'em. 'Why, the man that drives the "Flyin' Scotsman" used to live next door to us at home!'

"'But can you drive 'em?' sez the officer.

"'I'm willin' to try,' sez Nobby. 'I can't say no fairer than that, sir.'

"'But,' sez the officer, very persistent, 'have you ever worked an engine?'

"'Yes, sir,' sez Nobby; 'a beer engine,' he sez.

"I can't understand why Nobby didn't get the job, an' it only goes to prove that there's no encouragement given in the army to chaps who want to learn a trade.

"There was never a job goin' in barracks, with extra pay attached, that Nobby didn't apply for: cook, armourer, shoemaker, tailor, or odd paintin' work. Nobby put in for 'em all at some time or another. He got one or two, but somehow he never stuck to 'em. You see, Nobby's got ideas of his own, an' the army, bein' what I might call conservative, don't encourage a chap to go off the beaten track.

"For instance, when Nobby was tailorin', he thought out a plan for a new regimental weskit, an' a plan for a pocket in your cap, so as a chap could carry his shavin' kit when he went on leave. When he was at the armourer's he thought out a new bullet with a bit of string fastened to it, so that when you'd shot a feller you could extract the bullet without callin' in the doctor. Nobby worked it out, that it would save the Government hundreds of pounds a year in bullets alone.

"But Nobby's greatest invention was his latest. It was when Sanitas Domount, the balloon bloke, was creatin' such a stir that Nobby got the idea for a flyin' machine.

"I don't say that he ever carried it out, because, as a matter of fact, he couldn't raise the money; but the idea was a fine one.

"Nobby had been studyin' birds, sparrers an' canaries an' things, an' he saw the idea in a flash.

"His invention was to make a lot of bla-monges—them white puddin's—an' put 'em round the edge of a balloon basket. Then you had to stick thousan's of feathers all over 'em. Then you had to shake the bla-monges to make 'em tremble, an' as soon as they started tremblin' an' the feathers wavin', up the bloomin' car would go.

“That was Nobby’s best invention, but the money didn’t come in, even though Nobby pointed out to the chaps that even if the experiment didn’t come to any¬thing it would be simple to pick the feathers out, an’ eat the bla-monges.

“This was just about the time when the regiment was invention-mad. A feller of ours named Hawkey had invented a new cut-off for the rifle. A silly simple thing it was, that anybody could have thought of, if they’d happened to be thinkin’ of it. Yet Mr. Bloomin’ Hawkey got twenty pounds from the War Office an’ might have had promotion if it hadn’t been for a slight argument he had with a civil policeman in town (we was at Gib. at the time).

“The moment it got about that Hawkey had made twenty pounds the regiment reclined in various thoughtful attitudes, an’ put together inventions. That’s when Nobby produced the pull-out bullet an’ the razor-case cap an’ the reversible shirt that didn’t require washin’. Spud Murphy invented a holler bayonet with holes in it that you could play like a flute, an’ Yatesey invented a patent boot that laced itself up, an’ Bill Mason, who was a first-class armourer, invented a new kind of hand¬cuff. He tried ’em on Spud, an’ when he went to take ’em off they wouldn’t work, an’ it took the armourer-sergeant a whole day to file ’em off.

“Then Nobby invented a penny-in-the-slot machine out of a biscuit-box an’ an old alarum clock. You put your penny in one end an’ got a packet of Woodbines out of the other.

“Lots of chaps tried that. The pennies went in all right, but nothin’ seemed to come out at the other end.

“‘It’s very funny,’ sez Nobby. ‘It worked all right this mornin’—try it again.’

“So the chap who was makin’ the experiment—a recruit named Bowen—put another penny in, but nothin’ happened.

“Nobby kept shakin’ the box to make it work, but it was no go.

“‘Try it again,’ sez Nobby.

“‘No, thanks,’ sez the young feller, ‘it’s cost me threepence already.’

“‘The chances are,’ sez Nobby, thoughtfully, ‘that the next penny that’s put in will bring out four packets—who’ll have a penn’orth?’

“Tiny White tried on the off chance of gettin’ the four, an’ Harry Dyke had two tries because Nobby said that as likely as not the whole bloomin’ stock of cigarettes would come out at one pop.

“Spud said it was a swindle, an’ most of the other fellers who had lost money said the same.

“But, as Nobby pointed out, you can’t expect a new invention to work smooth at first, an’ it showed the invention was genuine because one part of it was workin’ splendidly.

“‘Which part?’ sez Spud.

“‘The part where the money goes in,’ sez Nobby.

“After that Nobby invented a burglar alarm an’ Spud sez it wasn’t before it was wanted.

“It was soon after that Nobby took on the Anchester Journal. I think I told you about Inky Taylor goin’ sick. Nobby wasn’t the greatest compositor in the world. He’s the sort of modest chap who’d admit it. But he did his dabdest an’ angels can do no more. When Inky came out of hospital an’ started sortin’ out the type that Nobby had mixed up, he said that Nobby was the most experimental chap he’d ever worked with. There wasn’t a single kind of type in the office that Nobby hadn’t messed about, an’ it took Inky the best part of three months to put ’em straight. You’d find little ‘X’s’ in the boxes where the ‘B’s’ live, an’ ‘G’s’ an’ ‘C’s’ all piggin’ together in one happy family.

“Nobby wanted Inky to take him on an’ learn him the trade.

“I forget exactly where Inky said he’d see Nobby to before he allowed him within a hundred miles of his office, but it was somewhere unpleasant.

“But Nobby was terribly taken up with the printin’ business an’ went off to see the sergeant-major, who was the editor of the regimental journal. It so happened that the feller who used to do the general work on the paper, had just gone away on the reserve an’ when Nobby asked for the job, an’ said his brother was the editor of the Times, an’ his uncle George was the head man on the Telegraph, and his cousin Peter drew the pictures in the Sunday Chronicle the sergeant-major gave him the job.

“News is pretty scarce in a regiment, beyond cricket an’ football an’ a concert or two at the sergeants’ mess, an’ the shootin’, there’s nothin’ to write about except ‘We hear with regret of the death of Mr. Thomas Samson, who served as a private in the Anchester Regiment durin’ the Peninsular War,’ an’ similar excitin’ items of news.

“When the battalion got to India, it was even worse, because the regiment had to depend upon the officers for news. We’d have a ‘Short Account of my Pig-Stickin’ Expedition to the Chootee Hills,’ an’ a ‘Brief Note of a Tiger Hunt in Bengal.’ All these was very interestin’ to the chaps who wrote ’em, but for the fellers who bought the paper they wasn’t worth two penn’orth of snuff.

“It was when we was in Chucajee waitin’ for the cholera to pass that Nobby got charge of the paper owin’ to the sergeant-major goin’ sick.

“That’s when it began to get bright.

“Nobby started a new column called ‘Tittle Tattle’ that caused more excitement in one day than theJournal had caused all its life.

“There were little paragraphs like this:—

Spud took another bath last Tuesday. How time flies!

Ugly J. has entered for the Chucajee Beauty Competition.

**DIARY OF THE WEEK.**

Tuesday.—Money market tight.

Wednesday (Pay Day). — Bill Mason ditto.

“An’ such light-hearted chatter. An’ he had a leader about recruits payin’ respect to old soldiers.

“But the finest thing in the whole magazine was the Foreign News—an’ of all the things that Nobby ever invented in his life this was the most wonderful an’ astonishin’ for more reasons than one.

“I think I told you about Chucajee an’ the sort of place it was. It was miles from everywhere, an’ there wasn’t no wire, an’ no telephone, or anything. We got all the news we got from mounted messengers an’ from a helio station twenty miles away on the hills.

“Bein’ in a cholera camp the officers was quite willin’ to do anythin’ to prevent the young soldiers dyin’ of funk, an’ when Nobby asked the adjutant if he could make up news the adjutant sez, Yes.

“‘In fact,’ sez the adjutant, ‘I never expected anything like the truth from a paper you have to do with, Clark, an’ I shall be very much disappointed if I ’eard a single line in the Journal that I can believe.’

“‘Thank you, sir,’ sez Nobby, gratefully.

“So me an’ Nobby sat down to write the foreign news.

“We started by sayin’ that the wife of a Wolver¬hampton labourer had had triplets, an’ got the King’s bounty.

“‘We’re pretty safe in sayin’ that,’ sez Nobby, who reads the newspapers; ‘they’re always havin’ triplets in Wolverhampton.’

“‘What about a fire in the City?’ I sez.

“‘That’s a good idea,’ sez Nobby, an’ wrote:

A terrible fire occurred in the City of London. Damage was done to the extent of hundreds of pounds. The place was insured.

“And then we put in a bit about a Liverpool gentleman who committed suicide owin’ to the loss of his high hat, a bit about a scene in Parliament, an’ a bit about the German Emperor.

“‘We can’t go wrong in sayin’ this,’ sez Nobby, very confident, ‘because this is the sort of news that’s in the papers all the year round.’

“Just then we was all full of the Chucajee Plate, what Nobby lost owin’ to his bein’ overweight, an’ it was only natural that Nobby should want to do the sportin’ news very well. So he went to a young officer in the sportin’ line of business, young Lieutenant Tollemache, an’ asked him if he could tell him what races was on just about then.

“‘Well, Clark,’ sez the officer, smilin, ‘there’s all kinds of races—there’s the Manchester November Handicap next week.’

“‘What’s goin’ to run. sir?’ sez Nobby.

“‘Not bein’ gifted as you are, Clark,’ sez the officer, ‘with the divine gift of secon’ sight, I can’t tell you—but I’ve got the entries,’ an’ he dug ’em out.

‘There was forty-three entries, an’ me an’ Nobby sat down to write about the race.

“‘We’ll make The Brewer win,’ sez Nobby, ‘an’ Otuka second.’

“An’ he sat down and wrote the description just like, you read about in the papers.

The Manchester November Handicap was run yesterday amidst great excitement. Epsom Downs was crowded with people and so were the trains. It was a glorious sight. “The Brewer” was the first at the post and spent some time chatting with the starter. The noble animal leant idly against the starting gate watching the animated scene with his beautiful eyes. Suddenly the whistle blew and “The Brewer” roaring with excitement, leapt into the air. “They’re off!” was the cry, and in a few minutes the horses were tearing round the cinder track as though they meant business. They disappeared behind the Bushes. Three minutes passed, five minutes passed, and the excitement became phenomenal. Suddenly the horses came into sight. “The Brewer” was leading. The other horses were behind. “‘The Brewer’ wins!” they cried, as the field came round Tattenham Comer, and bets were freely made. The bell rang joyously. “The Brewer” had won; Otuka second; Hammond Lady third. Betting: 50 to 1 agst “The Brewer,” 1,000 to 1 agst Otuka, 5,000 to 1 agst Hammond Lady. The favourite won by six lengths.

“That was the finest bit of writin’ that Nobby ever done in his life, an’ when the Journal came out everybody was delighted with it. In fact, there never was a Journal that had a bigger sale than Nobby’s number.

“Billy Mason said he’d have Nobby into court for deflamation of character, an’ Spud Murphy liked the paragraph about his bath so much that he said that for two pins he’d break Nobby’s jaw, but the officers was very pleased an’ the Colonel sent for Nobby.

“‘Very well done, Clark,’ he sez, ‘very excellent spoof. What a liar you are; you’re a born journalist,’ an’ similar compliments.

“Young Tollemache sent for Nobby, too.

“‘Clark,’ he sez. ‘what the devil made you hit upon The Brewer—I’ve never heard of the horse. Is it a runner?’

“‘I don’t know, sir,’ sez Nobby: ‘it ought to be,’ he sez.

“The young officer looks at Nobby.

“‘H’m,’ he sez, ‘the race is run in two days’ time.’ He shook his head an’ said nothin’ else.

“Soon after that we got orders to move to Poona, an’ we weren’t particularly sorry to get there. The night we arrived, Nobby an’ me was discussin’ things.

“‘I’ve got a feelin,’ sez Nobby, ‘that old Tolly has sent a cable home an’ backed The Brewer, an’ that it’ll win, an’ old Tolly will come in to me an’ say, with tears in his eyes, “Nobby, you’ve saved me family from ruin—here’s a hundred for you, don’t make a beast of yourself with it, an’——”’

“Then a most surprisin’ thing happened, for the very thing that Nobby was speakin’ about come to pass. In walked Tolly an’ another officer, an’ they was lookin’ so pleased with theirselves that I could almost hear the money clinkin’ into Nobby’s pockets.

“‘Ah, Clark,’ sez the officer, ‘I thought you’d like to know that I took your spoof tip an’ cabled home to back The Brewer.’

“‘Yes, sir,’ sez Nobby, quite fluttered.

“‘It didn’t win,’ said the officer, an’ Nobby’s face fell to six o’clock.

“‘Beg pardon, sir?’ he sez.

“‘It didn’t win, because there isn’t such a horse.’

“Nobby gasped.

“‘But it was in that paper you gave me, sir,’ he sez.

“‘Brewer’s not the name of a horse—it’s the name of a trainer,’ he sez.”

## XVI. — MARSHY, DETECTIVE

IT is a fact which my military friends do not dispute, that the average officer does not know the average soldier. If he knows him, it is the result of furtive study; round about deductions; secret overlookings.

A distinguished scientist told me the other day that nothing struck him so much when he was engaged in research work in a London hospital, as the fact that there is an hour in the day when the patients go on duty. For twenty-three hours they have been cheerful souls, exchanging badinage with their fellow sufferers, ripe for amusement, ready and willing to give or take a joke. Then comes the hour of the doctor's visit—and they become "officially ill," depressed, saddened, altogether melancholy. So it is in the army.

Brought face to face with his officer, the soldier becomes "officially military." He plays the part he thinks he is called upon to play, becomes inhumanly automatic. His very expression alters. His face is a mask, betraying no emotion. His speech is monosyllabic, it would need a most penetrating observer to pierce the mystery of the outward shell and reach the soul of this silent man, who stands to attention and says, "Yes, sir," or "No, sir," monotonously.

Thus it is that young officers say, in speaking of their men, that they are "very good chaps, but——," and thus it is also that these very officers return from active service bubbling over with joy at a discovery. That discovery is that there is no "but" in the case, but the British soldier is a splendidly, tip-topping, top-notching, ripping good fellow.

In war time the soldier is his human self without disguise. A man is brought before his company officer.

"You wish to see me, Jones?" says the officer.

"Yes, sir; I want three days' leave."

"For what purpose?"

"My sister is very ill."

Perhaps the officer may know that the man has no sister, and may wax indignant at the unnecessary lie.

But the soldier is acting up to the settled traditions of the army—not in lying, but in offering a conventional excuse for a conventional privilege.

"Sister ill," "mother ill," "a funeral," "a wedding," these events are regarded as sufficient excuse for three days' leave. Did the man "know'" his officer, or the officer his man, did mutual confidence exist between them, the soldier would say out plump and plain, "I want three days' leave because my girl has got a short holiday and I wish to spend the time profitably."

But it is his “duty face” that he turns to his officer, a machine made, artificial manner, with which he greets him. Beneath its surface very few officers are privileged to reach.

“Nobody likes an officer to be too friendly,” said Smithy, “an’ at the same time nobody cares for an officer that treats a soldier as if he was a new kind of dangerous animal.

“I knew an officer once who was a whale on collectin’ butterflies an’ similar reptiles. After parade he used to go wanderin’ all over the fields lookin’ for a patent new moth that was very rare.

“One mornin’, just before the cold weather started, he told his servant to give his new forty-guinea fur coat an airin’. When the servant shook the coat out he shook out half a bushel of loose fur, an’ the officer nearly went daft.

“‘What the devil’s the meanin’ of this?’ he sez, an’ just then a feeble little moth sort of staggered into the air. The officer caught it, an’ lo! it was his new patent moth!

“Between gettin’ the moth an’ losin’ his coat he was in a horrible state of mind, an’ that’s about the condition of an officer who tries to get too friendly with the men, He gains a little an’ loses a lot.

“Did I ever tell you about Marshy? He was the chap who took up with detectiving, an’ was always goin’ about solvin’ mysteries that nobody wanted solvin’. He could tell by the colour of your eyes how many entries you had on your defaulter sheet, an’ by the colour of your hands, how often you washed yourself. Perfectly marvellous he was. I told you a long time ago about what he did with Captain Brinky—found out how he was selling the plans of the barracks to Germany.

“As Nobby said at the time, it was very serious. Suppose them plans fell into the hands of Germany, the Germans had only to train their guns on our canteens an’ the whole bloomin’ regiment would be decimated. It turned out afterwards that the plans which old Marshy had seen Brinky workin’ at was only the plans of the new meat store, an’ that rather discouraged him for a bit. But bless you, he turned up smilin’ some time after that.

We were stationed at Wynberg at the time, an’ one of the guards was stationed on the outskirts of the town near an orchard. A beautiful orchard full of peaches an’ grapes an’ quinces very nearly ripe. It was in the spring time.

“Now, there was a very mysterious thing about this guard. Chaps who came off it was taken suddenly ill with pains that doubled ’em up. Every day the same thing happened, fellers bein’ carried off to hospital tied in knots, cussin’ the day they ever w’andered into other people’s orchards.

“Marshy had a theory about this mysterious illness.

“They’ve been poisoned,’ he sez to Nobby, very solemn: ‘they’ve got secret enemies who carry little glass phials full of deadly poison.’

“‘The poison they get,’ sez Nobby, ‘has got pips in it.’

“But Marshy was very confident, an’ went up to the hospital to see Bill Clare, who was one of the last chaps to suffer.

“‘Hullo, Bill,’ he sez, ‘I’ve just come to cheer you up—you’re lookin’ bad?’

“‘I am bad,’ sez Bill.

“‘Bill,’ sez Marshy, very earnest, ‘have you got any enemies?’

“‘Hundreds,’ sez Bill, who was one of those chaps bred an’ born with a grievance.

“‘That’s it!’ sez Marshy, ‘that just proves what I’ve said—you’ve been poisoned.’

“‘I know I have,’ groans Bill.

“‘When you’re dead,’ sez Marshy thoughtfully, ‘we’ll have a post-mortem, an’ that’ll settle the question.’

“‘You’re takin’ a liberty,’ sez Bill violently, ‘an’ if I had the use of me hands I’d belt your head off, you cheerful blighter.’

“As Marshy said, if only one of ’em would die, his theory would work out correct, but somehow nobody seemed anxious to prove his words. When Spud Murphy was took bad, Marshy haunted the hospital, enquirin’ about Spud’s temperature till the gentle hospital orderly said that if Marshy didn’t push-off he’d catch him a swipe in the jaw. When Spud came out of hospital he went to look for Marshy.

“‘I’m goin’ to return his call,’ he sez, ‘an’ if any of you chaps happen to want an afternoon’s amusement you can come down to the cricket field an’ see me diagnosin’ Marshy’s disease.’

“That put Marshy off detectiving, an’ it was a long time after the peaches in the orchard were ripe before the black wore out of his eye.

“But nothin’ could keep him quiet for long. He was back at the old business, tracin’ an’ measurin’ footsteps an’ peerin’ into other people’s secrets again.

“He found out why Chancer Saul never had any letters from home owin’ to his havin’ nobody to write to him; he discovered where the quartermaster-sergeant bought his new piano an’ where the money came from—out of the bank. He pried into the mystery of Nobby’s box an’ found a pair of my socks, an’ a smack in the head from Nobby, who happened to come in at that minute, He shaddered Sergeant Toms an’ his young lady an’ found out there

was a bull dog in the young lady's garden, an' wished he'd known it beforehand. In fact, Marshy went very strong.

"The Brinky affair wot I told you about nearly put Marshy out of business, but it was the case of young Lieutenant Forster that settled him for good an' all.

"As a rule, a chap in tire army knows very little about his officer, except that he's got pots of money an' plays polo.

"He sees him on parade, he marches by his side on manœuvres, an' sees him sittin' at a table handin' out the root-of-all-evil on pay days.

"He sees him sometimes at meals, when the officer happens to be on orderly duty, an' he hears him say 'any complaints?' an' sees him turn away before anybody can speak.

"What he does or sez; what the other officers think of him, whether he's a good chap or a bad chap, the soldier doesn't know. He guesses—but in nine cases out of ten he guesses wrong.

"This young Forster—Lieutenant Forster—was a fresh-coloured, cheerful kind of chap that we all liked. He played football an' could box, an' once I saw him ridin' out in his huntin' kit.

' Nobody knew exactly what happened, but when we was in Wynberg, the officers stopped talkin' to him. It happened suddenly. If they had to speak to him at all they spoke in a language that nobody understood, but which Marshy said was French, owin' to young Forster sayin' 'Wee wee.' You could see he was upset. He'd stammer an' stutter an' get confused, especially when Umfreville, who's a devil of a chap for French, spoke.

"Marshy said it was one of the mysteriousest things he'd ever had brought to his notice.

"'Anyone can tell what it means,' he sez. 'Young Forster's been an' done somethin' bad, an' the officers won't speak to him unless they can swear at him, an' that's why they talk in French.'

"So Marshy started to find out what Forster had been doin'. After two days pryin' he came to Nobby highly excited.

"'I've discovered it!' he sez.

"'I'll bet you have,' sez Nobby, admiringly.

"'I shaddered him last night,' sez Marshy. 'He went right through the village into the country. I shaddered him till we came to the woods near Constantia, an' in he goes an' me after. He started talkin' an' carryin' on to hisself—ravin' I call it, an' a feller of my experience could see that his conscience was bitin' him.'

"'I watched him for an hour, an' all the time he was talkin'—just as though someone was there. I looked an' looked, but I couldn't see anybody, an' I got as near as I could, but all I could hear was 'Wossy Lair, Wossy La Plume! Wossy Cray On, Dermont Pair.'

"'It was a sort of back slang, an' I couldn't understand it.'

"'My theory is,' sez Marshy, very impressive, 'that he's pinched something, an' he's got a pal a-hidin' in the wood.'

"Well, it turned out afterwards that young Forster was studyin' for some language examination—French it was—but bein' an easy goin' sort of young feller, an' much preferin' to spend his evenin's playin' bridge, he got a bit backward until the officers made up a plan only to speak to him in French.

"Billy Curtis, who's a waiter in the officer's mess, sez it was a bit of lark at dinner, because young Forster had to scratch up his French before he could get anything to eat. When he asked anybody to pass the mustard they pretended they didn't understand him till he asked for it in French. So if Marshy had started enquirin' in the proper quarters he'd have found out all he wanted to know in two ticks, but that wasn't Marshy's way.

"It wasn't the fact that he was makin' a silly ass of hisself that kiboshed Marshy, but something more serious an' unnatural.

"Marshy was crowded with the notion that Lieutenant Forster had a pal hidden in the woods.

"One day he had a talk with Nobby.

"'I've been shadderin' Forster," he sez, 'an' I'm goin' to search his quarters to- night.'

Take my tip an' don't,' sez Nobby, who was a bit alarmed, 'an' if you do, don't say that you told me you was goin' to do it.'

"I think Nobby might have persuaded him to drop his fat-headed idea, only that afternoon there was a garrison call.

"Not far from Wynberg is a big convict settlement at a place called Constantia, an' we got the news that a feller named Magee had escaped. This here Magee was a well-known chap at the Cape—you must have read 'about him.

"He used to meet fellers who had just come out from England, smack 'em on the back, an' give 'em the hullo-old-feller-fancy-meetin'-you shake, an' the come- an'-have-a-drink pass, an' when they was fairly hypnotised he'd borrer a hundred pounds from 'em just to show his confidence in 'em. He got one or two doses of imprison¬ment, an' then he struck up against a bad

judge who'd got theories about short sentences bein' no good for the risin' generation, an' this judge sent him down for five years.

"Magee had done three months when he decided to leave. He left early one mornin', an' that afternoon there were two battalions of infantry picketin' the country on the lookout for Mr. Magee. Seven companies of ours was out, and Marshy, who happened to be in the company stayin' behind, thought the whole bloomin' thing was got up to give him the chance he wanted. He waited till it was dark, an' then he sneaked across to the officers' quarters. Lieutenant Forster had a bungalow at the far end of the lines. He shared it with another young officer, an' Marshy's luck bein' in, these two chaps was both on duty somewhere in the neighbourhood of Constantia.

"Marshy sneaked round the bungalow, tryin' the doors an' winders, an' at last he found a winder that was open. He waited till he was sure there was no one about, then he nipped through the winder an' found hisself in Lieutenant' Forster's bath-room. It was quite dark, an' Marshy didn't dare to strike a light, but after failin' over a pail an' bangin' his head against the wall, he reached the officer's bedroom. Marshy's great point is footprints an' secret drawers. He'd got an idea that all criminals write confessions an' leave 'em in secret drawers where nobody could find 'em, except detectives. First thing he did was to close the shutters an' pull across the curtains of the winders, then he started to search for damnin' evidence with a candle he'd brought with him

"There was a little desk in one comer of the room with lots of papers. Marshy read a few. Some of 'em began: 'Dear sir, unless our account is paid in three days we shall be reluctantly compelled——'; another commenced, 'Dear sir, the enclosed account is long overdue, an' as we are makin' up our books for the half-year, we shall be glad——.'

"But there was nothin' that Marshy could find that gave Mr. Forster away.

"He was just turnin' over a heap of letters when he heard a cough behind him, an' his heart went down into his boots.

"'Beg pardon, sir,' he stammered, an' turned round with his knees shakin'.

"The chap that stood behind him was a tall chap, nicely dressed in a yaller suit that didn't fit him, an' ornamented all over with big black arrers. Marshy gasped—but the feller only smiled an' started polishin' the barrel of a revolver he had in his hand on the sleeve of his coat.

"'Good-evenin',' lie sez, as calm an' polite as possible, 'are you the servant of the officer who owns this bungalow?'

"'No, sir,' sez Marshy.

"'Don't say, sir,' sez the chap, 'I'm the escaped convict that your chaps are lookin' for.'

"'Oh, you are, are you?' sez Marshy, gettin' back a bit of his nerve.

"'Yes, I am, am I,' sez the chap.

"Marshy made up his mind—you can understand his feelin's at the prospec' of arrestin' an escaped convict.

"'Well,' sez Marshy, as bold as brass, 'I'll trouble you to come along with me.'

"The chap shook his head.

"'Not so,' he sez, 'but far otherwise. I have no partic'lar desire,' he sez, thoughtfully, 'of returning to Tokai. For one thing the work's too hard, an' for another thing, the food's not nice, an' the sleepin' accommodation is very horrid. I have decided to leave the country.'

"Marshy sez he swung his revolver around carelessly. "'The pistol,' sez the chap,' belongs to the officer who owns this charmin' bungalow. So do the cartridges,' he sez. 'I thought I might be able to borrer some civilian clothes to get away in, but they're locked up, an' I can't break open the box without makin' too much noise.'

"Marshy was tryin' to think of a way of attracting the guard.

"'Of course,' sez the chap, very significantly, 'if I have to shoot you, that'll make a noise, but I've got to chance that.'

"'Certainly,' sez Marshy, feebly.

"'At the same time,' sez the convict, 'there won't be no necessity to shoot, because you're goin' to behave like a little gentleman.'

"'Certainly,' sez Marshy, rather weakly.

"'First of all,' the convict chap went on, 'I see you are dressed for walkin' out. Take off your clothes.'

"'Hold hard!' sez Marshy, 'let's argue this point—'

"'I'll argue with you as you undress,' sez the chap; 'look slippy.'

Bit by bit he took Marshy's clothes from him.

"'Now your trousis,' sez the chap. 'Thanks,' he sez, as Marshy chucked them over.

"It didn't take the convict two minutes to get out of his things, an' in another minute he was dressed in Marshy's kit.

"'I'd make a fine soldier,' he sez, regretful. 'What a pity I didn't go into the army. Now, get into my things.'

"'Look here,' sez Marshy.

"'I'm lookin',' sez the convict; 'get on with it.'

"So pore old Marshy had to rig himself up like a convict.

"'Now, sit down it that chair,' sez the convict, 'and don't move whilst I tie you up.'

"With two or three straps from the officer's equipment he trussed old Marshy so that he couldn't move. Then he tied a towel round his mouth so that he couldn't yell.

"Then the convict chap lit one of the officer's cigars, an' stuck Marshy's walkin' stick under his arm.

"'Good-bye,' he sez, 'I'm sorry to take advantage of a feller burglar, but it had to be done.'

"'I'm not a burglar,' sez Marshy, very muffled. ' I'm a detective,' he sez.

"'A what?'

"'A detective,' sez pore ole Marshy. 'I was lookin' for somethin'.'

"'What you was lookin' for,' sez the convict, as he put the light out, 'was Trouble—an' you've found it. Good-night.'"

## XVII. — THE GHOST OF THE BROOK

IF you add to the title of your romance (supposing that you are an author) the sub-title, "A true story," you may expect your readers to yawn in anticipation, for, as everybody knows, a true story is a dull story. The only "true story" I know that wasn't hopelessly dull, was the life and adventures of Louis de Rougevitch. This narrative was so exceptionally interesting that all shrewd people knew it was a lie. Truth is stranger than fiction, and infinitely duller.

Therefore, I place no sub-title to this adventure of Smithy's. I avoid explanation, save the explanation that is in courtesy due from writer to reader.

Simonstown is the most southerly town in Africa. South of Simonstown runs a rocky promontory, that ends at a rugged headland, which throughout the world is famous as the Cape of Good Hope. Locally, it is called Cape Point. Behind Simonstown itself rises a range of hills, and one towering above its fellows is known as Simonsberg.

Of Simonstown itself there is no need to speak. Its one straggling street that stretches from the railway station to the cemetery; its stretch of placid blue bay; its white warships, and trim dockyard; its tiny barracks perched on a shelf of hill.—I tell you of these, incidentally, and not because they are material to the story.

Smithy regards Simonstown from a different point of view. Smithy is practical, and utilitarian, and there is very little of the sentimental nonsense in Smithy's composition.

"I was at Simonstown before they started the new docks," he said, "an' naturally the beer wasn't half as good as it is now. In fact, Simonstown was a very dull place, so dull that Nobby up an' joined the Good Templars. That will show you how dull Simonstown was. Nobby wanted me to come along, too, but I'd got something else to do with my money. Nobby was a Good Templar for a week, after which he had a slight disagreement with a half-caste brother, whose name was Sams, an' the consequence of this was that some of Sams' black blood came out.

"Then Yatesey's sister sent him out a new spellin' game, an' we played that for a week. It was played with cards. You shuffled 'em an' dealt 'em, an' the feller who could make a word out of the cards in his hand won the money. It was a bit difficult, because when you put a word down the chap next to you could challenge you. Then you had to look in the dictionary an' see if it was spelt that way; an' if it wasn't you had to pay.

"'Molix,' sez Nobby, puttin' down the word.

"'What's "Molix"?' sez Spud, suspicious.

"'A "Molix,"' sez Nobby, thoughtful, 'is a little fish.'

"'I won't have "Molix" at any price,' sez Spud, so they looked in the dictionary an' found it wasn't there, an' Nobby paid.

"A little while after:

"'Domsin,' sez Nobby, putting down his cards very surefully, 'an' if you challenge that word, Spud, you'll lose your money, because I looked it up this mornin'.'

"But Spud challenged it, an' that wasn't there, either, so Nobby paid again.

"Next day, when they went to play, the dictionary—it belonged to Corporal Sims—was missin', but Nobby said he could remember most of the words in his head.

"Tiny White put down 'hair,' but Nobby said he couldn't pass it owin' to there bein' no 'h' in air. A little while after Nobby put down 'gromb,' an' when Spud challenged it, Nobby said that it meant 'fierce an' wild.'

"Nobby might have made the spellin' game pay, only the dictionary was discovered in the nick of time. They found it hidden under some shirts in Nobby's box.

"That bust up the spellin' game, an' me an' Nobby went in for fishin' with a line we borrered from Pug Wilson an' a lead we pinched from the quartermaster sergeant.

"The bait was our own.

"It was a nice easy life in Simonstown—no parades, eight nights in bed,* an' nothin' to do but smoke an' fish.

* Eight days between guards.

"We'd arranged to go over Red Hill one day. We were goin' to take some grub an' a couple of bottles of beer, an' walk across country to the other side of the peninsular to see the place where the Birkenheadwent down, an' had got our passes signed by the C.O., when somethin' altogether unexpected happened.

"As you know, there are two guards at Simonstown, the guard on the gate at the R.A. Barracks an' the guard on the Kloof Magazine. You've heard me talk of No. 2 Magazine at Anchester, an' the magazine guard at Peshawar. Well, they was absolutely nothin' to the Kloof guard at Simonstown. It's away back from the town through 'The Brook,' an' right into the hills. It's a narrer, lonely ravine with a high waterfall, an' the chap on guard is away from light an' sound—except the sound of the baboons a-chatterin' on the hills, an' the splash of the water fallin'.

“It wasn’t a cheerful place, but then you don’t expect a magazine guard to be as lively as the Strand, an’ though nobody liked the job, nobody shirked it.

“One night, it was the night before me an’ Nobby went off for our excursion, we was sittin’ outside the barracks talkin’.

“By rights we ought to have been in bed, for it was long after ‘lights out,’ but it was one of them glorious nights that you get in Africa, a bright moon making everythin’ clear as day, an’ the bay all glimmerin’. We was talkin’ about how money flies (Nobby started it), when we heard the sentry on the gate:

“‘Number one—an’ all’s well!’ he yelled.

“We stopped talkin’ an’ waited for No. 2at the Kloof to answer.

“We waited an’ waited, but there was no sound.

“‘Who’s on No. 2?’ sez Nobby.

“‘Ten till twelve—Why, it’s Culley Carter,’ sez Spud.

“We listened again, but heard nothin’.

“‘He must have answered, an’ we didn’t hear him,’ sez Nobby.’ but just then we heard the main guard sentry—Happy Johnson it was—shout:

“‘No. 1—an’ all’s well!’ an’ we knew that No. 2 hadn’t spoken.

“Three times No. 1 called, an’ three times there was no answer, an’ then we heard Happy shout, ‘Guard, turn out!’

“‘Come along,’ sez Nobby, jumpin’ up, ‘we’ll cut along the back path to the magazine—old Culley ought to be warned the guard’s comin’ up.’

“We’d made our start, when the corporal of the main guard called again, an’ in the clear night air you could hear him distinctly, although it was a quarter of a mile away.

“‘No. 1—all’s well? ’

“He put it in a sort of questionin’ tone—an’ there came an answer:

“Land on the larboard bow, sir!’

“It wasn’t the words that made our blood run cold; it was the voice.

“Harsh, an’ cracked, an’ almost screamin’.

“‘That’s not Culley,’ whispered Nobby—an’ we ran along the dark little path that leads to the magazine.

“There was half-a-dozen of us, but we came up to the railin’s of the magazine almost abreast.

“As we reached it, we heard the tramp of the guard comin’ through ‘The Brook’ below.

“‘Culley!’ called Nobby, but there was no answer.

“‘Culley!’ he shouted.

“We could hear the guard halt at the sound of our voices, and the corporal in charge challenged us in the darkness.

“‘Halt! Who comes there?’

“‘Friend,’ sez Nobby. ‘It’s Clark, an’ half-a-dozen of our chaps.’

“‘What’s wrong?’ sez the corporal.

“‘I don’t know,’ sez Nobby; ‘we’ve come up to see.’

“The corporal opened the little wicket of the magazine with a key, an’ he an’ the guard went inside, an’ we flocked in after him.

“We couldn’t see anything of Culley for a bit, but after a while we found him.

“He was huddled up against the stonework of the magazine, insensible an’ foamin’ at the mouth.

“‘A fit,’ muttered the corporal.

“Nobby was lookin’ at Culley’s rifle.

“‘Corporal,’ he sez, suddenly, ‘look at this! ’

“The bolt of the rifle was open, an’ a round of ammunition had been pushed into the chamber.

“‘Old Culley was goin’ to shoot somebody,’ sez Nobby, ‘an’ that somebody was the chap who answered you.’

“The corporal turned quickly.

“‘So you heard it, did you?—I thought it was some drunken sailor in “The Brook,”’ (There’s lots of low drinkin’ shanties near ‘The Brook.’)

“‘Couldn’t have been a “mulloch,” Corporal,’ sez Nobby, ‘he wouldn’t say “larboard”; he’d say “port!”’

“We got Culley down to the little hospital, an’ a new sentry was posted at the Kloof—Bill Mason, who’s got nerves like brass—an’ we all went back to barracks talkin’ the matter over, an’ wonderin’ what had frightened old Culley.

“First thing we heard next mornin’ was that Bill Mason had been found at five o’clock in the mornin’ in a dead faint.

“I could have understood it if it had been anybody but Bill, but Bill ain’t got any imagination at all. It took ’em nearly two hours to get Bill round, an’

when they did he said he'd seen a ghost. He stuck to it, too, before the company officer, an' before the C.O. What's more, they managed to bring Culley out of his fit, an' Culley swore the same thing.

"'A gashley sight,' he sez, an' shuddered. He couldn't give any particulars, neither could Bill. All they could say was that they'd suddenly seen a most horrible face a-grinnin' at 'em between the railings of the magazine.

"The C.O. sent for the Chief of the Police.

"'Somebody has been trying to unnerve my men,' he sez, 'an' it will be a bad job for that somebody if he repeats his joke, because I've given orders to the sentry on the Kloof to shoot at sight.'

"Instead of treatin' the thing as a joke this police officer was very serious.

"'It sounds like the "Ghost of the Brook,"' he sez.

"'Ghost!' sez the C.O.; 'stuff an' nonsense! Bosh!' an' a few other tactful remarks.

"'It isn't nonsense, Colonel,' sez the police chap. 'The "Brook Ghost" is an old institution. I've been here twenty years, an' I've heard about that ghost from the first day I arrived here.'

"'Are you serious?' sez the Colonel.

"'I am, indeed,' sez the police chap. 'I believe in him almost as much as the natives; he's been seen in every part of the peninsular; on lonely farms, at the outskirts of the town—why, there are at least three people in Simonstown Cemetery who have been scared there by the "Ghost of the Brook."'

"Porky Cook, who's a clerk in the orderly room, told us this, an' when the orderly-room sergeant came round askin' for volunteers for the Kloof guard I was one of the first to get out of his way.

"'It's a double guard,' sez the orderly sergeant, 'an' although you can be "warned" for it, an'get cells for refusin', the colonel wants volunteers. You can choose your own pals for the double!'

"So Nobby up an' said that him an' me would take one relief, an' if it hadn't been for the sergeant bein' there I'd have clumped his head. But when I sat down to think of the matter seriously I was rather glad he volunteered, for I was a bit curious to see how it would turn out.

"After all, the Kloof's a pretty place in the day time. We mounted an' nothin' happened till night. Nobby an' me was on second relief—the guard mounted at ten—which was from twelve to two an' six to eight. The fellers who were relieved at eight had nothin' to tell, except Boyle, a bit of an author, who said he saw a strange white light a-hoverin' over the hill.

“As it happened the warships was practisin’ with their searchlights that night, so we knew what Boyle’s strange, white light was.

“The men who came off at ten thought they’d heard peculiar noises.

“‘Like what?’ sez the corporal of the guard.

“‘Like bones rattlin’,’ sez the chaps, solemn.

“‘It was your knees knockin’ together,’ sez the corporal.

“We marched up through the Brook, an’ over the little wooden bridge that leads to the magazine, an’ the two men on guard were pretty glad to see us.

“‘Anythin’ to report?’ sez the corporal.

“It was Spud Murphy an’ Tiny White on guard. ‘Nothin’ much,’ sez Spud. ‘I thought I saw somethin’ movin’ in the Kloof—somethin’ comin’ down the side of the rock.’

“‘The waterfall, I expect,’ said the corporal, who hadn’t got to stay out all night an’ could afford to be comic.

“The first half hour passed off quietly; it was terribly quiet, so quiet that the little waterfall sounded like a roar, an’ the baboons talkin’ just like human voices.

“We got ‘All’s well’ from the main guard at one o’clock, an’ returned it.

“Our voices were still echoin’ through the kloof when I saw Nobby bend forward as if he was listenin’.

“‘Hush,’ he whispers. ‘Somebody’s singin’.’

“‘Somebody in the town,’ I sez.

“‘No—listen.’

“I listened, an’ couldn’t hear anythin’, then, close at hand, I heard the voice—a broken, hoarse, old voice. You couldn’t hear the words; it was a sort of croon.

“‘There he is,’ whispers Nobby.

“I could see nothin’—then my heart went up into my mouth, for suddenly, as if he’d come up out of the ground, I saw somethin’ rise up not six paces from me.

“Dark as it was, I could see his face... I heard Nobby mutter somethin’ an’ he reeled back. Only for a minute—then up went his rifle.

“‘Bang!’

“‘Shoot, Smithy!’ yelled Nobby, an’ I shot at the place I’d seen the thing sink.

“I pressed close to the railings—I could see nothing.

"'Did you dekko the dial?' sez Nobby. I could feel him shakin', an' I nodded.

"The guard came up at a run, with their lanterns. We searched all about the magazine, but could find nothin'.

"'You've been dreamin',' sez the corporal. Then he jumped, for, from the darkness of the kloof, in the same cracked voice we heard:

"'Rocks on the larboard bow,sir!' came the hail, an' a sort of quiet chuckle that froze your blood.

"We didn't hear the ghost again that night; but when daylight came Nobby got permission to examine the ground where we'd seen the face. We found the marks of our bullets on a rock, but what he was so anxious to discover was footmarks an' there were none. We searched up an' down, an' went to the very foot of the waterfall, without strikin' on any clue.

"Nobby looks up at the face of the rock over which the water was peltin'.

"'Nothin' but a monkey could climb up there,' he sez. Then he made his first discovery. The ground was wet owin' to the spray of the fall, an' on a patch of sand he found a footmark. It was perfectly distinct.

"'A barefooted man,' sez Nobby thoughtfully, 'an' a big foot.'

"'A native,' I sez, but Nobby shook his head.

"'This mark is fairly fresh, an' there's been no natives near here since daybreak,' he sez.

"By climbin' up the hill at the back of the magazine we got to the head of the waterfall, an' that's where Nobby made his big discovery, for it wasn't only that he found another footmark, but he suddenly dived down an' picked up a bit of paper, almost black it was an' greasy, an' when he tried to open it, it fell to pieces. He gathered 'em carefully together an' we got down the hill again.

"That mornin' Nobby saw the colonel, an' the colonel an' Nobby went down to Admiralty House, an' Nobby showed the admiral—Rawson it was, the best fightin' sailor livin'—the paper. Before twelve o'clock there was four hundred sailors an' soldiers searchin' the hills. They searched 'em till the sun went down, goin' carefully over every bit of ground.

"We was about four miles inland when the naval officer an' our officer decided to drop the search for the night, an' we was just formin' up to march back again, when Nobby broke away from the ranks an' ran to a heap of stone.

"'Here he is!' he shouted, an' started chuckin' the stones left an' right.

He'd only to move a dozen before we saw a big hole in the ground.

“He was strippin’ off his coat to go in, when the man inside saved us the trouble ... he climbed out, peering left an’ right at the sailors.... Old! He must have been eighty. Dirty, with a long, dirty beard, an’ dirty, grey hair, an’ hands like the claws of a bird. He wore no clothes except a tattered old blanket, an’ he blinked an’ blinked in the light of the lanterns.

“By-an’-bye he spotted the naval officer an’ staggered towards him.

“‘Robson, sir,’ he sez, in his cracked voice, ‘I give myself up. I’ve lost my papers, but I’m Robson, A.B.’

“‘Robson? My poor man, who is Robson?’

The old man chuckled.

“‘I was at the wheel, sir,’ he sez, ‘me an’ my mate.... I was at the wheel when she struck.... It was all my fault.’... He mumbled a bit, then he sez, ‘They’ll try me by court martial because I escaped... They was all drawn up in line, the sojers an’ the marines an’ the sailors, an’ the skipper sez, “Stand fast, Birkenheads!”’

“‘My God!’ said the naval officer, startin’ back.

“‘Out of Queenstown we sailed in January, ’52,’ the old man went on, ‘an’ ... I was at the wheel, but I got ashore an’ hid... I’ve been hidin’ ever since.’... He blinked at the officer.

“‘Try me by court martial,’ he muttered....‘I was at the wheel.’

“Nobby caught him as he fell.”

## XVIII. — SMITHY ON HUMOUR

SOMETIMES I have the good fortune to meet Smithy in a philosophical frame of mind, and for my edification he will discourse learnedly and shrewdly on all manner of subjects ranging from the intimate talk of regimental affairs to the larger survey of matters of political and national interest. The other day I found him sniggering over the pictorial representation of the "Imps" adventures. I learned that the front page of Ideas is a source of constant joy to the Anchester Regiment. Hence, Smithy on Humour:

"It's a matter of disposition," said Smithy. "What'll make one feller laugh will reduce another chap to a mournful state of mind. There ain't any very sure way of making a chap laugh, but, gen'rally speakin', the easiest way is to tell a story about somebody gettin' hurt. There's nothin' quite so comic as a feller fallin' off a house, an' I've seen a yarn about a chap bein' run over by a steam roller send people into fits. It's the thought that it ain't you, but somebody else that's so comic. We had a chap in our regiment, by the name of Moggy, who could never see a joke. When all the other fellers would be rollin' about the door holdin' their sides, he'd be sittin' still with a puzzled look on his dial, sayin', 'An' what did the other man say?'

"Everybody tried to get a laugh out of Moggy, but nobody succeeded.

"Nobby tried his hand, an' told a yarn about a chap who asked another chap: 'If a herrin' an' a half cost three ha'pence what would twelve cost?' and the other chap said, 'One and sixpence.' 'No,' sez the first chap, 'they would cost a shillin', an' then explained it to him.

"'Oh,' sez the other chap. 'herrin's! I thought you said haddocks.'

"Everybody laughed except Moggy. He sat perfectly glum.

"'What difference did it make,' he sez, 'whether they was herrin's or haddocks?'

"That was the sort of feller Moggy was. Sometimes he would see the joke a long time after, an' in church, when the parson was in the middle of his sermon, Moggy started to laugh over a joke Nobby had told him a week before. He got seven days for improper conduct in church.

"'I'm very sorry, sir,' he sez, to the company officer, 'but I just happened to see a joke of Private Clark's. Why does a hen cross the road? To get to the other side. Whilst I was in church it struck me, sir, that perhaps there wasn't any other side, an' that made me laugh.'

"'Seven days,' sez the officer, 'an' perhaps the humour of mv present remark will penetrate your thick head before the seven days is up.'

“Poor old Moggy was so upset that he wouldn’t listen to any more of Nobby’s jokes, an’ one day, when Nobby caught his finger in the winder an’ was dancin’ about the room, Moggy sez, very solemn: ‘If you expect me to laugh, you’re jolly well mistook.’

“I might say that Moggy was an older lookin’ man than most young soldiers, and although he said he was only twenty-one when he enlisted, he wouldn’t let Nobby look at his teeth to make sure. I’ve always thought that Moggy had a bit of a history, but he was closer than an oyster, an’ although me an’ Nobby did our best to find out, an’ even turned Marshy on to him, we never got anywhere near the truth.

“What annoyed Moggy so much was that whenever a bad crime, a murder or a burglary, got into the Sunday papers, Nobby used to put him through a cross-examination, such as ‘Where were you on the night of the 14th?’ an’ ‘Will you swear you did not know the deceased?’

“We found out the solution of Moggy’s mystery in a very peculiar way.

“One night Nobby an’ me was in town, an’ met Moggy, lookin’ worried and hurrying along the High-street. We stopped to talk to him, but he hurried on, an’ we went on to the ‘Phoenix’ an’ made up a bit about Moggy bein’ chased by his wife an’ three children. It was a bit of a joke, because when we put it about barracks every feller he met used to ask him how the missus was, and little Sid Carter spent a penny which might very well have gone in beer, on a baby’s rattle.

“This joke made Moggy wilder than anything. He comes up to Nobby one day in the canteen, an’ sez for two pins he’d put it across him. Nobby borrowed the two pins from the chap behind the bar.

“‘If you think,’ sez Mogg, very fierce, ‘this tale about my wife an’ three kids is a joke you’re in the wrong box, because the tale happens to be true, only it ain’t three kids, it’s five!”

“After that Nobby said it was hopeless expectin’ to get Moggy to see the comic side of life. It appears Moggy got married when he was young, an’ not bein’ able to get work he enlisted, an’ every penny he got went to his missus, an’ that when Nobby an’ me had seen him hurryin’ he was goin’ for the doctor for the fifth. Anybody who knows Nobby is well aware that there ain’t a kinder heart breathin’, an’ in addition to bein’ terribly upset at hurtin’ Moggy’s feelin’s, he felt we ought to do somethin’ for the pore old chap. Well, we got a sing-song up for him one pay night an’ collected eighteen shillin’s, an’ Mogg thanked Nobby with tears in his eyes. This was just before we went to Gibraltar, an’ the week before we sailed we raised another pound, an’ little Fatty Golden, who’s got a sister in the second¬hand clothes line of

business, wrote home an' got a bundle of things what his sister couldn't sell nohow, for pore Mrs. Moggy.

"But the change that came over the regiment gen'rally was the wonderful thing. Instead of treatin" Mogg as they used to, they behaved like friends towards him in his sad affliction. It was 'Have a drink, Moggy, old feller,' an' 'Drink hearty, Mogg,' an' 'Don't you trouble about payin',' till Nobby began to think about gettin' married hisself.

"Once or twice in every three months there used to be a whip round for Moggy an' the missus, an' one Christmas time, when everybody was full of good spirits an' free beer, they collected as much as £2 17s. 3½d., a bad shillin', an' a Waterbury watch that wouldn't go, but which, as Nobby said (he gave it) had possibilities.

"I won't say that Moggy wasn't grateful, because that would be a lie. He was more grateful than lots of chaps would have been. He was always willin' to oblige, an' started gettin' a sense of humour. He laughed at Nobby's jokes once or twice, till Nobby got a bit huffy, an' told him not to laugh in the wrong place. After that Moggy would sit watchin' Nobby's face very intently, waitin' for the signal, so to speak.

"I remember one night Nobby was spinnin' a horrid lie about how him an' me an' Pug Wilson was nearly swallered by a rattlesnake in India. It was one of them serious tragic tales that Nobby liked to tell young recruits who didn't know enough to contradict him.

"'There was me,' sez Nobby, 'a-facin' him; his jaws was wide open, an' I could see him settin' his poison ready. I wasn't a bit afraid——

"'Ha, ha, ha!' sez Moggy.

"Nobby looks at him.

"'What the devil are you laughin' at?' he snaps.

"'Beg pardon, Nobby.' sez pore old Mogg; 'thought I saw you wink.'

"'There was me,' sez Nobby, goin' on, 'without a gun in me hand, an' the poisonous snake walkin' quietly towards me. I thought of me old home; of me mother——'

"'Ho, ho, ho!' roars Moggy, holdin' his sides, 'that's one of the comicalist things I've heard for a long time!'

"Nobby got up very wrathful.

"'If you can't behave yourself, like a gentleman,' he sez, 'hop it.'

"'I'm very sorry, Nobby,' sez Moggy, 'I was under the impression——'

"'Never mind what you was under,' sez Nobby, very wild, 'you come here interruptin' my story an' I'll knock your head off.'

"Moggy's intentions was good—even Nobby could see that—an' sometime after he went up to Moggy an' said that bygones should be bygones, an' invited him down to Mrs. Carey's 'do.'

"At that time, in Gibraltar, there was a lady named Mrs. Carey, who used to give a sort of party to soldiers.. She hadn't got a 'home,' but used to hire a hall. She was a wonderful lady was Mrs. Carey, because she didn't think that soldiers was made to be prayed over, or snivelled over, an' she never used to ask 'em about their souls, like they do in the other soldiers' homes in Gibraltar, especially in one where they keep a nice clean-lookin' sailor to make inquiries of that sort.

"But Mrs. Carey used to treat a chap's soul as if it was his own private an' secret property, not as if it was a sort of cold in the head that you had to ask about every time you met a chap. Yet she did more good than a dozen soldiers' homes. She knew that a glass of beer never did any man harm, an' a pipe of 'bacca was as good as a meal to some chaps, an' when she tackled a feller it wasn't a case of 'Dear-brother-where-have-you-strayed?' but straight to the point. 'I hear you was seen on the Ramps last night in a wretched state of intoxication—I've a good mind to box your ears.'

"Fellers got to know' Mrs. Carey, an' they never tried to lie to her, or pretend they were sufferin' from giddiness when she saw 'em supported by the picquet. We had to have boxin' an' fencin', an' there was books an' papers to read, an' gen'rally, in the course of the evenin', somebody or other would sing a song.

"Moggy had never been to Mrs. Carey's. He never went anywhere unless somebody asked him to go. Nobby sez that Moggy enjoyed himself very much, especially with a young lady named Louisa. Mrs. Carey had always one or two friends to help her entertain. They was tradesmen's daughters and decent young fellers from the town. She wouldn't have anybody who thought they was a cut above a soldier, an' that's why Mrs. Carey's 'do's' was always such a success.

"The reason he enjoyed hisself with Miss Louisa was, said Moggy, she reminded him so much of what his eldest daughter would be when she grew up.

"'I've got quite a fatherly feelin' for that girl,' he sez to Nobby.

"'I dessay,' sez Nobby.

"'I've always been very' fond of children,' sez Moggy.

"'So have I,' sez Nobby, 'of that age!'

“Mogg didn’t want Nobby to take him down to Mrs. Carey’s after that; he sort of drifted there natural, an’ there was always one or two fellers there who’d stand him a cup of coffee for the sake of the little ones at home.

“He asked Nobby not to mention the fact that he was married to Mrs. Carey.

“‘She’s one of them generous kind of women who will want to give me money,’ he sez: ‘an’ I want to keep me self respect an’ not be a burden to anybody!’

“We respected old Moggy for that; we respected him so much that Bill Mason got up another subscription for him.

“Moggy got very good reports from home. ‘The two pounds that we sent a little while back had bought a mangle,’ he sez, ‘an’ the missus was gettin’ quite a nice connection together. The children was keepin’ well (he read a bit of the letter out to us), but little Ernest had had a lot of trouble with his teethin’. Young Sam had a bad cold, but was goin’ on nicely. Imogene had fallen down an’ cut her knee, but it was better. Clarence was gettin’ on nicely at school with mathematics, an’ could now say his multiplication table up to “four times four are forty-four.” So no more at present, from your lovin’ wife, Matilda.’

“What with these letters comin’ in, an’ the news from time to time about Ernest’s teeth, we felt we was gettin’ our money’s worth, an’ even Nobby suspended money-makin’ operations, so as not to interfere with the support of Moggy’s family. In a manner of speakin’ we’d adopted him.

“‘It’s like what you read in story books,’ sez Moggy, with tears in his eyes, ‘about children bein’ brought up by the regiments an’ bein’ the “Pets of the Battalion,” ‘he sez.

“‘I wouldn’t go so far as sayin’ that,’ sez Nobby, very cautious, ‘but in a manner of speakin’ they are very dear to us.’

“‘Thank you, Nobby,’ sez Mogg, gratefully, shakin’ Nobby’s hand, ‘you’ve got a tender heart.’

“Moggy never could see a joke straight off.

“That same afternoon we saw Mrs. Carey driving in the Alameda an’ saluted her. We was passin’ on but she stopped the carriage an’ beckoned to us.

“‘Smith,’ she sez, ‘I hope you an’ your friends are goin’ to buy your comrade a nice weddin’ present.’

“‘Which comrade, ma’am!’ sez Nobby, surprised.

“‘Don’t you know?’ she sez. ‘Why he’s goin’ to marry Louisa an’ purchase his discharge, an’ Louisa’s brother is going to give him a position.’

“‘What name did you say, ma’am?’ sez Nobby, politely.

"'Mogg,' sez Mrs. Carey, an' Nobby sort of staggered.

"'Beg pardon?' he sez, faintly.

"'Mogg,' sez the lady, "a most careful, savin' young man. Now don't forget to give him something nice,' an' noddin' to us, she drove on.

"'Mogg?' sez Nobby, in a trance. 'give him a weddin' present?' he sez, dreamily. 'Yes, certainly—we'll give him a wreath.'

"Then he woke up.

"'Smithy,' he sez, fiercely, 'have we been supportin' Mogg's fam'ly for years or have we not?'

"'We have,' I sez.

"'Have we took what I might call a lovin' interest in Ernest's teethin' an' Imogene's knee or have we not?'

"'We have,' I sez.

"'Very well,' sez Nobby, firmly, 'then I ain't dreamin'—come on back to barracks.'

"We found Mogg polishing his boots.

"'Hullo, you bigaminous blighter,' sez Nobby, 'what's the game?'

"'Are you referrin' to my nuptials?' sez Mogg.

"'I am, you thief,' sez Nobby, 'what about that wife an' family of yourn?'

"'I ain't got no wife an' family,' sez Mogg, calmly.

"'What!' roars Nobby.

"'I never had one,' sez Mogg, breathin' on his boots to disinfect 'em, 'an' never thought of havin' 'em till you lumbered 'em on to me.'

"'Me?' sez Nobby.

"'Yes,' sez Mogg, 'you found 'em, you told the chaps about 'em; you invented 'em.'

"'But,' sez Nobby wrathfully, 'what about the money we've got together for you?'

"'That,' sez Mogg, carefully, 'will be used to the best advantage.'

"'You've robbed us,' sez Nobby.

"'Don't say that,' sez Mogg, pleadin'ly, 'or I shall think you've no sense of humour—I have,' he sez.

"'In fact.' he went on. 'I'm beginning to see the comical side of things more than ever I did. It's a great thing to have a sense of humour.'

## XIX. — PIKEY'S LUCK

I ASSOCIATE Smithy with many Christmases. With a Christmas on the bleak wind-swept slopes of the little hill, whereon is perched the sinister bulk of No. 2 magazine; with a Christmas spent under the blazing sun where the Modder comes swirling to the Riet River; with a memorable Christmas in Anchester, and with a Christmas—another war-like Christmas—sitting patiently in a lonely blockhouse between De Aar and Nauwpoort. When I think of Christmas in the army, I think of garlanded rooms, of admirable and praiseworthy mottoes covering the walls, of centrepieces and floral designs carried out in bayonets and flags; of "Success to the regiment" over the door, and "Good Luck to the Officers" over the fireplace; of coal-boxes swathed in crinkled paper, and the bare walls of the barrack-room hidden behind a screen of greenery and holly.

"Christmas takes people in different ways," said Smithy, reflectively, "with some it's 'How are you, ole feller, come an' have a drink,' an' with others it's'Don't you wish me a Merry Christmas or I'll give you a dig in the neck.'

"As a general rule, though, Christmas brings out all the best qualities in a chap; he can drink more an' eat more, an' lots of people who usually want to fight after their tenth gallon change their habits an' only want to cry. It's called seasonable greetin's. There's always lots of amusement, too, about Christmas in barracks. There's the gettin' ready, the decoratin', the paper-chain makin', an' the wonderin' whether 'Greasy' Sanders, the cook, will keep sober. An' there's generally a sing-song after dinner, an' a bit of a dance at night, an' for them who want to go out of barracks there's gen'rally a supply of civilian friends. Then there's always plenty to eat an' drink, an' cigars for them that want 'em, or are strong enough to smoke 'em—good cigars, too, that you couldn't buy under seven for a shillin', an' whisky, an' other Christmas spirits.

"But, as I've remarked, different chaps have different ways, an' what's more than that, different Christmases perduce different feelin's.

"I remember one year when we was in Aldershot, when Christmas fell in proper Christmas card weather. Snow on the ground, an' holly in bloom, an' the old church bells a-ringin'. An' somehow all the chaps got taken up with the Christmas feelin' in the air, an' tried to act accordin'.

"'I feel proper good this mornin',' sez Nobby, when he got up. 'I feel at peace with me feller man. A Merry Christmas to you, Spud,' he sez, nicely.

"'The same to you, Nobby,' sez Spud Murphy.

"'Has any friend seen my blackin' brushes?' sez Nobby, lookin' under his cot.

"'I saw friend Taylor usin' 'em yesterday,' I sez.

"'Friend Taylor is welcome to anything I've got that I don't happen to want,' sez Nobby, 'but at this present moment I feel like bitin' friend Taylor's ear.'

"'In fact, the day started so pleasantly that I was a bit doubtful in my mind whether I didn't ought to get out of barracks before the row started.

'The whole regiment was shakin' hands an' invitin' one another home to meet the old people, an' Spud Murphy an' Nobby sang a duet about a kid that got lost in the snow, and had nowhere to go, no mother to help him, in the grave she lay low, lorst in the wide world was pore little Joe, or words to that effect.

"About seven o'clock the good-fellership began to get frayed around the edge an' baggy at the knees, an' when Nobby asked Spud for the tenth time to come an' spend a Sunday at home with his rich relations, Spud said 'No' very sharp.

"'Why not, ole comrade?' sez Nobby.

"'Because,' sez Spud, 'I'm very particular where I go.'

"Nobby was so took back that he hadn't anything to say—for a minute.

"'Christmas-time is Christmas-time.' sez Spud. 'but I've got to draw a line somewhere.'

"'This bein' what I might call a festive season,' sez Nobby, takin' his coat off, 'I'm goin' to celebrate the day by killin' the fatted calf. You,' he sez, 'bein' the calf.'

"The best pleasures of life," philosophised Smithy, "come in a manner of speakin' unexpected. There's nothin' worse than making preparations to amuse yourself; plannin' this an' that for weeks in advance, because when you've got everything fixed up, it's ten to one that it rains, or someone's forgot the corkscrew.

"Similarly, when a chap's lookin' forward to some 'do' or other with as much pleasure as a tramp looks forward to a cold bath, it's pretty sure to turn out the time of his life.

"There was a feller of ours called Pikey, who was chiefly remarkable for being a descendant of the original Jonah wot the fisherman used for whale-bait in the good old times.

"Everybody used to steer clear of Pikey because of his unluckiness. He was the sort of cove who got mumps two days before his furlough was due, an' had to go into hospital. If he was on guard there was sure to be a rough house; when he came aboard the ship had the worst voyage she'd ever had; an', takin' one thing with another, Pikey's name was trouble.

“Chaps wouldn’t walk with him for fear of slates blowin’ off the roof on to their heads, an’ as sure as Pikey ever played football someone would be badly injured.

“If we met Pikey out in town we used to turn down a street quick, an’ naturally this sort of thing got on Pikey’s nerves. He challenged two or three chaps to fight, but nobody would take him on for fear of gettin’ accidentally killed.

“Just before Christmas, 1900, the battalion was sent down from the Transvaal to hold the line between De Aar an’ Norport. The colony was full of commandoes wanderin’ from town to town, and British columns wanderin’ after ’em.

“To prevent the Boers from losing themselves we’d put up a barbed wire fence for about three hundred miles along the line, an’ armour-plated summer-houses at regular intervals. ‘B’ company held the 29th Section, an’ me an’ Nobby, Spud Murphy, Pug Wilson, Jonah Pikey, an’ a dozen other fellers, beside a sergeant an’ a corporal, was told off to No. 49 Blockhouse.

“It wasn’t exactly a cheerful kind of prospect for Christmas. The scenery was mostly railway line an’ bare plain, with some blue hills miles an’ miles away in the distance; an’ the weather was blazin’ hot. In the daytime the blockhouse, bein’ made of tin, was like an oven, an’ in the night-time like a bloomin’ refrigerator. We knew the kind of place we was going to.

“As soon as we found out Pikey was comin’ with us, Nobby an’ one or two other chaps handed in the names of their next-of-kin.

“‘If anything happens to me,’ sez Nobby, very gloomy, ‘you can have my kit, Smithy. There’s four pairs of socks, a new pair of boots, an’ a brand new razor that I picked up at Modder River. Give my love to all at home, an’ tell ’em I died like a soldier.’

“After we’d been posted we was busy for a couple of days makin’ things ship-shape. We cleaned out the blockhouse (the Wigshires had been holdin’ it before we come), an’ Pug Wilson painted a board, ‘Anchester Villa’ to put up in front. Then we fixed up spring guns for brother Boer, an’ dug two trenches full of broken glass for them to fall into, and put ‘Welcome’ in little white stones in front of each trench.

“Altogether, the first two days passed quicker than you’d think.

“Every day a visitin’ picquet with an officer in charge used to come along to see how we got along, an’ to take reports.

“Naturally, all the other blockhouses was very anxious to know what was happenin’ at ‘49,’ owin’ to our havin’ Pikey with us, an’ when they found out, day by day, that nobody was shot or had sunstroke, they were a bit

disappointed. On Christmas Eve the visitin' picquet brought us a bit of news.

"'Old Viljoen is comin' this way,' sez Jerry Jordan—he was one of the picquet—'an' it looks as if you chaps are goin' to have a merry Christmas.' He looks at Pikey an' shakes his head. 'I wouldn't be in "49" for a bloomin' pension,' he sez; 'not with old Pikey,' he sez.

"When the picquet had left, Nobby had a talk with me.

"'Smithy,' he sez, serious, 'here's three days passed an' old Pikey's done nothin'. He ain't shot anybody by accident, he ain't set fire to the blockhouse, he ain't mixed hisself up in one of them spring guns—I'm gettin' nervous.'

"'P'raps his luck's turned; everybody's luck turns at Christmas,' I sez, but Nobby shook his head.

"Christmas Day came up in a white blaze of hot sunshine. There was not a single thing you touched that didn't blister you. All the hills was a-quiverin', an' over the plains you could see extr'ordinary woods an' lakes made by the mirage.

"We'd got a bit of Christmas up, a bit of holly over the door, an'"God Bless our Home,' done by Pug Wilson on a biscuit-box, an' a few paper chains to give the house a tone. An' they'd sent us along extra rations, a couple of fowls an' a bottle of beer a man. Nobby made a Christmas puddin' out of a receipt he found in a paper, an' it was very nice after the water was squeezed out of it.

"Nobby said there was nothin' in the receipt about tyin' it up in a cloth. As a matter of fact, it wasn't at all bad after we put it through a strainer.

"After dinner we had a sing-song. Nobby an' Spud sung their annual about pore little Joe out in the snow, nowhere to go, an' Sergeant Perkins recited, in a gentlemanly way, about a pauper refusin' his puddin' only last Christmas Day, an' Pug Wilson gave imitations of Irvin' in a way that was wonderfully life-like. Nobody had ever seen Irvin', so that made it all the more pleasant.

"Then Pikey gave an imitation of a clog-dance, an' we all drew back for fear somethin' would happen; that he'd kick up a stone an' blind somebody, or disturb a snake, or draw the enemy's fire. But nothin' came along to upset the harmony of the meetin'.

"In fact, when we paraded at sunset for guard, Nobby said it did look as if Pikey's luck had taken the first turnin' to the right. Guard mountin' at a blockhouse isn't like guard mountin' at home. For one thing, we dressed

pretty well as we liked, an' the main consideration was to see that your rifle was oiled, an' your ammunition handy.

"An' it was different in this respect, that everybody's on guard punctually although only a certain number are told off for sentry duty. Pikey's relief was the easiest, ten till twelve an' four till six. Half the time of his second relief most of the chaps are awake, an' half the time of his first relief they haven't gone to sleep. We took no risks with Pikey.

"We'd expected to have a fairly busy night owin' to Commandant Viljoen bein' in the neighbourhood, and at eight o'clock that night a telephone message came through from headquarters to say that Viljoen had been turned northward by Henniker's Column, and we settled down for a quiet night.

"I'd just dozed off, when I woke suddenly to feel Nobby pressin' my hand.*

* One of the dodges learnt by the British soldier in South Africa is this effective method of waking a man without startling him into an outcry. Press the hand and increase the pressure, and the sleeper will awake noiselessly.

"'What's up?' I whispered.

"'Listen!' he murmured.

"I strained my ears an' then I heard click-clock—click-clock very faintly.

"'Firin',' sez Nobby, under his breath; 'an' the question is: What in——is Pikey doin' not to give the alarm.'

"I was reachin' out my hand to touch the sergeant when Nobby caught it.

"'For God's sake, wait,' he whispers;'there's only two things that Pikey can be; dead's one, an' asleep's the other. Get outside as quietly as you can.'

"As silent as I could, I picked up my rifle an' bandolier, an' got outside. Nobby was with me in a second.

"There was no sign of Pikey, but there was a sign of somethin' else, for not two hundred yards away you could see a lot of shadders movin' across the veldt. There was no noise, for they were keepin' to the soft bed of a little dried-up river.

"'Pikey first,' sez Nobby, an' walked round to the other side of the blockhouse.

"There we found Pikey—Pikey the Jonah. On the flat of his back he lay a-sleepin' as calm an' as comfortable as if it was Sunday mornin' at home.

"'Get up, you worm!' hissed Nobby, an' Pikey opened his eyes an' said, "Merry Christmas."

"I couldn't see quite plain, because we only had starlight, but I fancy he opened his eyes, an' then grunted an' turned over an' went to sleep.

"Nobby took a kick at him that woke him up with a yell, an' just at that minute I raised my rifle an' fired at the shadows on the veldt.

"'Guard, turn out!' I shouted, an' I heard a scramble inside the blockhouse.

“Nobby an’ I let fly together an’ dropped down to cover, for the Boers are pretty nippy when it comes tothat sort of thing. All through that Christmas night we lay tucked up against the sandbag entrenchment, firin’ till the barrels of our rifles was scorchin’ hot. The telephone wire had been cut, so we could get no news from headquarters.

“There was another blockhouse a mile an’ a half away, an’ firin’ was goin’ on there—it was their fire that Nobby had heard. I heard the sergeant say, ‘It’s Viljoen doublin’ back,’ an’ I knew how serious it was, for we’d been warned an’ threatened as to what would happen to us if we allowed Viljoen to get across the lines.

“‘What I want to know,’ sez the sergeant, between the firin’, ‘is how these chaps got so close to us without the sentry givin’ an alarm.’

“‘It’s a dark night, sergeant,’ sez Nobby.

“‘Dark be damped,’ sez the sergeant; ‘all night’s are dark, ain’t they?’

“There wasn’t much talk after this.

“The Boer Intelligence Department ought to have gold medals, for what they didn’t know wasn’t worth knowin’. They knew that ‘49’ was weakly held, an’ they turned all their fire on to us. If they could smash us up they could get across the line with their convoy, an’ their fire was terrific.

“A chap of ours named Moley was the first to go down; shot through the lung, he went down all of a heap at my side. Then the sergeant was killed, an’ fell without a word.

“Nobby closed up and took poor Moley’s place.

“‘If ever I get out of this,’ he sez, ‘I’ll make Jonah sorry he ever gave up the whale business.’

“Corporal Thom was the next to go—he was lookin’ over the trench with his night glasses an’ Nobby pulled him down. He was a well-educated sort of youngster, an’ he hadn’t much experience.

“He shook Nobby off, an’ rose again. He leant over the sandbags for a long time without movin’, till Nobby said:

“‘Corporal, come down out of that, for the Lord’s sake,’ and gave him a tug.

“Then he came down all of a heap, for he was stone dead, an’ must have been shot the moment he went up.

“All the chaps were takin’ the fire quite coolly; Spud Murphy was singin’ a little Irish song to himself— his Irish blood always came out at times like this—an’ Pug Wilson was sayin’ what a good job it was it wasn’t rainin’.

“Only Pikey lost his head. He was whimpering and moanin’.

“‘I can’t stand this much longer,’ he sez.

“The bullets were patterin’ against the blockhouse like hail.

“All this time we’d been holdin’ the trench outside the blockhouse, but the fire got so hot that the other corporal, Higgs, ordered us to take shelter inside, an’ we crept inside one by one so that our fire shouldn’t die down.

“We’d hardly got inside before the Boers got a seven-pounder into action.

“The first shell went shriekin’ overhead, an’ the second went wide.
“But the third hit the roof an’ carried part of it away.
“The fourth killed the corporal an’ we was reduced to six men—reckonin’ Pikey.
“Then I think Pikey must have gone off his head.
“‘I’m a Jonah, a cursed Jonah!’ he yelled, an’ sprang from the little manhole where we’d crawled in.
“Before we could stop him he was through.
“Through the loopholes we saw him scramble down into the trench an’ up on the other side, an’ he stood there hesitating for a bit, as though he couldn’t make up his mind what he was goin’ to do.
“Then a most wonderful thing happened. For as he stood with not a bullet touching him, a dazzling white light fell on him, just as though he was on a stage an’ a limelight had suddenly been turned on. Clear an’ as plain as daylight he stood, for friend an’ foe to look at.
“He realised his danger in a second, an’ tried to run out of the circle of light, but it follered him an’ follered him all along the edge of the bank as he stumbled an’ ran.
“Then he stopped suddenly and faced the light, covering his eyes with his hands.
“That’s how poor old Jonah Pikey died, an’ that’s how we found him when the armoured train came up to us.
“It was the searchlight from the train that was the death of Pikey.

“The light was intended to show us where to fire, an’ to dazzle the enemy, an’ it only shows how Pikey’s bad luck held out to the last.”

## XX. — THE BUGLERS

"WHEN you are called to a murder," says Dr. Graham Grant, cold-bloodedly, "take with you paper and pencil, india-rubber, a tape measure, a lens, two microscopic slides, and a pair of old gloves." Thus runs the police-surgeon's emergency guide, but for my part, I could not imagine, were I the divisional surgeon of "H" Division, that I should do anything so methodical. Not nowadays. When I was a soldier and accepted sudden and violent death as part of the day's work, I might have acted with the cool promptitude that this brilliant police- surgeon suggests.

For all that is tragic in military affairs is intimately connected with the Royal Army Medical Corps.

I once knew a band corporal of the 5th Fusiliers who was going to marry the prettiest girl in Aldershot. He invited me to the wedding, and a couple of days before the ceremony, when he and I sat together in the little soldiers' club in North Camp, he took me into his confidence. We were chatting about football, I remember, when he broke off suddenly to tell me that he was the eldest son of the Tsar, and the bandmaster (to whom he had been sold as a boy) wars keeping him out of his inheritance.

I was politely interested. With a great display of secrecy he produced from a specially-constructed leathern sheath, which he had sown inside his trousers, a long amputating knife. I have no idea where he got it from. At the moment I was not curious, for we were almost alone. He informed me that he intended liberating himself from captivity that night. The band was to play outside the officers' mess, and during the second piece (it was to be "The Mikado," I remember) he would expe¬ditiously despatch the bandmaster to another, and, I trust, a better world.

I parted from him with some relief.

That night six of us descended upon him suddenly, and he gave us all the fight we wanted. But we strapped him to a stretcher, and got him into the padded cell, and on the day fixed for his wedding he died of G.P., which is an abbreviation for General Paralysis of the Insane.

"It stands to reason," said Smithy, "that there's more, what I might call scope for that sort of thing in the army than outside. Each feller is a little bit of life nipped off short. You don't know where his other life ended, or what it was, who his people were, or why he enlisted. When his relations come down to see him, you ain't surprised if they turn up in a motor-car, but you ain't surprised either if they turn up in drink an' have to be chucked out the gate.

"The tragicest thing I saw for a long time was when a chap named Stone was expectin' his rich aunt, what he'd stayed with when he was on furlough. A perfect lady she was. Had a greengrocer's shop, two servants, an' a musical-

box—she gave him the musical box when he come away, an' he sold it to Corporal Toms for ten bob. We waited for days an' days to see her, an' Stoney was braggin' about how she had two houses of her own, an' money in the bank besides. She did turn up after a bit. Came down with two tec's, an' pinched Stoney for stealin' the musical box.

"I've seen other tragic things, such as Nobby bein' ordered by the C.O. to pay back money to chaps—money that he'd honestly earned, an' I've seen the real downright tragedy of war, an' cholera, an' other deadly diseases.

"But I've noticed that, however bad it is, there's always a light side to the worst of tragedies, an' there was one or two in the case of the drum-major's daughter.

"When I joined the regiment in—well, I won't gratify your curiosity by tellin' you when I joined—she was a leggy girl, who used to run about barracks with her hair a-flyin'. She was pretty even then. A straight little nose, a pair of fine eyes, an' a firm, full mouth. Her hair was the colour of brown that had been washed in gold, an' hadn't quite lost its brownness, an' at the same time, hadn't got rid of its goldishness.

"I noticed her, as a chap notices kids, but the next time I noticed her, which was a few years later, she'd got to that stage where she wasn't a kid any longer, an' wasn't exactly a woman. Her father's name was Curton—Drum-Major Curton—an' her name was Cecila, an' her friends called her Cissy. I didn't have much to say to her. As you know, it is easier for a soldier to get into conversation with a princess than the daughter of a non-com. They don't want to know anything below the rank of colour-sergeant, but they much prefer the sergeant-major.

"Our sergeant-major at this time was a feller named Bensonberg. That ain't his real name, but if I called him Robinson, you'd probably get into trouble for libel.

"He was one of them dapper little chaps, all curled moustache, an' mincin' step, an' his quarters smelt like a perfumery factory after there's been a fire, an' all the scents have got mixed up. He was one of the youngest S.-M.'s in the service, an' he got his rank because, at the time the old sergeant-major died, he was the only colour-sergeant in the regiment who had a first-class certificate. He wasn't a popular feller by any means. Partly because he'd been a colour-sergeant of'H,' he was tremendously down on 'B' company an' of all the chaps in 'B' he disliked Nobby Clark worst.

"Nobby used to give imitations of him that was so life-like that you could almost smell the O-dee-Cologne.

"Nobby was on fatigue once, cleanin' out the sergeant-major's quarters, polishin' the grate an' scrubbin' the stairs, an' he said it was the most

ladylike quarters he'd ever been in. The sergeant-major was the sort of chap that some kind of women go mad over—the kind of women that are fond of dogs an' cats, an' any kind of pet they can tie up in blue ribbon, an' naturally when he put the dyin'-duck eye on Cissy he thought all the other entries would scratch, and it would be a walk-over.

"But there was a fellow in the regiment who was out for the second money, an' that feller was a corporal in the Drums by the name of Stanford. The finest bugler in the regiment he was, an' sometimes, when he took it into his head, he'd get up in the mornin's an' sound the'Reveille,' an' the chaps would wake one another up to listen to him.

"He got to know Cissy in a curious way. She was a bit of a Tom-boy as a kid, an' nothin' would satisfy her, but she must learn to play the bugle, an' it was Corporal Stanford who taught her down in the brickfield at Anchester.

"I don't know how long the lessons went on, but it appears that Stanford taught her other things besides the bugle, an' he learnt a few lessons from her. Her father was an' easy-goin', good-natured sort of chap, an' he liked Stanford. So there wasn't any obstacles put in the corporal's way.

"Then the sergeant-major came along, and the scene was changed, as the poem sez.

"The sergeant-major was good business, from a marryin' point of view, an' the drum-major made it very clear to Cissy that it was better to be Mrs. Sergeant-Major, an' live in the odour of Ess Bokay, than be Mrs. Corporal, an' live in the odour of soap suds.

"You'd have thought that Cissy would have jumped at the chance, but bless your heart you can never tell what a woman's going to do when there's a man in the business, an' it's perfectly impossible when there's two men.

"From what I heard afterwards she told the old man that she wouldn't marry the sergeant-major if he was the last man in the world. That it was corporal or nothin' for her. The drum-major was a very religious chap, so he hiked down his Bible an' proved to her that children that didn't obey their parents was in for a hot time, but she said that if it was no hotter than Poona an' the corporal was there, she didn't mind. The old man was terribly upset, an' sent for the corporal.

"'What have you been teachin' my girl,' he sez.

"'The "Last Post,"' sez Stanford, '"Officers' Call," "Fall In," "No Parade"——'

"'Never mind about that,' roars the drum-major, 'what have you been teachin' in the love-makin' line?'

"'The Reveille,' sez the corporal prompt. He was a smart feller with his tongue; almost as smart as Nobby, but not quite so glib.

“Try as he did, the drum-major couldn’t get his girl to change her mind, an’ when the sergeant-major started talkin’ airily about the weddin’ day—he took a lot for granted—the old man blurted out the truth.

“‘What?’ sez the sergeant-major, horror-struck. ‘Won’t have me? Why, the girl’s mad!’

“He wasn’t as much upset as he was amused. He didn’t think that any girl in her senses could refuse him. When he found out that Cissy had already fixed her mind on another chap he nearly had a fit.

“He was at Chunpore at the time, an’ it was just before the rains.

“‘I’ll see this corporal,’ he sez, in a rage, an’ marches back to his quarters. He sent for Stanford, an’ Stanford came.

“Me an’ Nobby happened to be near the gate of the cantonment half an hour later, when up came Corporal Stanford in walkin’-out kit, lookin’ a little white, but quite calm.

“‘Nobby,’ he sez, quiet, ‘I’ve done in Smellin’ Salts.’

“‘Go on!’ sez Nobby.

“‘I have,’ sez the corporal; ‘he began talkin’ unpleasantly about a lady friend of mine—no names mentioned—an’ I laid him out. He ain’t much hurt.’

“‘I’m sorry,’ sez Nobby.

“‘I’m goin,’ sez the corporal. ‘If you should see the lady in question tell her I’ve gone. Tell her that I’ve got a friend in the town who’ll hide me, an’ that when she’s ready, I’m ready.’

“With that he shook hands with us an’ left.

“Ten minutes later, when the sergeant-major recovered his conscience an’ picked hisself out of his cosy corner, there was the biggest row in barracks you ever heard. Where was Corporal Stanford? Nobody had seen him go. Not the corporal who was on the gate (who was a pal of his), not Nobby, not me.

“They searched the barracks from end to end; they sent picquets through the bazaar an’ native quarter, through the European quarter, an’ through the town from end to end—but Corporal Stanford was gone.

“Cissy was frantic when Nobby an’ me found an excuse to go over to the married quarters, an’ the way he broke the news to her was the cleverest an’ artfullest way you could imagine.

“We went over to ask for the drum-major, knowin’ that at that particular moment he was listening to the S.-M.’s horrid tale of how Stanford had knocked him down when he wasn’t lookin’, an’ jumped on his chest.

“Luckily the girl came to the door, an’ not her mother.

"'I've got something to say to you,' sez Nobby, solemn.

"'Is it about Jack?' she sez, quick—her eyes was red with cryin'.

"'Who's Jack?' sez Nobby.

"'Corporal Stanford,' she sez.

"'Yes, it's about Jack,' sez Nobby, 'though I never knew his name was Jack,' sez Nobby. 'Most corporals is named Bill, an' sergeants Adolphus, an' colour- sergeants——'.

"'Yes, yes,' she sez, impatient. 'Tell me about Jack.'

"'Well, Jack's gorn,' sez Nobby; 'gorn for ever,' he sez, very solemn.

"The girl went white.

"'For ever?' she faltered.

"'Perhaps,' sez Nobby, who always likes to work up a sensation, 'perhaps never to return.' When he'd got her nearly faintin', he delivered his message, an' we just managed to reach the barrack square in time to avoid the drum-major goin' home again.

"It appears from what I heard from the chaps in the 'drums' that Corporal Stanford was a savin' kind of feller, an' he'd put away close on a couple of hundred pounds in his service. It wasn't all savings, because he'd come into a little bit of money soon after he enlisted.

"'He'll be able to get out of India all right,' sez Nobby, 'but he won't go without the girl.'

"That's the idea the drum-major had, too, for he watched his daughter like a mouse, an' she hadn't a chance to send a note to the corporal, or receive one from him. One night me an' Nobby was returning from the canteen talkin' matters over, when suddenly Nobby stopped and laid his hand on my arm.

"Very clear, from the direction of the town, came a bugle call.

"Letters!' whispers Nobby. 'That's the post bugle—somebody is sayin' "I've sent you a letter"—an' I'll bet I know who that somebody is!' Nobody else seemed to hear the call, an' we waited. We waited ten minutes, then from the other side of the square came a sharp bugle call:

"'The "Standfast!"' sez Nobby, admiringly. 'That girl's got sense!'

"Then we heard the shout of the sergeant of the guard asking who in the name of various gentlemen an' places sounded the'Standfast.'

"We could have told him, but we didn't. Nothin' occurred the next day or the next night. The picquets were called in from town, an' the general idea was that Corporal Stanford had cleared.

“But Nobby an’ me knew better.

“I don’t think Cissy could have ever got the letter the corporal said he was going to send her, because, just before the tattoo on the second night, when the drums was actually on the square, waiting to sound off the ‘First Post,’ somebody in the neighbourhood of the married quarters sounded

the exact meaning of which is ‘Come for orders.’

“Whilst everybody was in a state of confusion owing to this unexpected call, the bugle went again:

“‘That’s the officer’s dinner call,’ sez Nobby, wonderingly, an’ we heard the far away bugle say ‘All right,’ as plain as plain, for Stanford could make a bugle talk.

“But we couldn’t understand the ‘Come for orders,’ nor yet the ‘Officers’ mess’ call. It puzzled Nobby considerable, an’ I know he lay awake in bed thinkin’ it out.

“As a matter of fact I found out the meaning first. The next night was guest night at the mess, when the officers invite their civilian pals to dinner.

“There’s a private road to the officer’s mess that’s only opened on guest night. It’s usually filled with carriages, because, as everybody knows, the Anchesters is one of the most popular regiments in the Army. It was just after the dinner bugle had sounded, an’ when the band was playing the first selection, that me an’ Nobby, who had strolled round to the entrance of the private road, saw a carriage drive up, an’ instead of turnin’ into the carriage-way, draw up a little further along the main road. There was a man inside.

“We waited, knowin’ it was Stanford, who was ‘come for orders.’

“We hadn’t long to wait, for bye-an’-bye a girl came flyin’ down the drive, an’ Stanford jumped out to meet her. He swung her into the gharri, an’ off they drove like the wind, just as the old man an’ the sergeant-major came pantin’ up....

“They got out of India all right, air I’m told she made him a splendid wife, an’ that they settled down in Canada—so there’s nothin’ tragic in that. Where the tragedy part comes in was when we was all standin’ lookin’ in the direction the gharri took, out of the darkness came a bugle call, an insultin’ bugle call, for it told the sergeant-major that the whole thing was the girl’s own idea.

“‘I called him, I called him,’ sez the bugle.

“‘I’ll take my oath she did,’ sez the drum-major, ‘an’ he’d have been a fool not to come.’”

## XXI. — HONOUR

OF course, pickets are absurd, and, of course, the C.I.C., Aldershot, acted wisely in abolishing them. You may be sure that anything you do in the Army that has never been done before will be hailed with delight, and acclaimed instantly as a much-needed reform.

"We are going to substitute hooks and eyes for buttons," says the War Office.

"Hooray!" says the public.

"Soldiers' trousers will be creased at the sides instead of back and front," says the War Office.

"Hooray!!" says the public.

"In future the Army will wear mohair laces," says the War Office.

"Hooray, hooray!!" says the public, "this is real reform! Vive la (who ever happens to be in office at the time)!"

It's a fine thing to know that pickets are abolished and there is nobody left in Aldershot to run in the intoxicated soldier save and except about 500 military and regimental police, who will carry on as usual.

It is a splendid tribute to the Commander-in-Chief's faith in the rank and file—mostly file—that he withdraws the cold-footed and unemployed patrols, and leaves the young military gentlemen of Aldershot to their sense of honour and the "red cap."

This, I gather from the eulogies that have been showered upon the Aldershot authorities, is the general sentiment of the public, but personally I have no enthusiasm for the man who takes the chain off the dog and omits to unmuzzle him.

"There was an officer of ours," sez Smithy, "a young officer, who came to us from India, an' went on with us to the Cape. He wasn't a bad sort of feller, but he took a very serious view of things, especially morals. He was one of them fellers who thought the soldier wanted elevatin', an' he used to do his best to improve our minds. Started a'botany ramble,' an' lots of fellers joined it. Nobby Clark was one. This was in India, an' it was pretty hot walkin'.

"'Here we have,' sez the officer, 'the cannabis indica, so called owin' to its petals bein' copratulated. It is mostly found in hot countries.'

"'It is hot, sir,' sez Nobby.

"'An' in dry soils,' sez the officer.

"'Like me, sir,' sez Nobby.

“He only went out once, did Nobby. When he found that there wasn’t any free drinks attached he chucked it up, an’ so did the other chaps. Nobby said it improved his thirst more than his mind, an’ he couldn’t afford it.

“This officer (his name was Holly) had an habit of putting chaps on their honour—that’s what made me think about him. It was ‘on your honour, did you borrow Private Murphy’s blacking brushes?’ an’“on your honour, is this your shirt?’ till the Adjutant, who happened to overhear one of these honourable conversa-tions, pulled him up sharp.

“‘You’ll wear out the honour of the “B” Company if you’re not careful, Holly,’ he sez.

“There was a bit of a dispute on about a razor that Fatty Green had lost.

“Fatty’s number was burnt into it, but when he found it again on Nobby’s shelf, it had been burnt out again, an’ you couldn’t tell which was a‘9’ an’ which was a ‘4.’ Nobby swore it was his: said he’d had it since the fourteenth of June.

“‘Have you had this razor for a year, on your honour?’ sez Holly, very solemn.

“‘No, on me shelf, sir,’ sez Nobby.

“‘Are you prepared to swear upon your honour?’

“‘I’m always prepared to swear, sir,’ sez Nobby, very earnest;‘on my honour I am.’

“That’s when the Adjutant came in.

“Umfreville—that’s the Adjutant’s name—was always ready to take a man’s word, but he never used to go about the business the same way that Holly did.

“‘Clark,’ he sez, ‘is that your razor?’

“‘Yessir,’ sez Nobby.

“‘Has it always been your razor?’

“‘No, sir,’ sez Nobby.

“‘Who did you borrow it from, an’ forget to return it to?’

“‘Private Green, sir, now you come to mention it.’

“‘An’ when did this razor accidentally fall on to the red hot poker and burn the numbers out?’

“‘Last week, sir,’ sez Nobby.

“‘Very well,’ sez the Adjutant, ‘you will be put under stoppages for a new razor for Private Green.’

"'Yessir,' sez Nobby. An' there the matter ends.

"If you try the word of honour dodge with the soldier, he thinks it's a new game, an' plays it to the best of his ability—but any two-handed game's a rottenly poor game when you hold all the two's an' three's an' four's in the pack, an' the other fellers got all the aces an' kings an' queens.

"Holly had all sorts of ideas for improvin' the soldier. He wanted to make 'em take a pride in theirselves an' that's one of the reasons he started a dog show. He tried a flower show first, an' Nobby got first prize for a beautiful rose tree in bloom, but he had to give it back because they found out afterwards he'd pinched the rose from the Botanical Gardens in Bombay an' stuck it in some earth with a few leaves round it to make it appear natural.

"The dog show was better, because everybody had a dog, although the regulations was against more than two or three to a regiment.

"Holly gave five pounds in prizes, an' the other officers put up a tenner between 'em.

"Holly wanted to divide the dogs into classes, thoroughbreds an' half-breds, but the Adjutant, who knew more about soldiers dogs than Holly did, persuaded him to make it for one class only—No Breed.

"About this time, Nobby had a dog called 'Rags,' so called because, when he was layin' down asleep, he looked like a door mat that hadn't been shook for weeks.

"Nobby was very indignant when he found there was goin' to be no prizes for thoroughbreds, because, accordin' to Nobby, 'Rags' was one of the purest bred dogs that was ever born.

"'His father was a pure bred Scotch Terrier,' sez Nobby, 'an' his mother was a pure bred bull terrier, an' if that don't make him thorough-bred I don't know what does.'

"Spud Murphy entered a little fox terrier, called 'Spot'—a very uncommon name that Spud thought of hisself—an' he reckoned that he'd take first prize in the'no class' division.

"For a week before the show all the fellers were busy gettin' their dogs clean an' fat. Nothin' was too good for 'em. 'Ginger' Carter fed his on hard boiled eggs till he could hardly stand. Nobby gave 'Rags' the best of everythin'. Once in the middle of dinner, 'Orderly Corporals' sounded, an' Corporal Hart, who was in charge of our room, had to get up 'an double as hard as he could to the orderly room. When he came back he looks round.

"'Where's my dinner?' he sez.

"'You finished it before you went, Corporal,' sez Nobby, politely.

"'Did I?' sez the Corporal, puzzled. 'That's very rum. I still feel hungry. I could have sworn I left two big slices of meat on my plate. I suppose none of these dashed dogs have been prowlin' about, have they? '

"'I couldn't tell you,' sez Nobby. 'All I know is that my dog's a vegetarian, an' never eats nothin' but fish.'

"Then some bloater paste disappeared off Spud Murphy's shelf. He'd put it aside for tea, an' when he went to look for it, it was gone.

"Spud was very wild, an' went in search of Nobby. He found him under the verander watchin'Rags,' an' 'Rags' was lickin' some brown stuff off his whiskers.

"'You've pinched my bloater paste,' sez Spud, very savage.

"Nobby was surprisingly mild.

"'Say not so,' he sez.

"'There it is!' sez Spud, wrathfully, 'he's chewin' the cud of it.'

"'That's not bloater paste,' sez Nobby, calm; 'that's brass polish that I'm givin' him—to brighten him up!'

"What worried Nobby most was a remark he heard the adjutant drop—the adjutant was to be the judge—about the colour of the dogs.

"'From what he said,' sez Nobby gloomily, 'he's goin' to judge how well a dog's looked after by his cleanness,' an' that put 'Rags' out of court.

"'Rags' was one of them dogs that couldn't keep clean if he tried. Me an' Nobby spent the best part of one night washin' him with a bar of carbolic soap an' dryin' him on Pug Wilson's woolly towel. The next mornin' 'Rags' wandered all through the cantonment lookin' for a puddle to roll in, an' found it.

"We washed him again, with another kind of soap (the corporal's box was locked that night) an' dried him on a sheet.

"He looked a perfect picture when we'd finished with him, an' even Spud, who came in late, admitted he looked fine.

"Spud grumbled a bit about his sheets bein' damp, but Nobby said it was in a good cause.

"'When we washed him he shook hisself,' sez Nobby, 'an' some of the water must have gone over your cot.'

"'It seems to me,' sez Spud, feelin' his sheets, 'as if somebody's been usin' 'em for towels.'

"'Sleep in blankets,' sez Nobby, 'it's healthier.'

“But all our trouble was for nothin’, for next momin’‘Rags’ turned up with a smile an’ fannin’ hisself with his tail as black as a sweep’s bride.

“‘He’s been down to the cavalry lines,’ sez Nobby in despair.

“The dog show was only two days off, an’‘Rags’ looked like a thousand to one chance, because the other dogs was in such good form, especially Spud’s dog (what he used to rub over with pipeclay every mornin’) an’ Nobby saw that somethin’ would have to be done. He thought an’ thought an’ thought, an’ at last he sez:

“‘I’ve got it!—we’ll dye him a colour that won’t show the dirt!’

“So me an’ Nobby went into the bazaar an’ saw a baboo chap, who now keeps a chemist’s shop.

“‘Dye?’ he sez, ‘what colour?’

“‘Somethin’ that won’t show the dirt, Bobajee,’ sez Nobby, ‘somethin’ blackish or brownish,’

“‘What is the material for which dyeing is desired?’ sez the baboo.

“‘A dog skin,’ sez Nobby, so the chemist chap got a powder out of one bottle an’ a powder out of another bottle an’ mixed ’em up.

“It cost us four annas, but, as Nobby pointed out, it was worth the money, for the first prize was worth twenty rupees.

“We didn’t touch ‘Rags’ till the night before the show, an’ then we caught him, an’ gave him a good wash. It took us some time to catch him, for ‘Rags’ was gettin’ a bit tired of the washin’ game, an’ as soon as he saw Nobby with a bit of rope he sort of pretended he was lookin’ for a friend an’ sneaked round the comer. We chased him for the best part of an hour, an’ when Nobby got him he gave him a welt that made him pen- an’-ink most piercin’ly.

“‘I’ll learn you!’ sez Nobby sternly. ‘Whatcher mean by runnin’ away from a friend that’s tryin’ to win you a prize, you ungrateful pie-dog?’

“We washed him most vigorous—poor‘Rags’ shiverin’ an’ lookin’ as if he wished he’d never been born.

“Then we dyed him. Nobby mixed the powders in hot water, an’ we sponged‘Rags’ over carefully an’ tied him up to a little kennel which Nobby had made behind the cook-house.

“Next momin’ Nobby went to look at him, an’ came back to breakfast very thoughtful. I didn’t see‘Rags,’ nor nobody else, because Nobby shut him up in the kennel for fear of his dirtyin’ himself.

"'He ain't quite black yet,' sez Nobby, 'but I dersay he will be by the time the judgin' starts.'

"The dog show was held in the gymnasium, an' you never saw such a collection of 'sooners' an' 'may-be's' in your life. Each of 'em had a little ticket stuck on: Private Murphy's 'Spot' and Private Jordan's tiger spaniel'Bill.'

"The most surprisin' exhibit was Nobby's. For we carried it in the kennel and stuck it up on the platform just as it was. Nobby had nailed two bars of wood across the front of the kennel, an' all you could see of poor old 'Rags' was a pair of miserable eyes an' the black tip of his nose.

"Nobby brought a card with him an' tacked it over the kennel:

**PRIVATE CLARK'S**

**GREENLAND LAPDOG,**

**"RAGSKI."**

"'There's nothin' like a bit of swank,' sez Nobby, 'an' everybody knows that racehorses who are called "Prince of Empire" on the course are called "Jim" in the stable.'

"The fellers was a bit puzzled.

"'Is it "Rags?"' sez Spud Murphy, tryin' to peep inside.

"'Keep your dial away from the menagerie,' sez Nobby, 'you'll make him homesick.'

"'Is it "Rags?"' sez Spud.

"'No,' sez Nobby shortly, 'it's a new dog what's just arrived from me brother in Greenland.'

"Spud sniffed.

"'Me brother,' sez Nobby firmly, 'who's in the Greenland Mounted Police—in the band,' he sez, 'sent me this dog yesterday.'

"'I don't believe it,' sez Spud. 'There ain't been a post in since Wednesday—how did it come?'

"'By telegraph,' sez Nobby.

"All the officers came, an' some of their wives, an' they enjoyed themselves immense.

"'What's this?' sez the adjutant.

"'A bull-retriever,' sez Fatty Green, prompt.

"'Has he got any points?' sez the adjutant, with his notebook in his hand, 'because if he has you'd better tell me what they are—I can't see any.'

"'He's a wonderful barker, sir,' sez Fatty.

"Other chaps had dogs that was wonderful eaters an' wonderful sleepers an' they all got marks. Spud looked like takin' the prize with'Spot' for the tricks he did.

"He could sit up an' beg, an' shoulder a rifle, an' smoke a pipe, an' say 'Attention' quite plain. In addition to which he was a wonderful barker, a wonderful sleeper, an' a surprisin' eater.

"Then the judges moved on to Nobby's dog.

"'Hullo!' sez the adjutant, puttin' up his eyeglass, 'what's this?'

"'Greenland Poodle, sir,' sez Nobby.

"'Let me have a look at him,' sez the adjutant.

"'He's very shy, sir,' sez Nobby. 'He never comes out in the daylight—bein' a night dog.'

"'Nonsense,' sez the adjutant, 'take those bars away an' let him out.'

"Everybody gathered round to see Nobby's new dog.

"'I'd rather you judged him where he was, sir,' sez Nobby. 'He looks better in the dark, on my honour,' he sez to Holly.

"But the adjutant shook his head.

"'We'll see this bashful creature,' he sez, an' very reluctant Nobby pulled the bars away an' out steps 'Rags.'

"You could have heard a pin drop for a minute, an' then there was a yell that lifted the roof.

"'Why, Why!' gasps the adjutant, 'the dashed dog's bright green! '

"'Yessir,' sez Nobby, very agitated, 'that's why he's called a Greenland sheep dog, sir.'

"'On your honour,' sez Holly, very stem, 'is that the dog's natural colour? '

"'I won't say on me honour, sir,' sez Nobby, 'but I'll say I hope I may dye if it ain't!'"

## XXII. — SACRIFICE

ACCORDING to a man's environments so his life is, so his tragedies are, and his end will be.

To be mauled by a lion is an extraordinary and painful experience that comes to very few of us. Yet it is the common lot of the menagerie attendant. So with the soldier, whether living here in peaceful England or going about his duty in Bombay, Kerachi, or some like place, his life, shaped by environment, is full of that incident which makes for tragedy.

There are conditions of life so colourless, so even, that the slightest deviation from the smooth and normal flow of existence stands out as a landmark to be looked back upon and discussed for a score of years.

The sedate Government office, with its days made up of returns, dockets, references and cross-references, remembers vividly that remarkable day in '83 when young Swink upset the red ink over the Public Works ledger—Swink himself, now a stout veteran of 44, will reconstruct the scene for you. At the vicarage at Bascombe-cum-Marsh, how often do they talk of that memorable Sunday when the dear Bishop drank a wine-glassful of vinegar under the impression that it was Château Lafayette?

In a thousand peaceful homes, the extraordinary happening that is retailed through the ages is very small potatoes, indeed, and well may their worthy occupants shake their heads doubtingly when I talk of the abnormalities of army life. For death in terrible guise is on calling terms with the regiment. He comes, not in conscious majesty, as one who knows that panic will grip the heart of all who observe him, but apologetically, rather, like a man slighted.

When we, in the army, with stately march and bowed head follow the laden gun carriage to the little military cemetery, and come back merrily, with the band playing unseemly tunes, you call us "callous," and are a little shocked, but the explanation is this: we are teaching the young recruits that this grisly monster is not so terrible a fellow; not one to be shivered over or shuddered at, but one to be treated with a certain amount of good-natured contempt.

"When we was stationed in England," said Smithy, apropos, "an' when we was on manœuvres, we pitched a camp one Saturday near a little village, an' the Colonel got the local parson to come along an' chew the mop on Sunday. He was a nice young feller, but he'd never seen real soldiers before, an' it worried him. By all accounts he sat up half the night makin' up his sermon, an' then he come along an' preached about what fine soldiers the ancient Israelites was, an' how we ought to be like 'em. An' he sez that when we was

killed, an' if we happened to have time to think the matter over, we should realise that it was all for a good cause, an' take it in good part.

"When the sermon was over, an' we was dismissed, he walked round the camp talkin' to the men. Of course, everybody was polite. It was 'yessir' an' 'no sir,' an' Nobby, who's one of the best, even went so far as to promise to call round at the church that night. But what was surprisin' about this parson was he would talk about dyin', an' accordin' to him, a chap ought to use all his spare time to sit down quietly by hisself an' say, 'Well, here's another day nearer the grave,' It was a comic idea, but it didn't catch on.

"Now, there's lots of fellers in the world who think like him, that to be good you've got to have a dial as long as a wet week, an' that the surest sign of badness is gladness.

"It's a wrong idea, an' the proof is this: that the best man that ever wore a uniform was the happiest—and that man was Father John Stronnard, C.F.*

* C.F.—Chaplain to the Forces.

"The first time I ever saw Father John was in Aldershot in'94. He ran a soldiers' home in North Camp, an' was one of those fellers with a thin, refined face, that had'Priest' written all over him. He wasn't an R.C., for all that. He was Church, very High Church, so some of the chaps said, an' wore little medals on his watch chain. But high or low, he was the whitest kind of white man that ever lived. He was friends with all the other chaplains—that's the best sign. Friends with 'em all, from Father O'Leary to Mr. Stemm, the Baptist lay preacher. He'd got no fads, he smoked a big fat pipe all day, an' was ready to put on the gloves with any feller that thought he had the beatin' of him. He never threw religion at you, but when a man acted the goat, you'd see that man go miles out of his way to avoid Father John.

"Fellers trusted him an' told him things. There was a wild devil in Ours called Cross—Sam Cross. Cross by name and crook by nature. There wasn't a decent-minded man of Ours who would have anything to do with him. It wasn't that his language was bad—it was worse than that. After he started swearin' you felt that the room ought to be disinfected.

"One day on the ranges, firin' our annual course, we was usin' a new cartridge, 'Mark 10.'

"Nobby was lyin' alongside of me, an' was passin' sarcastic remarks about the markers.

"He fired a round, an' got an 'outer'; then he tried to pull back the breech block.

"'Hello,' sez Nobby, 'she's jammed.'

“It took him nigh on five minutes to get the exploded cartridge out, then he whistled, got up, an’ walked to the officer in charge.

“‘Beg pardon, sir,’ sez Nobby, ‘see this?’

“He held up the cartridge.

“The officer-boy, who hadn’t been from Sandhurst a week or so, frowned most terrible, an sez, ‘What’s wrong with it?’

“‘It’s split all up the side, sir,’ Nobby sez, ‘an’ this is the second time it’s happened—the cartridges are defective.’

“If the officer-boy had known cow-heel from tripe he’d have called up the officer in charge, who was at another part of the range, but bein’ only a kid at the game, an’ not wishin’ to take advice from a private, he sez, very stern:

“‘Go back to your place, me man, an’ don’t talk nonsense.’

“So Nobby came back and lay down.

“By-an’-bye, the Colour-sergeant come up. ‘Why aren’t you firing, Clark?’ he sez, an’ Nobby told him.

“The‘flag’ took the cartridge an’ looked at it, an’ shouted, ‘Cease fire!’

“Up dashed the officer-boy.

“‘What the dickens is wrong, Colour-sergeant?’ he sez, angrily.

“‘Defective cartridges, sir,’ sez the‘flag.’

“‘Who said so?’ sez the officer. ‘Go on firin’ till I tell you to stop.’

“So we went on firin’ for two minutes, an’ then the breech block of Sam Cross’s rifle blew out, an’ Sam went down screamin’, with half his face shot off.

“I’m not goin’ to tell you how the officer was tried an’ cashiered, or how the ammunition was called in, an’ the fuss the papers made about it.

“When Cross got back to his senses, the first man he asked for was Father John, an’ Father John was at the hospital before you could say knife. Practically he didn’t leave him for two days an’ nights. He was with him when the doctors operated on poor old Sam, an’ with him through the night when it was a toss up whether the patient would live or die, an’ with him for a couple of hours every day till Sam was turned out of hospital cured.

“Now the rum thing about it was this, that although he’d sent for the Father, an’ although they was together so long, not one word of religion passed between them.

“At first Father John used to only sit an’ read in his soft voice—bits out of books—an’ then, when young Sam got better an’ could talk, they’d discuss

the coal business what Sam's brother was in, an' county cricket, an' things like that, but for all this, Sam came back to the battalion a new man.

"The only thing that was ever said, was said before witnesses, an' that was the day before Sam came out. He walked with the Father to the door of the ward, an' stood a bit awkward tryin' to put the words together.

"'Father,' he sez, sudden, 'how could a chap like me get to be a chap like you?'

"'How d'ye mean, Sam?' sez Father John.

"'I mean,' sez Sam, 'you're a man same as me. barrin' education; how did you get to be patient, an' gentle, an' all?'

"'By sacrifice,' sez Father John, sadly.

"That was Sam's motto when he came back to barracks. He'd got the idea in a dim sort of way into his thick head, that sacrifice meant not doin' somethin' you wanted to do, an' doing things you didn't want to do.

"Sometimes the devil in him got up; an' I've seen him standin' by his bed-cot, with the veins in his forehead swollen an' his eyes glarin' at somebody who had annoyed him, but he wouldn't speak, an' his hands would be clenched till the knuckles were white—then you'd see his lips move, an' you could almost read the word 'sacrifice' on his lips.

"Then the regiment was ordered to India, an' we left the padre behind. He marched down to the station by Sam's side, an' he shook hands with him on the platform. I believe that poor Sam never felt anything so much as he did that partin', but he 'stuck it'—he was learnin' his lesson.

"We hadn't been in India a year, movin' from station to station, before a feller by the name of Dah Yussef, who was a sort of head thief in the hills, came down an' burned a village, killed a lot of people, an' carried off some women an' cattle. He was a pukka budmarsh, was old Josephs, an' this was about the ninth dacoity he'd committed in the year, the Government lookin' on and sendin' polite messages to him, askin' him to kindly return the goods an' no questions would be asked. We was stationed on the border, an' naturally we was very bitter about the Government not doin' anythin'.

"'It's a scandal,' sez Nobby, very indignant. 'I've a good mind to write home to the Islington Gazetteabout it. It's this Liberal Government,' sez Nobby, gloomily.

"'It's a Conservative Government in now,' I sez, but Nobby sez it didn't affect the argument.

“Old Joseph, or Yussef, or whatever his name was, naturally got bolder an’ bolder, an’ not satisfied with raidin’ the villages near his hills, he came farther into the open, an’ started ructions almost on the plains.

“That’s what the Government of India was waitin’ for. The Guides an’ a battalion of Ghoorkas was waitin’ doggo, an’ came by forced march, an’ the Anchesters, the Wessex, the Punjab Lancers, an’ two batteries of Artillery was sent off at a minute’s notice to call on Uncle Joseph.

“We got the order at midnight, an’ by daybreak we was twelve miles on the road.

“It was supposed to be one of them cut an’ come again campaigns, all over in ten minutes, but the Government had left it a little bit too late, an’ the Afridis were up in arms. We fought two sharp battles, an’ then the enemy retired an’ took up a strong position on the foothills. We shelled ’em, but we couldn’t shift ’em; then the Guides, the Ghoorkas, an’ the Anchesters tried to take the position by assault—but we failed.

“The General in command drew us off, an’ we waited for reinforcements. They came in twenty-four hours, the Kents, Lancasters, an’ a battery of howitzers—an’ with ’em came Father John. He was in India for duty, an’ although we hadn’t known it, he’d been there for some time.

“Nobby, watchin’ the reinforcements march in, was the first to spot him, in his Khaki uniform, an’ with the black Maltese cross on his collar. Nobby dashed back to our lines lookin’ for Sam Cross, an’ found him sittin’ down quietly, drinkin’ cold tea.

“‘Sam,’ sez Nobby, very excited. ‘who do you think’s turned up? ’

“‘Father John,’ sez Sam, calmly, an’ Nobby was rather disappointed, because he wanted to create a little sensation.

“‘I had a feelin’ he was comin’,’ sez Sam, gettin’ up, ‘but I didn’t durst go down to see ’em marchin’ in, for fear I’d be disappointed. No,’ he sez, shakin’ his head at Nobby’s question, ‘I didn’t know he was in India.’

“Nobby told me afterwards it made his flesh creep to hear him—it was like listenin’ to a man that’s in the habit of seein’ ghosts. Nobody saw ’em meet, but when I met Sam comin’ from the Kent’s lines—where the padre’s tent was, his eyes were red, like a man who’d been cryin’.

“Next mornin’ we formed up for the grand assault. Soon after daybreak the guns got into action, the howitzers goin’ close up under the escort of the Guides’ Cavalry, an’ shellin’ the sangar, where the enemy was lyin’ as thick as bees in a hive. At eleven o’clock the infantry moved, the Guides an’ the Anchesters on the enemy’s front, the Ghoorkas an’ the Wessex on the left, the Kents an’ Pubjabus on the right, and the Lancasters in reserve. I’ve only

got a dim idea of what the fight was like. We went ahead by short rushes from cover to cover. The air seemed to be filled with flyin' bullets; an' the enemy had got an old gun into position, an' was dealin' out bits of scrap-iron at regular intervals.

"It was terrible hard, when we began the ascent of the hill, for the ground was broken up, an' big boulders an' stones came flyin' down to meet us. These were worse than the bullets. We'd got into a tight place, with a big, deep nullah in front of us, an' between us an' the enemy, an' we lay down firin' steady. The nullah had to be crossed, an' we had to rest before we could do it, in the face of the fire. We could hear the chaps on the right come into action, an' from where we was, we could see the Ghoorkas an' Wessex comin' up on the left, an' I was just wonderin' why it was that the Wessex, which is a rotten regiment in peace time, should be such a decent corps in war time, when I heard Sam Cross shout, 'Go back—go back for God's sake, Father John!'

"I looked round.

"Father John was comin' up the hill behind us—not foolhardy, but takin' cover.

"Sam's face was white, but the padre was smilin' when he reached up. His big pipe was in his mouth, an' he crouched down behind the little rampart of stones that protected us, with a pleasant nod.

"Personally, I thought it was a bit silly of him to come into danger like this, but I found out afterwards that he'd heard the General say that the success of the fight would depend upon the Guides an' the Anchesters. You see, the intelligence staff knew nothing about the big nullah on the hill, an' even we, who was lyin' along the side of it, didn't know what a terrible business it would be crossing it, for it ran so that it was fully exposed to the enemy's fire, an' every man who scrambled out on the other side could be picked off by the enemy's marksmen.

"When Father John knew what we were in for he came up. Lyin' down there, with his pipe goin', he was full of spirits an' made some of our youngsters, who'd got a bit fidgetty, cheerful, too.

"'Sing,' he sez, as the fire got heavier an' heavier.

"'What shall we sing, Father?' sez Nobby.

"'Anything,' sez Father John, an' he started us goin' with 'Where are the boys of the Old Brigade?' an' from one end of the line to the other we roared the chorus:

'Steadily, shoulder to shoulder,

Steadily, blade by blade;

Steady an' strong,

Marching along—

Like the boys of the Old Brigade.'

"In the middle of it the helio from headquarters began to wink, an' by-an'-bye the order was passed down the lines, 'Get ready!'

"Then, when there came a slackenin' of fire from the enemy, our bugle went, 'Come along! come along! come along, Anchesters!'—that's our regimental call—an' the 'Advance!'

"We were in the nullah an' over the edge of it before the execution began. The minute I reached the other side I could see the danger. Up the hill, as far as the nullah, the ground had been steep an' covered with big stones—it was from this nullah that they'd rolled the boulders down on us. Now, we were on a gentle slope, as bare of cover as a soup plate, an' there was no protection from the fire from the ridge above.

"The Guides on our right got the first blast of the storm, an' they went down in little patches, as if some blight had struck 'em, passin' a man here, an' takin' a man there.

"'Steady, the Anchesters!' yelled the Adjutant; 'fix bayonets!'

"We was a hundred an' fifty yards from the position, an' I braced myself for the run.

"'Charge!'

"With a yell that was almost like a scream, we dashed forward. I never ran so fast, or with any less effort, in my life.

, "The bullets made a noise like a gramophone before the tune starts, an' I've got an idea that I saw a feller fallin', but I hadn't time to notice properly before I'd followed Nobby over the breastworks.

"Nobby is the finest bayonet fighter in the regiment, an' the second man he met was dead before the first one had fallen.

"I got home with the bayonet on a big Afridi, who made a slice at me with his big knife, an' then someone fell against me with a cough. In a fraction of a second, as I half turned to see who it was, I saw an Afridi pass his knife through Sam Cross.

"Then two fellers came at me—I got the first, easy. I parried a blow, an' gave him a short arm thrust that brought him down—an' the other feller was shot dead by Captain Marsham, an' then the 'cease fire' sounded.

"I looked round. Nobby, who never loses an opportunity for business, was pickin' up all the valuable-lookin' articles, such as gold-mounted swords,

within reach. I was thinkin', regretful, of poor Sam, when, to my astonishment, he came up. He was bleedin' from a cut head, where some Afridi had got home on him, but there was no other sign of injury.

"'Smithy,' he sez, quietly, 'come an' help me with Father John—I—I mustn't lift him.'

"'Good God,' whispers Nobby, droppin' his swords, not—not?——'

"Sam nodded.

"'Father John was killed as we came over there.' He pointed to the ramparts.

"He made no sign of grief, not even that evenin', when we laid the Father in a deep grave at the foot of the hills—an' he was the only man who didn't cry as we buried the greatest an' kindest of Christians an' friends.

"Sam only stood, with his bandaged head and his white face; swayin' a little from side to side. Me an' Nobby, in our rough way, tried to cheer him when we got back to the camp—although we wasn't feeling any too cheerful ourselves, for some good men went out that day. But he was as calm as possible.

"'It's only proper that Father John should die that way,' he said. 'It's the right end—sacrifice. He risked his life because he wanted to help us.'

"He put his hand to his side as though he was in pain, an' he was, too, though we didn't guess it.

"'I thought,' he went on, 'that Father John would like me to see him put away nice an' comfortable—that's why I kept alive! '

"He said this all so calm that I didn't understand what he meant.

"'Let me down gently,' he sez, an' Nobby saw the blood on his lips, an' put his arms round him.

"We lowered him carefully down, an' two doctors came. Sam lay very still an' quiet.

"They stripped his coat. His shirt was caked with blood, an' one of the doctors whistled as he saw the wound.

"'Is he dead, sir?' whispered Nobby.

"The doctor nodded.

"'How he lived for six hours with a knife wound in his heart,' he said, 'God knows. Why, by every law of science, he ought to have been dead this morning!'

"The Adjutant had come up.

"'How do you account for it, doctor?' he asked.

“The doctor shook his head an’ couldn’t say, but me an’ Nobby could have explained. It was love, an’ will, an’ sacrifice that kept poor Sam alive—but mostly sacrifice.”

## XXIII. — A SUPPRESSED BOOK

"NOBBY CLARK," said Private Smith in a tone of wondering admiration, "is a marvel. There used to be times when some of the things he did surprised me, but if Nobby come up to me to-day an' produced an elephant out of his trousers' pocket I should simply say'Where did you pinch it?'

"Lots of people think Nobby ain't exactly honest, but that's a silly idea. Nobby wouldn't take anything of value from anybody.

"'It ain't the worth of the thing, Smithy,' he sez to me one day, 'Its the pleasure of gettin' it 'Nobby is what I'd call a mug-finder, an' when you have said that, you've said all that is to be said against him. His chief delight is to find a feller of a trustin' nature an' teach him to be careful in the future.

"There ain't a single game that Nobby ain't played. I remember once he filed a regimental razor into three parts, cut up a comb into three, fastened the bits of razors to the bits of combs, an' sold 'em for two bob each. He called 'em'Clark's Safety Razor.'

"The rum thing about Nobby was that he never caught the real mugs. The silly chaps wasn't bright enough to jump at Nobby's ideas. It was always the fly fellers, who fancied themselves a bit, that got hurt when they run up against Nobby.

"When we was in Wynberg, after the war, Nobby got a bit sobered down by certain things that happened. For one thing, we lost too many good chaps to take a comic view of life, an' then there was a certain affair with a girl in Johannesburg....

"Nobby didn't really start to buck up till Cully Park joined the company, from 'H'. We happened to be in the canteen one night when Bill Mason came in with his side arms—he stopped at the door to take 'em off—an' brought the news. He'd been C.O.'s orderly an' naturally he was what Nobby calls'Oh Fay!' with all that had been happenin'. For one thing he'd took battalion orders round to the colour-sergeants, so when he told us that Cully Park was transferred to 'B' Company we knew it was true.

"Nobody exactly understood what Cully had been in civil life, though once, when 'H' Company was ordered to parade for identification, we guessed. But the lady who lost the watch couldn't pick him out, so the matter dropped.

"That sort of thing ain't calculated to make a man popular in the army. It stands to reason that amongst the fellers who enlist you get lots of chaps who go into the service for the same reason. Other fellers fly the country, but mainly they're detected very soon, an' the army's kept clear of the real bad classes.

“What made Cully rather unpopular in the Anchesters was his skill at cards. He was the luckiest feller in the world at that sort of game. It didn’t matter what happened—Cully won, mainly because he sat an’ sat till he did win, an’ after he’d skinned the company regularly for weeks on end‘H’ started a sort of anti-gamblin’ league, the idea of which was‘We don’t mind playin’ “nap,” but we don’t play with Cully.’

“It’s a surprisin’ thing, but as soon as Cully was barred the chaps lost all interest in cards. The horrible fascination of seein’ your money walk into Cully’s corner of the table was gone, an’ the game got so tame an’ ladylike that‘H’ Company took to playin’ ‘Coddam.’

“Gamblin’ is one of the things that soldiers mustn’t do in the Army, an’ there’s a hundred others. But if a feller wants to enjoy life he’s got to break dozens of regulations.

“Well, to get back to Cully.

“We found he’d been transferred to‘B’ at his own request, because ‘H’ was gettin’ a bit too slow. Nobby was rather thoughtful when he heard the news.

“‘It’s a serious thing for me, Smithy,’ he sez. ‘It’s competition, that’s what it is. We’ll have to settle Cully.’

“You see, Nobby had got a big idea for bringin’ out a book about the war, an’ gettin’ all the fellers to write somethin’ about their experiences in it.

“The book was already started an’ promised to be a big success.

“‘Every chap who writes somethin’ will buy half-a-dozen copies to send to his friends, explained Nobby. ‘A chap will always spend money to see his name in print.’

“He’d made fine progress, when Cully came, an’ he’d got a dozen experiences from various fellers, all ready for printin’.

“‘How me and Browny pinched a pig at Bloemfontein, by Tiny White.’

“‘A true story of my terrible adventures in the Transvaal, by Spud Murphy.’

“‘A thrilling tale of how me and a feller of the Wessex got into trouble with the military police in Pretoria,’ by Bill Mason.’

“An’ things like that.

“‘Our chaps won’t have a penny piece by the time Cully’s done with ’em,’ sez Nobby, gloomily. ‘It’s a scandal.’

“So after what he said about Cully, callin’ him a daylight robber an’ a card-sharper, it was a little bit astonishin’ to see what Nobby did. For when Cully strolled into the canteen one evenin’, and sez, careless, “Who’ll have a little game at “nap?” Nobby was the first feller to say ‘I will.’

“It appears that Cully had arranged with Harry Young, ‘B’ Company’s storeman, for the use of the little bungalow, where our stores (blankets, spare rifles, an’ things) were kept. With blankets up to the winders., so that no light could show, a little party of six sat down to play‘nap.’

“The game started quietly, Nobby winnin’ a little an’ the other fellers winnin’ in their turn. Then things got brisker, an’ Nobby took two big ‘kitties.’ Cully didn’t seem to mind, he was as affable as possible. Then Nobby got another ‘nap’ home, an’ rose from the table.

“‘What’s up?’ sez Cully.

“‘I’ve got a bit of a headache,’ sez Nobby, gatherin’ in his winnin’s.

“‘It’ll soon pass off,’ sez Cully, shufflin’ the cards. ‘Sit down again an’ have a few more hands.’

“‘I’d rather not,’ sez Nobby. ‘You can’t be too careful with a holler tooth——’

“‘You said headache just now,’ sez Cully.

“‘Did I?’ sez Nobby. ‘I meant——’

“‘What you meant was,’ sez Cully, fiercely, “you’re goin’ to clear out with your winnin’s.’

“Nobby shook his head as he made for the door.

“‘You’re unjust, Cully.’ he sez, sadly.

“Next night Cully was on the watch, an’ after Nobby had brought a fat ‘nap’ home an’ got up sayin’ the room was a bit too close, Cully got up too.

“‘Look here,’ he sez, nastily, ‘you’ve just took six shillin’s out of the crowd.’

“‘Have I?’ sez Nobby. ‘I didn’t count it, but I’ll trust to your honesty.’

“‘Before you go,’ sez Cully, ‘let me ask you a question, man to man: in two nights you’ve took over a pound out of us, are you goin’ to give us a chance of winnin’ it back?’

“‘Man to man,’ sez Nobby, earnestly, ‘you shall have the chance to-morrer.’

“Next night Nobby turned up.

“‘I’ve brought some smellin’ salts,’ sez Cully, ‘in case Nobby’s took bad, an’ some carbolic acid for his holler tooth, an’ a bit of corn plaster in case his feet hurt.’

“‘Nobby smiled in an injured kind of way, an’ the play started.

“Luck was against him for a bit, but by-an’-bye he landed a‘nap’ hand, an’ follered it with another.

“As he gathered the money in he coughed very loud.

"'What's up now?' sez Cully. 'Got consumption? '

"'No,' sez Nobby.

"'Do you feel faint or anything?' sez Cully.

"'No,' sez Nobby, coughing louder still.

"'I never felt better in me life.'

"'That's all right,' sez Cully, with a sort of relieved sigh.

"Just then came a gentle tap on the door, an' Harry Young's voice sez, 'Is Nobby there?'

"'Yes,' sez Nobby.

"'You're wanted at once by the colour-sergeant,' sez Harry. 'You'd better run.' Nobby got up with the air of a martyr, but Cully just glared at him.

"'It's a plant!' he sez, very wild. 'It's a plant between you an' Harry Young—that's why you coughed, you big-footed blighter, to let him know you was winnin'.'

"'I'll see you to-morrer,' sez Nobby, 'in the football field, an' you've got time between now an' then to prepare yourself for another life.'

"'I'll fight you now!' sez Cully, who was furious.

"'Not now,' sez Nobby, 'not with all this money about me,' he sez.

"When Cully cooled down he saw how silly the fightin' idea was, an' got out of it. But Nobby's habit of goin' away as soon as he won broke up the 'nap' party.

"First of all, Fatty Johnson follered Nobby's example. Took a'kitty' of ten bob, an' went orf into a faint an' had to be assisted to his room. Then Spud Murphy, who'd been winnin' steadily one night, got somethin' the matter with his eyes an' couldn't see the cards properly, an' when a feller named Nathan sprained his wrist whilst he was rakin' in his winnin's, Cully said it was time to shut up shop.

"But he never forgave Nobby.

"When Nobby came to him an' asked him to write his experiences of the war, just to show there was no ill-feelin', Cully wrote about six pages entitled: 'A comical tale about Certain Parties who pretended they was ill, and the Colonel hearing about it, sent them to hospital, where they caught enteric fever and died in horrible agony.'

"Nobby said the title bein' so long there was no necessity for the tale. He thought the story might spoil the title, so he cut the story out.

“Nobby got a printer feller in Wynberg to get the book out. It was to be called:

**GALLANT ‘B,’**

**OR**

**HOW WE SAVED GREAT BRITAIN AN’ IRELAND.**

“Nobby had it ‘Great Britain’ at first, but Spud Murphy, who’s Irish, owin’ to his name, wouldn’t have anything to do with it unless the title was changed to ‘and Ireland.’ Nobby said Spud wasn’t Irish at all, but that he took his name from the gentleman Spud’s mother used to be housemaid to, but as Spud’s two bob was as good as anybody else’s he changed the title.

“That was the price the book was published at—two shillin’s. It was honestly worth fourpence of anybody’s money.

“Forty fellers wrote their experiences, an’ Nobby reckoned on each chap buyin’ three copies—one for his mother, one for his young lady, an’ one for the other girl.

“Nobby brought me a copy round.

“‘It’s a bit thin for two bob,’ I sez—it was about the size of Ideas, but not so interestin’. ‘Do you think they’ll pay two bob for it? ’

“‘I’m sure,’ sez Nobby.

“An’ it did seem as if he was right, because when we got to the canteen that night everybody came forward to ask when the book would be ready.

“‘I want my copy to send home,’ sez Cully.

“‘Only one copy?’ sez Nobby.

“‘Half-a-dozen, if you like,’ sez Cully.

“‘That’s how I like to hear you talk,’ sez Nobby, ‘an’ ’

“‘Of course,’ sez Cully, “all the chaps who’ve written bits will get free copies.’

“‘Eh?’ sez Nobby.

“‘Free copies,’ sez Cully. ‘That’s what’s always done—I asked a feller at the book-shop.’

“‘Don’t you go puttin’ that notion about,’ sez Nobby, very stern, ‘the books are two bob each, there’s no free list owin’ to the great demand.’

“A sort of silence fell on the multitude.

“‘What do we get for authorin’?’ sez Spud.

“‘You get,’ sez Nobby, slowly, ‘the credit; you get the satisfaction of hearin’ your relations say: “I never thought our Bill could write like that,” or words

to that effect. You get the glory of seein' all the lies you've told in print; you get famous in a manner of speakin'. You get——'

"'Hold hard, Nobby,' sez Spud. 'What do you get?'

"'I get the satisfaction of knowin' I've done me duty,' sez Nobby, highly virtuous.

"'Don't you get any money out of it?' sez Cully.

"'All the money I get,' sez Nobby, 'goes to charity,'

"Battle of Belfast'I know,' sez Cully. 'I know all about charity—it begins at home,' he sez, 'your home.'

"The next day the printer delivered the books—three hundred of 'em.

"He was a very nice young chap, this printer, an' was mightily struck on Nobby, an' when Nobby came to him with a long face an' told him that none of the chaps would buy the book owin' to Cully puttin' it about that the book was free to all who wrote in it, he was very sympathetic.

"Nobby tried hard to get the chaps to take copies, but Cully was here, there, an' everywhere, tellin' 'em that if they waited a bit they'd get it for nothin', an' then, suddenly, Nobby stopped tryin' to sell.

"He walked into the canteen one night with a light step an' a smile.

"'Hullo,' sez Spud, 'have you found a mug?'

"'Not till this very minute,' sez Nobby, pleasantly.

"'Have you found a buyer?'

"'No,' sez Nobby, rubbin' his hands, 'thank heavens, no!'

"At this all the chaps in the canteen pricked up their ears.

"'What are you thankin' heavens about,' sez Cully.

"But Nobby only shook his head.

"'There's been a slight error in printin' that book,' he sez. 'There's a certain thing in it that oughtn't to be in it—somethin' that'll cost me money.'

"'I know!' sez Cully, excitedly, 'you've libelled somebody,' but Nobby wouldn't say.

"'Look here, Nobby,' sez Cully. I'll buy a copy of that book.'

"'You couldn't buy a copy for a hundred pounds,' sez Nobby, prompt.

"By the next night half the battalion had been to Nobby, offerin' to buy a copy, but Nobby wouldn't part.

"It was put about that it was the Colonel who was libelled, an' all the chaps who owed Nobby a grudge tried to get hold of a copy.

“Cully sent a feller named Sambo—owin’ to his dark complexion—to Nobby, to get a copy.

“‘I’ll give you five bob for it,’ sez Sambo, an’ Nobby hesitated.

“‘I trust you as a friend,’ he sez, solemn. ‘Will you take your dying oath that you won’t show it to anybody?’

“‘I will,’ sez Sambo, eagerly, an’ Nobby handed him a copy. He let Harry Jackson have a copy for three bob, an’ Spud Murphy got one for 2s. 6d. Lots of other fellers came to him, an’ after he’d made ’em swear by this an’ that they’d keep the matter dark, he sold ’em copies.

“‘I’ve only got a few,’ he sez, ‘most of ’em are destroyed.’ Cully an’ Sambo spent all one night lookin’ for the libel.

“‘I’ll bet this is what it is,’ sez Cully, readin’ from Nobby’s account of the Battle of Belfast:

“GENERAL, ROBERTS ORDERED US TO ADVANCE.”

“‘He ought to have said “Lord Roberts,”’ sez Cully. ‘That’s the libel.’

“After a bit he found another libellous sentence:

“‘It was a dreadful sight. The Austretches prowled about the veld devouring our gallant men.’

“‘It’s libellous to say Ostritches eat humans,’ sez Sambo.

“There never was a book read as that book was read. Chaps who got it worked away at it quietly, an’ it wasn’t till they was all baffled, an’ started discussin’ the matter with each other, that it came out that every other man in the regiment had a copy, what he’d bought from Nobby secretly. Cully tackled Nobby in the barrack-room one day.

“‘About this book of yours,’ he sez.

“But Nobby put his fingers to his lips.

“‘Hush!’ he sez, very mysterious.

“‘Hush be blowed!’ sez Cully, wrathfully, ‘what I want to know is, what is there in the book that didn’t ought to be in?’

“‘Nothin” sez Nobby, very calm, ‘nothin’—now.’

“‘ Nothin’!’ sez Cully, scandalised.

“‘Not now,’ sez Nobby, ‘there was somethin’ in it.’

“‘When did you take it out?’ sez Cully.

“‘I didn’t take it out, sez Nobby. ‘You took it out.’

“‘Me?’

"'You,' sez Nobby, very placid, 'you an' the other chaps who bought it. My money was in that book, Cully!' he sez, solemn. 'Invested in it, but it's out again—with profits,' he sez."

## XXIV. — A SOLDIER AND A MAN

SOMETIMES, on cold dark mornings, when a carpet of snow lies on the ground, and white flakes come whirling through the air, I wake of a sudden, with the echo of a far-away bugle call in my ears. Long-drawn notes, sad and plaintive, come faintly from a distant guard-room, and I sit up in bed yawning, and reach up to the shelf above my head for my morning pipe....

But there is no shelf.... No muffled voice from the corporal's bed tells me, indelicately but tersely, to "show a leg." There is no pattering of bare feet upon a bare floor, or the clang and crash of closing bed cots; nor the sleepy grumbling of the men. Sometimes my hand mechanically gropes for my slippers—part of my unofficial kit—and missing them, I call upon Nobby Clark to return them instanter, or take the chance of a plug in the eye. But alas! the indignant denial of Nobby Clark comes not, nor is Smithy's protesting voice raised. Instead, comes a discreet knock upon my bed¬room door and the voice of my hired servant, "Your tea, sir." Then I know that I have been dreaming, and that this is not Maidstone or Aldershot or Anchester; and no uniformed coat awaits me. "There's no parade to-day"—no fatigue, no orderly man—nothing but the humdrum of civilian life.

Let me say this of the private soldier in all earnest¬ness, before, for a while, I take farewell of Smithy and Nobby Clark:

He is the whitest and the best man on God Almighty's earth.

In my day I have achieved some little notoriety, accomplished things that have momentarily enlarged my hat size, but of all accomplishments of which I am proud this stands first: That I was a private soldier, and shared the fellowship and friendship of private soldiers.

If he has faults, they are the faults he shares in com¬mon with the rest of humanity—his virtues rank with the virtues of the Olympians.

"Soldiers," said Smithy reflectively, "are different to other people, an' I've never yet understood why. It's probably somethin' to do with the uniform. It's the authority an' the responsibility. I once knew a chap by the name of Grover who was the mildest, kindest-hearted fellow in the world till they went an' made a G.M.P.* of him, an' that changed his whole nature. Most ferocious he was, an' would have strangled a baby if it interfered with him in the execution of his duty.

* Garrison Military Police.

"Then we had another feller who came from Poplar way, who used to think the world began at Hammersmith an' ended at Cannin' Town. But he wasn't in the regi¬ment three months before he was the most geographical chap that ever was. What with hearin' fellers talkin' about India, and other fellers

about Egypt, an' what with lookin' the places up on the map, he got to be the leadin' authority on the subject of Where-is-it? It was, 'When I was in Burmah in '98,' an'"That reminds me of the time I was at Doolali an' got the "tap," although he'd never been out of England at that time.

"He would stand at the bar, an' dippin' his fingers into other people's beer, used to draw little wet maps on the counter to show the rout he took when he was marchin' through Africa to the relief of What's-his-name.

"'We started orf from Cape Gadget, as it might be here,' he sez, 'an' leavin' Lake Oogar on the left——'

"'You'll be leavin' part of your 'ear on the floor if you put your fingers in my beer again,' sez Nobby.

"'It's a map of me travels,' sez Day—that was the chap's name.

"'Then put in another little bit,' I sez, 'showin' the rout to the hospital from the canteen an' the rout to the cemetery from the hospital, an' a little tiny cross to show where they'll plant you, an' a bit of an epitaph:

**"'HERE LIES PRIVATE WILLIAM DAY,**

**WHO VERY SUDDEN PASSED AWAY,**

**HE MESSED ABOUT WITH SMITHY'S BEER,**

**AN' THAT'S THE REASON HE IS HERE.'**

"I don't doubt at all that it was the uniform that turned old Day into an explorer. It's the same way through all the ranks. A lance-stripe turns a decent soldier into a pryin' policeman, two stripes makes him take up fret¬work an' other useless hobbies, three stripes makes him waltz an' go courtin', four stripes makes him fat, and so on.

"It is," said Smith, solemnly, "one of those extra¬ordinary things that can't be explained—like coincidences.

"After the war, as I've told you about twenty times, we was stationed at Wynberg, an' very glad most of us was to get down to the loveliest part of Africa, where there were trees an' flowers, an' great grey mountains, an' the everlastin' scent of firs.

"The war made a big difference to Nobby, for reasons already stated. He was quieter an' gentler, an' didn't try his games on like he used to—except now an' again, just to see if his right hand had lost its cunnin'.

"He took to readin' books, an' generally got so lady¬like that Spud Murphy took it into his head that he'd lost his dash, an' was quite saucy to Nobby.

"'The fact of it is,' sez Spud, "Nobby's past his prime. It stands to reason that a chap can't always be fightin' fit, an' I think I'll go an' talk over a matter of five bob I lent him before the war.'

"To everybody's everlastin' surprise, Nobby remem¬bered havin' borrowed it, an' returned it at once, an' Spud come back to the canteen quite hypnotised.

"'He's not only lost his dash,' sez Spud, 'but he' lost 'art, an' this is where I go an' remind him about certain statements he made about my face havin' been run over by a commissary wagon.'

"So over he went again, an' found Nobby readin' the life of a feller who started at the bottom of the tree, arrived in London with a half-crown, an' by careful attention to business, left the city owin' hundreds of pounds.

"By-an'-bye, back comes Spud, jubilant.

"'Nobby's withdrawn everything!' he sez, quite excited.

"I was astounded.

"'Did you pay him any money?' I sez.

"'No!' sez Spud, 'it was done spontaneous, in a manner of speakin'.'

"Now, the rum thing was that Nobby wasn't depressed or upset, or gloomy—he was just quiet.

"I didn't say much to him myself because I'd got an idea that I knew what was happenin', an' as things turned out I was right.

"'One day he sez to me: 'Smithy, I've had a letter from somebody who's sailin' for England to- morrow—she—she wants me to go down to the ship an' see her off.'

"I think I knew who that somebody was. There was a Dutch girl once, as pretty as a picture....it was in Johannesburg, you remember*....an' she joined her brother's commando dressed as a boy an' was wounded... then she went down to the coast, an' disappeared out of our lives.

* Smithy's Love Affair.

"'You're goin', I suppose?' I sez, but Nobby shook his head w'ith a little smile.

"'No,' he sez, shortly, 'what's the good of me goin'? Who wants to see Private Clark in his red coat?'

"'Have you written to say you won't go?' I asked, an' he shook his head again.

"'I've never written to her,' he said, simply, an' then he went on—'Smithy, chaps like you an' me are fools. We're fools from the day we enlist to the day

we get our "tickets." We fool away our time, an' we fool away our lives. If I'd given my time to a little study an' tried to make myself a better scholar, I could have written to her, but—but I'm ashamed to write. You know what my fist is, an' what my spellin' is? She only knows me as a man—please God, she'll never discover what a lout I am.'

"He drew a long breath.

"'There's a great big gulf betwixt her an' me. I know her people are rich, an' that she's a lady—an' I know what I am; a plain T.A., the son of plain people who never owned a hundred pounds between 'em.'

"He was silent for a while, an' I could think of nothin' to say, for what he'd told me was truth.

"'No,' sez Nobby, quietly. 'I'm off the map so far as she is concerned. I'm not such a conceited fool as to imagine anything else. We'll go into town to-morrow, Smithy, but we'll keep our distance.'

"It was from Signal Hill, next afternoon, that we watched the big white liner steer clear of the bay—watched her in silence, with Nobby's hungry eyes never leaving her as she put her nose to the north an' went out, dippin' her flag.

"'Good-bye,' I heard him whisper. 'Good- bye—God bless you, little girl—God bless you!'

"In silence we turned down the hill, an' Nobby's face was white. We were leavin' Capetown for India in a few weeks, an' knowin', as I did, how much Nobby was feelin' this affair of his, I hoped the excitement of preparin' for the'Shiny' would help him to forget his trouble.

"'She's goin' to England,' sez Nobby, breakin' the silence as we reached Adderley-street. 'She's got some relations of her mother's there. She's goin' to live there an' asked me to call'—he smiled a little bitterly, an' I could see how hard he was hit.

"It was an unfortunate thing that we'd no sooner got back to barracks than Spud Murphy, who was gettin' very bold, come swaggerin' into the room, just as Nobby was hangin' up his belt.

"'Nobby,' sez Spud, 'I understand that there's a bit of a dispute regardin' a certain shirt wot you said I pinched. Now——'

"Nobby turned in a flash.

"'Are you lookin' for trouble, Spud?' he sez, quick.

"'If you've got any to give away,' sez Spud, easily, 'I shall be pleased to take it,'

"'Well, take it,' sez Nobby, an' landed him a smack in the jaw that didn't do him any good at all. But he was up again in a second, an' looks at Nobby very carefully.

"'I can take a hidin' with any man,' sez Spud, thoughtfully, 'if there's any occasion, or if there's'a reasonable chance of gettin' a fair exchange of punish¬ment. Nobby,' he sez, reproachful, 'you oughtn't to pretend that you've lost your dash—it ain't fair on the likes of me.'

"'Give him a dig in the eye,' sez a chap named Hooker, who was a great feller for pushin' other chaps into danger.

"'You try the experiment,' sez Spud, 'I'm busy.'

"There were lots of chaps who didn't believe that Nobby's dash had come back again, an' they fell into a great error. For Nobby went through a period of quiet savageness, an' two fellers of'H' Company who came over one evenin' to pull his leg, was assisted back to their rooms by lovin' friends—they not having sufficient eyesight.

"As the time grew nearer for our departure for India he sobered down again, an' went back to his books, an' him an' me took long walks across the Cape Flats—but we never spoke about the thing that was uppermost in both our minds. Except once.

"'Goin' back to India,' sez Nobby, one day as we were returnin' to barracks after a long walk, 'is, in a way, the best thing. It means that we shall never meet, an' she won't be bothered with the thought that I'm anywhere around.'

"As we walked across the barrack square we heard cheerin' from all the bungalows. The fellers were yellin' their heads off.

"'Hullo!' sez Nobby, surprised, 'what's on? Somebody standin' the troops free beer?'

"We hadn't long to wait for any explanation, for as we passed 'G' we heard the chaps singin':

If I cross the briny

To go unto the "Shiney,"

To Quetta or to good old Chucajee;

Oh, who'll look after Biddy,

An' me mother, an' the kiddy?

Oh, Aldershot is good enough for me,

For me,

Aldershot is good enough for me!

“Nobby stopped dead, an’ looked at me.

“‘Go in, and find out,’ he began, when along come Spud Murphy.

“‘What ho!’ he sez, singin’:

I’m goin’ back to the dear old land,

Far away over the sea,

Back to the scenes of me childhood—”

“‘Stop bein’ poetical,’ sez Nobby, ‘an’ talk sense; what’s the game?’

“‘India’s cancelled,’ sez Spud, doin’ a’ little cellar-flap dance. ‘We’re for Aldershot.’

“An’ so it was.

“At the last minute the War Office had decided to send a regiment home, an’ they’d chosen the Anchesters. It was a joyful week we spent, an’ everybody’s spirits was sky-high. Nobby was a new man, an’ on the boat he was the life an’ soul of the ship—you heard how he carried on at Cadiz—an’ in course of time we reached Southampton.

“I was the first to see the girl. She stood a little apart in her furs—there was a bite in the air—an’ she looked a sweet picture—with her pale, young face an’ her big, sad eyes.

“Then, in the confusion of disembarking, I missed her, an’ was helpin’ to get the regimental kitfashore, when the‘flag’ came up to Nobby, who was with me, an’ said a lady wanted to see him in the saloon. Nobby changed colour, but went without sayin’ a word. He was gone a long time, an’ when he came back he looked grave, but said nothin’ to me.

“We marched into the Albuhera Barracks at the ’Shot that afternoon, an’ was busy till night gettin’ kit from stores. The regiment in the next barracks—the North Lancashires I think it was—cooked our dinner for us, an’ invited us over to their canteen, but when me an’ Nobby had finished our work, we got into our walking-out kit, an’ went into town. It was Nobby’s suggestion, We went down to South Camp, an’ turned into the Church of England Soldiers’ Club, an’ got tea; then Nobby spoke up.

“‘Smithy,’ he said, goin’ straight to the heart of the matter, ‘her people want her to get married to a man with money.’

“‘Well?’ I sez.

“‘She ain’t rich, as I thought she was. In fact, except for a couple of hundred pounds she’s got nothin’—I—I told her she ought to marry him.’ He hung his head as he said this. ‘I told her all about myself, that I wasn’t anything

worth considerin'; not because I'm a soldier, for I'm a better man, an' a prouder man now, than ever I was.'

"What did she say?' I asked.

"Nobby Clark shook his head.

"'There are some things I can't tell even you, Smithy,' he sez. 'I told her that I was a man who could never earn more than a couple of pounds a week—an' I told her why I didn't write to her.'

"'An' what did she say?' I asked. 'I want to know,' I sez, 'because everythin' depends on that.'

"He rose.

"'It's no good thinkin' about it,' he sez, very abrupt, an' that's all I could get out of him.

"We took our furlough together an' went to London.

"When Nobby said he thought we could afford to take lodgin's at Blackheath, I knew that the girl was livin' somewhere in the neighbourhood, an' that he wanted to be near her.

"She was livin' with an aunt, an' I saw her once drivin' in a carriage, an' in a roundabout fashion, I got to hear that the chap who wanted to marry her was an elderly feller, with pots of money. He hadn't got a nice reputation by all accounts, but he was madly in love with the girl, an' it was because Nobby, who was breakin' his heart over her, knew that the money would make her comfortable, that he was persuadin' her to marry him.

"Our furlough was nearly up, when Nobby told me he'd written her, an' was goin' to meet her an' asked me to come along with him. I think he asked me because he's got a very nice mind, an' didn't want the girl's reputation to suffer, through meetin' him alone.

"That mornin' I had the surprise of my life, for, as I was takin' a constitutional across the heath, who did I meet but the Adjutant, Captain Umfreville. He looks at me in surprise.

"'Why, Smith!' he sez, 'what are you doin' in this part of the world?' We talked for a little time, an' he offered me a cigar, an' told me his people lived close at hand. A nice gentleman is the Adjutant.

"That afternoon Nobby an' me walked across the Heath, to the place the girl had chosen, an' there she was waitin' an' Nobby went toward her, whilst I stood round admirin' the scenery. They walked together, up an' down, an' even at the distance I stood I could see how upset Nobby was. I suppose they was talkin' for half- an-hour when I saw a man cornin' across the heath toward 'em.

“A stoutish chap he was, walkin’ very quick, an’ puffin’ an’ blowin’ like a grampus.

“He didn’t wait till he got up to ’em before he started talkin.’

“‘Hi! Marie! What the devil do you mean by this, miss?’ he shouted.

“She turned towards him with a face like thunder, an’ I walked forward, scentin’ trouble.

“‘I shall write to your brother,’ sez the stout chap, furious, ‘walkin’ about in broad daylight with a common soldier? I’ll——’

“‘I think you forget yourself, Mr. Hoggin,’ sez the girl, very dignified. ‘You have no right to dictate to me as to what I shall do, or what I shall not do.’

“‘No right!’ he roars. ‘What! aren’t you practically engaged to me?’

“‘No, sez the girl, ‘I am not—nor shall I ever be. There is only one man in the world that I shall ever love,’ an’ she laid her hand on Clark’s shoulder. I thought the stout man would have a fit. He spluttered an’ stammered an’ got purple in the face.

“‘A soldier!’ he almost screamed, a wretched shilling-a-day gutter child! You’re mad! I’ll report this man to his commanding officer—I’ll write——’

“‘You needn’t do that,’ sez a voice. I looked round, an’ there was the Adjutant.

“‘I am Clark’s company officer, if you have any particular complaint to make,’ he sez, coolly.

“‘Oh, you are, are you?’ spluttered the stout teller, ‘then let me ask you sir, if you allow blackguards of this kind——’

“‘Private Clark is not a blackguard,’ sez the Adjutant.

“‘He’s a damned soldier,’ swore the other.

“‘So am I,’ sez the Adjutant.

“‘He’s had the impertinence to run after my fiancée—the stout man was absolutely beside himself with rage—‘he’s not in a position—he’s an uneducated——’

“‘That may be,’ sez the Adjutant, quietly, ‘but he can improve himself; he can afford to wait, and so can the lady,’ he smiled.

“‘Do you mean to tell me,’ sez the stout chap, gaspin’, ‘that you, an officer, can encourage a man of this class—’

“‘I do,’ sez Captain Umfreville, ‘in two or three years Clark can make himself fit for a princess,’ he sez.

“‘Will you wait three years, Miss Vanhys?’ he sez to the girl.

"'I will wait whilst I live,' she said, an' Nobby's arm went round her.

"'He's a private soldier!' roars the stout man, who couldn't get over the fact, an' you're standin' up for him! '

"'I know that,' sez the Adjutant. 'In the army,' he sez, 'we make it a rule to stand by our comrades, an' I'm goin' to stand by Clark, an' help him to be worthy of a good woman's love.'

"'Do you call yourself a gentleman?' sneers the stout chap.

"'I call myself a man,' sez the Adjutant."

**THE END**