

# OUR PERIODICAL PLAYLET.

On the Somme, A.D. 1415.

*Dramatis Personæ:*

Billikin ..... A Spearman.  
Dickon ..... A Bowman.  
Giles ..... An Arbalaster.  
Sir Percival Brassbound ..... A Captain.  
Madame Brigande ..... An Inn-keeper.

*Scene: Interior of "Fleur de Lys" Inn.*

*(Dickon and Billikin are seen seated on a bench by the fire.)*

DICKON: "Ods fish! 'Tis a weary life, this, Billikin. Twice have I been to ye Keeper of ye Purse with a piteous tale, but not a groat would he give me. Nay, no longer ago than yesterday he bade me begone, with blows and revilings, so that I am come here athirst for even ye weak and watery ale of this accursed country, yet with no means wherewithal to purchase it."

BILLIKIN: "I, too, am in a like case. With what joy could not I lower ye tide in a butt of Canterbury ale. Methinks I shall have to sell ye casque of ye French Knight which I took from off his head on ye battle ground at grave personal riske."

*(Enter GILES.)*

GILES: "Godden to ye, sirs, and wherefore look ye so glum? Wilt join me in a measure o' stoot?"

BOTH *(instantly)*: "Of a surety!"

GILES *(to Madame Brigande)*: "Thrice on ye stoot, an it please ye, Madame Brigande."

MME. BRIGANDE: "Tout de suite, m'sieu."

*Mme. Brigande lifts a leathern bottle from the shelf, descends into the lower regions, and re-appears some half-hour later with the liquor, which she pours out and gives to the three soldiers.*

DICKON: "Hale and merry, sirs."

BILLIKIN: "May ye never be broke."

GILES: "Drink deeply, comrades."

*(They drink.)*

GILES: "Marry, an' 'twas by Fortune's favour that I am enabled to purchase ye refreshment we all crave. Not a coin had I, when I bethought me of ye vestments of clothe of golde which I did remove from ye person of a right riche and valiant Frenchman after ye battle. These took I to one who trafficks in merchandise, and of him received much silver. *(Jingles the coins in his jerkin.)*

DICKON: "Billikin, here, hath the casque of a knight whom he slew on ye battle ground. Lucke is ever with ye Infantrye."

BILLIKIN: "Lucke with ye Infantrye! Bully-beef o' mine! I tell ye, I adventure no more into warfare, except I be joined to ye bombe-proofes, ye Artillerie."

DICKON: "Bombe-proofes! Ye Royal Field Bowmen! Marry, 'tis an untruth. Mayhap ye Arbalasters, ye 'heavies,' be bombe-prooffe, but never ye Bowmen."

GILES: "Ye are jealous that we who man ye Arbalast be a fülle furlong behind ye line. Yet, be it known, ye would not be so free of speech were ye forced to stay by ye Arbalast under a verie haile of stone. Sling-shots I fear not, arrows can I stand, but ye mighty roare of ye twenty-pounce rocke congealeth ye bloode within me. Bombe-prooffe!"

*(Enter Sir Percival Brassbound.)*

SIR PERCIVAL: "What ho! varlets."

ALL: "What ho! Sir Percival."

DICKON *(aside)*: "Perchance ye noble knight will purchase ye casque of steel."

BILLIKIN *(aside)*: "Twere well thought on. *(Addressing himself to Sir Percival)*: "An it please ye, Sir Percival, I have here a casque of steele which I did remove from ye valiant brow of a most puissant Frenchman at much riske."

SIR PERCIVAL: "Produce ye goodes!"

*(Billikin uncovers a large object which proves to be the helmet of a knight.)*

BILLIKIN: "Fifty francs, an it please ye, Sir Percival."

SIR PERCIVAL: "Ha-ha! Likewise haw-haw! What have we here but mine own dresse parade casque, which was stolen from my tente on ye Somme most feloniously. O cursed villain! Behold mine initials worked on ye sweate-bande thereof by ye faire handes of ye Ladye Ermyntrude!"

DICKON AND GILES: "'Tis even so!"

SIR PERCIVAL: "For this acte so dreadful I decree that ye be condemned to bathe in ye colde water for ye purging of ye bodie and ye purifying of ye soule, and, furthermore, that ye be sentenced to have ye haire of ye face and heade shaven."

BILLIKIN: "Mercy! Sir Percival, not ye bathe!"

SIR PERCIVAL: "Let it be as I have spoken." *(To DICKON and GILES)*: "Convey ye prisoner, under close arreste, to ye tente of ye Provost-Marshal, there to await ye expiation of hys crime."

*(Exeunt—DICKON and GILES on either side of BILLIKIN.)*

SIR PERCIVAL *(to Mme. Brigande)*: "By my sande-glasse 'tis now ten grains after ye eighth hour, and I bid ye, Mme. Brigande, serve no more drinke, else will ye inne be placed oute of boundes!"

*(Exit.)*

MME. BRIGANDE *(shrugging)*: "C'est la guerre!"

*(Curtain.)*

## THE PERMANENT SERGEANT-MAJOR.

Sergeant-Major Richard Tubbs, known to his familiars as "Tubby Dick," was much upset—wrought to a purple passion, indeed. His speech was of much the same hue—and here let it be said, when Tubby Dick "took the brake off" he had a resourceful flow, at once the delight and despair of the entire battalion. Long years in the Imperial Service, and a working knowledge of vituperative and insult in many native dialects, joined to an inborn knack of expression, brought his finer flights to the point of genius. Unfortunately, much of his talk was quite—oh, quite—unprintable!

It was at the Divisional Baths that he suffered the indignity of his career. When Sergeant-Major Tubbs disrobed he was not exactly the ideal of symmetry. Far from it. He bulged where he ought to have receded, and retreated where he should have advanced. Even a moustache of heroic latitude, and waxed withal, failed to distinguish him from the common herd. Thus it came about that the bath attendant, unaware of the exalted status of the person whom he addressed, shouted to him with that air of off-handed authority which all bath attendants acquire:—

"Come on, Fatty. Get that soap off!"

Sergeant-Major Tubbs swallowed about a pint of soapsuds before his lower jaw resumed the normal, and, before he could

unbosom himself to the attendant, the latter had become so busy refusing clean towels to the troops that he was unable to pay proper attention.

That afternoon the Sergeant-Major detailed the seemingly trivial circumstances of this incident with much heat to his particular friend, the R.Q.M.S.

"The trouble is," he stated, "when a fellow's undressed these doubtfully-descended relics of unmentionable parentage who work in the baths don't know a sergeant-major when they see one."

"You ought to have your crowns tattooed on your arms," suggested the R.Q.M.S., who suffered from occasional brain-movements.

"D—d good idea!" Tubby Dick agreed, after a pause.

That very afternoon he called in the services of a local artist, and had two large blue crowns worked on his forearms.

A short while afterwards he made a slight slip, which resulted in an F.G.C.M., and ultimate reduction to the ranks. Nevertheless, every two weeks Private Richard Tubbs enjoyed special attention and the finest underclothing in the Divisional Baths, through the silent command of the emblems on his forearms. As he said himself, although he might be broken, he would always be a sergeant-major.