

# WAR HAS ITS HUMOROUS SIDE

## War Nicknames

**C**HEERFUL Tommy Atkins goes to war with a song or a joke. He carries with him into the trenches the wit of the costermonger and the London cabbie. He has no hymn of hate, no grim obsession, no national insanity. War to him is part of the great game of life. Some of the wittiest things said by the British soldier in this war take the form of nicknames. Months ago the German shells were dubbed "coal boxes," "Black Marias," and "Jack Johnsons." Canadians in their letters home have used these names as naturally as the British. One of the most puzzling nicknames was the word "Asquiths," used in descriptive letters. It took the public some time to discover that it was the name given to French matches, which make it necessary to "wait and see" what happens when they are struck. The body belt has been happily described as "the dado round the dining-room." The Kaiser was dubbed "Crazy Bill," the Crown Prince, "Five Bob Bit," Gen. von Kluck, "Old von o'clock," and German snipers, "little Willies."

When the Prince of Wales visited the firing lines, not long ago, he inspected some of the big guns which have been doing great damage to the Germans. And though Napoleon was the first great soldier who actually petted and patted cannons as though they were favourite horses, the British soldier went him one better, when to the great amusement of the future King and Emperor he found one gun called "Teddy," another "George," another "Mary," and two more respectively "Mother" and "Baby." King George himself has been tersely summed up as G. 5, out of respect to the method of naming submarines. Sir John French is called "Father." "One section of the trenches," says a private in the London Rifle Brigade, "is called the House of Commons, because the men in it spend most of their time arguing." The outer line of trenches, where the men are posted at first to draw the German fire, is known as the "drawing-room," and the inner line, where the attacks are really met, is called the "reception-room."

Asking for a sausage roll, "Tommy" will call for a "torpedo"; a twopenny meat pie is known as a "shell," and a currant cake is a "fly cemetery." If the cake happens to be smaller than usual, the khaki customer remarks, "This is not up to chest measurement," or "This is below standard height."

In many places, where the windings and turnings in the trenches are most intricate, and a stranger is liable to lose his way, signposts are placed at the points of junction, and each passage and section of a trench is given a name, probably taken from the battalion which dug it or the officer who was in charge of the work. Very often the names selected are more pretentious. A plank pathway through a muddy wood will in all probability go by the title of "Piccadilly" or "The Strand."

All these nicknames are a form of humour which in the case of Tommy Atkins take the place of ordinary slang. Calling a thing an apt name is one of the peculiarities of British humour.

## Mullins

**A** WRITER in Punch has the following sketch, which in the form of serious humour, hits off the subject of recruiting:

"This 'ere war," began Bill Corrigan, and the opening was so familiar that the line of men leaning against the factory-wall scarcely looked up from their pipes and papers, "may be right enough for them as was born with the martial instinct, but for them as wasn't, it's jest silly!"

They agreed with him, though languidly. The sentiment was in entire accordance with their mood; the sole objection to it was that they had heard it expressed by Bill many times before.

"Slackers?" he had echoed amiably, in reply to a persistent recruiting-sergeant in the early days, "oo's denyin' of it, mate? No, we ain't reg'lers, nor territorial, nor nash'nal volunteers, nor yet speshuls, an' we don't manufacture as much as a bootlace for the bloomin' troops, an' we're about the only crowd in England as ain't ashamed to say so!"

And the rest, following Bill's heroic lead, were quite remarkably proud of the fact that they also weren't ashamed to say so. The thing had become a cult, a sort of fetish. They regarded each new recruiting-poster with amused interest; passed the barracks at the corner with light and careless steps, and made a decent bit overtime.

"Eard yest'day," said Alf Chettle, "that they've got a noo recruiting-sergeant, name o' Cheem, at the barracks. Reckons 'e's goin' to wake us up. Got an idee that the other fellers that tried to make

rookies o' me an' Bill didn't understand our temp'ryments."

There was a chorus of chuckles.

A little man in khaki who had been listening to the dialogue came nearer hesitatingly.

"Any o' you chaps live in Ponter Street?"

"I do," said Bill, suspiciously. "Why?"

"Met a feller at the Front that used to live in this neighbourhood, an' 'e sent a message. Larky sort o' boy, 'e was, not more than sixteen, though 'e wouldn't own it. 'E was wounded in the ankle while we was retreatin', an' the Huns got 'im before we could carry 'im off. Late that night 'e crawled into camp, an' the things 'e told us before 'e died—"

"What name?" asked Alf, sharply.

"Mullins—Tim Mullins."

## "THE POPULAR PLACE FOR BILL"



Writers in the Press are continually suggesting what shall be done to the Kaiser after the war. Isn't it possible that the treatment depicted above will be required for him?

—London Daily Sketch.

"Recollect 'im skylarkin' with my lads," said an older man. "Game little beggar, all freckles an' grin."

"'E was. 'Remember me to the old crowd in Ponter Street, if ever you're down that way,' 'e says; 'I bet the Factory's workin' short-anded just now. I ain't done 'alf what I meant to,' 'e says, catchin' 'is breath, but there's plenty more, thank Gawd, to carry on. Guess there won't be many slackers in England when they reads the papers—only poor beggars as ain't got strength enough to fire a rifle or dig a trench."

There was a short silence while the man in khaki filled his pipe.

"I can see all the fightin' I wants at a picture palace," said Bill, gruffly.

"Maybe," said the man in khaki. "But I'm goin' out again soon's I get the chance. . . . Can't forget the look on young Mullins' face when 'e died. No, 'e wasn't no bloomin' martyr. But 'e'd done 'is bit, an' that was all that mattered."

"Last I saw o' the beggar," said the older man, "'e was playin' marbles with my Tom. 'When I grows up,' 'e says, 'I'm goin' to buy a farm, an' grow apples.'"

"An' now—'e won't never grow up," said Alf.

"No," said the man in khaki, "nor won't die, neither. There's life, mate, an' there's death, an' there's another thing they calls immortality, an' that's what Mullins found."

The hoarse roar of the factory hooter filled the air, and the men began to drift towards the entrance. Within the yard Bill came to a sudden halt.

"Anyone care to look in at the barracks to-night?" he demanded, huskily.

"Don't mind if I do," said Alf.

A dozen others straggled across and said they felt like coming to join them.

The man in khaki watched them. If Bill had made a discovery, so had he—a discovery not uncommon among those whose talk is of the elemental things of life. His subject had been greater than he had suspected.

Turning away, he came face-to-face with an officer. He saluted briskly.

"Well," said the officer, "any luck?"

"Pretty fair, Sir," said Cheem.

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## Musical Moments

**M**USIC goes with the British soldier everywhere. The bugle and the band and the drum may not be so useful in this war as they have been in the wars of the past, and even the banjo immortalized by Kipling has a hard time in the trenches. But Tommy at the front or in the training camp will have his music. Here is a sample poster which was stuck on the wall of a canteen—a large marquee—in one of the largest camps in England:

"To-night! To-night! 'D' Company's Grand Free-and-Easy will be held in the canteen (Wet) To-night. All the singers in camp—and dozens who think they can sing, but can't—will positively appear! Each singer will get a pint and a packet of fags—if he pays for them. A collection will be taken, the proceeds to be devoted to the relief of the starving family of the sergeant-cook. Roll up! Roll up!"

The allusion to the starving family of the sergeant-cook arose from a legend that the cook's young son had been seen leaving camp with a large joint of beef under his arm.

Classical music makes no great hit in the camps. The Russians may be fonder of that. When any performer asks, "Wot'll I give yer this time?" the British soldier frankly admits that he prefers "any old thing with a swing."

"But the old and imperishable songs that 'mother used to sing,' and which mostly have no 'swing' to speak of, also have an unflinching appeal for him," says a writer in a London daily. "He always refuses to countenance anything 'too blinkin' classy.' 'The Soldiers' Chorus,' and 'Drinking' are all of grand opera that he will 'stomach' at one sitting. 'Asleep in the Deep' is always a prime favourite, and not infrequently does the one-song man, encouraged by the success which attended the earlier rendering, 'oblige' for a second time with 'Stormee thee night and thee waves roll 'igh,' to the immense satisfaction of all present, which includes, of course, the singer."

"Other songs which have a great vogue with sing-song audiences are 'The Poor Blind Boy,' 'Don't Go Down in the Mine, Daddy,' and 'When the Fields Are White with Daisies.' The well-known music hall artiste, 'The White-Eyed Kaffir,' whose song it is, has never succeeded in scaling the height of realism reached by the canteen songster when singing 'Hi ham bee-ut a pee-oor blee-ind boy.' Imagine the singer,

his pint standing, untasted and for the moment forgotten, on the piano-top; his eyes rolling heavenward, the whites alone visible; while his anguished lips proclaim, in accents to melt a mummy, the sightless orphan's travail—and all around him—on wooden forms and upturned ginger beer cases, the boys of the regiment, their hearts nigh to bursting with emotion at the splendour of the singer's presentment of the song's pathos.

"Or, if one pictures these ardent music lovers, with glasses raised on high, and loose heel-plates on ammunition boots clanking a not unmusical accompaniment, as they bellow 'W'en the fields are wite wif d'isies an' the roses bloom agine,' one beholds a spectacle of utter abandonment."

## A Bubble Burst

**A** MAN in Chicago has been admiring the fine literary style of Gen. French's war reports, who is considered by this critic to be a really great war correspondent. Which of course is not altogether a new thing in history. Caesar was the first great war correspondent, and his "Veni, Vidi, Vici" is the world's model for trenchant brevity and egotism combined. Gen. French is less laconic, not at all egotistical, and delights to praise other men. His despatches are so lucid and fair-minded that they must please even the critical sense of Lord Kitchener, who has no great affection for war scribes. The only objection anybody can possibly have to Gen. French as a war writer is—that he isn't. That he is a great soldier nobody doubts. But in the more fanciful matter of writing, it is regrettable to confess that those fine despatches which have so often cheered the British and Canadian heart during the past ten months were written by Col. Edward D. Swinton.