

armies than the fact that a song book—doubtless passed by the censor—figures in the German soldier's list of necessities and is absent from the Englishman's. German officers have been known to strike a man across the shoulders with the endearing exhortation: "*Singen Sie!*" The English soldier makes his own songs and sings them or not as it pleases him. I have even seen in the early days of the war a fatigue-party of soldiers, under sentence of F.P., marching to their unsanitary tasks singing "Keep the Home Fires Burning"—a spectacle which would produce a fit of apoplexy in the German mind. I often think that, whatever else the British Army has or has not done in France, it has destroyed forever on the Continent the legend of a dour phlegmatic Eng'and, hostile to cakes and ale. It has restored the old tradition of a "Merrie England."

But the British soldier has something deeper than gaiety or wit; he has humour. The former are transient; the latter is permanent. Wit is a thing of the intellect, but humour has its roots in the character. The British soldier is not witty when in the trenches—no one is—but he is humorous. Like every other natural trait this humour is largely unconscious. It is an attitude, not a gesture. As for example, the two men who—when out one night in No Man's Land lying in wait for a German patrol that was long in coming their way—were heard by a friend of mine, their Platoon Commander, whispering to one another: "I hope they haven't come to no