

THE RUNNERS OF THE SOMME

They didn't pull off any grand-stand play;
They seldom did much in the gallery way;
They were generally dirty and sometimes shaved,
But never the flag of their country waved,
Because they weren't just built that way.
There wasn't much that they had to say,
Unless it was on the subject of pay,
Which amounted to quite a franc a day—
Not enough, you'll admit, to marry on—
But they packed in their pouch
When out on a mooch
What's better than any brand of "hootch"—
The motto, or badge, or what you please,
Which in army circles is quite the "wheeze"—
The thing we call "Carry on!"

They'd grouch as every good soldier should,
But they treated their job as if sawing wood.
They took their turn as they took their rum,
Without blast of bugle or tuck of drum.
They knew, each hour, what they had to face,
But it never struck them to slacken pace,
Though "three by night and three by day"
Must read the toll of their urgent way,
Which often looked good to tarry on,
Because of the mud,
Or a neighbourly dud,
Or a noise not a little bit like a dud.
They'd light up another weird issue fag,
A "'Alf a Mo'" or a "Regent" or "Flag"—
And cheerfully "Carry on!"

They'd give the foot-slogger their simple praise,
With no meed for their own "laborious days."
They guessed that the heroes at the gun
Thought small potatoes of those who "run."
But some Persons saw and made a note,
And when they had time sat down and wrote
In terms that astounded the blushing runner—
Not to mention the past-pluperfect gunner—
On the subject of how to "carry on,"
And took as a model
The ceaseless toddle—
In mud-time ludicrously like a waddle—
That's now the fashion wherever you go
Because the *brass hats* have made it so—
We call it the "Carry on!"