

An G.T. Tommy's Letter to a Pal.

Dear Bill,

John Reilly says that it's nemeesis or something like that, but I don't know whv they'd call it such a foolish name, because it hurts more other places than it does the knees. Honest, Bill, I wouldn't be sitting down now if I could find a place to write standing up. I always heard that the horse was the friend of man. Perhaps he is, but I bet you got to know him a long time before his stirling qualities show theirselves. I ain't felt like this for years, Bill, not since the old man and me had the last session, him using the back of a hair brush to let me know how much more it hurt him than me. You get me, eh, Bill?

Johnny says the O.C. suspects it is one of our Section what sold his dog, and he's handing this horse riding to all of us so to be sure to get the right one. He says that if it wasn't horse riding it would be something else as bad, so that's why its nemeesis.

The riding school ain't like no school you ever seen, Bill. It's just a corner fenced off in a field, with white-washed stone, making a oval in the center, and you ride around between the stones and the fence, that is, when you ride. The Sergeant Major stands in the center and says things in a loud voice.

I was on fatigue yesterday, so I didn't go out. I had the laugh on the bunch last night, Bill, cause they was all stiff and sore, but I couldn't laugh at Charlie Chaplin to-night, Bill, if he walked in the hut there, which there ain't no chance of. But maybe I'll be workin' with him after the war, Bill, because there ain't no one can do falls from a horse like I can. Just get on and fall off, I mean.

The sergeant-major said he never seen anything like it. He says, "Ain't you afraid you'll hurt yourself, fallin' off."

"Not so much as it hurts to stay on," I says.

"Well, get on and hurt yourself some more," he says in his kindest tone. "And if you have to fall, don't hit your head on any of them stones," he says. "We don't want them broken."

I had a swell come back, Bill, but kidding the sergeant major don't get you nothing, but about fourteen days in the clink so I swallows it.

Next time you get a chance, Bill, you give a horse the once over. Maybe you think you know something about them. But no one don't know anything about horses until they tried to ride one. Just to look at one, it looks easy to sit on his back and roll along. You see guys and ladies, too, in circuses, doing all kinds of fancy stunts. You can bet they was born in a stable, Bill, and bent their legs round a horse first when their bones was soft. I never wish I was bowlegged till to-day.

We fell in as usual this morning, and the riding school sergeant major marched us over the stables. He told me to take a big bay horse, about eight feet high. It would of been a camel Bill, if it had a hump. We drags the ponies out, everybody looking glum but me. I had a feeling, Bill, that I would show them all up. Gee whiz, you learn something new in the Army every day, Bill.

Of course, you got to get on a horse by numbers, Bill, and when you get on you got to sit just so and hold your reins in a certain way. But first, we took our spurs off. Some fellows, when they gits on a horse, digs in their spurs, and hang on that way. So they don't give no one spurs at first.

I tried and tried with no success to get up that horse, but at last I made it, and everything was jake. The sergeant major was getting at somebody, but I knew I was alright. But it was me, Bill. He wanted to know if I didn't know how to mount. That got my angora, Bill, but I just smiled serene like, and says "Well, I'm here." "Yes," says he, "And how did you get there." "The elevator wasn't running, so I walked," I says, "Well, walk down," he says, "And mount from the right side."

"I did mount on the right side," I says.

"It happens the right side is the wrong side," says he. "You never mount a horse from the off or right side."

"O," I says, "If it was off side, you had a kick coming alright." But that guy couldn't see it, Bill. All he says was, "None of your lip, young fellow, or you'll go to the guard room. Just get off that horse."

Well, I started to get off, Bill, and I thought he would have a fit. He started