

SPECIAL ARTICLES.

"What we did in the Great War."

By Lieut. A. J. Smith.

List, to a tale of Arcadie—Harken ye, and picture to thyself the ancient town of Sandgate on a certain night in May.

Stroll in imagination down the single street that runs parallel with the English Channel that passes by the "Norfolk" (a Pub), the "Kent" (another Pub) and the "Bucket of Blood" (still another Pub), and that finally stretches its dusty length past the palatial abode of the celebrated "Overseas Comedians." There just opposite the wreck on the seashore, stands a large mansion, once the property of a wealthy family but now sadly fallen into ruin and decay, and therefore used to house the aforesaid "Comedians." It stands well back from the side-walk, as if its occupants should be withdrawn from all contact with the natives, and is surrounded by a high wall and inside that wall are grounds that testify eloquently to the former care of a skillful gardener. Wreathed in ivy, spacious and wide, it might well have been reserved for a better fate in its old age. We all admit that the single entrance to the house is narrow—and has been passed several times by "Comedians" returning homeward in the dawn, overcome, as it were, by the beauty of the rising sun and the perfume of the wallflowers; and too, the steps are steep and numerous, perhaps a wee trifle inconvenient for the tardy ones who are often reduced to vain attempts to swim up to the house. But, what of that? Are the "Comedians" not curiously happy, in spite of all discomforts? What if the pillar boxes do occasionally chase them across the road, and the moon has been known to roll like a hoop along the high wall? Such phenomena are philosophically accepted; in the Army, know ye, all things are possible.

Well, all was merry and cheery on that night. Through the halls and darkened cloisters of the mansion came the sounds of laughter and the popping of corks. In the Mess good fellowship reigned supreme. Yes, perhaps some of the lads were—well, a little vague and misty as to their surroundings, but all were capable of continuing indefinitely; yea, even to the bitter end. But, hark, that fatal sound! the clock has struck eleven, that dreadful hour when the Mess must close and the "Comedians" must climb the stairs, stumbling (because of the darkness) and cursing (because of the restrictions on their liberties). Half an hour has passed—nearly every light has been extinguished; the last "Comedian" has been carried to his lowly couch, and all is silent, save for the boisterous laughter from certain Rooms and the loud and continuous snores of men overcome by their emotions and reluctantly compelled to seek rest. What a scene! Such innocence! Such sweet slumbers! Let us glance for a moment into the room occupied by several very popular members of the Staff. In the dim light of the candle that someone has forgotten to blow out, behold a row of red noses thrust above grey and black blankets, drawing in thousands of cubit yards of the alcohol laden air, and exhaling it with a sound that curiously resembles a saw mill in full swing, or a train running through a boiler factory. Around and

about are scattered articles of clothing, dropped there as if from an airship, and from the walls come the sounds peculiar to rodents endeavouring to make their way through solid planks. Here and there the eye is delighted by the sight of playing cards (alas too often marked) a bottle or two (many of the boys spend all their money on Cod Liver oil and other bottled tonics) cigarette ends, burnt matches, and all things that contribute towards a peaceful life in the Army and are certainly indispensable.

But listen! whose heavy feet are those stumbling up the passage and whose well modulated tones are those that cry FIRE, FIRE? In a moment all is confusion and noise. Men work frantically to save their most precious belongings carrying the bottles as far into the gardens as possible; others run about and ask each other in thick accents, if the Mess servants are safe and if they had better not go into the Mess and attempt a rescue, others try to arouse the numerous "Comedians" who have been long in the Army, and who lie in bed thankful that at last the end has come, and that there is no danger of their dying sober. The glare of the fire has lighted the heavens and thrown into bold relief the pitiful scene. Rooms and Halls are alight now; easily can the spectators see the "Comedians" who are strangely influenced by the fire and who must be carried from their beds and laid in rows on the lawn (how many were sensitive to the fire's fierce glare); they see our precious possessions carefully wrapped in glass, placed where they will never tempt mankind, and they cannot but feel pity for the poor fellows who stagger as they walk sorrowfully away from the Mess.

But look! in the distance the light shines upon ancient brass helmets forgotten and left behind by the mighty Cæsar, when he beat it back to Imperial Rome to meet the barbarians who threatened to over-run the Mistress of the World and to clutch with their foul hands the treasures of a thousand years of conquest and domination. Galantly they come on, their determined faces, set, grim, unconquered (save by the "Scotch") magnificent testimony to the fact that Britons will never, never, be slaves to anything but drink. One, far in the lead, is almost running; his benevolent countenance beams through his whiskers, his men, inspired by his example follow him as they would a brewery van. By this time the flames roar high above the building; inside the Administrative Offices, men are frantically throwing furniture, papers, typewriters, ink bottles, etc., to the stone pavement; a huge crowd of Civilians, in various stages of intoxication pounce eagerly upon every article of value. Soon the roadway is blocked with Government property, and through this chaos charges the Sandgate Fire Brigade, determined to do or die.

With incredible speed a hose is passed to the building and before anyone realises it the gallant Fire-fighters find that they have forgotten the nozzle. A yell of delight, fiendish in its intensity, arises from the half dressed "Comedians," higher and higher the flames burst, and frag-