

But what of the toast list? It might be the toast list for a Lord Mayor's banquet. Our King, the Army, the Navy, our commerce, absent friends, our brothers in the trenches, and even the toast of our enemies. Never have I enjoyed such a time, and it would be difficult to realise what our mission in England is. The shadow of this appalling catastrophe is never thought of. It is Christmas, and each and everyone throws himself into the spirit of the great day.

But how quickly the afternoon flies; already it is 5 o'clock, and I have accepted an invitation to dine with another company. There it is even more enjoyable, if that be possible. The table simply groans. What boots it if you eat your turkey with your pocket knife, and the Christmas cake is cut with a bayonet? The spirit of cheerfulness is abroad. There are amusing reminiscences of experiences as Volunteers, some of them scarcely for ears polite; songs, recitations, and last, but not least, a dance. Never have I seen the sailor's hornpipe and Highland schottische danced with such vim. I wish one could have taken all these young, able-bodied fellows who still sit at home, and have shown them this gathering—I daresay it was just of a piece with the numerous other gatherings among those who are ready to lay down their lives for their country—it might have inspired them with some enthusiasm. I sometimes wonder how they will appear when arraigned at the bar of posterity. Time and again I think of these lines of Housman's:—

Far I hear the bugle blow  
To call me where I would not go;  
And the guns begin the song—  
Soldier, fly, or stay for long.

Comrade, if to turn and fly  
Made a soldier never die,  
Fly I would, for who would not?  
'Tis sure no pleasure to be shot.

But since the man who runs away  
Lives to die another day,  
And cowards' funerals, when they come,  
Are not wept so well at home,