

The Chronicles of Joyous Jane

By Dorothy L. Warne

III.—THE ORDERLY ROOM

In the Orderly Room—I mean the office, and not the cubby hole that leads to the clink—there is always present the atmosphere created by Big Minds. You know the kind of feeling I mean, quite indescribable, but, like poor relations, always forced upon one.

A very firm and very quick footfall, made musical by the clinking of spurs, announces the advent of Captain Burwill, the Presiding Genius of the other Minds.

Seated at the central table is Sergeant Bpron. His pen leaves his work for just one second as he greets us with a kindly smile then descends on the paper again and rushes along at an astonishingly rapid pace. We were informed that in his spare time he is compiling a seven-volume treatise on "How, Why, and When to Use a Duplicator," to be handed down to future generations of Boy Scouts.

Opposite to him is a fair-haired Tomma Rott. Here is yet another wonderful brain, stored full of records (Army, not Edison Bell). If you want to know the Christian name of the officer with soulful eyes who passed you in the corridor, Tomma will unearth a Nominal Roll and satisfy you: or if any forlorn damsel wishes to find whether her hero, who has sworn to be true for the duration, is as single as he looks, why here is the person who has the power to plunge her into the depths or raise her to the heights.

Shell-Shock-Shorty-Shortsocks sits serenely stenographing. By way of a change from alliteration he occasionally types the big business of the day—Orders. Under his fingers and the effacing aid of "Correctine" the stencil sheet is as wax in his hands.

Another knight of the typewriter and dot-dash caligraphy is Private Porty. The symbol of eternity, as used by the ancients, was, I believe, a serpent biting its tail—no beginning, no ending—Porty's click-clack, bing-a-ling, burr-r-r, would do just as well. They never stop.

Vivian Oakdene is a name to which only the pen of a Mrs. Humphrey Ward or a Hall Caine could do justice. The owner of it sits in a snug corner doing his allotted tasks with a mien as smooth and unruffled as his lovely brown locks.

We missed Robin's ready wit, but were cheered on being told that he is living up other departments on a lower level to the Orderly Room (architecturally lower, please understand).

Monitor Nick's face is, as usual, one big beam. For each day on which he dodges a score of jobs he is awarded a star. These are presented so regularly that in a couple of months we expect to see him looking like the glittering Princess of the Pantomime.