

SERIOUS TALKS TO SUBALTERNs

On « Tact ».

Tact is a hard-to-define quality that all officers (except the Adjutant) require to possess themselves of in large measure, to be able to handle troops on pay-day, live bombs, barbed wire entanglements at midnight and other such minor worries of the campaign.

Someone I believe, said that « tact is saying or doing the right thing in the right way at the right time », and much sadness that I have experienced in this hard, old world, compels me regretfully to believe in him.

Take the case of the « Celleries » for example, not having any tact I had attacked that venerable, old pile of ruins with a large working party of enthusiastic amateurs and carried it reverently brick by brick to a distant field in the forlorn hope that eventually I would get enough to build a palatial Headquarters. Then along comes « Pat ». You all know Pat, I guess, not one of those red-haired Irishmen that you are thinking of, who won't get married because he is kind of scared that home-rule would begin at home... No ! This Pat of ours is one of those off-coloured Scotsmen who refuse to wear a kilt because of their bow legs and the trouble of occasionally washing their knees ; the kind of hard-headed Scot that thinks so hard that he wears all the hair off the top of his head in early youth. Well, as I was saying, along comes Pat ; he just fixes the seventh brick from the bottom left corner with a cold, calculating, left eye and allows the other to roam around in a circle to the point of commencement, and Presto ! a hole in the ground with brick walls round it suddenly gets a tin roof ; a sudden knock with a revetting post at one of the side walls, and over it falls on the tin, and is immediately dignified by the title « detonating surface », and then as I rub the brick-dust from my eyes, there is Pat handing over the cutest, most fetching, little Headquarters you ever saw and receiving the plaudits of the multitude with that kind of half disdainful expression that appears to imply — « Oh this ? Why this is nothing, We do this sort of thing every morning before breakfast, just for exercise ». — That's fact.

Then of course, there's that other time with the Medical Officer when my love of a practical joke wouldn't let me use tact. It was one of those convivial, little gatherings in the cellar of Irish Farm, the only discordant note being our old friend the « Doc » who would persist in explaining, in ponderous medical terms, just how unhealthy the air of those delightful caverns was, owing to it's unusual dryness... After a while we managed to introduce sufficient of the proper kind of moisture into the atmosphere to suit even the Doc's taste, and then he decided that he wanted to go to the front line. Now I should explain here that for some time I had been cultivating the Doc, most carefully in the hope that, ere long, he would order me to be sent down to Nice, or one of those other pretty places for a long rest to recuperate my shattered nerves.

We started out from the farm in the dim light of a crescent moon and proceeded across the field past those little square holes where the Brits dug themselves in during the early days ; whilst we were learning to steal each other's rations, and the real value of week-end passes at Lark Hill Stepping warily I crossed on the narrow bank of earth between to of the grass covered holes and behind me followed the unsuspecting Doc..... Splash ! The next thing I saw was our old friend up to the shoulders in nice, clean water and his hat floating gently beside him. For one breathless, icy minute he was speechless and then the full torrent of his supply of sulphuric language churned up the water into clouds of steam and I fled, and as I ran his last parting wish that I might pick up a « stray » on my way down to the trench, and

the hundred and one horrible things that would happen to a certain wire stealing subaltern, should he come to a certain dressing station, convinced me that any hopes of rest cures I may have cherished from that direction must be given up forever... Wherefore once again lacked I tact.

If you visit bed 23 in N° 7 Stationary Hospital at — (I wasn't going to say where, really, Mr Censor) — you will find a poor, old wreck that was once a sprightly fellow of the Mechanical Transport section. He was a perfectly decent kid, and didn't mean any harm, but the sight of that company swinging along with set, stern faces to make a frontal attack in daylight, just sort of thrilled him, and he thought to cheer them up a little so just hummed to them that old refrain — « We don't want to lose you but we think you ought to go » Now he realises that a little tact is a priceless jewel.

It has just dawned on me, at this stage, that this effusion of mine isn't altogether tactful, and though I haven't really given you any sound advice yet — only samples of lack of it — the only hope I have of showing that I possess any tact is to stop right now.

IDDY UMPTY.

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## TO THE POPPY

Oh lovely poppy,  
Living and sleeping in the shining fields  
Why growest thou  
In times like these, with silence and thy dream,  
Thy red-lipped petals like the wine cup's rim  
Are unto me a refuge and a balm,  
Where I may drink and laugh at this world's sin  
Unmindful of the wretch and wee of war.

Oh modest poppy  
In thy living red I see a dream of hope  
And life to come ;  
For thou art growing in thy loveliness,  
Upon the mound where Valour sleeps with Death  
Beneath the cross that marks a hero's grave.

And Oh sweet poppy  
As I mark his doom,  
And read the cross, his number, and his line,  
And think that as he died so must we die,  
My heart is filled with sorrow and deep gloom.

But then dear flower  
Whene'er I see thy bloom,  
And hear thee saying « Life is Lord of Death »,  
And watch thee growing in thy loveliness  
All living red in Summer's beauteous breath,  
A breathing peace and perfect blessedness  
Comes stealing on my soul with strong repose ;  
For he and I are like thee and the rose  
That blows and dies, but, ever blows and blows.

J. H. STIRT,

2nd Can. D. A. C.

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Two of our scouts who were wearing German caps, souvenirs of the recent fighting, were to their dismay, arrested by the battalion next-door, and had a deuce of a time proving an alibi.

Their innocence was eventually established, and their identities proved by sheer force of profanity.

You may fake an identity-disc and a pay-book, but army English, Canadian army English, can only be acquired through long experience and incessant practice.

After they had put on the third record, (you know the one) « Holy, sufferin, systematic... » the officer who was questioning them leaned weakly against the parados and said : « S'enough boys. Your characters are cleared. Go ! »