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These official figures for the latest fiscal year represent the unprecedented record of injury and slaughter on the railway systems of the United States. The epidemic of wrecks is rapidly increasing. Since July 1st, 268 lives have been lost in railway wrecks, not counting hundreds of casualties. The reason back of almost every recent smash-up can be almost invariably expressed in the two words:

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Our London Letter

From Our Own Correspondent

London, October 2.

WE got justly indignant at the nameless brutalities of the Kaiser's Huns; but here in this peaceful England are horrors of daily perpetration that must harrow up the immortal soul of Shakespeare. This is merely a roundabout way of referring to the flood of execrable verse that has been poured upon the public through the too-ready channel of the Press. Of old the exhortation to the British poet was "Strike the Lyre," but in these stirring times the object of their metrical attack is spelled with an "ia," and is that Director-in-Chief of the Potsdam Fabrication Factory. Even Mr. Kipling's poem, "For All We Have and Are" falls lamentably below, in execution, the heights it aims at—in sentiment, and the rest of the vintage from the Press is thin and sour and without body, lacking even the palatable tickling excuse of neat rhyming. But though the 1914 vin ordinaire of verse may well be called a British atrocity we have remaining a robust small-beer of excellent quality—the tuneful and captivating doggerel of a good music-hall song. In spite of war-maps and descriptions of the line of battle, the one geographical fact stamped indelibly on Mr. Atkins' mind is the length of the way to Tipperary. Recruiting, training, traveling, fighting, resting and marching he sings this new National Anthem. Its chief charm being that it has nothing whatever to do with the matter in hand, it has naturally obtained an entire hold upon the British mind, and so powerful are the forces of association that one cannot hear it without a thrill. This irrelevant swinging tune is the marching-song of civilization, it is the battle-cry of the clean peoples on their way to remove the unclean thing—the Prussian women-butcher—from the path of peace. The stations are full of jaunty youths singing this song—and it is woeful to think how many of them must go "a long, long way"—and not return.

But this is a discussion of a musical matter, and should not be serious. Jack Judge, the composer, plodded London with it, but could not find a publisher; eventually Feldman's took it up and had it on their hands for some months an apparent failure, but it began to take at the "Halls" a little, and the war set it jingling in the mouths of the whole nation, for the aforesaid excellent reason that it was entirely irrelevant. This mention of the "Halls" reminds me of an inscription outside the doors of the Empire; I don't mean the great un-sunsettable one to which we have the mutual honour to belong, but the smaller though almost as famous one in Leicester Square. The legend was as follows:

EUROPE.

Invented, Designed and Produced by Wilhelm.

I was admiring the publicity given to this piece of characteristic modesty of the Kaiser when a nearer view told me that it was a "revue" and that there was an initial C before the Wilhelm.

The Making of an Army.

We are an orderly people, and though the war-feeling is as strong as in those first earth-shaking days of August, it is directed into proper channels, and enthusiasm finds expression rather in solid endeavour than in any flag-flapping exuberance. Still the stream of recruits flows steadily in whilst the War Office, like the female progeny of the scriptural Veterinary Surgeon, clamours aloud for more. But the chief difficulty is, as I have mentioned before, to get the non-coms to train the men, for what avails a bed of clay if there be a dearth of potters? Some ingenious souls have been making a small fund of beer-money by enlisting at all available recruiting offices, thoughtfully drawing a day's pay at each, but a liberal use of the telephone is now limit-

ing their more profitable activities. I am more interested to see the stages of training than the actual recruiting, and a seaside camp I have discovered provides opportunities for observation. It is amazing to note the development and improvement in gentlemen who were in the highest degree of that class, so tactfully described by Gilbert as "imperfect abolitioners." One small draft in particular I have watched; they travelled down with me one Saturday; the "thirds" were full, and a harassed lance-corporal and five large but stooping men whose presence was perceptible by other senses than sight and touch, settled themselves in my carriage, informing an unmoved landscape, as we went, that it was a "long, long way to Tipperary," in five distinct keys, mostly minor. The next time I saw them it was they who were harassed by the lance-corporal who, as he told me afterward, was "sweating" for their good.

Each week-end there was a difference, and the lance-corporal, who is, by the way, a Rugger Blue of some note, has sent them out, cleaner and straight-backed, to spread the light to rawer rookies than themselves. The "lance" is now a full-blown subaltern, as efficiency and education are quick promoters in these days. "It's a gorgeous life," he told me as we sat in clear sunshine on the windy down, "at first it tired me no end, and my feet were very bad; rugger isn't a circumstance to this everlasting marching, but I'm fit as a fiddle now and the men are shaping beautifully. Of course it's a bit tough for a fellow with no training, but they're all so keen they soon get fit. You saw that mouldy lot I brought down the other day—why four of 'em have got stripes now. Y'see I had to work 'em over a bit. I recruited them myself. Funny thing—" and he stopped smiling. "What's the jest?" I asked.

"Well, I was going to fetch—er—someone from a charity concert in the East-end just before I came down, and a couple of roughs came out at me and made a grab for my chain. Of course they weren't very fit, and—well, I told them they could choose between the police station or the recruiting office, and let them go."

"Let them go?" said I. "It's a wonder you saw them again."

"Oh, they turned up all right, and hanged if they hadn't brought three pals, about as sweet as they were; so I got 'em in with our lot and fetched 'em down; I'm off." And he went down the hill, whilst I thought that the deeds of French's army are not so surprising; if the stuff they are made of is this stock.

Blackberry Blankets.

Blankets are the great need of our soldiers at the moment, both at the front and in the great camps of preparation here; and as I went over the hill home I came across a small, but sure source of supply. A number of children were busily engaged filling baskets with the berries. Torn frocks and little scratched arms and legs gave evidence of much industry, whilst stains in plenty showed that all the fruit did not find its way into the baskets. The small maidens in charge of the party told me that their mothers purchased all they could gather and the hard-earned pennies were then spent on buying blankets for the soldiers. I like to think that Mr. Atkins, on his return from Berlin, will be able to partake of that same blackberry jam that purchased him the blankets he valued so much in the bleak German winter. I hope you in Canada have sent your men off well provided for the winter weather, and if you should feel your consciences prick you on that score, I know the Editor of the "Courier" will see that any that reach him are sent swiftly to the proper quarter. You see what it is to be generous—you are always asked for more. Canada has proved herself the prodigal daughter of the Empire, prodigal of men and food and money, prodigal of loyalty and love.

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