

THE ADVENTURES OF IGNATZ HUMP, SOLDIER AND BATMAN TOO.

By R. ATHER RAWTEN.

Ignatz Hump : Soldier : Her :o Batman. In love with.
Marie Brillon : Once a lace-maker, now, by the cruel vicissitudes of war, barmaid in an estaminet — also heroine. Kind of stuck on Ignatz.
Old Man Brillon : Marie's father.
Auguste : Villain : Roadmender : Spy : Marie's cousin.
Other Accessories : Canadians . Soldiers : Human Beings.

(Continued)

The battalion to which our hero belonged was due for a rest, and from the time the announcement was made Ignatz smacked his lips in anticipation of a period of blissful leisure. He tasted in advance the joys of sunning himself in peaceful meadows with nothing in the wide world to do, and of splendid evenings of unclouded mirth in spacious estaminets where a tippie worth while is served by the most beauteous of the daughters of France.

With an eye to obtaining the wherewithal to purchase these golden pleasures he acquired a « Crown and Anchor » board. Never mind where he got it. He acquired it, I say, in the age-old army way when its owner was — elsewhere. But Ignatz was a man of honour. He was also a person of discretion. Not from his own battalion did he acquire it, not even from his own brigade — elsewhere. Away by himself in a corner of a lonely field he practised the cries and gestures of the high priests of that ancient and honourable ceremonial and when he considered himself word-perfect with the proper cadences and inflections of « Who says the lucky, old mud-hook ? » etc., he began business. Thereafter in most of his spare time he was to be found surrounded by a stooping circle of votaries poring over the board of chance and watching his every move with that utter absorption which lays hold of the worshippers of Luck. After a set-back or two Ignatz got into his gait and soon his « Old Chum » bag was full to overflowing with the kale of his dupes.

Marching orders were received and the battalion moved off preceded by the banging of the drums and the tooting of the fifes. The way was long and the roads were dusty. At first the troops sang, but later, when the pack-straps bit their shoulders and their feet began to ache, they grouched with that comprehensive abandon which is the hall-mark of the modern soldier, perhaps of the soldiers of all times, if the truth were known.

At length the particular billet to which our hero's platoon had been assigned was reached, and after traversing the usual malodorous yard Ignatz found ease up the broken rung ladder in the loft. He shed his equipment hastily and after supper and a smoke felt fit for exploration. He explored.

Discovery number one was that the « Estaminet of the Field Workers' Paradise » held a sleek-headed charmer of super beauty, a beverage faintly resembling the proper product of malt and a patent piano. Ignatz gravitated towards the first named fixture — enumerated in the order of their appeal — and began the customary exchange of civilities with the remark : « Très chaud, Ma'm-selle ! »

« Itchy-Koo no bon ! » responded the maiden, smiling coyly.

Our hero did not make much progress that evening owing to the pardonable thirst of his comrades. In they came a sunburnt drove of lusty soldiery and Ernestine, « the Jane's moniker », as Ignatz phrased it, was kept busy wielding large and frequent pitchers of froth under the vigilant eye of a capable looking « Madame ». The patent piano was worked to death at a penny the work and song filled the interludes until Madame stopped supplies on the stroke of eight and retired to count over the wall-paper money extracted from the troops.

(TO BE CONTINUED).

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## AN EVENING OFF.

I am free for the evening, and elect to walk a couple of miles or so to a neighbouring village with a name like a nursery rhyme.

It is only a four-corner affair dominated by a church. I walk along the cobbled street where ranks of motor transports are drawn up, enter the butcher's shop with its scanty stock and utter the magic formula : « Pork chop. » At the same moment I incautiously display a five franc note. The proprietor knows little English, but he can say « No change, Monsieur » with a melancholy air of finality there is no combatting. Sorrowfully I replace the note, brightening a trifle as I murmur « Je vais à la boulangerie ». « Ah, oui, » he nods, and I cross the lane, open the bakery with its ponderous bell and softly enquire : « Avez-vous des petits pains ? » They have, but have not of the silver. In despair I return to the butcher's shop with the solitary franc which is my only other current coin. He slices off a francs worth of porkchop, and pursues me to the door with remarks on the weather and enquiries as to my health.

With my precious package clutched tightly in my hand I stumble into a dark hallway, knock at an invisible door and am instantly engulfed in the light and warmth of Marthe's kitchen.

There are other soldiers there for Marthe is not unattractive in a broad-faced Flemish way, also her cooking is irreproachable. While my supper is sizzling on the stove she informs me that her fiance returns tomorrow on leave. I am all sympathy until she adds in her quaint English : « He is good looking, much better looking than you if not so fat. » I strive to conceal my grief, and am further humiliated when she snatches a photograph from the mantel portraying a swarthy, undersized, ferociously moustached little French soldier and cries, rapturously : « Voila ! »

I murmur complete comprehension and entire agreement, and bury my despised beauty in porkchop with an unimpaired appetite, all the while vaguely aware of a fine business of holding hands behind my back between Marthe and a tall Irish trooper.

I pay my bill and tramp back to the billets, where the long rows of guttering candle-ends have an almost festive effect in the gloom of the great barn.

H.B.M.

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THE OLD RED DISC.

Not for me the praise of nations :
 Not for me the extra risk.
 Far beyond all decorations
 I shall hold the old, red disc.

I will do as you may bid me
 If you wear a stripe or two,
 But this glory stuff can't kid me
 If I bring the old disc through.