

MY VISIT TO AN OPIUM DEN. BY TOBA.

(Continued from last week.)

Have you ever been surrounded by a screen? Have you ever had a strange female thrust upon you at a moment's notice and not know what to do with her? If you have you can imagine what my feelings were behind this screen. I was very comfortable, I will admit, but what's the use of feeling comfortable if you feel awkward at the same time?

I felt I wanted to tell her how wicked she was, but I was afraid she would stop being wicked if I did. I would have to write to her—I would write and tell her how I had heard of girls going to ruin through mixing with strange men. I would tell her about girls who had been murdered, about Bluebeard, about opium—*opium!*—*OPIUM!*—how dare I warn girls about *opium* and me here in an opium den! No, I would tell her now—about the young lady of Glo'ster—and I did. I told her one or two more, and then I began thinking of home. During all these wanderings of the brain I was on the best of terms with my "lady"—and she was a lady, because she had all sorts of nice things on—jewellery, I mean—and she powdered, and I know all ladies powder. Yes, the opium was doing it's deadly work, and visions of Police Courts, Marlborough Street, the Old Bailey, and the gallows appeared on the horizon. My photograph would adorn the front page of the *Daily Mirror*, the *Police Budget*, and the *Bulletin* (War Souvenir Number). My past life would be raked up, and the wife would read it all.

As I was pondering on the wickedness of it my "lady friend" removed the last remaining piece of cushion which was acting as a barrier between us both—and she moved close up to me—just as my wife used to when we first married. A thousand prickly things were now running down my back—opium does funny things—and gently I entwined my arms around her wasp-like waist, at the same time kicking the clocks of her stockings with my hob-nailed boots to convince her of my love and sincerity (?). The old saying: "It's a wise child that knows it's own father," struck me very forcibly at the time, and I realised that the orgie I was taking part in might end very unpleasantly for me. My "lady"—or, as I like to call her, my female form divine—was now telling me that she could not understand a fellow like me visiting such a notorious place as that, and I was telling her that she was far too good to be employed in such surroundings, and I began to think we were understanding one another to a very unusual degree. By this time we were both nearly dosing off in one another's arms—she and I, love birds of a harem—turtle doves from the Ark—when we were suddenly aroused from our love dreams by a piercing shriek which rent the air; it came from behind the screen which surrounded my S.Q.M.S. and his "lady-bird"! Good Heavens! I thought, he has given her too much opium I and disentangling myself, I rushed over to their "dugout," and to my sur-

prise found them exactly as when I last saw them—both huddled up together, or rather, mixed up in a very extraordinary manner. "What's wrong?" I enquired; and the lady, looking up quite unconcerned, replied: "Oh, he pinched me!" "We shall both get pinched if we don't clear out of this place," I said to my S.Q.M.S. "My nerves are all 'fuzzy,' but at the same time I felt that the opium effect was wearing off. By this time "she" was at my side again: she had just been "settling up" with an old "Johnny" who had "popped in" to tea; he had paid his bill and was departing. "I say," said my "bird," "you see that old pig just going out? I can't stand him; he comes in here every day, mauls me about as bad as you've done, and then gives me sixpence over his bill! D—— mean, I call him." Then it dawned on me: she did not have any particular love for me, after all! I had been cuddling a white-skinned hussy of a Piccadilly eskimo's daughter! Her liquid eyes were not liquid at all, and she was only making "combs" in order to lure me on to talk about them, and I'm d—— sorry I paid for the trimmings! Opium or no opium, I'd had enough, and I knew that if the old Johnny had got away with sixpence—we wouldn't. "We'd better be quitting," I suggested to my S.Q.M.S., and to my surprise he agreed, although he appeared to have had a better time than I had. Within 15 minutes we had got a real move on, found our hats and sticks, paid our bills, tripped over two pairs of feet, promised to go back again (?), and departed.

Correspondence.

The "Bulletin" does not necessarily associate itself with the views expressed by our correspondents.

(To the Editor.)

I welcomed Lt. Candy in the lists, but doubt very much if his objection to my criticism of the C.R.O. Concert Party for the reason of my non-attendance at the first meeting or any other hold water. I can imagine that gentleman talking glibly of the Magna Charta, the Peace Conference, or even of a Sports Meeting, at one of which he could not, and at the others probably would not, be present. If one is not to be allowed to discuss any meeting at which one is not present, then Parliament, the Billie Carlton, the Seton-Rutherford cases with thousand more instances would be taboo. "Which is absurd."

Certainly in reply to Mr. Candy's invitation to be present at a general meeting, which I myself proposed, I advanced the fact that owing to other musical engagements and private affairs, it appeared unlikely that I could afford much assistance, and I thought that I had better "wait

and see" with what success the party met.

I have seen.

I claim the right to criticize this matter, a right I would not deny to any member of the C.R.O. when a concert party is originated under that heading, largely upon the fact that I was glad to purchase half a dozen tickets for the opening concert, although knowing well that I should not be able to be present. Not great support certainly, but I was more than willing to do more if necessary.

Upon the main contention in my letter of last week I am glad to find Mr. Candy and myself at one, where we agree that the whole matter was treated far too surreptitiously, for adequate reasons still unexplained.

A published balance sheet is always wise when dealing with monies not one's own, although in this case I am assured that there is not the slightest suggestion of anything irregular, except possibly too much expense for no results, but we have all been so fed up with Battalion Canteen funds, etc., in the past, where credit balance have mysteriously been spirited away, that there is always a danger of suspicion creeping in which publicity alone can allay. Nuff sed.

We recognise that the C.R.O. is a Military organisation and not a Departmental Store, as your correspondent rightly points out, however difficult it may be at times to realize this fact.

WHITWELL H. RANSON.

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Kimmel Park Camp.

Feb. 1st, 1919.

(The Editor C.R.O. Bulletin.)

Sir,—A chance glimpse at your issue of 22.1.19 which has found its way up here has brought to my notice the controversy regarding "The Cheerios," who, by the way, seem to be receiving much more attention than they did during their very short existence.

As secretary of the above party, I feel called upon to mention one or two facts which may satisfy the one "in quandry" (elected by the old Party), and any others who may imagine that they have not received a fair show.

I regret that, without taking up too much of your valuable space, I cannot deal with each petty complaint, but I shall pick one or two and endeavour to show that they are merely the ravings of one or two soreheads.

Firstly, a financial statement, together with all surplus funds, was handed to the Adjutant prior to my departure for this camp.

Secondly, the "favoured few" were selected, to the best of my knowledge, by Lieut. Candy, who has never been secretary of the Concert Party.

Thirdly, the "whole-hearted financial" and "magnificent" support given us by the personnel of the office, who "undeniably rallied" round us, was such that a large number of tickets were given away at the last moment to avoid the possibility of our appearance before a half empty house.

With regard to the letter written by

(Continued on page 3, column 3.)