

A Soldier's Pipe Dream

(Written "Somewhere in France" in August, 1918, by Bdr. A. Hazeldine)

ALL ready for parade, with thirty minutes before that all-persuasive, most obnoxious of all calls, "Fall in!" is sounded.

There is no rankling of thoughts as to the manner in which the intervening time may be "killed." Rest! Tommy's paradise, the moments always looked forward to—a few minutes' repose, and the proverbial pipe of tobacco.

Drooping! . . . Now deluged in a subconscious state of insomnia; memories flit to and fro over his mind's vision—a cinema, as it were. One fleeting glance of another world. The whole mind impressed; every detail exploited; images of some paramount ideal or factor of days that are gone.

The character of this natural facsimile appears to be attended more or less by the prevalent atmospheric conditions.

A glorious, sunshiny day draws forth a sigh of contentment, a smile passes over his war-worn face, visions of summers past. His beloved at home—his mistress, the children. What joyous rioting there was, going off on a day's outing—the occasion of the hurry and bustle, when they all but missed the train, and the good laugh after!

The visage breaks out into another smile at the recollection of the baby—innocent child of man (thank God it knows not the meaning of war!)—splashing those tiny hands, with joyous glee at the reflection in the clear waters of the bay.

Then the picnic, with the lily-white cloth spread, and presto! as if by magic it is set out with a delightful

repast, enviable of any table. Such fragrant memories that ne'er will be forgotten!

The youth, his mind roaming in a lighter vein, sees visions of the swimming-pool behind the old mill, where he was first taught that "fishy" art; football fields, parties, and all the gay, unrestrained, unlimited activities of youth flash by in successive panoramas, decorated in the beautiful colors of the summer-time—tinted and toned as only Nature herself can embellish such things.

A dimness overshadows all these frivolities. A mist rolls over; out of this the phantom of his mother and of his dad appear—the great sacrifices and sorrows they have made and borne for him, their son—living pictures, as it were, flit to and fro in playfulness, now tantalizing, now sympathizing.

That indelible impression of the morning he bade farewell, many months previous; his mother wiping the tears from those kindly eyes; that fond, loving embrace; his father's powerful grasp as he bids him "Godspeed and a safe return," and the lump in his own throat. Beautiful, nay, most glorious of sacred memories!

Ah, the trumpet calls! A gasp of surprise; a blank look of interrogation covers his face. Is it reality?

The bugle calls again, more harshly. The trampling of feet, mingled with the jargon of voices, is only a too unpleasant reminder.

Yes, that is all it was—a soldier's pipe-dream.