

## THE ADVENTURES OF IGNATZ HUMP, SOLDIER AND BATMAN TOO.

By R. ATHER RAWTEN.

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

### IGNATZ HUMP.

Not more than twenty minutes before it was necessary, Ignatz was ordered to fall in. The wind was blowing great guns, and the rain lashing down.

As soon as the working party were satisfactorily soaked they moved off. Through the darkness they went, slipping, and sliding, and wallowing.

It was very, very dark, and our hero was dependent on the vague shape of the man in front for guidance. At times even that failed. The man was blotted out in the rain-sodden opaqueness, and only the clatter of his rifle as he fell from time to time, or the simple sincerity of his speech, directed our hero's footsteps.

Ignatz thanked Heaven for the man in front, and with reason, for, in civilian times, the life-work of this man in front had been — mules. Yes, he had driven mules, and in consequence he appealed to his Maker with fluency and fervency, never once repeating himself on that long and inexpressibly toilsome trip. His rich and husky tones were as a guiding star to our hero's feet. By that curious compound of dim vision and instinct which the Troops acquire, our Ignatz grew to sense what particular brand of trouble was engaging his friend's attention. When it was mud, just mud, of that incomparably juicy and affection ate Flemish sort, the mule driver expressed himself in a monosyllabic monotone. Sudden, short, sharp bursts of speech meant wire — underfoot or overhead. An appalling blast of profanity announced his arrival at the bottom of an old trench. Ignatz blessed Heaven for his guiding star.

It was only as they neared the firing line that his voice faltered and finally ceased. Ignatz was deeply concerned. « Tom », he asked. « What's the matter ? » « IT's no use, » answered the man of mules, resignedly. « I just can't do it justice. »

By this time Ignatz was less dependent on the man in front. German flare lights were going up almost continuously, their vivid beams piercing the driving rain, showed for an instant the delicate tracery of trees and the weather beaten growth of « No Man's Land ». The working party rejoiced.

Little does the Allemand know what a comfort and consolation are his excellent flare lights ; how they guide and cheer our Troops on many a midnight job !

At the appointed place the long file of men telescoped. That is to say the N.C.O. in charge simply stopped. In consequence, those behind followed suit with varying success. There they stood for a trifling matter of forty five minutes, until a Sapper groped his way to them. The Troops knew he was a Sapper because he carried neither rifle nor equipment, and the extreme hauteur of his deportment singled him out of the ruck of Staff Officers.

« One N.C.O. and twenty men, this way, » he commanded. The modesty of the Troops prevented

them complying with his request without a decent show of hesitation.

Ignatz found himself No. 2. of the « Gum Boot Party », whereat his heart sank. In a shrapnel holed skeleton of a barn he removed his boots and puttees, and shiveringly struggled into his gum-boots. Size 11 they were and without side-buckles, whilst our hero wore an eight. He girt them up as best he could, shouldered two sheets of corrugated iron and started after his guide.

The way led through a complicated series of pit-falls and man-traps, lapsed trenches, real trenches, refuse heaps, wire entanglements and natural obstacles of many kinds. The pathway was a welter of mud almost knee deep in places, doubly treacherous to a man wearing gum-boots three sizes too big. It led over the parapet of a trench down which our hero skated on his face, to an accompaniment of noise like a tin-plate factory in full blast. Ignatz was instantly unpopular with his fellow sufferers who fully expected a burst of machine-gun fire as areply to the noise, but apart from desultory rifle fire nothing happened. As he drained the mud from his great coat sleeves our hero remarked : « You may as well throw me away for I won't be any more use in this war. » Nevertheless he disinterred his rifle, resurrected his corrugated-iron, and stumbled on his way.

For his third trip our Ignatz was given a sack of coke and a sack of bread — part of the rations for the front line artists. He slipped ; he slid ; he wallowed. Sometimes the coke was uppermost, sometimes the bread, sometimes Ignatz.

Eventually he reached the trench — just two walls of mud with a stream flowing through, and fell into it — bread first. The firing step was nearly awash and there was no one around. Ignatz sat on his bread, lit a cigarette and waited for signs of human occupation.

Bye and bye there came a sound of splashing round the traverse, laughter and voices raised in song : « Oh father, dear father come home to me now. » « Rum issue, » said Ignatz to himself hopefully, picking up his coke and his bread and sloshing along the trench.

He reached the dismal hole called by courtesy Company Headquarters, and placing his coke and bread carefully on the parados — reported. He coughed suggestively and stared fixedly at the rum-jar, but the company sergeant-major simply said : « Good night ! » with unmistakeable finality, and our hero turned sadly away.

Just then he spied a jar out side the dug-out, and shook it tentatively. It was half full. Cautiously our hero raised it to his lips and took a rapid swallow — « Whale-oil » — excellent for the feet but not to be recommended as a beverage. Our Ignatz became instantly and violently unwell, with such utter abandon, indeed, that the C.S.M. heard him, and putting his head out of the dug-out addressed a few pungent remarks to the stooping, coughing figure.

Ignatz climbed laboriously out of the trench and made his way back to the dump, wishing more heartily than ever before for a nice clean « blighty. » But even that was denied him. A man slightly to one side of him, suddenly collapsed, simultaneously with the vicious « PSST » of a stray bullet, with an elegant little touch through the fore-arm. He was tied up by a stretcher-bearer and helped off, crowing cheerily : « Blighty for mine, boys ! »

That night, in the hut, as Ignatz smoked a final « Arf-a-mo », he turned to where his mule driving friend's shock of hair bulged above the blanket — « Tom, » he said « in civvy life I wouldn't do that working party stunt for twenty five dollars a time. » The mule man grunted entire agreement, and they slept.

(TO BE CONTINUED).