

The Adventures of Ignatz Hump, Soldier and Batman too.

By R ATHER RAWTEN.

(Continued)

Synopsis of Characters:

Ignatz Hump: Soldier: Hero: Batman: In love with—Marie Brillon: Once a lace-maker, now, by the cruel vicissitudes of war, barmaid in an estaminet, alsoheroine. Kind of stuck on Ignatz.

Old Man Brillon: Marie's father

Auguste: Belgian: Villian: Roadmender: Spy. Marie's cousin.

Other Accessories: Canadians: Soldiers: Human Beings.

They spilled over into his field dressing pouch. His smoke helmet satchel bulged with them. He stuck them into his boots and behind his ears and still they came. Finally, one disgruntled player stood up and said "Hump, you're a crook. I won't play any more with you, besides I'm broke".

One by one the men withdrew until finally Ignatz was left in sole possession of the hut—and the kale. He yawned, lit a rag in a tin of dubbin, as his candle was almost consumed, took off his boots, wound his watch, pillowed his head on his tobacco pouch and fell asleep with a smile of infinite content distorting his pale, proud face.

Far beyond the ridge flare lights glimmered and glowed. A distant machine-gun muttered at intervals. A very noisy battery in the edge of the wood uttered four distinct and awful whoops. The shells droned through the moist air to burst far over the German lines with the muffled tap of shrapnel. The night wind soughed and sighed through the trees. A nice, sociable rat pattered over the floor of the hut, selected a couple of fresh "fives" from Pte. Hump's off sock, detached some of his superabundant hair and made off with the finest upholstery material she had ever discovered in her whole rodentary life, and still Ignatz slept on. Dawn lightened in the east. The morning "straft" rose and died away before the need of breakfast.

Ignatz stirred, swore a little, lit a half dead cigarette and began to think about getting up. Besides his officer had been shouting for shaving water for about half an hour and this almost convinced Ignatz that he would have to arise—soon. He did. He completed his toilet in two minutes "Ingersoll time" and lied a little to his superior. Then he got the shaving water. Considered simply as shaving water it was not wholly a success. It possessed many of the attributes of shaving water with the addition of a refreshing bouquet of farm yard, a generous sediment and the subtraction of the heat. The Exalted One protested vigorously and warmly, but Ignatz pointed out that he didn't make the water, that he didn't heat it, (which was perfectly true) and offered as an alternative to share the messin of tea in which he himself was about to ablute. This offer was declined curtly and conclusively and Ignatz set about cooking the Exalted One's breakfast, a ceremony which called for care and originality. His task was to make one egg look like two—the other egg—the big one, had, well—been commandeered for military purposes, a fact which must be kept from the Exalted One at all costs, except going without. By an acrobatic feat known to few, and liberal surgery with a clasp knife, Pte. Hump attained the desired effect and presented the result to his unsuspecting superior, with the untroubled brow of conscious rectitude and expertness. The officer fed, (beg pardon breakfasted, only privates feed), and turning to Ignatz said, "Hump have something decent for lunch". "Very good Sir" said our hero clutching the twenty franc bill which lay amongst the litter of breakfast plates. (There wasn't really a litter of dishes, in fact there was only one dish, but it sounds ever so much better).

Having shaved and washed sketchily and with the utmost economy of labour, Ignatz cleaned his master's clothing and accoutrements. The boots first, were soused in the horse pond, dried in the draught of the windmill, carefully dubbed with the butter issue, polished till they shone with a wisp of straw, and finished off with an old sock.

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Then he attacked the tunic, wishing all the while that the Exalted One would buy leather buttons. There was no help for it however, so he cleaned these and the badges with his master's tooth-brush and powder.

Being free now to do the shopping, he made for the nearest Estaminet, as the Regimental Canteen was many weary leagues away and out of nearly everything. Thus it was that he trudged along the self same highway on the afore mentioned morning, careless, happy, and without premonition of the calamity which was about to befall him.

Ignatz was usually an observant man, but so engrossed was he with his good fortune that he failed to notice the black-browed, black-bearded, Belgian road-mender who trifled with a shovel, flirting with work for the Government at four francs per. He failed to notice that this person watched him, not with the apathetic indifference of the average native, but with a keen, close scrutiny. All unconscious of impending danger, Pte. Hump passed on, inhaling the soothing perfume of his 'Arf a Mo' with an untroubled spirit.

He reached the "Estaminet A la Frontière", pushed open the rickety door, stole a glass someone had laid down for a moment, drained it, took it up to the counter to be replenished, and seeing none of his friends near, paid for it himself.

Our hero was a practised and discriminating imbibor of beer, but this Belgian stuff "got his goat". He swallowed it with the ease of long use and a shudder of distaste, called for another and thought about his shopping.

Then it was, at that fateful moment, his eye fell on Marie. There she stood sedate and calm, lading out the "froth" at the rate of fully two quarts an hour, short-changing the dissolute soldiery with a dexterity demanding admiration.

In a past of some variety Ignatz had been a bar-tender in Vancouver. He knew all the tricks of the trade. He accepted all the perquisites offered by opportunity. As he watched, his admiration grew and grew. Verily she was no novice. Thus had he done in by-gone times. He dilated with interest and beer. Ah! The lovely miracle was wrought. He was in love.

Shortly after, Marie became aware of a small, Canadian soldier who bought beer with imposing recklessness, and besought her to have 'one on him'. But Marie was cautious. Marie was prudent. Not for the penny stuff would she fall. It must be champagne or nothing. She intimated this with attractive indifference and he bought. Yes, he bought the genuine gooseberry, sealed up in elaborate tin-foil and full of fizz. He bought once; he bought twice; and then he thought about his shopping.

(To be Continued.)

Answers to Correspondents.

Consoled.. Ah, yes. Casualties are sad aren't they? But as you say, they mean a rectified leave list.

Coincidence. Yes. "Ten nights in an Estaminet" was by the author of our grand new serial, R. Ather Rawten.

Mathematican. You ask: "If a light trench mortar crew at practice, firing dummy bombs, suffers two casualties in five minutes, how long will a crew last in real warfare?"

We have turned the matter over to our Statistics and Circulation manager, who promises an answer the day after peace breaks out.

James. No, the motto of our regiment is not "Hard Work and High Mortality". The very idea!

Nicotine. You guessed correctly. The reason a man has to pass such a severe physical test to join the army, is because one must be a man of good physique in order to stand all the gift cigarettes handed around.