

The Derelict's Return.

Lying alone in a shell-hole,
 His life was fading fast,
 But a phantom host was gathered round,
 And he thought of the days long past,
 And his eyes lit up with a sparkle,
 For he felt he'd conquered at last.

Back there he'd been a drifter,
 Derelict on the sea of life,
 All were glad to see him go,
 Even his own young wife,
 For the craze for drink had got him,
 And wherever he went there was strife.

Filled with the spirit of wanderlust,
 Which flowed through the blood in his veins,
 He started out on the highway of life,
 With the average amount of brains,
 But his restless spirit would not submit,
 To life with its aches and pains.

And soon he took to the drinking habit,
 With thoughts of his empty purse,
 Till it gradually got the upper hand,
 And he went from bad to worse.
 Till even his friends of by-gone days,
 Only spoke his name with a curse.

And here we find him, out in the night,
 With that phantom host near-by,
 They were men and women whom he had
 wronged,
 And he started up with a cry,
 "Oh God, be merciful to me,
 And leave me alone to die."

And suddenly his skies were brightened,
 They approached him one at a time,
 And they spoke in the tone of forgiveness,
 And he raised himself from the grime.
 And the first that spoke was the wife he had left,
 In his days of darkest crime.

He stretched his arms to receive her,
 As she knelt down by his side,
 And he felt her arms about him,
 And the soul that was in him cried ;
 "Thank God for your coming to help me
 Across the Great Divide."

And one by one the others came,
 And each in their turn forgave,
 The man who had caused their misery,
 As he lay in his open grave.
 For his deeds on the field of battle
 Had shown a heart that was brave.

For out there the drink curse he'd conquered,
 And he longed to make amends,
 For the misery he'd caused to many,
 Even his dearest friends.
 And his deeds prove to us that life
 Upon circumstances depend.

For he made of his life a sacrifice,
 Risking it each day,
 To help his comrades as they fell,
 And bear them safely away.
 Each time returning for others,
 Not caring what came in his way.

Till that day while doing his duty,
 A German sniper had tried,
 Not once, but half a dozen times,
 To down this man who defied.
 And at last a bullet found him,
 And pierced his aching side.

And there he fell in the shell-hole,
 His duty was done at last,
 With nobody there to help him,
 Only the ghosts of the past.
 For the blood was flowing freely,
 And his life was ebbing fast.

And one by one they vanished,
 These spirits of the night.
 Alone with his Maker they left him,
 A victim of the fight.
 But he'd won a greater battle,
 In those hours of fading light.

And so like many another,
 Mending a broken bond,
 The hand of God stretched o'er him,
 Like a mighty magic wand.
 His life the price of forgiveness,
 He passed to the great Beyond.

—A. J. S.

The Leadswinger.

The Sergeant and the Corporal
 Go shuffling down the ward,
 The Corporal he can barely walk,
 The Sergeant groans "My Gawd."

The Major and the Captain watch,
 And think, poor fellows they
 Will not be fit for active work
 Till quite a distant day.

The Sergeant and the Corporal
 Wait by the Dining Hall ;
 But for their trusty walking sticks,
 They look as though they'd fall.

The other patients start aside,
 To let them stumble in,
 To jostle such a crippled pair
 Would be a mortal sin.

The Sergeant and the Corporal
 Go strolling on the links,
 The Sergeant says, "We're out of sight,"
 And gives two lively winks.

Upon their shoulders go their canes,
 They set a lively pace :
 And both, without the slightest limp,
 Start on a walking race.