

THE OPINIONS OF GUNNER BARNABAS

A NARROW-MINDED Legislature sets its face against that Atkins, whose Christian name is Thomas, drinking with the "civilian." To this prejudice I and Gunner Barnabas rise superior. Ever since the night when he, weeping, asked me whether the road was as frisky as his mule, and then fell head-first from the latter on the former, we have entertained a respect for each other. I wondered that he had not been instantly killed, and he that I had not reported him to various high Military Authorities then in sight, instead of gently rolling him down the hillside till the danger was overpast. On that occasion, it cannot be denied that Gunner Barnabas was drunk. Later on, as our intimacy grew, he explained briefly that he had been "overtaken" for the first time in three years; and I had no reason to doubt the truth of his words.

Gunner Barnabas was a lean, heavy-browed, hollow-eyed giant, with a moustache of the same hue and texture as his mule's tail. Much had he seen from Karachi to Bhamo, and, so his bosom friend, McGair, assured me, had once killed a man "with 'e's naked fistes." But it was hard to make him talk. When he was moved to speech, he roved impartially from one dialect to another, being a Devonshire man, brought up in the slums of Fratton, nearly absorbed into Portsmouth Dock-yard, sent to Ireland as a blacksmith's assistant, educated imperfectly in London, and there enlisted into what he profanely called a "jim-jam batt'ry." "They want big 'uns for the work we does," quoth Gunner Barnabas, bringing down a huge hairy hand on his mule's withers. "Big 'uns