

The Absent-minded Beggar

Part of a Pictorial Contribution in Verse to the Fund for Families and Dependents of
Soldiers on Service

When you've shouted Rule Britannia! when you've sung God Save the
When you've finished killing Kruger with your mouth, [Queen,
Will you kindly drop a shilling in my little tambourine,
For a gentleman in khaki ordered south?
He's an absent-minded beggar, and his weaknesses are great,
But we and Paul must take him as we find him.
He is out on active service wiping something off a slate,
And he's left a lot of little things behind him.

Duke's son—cook's son—son of a hundred kings—
Fifty thousand horse and foot going to Table Bay;
Each of 'em doing his country's work (and who's to look after their things?)
Pass the hat for your credit's sake, and pay—pay—pay!

There are girls he married secret, asking no permission to,
For he knew he wouldn't get it if he did.
There is gas, and coals, and vittles, and the house rent falling due,
And it's more than rather likely there's a kid.
There are girls he walked with casual; they'll be sorry now he's gone,
For an absent-minded beggar they will find him;
But it ain't the time for sermons with the winter coming on—
We must help the girl that Tommy's left behind him.

Cook's son—duke's son—son of a belted earl
Son of a Lambeth publican—it's all the same to-day;
Each of 'em doing his country's work (and who's to look after the girl?)
Pass the hat for your credit's sake, and pay—pay—pay!

There are families by thousands far too proud to beg or speak,
And they'll put their sticks and bedding up the spout;
And they'll live on half o' nothing, paid 'em punctual once a week,
'Cause the man that earned the wage is ordered out.
He's an absent minded beggar, but he heard his country's call,
And his regiment didn't need to send to find him;
He chucked his job and joined it! So the job before us all
Is to help the home that Tommy left behind him.

Duke's job—cook's job—gardener—baronet—groom—
Mews or palace or paper shop—there's someone gone away!
Each of 'em doing his country's work (and who's to look after the room?)
Pass the hat for your credit's sake, and pay—pay—pay!

Let us manage so as later we can look him in the face,
And tell him what he'd very much prefer
That while he saved the Empire his employer saved his place,
And his mates (that's you and me) looked out for her
He's an absent minded beggar, and he may forget it all,
But we do not want his kiddies to remind him
That we sent 'em to the workhouse while their daddy fought the war—
So we'll help the home's out Tommy's left behind him!

Duke's home—cook's home—home of a millionaire
(Fifty thousand horse and foot going to Table Bay);
Each of 'em doing his country's work (and what have you
Pass on that for your credit's sake, and pay—pay—pay!