

The Dream of Herbert Higgins.

No. A12345, Pte. Herbert H. Higgins had a grouch on, that much was obvious. More than that; it could be no ordinary grouch, this; none of your common, tame, "Regimental Issue, 1917 Pattern." This grouch that lowered darkly over the usually cheerful countenance of Higgins, H. H. was unique—in a class and category by itself! You felt it the moment you caught sight of Higgins. Higgins on that memorable day was a living personification of the Spirit of Gloom!

In justice to his mates, the remainder of "B" Section, be it known that they were deeply concerned for Higgins. They were brave men too, from the least even to the greatest! But they were only human, and if there was anything worse than Higgins' grouch it was Higgins' wrath!

At last, however, human flesh could bear it no longer. And as they huddled around their bit of fire that night, the more daring spirits amongst them began to "feel him out," but ever so warily!

"Leave cancelled again, Erbie?" began Tucker, feeling this to be at once the most plausible and most crushing blow that a fickle Fate could deal.

He was miserably, hopelessly wrong. He realized it too late when Higgins turned on him that injured and reproachful glance.

"Jane jilted yuh?" This from Fat Hoggson, prompted by a painful episode in his own young life! Such a weak, frivolous suggestion met with a merited rebuke: it was ignored completely.

Then, when the overcharged soul of Higgins could contain itself no longer, he unburdened himself upon our sympathetic ears:

"I had a dream last night, mates."

"B" Sec. breathed again! A dream was a dream undeniably, but it might be worse!

"I dreamt it was Dec. 25th, 1917, and the war was finished. The Canadians had cut the Hinden Line, marched on Berlin, and the Willies had died of the shock! I was on the old Homestead again; in the old living room, looking just like when I left. It was twelve o'clock noon, and the table was laid for Christmas dinner. Oh! mates, that table! I thought I'd never seen such a table, and believe me, I've seen SOME tables!"

"B" Sec. was all attention.

"There was the white table cloth, and wasn't it white! But you didn't look long at the cloth, for all the time your nose would be coaxing your eyes to have a look at what was on the top of the cloth. Say, mates, no living man nowhere could remember all that was on that table! All the eats that you like best were all there! 'Nd if there's anything else you'd like better,—why, it was there too!"

"B" Sec. looked as though they were ransacking their brain-boxes for something they had lost! Herbie was getting warmed up to his subject. You couldn't see that grouch of his showing anywhere.

"There was everything on that table, and every kind of everything. And plenty? Say, if the Food Controller had a' seen that table he'd have committed 'Hara-Kiri!' At one end of the table was the big turkey, lookin' as swelled and imposin' as a bloomin' general on review, with all kinds of small fowl packed two-deep around him, for his staff. And

right from that turkey clear to the other end 'o the table there was sauces, pickles, vegetables, fruit, pies, and cakes—to say nothing of the daily issue—bread and butter and stuff. And the Christmas cake on the New York sky-scraper plan, in the centre of it all! And say, you could smell that plum pudding all the way from the kitchen just as easy as if it was Monty's Mulligan, only you didn't start fumbling for your respirator—you wanted to follow up the scent, and not miss any of it!"

There was an eager, expectant expression on the faces in "B" Sec. Herbie was hurrying on excitedly to the dramatic climax:

"Everybody was sitting in their places, watching that turkey out of the corner of their eye, while the gov'nor carved, and all trying to look as though they didn't want him to hurry—not on their account, anyway! And the mater says: 'Erbie, our 'ero, is to be served first, in honour of his brave deeds and safe return.' And the gov'nor knew without asking that I'd have a leg. You always feel that you have got something when you have a leg!"

"At last all were served, and we were ready to launch our attack. I got hold of that leg with both hands and says to myself: 'Here goes!' But try as I might I couldn't raise it from the plate. I braced myself and gave a last mighty heave, and something gave way. And," concluded Herbie, in a voice that matched the gloom that had settled again upon him: "I found myself sitting up in the blankets, nursing my pack!"

E. S. D.

Oh! Candle.

By thy light I commune my lady love.

I read my shirt.

I toast crumbs.

I worm my way through the solitary hours.

I cheer my soul.

The postman sorts my mail.

That wretched lighthouse practices on the bugle.

I think of the Rum Issue.



"Kamrade."