

### THE ADVENTURES OF IGNATZ HUMP, SOLDIER AND BATMAN TOO.

By R. ATHER RAWTEN

- 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 — also heroine. Kind of stuck on Ignatz.
- Old Man Brillon :** Marie's father.
- Auguste :** Villain : Roadmender : Spy : Marie's cousin.
- Other Accessories :** Canadians : Soldiers : Human Beings.

~~~~~

Half an hour after lunch time our hero strode into the billets, albeit with an unsteady step, and depositing a sand bag which chinked and gurgled, in his hut, drew out his purchases. These were a small tin of lobster, two of pork and beans, also small, a tin of pineapple, two packets of rolled oats, and a mass of damp, milk chocolate of obscure parentage. From these, eked out by the army ration, Ignatz prepared a recherche repast for the Exalted One which made the latter reflect, « some batman, if an obstinate beast ». The « chink » and the « gurgle » were naturally withheld. These belonged to our hero.

Having lunched thoroughly, the Exalted One leaned back with the satisfactory sigh of repelition, lit a cigarette, the gift of a maiden aunt, a good judge of worsted, and an excellent Christian, but not an expert in tobaccos. Then he thought about the money. « Hump » he shouted, « Sir » answered Ignatz, standing at attention as rigidly as his knees would permit. « How about that change » ? Our hero stared a moment uncomprehendingly, then pained amasement dawned on his freckled face. « To think that I, a batman of renown, should be asked a question so ridiculous » was in his mind. But the question had to be answered, Ignatz smiled faintly, and began : « Sir, as I reached the four corners, I was stopped by an R. M. P. who asked for my pass. I reached into my pocket and handed him what I thought was my pass. I never noticed the paper he gave me back. Later on, I found I'd given him your twenty franc note, and the paper he gave me was this here religious tract ».

Ignatz laid a grimy, pink, literary and evangelistic effort on the table, and continued ; « When I got to the Est-store I found out my mistake and ran back to the four corners only to find that the R. M. P. had been suddenly sent with his unit to keep order in a navy battalion near Bethune. So I bought your lunch out of my own pocket and hurried right back. Very sorry Sir. »

The Exalted One, who, as you will have observed, was of rather recent creation, and not very well versed in the etiquette of batting, pondered a moment, whistled a little, and finally said in a strained voice « all right Hump, you may go ».

« Home James » said our hero, beating it for his hut, for his eloquence had made him thirsty. Having carefully closed the door, he tore the tin-foil off his reserve stock and drained it to the final flicker. Then he smiled dizzily and lay down for his afternoon sleep as the Exalted One was dining out that evening.

Ignatz awakened as dewy eve was at its dewiest and strolled across to the neighbouring farm where he dined satisfactorily, if not elegantly, on three eggs, bread with a suggestion of butter and stewed chicory. He virtuously declined an invitation to play stud poker, and impelled by the dual urge of love and beer hied him for the « Estaminet A la Frontiere », it being now hard upon six o'clock.

Marie was there strangely enough, and she gave our hero a kind look and a gentle tap with her large and muscular hand which turned him

faint. He countered quickly however, and bought. Marie partook.

Ignatz was a little short on French, but he used such phrases as he had skilfully. Much meaning, great and tender stress may be put into the simple phrase « après la Guerre ». Every soldier knows it. Our hero rang all the changes on it. He sighed it. He spoke it. He crooned it. He shouted it. Every time there was a chance, every time the nightly hub-bub of the Estaminet died down for a moment, there was Ignatz with his little phrase. It was almost the only phrase he knew. His other one was « na poo » and it was not yet time to use that. So, every time Marie was able to rest from her labour of distributing beer, speciale, biere et stoot, Players, ginger bread, grenadine, citron and bad money, our hero uttered his little phrase.

Marie was touched. Such constancy deserved reward. She began to study her strange wooer closely. She found to her pleased astonishment that the alignment of his features was fair to middling, that his hair hung down picturesquely over the collar of his tunic, that he wore his smoke helmet with distinction. Already shewas aware that he had all kinds of kaie. All this had the effect of creating that impalpable nimbus of interest about our Ignatz, which is the sure precursor of love.

Marie, who, when she chose, could speak English much better than our hero, although her knowledge of Canadian slang and improper speech was not nearly so complete, said « you come my house tomorrow three oclock. You meet all my parents, then maybe — après la Guerre ». She then kissed Ignatz moistly on the left eyebrow and shooed him out.

In the Estaminet the mud stained heroes of the trenches, the R. F. A. and the A. S. C. were fighting their battles over again. Ypres, Festubert, Givenchy, Petit Pont. The quicker they drank the faster flew the bullets. Shrapnel hailed about them on every side. They took cover from our own guns. Ah ! It was terrible, terrible !

Ignatz was so overcome by the recent crisis in his emotions that he was unable to refute these base usurpers of the honours of his corps, as was his usual custom. Delirious with joy and dizzy with beer our hero tottered towards his hut. He was rounding the corner by the ruined cottage, when, « Crash ! » Something whizzed past his ear and struck with a terrific impact, on the cobbled road. Ignatz took cover with commendable promptitude and celerity. At the self-same moment a dark figure detached itself from the shadow of the cottage, and uttering a cry of rage, rushed off towards the village. Our hero crawled cautiously out of the ditch, dripping but undaunted. For a moment he stared after the fast receding figure of his would be assassin, running over in his mind all the men he owed money to, but without enlightenment. Then he examined the instrument of destruction. Oh, unbelievable base-ness ! Oh, crime without parallel ! Oh, anything else you like ! It was, it was a loaf of service bread.

Hump knew from it's out of date pattern that it was a 1915 loaf. He looked it over carefully for distinguishing marks, but apart from the obvious fact that it was quite dead, could form no conjecture as to it's previous owner. He rolled it, with an effort, to the road side, so as not to impede traffic, and went on his way pondering deeply.

So great was the turmoil of his emotions that he lost fifteen francs at « Black-jack » in a few minutes, and then, as he couldn't concentrate on the cards, threw in his hand and went to bed.

Next morning he paraded sick with shell-shock. The M. O. gave him the once over, listened to fully three syllables of his most alarming symptoms, and gave him three threes, being out of number nines. He was handed an M. and D. slip and told to efface himself.

(To be continued).