

EXPERIENCE BY A MENTAL PATIENT.

"Now then, you bearers, pick up this stretcher. Take the patient to dammit." "Where to, Sergeant?" queried the patient bearers. "Bell Tent No. 5" snapped the haughty and well-fed Sergeant—who had also made use of the reprehensible word *dammit*, and others first mentioned above. I was carried to the shell-shock mental tent, and the stretcher placed on trestles. Being of beamy build I found the stretcher poles not any too wide apart, so that portion of my anatomy suffered. On the orderly enquiring what sort of a case it was, I heard the bearers say, "Mental," whatever that meant. Was I indeed a lunatic? Had I gone mad? At times during my subsequent experiences I thought so, so I'm just dotting down a few notes of what occurred, in order that the readers of this bright Star in the firmament of journalism may judge for themselves.

The Orderly produced a card, No. 0xz3—12345, Army Form 5678—form copyright by W.D., etc., on which, according to the questions he asked me, the most intimate of my private affairs was notified.

I failed to see why this wonderful copyright form, 12345 & 5678, should demand to know what kind of death my grandmother indulged in; or whether my brother, who actually dealt in fish and chips, ran a Chinese laundry, and did I have a price list on me. My answer to his last question seemed to settle the diagnosis of my case. "Have you," quoth he, "been in the Army before joining the Canadian E.F.?" "Yes," said I. "And you enlisted again? That settles it!" "Settles what?" I asked respectfully, thinking that the Orderly was offended by my reply. I won't mention his answer, as I understand from our Sergeant Major that this journal finds its way into many Christian homes.

Shortly after, a Sister, resplendent in sky blue, brass buttons, pips on shoulder straps, and an enormous veil, came to my side stretcher. "What part of Canada do you come from, lad?" she asked tenderly. "Paschendaale," I gurgled. Heaving a deep sigh she left, calling the Orderly to follow her outside.

I heard them consulting in low and mellow tones, and could only pick up stray words here and there—amongst which were "theatre—the orderly sergeant will operate—Captain Ludenberg—chloroform—ether—let him—whiskey,—sergeants' mess," and such like, then their voices dropped so low I could distinguish nothing. I could hear the devoted lady sobbing. For a while I let them cry in their great grief, but on rolling over, I banged myself on the stretcher pole, and could not, for the life of me, refrain from uttering a sharp cry of inconvenience. The Orderly rushed in, I could see he had been weeping copiously, and he had the snuffles. Before I could speak he fixed my box respirator on me,

and with equal expedition pulled an H.P. helmet over all, thus shutting me out from everything external. This was, I'm sure, a bluff to convince me that there was lachrymatory gas in the air, but what upset him really, was—well, it was a mere trifle. He had asked for a few minutes off to visit an estaminet across the road to extend an all welcome good-night meeting, and hadn't been able to click.

Anon cometh two bearers to take me to the theatre, where the latest operation for *ossification of the hippocampus* was to be performed on me by a specialist from the Orderly Room.

The theatre was a blaze of light, charmingly decorated with festoons of exotic palms and other foliage from the Royal gardens at Ypres. The table on which I lay was very tastefully arranged with fancy cushions and plain needlework. I could see a good deal through the windows of both the box respirator and H.P. helmet somewhat limited my view. I was very much interested to note that H.P. made sauce besides helmet, as I saw several bottles on the various supper tables with the letters H.P. on them. There was evidently going to be a large dinner party in commemoration of my operation, in fact, dancing was being indulged in by the Sisters and many Air Force men when I arrived. By the way, I heard during the evening, that the H.P. bottles were only a camouflage, they did not contain sauce, "they were empty?" You quoth, gentle readers? No, the bottles did not stand there empty, only the O.C. was a total abstainer, and deluded himself that the M.O.'s and Sisters were, too.

My case must have been spoken of before my arrival, as on my being noticed, the nurses at once crowded round my humble bed, and soon a jewelled throng of ladies fair encompassed me as stars the night. My H.P. and B.R. were hurriedly pulled off, and I was simply inundated with ice creams, chops, steaks, all kinds of soups, the best brands of fermented and spirituous liquors, besides matches, tobacco, cigars, cigarettes and pipes. How they did wait on me and how thankful I felt to the Canadian Red Cross that we poor battle-stricken wretches could feast on such delicacies while the operating surgeons were searching our innermost soul-cases for the penetrating shell fragments.

The orchestra again tuned its stringy song, and every one rushed off soon to whirling in the "giddy mazes of the waltz." (This last is an original expression you never see in novels or newspapers).

Outside, the airmen gyrated up and down, back and forth. Many had their planes handsomely decorated with variegated lanterns, streamers of coloured paper, and with such like confetti beloved by airmen.

As they slowly soared by the theatre door, the light from the thousand and one arcs gave them the appearance of huge fireflies enjoying the tropical nights in far-off Southern Seas.