

The Conversation Book

I 'ave a conversation book ; I brought it out from 'ome,
 It tells the French for knife an' fork an' likewise brush and comb ;
 It learns you 'ow to ast the time, the names of all the stars,
 And 'ow to order hoysters an' 'ow to buy cigars.

But there ain't no shops to shop in, there ain't no grand hotels,
 When you spend your days in dugouts doin' olesale trade in shells ;
 It's nice to know the proper talk for theatres an' such ;
 But when it comes to talking, why, it doesn't help you much.

There's all them friendly kind o' things you'd naturally say
 When you meet a feller casual-like an' pass the time o' day.
 Them little things as breaks the ice an' kind o' clears the air,
 Which, when you turn the phrase book up, why, them things isn't there.

I met a chap the other day a-roosting in a trench,
 'E didn't know a word of ours nor me a word o' French ;
 An' 'ow it was we managed, well, I cannot understand,
 But I never used the phrase book, though I 'ad it in my 'and.

I winked at im to start with ; 'e grinned from ear to ear ;
 An' 'e says « *Tipperary* » an' I says « *Sooveneer* » ;
 'E 'ad my only Woodbine, I 'ad 'is thin cigar,
 Which set the ball a-rolling, an' so-well, there you are.

I showed 'im next my wife an' kids, 'e up an' showed me 'is,
 Them little funny Frenchy kids with 'air all in a frizz ;
 « Annette » 'e says, « Louise », 'e says, an' 'is tears begin to fall ;
 We was comrades when we parted, but we'd 'ardly spoke at all.

'E'd 'ave kissed me if I'd let im, we 'ad never met before,
 An' I've never seen the beggar since, for that's the way o' war ;
 An' though we scarcely spoke a word, I wonder just the same
 If 'e 'll ever see them kids of 'is . . . I never ast 'is name.

