

The Great Red Cross Sale

SOME THINGS WE'D MORE CHEERFULLY GIVE THAN RECEIVE.

(By Q. Pica-Sma')

It was just as the train was gliding into the Harbour Station that I read in the newspaper that the great Red Cross Superfluity Sale was to begin in London on the morrow; also that the offerings had been so enormous that special trains were being run from many centres to convey the gifts to the Metropolis. As I stepped out onto the platform I noticed an unwonted noise and bustle, and on the up line a long train placarded "Superfluities."

Although it was past ten p.m. the main streets were thronged with a happy chattering crowd; nearly everyone was carrying some donation stationwards. Some had dogs, some babies, while not a few women dragged unwilling husbands towards the train.

"Here they come," the crowd suddenly cried.

"Who?" I asked a nearby R.P.

"The boys bringing the soldiers' gifts to the sale," he answered.

As he spoke, the procession, lit by many flash torches began passing before me. First came seven S.M.'s, surrounded by a hilarious band of privates; followed one very heavily-guarded sour looking individual. He was in khaki but I could not distinguish his rank.

"Who's that?" I asked.

"The man who turns down our passes."

"And that R.P.? What's he done?"

"He's the man who sells the cigarettes the padre gives him."

"What's that bunch of officers?" I whispered, as a dejected yet fiercely defiant handcuffed party passed. "Those are the members of the Medical Board that mark the boys fit for France again."

I could hardly hear this reply as at that moment the whole crowd began shouting and yelling with sheer joy. Staring into the murky night I saw seventy privates, staggering along under the weight of a huge box as big as a large room.

"Gee!" I exclaimed, "they're a happy gang for a working party."

The R.P. beside me was cheering so loudly himself that I had to ask him twice before he told me what the box was. "Man alive," he exclaimed at last, "don't you know? That's the clink from the Granville! Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" As that seemed to be the end of the procession I went on to Chatham House. Although I was just back from leave I was happy. Life without these superfluities would indeed be jake with the levers up.

As I pushed my way into the marquee in which I slept, I met the Orderly Corporal.

"Good lord!" he ejaculated, "you've no right here. You're marked Superfluity."