

*esprit de corps* of the Services. They are veritably the hostelries of strange and happy meetings. The subaltern, who has run up from Aldershot to dine and go to the play, comes to a sudden stop in the hall as he recognises his old chum of the Academy, bronzed and weather-worn almost out of recognition. If they were Frenchmen they would fall into each other's arms and kiss on either cheek. Being Britons they exchange a hearty handshake and walk off to inspect the dinner-bill. There is no theatre that evening for the Aldershot man. As Desdemona hung on the lips of Othello, he listens to thrilling tales of adventure, told in matter-of-fact fashion, and in which the *raconteur* provokingly suppresses his own personality—it is his habit to leave the Victoria Cross to speak for him—till in the excitement of recollection he is swept along and they are away among sniping Pathans in the Afghan passes, hunting Dakoits through the Burmese swamps and jungles, or rushing a Boer position in the converging fire of rifle, pom-pom, and guns of position. The subaltern, who has never heard a shot fired in anger, is keener than ever to rival these exploits.

See the swarming and buzzing in one of these clubs, like the disturbance of a nest of hornets or the upsetting of a hive of bees, when the rumours of a great expedition have been confirmed by official announcements. The envy of the fortunate regiments figuring in orders—of the lucky fellows who are assured of desperate fighting, who have every chance of leaving their bones abroad, or of coming home crippled or mutilated, who will probably be decimated by deadly epidemics, and who will certainly look wistfully back to the much-abused club cooking. The war spirit is worked up to fever-heat, and, like the reserved stores of power in a hydraulic gun-carriage, will tell with tremendous effect when set free. There is no shadow on the joyous send-off dinners given to the departing warriors, though there will be a sad touch of solemnity at the regimental banquets when the memories of the missing are recalled.