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SAM THE SPRUCER.

"His Royal Holiness the Bishop of Rumtifo," said Sam, "is a whiskey old oyster by his photograph, with a face like a doormat in convulsions. But I could forgive him that. A man's face isn't usually his own fault. He starts out with a handicap, and makes it worse or better as he goes through life. I shouldn't say the Bishop had done much to improve his little lot, barring raising a fine crop of hair all over it that really ought to be trained up a trellis. But that's neither here nor there, as the Brigadier said when the bomb went off premature.

"His face he can't help, but he can help being a silly old date, a blithering, blathering old sheephead, and an episcopal chump. Can't he? Well, then, why don't he? I know! Because of the limelight, and there's no prizes for finding the answer.

"He's like all the bishops. Got to do something to keep his end up, else he'll be overlooked. Take that other joint! All of a sudden he discovers that London is a wicked place! Marvellous! Just come to him! A brain wave! Wicked? Course it is! If it wasn't he'd be out of work. But wasn't it wicked before the war? Bet your sweet life! And did the bishops mind? Bet your life, too! "Well, here's the Rumtifo geezer, dipping his pen in indelible ink to write to the papers about bad language in the Army. Course! Silly old date! How does he reckon you're going to get the work done if you don't stiff a bit? Soldiers ain't choir-boys not by a good many coats of paint. Our halos are all in pawn.

"It's like this here. We'll suppose I'm a sergeant and I've got a lot of round-shouldered clod-hoppers like yourself to put through it. It's up to me to teach 'em how to march without falling over their feet, how to form fours by numbers and do the rest of the bright things that are going to win the war for us. Well, what do I do? I looks at 'em and draws a deep breath through my nose—so. Then I inflates my chest and lets 'em have it 16 h.p. and all out.

"You flat-footed lot of swizzle-headed Amalekites," I says, "why the Hellsport don't you stand up without leaning on one another? You ruddy-faced bunch of mucky old bishops," I says, "at the word 'Form' you stand fast. At the word 'Pours' you takes one pace to the rear with the hind foot and one pace to the left with the right foot. And now, you bandy-legged sons of sin, you bottle-nosed beer tanks, you amazing specimens of infantile paralysis, form fours!"

"And what's the result? They try! It's a gaudy mess, and most of 'em get strangled in the attempt, but they try, bless 'em. I've done it myself, so I know. But what would happen if the Bishop had his way. At the parade call the rookies would all fall in and have a nice cup of tea with thin bread and butter. Then, when they had had a smoke, we should start work.

"Gentlemen," I should say, "while deprecating the lack of thought shown by the military authorities and the Army Council, it is my painful duty to inform you that this afternoon you are expected to do at least one about-turn. Much as I regret this, orders is orders, and must be obeyed. Besides, you never know what it might lead to. If you oblige and do it successfully, there may even be promotion for some of you.

"Therefore, gentlemen," I should say, "may I request that you raise your beautiful bodies slightly, poising on the right heel and left toe those sublime members of your admirable anatomy, afterwards swinging a half turn to the right, bringing the left heel into position with a pronounced click. Of course, I know it's a beastly bore and all that, but war's war, gentlemen, and these degrading duties must be done."

"Then, running my episcopal eye along the ranks, I should notice that some of the men were not quite ready.

"Excuse me, Private Brown," I should say, "but pitch-and-toss in the ranks is not looked upon with favour by the military authorities. Therefore, when you have called to Private Johnson, will you kindly return the coin to your pocket and oblige yours truly? Thank you! And now, gentlemen, if you are all quite rested and fit would you be so good as to about-turn?"

"What do you think they'd do? They'd tell me to go and bury my muddy old face in a dug-out and lose the ticket. I shouldn't get anything done. But take the proper method. Thusly—

"Comp'ny, honk! Why the honkity honk don't you honk, you bladderheaded lot of gazekas? You plucky mugwumps! You perishing lot of hump-backed gorillas! You stand there with your legs all wobbling like new-boiled macaroni, with a look on your ugly, three-cornered dials as if the insides of you was full of high explosive, and about as intelligent as a wagon-load of ruddy-nosed village idiots with the mumps.

"Stand up!" I says. "Stand hup, you disastrous devils, and try to look as if you meant it. And when I say 'Honk' you mind you get a wiggle on it, you blazing lot of stupefied sandbags! Now then, 'Comp'ny—Honk!'"

"And immediately they all fall over. Five are carried away bleeding profusely from the nose, and the rest are picked up and dusted by the lance-corporals. But, anyway, I get something for my money, whereas the bishop don't. That's the difference.

"And let me tell you for the benefit of all new recruits that this forming fours business isn't so barny as it looks. You never know when you may be glad of the information so obtained in these early days. Suppose you get into a tight corner. A thousand Fritzies are advancing on you from the front, and two thousand at the double from the rear, you are being shelled from the four points of the compass, you've got your foot stuck in a hole and the barbed wire is affectionately embracing your trousers and face. You are sitting on a live bomb with the pin drawn, and to make matters worse, and finally put the lid on it, it is raining cats and dogs. Having lost your rifle, what would you do in the circumstances?"

"Form fours, of course! A fine thing is forming fours. I've formed some thousands of 'em in my time—beauties.

"But you can take it from me, cussing in the Army is highly essential. In fact, some of the sergeants have to go through a special profanity course before they get their stripes. That's why I got passed over."

THE ROSE OF DENMARK.

MANY HAPPY RETURNS TO QUEEN ALEXANDRA WHO CELEBRATED HER BIRTHDAY ON DEC. 1.

The other day a crowd of little Italian children had assembled outside a cinema to watch Queen Alexandra had paid a visit. She had gone to see the great Italian war film, and the whole Italian colony in London took the royal visit as a personal compliment to themselves.

The children, in charge of their teachers, were waiting impatiently for the royal party to come out. "We may cheer the Queen, may we not?" one little dark-eyed girl asked.

"Of course you may, but be careful that you all cheer together," was the teacher's reply. "But what shall we say?" the tiniest mite in the school, a brown-eyed, golden-haired fairy dressed in white, asked.

"Envidia el Regina—long live the Queen!" the teacher said.

A few moments later, when Queen Alexandra came out, she was greeted by a regular hurricane of cheers. There was silence for a moment as, before stepping into her carriage, she smiled and bowed her thanks to the bright-faced little girls, and then a tiny, shrill voice rang out, clear and alone:

"Long live the beautiful Queen!" The little fair-haired girl hadn't deemed her teacher's instructions sufficient. "Well, she is beautiful, so why shouldn't I have said it, she explained afterwards between smiles and tears as, astonished at her sudden outburst, teacher and children crowded round her. "She is even beautiful for a Queen."

And the verdict of the little Italian girl is endorsed by every man, woman, and child in the British Empire.

Queen Alexandra's popularity began when she came as a pretty, graceful girl of nineteen to be the bride of King Edward, then Prince of Wales, in 1863. Women copied her dress, her smile, the way she did her hair. For very many years the long side-curl worn by the then Princess of Wales, and known as the "Alexandra" curl, was the fashionable coiffure.

Since the war Queen Alexandra has been one of the busiest ladies in the land. She has remained almost constantly in London, where she has been simply indefatigable in all kinds of work for the soldiers at the front and the sick and wounded in France and at home.

Once she served coffee, tea, and buns to a number of soldiers at a Y.M.C.A. recreation hut. "I call it the best kind of send-off I could have had, and it'll bring me luck," was the remark of one lad in khaki, just off to the front, when he had been smilingly asked by the Queen-mother if he would have tea or coffee, and had taken, as he described it, "a jolly good mug of tea" from her hands.

Queen Alexandra is a constant visitor to the military hospitals in London which bear her name. Last year she presented a silver-mounted walking-stick and a service pocket-book to each patient in the hospital, and a box of chocolates to every member of the nursing staff.

Queen Alexandra is a great favourite with the younger members of the Royal family, who take all their little troubles and worries to "grannie."

WAR-TRAIN CONTROLLER.

SIR HERBERT WALKER'S GREAT TASK.

There are scores of eminent men whose names are not much before the general public, but who are working hard behind the scenes to see our "contemptible little Army" through. Among them is Sir Herbert Walker, the general manager of the London and South-Western Railway.

It is no exaggeration to say that the transportation of our troops to France would have been impossible but for the wonderful organizing abilities of this great expert.

As chairman of the Railway Executive Committee, which now arranges the whole work of railways under Government supervision all over the kingdom, he is responsible for the safe transport of stores, ammunition, and food across to France, the conveyance of vast quantities of coal from ports to inland towns, and the enormous work of keeping the whole of the British Isles plentifully supplied with the necessities of life.

Since the war no fewer than 15,000 special trains conveying troops have been run on the London and South-Western Railway, as well as 2,500 fully-equipped Red Cross trains carrying our wounded. So wonderfully have these cars been constructed that a serious operation could actually be performed whilst the train was going at a speed of thirty miles an hour.

Sir Herbert was originally intended for the medical profession, but he preferred the engineering shop to the operating theatre. He finally abandoned the idea of becoming a doctor and entered the service of the London and North-Western Railway.

It was not long before he gained recognition, and in 1910 he was appointed outdoor goods manager.

The offer of the high position of general manager of the London and South-Western Railway in 1910 caused quite a flutter in railway circles.

Naturally when a young man is appointed to a post of such great responsibility there are doubt or misgivings in the minds of old and important servants of the company as to the ability of their new chief.

Sir Herbert Walker allows no slackers to be near him, but has every respect for the energetic workman, and he is as willing to receive sound advice as he is to give it, when it is worth having.

Since the war no patriot could have done more for his country. Sir Herbert may well be proud of the fact that no fewer than 3,800 of his men are with the Colours and "doing their bit." He has placed some of his company's best workshops at the disposal of the Ministry of Munitions and he has sent many of his skilled workmen to make shells. And Sir Herbert has not forgotten the wives and children of his men now fighting. He is forwarding payments to the families left at home.

A trainload of Boche prisoners was being taken from the Somme front, and a Hun officer found himself in a third-class carriage with a "Tommy" as escort.

"Why," said he, in an injured tone, "have I, an officer, to travel third class?" "Because," said Tommy, "I've got to guard you, and they didn't think a British soldier ought to be put in a cattle-truck, see?"

PLEASE TELL US.

Why Mack sat looking at a key in a certain house in Buxton? And where was he when he said: "Four at a time?"

Which corporal of the staff was it who cried to quieten the baby, or was it the nurse who received the most attention? Can Corp. Roulston tell us?

Who is the young lady who said she would never marry a man with hairs on his legs? And who is the man?

Who is the Canadian who is thinking of taking over the dye works in Spring Gardens? Does Shepherd know?

Was it owing to the darkened streets that a certain Canadian took a young lady for a walk, and what caused the loss of the lady's earring? Does J. — know?

Why does the mere mention of "geegees" "get" the office staff?

Will certain young ladies in Buxton miss the "Canadian Red Cross Special"? Better keep this week's copy as a souvenir.

Who were the four soldiers taking to four young ladies in Spring Gardens when one of the girls struck a match and the other three bolted? Does "Shep" know?

Who is the soldier who persisted in kissing a young lady in a shop doorway in Spring Gardens?

Is Sergt. Martin contemplating attending the school children's fete?

Whether it was really the tall lady or the little school teacher, who was chasing a certain Staff-Sergeant on Monday night, and which of them caught him?

Why does Pte. H. walk Spring Gardens alone these days?

If Ptes. Worthing and Leach are members of the H. and H. Company?

Why was Lily so tickled with the bombardment of Freddy?

Who is the person who stated that Pte. Purser was married and walked out with a married lady? Does he need his head examined?

If Pte. Sargeant has now opened up in the tobacco business and how much will two packages of cigarettes cost?

If Jimmie was sore about the tickets, or was he worried over parting with the other sixpence?

Who the young lady was that mistook Sammy for someone else, and did not find out her mistake until after the usual osenulatory greetings were passed?

Is Sammy anxious to meet the young lady again?

When the next meeting of the H. and H. Company will be held?

Who is the Sister that is barred from the Roller rink owing to the weakness of the floor?

The reason of the fire in Lieut. Young's room; was he anxious to see the famous Buxton Fire Brigade?

Was Corp. Cook disappointed when he didn't get his usual letter, and did he get two next mail?

What Sergt. Moss intends doing with the baby carriage?

When Robinson intends taking another bath?

Why Wilks keeps calling for "Lily" in his sleep?

How Sergt. Henderson likes his new home, and is he figuring on joining the firm?

If Pte. Porter professes to be such an artist which could he draw the quicker, a bottle or the cork?

Who is the Private who offered to take two young ladies home and left them in the middle of a field, saying it was too cold? Does Pte. W. know?

Why Pte. Porter looking so worried these days? Is it worrying over Nellie in Leighwood?

Who are the two soldiers that were hugging three young ladies in Spring Gardens? Does Corp. — know?

Why Jimmie was so eager to have the picture framed, after deciding not to? Did he have anyone in mind?

Why Sergt. Moss objected to taking the long distance 'phone message? Did he not want the young lady to know that he was going to Manchester?

Why Pte. Sargeant showed off his moustache? Did his young lady object to it?

Who accompanies the chef on his nightly visits up the hill since Corp. Keen went on night duty?

What Pte. Sinclair's young lady weighs?

Why the Sister asked Sergt. Scott if he was Sergt. Scott, and what does she know about him?

Is the editor of the Please Tell Us column carrying a gun this week for protection?

What relation had the pair of white gloves to the fact that there was no orderly room for three days? Had the absence of the "staff" anything to do with it?

What the fair maiden told Corp. Roulston when he asked her if she could buy a penny-worth of humbugs?

PERSONAL MENTION.

N. Sister Mills has been attached to this hospital for duty during the past week.

Pte. Worthing is visiting his brother at Liverpool.

N. Sister Smith reported for duty this week from the C.A.M.C. training school.

Editor Duncan is still confined to his bed, conducting the paper from that point of (disad) vantage.

N. Sister Walker reported for duty this week from the C.A.M.C. training school.

N. Sisters Popham and Wilson have been transferred to the Ravenscroft Military Hospital, Seaford.

FIRE DRILL FOR HORSES.

A DEVICE TO SAVE THEIR LIVES.

Horses are terrified of fire, and when a conflagration breaks out in a stable a terrible panic ensues among the animals. A new invention has already been put into use which will bring the horses from the stable into the open five seconds after the fire-drill alarm is sounded.

The stalls in the stable are fitted with doors which are hung on gravity hinges. These hinges allow the door to swing open when the latches are undone. To the latches is attached a wire cord, which is joined together in places by links that melt in slight heat. As soon as a fire breaks out these links melt almost immediately, enabling the doors to fly open.

The manger is fixed to the door, so that the horse, instead of standing with his back towards the exit, faces it.

As soon as each door opens a gate drops and the horse cannot back, but is bound to go forward. As soon as the door opens the manger drops, and releases the rope by which the horse is tied. The animal is then free to run into the yard.

LOST.—A wrist watch in the wash room in "A" Ward. Finder please return to Pte. Redfern, "B" Ward duty room.