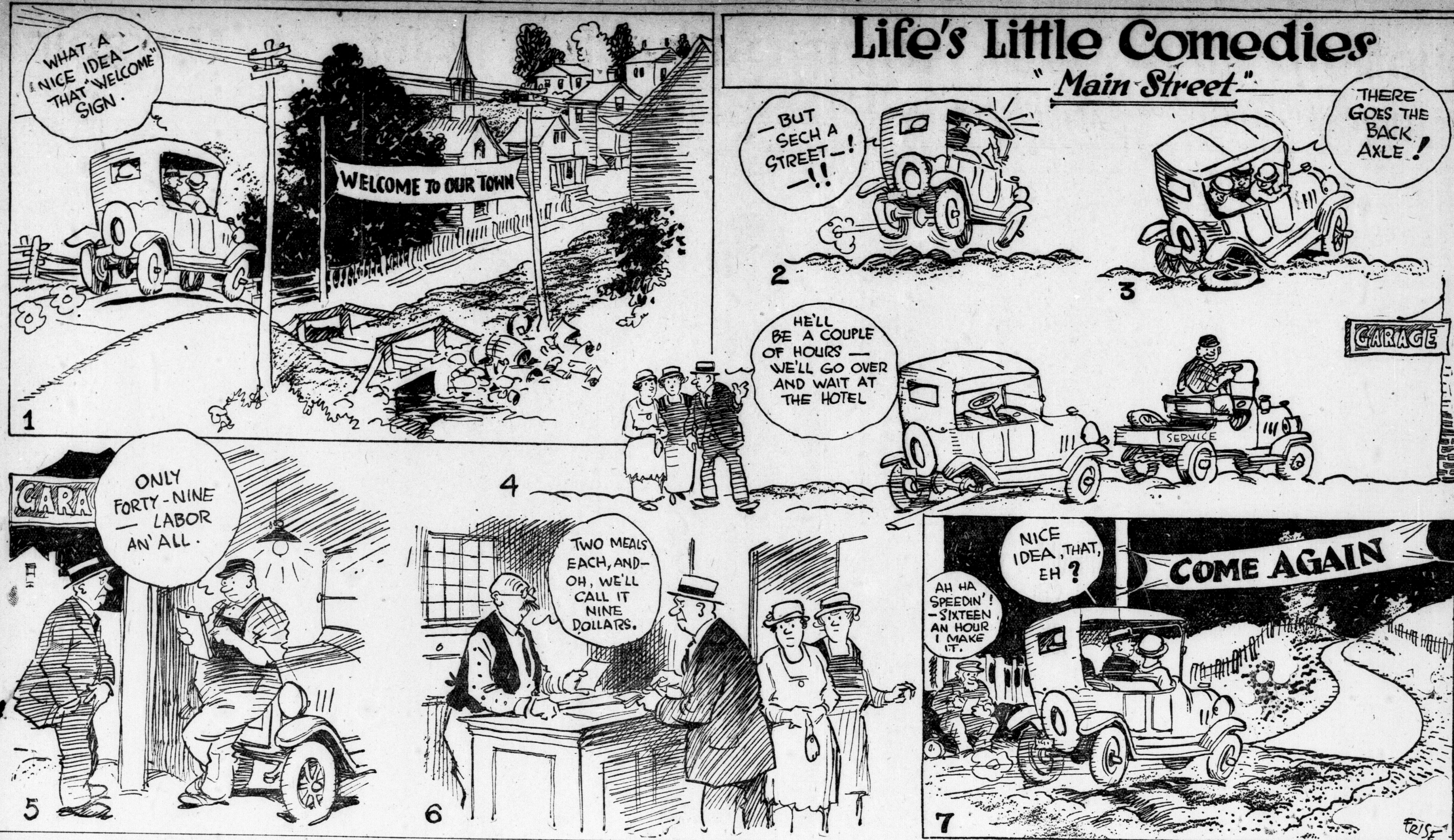


## Life's Little Comedies

"Main Street"



## RUDYARD KIPLING'S STORY OF THE WAR

## The Irish Guards Found War At Its Worst in the Horrors of the First Gas Attacks —the Days of Loos.

By RUDYARD KIPLING.

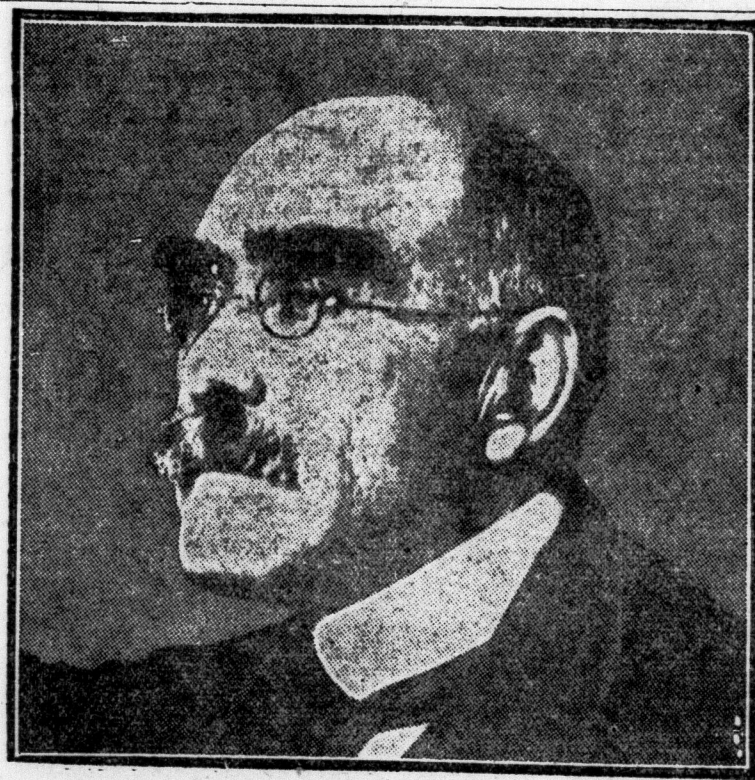
## III.—AMID THE HORRORS OF POISON GAS.

It was safer to relieve by daylight than by night, as darkness brought bursts of sudden rifle and machine gun fire, despatched at a venture from behind the five-deep line of German chevaux de frise not seventy yards away. (March, 1915.) Tempting openings, too, were left in the wire to invite attack, but the bait was not taken. Neuve Chapelle had been a failure, except in so far as it had shown the enemy that winter had not dulled any of our arms, and it was recognized we must continue to sit still till men and material should accumulate behind us. The documents and diaries of those weeks admit this with the unshaken cheerfulness of the race. Yet, even so, the actual and potential strength of the

enemy was not realized.

Very slowly, and always with the thought at the back of the mind that the deadlock might break at any moment, the army set itself, battalion by battalion, to learn the war it was waging.

The enemy celebrated the day before St. Patrick's Day, and the day itself, March 17, by several hours of brisk shelling of Givenchy, timed to catch the evening reliefs, but luckily without casualties. Queen Alexandra sent the battalion their shamrock; telegrams wishing them good luck were duly received from Lord Kitchener, colonel of the battalion; Brig.-Gen. Nugent, and a letter from Sir Charles Monro, commanding the First Army Corps. Father Gwynne held an open-air service in the early morning, and every man was given a hot bath at Bethune. More important



RUDYARD KIPLING.

ant still, every man who wanted it had free beer with his dinner, and in those days beer was beer indeed.

## The First Planes.

It may have been no more than a coincidence that the first planes came over on the day that the Prince of Wales was paying the battalion another visit. But it was the continuous rifle fire at night that accounted for most of the casualties in the trenches and during relief. Second Lieut. T. Nugent was wounded in the back of the neck on the 24th by an unaimed bullet, and almost each day had its count of casualties.

The battalion took life with philosophic calm. Food and rest are the paramount considerations of men in war. The former was certain and abundant; the latter scanty and broken. So the commanding officer made no comment when, one night going around the line, he found a man deeply asleep with his feet projecting into the fairway, and, written on a paper on his chest, the legend: "Sleep is sweet; undisturbed it is divine; So lift up your feet, and do not tread on mine."

There were other preoccupations for those in command. The second Battle of Ypres, that month's miracle of naked endurance against the long-planned and coldly-thought-out horror of gas, had begun near Langemarck with the choking out of the French and Canadian troops, and had continued day after day with the sacrifice of battalions and brigades, regulars and territorials swallowed up in the low gray-yellow gas banks that threatened Ypres from Langemarck to Hill 60, or beaten to pulp by heavy explosives and the remnant of a riddled anvil by machine guns. Once

again England was making good with her best flesh and blood for the material and the training she had deliberately refused to provide white yet peace held.

## War At Its Worst.

The men who came out of that furnace alive say that no after experience of all the war approached it for sheer concentrated as well as prolonged terror, confusion and a growing sense of hopelessness among growing agonies. If a world, at that time unbroken to German methods, stood aghast at the limited revelations allowed by the press censorship reports, those who had seen a man, or worse, a child, dying from gas, may conceive with what emotions men exposed to the new torment regarded it, what kind of reports leaked out from clearing stations and hospitals, and what work, therefore, was laid upon officers to maintain an even and unaffected temper in the battalions in waiting.

If there be any mystery in the training of war that specially distinguishes the Brigade of Guards from their fellows it is that the officers lie under discipline more exacting than that of the rank and file, and that even more than in any other branch of the service they are responsible for the comfort of their men. Forced together as they were in the stark intimacy of the trenches, that at any moment may test any soul to the uttermost; revealed to each other, every other day at least, in the long and wearisome march to billets, where the companies and platoons move slowly and sideways through the communication trenches, gambling against death—if the German heavies are busy—at each step of the road, officers and men came to a mutual comprehension and affection

—which in no way prevented the most direct and drastic criticism or penalties—as impossible to describe as it would be to omit, since it was the background against which their lives ran from day to day.

## Inventive "Crime."

The Celt's national poise and manner, his gift of courtesy and sympathy, and above all the curious and incommunicable humor of his outlook in those days made it possible for him and his officers to consort together upon terms perhaps debarred to other races. When the men practiced "crime" they were thorough and inventive by the act and unequalled in the defense, as the records of some courts-martial testify. But the same spirit that prompted the large and imaginative sin and its unexpected excuse or justification (as, for example, that three sinners detected in removing a large cask of beer were but exercising their muscles in "rowing it a piece along the pave"), bred a crop of forceful regimental characters. Many, very many of these have perished and left no record sayings passed from mouth to mouth through the long years, or a blurred record of some desperately

heroic deed, light-heartedly conceived and cunningly carried through to its triumphant end and dismissed with a jest.

The unpredictable incidence of death or wounds was a mystery that gave the Irish full rein for sombre speculation. Half an hour's furious bombardment, with trenches blowing in by lengths at a time, would end in no more than extra fatigues for the disgusted working parties that had to repair damage. On another day of still peace, one sudden light shell might mangle every man in a bay and smear the duckboards with blood and horrors. A night patrol, pinned down by a German flare where they sprawled in the corn, and machine gunned till their listening comrades gave up all hope, would tumble back at last into their own trenches unscathed, while far back in some sheltered corner the skied bullet, falling from a mile and a half away, would send a man to his account so silently that, till the body slid off the estaminet bench, his neighbors never guessed.

## Before Loos.

On Sept. 15, 1915, the C. O.'s of all the battalions in the Guards

Division motored to the Bethune district, where a reconnaissance was made "from convenient observation posts" of the country between Culinchy and Loos that they might judge the weight of the task before them.

It was a jagged, scarred and mutilated sweep of mining villages, factories, quarries, slag dumps, pits, heads, chalk pits and railway embankments—all the plant of an elaborate mechanical civilization connected above ground and below by every means that ingenuity and labor could devise to the uses of war. The ground was trenched and tunneled with cemented and floored works of terrifying permanency that linked together fortified redoubts, observation posts, concealed batteries, rallying points and impregnable shelters for waiting reserves. So it ran along our front from Grenay north of the plateau of Notre Dame de Lorette, where two huge slag heaps, known as the Double Crasiers, bristled with machine guns, across the bare interlude of crop land between Loos and Hulluch, where a high German redoubt crowned the slopes to the village of

Haisnes with the low and dangerous Hohenzollern redoubt south of it.

Triple lines of barbed wire protected a system of triple trenches, concrete-faced, holding dugouts 20 feet deep, with lifts for machine guns which could appear and disappear in emplacements of concrete over iron rails, and the observation posts were capped with steel cupolas. In the background ample railways and a multitude of roads lay ready to launch fresh troops to any point that might by any chance be forced in the face of these obstacles.

Our armies were brought up for the most part on their own feet and lay in trenches not in the least congested; nor were our roads to the front wholly equal to the demands on them.

Opinions naturally differ as to which was the least attractive period of the war for the battalion, but there was a general feeling that, eating aside the cruel wet of the Salient and the complicated barren miseries of the Somme, the times after Loos round the Hohenzollern Redoubt and in the Laventie sector were the worst.

(Copyright, 1923, by Rudyard Kipling.)

## Sugar-Crisp CORN FLAKES

The fresh crispness of Sugar-Crisp Corn Flakes will make an appeal to that jaded appetite. You'll enjoy the new zestful flavor. 11c. a package.

At Your Grocer's

Canadian Postum Cereal Co., Limited  
Head Office: Toronto Factory: Windsor

Deliciously Sweet and Crisp

MADE IN CANADA

405

## ASPIRIN

UNLESS you see the name "Bayer" on tablets, you are not getting Aspirin at all

Genuine



Accept only an "unbroken package" of "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin," which contains directions and dose worked out by physicians during 22 years and proved safe by millions for

Colds Headache Rheumatism  
Toothache Neuralgia Neuritis  
Earache Lumbago Pain, Pain

Handy "Bayer" boxes of 12 tablets—Also bottles of 24 and 100—Druggists. Aspirin is the trade mark (registered in Canada) of Bayer Manufacture of Monocarbonyl Salicylic Acid. While it is well known that Aspirin means Bayer Manufacture, to assist the public against imitations, the Tablets of Bayer Company will be stamped with their general trade mark, the "Bayer Cross."