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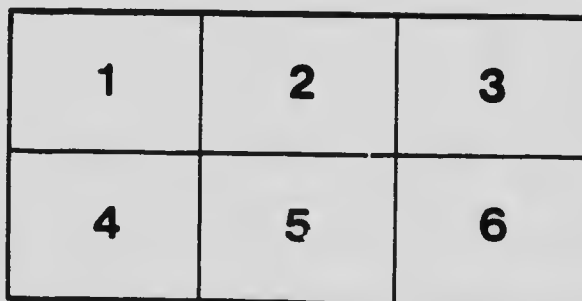
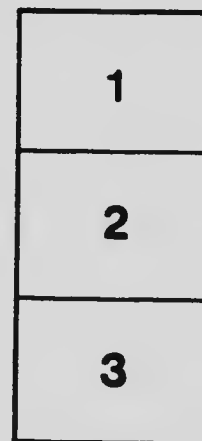
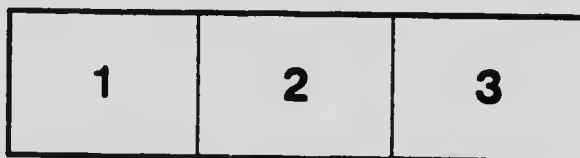
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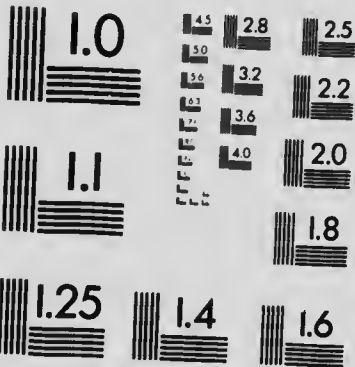
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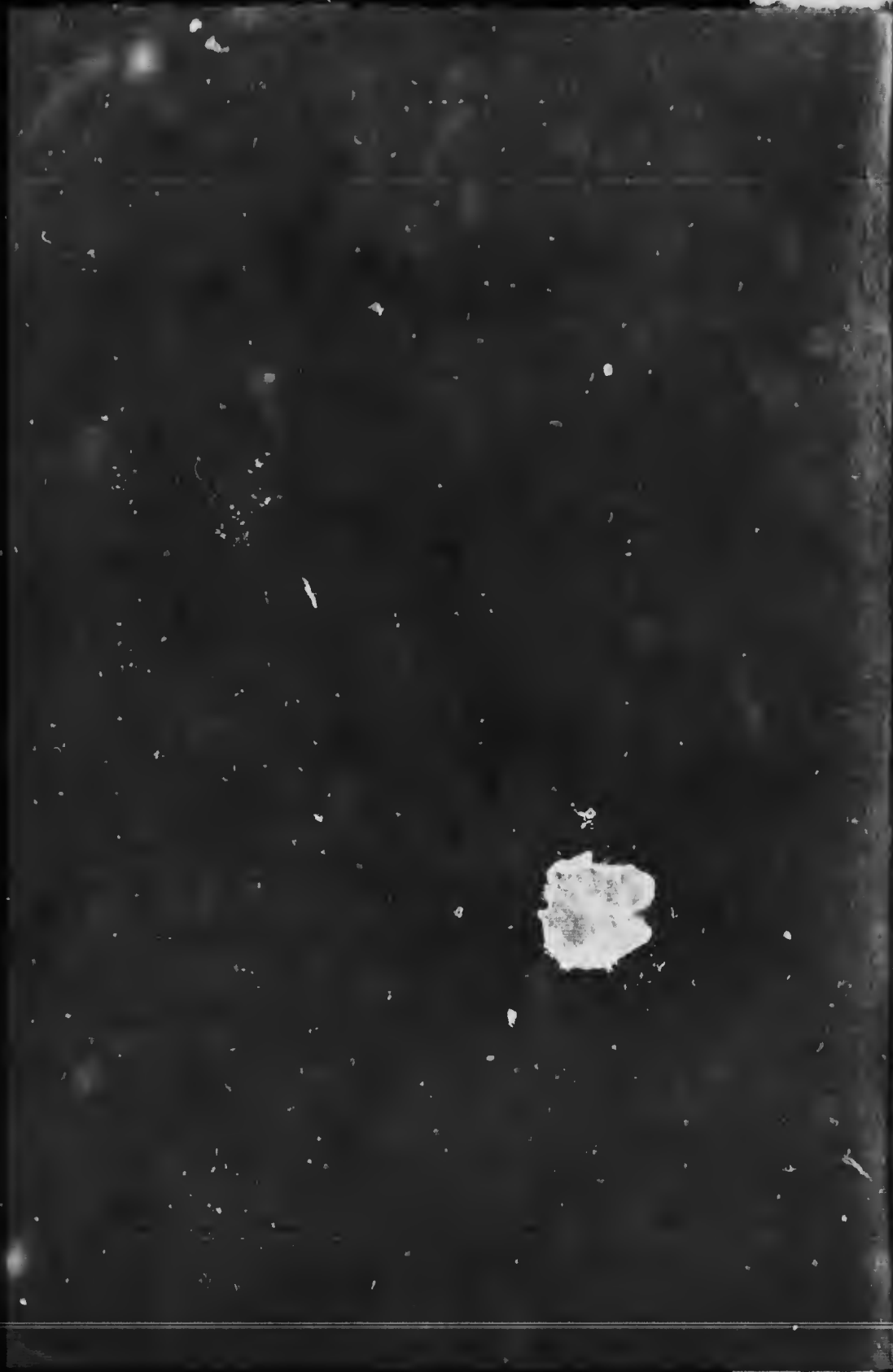
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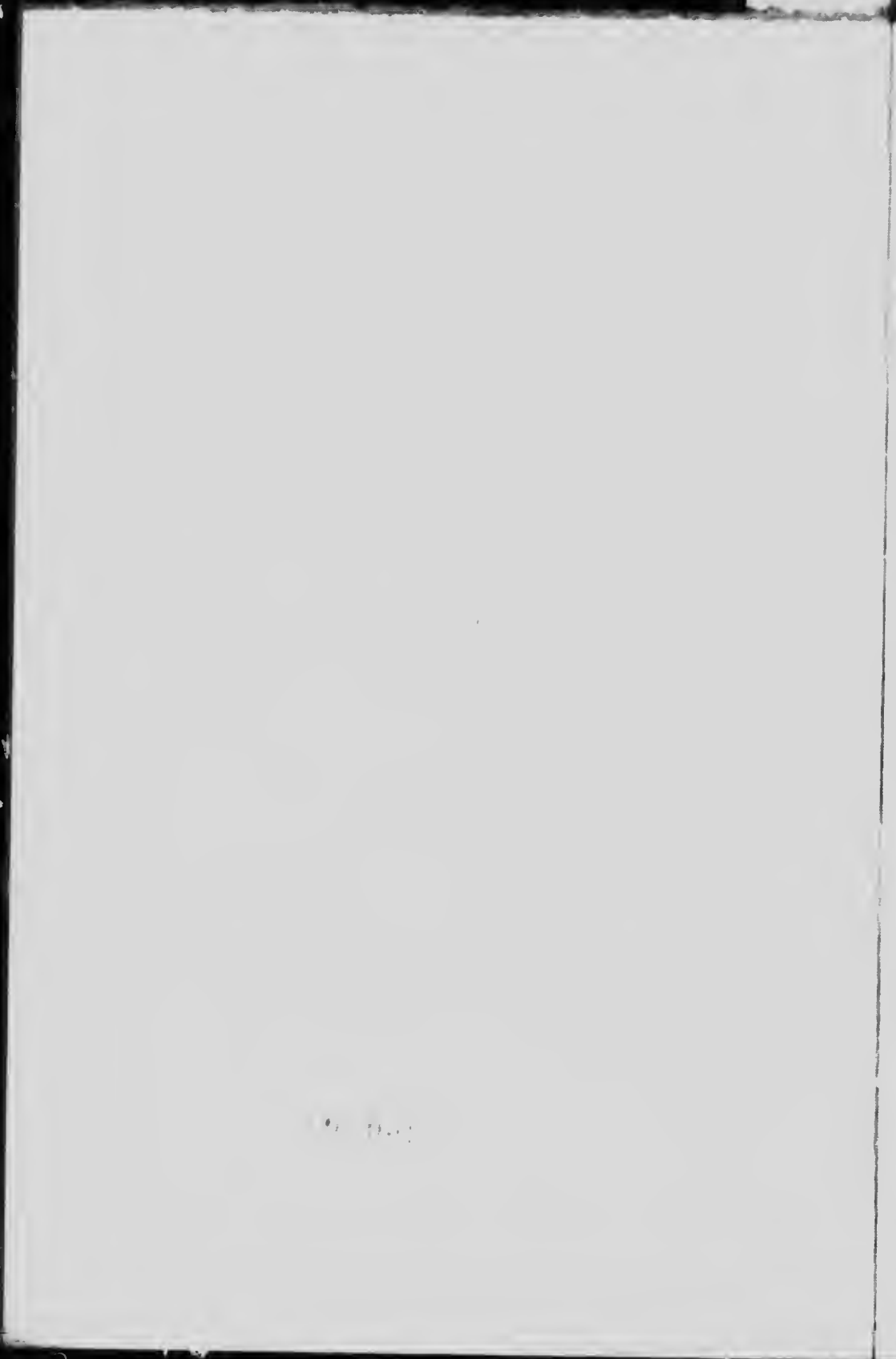
LONDON CANADA



Omar from the Trenches



By
George Doltridge



Oma: from the Trenches

By

GEORGE DOTTRIDGE

•

I

Stand to! for Morning in the Trench of Night
Has flung his Starshell, putting Stars to Flight,
And lo! the Sergeant with the Rum is come,
"Stand down and post Day-sentries now," "All right!"

II

Dreaming when Starshells fluttered thro' the Sky
I heard a Voice outside the Dugout cry:
"Awake, my little one, it's two o'clock,"
Sadly I crooned "Thy Sentinel am I."

III

And at the "Stand down," those who stood outside
The Dugout, waiting, "Get a move on," cried,
"You know how little while we have to stay,
Big Working Parties threaten—get inside."

V

Winter indeed has gone with all her Snows
And last week's Fifteen Francs—where, no one knows
But still our Rum its Warmth and Pleasure yields
And still the "Stokes" its frequent mortar throws

VI

And Fritz's bolt is shot: but asinine
Fool-bluffing newspapers with "Whine, Rhine, Whine!"
"Ach Rhine!" The *Tagenblatt* cries to poor Fritz,
That yellow Cheek of his to incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Spoon, and in the Fire of Spring,
Our Winter Garment, made of Leather, fling
The German Eagle has but little Time
To fly--and lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

And look--a thousand Sandbags ev'ry Day,
No! many thousands filled with Belgian Clay!
And the first Winter Month may bring the close,
And take John Bull and Jack Cannek away!

IX

But come with Jack Cannek and leave the Lot,
Of Hindenberg and Von Tirpitz forgot,
Let Bernstoff lie and ramble as he will,
And Hyphenates cry "Deutschland!" Heed them not.

X

With me along some Strip of Herbage sown
With Cabbages and Carrots--all mine own,
Where Gas Alerts and Grenades are not known,
And pity Kaiser Wilhelm on his throne.

XI

There with a Newspaper beneath the Bough,
A little Beer, a Smoke or two --and Thon
Beside me, rambling about Politics,
Ah! Canada were Paradise enow!

XII

"How sweet are Home and Comfort" burble some,
Others "Yes, let our Tenton cousins come,"
Ah! don a Skirt and send us Cigarettes,
Oh! the brave music of the distant drum!

XIII

Look to the Shell that flies around us "Lo!
Whistling," she says "Into the Air I go
And once my iron Casing burst apart,
Fly to your Dugouts! Look out there, below!"

XIV

The Dugout that we set our minds upon,
Blows up—or isn't bothered—and anon,
Like Warts upon old Belgium's muddy Face,
Staying its little day or two—is gone.

XV

And those who dodged the vindictive Grenade,
And those who promptly for their Dugouts made,
Alike to Sentry Duty are returned,
They're much too busy now to be afraid.

XVI

Think—in this battered—on—Line Trench we stay,
Waiting for Him Surprise—Night and Day,
Where sentry after sentry with his "Gat,"
Abides his Hour or two and goes away.

XVII

They say the Germans find it hard to keep
The land where Willie gloried and drank deep,
And Joffre's going to hunt the Wild Ass,
And put him and his Papa safe to sleep.

XVIII

I sometimes think that ne'er has blown so red
The Rose, as Roses will, when Willie's fled,
That every Flower will in the garden grow
More beautiful when Prussianism's dead.

XIX

And this delightful Herb's once tender green
Dyed by the foulest Work the World has seen,
Will grow again in Radiance—Ah, who knows
How badly Germanized we might have been?

XX

Come, gentle Sergeant, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears,
To-morrow in old Blighty I may be,
And I'll come back—in nineteen thousand years.

XXI

Lo! Rum we want, the strongest and the best,
 Lick up the Spoon, then stand awhile and jest—
 Let's drink our "tot" and clean our trusty "Gats,"
 Then one by one creep silently to rest.

XXII

And we, who erst made merry in a Shed
 With six to eight tiles missing overhead,
 Can keep a Smile on in a Dugout too,
 If we've swiped Sandbags to make soft our Bed.

XXIII

Ah, make the best of what we yet must spend,
 Lest Britain too into the Mud descend,
 Mnd unto Mud and under Mnd to lie,
 Sans Wit, Sans Truth, Sans Justice—What an end!

XXIV

Alike to those who for a Zepp prepare
 And those who after Tirpitz' Navy stare,
 A Northcliffe from the Tower of Darkness cries
 "Hark" but his Talk is neither here nor there.

XXV

Why, all these ha'penny Sages who dispense
 Stale Platitudes so learnedly—from whence,
 Got they their turgid Wisdom?—Purchase some
 Lest strident Paper—till they write some Sense.

XXVI

Oh, come with Jack Canuck and leave those "Wise"
 To talk: some insects worry such as—Flies
 Keep still—and listen (all the Rest is Lies)
 The Pow'r that caused this War forever dies.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
 Tory and Whig—and heard great Argument,
 Of Food and Creeds and Taxes—and I found
 The whole blamed lot was mere Advertisement.

XXVIII

With them all kinds of Politics I'd spout,
 But dimly guessing what I talked about,
 And this was all the Harvest that I gleaned:
 "I earn my Bread and Cheese—or go without."

XXIX

Into this Mess of Talk, the Truth not knowing
 Like Golden Syrup, sticky—ever flowing
 And messing up the Scheme of Things entire,
 I ladled Platitudes—and sat back blowing.

XXX

"Why," I would ask: "was this Man hurried hence?"
 And further "Why was that Man rushed back thence?"
 Another and another Rag to chew
 And worry with colossal Impudence.

XXXI

Up from Bayswater and thro' Notting Gate
 I rode—and on the Throne of Britain Sate
 And many Knots unravelled on the Road,
 A Cop held up his Hand—I had to wait.

XXXII

There was a Hand I could not thrust aside,
 There was a Power o'er which I could not ride
 And while I fumed, the Policeman let us by,
 (One humble Copper—what a thing is Pride!)

XXXIII

Then to the ranting Press itself I wrote,
 Saying: "O, Screamers, here's what gets my Vote,
 Four million Soldiers—fighting in the Dark,
 Not proud nor wise enough to send a Note!"

XXXIV

So to this dusty Trench my Face I turned,
 And something of the Soul of Nations learned
 And Heart to Heart it whispered "While you live
 Fight! for this War must never be adjourned!"

XXXV

I think the Navy—modest fugitive,
Retiring yet so argumentative,
Fights chiefly via Sayville from Berlin.
And by its Fiction doth its glory live.

XXXVI

For in the New York Papers, day by day,
The wireless from Sayville had its Say,
Till even yellow Journalism blushed
And murmured "Gently, Brother, Gently, Pray."

XXXVII

Ah, be discreet—what boots it to repeat
Our words when Bathmats slither 'neath our feet?
Bullets to-morrow and Mud yesterday,
Don't fret about it—get Old Fritzie beat.

XXXVIII

A year ago—Annihilation's waste,
This year, the Germans whipped to suit your taste,
Their Star is setting—and the Battle Plan
Of Kaiser Wilhelm crumbles—Let's make haste!

XXXIX

How long, how long should Working Parties last?
And why do Officers all walk so fast?
Better in Trenches, fighting fretful Fritz,
Than work for a C. E. enthusiast.

XL

You know, my friends, how long since I abjured
My old Enthusiasm—I've been cured
The more you do the more you have to do,
All Life's uncertain—but that Fact's assured.

XLI

For Work and Hustle as with Rule and Line
And Laziness without I can define,
But after all, I never cared for Work,
The "dolce far niente" stuff for mine!

XLII

And lately in a lone Estaminet,
I heard a bunch of soldiers have their Say;
It wasn't what they said that made me gasp,
The Language they employed caused my Dismay.

XLIII

The Swear that doth with Vigor infinite,
The end of Bad Oues and their Doom recite,
Two Monosyllables, that in a Trice,
Assign to you a Fate that's definite.

XLIV

The mighty Kaiser—that victorious Lord,
—Whose dialectic ravings as a sword
The Berlin journals fiercely wave aloft,
Makes "God damn England" quite a mild word.

XLV

But leave them all to fulminate—with me,
The Quarrel of the Nations come and see
And from some Sandbag on the Parapet
Take Shots at Fritz who's shot so oft at Thee!

XLVI

But if the Job you're on—your Khaki Dress,
End in the Victory you strive for—yes
Then see that while Thou art, Thou art but what,
Thou startedst—Private. Thou canst not be less!

XLVII

While the Rat plays upon the Parapet,
Think of the Morning and the Run you'll get,
And when the Sergeant with the soothing Draught,
Draws up to thee—drink deep and do not fret.

XLVIII

'Tis all a Railway Map of ups and downs,
While Father draws up schedules—Willie clowns
Hither and thither moves—and causes Wrecks;
The whole blamed Argument should cost Three Crowns.

XLIX

For in and out, above, about, below,
 'Tis nothing but a wicked Fireworks show,
 And now and then you get a chance to shoot,
 —You can't see anything to shoot at, though.

L

Poor Fritzie has no Right to Ayes or Noes,
 But East or West as rules the Kaiser, goes;
 He gives his life for Willie's vanity,
 And knows it all the Time—you bet he knows.

L1

The Working Party toils—when one Job's done,
 Starts on another, which is scarce begun,
 Ere rushes up a different Engineer,
 And takes the Party elsewhere—it's great Fun.

LII

To that embracing Thread they call barbed wire,
 I've got to own I never did aspire,
 You wind it round some Stakes in No Man's Land,
 And Fritzie gets you with Machine Gun fire.

LIII

Of Belgian Clay we built a Parapet,
 The Belgian Rain came down and we got wet,
 Soon after came the burning Belgian Sun,
 And we supplied the honest British Sweat.

LIV

I tell thee this—in making out the Bill,
 Don't think it's all correct and fair until
 All Prussianism's dead, Von Bissing hung,
 And others punished who conspired the ill.

LV

The Hun hath shot his bolt—and little doubt
 It hurts his Vanity—well, let him shout;
 He's got to take up Waiting once again,
 But not in Britain—we can do without.

LVI

This, now, he knows—a Tip however slight,
A little light Employment every night;
The modest Penny in the Tavern caught,
Are better than an Empire lost outright.

LVII

O, Thou, who didst with Howitzer and Krupp,
Beset the Road we had to wander up,
We've had our Share—and now it's up to thee,
We have Thy Gruel ready—"Hand and Sup."

LVIII

O Thou whose sense of Honor's so awry,
Betrayed our Friendship—Royal Spy,
For all the evil wherewith Germany
Is blackened—Thou shalt answer bye and bye.

KUZA-NAMA

LIX

Listen again. On Sentry-go one Night,
Lit up by Starshell's parabolic Flight,
As on the Firing-Step I stood alone,
I heard Lee-Enfields whisper of the fight.

LX

And strange to tell—of all that Deadly Lot,
Not one could count the Germans it had shot,
And suddenly mine own impatient cried:
"Is this a real War—or is not?"

LXI

Then said another: "Surely not in vain,
My former Owner's numbered with the Slain,
And those responsible for this mad War
Will surely never have the Power again."

LXII

Another said: "The Crown Prince,—Idiot—
Had Power and Friends—not good, but quite a lot;
Shall he who killed his army in pure Pride,
Retain his Power and Friends? I fancy not."

LXIII

None answered this; but after Silence spake,
A Lee-Enfield of very modern make:
"They sneer at me for having no Cut-off,
Why has not Northcliffe one for Goodness' sake?"

LXIV

Said one "Folk o' a handy Conscience tell,
And scream Objections in the Press as well;
They'd sooner die than fight for Freedom—pish!
They've got to toe the Line—all will be well."

LXV

Then said another with a long drawn Sigh:
"This conscientious Stuff is all my Eye;
Let's make him keep our Britain's Conscience first,
And talk about his Conscience bye and bye."

LXVI

And while the Rifles one by one were speaking,
One spied the Break of Day the World was seeking,
And then they jogged each other "Brother, Brother,
The Heavens are full of Light—Look, some is leaking."

LXVII

Lord, with Thy Light my fading Life provide,
And let it shine from Heaven far and wide;
Let Murder, such as this War, blindly grope,
Nor find a Virtue under which to hide.

LXVIII

That all our buried Soldiers, such a Snare
Of Perfume shall fling up into the Air,
That stinking War shall show for what it is,
And fragrant Peace shall flourish everywhere.

LXIX

Indeed the Idols we have loved so long,
 These scientific Days seem all dead wrong;
 We're torn to Pieces by a Chemical
 Because we listened to a Jingo Song.

LXX

Indeed against this Soldiering before
 I swore—was I in earnest when I swore?
 And then—and then came War and Poison Gas;
 I joined the Bunch and babbled Peace no more.

LXXI

And much as War has played the Infidel
 And robbed me of my peaceful Notions—well
 I often wonder what the Soldiers gain
 One half as precious as the Lives they sell.

LXXII

Alas, that men should be shot down in Rows,
 That Youth's sweet scented Manuscript should close,
 A Holocaust to please an Imbecile,
 Who yet may be an Emperor, who knows?

LXXIII

Ah, Friend, could you and I with Fate conspire;
 To cure this Imbecile's insane Desire,
 Would we not smash his Armaments to Bits
 And put his turgid War Books in the fire?

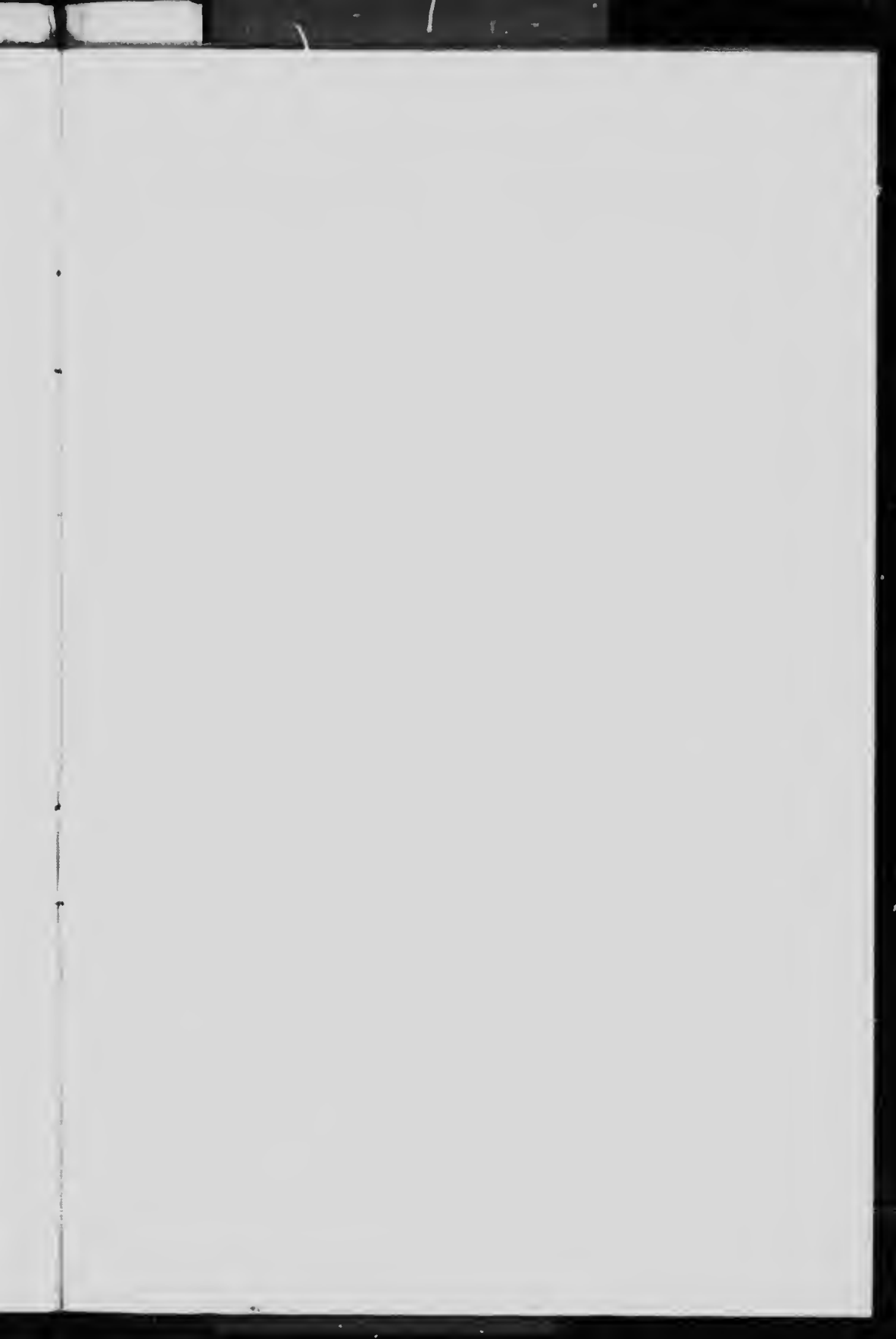
LXXIV

But, blood red War dimming and shall wane,
 The Sun of Peace is shining once again;
 How oft hereafter rising shall he look
 For any Hint of War—and look in vain.

LXXV

And when Thyself with shining Feet shall tread
 Among the Soldier Victims—Thy bent head
 Shall promise for their death an Endless Peace;
 Forgive us if we hate—we have our Dead.







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