

**RUDYARD
KIPLING**

SOLDIERS
THREE

Редьярд Киплинг

Soldiers Three

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Rudyard Kipling

Soldiers Three

THE GOD FROM THE MACHINE

Hit a man an' help a woman, an' ye can't be far wrong anyways. —*Maxims of Private Mulvaney.*

The Inexpressibles gave a ball. They borrowed a seven-pounder from the Gunners, and wreathed it with laurels, and made the dancing-floor plate-glass, and provided a supper, the like of which had never been eaten before, and set two sentries at the door of the room to hold the trays of programme-cards. My friend, Private Mulvaney, was one of the sentries, because he was the tallest man in the regiment. When the dance was fairly started the sentries were released, and Private Mulvaney went to curry favour with the Mess Sergeant in charge of the supper. Whether the Mess Sergeant gave or Mulvaney took, I cannot say. All that I am certain of is that, at supper-time, I found Mulvaney with Private Ortheris, two-thirds of a ham, a loaf of bread, half a *pate-de-foie-gras*, and two magnums of champagne, sitting on the roof of my carriage. As I came up I heard him saying —

'Praise be a danst doesn't come as often as Ord'ly-room, or, by this an' that, Orth'ris, me son, I wud be the dishgrace av the rig'mint instid av the brightest jool in uts crown.'

'*Hand* the Colonel's pet noosance,' said Ortheris. 'But wot makes you curse your rations? This 'ere fizzy stuff's good enough.'

'Stuff, ye oncivilised pagin! 'Tis champagne we're dhrinkin' now. 'Tisn't that I am set ag'in. 'Tis this quare stuff wid the little bits av black leather in it. I misdoubt I will be distressin'ly sick wid it in the mornin'. Fwhat is ut?'

'Goose liver,' I said, climbing on the top of the carriage, for I knew that it was better to sit out with Mulvaney than to dance many dances.

'Goose liver is ut?' said Mulvaney. 'Faith, I'm thinkin' thim that makes it wud do betther to cut up the Colonel. He carries a power av liver undher his right arrum whin the days are warm an' the nights chill. He wud give thim tons an' tons av liver. 'Tis he sez so. "I'm all liver to-day," sez he; an' wid that he ordhers me ten days C. B. for as moild a dhrink as iver a good sodger tuk betune his teeth.'

'That was when 'e wanted for to wash 'isself in the Fort Ditch,' Ortheris explained. 'Said there was too much beer in the Barrack water-butts for a God-fearing man. You was lucky in gettin' orf with wot you did, Mulvaney.'

'Say you so? Now I'm pershuaded I was cruel hard trated, seein' fwhat I've done for the likes av him in the days whin my eyes were wider opin than they are now. Man alive, for the Colonel to whip *me* on the peg in that way! Me that have saved the repitation av a ten times better man than him! 'Twas ne-farious — an' that manes a power av evil!'

'Never mind the nefariousness,' I said. 'Whose reputation did you save?'

'More's the pity, 'twasn't my own, but I tuk more trouble wid ut than av ut was. 'Twas just my way, messin' wid fwhat was no business av mine. Hear now!' He settled himself at ease on the top of the carriage. 'I'll tell you all about ut. Av coorse I will name no names, for there's wan that's an orf'cer's lady now, that was in ut, and no more will I name places, for a man is thracked by a place.'

'Eyah!' said Ortheris lazily, 'but this is a mixed story wot's comin'.'

'Wanst upon a time, as the childer-books say, I was a recruity.'

'Was you though?' said Ortheris; 'now that's extry-ordinary!'

'Orth'ris,' said Mulvaney, 'av you opin thim lips av yours again, I will, savin' your presince, Sorr, take you by the slack av your trousers an' heave you.'

'I'm mum,' said Ortheris. 'Wot 'appened when you was a recruity?'

‘I was a betther recruity than you iver was or will be, but that’s neither here nor there. Thin I became a man, an’ the divil of a man I was fifteen years ago. They called me Buck Mulvaney in thim days, an’, begad, I tuk a woman’s eye. I did that! Ortheris, ye scrub, fwhat are ye sniggerin’ at? Do you misdoubt me?’

‘Devil a doubt!’ said Ortheris; ‘but I’ve ‘eard summat like that before!’

Mulvaney dismissed the impertinence with a lofty wave of his hand and continued —

‘An’ the orf’cers av the rig’mint I was in in thim days *was* orf’cers – gran’ men, wid a manner on ‘em, an’ a way wid ‘em such as is not made these days – all but wan – wan o’ the capt’ns. A bad dhrill, a wake voice, an’ a limp leg – thim three things are the signs av a bad man. You bear that in your mind, Orth’ris, me son.

‘An’ the Colonel av the rig’mint had a daughter – wan av thim lamblike, bleatin’, pick-me-up-an’-carry-me-or-I’ll-die gurls such as was made for the natural prey av men like the Capt’n, who was iverlastin’ payin’ coort to her, though the Colonel he said time an’ over, “Kape out av the brute’s way, my dear.” But he niver had the heart for to send her away from the throuble, bein’ as he was a widower, an’ she their wan child.’

‘Stop a minute, Mulvaney,’ said I; ‘how in the world did you come to know these things?’

‘How did I come?’ said Mulvaney, with a scornful grunt; ‘bekase I’m turned durin’ the Quane’s pleasure to a lump av wood, lookin’ out straight forninst me, wid a – a – candelabrum in my hand, for you to pick your cards out av, must I not see nor feel? Av coorse I du! Up my back, an’ in my boots, an’ in the short hair av the neck – that’s where I kape my eyes whin I’m on duty an’ the reg’lar wans are fixed. Know! Take my word for it, Sorr, ivrything an’ a great dale more is known in a rig’mint; or fwhat wud be the use av a Mess Sargint, or a Sargint’s wife doin’ wet-nurse to the Major’s baby? To reshume. He was a bad dhrill was this Capt’n – a rotten bad dhrill – an’ whin first I ran me eye over him, I sez to myself: “My Militia bantam!” I sez, “My cock av a Gosport dunghill” – ‘twas from Portsmouth he came to us – “there’s combs to be cut,” sez I, “an’ by the grace av God, ’tis Terence Mulvaney will cut thim.”

‘So he wint menowderin’, and minanderin’, an’ blandandherin’ roun’ an’ about the Colonel’s daughter, an’ she, poor innocint, lookin’ at him like a Comm’ssariat bullock looks at the Comp’ny cook. He’d a dhirty little scrub av a black moustache, an’ he twisted an’ turned ivry wurrd he used as av he found ut too sweet for to spit out. Eyah! He was a tricky man an’ a liar by natur’. Some are born so. He was wan. I knew he was over his belt in money borrowed from natives; besides a lot av other matthers which, in regard for your presince, Sorr, I will oblitherate. A little av fwhat I knew, the Colonel knew, for he wud have none av him, an’ that, I’m thinkin’, by fwhat happened aftherwards, the Capt’n knew.

‘Wan day, bein’ mortal idle, or they wud never ha’ thried ut, the rig’mint gave amshure theatricals – orf’cers an’ orf’cers’ ladies. You’ve seen the likes time an’ agin, Sorr, an’ poor fun ‘tis for them that sit in the back row an’ stamp wid their boots for the honour av the rig’mint. I was told off for to shif’ the scenes, haulin’ up this an’ draggin’ down that. Light work ut was, wid lashins av beer and the gurl that dhressed the orf’cers’ ladies – but she died in Aggra twelve years gone, an’ my tongue’s gettin’ the betther av me. They was actin’ a play thing called *Sweethearts*, which you may ha’ heard av, an’ the Colonel’s daughter she was a lady’s maid. The Capt’n was a boy called Broom – Spread Broom was his name in the play. Thin I saw – ut come out in the actin’ – fwhat I niver saw before, an’ that was that he was no gentleman. They was too much together, thim two, a-whishperin’ behind the scenes I shifted, an’ some av what they said I heard; for I was death – blue death an’ ivy – on the comb-cuttin’. He was iverlastin’ly oppressing her to fall in wid some sneakin’ schame av his, an’ she was thryin’ to stand out against him, but not as though she was set in her will. I wonder now in thim days that my ears did not grow a yard on me head wid list’nin’. But I looked straight forninst me an’ hauled up this an’ dragged down that, such as was my duty, an’ the orf’cers’ ladies sez one to

another, thinkin' I was out av listen-reach: "Fwhat an obligin' young man is this Corp'ril Mulvaney!" I was a Corp'ril then. I was rejuiced aftherwards, but, no matther, I was a Corp'ril wanst.

'Well, this *Sweethearts*" business wint on like most amshure theatricals, an' barrin' fwhat I suspicioned, 'twasn't till the dhress-rehearsal that I saw for certain that thim two – he the blackguard, an' she no wiser than she should ha' been – had put up an evasion.'

'A what?' said I.

'E-vasion! Fwhat you call an elopemint. E-vasion I calls it, bekaze, exceptin' whin 'tis right an' natural an' proper, 'tis wrong an' dhirty to steal a man's wan child she not knowin' her own mind. There was a Sargint in the Comm'ssariat who set my face upon e-vasions. I'll tell you about that –'

'Stick to the bloomin' Captains, Mulvaney,' said Ortheris; 'Comm'ssariat Sargints is low.'

Mulvaney accepted the amendment and went on: —

'Now I knew that the Colonel was no fool, any more than me, for I was hild the smartest man in the rig'mint, an' the Colonel was the best orf'cer commandin' in Asia; so fwhat he said an' I said was a mortal truth. We knew that the Capt'n was bad, but, for reasons which I have already obliterated, I knew more than me Colonel. I wud ha' rolled out his face wid the butt av my gun before permittin' av him to steal the gurl. Saints knew av he wud ha' married her, and av he didn't she wud be in great tormint, an' the divil av a "scandal." But I niver sthruck, niver raised me hand on my shuperior orf'cer; an' that was a merricle now I come to considher it.'

'Mulvaney, the dawn's risin',' said Ortheris, 'an' we're no nearer 'ome than we was at the beginnin'. Lend me your pouch. Mine's all dust.'

Mulvaney pitched his pouch over, and filled his pipe afresh.

'So the dhress-rehearsal came to an end, an', bekaze I was curious, I stayed behind whin the scene-shiftin' was ended, an' I shud ha' been in barricks, lyin' as flat as a toad under a painted cottage thing. They was talkin' in whispers, an' she was shiverin' an' gaspin' like a fresh-hukked fish. "Are you sure you've got the hang av the manewvers?" sez he, or wurrds to that effec', as the coort-martial sez. "Sure as death," sez she, "but I misdoubt 'tis cruel hard on my father." "Damn your father," sez he, or anyways 'twas fwhat he thought, "the arrangement is as clear as mud. Jungi will drive the carr'ge afther all's over, an' you come to the station, cool an' aisy, in time for the two o'clock thrain, where I'll be wid your kit." "Faith," thinks I to myself, "thin there's a ayah in the business tu!"

'A powerful bad thing is a ayah. Don't you niver have any thruck wid wan. Thin he began sootherin' her, an' all the orf'cers an' orf'cers' ladies left, an' they put out the lights. To explain the theory av the flight, as they say at Muskthry, you must understand that afther this *Sweethearts*" nonsense was ended, there was another little bit av a play called *Couples*– some kind av couple or another. The gurl was actin' in this, but not the man. I suspicioned he'd go to the station wid the gurl's kit at the end av the first piece. 'Twas the kit that flustered me, for I knew for a Capt'n to go trapasing about the impire wid the Lord knew what av a *truso* on his arrum was nefarious, an' wud be worse than easin' the flag, so far as the talk aftherwards wint.'

'Old on, Mulvaney. Wot's *truso*?' said Ortheris.

'You're an oncivilised man, me son. Whin a gurl's married, all her kit an' 'coutrements are *truso*, which manes weddin'-portion. An' 'tis the same whin she's runnin' away, even wid the biggest blackguard on the Army List.

'So I made my plan av campaign. The Colonel's house was a good two miles away. "Dennis," sez I to my colour-sargint, "av you love me lend me your kyart, for me heart is bruk an' me feet is sore wid trampin' to and from this foolishness at the Gaff." An' Dennis lent ut, wid a rampin', stampin' red stallion in the shafts. Whin they was all settled down to their *Sweethearts* for the first scene, which was a long wan, I slips outside and into the kyart. Mother av Hivin! but I made that horse walk, an' we came into the Colonel's compound as the divil wint through Athlone – in standin' leps. There was no one there excipt the servints, an' I wint round to the back an' found the girl's ayah.

“Ye black brazen Jezebel,” sez I, “sellin’ your masther’s honour for five rupees – pack up all the Miss Sahib’s kit an’ look slippy! *Capt’n Sahib’s* order,” sez I. “Going to the station we are,” I sez, an’ wid that I laid my finger to my nose an’ looked the schamin’ sinner I was.

”*Bote acchy*,” says she; so I knew she was in the business, an’ I piled up all the sweet talk I’d iver learnt in the bazars on to this she-bullock, an’ prayed av her to put all the quick she knew into the thing. While she packed, I stud outside an’ sweated, for I was wanted for to shif the second scene. I tell you, a young gurl’s e-vasion manes as much baggage as a rig’mint on the line av march! “Saints help Dennis’s springs,” thinks I, as I bundled the stuff into the thrap, “for I’ll have no mercy!”

“I’m comin’ too,” says the ayah.

“No, you don’t,” sez I, “later —*pechy!* You *baito* where you are. I’ll *pechy* come an’ bring you *sart*, along with me, you maraudin” — niver mind fwhat I called her.

‘Thin I wint for the Gaff, an’ by the special ordher av Providence, for I was doin’ a good work you will ondersthand, Dennis’s springs hild toight. “Now, whin the Capt’n goes for that kit,” thinks I, “he’ll be throubled.” At the end av *Sweethearts* off the Capt’n runs in his kyart to the Colonel’s house, an’ I sits down on the steps and laughs. Wanst an’ again I slipped in to see how the little piece was goin’, an’ whin ut was near endin’ I stepped out all among the carr’ges an’ sings out very softly, “Jungi!” Wid that a carr’ge began to move, an’ I waved to the dhriver. “*Hitherao!*” sez I, an’ he *hitheraoed* till I judged he was at proper distance, an’ thin I tuk him, fair an’ square betune the eyes, all I knew for good or bad, an’ he dhropped wid a guggle like the canteen beer-engine whin ut’s runnin’ low. Thin I ran to the kyart an’ tuk out all the kit an’ piled it into the carr’ge, the sweat runnin’ down my face in dhrops. “Go home,” sez I, to the *sais*; “you’ll find a man close here. Very sick he is. Take him away, an’ av you iver say wan wurrd about fwhat you’ve *dekkloed*, I’ll *marrow* you till your own wife won’t *sumjao* who you are!” Thin I heard the stampin’ av feet at the ind av the play, an’ I ran in to let down the curtain. Whin they all came out the gurl thried to hide herself behind wan av the pillars, an’ sez “Jungi” in a voice that wouldn’t ha’ scared a hare. I run over to Jungi’s carr’ge an’ tuk up the lousy old horse-blanket on the box, wrapped my head an’ the rest av me in ut, an’ dhrove up to where she was.

“Miss Sahib,” sez I; “going to the station? *Captain Sahib’s* order!” an’ widout a sign she jumped in all among her own kit.

‘I laid to an’ dhruv like steam to the Colonel’s house before the Colonel was there, an’ she screamed an’ I thought she was goin’ off. Out comes the ayah, saying all sorts av things about the Capt’n havin’ come for the kit an’ gone to the station.

“Take out the luggage, you divil,” sez I, “or I’ll murther you!”

‘The lights av the thraps people comin’ from the Gaff was showin’ across the parade ground, an’, by this an’ that, the way thim two women worked at the bundles an’ thrunks was a caution! I was dyin’ to help, but, seein’ I didn’t want to be known, I sat wid the blanket roun’ me an’ coughed an’ thanked the Saints there was no moon that night.

‘Whin all was in the house again, I niver asked for *bukshish* but dhruv tremenjus in the opp’ site way from the other carr’ge an’ put out my lights. Presintly, I saw a naygur man wallowin’ in the road. I slipped down before I got to him, for I suspicioned Providence was wid me all through that night. ‘Twas Jungi, his nose smashed in flat, all dumb sick as you please. Dennis’s man must have tilted him out av the thrap. Whin he came to, “Hutt!” sez I, but he began to howl.

“You black lump av dirt,” I sez, “is this the way you dhrove your *gharri*? That *tikka* has been *owin*” an’ *fer-owin*” all over the bloomin’ country this whole bloomin’ night, an’ you as *mut-walla* as Davey’s sow. Get up, you hog!” sez I, louder, for I heard the wheels av a thrap in the dark; “get up an’ light your lamps, or you’ll be run into!” This was on the road to the Railway Station.

“Fwhat the divil’s this?” sez the Capt’n’s voice in the dhark, an’ I could judge he was in a lather av rage.

“*Gharri* dhriver here, dh drunk, Sorr,” sez I; “I’ve found his *gharri* sthrayin’ about cantonmints, an’ now I’ve found him.”

“Oh!” sez the Capt’n; “fwhat’s his name?” I stooped down an’ pretended to listen.

“He sez his name’s Jungi, Sorr,” sez I.

“Hould my harse,” sez the Capt’n to his man, an’ wid that he gets down wid the whip an’ lays into Jungi, just mad wid rage an’ swearin’ like the scutt he was.

‘I thought, afther a while, he wud kill the man, so I sez: – “Stop, Sorr, or you’ll, murdher him!” That dhrew all his fire on me, an’ he cursed me into Blazes, an’ out again. I stud to attenshin an’ saluted: – “Sorr,” sez I, “av ivry man in this wurruld had his rights, I’m thinkin’ that more than wan wud be beaten to a jelly for this night’s work – that niver came off at all, Sorr, as you see?” “Now,” thinks I to myself, “Terence Mulvaney, you’ve cut your own throat, for he’ll sthrike, an’ you’ll knock him down for the good av his sowl an’ your own iverlastin’ dishgrace!”

‘But the Capt’n niver said a single wurrd. He choked where he stud, an’ thin he went into his thrap widout sayin’ good-night, an’ I wint back to barricks.’

‘And then?’ said Ortheris and I together.

‘That was all,’ said Mulvaney; ‘niver another word did I hear av the whole thing. All I know was that there was no e-vasion, an’ that was fwhat I wanted. Now, I put ut to you, Sorr, is ten days’ C. B. a fit an’ a proper tratement for a man who has behaved as me?’

‘Well, any’ow,’ said Ortheris, ‘tweren’t this ‘ere Colonel’s daughter, an’ you *was* blazin’ copped when you tried to wash in the Fort Ditch.’

‘That,’ said Mulvaney, finishing the champagne, ‘is a shuparfluous an’ impert’nint observation.’

OF THOSE CALLED

[Footnote: 1895]

We were wallowing through the China Seas in a dense fog, the horn blowing every two minutes for the benefit of the fishery craft that crowded the waterways. From the bridge the fo'c'sle was invisible; from the hand-wheel at the stern the captain's cabin. The fog held possession of everything – the pearly white fog. Once or twice when it tried to lift, we saw a glimpse of the oily sea, the flitting vision of a junk's sail spread in the vain hope of catching the breeze, or the buoys of a line of nets. Somewhere close to us lay the land, but it might have been the Kurile Islands for aught we knew. Very early in the morning there passed us, not a cable's-length away, but as unseen as the spirits of the dead, a steamer of the same line as ours. She howled melodiously in answer to our bellowing, and passed on.

'Suppose she had hit us,' said a man from Saigon. 'Then we should have gone down,' answered the chief officer sweetly. 'Beastly thing to go down in a fog,' said a young gentleman who was travelling for pleasure. 'Chokes a man both ways, y' know.' We were comfortably gathered in the smoking-room, the weather being too cold to venture on the deck. Conversation naturally turned upon accidents of fog, the horn tooting significantly in the pauses between the tales. I heard of the wreck of the *Eric*, the cutting down of the *Strathnairn* within half a mile of harbour, and the carrying away of the bow plates of the *Sigismund* outside Sandy Hook.

'It is astonishing,' said the man from Saigon, 'how many true stories are put down as sea yarns. It makes a man almost shrink from telling an anecdote.'

'Oh, please don't shrink on our account,' said the smoking-room with one voice.

'It's not my own story,' said the man from Saigon. 'A fellow on a Massageries boat told it me. He had been third officer of a sort on a Geordie tramp – one of those lumbering, dish-bottomed coal-barges where the machinery is tied up with a string and the plates are rivetted with putty. The way he told his tale was this. The tramp had been creeping along some sea or other with a chart ten years old and the haziest sort of chronometers when she got into a fog – just such a fog as we have now.'

Here the smoking-room turned round as one man, and looked through the windows.

'In the man's own words, "just when the fog was thickest, the engines broke down. They had been doing this for some weeks, and we were too weary to care. I went forward of the bridge, and leaned over the side, wondering where I should ever get something that I could call a ship, and whether the old hulk would fall to pieces as she lay. The fog was as thick as any London one, but as white as steam. While they were tinkering at the engines below, I heard a voice in the fog about twenty yards from the ship's side, calling out, "Can you climb on board if we throw you a rope?" That startled me, because I fancied we were going to be run down the next minute by a ship engaged in rescuing a man overboard. I shouted for the engine-room whistle; and it whistled about five minutes, but never the sound of a ship could we hear. The ship's boy came forward with some biscuit for me. As he put it into my hand, I heard the voice in the fog, crying out about throwing us a rope. This time it was the boy that yelled, "Ship on us!" and off went the whistle again, while the men in the engine-room – it generally took the ship's crew to repair the *Hespa's* engines – tumbled upon deck to know what we were doing. I told them about the hail, and we listened in the smother of the fog for the sound of a screw. We listened for ten minutes, then we blew the whistle for another ten. Then the crew began to call the ship's boy a fool, meaning that the third mate was no better. When they were going down below, I heard the hail the third time, so did the ship's boy. "There you are," I said, "it is not twenty yards from us." The engineer sings out, "I heard it too! Are you all asleep?" Then the crew began to

swear at the engineer; and what with discussion, argument, and a little swearing, – for there is not much discipline on board a tramp, – we raised such a row that our skipper came aft to enquire. I, the engineer, and the ship's boy stuck to our tale. 'Voices or no voices,' said the captain, 'you'd better patch the old engines up, and see if you've got enough steam to whistle with. I've a notion that we've got into rather too crowded ways.'

“The engineer stayed on deck while the men went down below. The skipper hadn't got back to the chart-room before I saw thirty feet of bowsprit hanging over the break of the fo'c'sle. Thirty feet of bowsprit, sir, doesn't belong to anything that sails the seas except a sailing-ship or a man-of-war. I speculated quite a long time, with my hands on the bulwarks, as to whether our friend was soft wood or steel plated. It would not have made much difference to us, anyway; but I felt there was more honour in being rammed, you know. Then I knew all about it. It was a ram. We opened out. I am not exaggerating – we opened out, sir, like a cardboard box. The other ship cut us two-thirds through, a little behind the break of the fo'c'sle. Our decks split up lengthways. The mizzen-mast bounded out of its place, and we heeled over. Then the other ship blew a fog-horn. I remember thinking, as I took water from the port bulwark, that this was rather ostentatious after she had done all the mischief. After that, I was a mile and a half under sea, trying to go to sleep as hard as I could. Some one caught hold of my hair, and waked me up. I was hanging to what was left of one of our boats under the lee of a large English ironclad. There were two men with me; the three of us began to yell. A man on the ship sings out, 'Can you climb on board if we throw you a rope?' They weren't going to let down a fine new man-of-war's boat to pick up three half-drowned rats. We accepted the invitation. We climbed – I, the engineer, and the ship's boy. About half an hour later the fog cleared entirely; except for the half of the boat away in the offing, there was neither stick nor string on the sea to show that the *Hespa* had been cut down.”

'And what do you think of that now?' said the man from Saigon.

PRIVATE LEAROYD'S STORY

And he told a tale. —*Chronicles of Gautama Buddha*

FAR from the haunts of Company Officers who insist upon kit-inspections, far from keen-nosed Sergeants who sniff the pipe stuffed into the bedding-roll, two miles from the tumult of the barracks, lies the Trap. It is an old dry well, shadowed by a twisted *pipal* tree and fenced with high grass. Here, in the years gone by, did Private Ortheris establish his depot and menagerie for such possessions, dead and living, as could not safely be introduced to the barrack-room. Here were gathered Houdin pullets, and fox-terriers of undoubted pedigree and more than doubtful ownership, for Ortheris was an inveterate poacher and pre-eminent among a regiment of neat-handed dog-stealers.

Never again will the long lazy evenings return wherein Ortheris, whistling softly, moved surgeon-wise among the captives of his craft at the bottom of the well; when Learoyd sat in the niche, giving sage counsel on the management of 'tykes,' and Mulvaney, from the crook of the overhanging *pipal*, waved his enormous boots in benediction above our heads, delighting us with tales of Love and War, and strange experiences of cities and men.

Ortheris – landed at last in the 'little stuff bird-shop' for which your soul longed; Learoyd – back again in the smoky, stone-ribbed North, amid the clang of the Bradford looms; Mulvaney – grizzled, tender, and very wise Ulysses, sweltering on the earthwork of a Central India line – judge if I have forgotten old days in the Trap!

Orth'ris, as allus thinks he knaws more than other foaks, said she wasn't a real laady, but nobbut a Hewrasian. I don't gainsay as her culler was a bit doosky like. But she *was* a laady. Why, she rode iv a carriage, an' good 'osses, too, an' her 'air was that oiled as you could see your faice in it, an' she wore dimond rings an' a goold chain, an' silk an' satin dresses as mun 'a' cost a deal, for it isn't a cheap shop as keeps enough o' one pattern to fit a figure like hers. Her name was Mrs. DeSussa, an't' waay I coom to be acquainted wi' her was along of our Colonel's Laady's dog Rip.

I've seen a vast o' dogs, but Rip was t' prettiest picter of a cliver fox-tarrier 'at iver I set eyes on. He could do owt you like but speak, an' t' Colonel's Laady set more store by him than if he hed been a Christian. She hed bairns of her awn, but they was i' England, and Rip seemed to get all t' coodlin' and pettin' as belonged to a bairn by good right.

But Rip were a bit on a rover, an' hed a habit o' breakin' out o' barricks like, and trottin' round t' plaice as if he were t' Cantonment Magistrate coom round inspectin'. The Colonel leathers him once or twice, but Rip didn't care an' kept on gooin' his rounds, wi' his taail a-waggin' as if he were flag-signallin' to t' world at large 'at he was 'gettin' on nicely, thank yo', and how's yo'sen?' An' then t' Colonel, as was noa sort of a hand wi' a dog, tees him oop. A real clipper of a dog, an' it's noa wonder yon laady. Mrs. DeSussa, should tek a fancy tiv him. Theer's one o' t' Ten Commandments says yo' maun't cuwet your neebor's ox nor his jackass, but it doesn't say nowt about his tarrier dogs, an' happen that's t' reason why Mrs. DeSussa cuvveted Rip, tho' she went to church reg'lar along wi' her husband who was so mich darker 'at if he hedn't such a good coaat tiv his back yo' might ha' called him a black man and nut tell a lee nawther. They said he addled his brass i' jute, an' he'd a rare lot on it.

Well, you seen, when they teed Rip up, t' poor awd lad didn't enjoy very good 'elth. So t' Colonel's Laady sends for me as 'ad a naame for bein' knowledgeable about a dog, an' axes what's ailin' wi' him.

'Why,' says I, 'he's gotten t' mopes, an' what he wants is his libbaty an' coompany like t' rest on us, wal happen a rat or two 'ud liven him oop. It's low, mum,' says I, 'is rats, but it's t' nature of

a dog; an' soa's cuttin' round an' meetin' another dog or two an' passin' t' time o' day, an' hevvin' a bit of a turn-up wi' him like a Christian.'

So she says *her* dog maunt niver fight an' noa Christians iver fought.

'Then what's a soldier for?' says I; an' I explains to her t' contrairy qualities of a dog, 'at, when yo' coom to think on't, is one o't' curusest things as is. For they larn to behave theirsens like gentlemen born, fit for t' fost o' coompany – they tell me t' Widdy herself is fond of a good dog and knaws one when she sees it as well as onny body: then on t' other hand a-tewin' round after cats an' gettin' mixed oop i' all manners o' blackguardly street-rows, an' killin' rats, an' fightin' like divils.

T' Colonel's Laady says: – 'Well, Learoyd, I doan't agree wi' you, but you're right in a way o' speeakin', an' I should like yo' to tek Rip out a-walkin' wi' you sometimes; but yo' maun't let him fight, nor chase cats, nor do nowt 'orrid': an them was her very wods.

Soa Rip an' me goes out a-walkin' o' evenin's, he bein' a dog as did credit tiv a man, an' I catches a lot o' rats an we hed a bit of a match on in an awd dry swimmin'-bath at back o't' cantonments, an' it was none so long afore he was as bright as a button again. He hed a way o' flyin' at them big yaller pariah dogs as if he was a harrow offan a bow, an' though his weight were nowt, he tuk 'em so suddint-like they rolled over like skittles in a halley, an' when they coot he stretched after 'em as if he were rabbit-runnin'. Saame with cats when he cud get t' cat agaate o' runnin'.

One evenin', him an' me was trespassin' ovver a compound wall after one of them mongooses 'at he'd started, an' we was busy grubbin' round a prickle-bush, an' when we looks up there was Mrs. DeSussa wi' a parasel ovver her shoulder, a-watchin' us. 'Oh my!' she sings out; 'there's that lovelee dog! Would he let me stroke him, Mister Soldier?'

'Ay, he would, mum,' sez I, 'for he's fond o' laady's coompany. Coom here, Rip, an' speak to this kind laady.' An'Rip, seein' 'at t'mongoose hed gotten clean awaay, cooms up like t' gentleman he was, nivver a hauptorth shy or okkord.

'Oh, you beautiful – you prettee dog!' she says, clippin' an' chantin' her speech in a way them sooart has o' their awn; 'I would like a dog like you. You are so verree lovelee – so awfullee prettee,' an' all thot sort o' talk, 'at a dog o' sense mebbe thinks nowt on, tho' he bides it by reason o' his breedin'.

An' then I meks him joomp ovver my swagger-cane, an' shek hands, an' beg, an' lie dead, an' a lot o' them tricks as laadies teeaches dogs, though I doan't haud with it mysen, for it's makin' a fool o' a good dog to do such like.

An' at lung length it cooms out 'at she'd been thrawin' sheep's eyes, as t' sayin' is, at Rip for many a day. Yo' see, her childer was grown up, an' she'd nowt mich to do, an' were allus fond of a dog. Soa she axes me if I'd tek somethin' to dhrink. An' we goes into t' drawn-room wheer her husband was a-settin'. They meks a gurt fuss ower t' dog an' I has a bottle o' aale, an' he gave me a handful o' cigars.

Soa I coomed away, but t' awd lass sings out – 'Oh, Mister Soldier, please coom again and bring that prettee dog.'

I didn't let on to t' Colonel's Laady about Mrs. DeSussa, and Rip, he says nowt nawther; an' I gooes again, an' ivry time there was a good dhrink an' a handful o' good smooaks. An' I telled t' awd lass a heeap more about Rip than I'd ever heeared; how he tuk t' fost prize at Lunnon dog-show and cost thotty-three pounds fower shillin' from t' man as bred him; 'at his own brother was t' propputty o' t' Prince o' Wailes, an' 'at he had a pedigree as long as a Dook's. An' she lapped it all oop an' were niver tired o' admirin' him. But when t' awed lass took to givin' me money an' I seed 'at she were gettin' fair fond about t' dog, I began to suspicion summat. Onny body may give a soldier t' price of a pint in a friendly way an' theer's no 'arm done, but when it cooms to five rupees slipt into your hand, sly like, why, it's what t' 'lectioneerin' fellows calls bribery an' corruption. Specially when Mrs. DeSussa threwed hints how t' cold weather would soon be ower an' she was goin' to Munsooree Pahar an' we was goin' to Rawalpindi, an' she would niver see Rip any more onless somebody she knowed on would be kind tiv her.

Soa I tells Mulvaney an' Ortheris all t' taale thro', beginnin' to end.

‘Tis larceny that wicked ould laady manes,’ says t’ Irishman, ‘tis felony she is sejuicin’ ye into, my frind Learoyd, but I’ll purtect your innocince. I’ll save ye from the wicked wiles av that wealthy ould woman, an’ I’ll go wid ye this evenin’ and spake to her the wurds av truth an’ honesty. But Jock,’ says he, waggin’ his heead, ‘twas not like ye to kape all that good dhrink an’ thim fine cigars to yerself, while Orth’ris here an’ me have been prowlin’ round wid throats as dry as lime-kilns, and nothin’ to smoke but Canteen plug. ‘Twas a dhirty thrick to play on a comrade, for why should you, Learoyd, be balancin’ yourself on the butt av a satin chair, as if Terence Mulvaney was not the aquil av anybody who thrades in jute!’

‘Let alone me sticks in Orth’ris, ‘but that’s like life. Them wot’s really fitted to decorate society get no show while a blunderin’ Yorkshireman like you – ’

‘Nay,’ says I, ‘it’s none o’ t’ blunderin’ Yorkshireman she wants; it’s Rip. He’s the gentleman this journey.’

Soa t’ next day, Mulvaney an’ Rip an’ me goes to Mrs. DeSussa’s, an’ t’ Irishman bein’ a stranger she wor a bit shy at fust. But you’ve heared Mulvaney talk, an’ yo’ may believe as he fairly bewitched t’ awd lass wal she let out ‘at she wanted to tek Rip away wi’ her to Munsooree Pahar. Then Mulvaney changes his tune an’ axes her solemn-like if she’d thought o’ t’ consequences o’ gettin’ two poor but honest soldiers sent t’ Andamning Islands. Mrs. DeSussa began to cry, so Mulvaney turns round oppen t’ other tack and smooths her down, allowin’ ‘at Rip ud be a vast better off in t’ Hills than down i’ Bengal, and ‘twas a pity he shouldn’t go wheer he was so well beliked. And soa he went on, backin’ an’ fillin’ an’ workin’ up t’ awd lass wal she felt as if her life warn’t worth nowt if she didn’t hev t’ dog.

Then all of a suddint he says: – ‘But ye *shall* have him, marm, for I’ve a feelin’ heart, not like this could-blooded Yorkshireman; but ‘twill cost ye not a penny less than three hundher rupees.’

‘Don’t yo’ believe him, mum,’ says I; ‘t’ Colonel’s Laady wouldn’t tek five hundred for him.’

‘Who said she would?’ says Mulvaney; ‘it’s not buyin’ him I mane, but for the sake o’ this kind, good laady, I’ll do what I never dreamt to do in my life. I’ll stale him!’

‘Don’t say steal,’ says Mrs. DeSussa; ‘he shall have the happiest home. Dogs often get lost, you know, and then they stray, an’ he likes me and I like him as I niver liked a dog yet, an’ I *must* hev him. If I got him at t’ last minute I could carry him off to Munsooree Pahar and nobody would niver know.’

Now an’ again Mulvaney looked acrost at me, an’ though I could mak nowt o’ what he was after, I concluded to take his leead.

‘Well, mum,’ I says, ‘I never thowt to coom down to dog-stealin’, but if my comrade sees how it could be done to oblige a laady like yo’sen, I’m nut t’ man to hod back, tho’ it’s a bad business I’m thinkin’, an’ three hundred rupees is a poor set-off again t’ chance of them Damning Islands as Mulvaney talks on.’

‘I’ll mek it three fifty,’ says Mrs. DeSussa; ‘only let me hev t’ dog!’

So we let her persuade us, an’ she teks Rip’s measure theer an’ then, an’ sent to Hamilton’s to order a silver collar again t’ time when he was to be her awn, which was to be t’ day she set off for Munsooree Pahar.

‘Sitha, Mulvaney,’ says I, when we was outside, ‘you’re niver goin’ to let her hev Rip!’

‘An’ would ye disappoint a poor old woman?’ says he; ‘she shall have *a* Rip.’

‘An’ wheer’s he to come through?’ says I.

‘Learoyd, my man,’ he sings out, ‘you’re a pretty man av your inches an’ a good comrade, but your head is made av duff. Isn’t our friend Orth’ris a Taxidermist, an’ a rale artist wid his nimble white fingers? An’ what’s a Taxidermist but a man who can thrate shkins? Do ye mind the white dog that belongs to the Canteen Sargint, bad cess to him – he that’s lost half his time an’ snarlin’ the rest? He shall be lost for *good* now; an’ do ye mind that he’s the very spit in shape an’ size av the Colonel’s, barrin’ that his tail is an inch too long, an’ he has none av the colour that divarsifies the rale Rip, an’ his timper is that av his mather an’ worse. But fwhat is an inch on a dog’s tail? An’ fwhat to a professional like Orth’ris is a few ringstraked shpots av black, brown, an’ white? Nothin’ at all, at all.’

Then we meets Orth'ris, an' that little man, bein' sharp as a needle, seed his way through t' business in a minute. An' he went to work a-practisin' 'air-dyes the very next day, beginnin' on some white rabbits he had, an' then he drored all Rip's markin's on t' back of a white Commissariat bullock, so as to get his 'and in an' be sure of his colours; shadin' off brown into black as nateral as life. If Rip hed a fault it was too mich markin', but it was straingely reg'lar an' Orth'ris settled himself to make a fost-rate job on it when he got haud o' t' Canteen Sargint's dog. Theer niver was sich a dog as thot for bad timper, an' it did nut get no better when his tail hed to be fettled an inch an' a half shorter. But they may talk o' theer Royal Academies as they like. *I* niver seed a bit o' animal paintin' to beat t' copy as Orth'ris made of Rip's marks, wal t' picter itself was snarlin' all t' time an' tryin' to get at Rip standin' theer to be copied as good as goold.

Orth'ris allus hed as mich conceit on himsen as would lift a balloon, an' he wor so pleased wi' his sham Rip he wor for tekking him to Mrs. DeSussa before she went away. But Mulvaney an' me stopped thot, knowin' Orth'ris's work, though niver so cliver, was nobut skin-deep.

An' at last Mrs. DeSussa fixed t' day for startin' to Munsooree Pahar. We was to tek Rip to t' stayshun i' a basket an' hand him ovver just when they was ready to start, an' then she'd give us t' brass – as was agreed upon.

An' my wod! It were high time she were off, for them 'air-dyes upon t' cur's back took a vast of paintin' to keep t' reet culler, tho' Orth'ris spent a matter o' seven rupees six annas i' t' best drooggist shops i' Calcutta.

An' t' Canteen Sargint was lookin' for 'is dog everywheer; an', wi' bein' tied up, t' beast's timper got waur nor ever.

It wor i' t' evenin' when t' train started thro' Howrah, an' we 'elped Mrs. DeSussa wi' about sixty boxes, an' then we gave her t' basket. Orth'ris, for pride av his work, axed us to let him coom along wi' us, an' he couldn't help liftin' t' lid an' showin' t' cur as he lay coiled oop.

'Oh!' says t' awd lass; 'the beautee! How sweet he looks!' An' just then t' beauty snarled an' showed his teeth, so Mulvaney shuts down t' lid and says: 'Ye'll be careful, marm, whin ye tek him out. He's disaccustomed to travellin' by t' railway, an' he'll be sure to want his rale mistress an' his friend Learoyd, so ye'll make allowance for his feelings at fost.'

She would do all thot an' more for the dear, good Rip, an' she would nut oppen t' basket till they were miles away, for fear anybody should recognise him, an' we were real good and kind soldiermen, we were, an' she bonds me a bundle o' notes, an' then cooms up a few of her relations an' friends to say good-by – not more than seventy-five there wasn't – an' we cuts away.

What coom to t' three hundred and fifty rupees? Thot's what I can scarcelins tell yo', but we melted it – we melted it. It was share an' share alike, for Mulvaney said: 'If Learoyd got hold of Mrs. DeSussa first, sure 'twas I that renumbered the Sargint's dog just in the nick av time, an' Orth'ris was the artist av janius that made a work av art out av that ugly piece av ill-nature. Yet, by way av a thank-offerin' that I was not led into felony by that wicked ould woman, I'll send a thrifle to Father Victor for the poor people he's always beggin' for.'

But me an' Orth'ris, he bein' Cockney an' I bein' pretty far north, did nut see it i' t' saame way. We'd gotten t' brass, an' we meant to keep it. An' soa we did – for a short time.

Noa, noa, we niver heered a wod more o' t' awd lass. Our rig'mint went to Pindi, an' t' Canteen Sargint he got himself another tyke instead o' t' one 'at got lost so reg'lar, an' was lost for good at last.

THE BIG DRUNK DRAF'

*We're goin' 'ome, we're goin' 'ome —
Our ship is at the shore,
An' you mus' pack your 'aversack,
For we won't come back no more.
Ho, don't you grieve for me,
My lovely Mary Ann,
For I'll many you yet on a fourp'ny bit,
As a time expired ma-a-an!*

Barrack-room Ballad.

An awful thing has happened! My friend, Private Mulvaney, who went home in the *Serapis*, time-expired, not very long ago, has come back to India as a civilian! It was all Dinah Shadd's fault. She could not stand the poky little lodgings, and she missed her servant Abdullah more than words could tell. The fact was that the Mulvaney's had been out here too long, and had lost touch of England.

Mulvaney knew a contractor on one of the new Central India lines, and wrote to him for some sort of work. The contractor said that if Mulvaney could pay the passage he would give him command of a gang of coolies for old sake's sake. The pay was eighty-five rupees a month, and Dinah Shadd said that if Terence did not accept she would make his life a 'basted purgatory.' Therefore the Mulvaney's came out as 'civilians,' which was a great and terrible fall; though Mulvaney tried to disguise it, by saying that he was 'Ker'nel on the railway line, an' a consequinshal man.'

He wrote me an invitation, on a tool-indent form, to visit him; and I came down to the funny little 'construction' bungalow at the side of the line. Dinah Shadd had planted peas about and about, and nature had spread all manner of green stuff round the place. There was no change in Mulvaney except the change of clothing, which was deplorable, but could not be helped. He was standing upon his trolley, haranguing a gangman, and his shoulders were as well drilled, and his big, thick chin was as clean-shaven as ever.

'I'm a civilian now,' said Mulvaney. 'Cud you tell that I was iver a martial man? Don't answer, Sorr, av you're strainin' betune a compliment an' a lie. There's no houldin' Dinah Shadd now she's got a house av her own. Go inside, an' dhrink tay out av chiny in the drrrrawin'-room, an' thin we'll dhrink like Christians undher the tree here. Scutt, ye naygur-folk! There's a Sahib come to call on me, an' that's more than he'll iver do for you onless you run! Get out, an' go on pilin' up the earth, quick, till sundown.'

When we three were comfortably settled under the big *sisham* in front of the bungalow, and the first rush of questions and answers about Privates Ortheris and Learoyd and old times and places had died away, Mulvaney said, reflectively — 'Glory be there's no p'rade to-morrow, an' no bun-headed Corp'ril-bhoy to give you his lip. An' yit I don't know. 'Tis harrd to be something ye niver were an' niver meant to be, an' all the ould days shut up along wid your papers. Eyah! I'm growin' rusty, an' 'tis the will av God that a man mustn't serve his Quane for time an' all.'

He helped himself to a fresh peg, and sighed furiously.

'Let your beard grow, Mulvaney,' said I, 'and then you won't be troubled with those notions. You'll be a real civilian.'

Dinah Shadd had told me in the drawing-room of her desire to coax Mulvaney into letting his beard grow. 'Twas so civilian-like,' said poor Dinah, who hated her husband's hankering for his old life.

‘Dinah Shadd, you’re a dishgrace to an honest, clancramped man!’ said Mulvaney, without replying to me. ‘Grow a beard on your own chin, darlint, and lave my razors alone. They’re all that stand betune me and dis-ris-pect-ability. Av I didn’t shave, I wud be torminted wid an outrajis thurst; for there’s nothin’ so dhryin’ to the throat as a big billy-goat beard waggin’ undher the chin. Ye wudn’t have me dhrink ALWAYS, Dinah Shadd? By the same token, you’re kapin’ me crool dhry now. Let me look at that whiskey.’

The whiskey was lent and returned, but Dinah Shadd, who had been just as eager as her husband in asking after old friends, rent me with —

‘I take shame for you, Sorr, coming down here – though the Saints know you’re as welkim as the daylight whin you DO come – an’ upsettin’ Terence’s head wid your nonsense about – about fwhat’s much better forgotten. He bein’ a civilian now, an’ you niver was aught else. Can you not let the Army rest? ‘Tis not good for Terence.’

I took refuge by Mulvaney, for Dinah Shadd has a temper of her own.

‘Let be – let be,’ said Mulvaney. ‘Tis only wanst in a way I can talk about the ould days.’ Then to me: – ‘Ye say Dhumshticks is well, an’ his lady tu? I niver knew how I liked the gray garron till I was shut av him an’ Asia.’ – ‘Dhumshticks’ was the nickname of the Colonel commanding Mulvaney’s old regiment. – ‘Will you be seein’ him again? You will. Thin tell him’ – Mulvaney’s eyes began to twinkle – ‘tell him wid Privit – ’

‘MISTER, Terence,’ interrupted Dinah Shadd.

‘Now the Divil an’ all his angils an’ the Firmament av Hiven fly away wid the “Mister,” an’ the sin av making me swear be on your confession, Dinah Shadd! *Privit*, I tell ye. Wid *Privit* Mulvaney’s best obedience, that but for me the last time-expired wud be still pullin’ hair on their way to the sea.’

He threw himself back in the chair, chuckled, and was silent.

‘Mrs. Mulvaney,’ I said, ‘please take up the whiskey, and don’t let him have it until he has told the story.’

Dinah Shadd dexterously whipped the bottle away, saying at the same time, ‘Tis nothing to be proud av,’ and thus captured by the enemy, Mulvaney spake: —

‘Twas on Chuseday week. I was behaderin’ round wid the gangs on the ‘bankmint – I’ve taught the hoppers how to kape step an’ stop screechin’ – whin a head-gangman comes up to me, wid two inches av shirt-tail hanging round his neck an’ a disthressful light in his oi. “Sahib,” sez he, “there’s a rig’mint an’ a half av soldiers up at the junction, knockin’ red cinders out av ivrything an’ ivrybody! They thried to hang me in my cloth,” he sez, “an’ there will be murder an’ ruin an’ rape in the place before nightfall! They say they’re comin’ down here to wake us up. What will we do wid our women-folk?”

“Fetch my throlly!” sez I; “my heart’s sick in my ribs for a wink at anything wid the Quane’s uniform on ut. Fetch my throlly, an’ six av the jildiast men, and run me up in shtyle.”

‘He tuk his best coat,’ said Dinah Shadd reproachfully.

‘Twas to do honour to the Widdy. I cud ha’ done no less, Dinah Shadd. You and your digresshins interfere wid the coorse av the narrative. Have you iver considhered fwhat I wud look like wid me *head* shaved as well as my chin? You bear that in your mind, Dinah darlin’.

‘I was throllied up six miles, all to get a shquint at that draf’. I *knew* ‘twas a spring draf’ goin’ home, for there’s no rig’mint hereabouts, more’s the pity.’

‘Praise the Virgin!’ murmured Dinah Shadd. But Mulvaney did not hear.

‘Whin I was about three-quarters av a mile off the rest-camp, powtherin’ along fit to burrst, I heard the noise av the men an’, on my sowl, Sorr, I cud catch the voice av Peg Barney bellowin’ like a bison wid the belly-ache. You remimber Peg Barney that was in D Comp’ny – a red, hairy scraun, wid a scar on his jaw? Peg Barney that cleared out the Blue Lights’ Jubilee meeting wid the cook-room mop last year?’

‘Thin I knew ut was a draf of the ould rig’mint, an’ I was conshumed wid sorrow for the bhoys that was in charge. We was harrd scrapin’s at any time. Did I iver tell you how Horker Kelley went into clink nakid as Phoebus Apollonius, wid the shirts av the Corp’ril an’ file undher his arrum? An’ *he* was a moild man! But I’m digreshin’. ‘Tis a shame both to the rig’mints and the Army sendin’ down little orf’cer bhoys wid a draf av strong men mad wid liquor an’ the chanst av gettin’ shut av India, an’ *niver a punishment that’s fit to be given right down an’ away from cantonmints to the dock!* ‘Tis this nonsince. Whin I am servin’ my time, I’m undher the Articles av War, an’ can be whipped on the peg for *thim*. But whin I’ve *served* my time, I’m a Reserve man, an’ the Articles av War haven’t any hould on me. An orf’cer *can’t* do anythin’ to a time-expired savin’ confinin’ him to barricks. ‘Tis a wise rig’lation bekaze a time-expired does *not* have any barricks; bein’ on the move all the time. ‘Tis a Solomon av a rig’lation, is that. I wud like to be intruduced to the man that made ut. ‘Tis easier to get colts from a Kibbereen horse-fair into Galway than to take a bad draf’ over ten miles av country. Consiquintly that rig’lation – for fear that the men wud be hurt by the little orf’cer bhoys. No matter. The nearer my throlly came to the rest-camp, the woilder was the shine, an’ the louder was the voice av Peg Barney. “‘Tis good I am here,” thinks I to myself, “for Peg alone is employmint for two or three.” He bein’, I well knew, as copped as a dhrover.

‘Faith, that rest-camp was a sight! The tent-ropes was all skew-nosed, an’ the pegs looked as dhrunk as the men – fifty av thim – the scourin’s, an’ rinsin’s, an’ Divil’s lavin’s av the Ould Rig’mint. I tell you, Sorr, they were dhrunker than any men you’ve ever seen in your mortal life. *How* does a draf’ get dhrunk? How does a frog get fat? They suk ut in through their shkins.

‘There was Peg Barney sittin’ on the groun’ in his shirt – wan shoe off an’ wan shoe on – whackin’ a tent-peg over the head wid his boot, an’ singin’ fit to wake the dead. ‘Twas no clane song that he sung, though. ‘Twas the Divil’s Mass.’

‘What’s that?’ I asked.

‘Whin a bad egg is shut av the Army, he sings the Divil’s Mass for a good riddance; an’ that manes swearin’ at ivrything from the Commandher-in-Chief down to the Room-Corp’ril, such as you niver in your days heard. Some men can swear so as to make green turf crack! Have you iver heard the Curse in an Orange Lodge? The Divil’s Mass is ten times worse, an’ Peg Barney was singin’ ut, whackin’ the tent-peg on the head wid his boot for each man that he cursed. A powerful big voice had Peg Barney, an’ a hard swearer he was whin sober. I stood forninst him, an’ ‘twas not me oi alone that cud tell Peg was dhrunk as a coot.

“Good mornin’ Peg,” I sez, whin he dhrew breath afther cursin’ the Adj’tint Gen’ral; “I’ve put on my best coat to see you, Peg Barney,” sez I.

“Thin take ut off again,” sez Peg Barney, latherin’ away wid the boot; “take ut off an’ dance, ye lousy civilian!”

‘Wid that he begins cursin’ ould Dhumshticks, being so full he clean disremimbers the Brigade-Major an’ the Judge Advokit Gen’ral.

“Do you know me, Peg?” sez I, though me blood was hot in me wid being called a civilian.’

‘An’ him a decent married man!’ wailed Dinah Shadd.

“I do not,” sez Peg, “but dhrunk or sober I’ll tear the hide off your back wid a shovel whin I’ve stopped singin’.”

“Say you so, Peg Barney?” sez I. “‘Tis clear as mud you’ve forgotten me. I’ll assist your autobiography.” Wid that I stretched Peg Barney, boot an’ all, an’ wint into the camp. An awful sight ut was!

“Where’s the orf’cer in charge av the detachment?” sez I to Scrub Greene – the manest little worm that ever walked.

“There’s no orf’cer, ye ould cook,” sez Scrub; “we’re a bloomin’ Republic.”

“Are you that?” sez I; “thin I’m O’Connell the Dictator, an’ by this you will larn to kape a civil tongue in your rag-box.”

‘Wid that I stretched Scrub Greene an’ wint to the orf’cer’s tent. ‘Twas a new little bhoys – not wan I’d iver seen before. He was sittin’ in his tent, purtendin’ not to ‘ave ear av the racket.

‘I saluted – but for the life av me I mint to shake hands whin I went in. ‘Twas the sword hangin’ on the tentpole changed my will.

“Can’t I help, Sorr?” sez I; “‘tis a strong man’s job they’ve given you, an’ you’ll be wantin’ help by sundown.” He was a bhoys wid bowils, that child, an’ a rale gintleman.

“Sit down,” sez he.

“Not before my orf’cer,” sez I; an’ I tould him fwhat my service was.

“I’ve heard av you,” sez he. “You tuk the town av Lungtungpen nakid.”

“Faith,” thinks I, “that’s Honour an’ Glory”; for ‘twas Lift’nint Brazenose did that job. “I’m wid ye, Sorr,” sez I, “if I’m av use. They shud niver ha’ sent you down wid the draf’. Savin’ your presence, Sorr,” I sez, “‘tis only Lift’nint Hackerston in the Ould Rig’mint can manage a Home draf’.”

“I’ve niver had charge of men like this before,” sez he, playin’ wid the pens on the table; “an’ I see by the Rig’lations – ”

“Shut your oi to the Rig’lations, Sorr,” I sez, “till the throoper’s into blue wather. By the Rig’lations you’ve got to tuck thim up for the night, or they’ll be runnin’ foul av my coolies an’ makin’ a shiverarium half through the country. Can you trust your non-coms, Sorr?”

“Yes,” sez he.

“Good,” sez I; “there’ll be throuble before the night. Are you marchin’, Sorr?”

“To the next station,” sez he.

“Better still,” sez I; “there’ll be big throuble.”

“Can’t be too hard on a Home draf’,” sez he; “the great thing is to get thim in-ship.”

“Faith you’ve larnt the half av your lesson, Sorr,” sez I, “but av you shtick to the Rig’lations you’ll niver get thim in-ship at all, at all. Or there won’t be a rag av kit betune thim whin you do.”

‘Twas a dear little orf’cer bhoys, an’ by way av kapin’ his heart up, I tould him fwhat I saw wanst in a draf’ in Egypt.’

‘What was that, Mulvaney?’ said I.

‘Sivin an’ fifty men sittin’ on the bank av a canal, laughin’ at a poor little squidgreen av an orf’cer that they’d made wade into the slush an’ pitch the things out av the boats for their Lord High Mightinesses. That made me orf’cer bhoys woild with indignation.

“Soft an’ aisy, Sorr,” sez I; “you’ve niver had your draf’ in hand since you left cantonmints. Wait till the night, an’ your work will be ready to you. Wid your permission, Sorr, I will investigate the camp, an’ talk to my ould frinds. ‘Tis no manner av use thryin’ to shtop the divilment *now*.”

‘Wid that I wint out into the camp an’ inthrojuded mysilf to ivry man sober enough to remimber me. I was some wan in the ould days, an’ the bhoys was glad to see me – all excipt Peg Barney wid a eye like a tomata five days in the bazar, an’ a nose to match. They come round me an’ shuk me, an’ I tould thim I was in privit employ wid an income av me own, an’ a drrrawin’-room fit to bate the Quane’s; an’ wid me lies an’ me shtories an’ nonsinse gin’rally, I kept ‘em quiet in wan way an’ another, knockin’ roun’ the camp. ‘Twas *bad* even thin whin I was the Angil av Peace.

‘I talked to me ould non-coms —*they* was sober – an’ betune me an’ thim we wore the draf’ over into their tents at the proper time. The little orf’cer bhoys he comes round, decint an’ civil-spoken as might be.

“Rough quarters, men,” sez he, “but you can’t look to be as comfortable as in barricks. We must make the best av things. I’ve shut my eyes to a dale av dog’s tricks today, an’ now there must be no more av ut.”

“No more we will. Come an’ have a dhrink, me son,” sez Peg Barney, staggerin’ where he stud. Me little orf’cer bhoys kep’ his timper.

“You’re a sulky swine, you are,” sez Peg Barney, an’ at that the men in the tent began to laugh.

‘I tould you me orf’cer bhoy had bowils. He cut Peg Barney as near as might be on the oi that I’d squashed whin we first met. Peg wint spinnin’ acrost the tent.

“Peg him out, Sorr,” sez I, in a whishper.

“Peg him out!” sez me orf’cer bhoy, up loud, just as if ‘twas battalion-p’rade an’ he pickin’ his wurds from the Sargint.

‘The non-coms tuk Peg Barney – a howlin’ handful he was – an’ in three minutes he was pegged out – chin down, tight-dhrawn – on his stummick, a tent-peg to each arm an’ leg, swearin’ fit to turn a naygur white.

‘I tuk a peg an’ jammed ut into his ugly jaw. – “Bite on that, Peg Barney,” I sez; “the night is settin’ frosty, an’ you’ll be wantin’ divarsion before the mornin’. But for the Rig’lations you’d be bitin’ on a bullet now at the thriangles, Peg Barney,” sez I.

‘All the draf’ was out av their tents watchin’ Barney bein’ pegged.

“‘Tis agin the Rig’lations! He strook him!” screeches out Scrub Greene, who was always a lawyer; an’ some of the men tuk up the shoutin’.

“Peg out that man!” sez my orf’cer bhoy, niver losin’ his timper; an’ the non-coms wint in and pegged out Scrub Greene by the side av Peg Barney.

‘I cud see that the draf’ was comin’ roun’. The men stud not knowin’ fwat to do.

“Get to your tents!” sez me orf’cer bhoy. “Sargint, put a sintry over these two men.”

‘The men wint back into the tents like jackals, an’ the rest av the night there was no noise at all excipt the stip av the sintry over the two, an’ Scrub Greene blubberin’ like a child. ‘Twas a chilly night, an’ faith, ut sobered Peg Barney.

‘Just before Revelly, my orf’cer bhoy comes out an’ sez: “Loose those men an’ send thim to their tents!” Scrub Greene wint away widout a word, but Peg Barney, stiff wid the cowld, stud like a sheep, thryin’ to make his orf’cer understhand he was sorry for playin’ the goat.

‘There was no tucker in the draf’ whin ut fell in for the march, an’ divil a wurrd about “illegality” cud I hear.

‘I wint to the ould Colour Sargint and I sez: – “Let me die in glory,” sez I. “I’ve seen a man this day!”

“A man he is,” sez ould Hother; “the draf’s as sick as a herrin’. They’ll all go down to the sea like lambs. That bhoy has the bowils av a cantonmint av Gin’rals.”

“Amin,” sez I, “an’ good luck go wid him, wheriver he be, by land or by sea. Let me know how the draf gets clear.”

‘An’ do you know how they *did*? That bhoy, so I was tould by letter from Bombay, bullydamned ‘em down to the dock, till they cudn’t call their sowls their own. From the time they left me oi till they was ‘tween decks, not wan av thim was more than dacintly dh drunk. An’, by the Holy Articles av War, whin they wint aboard they cheered him till they cudn’t spake, an’ *that*, mark you, has not come about wid a draf in the mim’ry av livin’ man! You look to that little orf’cer bhoy. He has bowils. ‘Tis not ivry child that wud chuck the Rig’lations to Flanders an’ stretch Peg Barney on a wink from a brokin an’ dilapidated ould carkiss like mesilf. I’d be proud to serve –’

‘Terence, you’re a civilian,’ said Dinah Shadd warningly.

‘So I am – so I am. Is ut likely I wud forget ut? But he was a gran’ bhoy all the same, an’ I’m only a mud-tipper wid a hod on my shoulthers. The whiskey’s in the heel av your hand, Sorr. Wid your good lave we’ll dhrink to the Ould Rig’mint – three fingers – standin’ up!’

And we drank.

THE WRECK OF THE VISIGOTH

[Footnote: 1895]

‘Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidst the mighty ocean keep
Its own appointed limits deep.’

The lady passengers were trying the wheezy old harmonium in front of the cuddy, because it was Sunday night. In the patch of darkness near the wheel-grating sat the Captain, and the end of his cheroot burned like a head-lamp. There was neither breath nor motion upon the waters through which the screw was thudding. They spread, dull silver, under the haze of the moonlight till they joined the low coast of Malacca away to the eastward. The voices of the singers at the harmonium were held down by the awnings, and came to us with force.

‘Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea.’

It was as though the little congregation were afraid of the vastness of the sea. But a laugh followed, and some one said, ‘Shall we take it through again a little quicker?’ Then the Captain told the story of just such a night, lowering his voice for fear of disturbing the music and the minds of the passengers.

‘She was the *Visigoth*, – five hundred tons, or it may have been six, – in the coasting trade; one of the best steamers and best found on the Kutch-Kasauli line. She wasn’t six years old when the thing happened: on just such a night as this, with an oily smooth sea, under brilliant starlight, about a hundred miles from land. To this day no one knows really what the matter was. She was so small that she could not have struck even a log in the water without every soul on board feeling the jar; and even if she had struck something, it wouldn’t have made her go down as she did. I was fourth officer then; we had about seven saloon passengers, including the Captain’s wife and another woman, and perhaps five hundred deck-passengers going up the coast to a shrine, on just such a night as this, when she was ripping through the level sea at a level nine knots an hour. The man on the bridge, whoever it was, saw that she was sinking at the head. Sinking by the head as she went along. That was the only warning we got. She began to sink as she went along. Of course the Captain was told, and he sent me to wake up the saloon passengers and tell them to come on deck. ‘Sounds a curious sort of message that to deliver on a dead still night. The people tumbled up in their dressing-gowns and *pyjamas*, and wouldn’t believe me. We were just sinking as fast as we could, and I had to tell ‘em that. Then the deck-passengers got wind of it, and all Hell woke up along the decks.

‘The rule in these little affairs is to get your saloon passengers off first, then to fill the boats with the balance, and afterwards – God help the extras, that’s all. I was getting the starboard stern boat – the mail-boat – away. It hung as it might be over yonder, and as I came along from the cuddy, the deck-passengers hung round me, shoving their money-belts into my hand, taking off their nose-rings and earrings, and thrusting ‘em upon me to buy just one chance for life. If I hadn’t been so desperately busy, I should have thought it horrible. I put biscuits and water into the boat, and got the two ladies in. One of ‘em was the Captain’s wife. She had to be put in by main force. You’ve no notion

how women can struggle. The other woman was the wife of an officer going to meet her husband; and there were a couple of passengers beside the lascars. The Captain said he was going to stay with the ship. You see the rule in these affairs, I believe, is that the Captain has to bow gracefully from the bridge and go down. I haven't had a ship under my charge wrecked yet. When that comes, I'll have to do like the others. After the boats were away, and I saw that there was nothing to be got by waiting, I jumped overboard exactly as I might have vaulted over into a flat green field, and struck out for the mail-boat. Another officer did the same thing, but he went for a boat full of natives, and they whacked him on the chest with oars, so he had some difficulty in climbing in.

'It was as well that I reached the mail-boat. There was a compass in it, but the idiots had managed to fill the boat half full of water somehow or another, and none of the crew seemed to know what was required of them. Then the *Visigoth* went down and took every one with her – ships generally do that; the corpses don't cumber the sea for some time.

'What did I do? I kept all the boats together, and headed into the track of the coasting steamers. The aggravating thing was the thought that we were close to land as far as a big steamer was concerned, and in the middle of eternity as far as regarded a little boat. The sea looks hugeous big from a boat at night.'

'Oh, Christ, whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their ravings at Thy word,
Who walkedst on the foaming deep
And calm amidst its rage did keep, —
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!'

sang the passengers cheerily.

'That harmonium is disgracefully out of tune,' said the Captain. 'The sea air affects their insides. Well, as I was saying, we settled down in the boat. The Captain's wife was unconscious; she lay in the bottom of the boat and moaned. I was glad she wasn't threshing about the boat: but what I did think was wrong, was the way the two men passengers behaved. They were useless with funk – out and out fear. They lay in the boat and did nothing. Fetched a groan now and again to show they were alive; but that was all. But the other woman was a jewel. Damn it, it was worth being shipwrecked to have that woman in the boat; she was awfully handsome, and as brave as she was lovely. She helped me bail out the boat, and she worked like a man.

'So we kicked about the sea from midnight till seven the next evening, and then we saw a steamer. "I'll – I'll give you anything I'm wearing to hoist as a signal of distress," said the woman; but I had no need to ask her, for the steamer picked us up and took us back to Bombay. I forgot to tell you that, when the day broke, I couldn't recognise the Captain's wife – widow, I mean. She had changed in the night as if fire had gone over her. I met her a long time afterwards, and even then she hadn't forgiven me for putting her into the boat and obeying the Captain's orders. But the husband of the other woman – he's in the Army – wrote me no end of a letter of thanks. I don't suppose he considered that the way his wife behaved was enough to make any decent man do all he could. The other fellows, who lay in the bottom of the boat and groaned, I've never met. Don't want to. Shouldn't be civil to 'em if I did. And that's how the *Visigoth* went down, for no assignable reason, with eighty bags of mail, five hundred souls, and not a single packet insured, on just such a night as this.'

'Oh, Trinity of love and power,
Our brethren shield in that dread hour,
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them whereso'er they go.

Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise by land and sea.'

'Strikes me they'll go on singing that hymn all night. Imperfect sort of doctrine in the last lines, don't you think? They might have run in an extra verse specifying sudden collapse – like the *Visigoth's*. I'm going on to the bridge, now. Good-night,' said the Captain.

And I was left alone with the steady thud, thud, of the screw and the gentle creaking of the boats at the davits.

That made me shudder.

THE SOLID MULDOON

*Did ye see John Malone, wid his shinin', brand-new hat?
Did ye see how he walked like a grand aristocrat?
There was flags an' banners wavin' high, an' dhress and
shtyle were shown,
But the best av all the company was Mither John
Malone.*

John Malone.

There had been a royal dog-fight in the ravine at the back of the rifle-butts, between Learoyd's *Jock* and Ortheris's *Blue Rot*— both mongrel Rampur hounds, chiefly ribs and teeth. It lasted for twenty happy, howling minutes, and then *Blue Rot* collapsed and Ortheris paid Learoyd three rupees, and we were all very thirsty. A dog-fight is a most heating entertainment, quite apart from the shouting, because Rampurs fight over a couple of acres of ground. Later, when the sound of belt-badges clicking against the necks of beer-bottles had died away, conversation drifted from dog to man-fights of all kinds. Humans resemble red-deer in some respects. Any talk of fighting seems to wake up a sort of imp in their breasts, and they bell one to the other, exactly like challenging bucks. This is noticeable even in men who consider themselves superior to Privates of the Line: it shows the Refining Influence of Civilisation and the March of Progress.

Tale provoked tale, and each tale more beer. Even dreamy Learoyd's eyes began to brighten, and he unburdened himself of a long history in which a trip to Malham Cove, a girl at Pateley Brigg, a ganger, himself and a pair of clogs were mixed in drawling tangle.

'An' so Ah coot's yead oppen from t' chin to t' hair, an' he was abed for t' matter o' a month,' concluded Learoyd pensively.

Mulvaney came out of a reverie — he was lying down — and flourished his heels in the air. 'You're a man, Learoyd,' said he critically, 'but you've only fought wid men, an' that's an ivry-day expayrience; but I've stud up to a ghost, an' that was *not* an ivry-day expayrience.'

'No?' said Ortheris, throwing a cork at him. 'You git up an' address the 'ouse — you an' yer expayriences. Is it a bigger one nor usual?'

'Twas the livin' trut'!' answered Mulvaney, stretching out a huge arm and catching Ortheris by the collar. 'Now where are ye, me son? Will ye take the wurrud av the Lorrd out av my mouth another time?' He shook him to emphasise the question.

'No, somethin' else, though,' said Ortheris, making a dash at Mulvaney's pipe, capturing it and holding it at arm's length; 'I'll chuck it acrost the ditch if you don't let me go!'

'You maraudin' hathen! 'Tis the only cutty I iver loved. Handle her tinder, or I'll chuck *you* acrost the nullah. If that poipe was bruk — Ah! Give her back to me, Sorr!'

Ortheris had passed the treasure to my hand. It was an absolutely perfect clay, as shiny as the black ball at Pool. I took it reverently, but I was firm.

'Will you tell us about the ghost-fight if I do?' I said.

'Is ut the shtory that's troublin' you? Av course I will. I mint to all along. I was only gettin' at ut my own way, as Popp Doggle said whin they found him thrying to ram a cartridge down the muzzle. Orth'ris, fall away!'

He released the little Londoner, took back his pipe, filled it, and his eyes twinkled. He has the most eloquent eyes of any one that I know.

'Did I iver tell you,' he began, 'that I was wanst the divil av a man?'

‘You did,’ said Learoyd with a childish gravity that made Ortheris yell with laughter, for Mulvaney was always impressing upon us his great merits in the old days.

‘Did I iver tell you,’ Mulvaney continued calmly, ‘that I was wanst more av a divil than I am now?’

‘Mer – ria! You don’t mean it?’ said Ortheris.

‘Whin I was Corp’ril – I was rejuiced aftherwards – but, as I say, *whin* I was Corp’ril, I was a divil of a man.’

He was silent for nearly a minute, while his mind rummaged among old memories and his eye glowed. He bit upon the pipe-stem and charged into his tale.

‘Eyah! They was great times. I’m oudl now; me hide’s wore off in patches; sinthrygo has disconceited me, an’ I’m a married man tu. But I’ve had my day – I’ve had my day, an’ nothin’ can take away the taste av that! Oh my time past, whin I put me fut through ivry livin’ wan av the Tin Commandmints between Revelly and Lights Out, blew the froth off a pewter, wiped me moustache wid the back av me hand, an’ slept on ut all as quiet as a little child! But ut’s over – ut’s over, an’ ‘twill niver come back to me; not though I prayed for a week av Sundays. Was there *any* wan in the Ould Rig’mint to touch Corp’ril Terence Mulvaney whin that same was turned out for sedukshin? I niver met him. Ivry woman that was not a witch was worth the runnin’ afther in those days, an’ ivry man was my dearest frind or – I had stripped to him an’ we knew which was the betther av the tu.

‘Whin I was Corp’ril I wud not ha’ changed wid the Colonel – no, nor yet the Commandher-in-Chief. I wud be a Sargint. There was nothin’ I wud not be! Mother av Hivin, look at me! Fwhat am I *now*?’

‘We was quartered in a big cantonmint – ‘tis no manner av use namin’ names, for ut might give the barricks disreputation – an’ I was the Imperor av the Earth to my own mind, an’ wan or tu women thought the same. Small blame to thim. Afther we had lain there a year, Bragin, the Colour Sargint av E Comp’ny, wint an’ took a wife that was lady’s maid to some big lady in the Station. She’s dead now is Annie Bragin – died in child-bed at Kirpa Tal, or ut may ha’ been Almorah – seven – nine years gone, an’ Bragin he married agin. But she was a pretty woman whin Bragin inthrojuiced her to cantonmint society. She had eyes like the brown av a buttherfly’s wing whin the sun catches ut, an’ a waist no thicker than my arm, an’ a little sof’ button av a mouth I would ha’ gone through all Asia bristlin’ wid bay’nits to get the kiss av. An’ her hair was as long as the tail av the Colonel’s charger – forgive me mentionin’ that blunderin’ baste in the same mouthful with Annie Bragin – but’twas all shpun gold, an’ time was when a lock av ut was more than di’monds to me. There was niver pretty woman yet, an’ I’ve had thruck wid a few, cud open the door to Annie Bragin.

‘Twas in the Cath’lic Chapel I saw her first, me oi rolling round as usual to see fwhat was to be seen.

‘You’re too good for Bragin, my love,’ thinks I to mesilf, “but that’s a mistake I can put straight, or my name is not Terence Mulvaney.”

‘Now take my wurrd for ut, you Orth’ris there an’ Learoyd, an’ kape out av the Married Quarters – as I did not. No good iver comes av ut, an’ there’s always the chance av your bein’ found wid your face in the dirt, a long picket in the back av your head, an’ your hands playing the fifes on the tread av another man’s doorstep. ‘Twas so we found O’Hara, he that Rafferty killed six years gone, when he wint to his death wid his hair oiled, whistlin’ *Larry O’Rourke* betune his teeth. Kape out av the Married Quarters, I say, as I did not. ‘Tis onwholesim, ‘tis dangerous, an’ ‘tis ivrything else that’s bad, but – O my sowl, ‘tis swate while ut lasts!

‘I was always hangin’ about there whin I was off duty an’ Bragin wasn’t, but niver a sweet word beyon’ ordinar’ did I get from Annie Bragin. “‘Tis the pervarsity av the sect,” sez I to mesilf, an’ gave my cap another cock on my head an’ straightened my back – ‘twas the back av a Dhrum Major in those days – an’ wint off as tho’ I did not care, wid all the women in the Married Quarters laughin’,

I was persuaded – most bhoys *are* I'm thinkin' – that no woman born av woman cud stand against me av I hild up my little finger. I had reason fer thinkin' that way – till I met Annie Bragin.

'Time an' agin whin I was blandandherin' in the dusk a man wud go past me as quiet as a cat. "That's quare," thinks I, "for I am, or I should be, the only man in these parts. Now what divilment can Annie be up to?" Thin I called myself a blayguard for thinkin' such things; but I thought thim all the same. An' that, mark you, is the way av a man.

'Wan evenin' I said: – "Mrs. Bragin, manin' no disrespect to you, who is that Corp'ril man" – I had seen the stripes though I cud niver get sight av his face – "*who* is that Corp'ril man that comes in always whin I'm goin' away?"

"Mother av God!" sez she, turnin' as white as my belt, "have *you* seen him too?"

"Seen him!" sez I; "av coorse I have. Did ye want me not to see him, for" – we were standin' talkin' in the dhark, outside the veranda av Bragin's quarters – "you'd betther tell me to shut me eyes. Unless I'm mistaken, he's come now."

'An', sure enough, the Corp'ril was walkin' to us, hangin' his head down as though he was ashamed av himsilf.

"Good-night, Mrs. Bragin," sez I, very cool; "'tis not for me to interfere wid your *a-moors*; but you might manage things wid more dacincy. I'm off to canteen," I sez.

'I turned on my heel an' wint away, swearin' I wud give that man a dhressin' that wud shtop him messin' about the Married Quarters for a month an' a week. I had not tuk ten paces before Annie Bragin was hangin' on to my arm, an' I cud feel that she was shakin' all over.

"Stay wid me, Mister Mulvaney," sez she; "you're flesh an' blood, at the least – are ye not?"

"I'm *all* that," sez I, an' my anger wint away in a flash. "Will I want to be asked twice, Annie?"

'Wid that I slipped my arm round her waist, for, begad, I fancied she had surrendered at discretion, an' the honours av war were mine.

"Fwhat nonsinse is this?" sez she, dhrawin' hersilf up on the tips av her dear little toes. "Wid the mother's milk not dhry on your impident mouth? Let go!" she sez.

"Did ye not say just now that I was flesh an' blood?" sez I. "I have not changed since," I sez; an' I kep' my arm where ut was.

"Your arms to yoursilf!" sez she, an' her eyes sparkild.

"Sure, 'tis only human nature," sez I, an' I kep' my arm where ut was.

"Nature or no nature," sez she, "you take your arm away or I'll tell Bragin, an' he'll alter the nature av your head. Fwhat d'you take me for?" she sez.

"A woman," sez I; "the prettiest in barricks."

"A *wife*," sez she; "the straightest in cantonmints!"

'Wid that I dropped my arm, fell back tu paces, an' saluted, for I saw that she mint fwhat she said.'

'Then you know something that some men would give a good deal to be certain of. How could you tell?' I demanded in the interests of Science.

"Watch the hand," said Mulvaney; "av she shuts her hand tight, thumb down over the knuckle, take up your hat an' go. You'll only make a fool av yoursilf av you shtay. But av the hand lies opin on the lap, or av you see her thryin' to shut ut, an' she can't, – go on! She's not past reasonin' wid."

'Well, as I was sayin', I fell back, saluted, an' was goin' away.

"Shtay wid me," she sez. "Look! He's comin' again."

'She pointed to the veranda, an' by the Haight av Impart'nince, the Corp'ril man was comin' out av Bragin's quarters.

"He's done that these five evenin's past," sez Annie Bragin. "Oh, fwhat will I do!"

"He'll not do ut again," sez I, for I was fightin' mad.

'Kape away from a man that has been a thrifle crossed in love till the fever's died down. He rages like a brute beast.

‘I wint up to the man in the veranda, manin’, as sure as I sit, to knock the life out av him. He slipped into the open. “Fwhat are you doin’ philanderin’ about here, ye scum av the gutter?” sez I polite, to give him his warnin’, for I wanted him ready.

‘He niver lifted his head, but sez, all mournful an’ melancolius, as if he thought I wud be sorry for him: “I can’t find her,” sez he.

“My troth,” sez I, “you’ve lived too long – you an’ your seekin’s an’ findin’s in a dacint married woman’s quarters! Hould up your head, ye frozen thief av Genesis,” sez I, “an’ you’ll find all you want an’ more!”

‘But he niver hild up, an’ I let go from the shoulther to where the hair is short over the eyebrows.

“That’ll do your business,” sez I, but it nearly did mine instid. I put my bodyweight behind the blow, but I hit nothing at all, an’ near put my shoulther out. The Corp’ril man was not there, an’ Annie Bragin, who had been watchin’ from the veranda, throws up her heels, an’ carries on like a cock whin his neck’s wrung by the dhrummer-bhoy. I wint back to her, for a livin’ woman, an’ a woman like Annie Bragin, is more than a p’rade-groun’ full av ghosts. I’d niver seen a woman faint before, an’ I stud like a shtuck calf, askin’ her whether she was dead, an’ prayin’ her for the love av me, an’ the love av her husband, an’ the love av the Virgin, to opin her blessed eyes again, an’ callin’ mesilf all the names undher the canopy av Hivin for plaguin’ her wid my miserable *a-moors* whin I ought to ha’ stud betune her an’ this Corp’ril man that had lost the number av his mess.

‘I misremimber fwhat nonsense I said, but I was not so far gone that I cud not hear a fut on the dirt outside. ‘Twas Bragin comin’ in, an’ by the same token Annie was comin’ to. I jumped to the far end av the veranda an’ looked as if butter wudn’t melt in my mouth. But Mrs. Quinn, the Quarter-Master’s wife that was, had tould Bragin about my hangin’ round Annie.

“I’m not pleased wid you, Mulvaney,” sez Bragin, unbucklin’ his sword, for he had been on duty.

“That’s bad hearin’,” I sez, an’ I knew that the pickets were dhriven in. “What for, Sargint?” sez I.

“Come outside,” sez he, “an’ I’ll show you why.”

“I’m willin’,” I sez; “but my stripes are none so ould that I can afford to loses him. Tell me now, *who* do I go out wid?” sez I.

‘He was a quick man an’ a just, an’ saw fwhat I wud be afther. “Wid Mrs. Bragin’s husband,” sez he. He might ha’ known by me askin’ that favour that I had done him no wrong.

‘We wint to the back av the arsenal an’ I stripped to him, an’ for ten minutes ‘twas all I cud do to prevent him killin’ himself against my fistes. He was mad as a dumb dog – just frothing wid rage; but he had no chanst wid me in reach, or learnin’, or anything else.

“Will ye hear reason?” sez I, whin his first wind was run out.

“Not whoile I can see,” sez he. Wid that I gave him both, one after the other, smash through the low gyard that he’d been taught whin he was a boy, an’ the eyebrow shut down on the cheek-bone like the wing av a sick crow.

“Will ye hear reason now, ye brave man?” sez I.

“Not whoile I can speak,” sez he, staggerin’ up blind as a stump. I was loath to do ut, but I wint round an’ swung into the jaw side-on an’ shifted ut a half pace to the lef’.

“Will ye hear reason now?” sez I; “I can’t keep my timper much longer, an’ ‘tis like I will hurt you.”

“Not whoile I can stand,” he mumbles out av one corner av his mouth. So I closed an’ threw him – blind, dumb, an’ sick, an’ jammed the jaw straight.

“You’re an ould fool, *Mister* Bragin,” sez I.

“You’re a young thief,” sez he, “an’ you’ve bruk my heart, you an’ Annie betune you!”

‘Thin he began cryin’ like a child as he lay. I was sorry as I had niver been before. ‘Tis an awful thing to see a strong man cry.

“I’ll swear on the Cross!” sez I.

“I care for none av your oaths,” sez he.

“Come back to your quarters,” sez I, “an’ if you don’t believe the livin’, begad, you shall listen to the dead,” I sez.

‘I hoisted him an’ tuk him back to his quarters. “Mrs. Bragin,” sez I, “here’s a man that you can cure quicker than me.”

“You’ve shamed me before my wife,” he whimpers.

“Have I so?” sez I. “By the look on Mrs. Bragin’s face I think I’m for a dhressin’-down worse than I gave you.”

‘An’ I was! Annie Bragin was woild wid indignation. There was not a name that a dacint woman cud use that was not given my way. I’ve had my Colonel walk roun’ me like a cooper roun’ a cask for fifteen minutes in Ord’ly Room, bekaze I wint into the Corner Shop an’ unstrapped lewnatic; but all I iver tuk from his rasp av a tongue was ginger-pop to fwhat Annie tould me. An’ that, mark you, is the way av a woman.

‘Whin ut was done for want av breath, an’ Annie was bendin’ over her husband, I sez: “‘Tis all throe, an’ I’m a blayguard an’ you’re an honest woman; but will you tell him of wan service that I did you?”

‘As I finished speakin’ the Corp’ril man came up to the veranda, an’ Annie Bragin shquealed. The moon was up, an’ we cud see his face.

“I can’t find her,” sez the Corp’ril man, an’ wint out like the puff av a candle.

“Saints stand betune us an’ evil!” sez Bragin, crossin’ himself; “that’s Flahy av the Tyrone.”

“Who was he?” I sez, “for he has given me a dale av fightin’ this day.”

‘Bragin tould us that Flahy was a Corp’ril who lost his wife av cholera in those quarters three years gone, an’ wint mad, an’ *walked* afther they buried him, huntin’ for her.

“Well,” sez I to Bragin, “he’s been hookin’ out av Purgathory to kape company wid Mrs. Bragin ivry evenin’ for the last fortnight. You may tell Mrs. Quinn, wid my love, for I know that she’s been talkin’ to you, an’ you’ve been listenin’, that she ought to ondherstand the differ ‘twixt a man an’ a ghost. She’s had three husbands,” sez I, “an’ *you’ve* got a wife too good for you. Instid av which you lave her to be boddered by ghosts an’ – an’ all manner av evil spirruts. I’ll niver go talkin’ in the way av politeness to a man’s wife again. Good-night to you both,” sez I; an’ wid that I wint away, havin’ fought wid woman, man and Divil all in the heart av an hour. By the same token I gave Father Victor wan rupee to say a mass for Flahy’s soul, me havin’ discommoded him by shticking my fist into his system.’

‘Your ideas of politeness seem rather large, Mulvaney,’ I said.

‘That’s as you look at ut,’ said Mulvaney calmly; ‘Annie Bragin niver cared for me. For all that, I did not want to leave anything behin’ me that Bragin could take hould av to be angry wid her about – whin an honust wurrd cud ha’ cleared all up. There’s nothing like opin-speakin’. Orth’ris, ye scutt, let me put me oi to that bottle, for my throat’s as dhry as whin I thought I wud get a kiss from Annie Bragin. An’ that’s fourteen years gone! Eyah! Cork’s own city an’ the blue sky above ut – an’ the times that was – the times that was!’

WITH THE MAIN GUARD

*Der jungere Uhlanen
Sit round mit open mouth
While Breitmann tell dem stories
Of fightin' in the South;
Und gif dem moral lessons,
How before der battle pops,
Take a little prayer to Himmel
Und a goot long drink of Schnapps.*

Hans Breitmann's Ballads.

'Mary, Mother av Mercy, fwat the divil possist us to take an' kape this melancholious counthry? Answer me that, Sorr.'

It was Mulvaney who was speaking. The time was one o'clock of a stifling June night, and the place was the main gate of Fort Amara, most desolate and least desirable of all fortresses in India. What I was doing there at that hour is a question which only concerns M'Grath, the Sergeant of the Guard, and the men on the gate.

'Slape,' said Mulvaney, 'is a shuparfluous necessity. This gyard'll shtay lively till relieved.' He himself was stripped to the waist; Learoyd on the next bedstead was dripping from the skinful of water which Ortheris, clad only in white trousers, had just sluiced over his shoulders; and a fourth private was muttering uneasily as he dozed open-mouthed in the glare of the great guard-lantern. The heat under the bricked archway was terrifying.

'The worrst night that iver I remimber. Eyah! Is all Hell loose this tide?' said Mulvaney. A puff of burning wind lashed through the wicket-gate like a wave of the sea, and Ortheris swore.

'Are ye more heasy, Jock?' he said to Learoyd. 'Put yer 'ead between your legs. It'll go orf in a minute.'

'Ah don't care. Ah would not care, but ma heart is plaayin' tivvy-tivvy on ma ribs. Let me die! Oh, leave me die!' groaned the huge Yorkshireman, who was feeling the heat acutely, being of fleshly build.

The sleeper under the lantern roused for a moment and raised himself on his elbow. – 'Die and be damned then!' he said. 'I'm damned and I can't die!'

'Who's that?' I whispered, for the voice was new to me.

'Gentleman born,' said Mulvaney; 'Corp'ril wan year, Sargint nex'. Red-hot on his C'mission, but dhrinks like a fish. He'll be gone before the cowld weather's here. So!'

He slipped his boot, and with the naked toe just touched the trigger of his Martini. Ortheris misunderstood the movement, and the next instant the Irishman's rifle was dashed aside, while Ortheris stood before him, his eyes blazing with reproof.

'You!' said Ortheris. 'My Gawd, *you!* If it was you wot would *we* do?'

'Kape quiet, little man,' said Mulvaney, putting him aside, but very gently; 'tis not me, nor will ut be me whoile Dinah Shadd's here. I was but showin' something.'

Learoyd, bowed on his bedstead, groaned, and the gentleman-ranker sighed in his sleep. Ortheris took Mulvaney's tendered pouch and we three smoked gravely for a space while the dust-devils danced on the glacis and scoured the red-hot plain.

'Pop?' said Ortheris, wiping his forehead.

'Don't tantalise wid talkin' av dhrink, or I'll shtuff you into your own breech-block an' – fire you off!' grunted Mulvaney.

Ortheris chuckled, and from a niche in the veranda produced six bottles of gingerade.

‘Where did ye get ut, ye Machiavel?’ said Mulvaney. ‘Tis no bazar pop.’

‘Ow do *Hi* know wot the Orf’cers drink?’ answered Ortheris. ‘Arst the mess-man.’

‘Ye’ll have a Disthric Coort-martial settin’ on ye yet, me son,’ said Mulvaney, ‘but’ – he opened a bottle – ‘I will not report ye this time. Fwhat’s in the mess-kid is mint for the belly, as they say, ‘specially whin that mate is dhrink. Here’s luck! A bloody war or a – no, we’ve got the sickly season. War, thin!’ – he waved the innocent ‘pop’ to the four quarters of Heaven. ‘Bloody war! North, East, South, an’ West! Jock, ye quakin’ hayrick, come an’ dhrink.’

But Learoyd, half mad with the fear of death presaged in the swelling veins in his neck, was begging his Maker to strike him dead, and fighting for more air between his prayers. A second time Ortheris drenched the quivering body with water, and the giant revived.

‘An’ Ah divn’t see thot a mon is i’ fettle for gooin’ on to live; an’ Ah divn’t see thot there is owt for t’ livin’ for. Hear now, lads! Ah’m tired – tired. There’s nobbut watter i’ ma bones. Let me die!’

The hollow of the arch gave back Learoyd’s broken whisper in a bass boom. Mulvaney looked at me hopelessly, but I remembered how the madness of despair had once fallen upon Ortheris, that weary, weary afternoon on the banks of the Khemi River, and how it had been exorcised by the skilful magician Mulvaney.

‘Talk, Terence!’ I said, ‘or we shall have Learoyd slinging loose, and he’ll be worse than Ortheris was. Talk! He’ll answer to your voice.’

Almost before Ortheris had deftly thrown all the rifles of the Guard on Mulvaney’s bedstead, the Irishman’s voice was uplifted as that of one in the middle of a story, and, turning to me, he said —

‘In barricks or out of it, as *you* say, Sorr, an Oirish rig’mint is the divil an’ more. ‘Tis only fit for a young man wid eddicated fisteses. Oh the crame av disruption is an Oirish rig’mint, an’ rippin’, tearin’, ragin’ scattherers in the field av war! My first rig’mint was Oirish – Faynians an’ rebils to the heart av their marrow was they, an’ *so* they fought for the Widdy betther than most, bein’ contrairy – Oirish. They was the Black Tyrone. You’ve heard av thim, Sorr?’

Heard of them! I knew the Black Tyrone for the choicest collection of unmitigated blackguards, dog-stealers, robbers of hen-roosts, assaulters of innocent citizens, and recklessly daring heroes in the Army List. Half Europe and half Asia has had cause to know the Black Tyrone – good luck be with their tattered Colours as Glory has ever been!

‘They *was* hot pickils an’ ginger! I cut a man’s head tu deep wid my belt in the days av my youth, an’, afther some circumstances which I will oblitherate, I came to the Ould Rig’mint, bearin’ the character av a man wid hands an’ feet. But, as I was goin’ to tell you, I fell acrost the Black Tyrone agin wan day whin we wanted thim powerful bad. Orth’ris, me son, fwhat was the name av that place where they sint wan comp’ny av us an’ wan av the Tyrone roun’ a hill an’ down again, all for to tache the Paythans something they’d niver learned before? Afther Ghunzi ‘twas.’

‘Don’t know what the bloomin’ Paythans called it. We called it Silver’s Theayter. You know that, sure!’

‘Silver’s Theatre – so ‘twas. A gut betune two hills, as black as a bucket, an’ as thin as a girl’s waist. There was over-many Paythans for our convaynience in the gut, an’ begad they called themselves a Reserve – bein’ impident by nature! Our Scotchies an’ lashins av Gurkeys was poundin’ into some Paythan rig’mints, I think ‘twas. Scotchies an’ Gurkeys are twins bekaze they’re so onlike an’ they get dhrunk together whin God plazes. As I was sayin’, they sint wan comp’ny av the Ould an’ wan of the Tyrone to double up the hill an’ clane out the Paythan Reserve. Orf’cers was scarce in thim days, fwhat with dysintry an’ not takin’ care av themselves, an’ we was sint out wid only wan orf’cer for the comp’ny; but he was a Man that had his feet beneath him, an’ all his teeth in their sockuts.’

‘Who was he?’ I asked.

‘Captain O’Neil – Old Crook – Cruikna-bulleen – him that I tould ye that tale av whin he was in Burma.

[Footnote:

Now first of the foemen of Boh Da Thone
Was Captain O'Neil of the Black Tyrone.
The Ballad of Boh Da Thone.] Hah!

He was a Man! The Tyrone tuk a little orf'cer bhoy, but divil a bit was he in command, as I'll dimonstrate presintly. We an' they came over the brow av the hill, wan on each side av the gut, an' there was that ondacint Reserve waitin' down below like rats in a pit.

“Howld on, men,” sez Crook, who tuk a mother's care av us always. “Rowl some rocks on thim by way av visitin' kyards.” We hadn't rowled more than twinty bowlders, an' the Paythans was beginnin' to swear tremenjus, whin the little orf'cer bhoy av the Tyrone shqueaks out acrost the valley: – “Fwhat the devil an' all are you doin', shpoilin' the fun for my men? Do ye not see they'll stand?”

“Faith, that's a rare pluckt wan!” sez Crook. “Niver mind the rocks, men. Come along down an' take tay wid thim!”

“There's damned little sugar in ut!” sez my rear-rank man; but Crook heard.

“Have ye not all got spoons?” he sez, laughin', an' down we wint as fast as we cud. Learoyd bein' sick at the Base, he, av coorse, was not there.

‘Thot's a lie!’ said Learoyd, dragging his bedstead nearer. ‘Ah gotten *thot* theer, an' you know it, Mulvaney.’ He threw up his arms, and from the right armpit ran, diagonally through the fell of his chest, a thin white line terminating near the fourth left rib.

‘My mind's goin’,’ said Mulvaney, the unabashed. ‘Ye were there. Fwhat I was thinkin' of! ‘Twas another man, av coorse. Will, you'll remember thin, Jack, how we an' the Tyrone met wid a bang at the bottom an' got jammed past all movin' among the Paythans.’

‘Ow! It *was* a tight ‘ole. I was squeezed till I thought I'd bloomin' well bust,’ said Ortheris, rubbing his stomach meditatively.

‘Twas no place for a little man, but *wan* little man’ – Mulvaney put his hand on Ortheris's shoulder – ‘saved the life av me. There we shtuck, for divil a bit did the Paythans flinch, an' divil a bit dare we; our business bein' to clear ‘em out. An' the most exthryordinar' thing av all was that we an' they just rushed into each other's arrums, an' there was no firing for a long time. Nothin' but knife an' bay'nit when we cud get our hands free: an' that was not often. We was breast-on to thim, an' the Tyrone was yelpin' behind av us in a way I didn't see the lean av at first. But I knew later, an' so did the Paythans.

“Knee to knee!” sings out Crook, wid a laugh whin the rush av our comin' into the gut shtopped, an' he was huggin' a hairy great Paythan, neither bein' able to do anything to the other, tho' both was wishful.

“Breast to breast!” he sez, as the Tyrone was pushin' us forward closer an' closer.

“An' hand over back!” sez a Sargint that was behin'. I saw a sword lick out past Crook's ear, an' the Paythan was tuk in the apple av his throat like a pig at Dromeen fair.

“Thank ye, Brother Inner Guard,” sez Crook, cool as a cucumber widout salt. “I wanted that room.” An' he wint forward by the thickness av a man's body, havin' turned the Paythan undher him. The man bit the heel off Crook's boot in his death-bite.

“Push, men!” sez Crook. “Push, ye paper-backed beggars!” he sez. “Am I to pull ye through?” So we pushed, an' we kicked, an' we swung, an' we swore, an' the grass bein' slippery, our heels wouldn't bite, an' God help the front-rank man that wint down that day!

‘Ave you ever bin in the Pit hentrance o' the Vic, on a thick night?’ interrupted Ortheris. ‘It was worse nor that, for they was goin' one way an' we wouldn't ‘ave it. Leastways, I ‘adn't much to say.’

‘Faith, me son, ye said ut, thin. I kep’ the little man betune my knees as long as I cud, but he was pokin’ roun’ wid his bay’nit, blindin’ an’ stiffin’ feroshus. The devil of a man is Orth’ris in a ruction – aren’t ye?’ said Mulvaney.

‘Don’t make game!’ said the Cockney. ‘I knowed I wasn’t no good then, but I guv ‘em compt from the lef’ flank when we opened out. No!’ he said, bringing down his hand with a thump on the bedstead, ‘a bay’nit ain’t no good to a little man – might as well ‘ave a bloomin’ fishin’-rod! I ‘ate a clawin’, maulin’ mess, but gimme a breech that’s wore out a bit, an’ hamminition one year in store, to let the powder kiss the bullet, an’ put me somewheres where I ain’t trod on by ‘ulkin swine like you, an’ s’elp me Gawd, I could bowl you over five times outer seven at height ‘undred. Would yer try, you lumberin’ Hirishman.’

‘No, ye wasp. I’ve seen ye do ut. I say there’s nothin’ better than the bay’nit, wid a long reach, a double twist av ye can, an’ a slow recover.’

‘Dom the bay’nit,’ said Learoyd, who had been listening intently. ‘Look a-here!’ He picked up a rifle an inch below the foresight with an underhand action, and used it exactly as a man would use a dagger.

‘Sitha,’ said he softly, ‘thot’s better than owt, for a mon can bash t’ faace wi’ thot, an’, if he divn’t, he can breek t’ forearm o’ t’ gaard.’ Tis not i’ t’ books, though. Gie me t’ butt.’

‘Each does ut his own way, like makin’ love,’ said Mulvaney quietly; ‘the butt or the bay’nit or the bullet accordin’ to the natur’ av the man. Well, as I was sayin’, we shtuck there breathin’ in each other’s faces and swearin’ powerful; Orth’ris cursin’ the mother that bore him bekaze he was not three inches taller.

‘Prisintly he sez: – “Duck, ye lump, an’ I can get at a man over your shouldher!”

“You’ll blow me head off,” I sez, throwin’ my arm clear; “go through under my arm-pit, ye bloodthirsty little scutt,” sez I, “but don’t shtick me or I’ll wring your ears round.”

‘Fwhat was ut ye gave the Paythan man forninst me, him that cut at me whin I cudn’t move hand or foot? Hot or cowld was ut?’

‘Cold,’ said Ortheris, ‘up an’ under the rib-jint. ‘E come down flat. Best for you ‘e did.’

‘Thru, my son! This jam thing that I’m talkin’ about lasted for five minutes good, an’ thin we got our arms clear an’ wint in. I misremimber exactly fwhat I did, but I didn’t want Dinah to be a widdy at the Depot. Thin, after some promishkuous hackin’ we shtuck again, an’ the Tyrone behin’ was callin’ us dogs an’ cowards an’ all manner av names; we barrin’ their way.

“Fwhat ails the Tyrone?” thinks I, “they’ve the makin’s av a most convanient fight here.”

‘A man behind me sez beseechful an’ in a whisper: – “Let me get at thim! For the Love av Mary give me room beside ye, ye tall man!”

“An’ who are you that’s so anxious to be kilt?” sez I, widout turnin’ my head, for the long knives was dancin’ in front like the sun on Donegal Bay whin ut’s rough.

“We’ve seen our dead,” he sez, squeezin’ into me; “our dead that was men two days gone! An’ me that was his cousin by blood could not bring Tim Coulan off! Let me get on,” he sez, “let me get to thim or I’ll run ye through the back!”

“My troth,” thinks I, “if the Tyrone have seen their dead, God help the Paythans this day!” An’ thin I knew why the Oirish was ragin’ behind us as they was.

‘I gave room to the man, an’ he ran forward wid the Haymaker’s Lift on his bay’nit an’ swung a Paythan clear off his feet by the belly-band av the brute, an’ the iron bruk at the lockin’-ring.

“Tim Coulan’ll slape easy to-night,” sez he wid a grin; an’ the next minut his head was in two halves and he wint down grinnin’ by sections.

‘The Tyrone was pushin’ an’ pushin’ in, an’ our men was swearin’ at thim, an’ Crook was workin’ away in front av us all, his sword-arm swingin’ like a pump-handle an’ his revolver spittin’ like a cat. But the strange thing av ut was the quiet that lay upon. ‘Twas like a fight in a drame – except for thim that was dead.

‘Whin I gave room to the Oirishman I was expinded an’ forlorn in my inside. ‘Tis a way I have, savin’ your presince, Sorr, in action. “Let me out, bhoys,” sez I, backin’ in among thim. “I’m going to be onwell!” Faith they gave me room at the wurrud, though they would not ha’ givin room for all Hell wid the chill off. When I got clear, I was, savin’ your presince, Sorr, outragis sick bekaze I had dhrunk heavy that day.

‘Well an’ far out av harm was a Sargint av the Tyrone sittin’ on the little orf’cer bhoys who had stopped Crook from rowlin’ the rocks. Oh, he was a beautiful bhoys, an’ the long black curses was slidin’ out av his innocint mouth like mornin’-jew from a rose!

“Fwhat have you got there?” sez I to the Sargint.

“Wan av Her Majesty’s bantams wid his spurs up,” sez he. “He’s goin’ to Coort-martial me.”

“Let me go!” sez the little orf’cer bhoys. “Let me go and command my men!” manin’ thereby the Black Tyrone which was beyond any command – ay, even av they had made the Divil a Field-orf’cer.

“His father howlds my mother’s cow-feed in Clonmel,” sez the man that was sittin’ on him. “Will I go back to *his* mother an’ tell her that I’ve let him throw himself away? Lie still, ye little pinch av dynamite, an’ Coort-martial me aftherwards.”

“Good,” sez I; “tis the likes av him makes the likes av the Commandher-in-Chief, but we must presarve thim. Fwhat d’you want to do, Sorr?” sez I, very politeful.

“Kill the beggars – kill the beggars!” he shqueaks; his big blue eyes brimmin’ wid tears.

“An’ how’ll ye do that?” sez I. “You’ve shquibbed off your revolver like a child wid a cracker; you can make no play wid that fine large sword av yours; an’ your hand’s shakin’ like an asp on a leaf. Lie still an’ grow,” sez I.

“Get back to your comp’ny,” sez he; “you’re insolint!”

“All in good time,” sez I, “but I’ll have a dhrink first.”

‘Just thin Crook comes up, blue an’ white all over where he wasn’t red.

“Wather!” sez he; “I’m dead wid drouth! Oh, but it’s a gran’ day!”

‘He dhrank half a skinful, and the rest he tilts into his chest, an’ it fair hissed on the hairy hide av him. He sees the little orf’cer bhoys undher the Sargint.

“Fwhat’s yonder?” sez he.

“Mutiny, Sorr,” sez the Sargint, an’ the orf’cer bhoys begins pleadin’ pitiful to Crook to be let go: but divil a bit wud Crook budge.

“Kape him there,” he sez, “tis no child’s work this day. By the same token,” sez he, “I’ll confishcate that iligant nickel-plated scent-sprinkler av yours, for my own has been vomitin’ dishgraceful!”

‘The fork av his hand was black wid the backspit av the machine. So he tuk the orf’cer bhoys’ revolver. Ye may look, Sorr, by my faith, *there’s a dale more done in the field than iver gets into Field Ordhers!*

“Come on, Mulvaney,” sez Crook; “is this a Coort-martial?” The two av us wint back together into the mess an’ the Paythans were still standin’ up. They was not *too* impart’nint though, for the Tyrone was callin’ wan to another to remimber Tim Coulan.

‘Crook stopped outside av the strife an’ looked anxious, his eyes rowlin’ roun’.

“Fwhat is ut, Sorr?” sez I; “can I get ye anything?”

“Where’s a bugler?” sez he.

‘I wint into the crowd – our men was dhrawin’ breath behin’ the Tyrone who was fightin’ like sowls in tormint – an’ prisintly I came acrost little Frehan, our bugler bhoys, pokin’ roun’ among the best wid a rifle an’ bay’nit.

“Is amusin’ yoursilf fwhat you’re paid for, ye limb?” sez I, catchin’ him by the scruff. “Come out av that an’ attind to your duty,” I sez; but the bhoys was not pleased.

“I’ve got wan,” sez he, grinnin’, “big as you, Mulvaney, an’ fair half as ugly. Let me go get another.”

'I was dishplease dat the personability av that remark, so I tucks him under my arm an' carries him to Crook who was watchin' how the fight wint. Crook cuffs him till the bhoy cries, an' thin sez nothin' for a whoile.

'The Paythans began to flicker onaisy, an' our men roared. "Opin ordher! Double!" sez Crook. "Blow, child, blow for the honour of the British Army!"

'That bhoy blew like a typhoon, an' the Tyrone an' we opined out as the Paythans broke, an' I saw that fwhat had gone before wud be kissin' an' huggin' to fwhat was to come. We'd dhruv thim into a broad part av the gut whin they gave, an' thin we opined out an' fair danced down the valley, dhruvin' thim before us. Oh, 'twas lovely, an' stiddy, too! There was the Sargints on the flanks av what was left av us, kapin' touch, an' the fire was runnin' from flank to flank, an' the Paythans was dhroppin'. We opined out wid the widenin' av the valley, an' whin the valley narrowed we closed again like the shticks on a lady's fan, an' at the far ind av the gut where they thried to stand, we fair blew them off their feet, for we had expinded very little ammunition by reason av the knife work.'

'Hi used thirty rounds goin' down that valley,' said Ortheris, 'an' it was gentleman's work. Might 'a' done it in a white 'andkerchief an' pink silk stockin's, that part. Hi was on in that piece.'

'You could ha' heard the Tyrone yellin' a mile away,' said Mulvaney, 'an' 'twas all their Sargints cud do to get thim off. They was mad – mad – mad! Crook sits down in the quiet that fell whin we had gone down the valley, an' covers his face wid his hands. Prisintly we all came back again accordin' to our natures and disposishins, for they, mark you, show through the hide av a man in that hour.

"'Bhoys! bhoys!" sez Crook to himself. "I misdoubt we could ha' engaged at long range an' saved betther men than me." He looked at our dead an' said no more.

"'Captain dear," sez a man av the Tyrone, comin' up wid his mouth bigger than iver his mother kissed ut, spittin' blood like a whale; "Captain dear," sez he, "if wan or two in the shtalls have been discommoded, the gallery enjoyed the performinces av a Roshus."

'Thin I knew that man for the Dublin dock-rat he was – wan av the bhoys that made the lessee av Silver's Theatre gray before his time wid tearin' out the bowils av the benches an' t'rowin' thim into the pit. So I passed the wurrud that I knew when I was in the Tyrone an' we lay in Dublin. "I don't know who 'twas," I whispers, "an' I don't care, but anyways I'll knock the face av you, Tim Kelly."

"'Eyah!" sez the man, "was you there too? We'll call ut Silver's Theatre." Half the Tyrone, knowin' the ould place, tuk it up: so we called ut Silver's Theatre.

'The little orf'cer bhoy av the Tyrone was thremblin' an' cryin'. He had no heart for the Coort-martials that he talked so big upon. "Ye'll do well later," sez Crook, very quiet, "for not bein' allowed to kill yourself for amusemint."

"'I'm a dishgraced man!" sez the little orf'cer bhoy.

"'Put me undher arrest, Sorr, if you will, but, by my sowl, I'd do ut again sooner than face your mother wid you dead," sez the Sargint that had sat on his head, standin' to attention an' salutin'. But the young wan only cried as tho' his little heart was breakin'.

'Thin another man av the Tyrone came up, wid the fog av fightin' on him.'

'The what, Mulvaney?'

'Fog av fightin'. You know, Sorr, that, like makin' love, ut takes each man diff'rint. Now I can't help bein' powerful sick whin I'm in action. Orth'ris, here, niver stops swearin' from ind to ind, an' the only time that Learoyd opins his mouth to sing is whin he is messin' wid other people's heads; for he's a dhirty fighter is Jock. Recruities sometime cry, an' sometime they don't know fwhat they do, an' sometime they are all for cuttin' throats an' such like dirtiness; but some men get heavy-dead-dhrunk on the fightin'. This man was. He was staggerin', an' his eyes were half shut, an' we cud hear him dhraw breath twinty yards away. He sees the little orf'cer bhoy, an' comes up, talkin' thick an' drowsy to himsilf. "Blood the young whelp!" he sez; "blood the young whelp"; an' wid that he threw up his arms, shpun roun', an' dropped at our feet, dead as a Paythan, an' there was niver sign or scratch on him. They said 'twas his heart was rotten, but oh, 'twas a quare thing to see!

‘Thin we wint to bury our dead, for we wud not lave thim to the Paythans, an’ in movin’ among the haythen we nearly lost that little orf’cer bhoy. He was for givin’ wan divil wather and layin’ him aisy against a rock. “Be careful, Sorr,” sez I; “a wounded Paythan’s worse than a live wan.” My troth, before the words was out of my mouth, the man on the ground fires at the orf’cer bhoy lanin’ over him, an’ I saw the helmit fly. I dropped the butt on the face av the man an’ tuk his pistol. The little orf’cer bhoy turned very white, for the hair av half his head was singed away.

“I tould you so, Sorr!” sez I; an’, afther that, whin he wanted to help a Paythan I stud wid the muzzle contagious to the ear. They dare not do anythin’ but curse. The Tyrone was growlin’ like dogs over a bone that had been taken away too soon, for they had seen their dead an’ they wanted to kill ivry sowl on the ground. Crook tould thim that he’d blow the hide off any man that misconducted himself; but, seeing that ut was the first time the Tyrone had iver seen their dead, I do not wondher they were on the sharp. ‘Tis a shameful sight! Whin I first saw ut I wud niver ha’ given quarter to any man north of the Khaibar – no, nor woman either, for the women used to come out afther dhark – Auggrh!

‘Well, evenshually we buried our dead an’ tuk away our wounded, an’ come over the brow av the hills to see the Scotchies an’ the Gurkeys taking tay with the Paythans in bucketsfuls. We were a gang av dissolute ruffians, for the blood had caked the dust, an’ the sweat had cut the cake, an’ our bay’nits was hangin’ like butchers’ steels betune ur legs, an’ most av us were marked one way or another.

‘A Staff Orf’cer man, clean as a new rifle, rides up an’ sez: “What damned scarecrows are you?”

“A comp’ny av Her Majesty’s Black Tyrone an’ wan av the Ould Rig’mint,” sez Crook very quiet, givin’ our visitors the flure as ‘twas.

“Oh!” sez the Staff Orf’cer; “did you dislodge that Reserve?”

“No!” sez Crook, an’ the Tyrone laughed.

“Thin fwhat the divil have ye done?”

“Disthroyed ut,” sez Crook, an’ he took us on, but not before Toomey that was in the Tyrone sez aloud, his voice somewhere in his stummick: “Fwhat in the name av misfortune does this parrit widout a tail mane by shtoppin’ the road av his betthers?”

‘The Staff Orf’cer wint blue, an’ Toomey makes him pink by changin’ to the voice av a minowderin’ woman an’ sayin’: “Come an’ kiss me, Major dear, for me husband’s at the wars an’ I’m all alone at the Depot.”

‘The Staff Orf’cer wint away, an’ I cud see Crook’s shoulthers shakin’.

‘His Corp’ril checks Toomey. “Lave me alone,” sez Toomey, widout a wink. “I was his batman before he was married an’ he knows fwhat I mane, av you don’t. There’s nothin’ like livin’ in the hight av society.” D’you remimber that, Orth’ris!’

‘Hi do. Toomey, ‘e died in ‘orspital, next week it was, ‘cause I bought ‘arf his kit; an’ I remember after that – ’

‘GUARRD, TURN OUT!’

The Relief had come; it was four o’clock. ‘I’ll catch a kyart for you, Sorr,’ said Mulvaney, diving hastily into his accoutrements. ‘Come up to the top av the Fort an’ we’ll pershue our invistigations into M’Grath’s shtable.’ The relieved Guard strolled round the main bastion on its way to the swimming-bath, and Learoyd grew almost talkative. Ortheris looked into the Fort ditch and across the plain. ‘Ho! it’s weary waitin’ for Ma-ary!’ he hummed; ‘but I’d like to kill some more bloomin’ Paythans before my time’s up. War! Bloody war! North, East, South, and West.’

‘Amen,’ said Learoyd slowly.

‘Fwhat’s here?’ said Mulvaney, checking at a blur of white by the foot of the old sentry-box. He stooped and touched it. ‘It’s Norah – Norah M’Taggart! Why, Nonie darlin’, fwhat are ye doin’ out av your mother’s bed at this time?’

The two-year-old child of Sergeant M’Taggart must have wandered for a breath of cool air to the very verge of the parapet of the Fort ditch. Her tiny night-shift was gathered into a wisp round

her neck and she moaned in her sleep. ‘See there!’ said Mulvaney; ‘poor lamb! Look at the heat-rash on the innocint skin av her. ‘Tis hard – crool hard even for us. Fwhat must it be for these? Wake up, Nonie, your mother will be woild about you. Begad, the child might ha’ fallen into the ditch!’

He picked her up in the growing light, and set her on his shoulder, and her fair curls touched the grizzled stubble of his temples. Ortheris and Learoyd followed snapping their fingers, while Norah smiled at them a sleepy smile. Then carolled Mulvaney, clear as a lark, dancing the baby on his arm —

‘If any young man should marry you,
Say nothin’ about the joke;
That iver ye slep’ in a sinthry-box,
Wrapped up in a soldier’s cloak.’

‘Though, on my sowl, Nonie,’ he said gravely, ‘there was not much cloak about you. Niver mind, you won’t dhress like this ten years to come. Kiss your friends an’ run along to your mother.’

Nonie, set down close to the Married Quarters, nodded with the quiet obedience of the soldier’s child, but, ere she pattered off over the flagged path, held up her lips to be kissed by the Three Musketeers. Ortheris wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and swore sentimentally; Learoyd turned pink; and the two walked away together. The Yorkshireman lifted up his voice and gave in thunder the chorus of *The Sentry-Box*, while Ortheris piped at his side.

‘Bin to a bloomin’ sing-song, you two?’ said the Artilleryman, who was taking his cartridge down to the Morning Gun. ‘You’re over merry for these dashed days.’

‘I bid ye take care o’ the brat, said he,
For it comes of a noble race,’

Learoyd bellowed. The voices died out in the swimming-bath.

‘Oh, Terence!’ I said, dropping into Mulvaney’s speech, when we were alone, ‘it’s you that have the Tongue!’

He looked at me wearily; his eyes were sunk in his head, and his face was drawn and white. ‘Eyah!’ said he; ‘I’ve blandandhered thim through the night somehow, but can thim that helps others help thimselves? Answer me that, Sorr!’

And over the bastions of Fort Amara broke the pitiless day.

IN THE MATTER OF A PRIVATE

*Hurrah! hurrah! a soldier's life for me!
Shout, boys, shout! for it makes you jolly and free.*

The Ramrod Corps.

People who have seen, say that one of the quaintest spectacles of human frailty is an outbreak of hysterics in a girls' school. It starts without warning, generally on a hot afternoon, among the elder pupils. A girl giggles till the giggle gets beyond control. Then she throws up her head, and cries, '*Honk, honk, honk,*' like a wild goose, and tears mix with the laughter. If the mistress be wise, she will rap out something severe at this point to check matters. If she be tender-hearted, and send for a drink of water, the chances are largely in favour of another girl laughing at the afflicted one and herself collapsing. Thus the trouble spreads, and may end in half of what answers to the Lower Sixth of a boys' school rocking and whooping together. Given a week of warm weather, two stately promenades per diem, a heavy mutton and rice meal in the middle of the day, a certain amount of nagging from the teachers, and a few other things, some amazing effects develop. At least, this is what folk say who have had experience.

Now, the Mother Superior of a Convent and the Colonel of a British Infantry Regiment would be justly shocked at any comparison being made between their respective charges. But it is a fact that, under certain circumstances, Thomas in bulk can be worked up into dithering, rippling hysteria. He does not weep, but he shows his trouble unmistakably, and the consequences get into the newspapers, and all the good people who hardly know a Martini from a Snider say: 'Take away the brute's ammunition!'

Thomas isn't a brute, and his business, which is to look after the virtuous people, demands that he shall have his ammunition to his hand. He doesn't wear silk stockings, and he really ought to be supplied with a new Adjective to help him to express his opinions: but, for all that, he is a great man. If you call him 'the heroic defender of the national honour' one day, and a 'brutal and licentious soldiery' the next, you naturally bewilder him, and he looks upon you with suspicion. There is nobody to speak for Thomas except people who have theories to work off on him; and nobody understands Thomas except Thomas, and he does not always know what is the matter with himself.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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