

# RUDYARD KIPLING

SOLDIERS

THREE - PART

2

Редъярд Киплинг

**Soldiers Three - Part 2**

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# Rudyard Kipling

## Soldiers Three - Part 2

### ‘LOVE-O’WOMEN’

A lamentable tale of things  
Done long ago, and ill done.

The horror, the confusion, and the separation of the murderer from his comrades were all over before I came. There remained only on the barrack-square the blood of man calling from the ground. The hot sun had dried it to a dusky gold-beater-skin film, cracked lozenge-wise by the heat, and as the wind rose each lozenge, rising a little, curled up at the edges as if it were a dumb tongue. Then a heavier gust blew all away down wind in grains of dark-coloured dust. It was too hot to stand in the sunshine before breakfast. The men were all in barracks talking the matter over. A knot of soldiers' wives stood by one of the entrances to the married quarters, while inside a woman shrieked and raved with wicked filthy words.

A quiet and well-conducted sergeant had shot down in broad daylight just after early parade one of his own corporals, had then returned to barracks and sat on a cot till the guard came for him. He would, therefore, in due time be handed over to the High Court for trial. Further, but this he could hardly have considered in his scheme of revenge, he would horribly upset my work; for the reporting of the trial would fall on me without a relief. What that trial would be like I knew even to weariness. There would be the rifle carefully uncleaned, with the fouling marks about breech and muzzle, to be sworn to by half a dozen superfluous privates; there would be heat, reeking heat, till the wet pencil slipped sideways between the fingers; and the punkah would swish and the pleaders would jabber in the verandahs, and his Commanding Officer would put in certificates of the prisoner's moral character, while the jury would pant and the summer uniforms of the witnesses would smell of dye and soaps; and some abject barrack-sweeper would lose his head in cross-examination, and the young barrister who always defended soldiers' cases for the credit that they never brought him, would say and do wonderful things, and would then quarrel with me because I had not reported him correctly. At the last, for he surely would not be hanged, I might meet the prisoner again, ruling blank account-forms in the Central Jail, and cheer him with the hope of a wardership in the Andamans.

The Indian Penal Code and its interpreters do not treat murder, under any provocation whatever, in a spirit of jest. Sergeant Raines would be very lucky indeed if he got off with seven years, I thought. He had slept the night upon his wrongs, and had killed his man at twenty yards before any talk was possible. That much I knew. Unless, therefore, the case was doctored a little, seven years would be his least; and I fancied it was exceedingly well for Sergeant Raines that he had been liked by his Company.

That same evening — no day is so long as the day of a murder — I met Ortheris with the dogs, and he plunged defiantly into the middle of the matter. “I’ll be one o’ the witnesses,” said he. “I was in the verandah when Mackie came along. ‘E come from Mrs. Raines’s quarters. Quigley, Parsons, an’ Trot, they was in the inside verandah, so they couldn’t ‘ave ‘eard nothing. Sergeant Raines was in the verandah talkin’ to me, an’ Mackie ‘e come along acrost the square an’ ‘e sez, ‘Well,’ sez ‘e, “‘ave they pushed your ‘elmet off yet, Sergeant?’ ‘e sez. An’ at that Raines ‘e catches ‘is breath an’ ‘e sez, ‘My Gawd, I can’t stand this!’ sez ‘e, an’ ‘e picks up my rifle an’ shoots Mackie. See?”

“But what were you doing with your rifle in the outer verandah an hour after parade?”

“Cleanin’ ‘er,” said Ortheris, with the sullen brassy stare that always went with his choice lies.

He might as well have said that he was dancing naked, for at no time did his rifle need hand or rag on her twenty minutes after parade. Still the High Court would not know his routine.

“Are you going to stick to that — on the Book?” I asked.

“Yes. Like a bloomin’ leech.”

“All right, I don’t want to know any more. Only remember that Quigley, Parsons, and Trot couldn’t have been where you say without hearing something; and there’s nearly certain to be a barrack-sweeper who was knocking about the square at the time. There always is.”

“Twasn’t the sweeper. It was the beastie. ‘E’s all right.”

Then I knew that there was going to be some spirited doctoring, and I felt sorry for the Government Advocate who would conduct the prosecution.

When the trial came on I pitied him more, for he was always quick to lose his temper, and made a personal matter of each lost cause. Raines’s young barrister had for once put aside his unslaked and Welling passion for alibis and insanity, had forsworn gymnastics and fireworks, and worked soberly for his client. Mercifully the hot weather was yet young, and there had been no flagrant cases of barrack-shootings up to the time; and the jury was a good one, even for an Indian jury, where nine men out of every twelve are accustomed to weighing evidence. Ortheris stood firm and was not shaken by any cross-examination. The one weak point in his tale — the presence of his rifle in the outer verandah — went unchallenged by civilian wisdom, though some of the witnesses could not help smiling. The Government Advocate called for the rope; contending throughout that the murder had been a deliberate one. Time had passed, he argued, for that reflection which comes so naturally to a man whose honour is lost. There was also the Law, ever ready and anxious to right the wrongs of the common soldier if, in deed, wrong had been done. But he doubted much whether there had been any sufficient wrong. Causeless suspicion over-long brooded upon had led, by his theory, to deliberate crime. But his attempts to minimise the motive failed. The most disconnected witness knew — had known for weeks — the causes of offence, and the prisoner, who naturally was the last of all to know, groaned in the dock while he listened. The one question that the trial circled round was whether Raines had fired under sudden and blinding provocation given that very morning, and in the summing up it was clear that Ortheris’s evidence told. He had contrived, most artistically, to suggest that he personally hated the Sergeant, who had come into the verandah to give him a talking to for insubordination. In a weak moment the Government Advocate asked one question too many, “Beggin’ your pardon, sir,” Ortheris replied, “‘e was callin’ me a dam’ impudent little lawyer.” The Court shook. The jury brought it in a killing, but with every provocation and extenuation known to God or man, and the Judge put his hand to his brow before giving sentence, and the Adam’s apple in the prisoner’s throat went up and down mercury-pumping before a cyclone.

In consideration of all considerations, from his Commanding Officer’s certificate of good conduct to the sure loss of pension, service, and honour, the prisoner would get two years, to be served in India, and — there need be no demonstration in Court. The Government Advocate scowled and picked up his papers; the guard wheeled with a clash, and the prisoner was relaxed to the Secular Arm, and driven to the jail in a broken-down ticca-gharri.

His guard and some ten or twelve military witnesses, being less important, were ordered to wait till what was officially called the cool of the evening before marching back to cantonments. They gathered together in one of the deep red brick verandahs of a disused lock-up and congratulated Ortheris, who bore his honours modestly. I sent my work into the office and joined them. Ortheris watched the Government Advocate driving off lunch.

“That’s a nasty little bald-headed little butcher, that is,” he said. “‘E don’t please me. ‘E’s got a colley dog wot do, though. I’m goin’ up to Murree in a week. That dawg’ll bring fifteen rupees anywheres.”

“You had better spend it in Masses,” said Terence, unbuckling his belt, for he had been on the prisoner’s guard, standing helmeted and bolt up right for three long hours.

“Not me,” said Ortheris cheerfully. “Gawd’ll put it down to B Comp’ny’s barrick damages one o’ these days. You look strapped, Terence.”

“Faith, I’m not so young as I was. That guard-mountin’ wears on the sole av the fut, and this” — he sniffed contemptuously at the brick verandah — “is as hard setting as standin’!”

“Wait a minute. I’ll get the cushions out of my cart,” I said.

“Strewth — sofies! We’re going it gay,” said Ortheris, as Terence dropped himself section by section on the leather cushions, saying prettily, “May you niver want a soft place wheriver you go, an’ power to share utt wid a frind. Another for yourself? That’s good. It lets me sit long ways. Stanley, pass me a poipe. Augrrh! An’ that’s another man gone all to pieces bekaze av a woman. I must ha’ been on forty or fifty prisoners’ gyards, first an’ last, an’ I hate ut new ivry time.”

“Let’s see. You were on Losson’s, Lancey’s, Dugard’s, and Stebbins’s, that I can remember,” I said.

“Ay, an’ before that an’ before that — scores av thim,” he answered with a worn smile. “Tis bettther to die than to live for thim, though. Whin Raines comes out — he’ll be changin’ his kit at the jail now — he’ll think that too. He shud ha’ shot himself an’ the woman by rights, an’ made a clean bill av all. Now he’s left the woman — she tuk tay wid Dinah Sunday gone last — an’ he’s left himself. Mackie’s the lucky man.”

“He’s probably getting it hot where he is,” I ventured, for I knew something of the dead Corporal’s record.

“Be sure av that,” said Terence, spitting over the edge of the verandah. “But fwhat he’ll get there is light marchin’-ordher to fwhat he’d ha’ got here if he’d lived.”

“Surely not. He’d have gone on and forgotten like the others.”

“Did ye know Mackie well, Sorr?” said Terence.

“He was on the Pattiala guard of honour last winter, and I went out shooting with him in an ekka for the day, and I found him rather an amusing man.”

“Well, he’ll ha’ got shut av amusemints, excipt turnin’ from wan side to the other, these few years come. I knew Mackie, an’ I’ve seen too many to be mistuk in the muster av wan man. He might ha’ gone on an’ forgot, as you say, Sorr, but was a man wid an educashin, an’ he used ut for his schames, an’ the same educashin, an’ talk an’ all that made him able to do fwhat he had a mind to wid a woman, that same wud turn back again in the long run an’ tear him alive. I can’t say fwhat that I mane to say bekaze I don’t know how, but Mackie was the spit an’ livin’ image av a man that I saw march the same march all but; an’ ‘twas worse for him that he did not come by Mackie’s ind. Wait while I remimber now. ‘Twas fwhin I was in the Black Tyrone, an’ he was drafted us from Portsmouth; an’ fwhat was his misbegotten name? Larry — Larry Tighe ut was; an’ wan of the draft said he was a gentleman ranker, an’ Larry tuk an’ three parts killed him for saying so. An’ he was a big man, an’ a strong man, an’ a handsome man, an’ that tells heavy in practice wid some women, but, takin’ thim by an’ large, not wid all. Yet ‘twas wid all that Larry dealt — all — for he ‘ud put the comether on any woman that trod the green earth av God, an’ he knew ut. Like Mackie that’s roastin’ now, he knew ut; an’ niver did he put the comether on any woman save an’ excipt for the black shame. ‘Tis not me that shud be talkin’, dear knows, dear knows, but the most av my mis — misalli’nces was for pure devilry, an’ mighty sorry I have been whin harm came; an’ time an’ again wid a girl, ay, an’ a woman too, for the matter av that, whin I have seen by the eyes av her that I was makin’ more throuble than I talked, I have hild off an’ let be for the sake av the mother that bore me. But Larry, I’m thinkin’, he was suckled by a she-devil, for he niver let wan go that came nigh to listen to him. ‘Twas his business, as if it might ha’ bin sinthry-go. He was a good soldier too. Now there was the Colonel’s governess — an’ he a privit too! — that was never known in barricks; an’ wan av the Major’s maids, and she was promised to a man; an’ some more outside; an’ fwhat ut was amongst us we’ll never know till Judgment Day! ‘Twas the nature av the baste to put the comether on the best av thim — not the prettiest by any manner av manes — but the like av such woman as you cud lay

your band on the Book an' swear there was niver thought av foolishness in. An' for that very reason, mark you, he was niver caught. He came close to ut wanst or twice, but caught he niver was, an' that cost him more at the ind than the beginnin'. He talked to me more than most, bekaze he tould me, barrin' the accident av my educashin, I'd ha' been the same kind av divil he was. 'An' is ut like,' he wud say, houldin' his head high — 'is ut like that I'd iver be thrapped? For fwhat am I when all's said an' done?' he sez. 'A damned privit,' sez he. 'An' is ut like, think you, that thim I know wud be connect wid a privit like me? Number tin thousand four hundred an' sivin,' he sez, grinnin'. I knew by the turn av his spache whin he was not takin' care to talk rough that he was a gentleman ranker.

"I do not undherstan' ut at all,' I sez; 'but I know,' sez I, 'that the divil looks out av your eyes, an' I'll have no share wid you. A little fun by way av amusemint where 't will do no harm, Larry, is right and fair, but I am mistook if 'tis any amusemint to you,' I sez.

"You are much mistook,' he sez. 'An' I counsel you not to judge your betters.'

"My betthers!' I sez. 'God help you, Larry. There's no betther in this. 'Tis all bad, as you will find for yoursilf.'

"You're not like me,' he says, tossin' his head.

"Praise the Saints, I am not,' I sez. 'Fwhat I have done I have done an' been crool sorry for. Fwhin your time comes,' sez I, 'ye'll remimber fwhat I say.'

"An' whin that time comes,' sez he, 'I'll come to you for ghostly consolation, Father Terence,' an' at that he wint off afther some more divil's business — for to get expayrience, he tould me. He was wicked — rank wicked — wicked as all Hell! I'm not construct by nature to go in fear av any man, but, begad, I was afraid av Larry. He'd come in to barricks wid his cap on three hairs, an' lie on his cot and stare at the ceilin', and now an' again he'd fetch a little laugh, the like av a splash in the bottom av a well, an' by that I knew he was schamin' new wickedness, an' I'd be afraid. All this was long an' long ago, but ut hild me straight — for a while.

"I tould you, did I not, Sorr, that I was caressed an' pershuated to lave the Tyrone on account av a throuble?"

"Something to do with a belt and a man's head, wasn't it?" Terence had never given me the exact facts.

"It was. Faith, ivry time I go on prisoner's gyard in coort I wondher fwhy I am not where the pris'ner is. But the man I struk tuk it in fair fight, an' he had the good sinse not to die. Consider now, fwhat wud ha' come to the Army if he had! I was enthreated to exchange, an' my Commandin' Orf'cer pled wid me. I wint, not to be disobligin', an' Larry tould me he was powerful sorry to lose me, though fwhat I'd done to make him sorry I do not know. So to the Ould Rig'mint I came, lavin' Larry to go to the divil his own way, an' niver expectin' to see him again except as a shootin'-case in barricks... Who's that lavin' the compound?" Terence's quick eye had caught sight of a white uniform skulking behind hedge.

"The Sergeant's gone visiting," said a voice.

"Thin I command here, an' I will have no sneakin' away to the bazar, an' huntin' for you wid a pathrol at midnight. Nalson, for I know ut's you, come back to the verandah."

Nalson, detected, slunk back to his fellows. There was a grumble that died away in a minute or two, and Terence, turning on the other side, went on: —

"That was the last I saw av Larry for a while. Exchange is the same as death for not thinkin', an' by token I married Dinah, an' that kept me from remimberin' ould times. Thin we wint up to the Front, an' ut tore my heart in tu to lave Dinah at the Depot in Pindi. Consequint whin was at the Front I fought circumspectuous till I warrmed up, an thin I fought double tides. You remimber fwhat I tould you in the gyard-gate av the fight at Silver's Theatre."

"Wot's that about Silver's Theayter!" said Ortheris quickly, over his shoulder.

"Nothin', little man. A tale that ye know. As I was sayin', afther that fight us av the Ould Rig'mint an' the Tyrone was all mixed together takin' shtock ay the dead, an' av coorse I wint about to

find if there was any man that remimbered me. The second man I came acrost — an' how I'd missed him in the fight I do not know — was Larry, an' a fine man he looked, but oulder, by token that he had a call to be. 'Larry,' sez I, 'how is ut wid you?'

“Ye're callin' the wrong man,' he sez, wid his gentleman's smile; 'Larry has been dead these three years. They call him “Love-o'-Women” now,' he sez. By that I knew the ould divil was in him yet, but the ind av a fight is no time for the beginnin' av confession, so we sat down an' talked av times.'

“They tell me you're a married man,' he sez, puffing slow at his poipe. 'Are ye happy?'

“I will be whin I get back to Depot,' I sez. “Tis a reconnaissance honeymoon now.'

“I'm married too,' he sez, puffin' slow an' more slow, an' stopperin' wid his forefinger.

“Sind you happiness,' I sez. 'That's the best hearin' for a long time.'

“Are ye av that opinion?' he sez; an' thin he began talkin' av the campaign. The sweat av Silver's Theatre was not dhry upon him, an' he was prayin' for more work. I was well contint to lie and listen to the cook-pot lids.

“Whin he got up off the ground he shtaggered a little, an' laned over all twisted.

“Ye've got more than ye bargained for,' I sez. 'Take an inventory, Larry. 'Tis like you're hurt.'

“He turned round stiff as a ramrod an' damned the eyes av me up an' down for an impertinent Irish-faced ape. If that had been in barracks, I'd ha' stretched him an' no more said; but 'twas at the Front, an' afther such a fight as Silver's Theatre I knew there was no callin' a man to account for his timpers. He might as well ha' kissed me. Aftherwards I was well pleased I kept my fistes home. Then our Captain Crook — Cruik-na-bul-leen — came up. He'd been talkin' to the little orf'cer bhoy av the Tyrone. 'We're all cut to windystraws,' he sez, 'but the Tyrone are damned short for noncoms. Go you over there, Mulvaney, an' be Deputy-Sergeant, Corp'ral, Lance, an' everything else ye can lay hands on till I bid you stop.'

“I wint over an' tuk hould. There was wan sergeant left standin', an' they'd pay no heed to him. The remnint was me, an' 'twas high time I came. Some I talked to, an' some I did not, but before night the bhoys av the Tyrone stud to attention, begad, if I sucked on my poipe above a whisper. Betune you an' me an' Bobs, I was commandin' the company, an' that was what Cruik had thransferred me for, an' the little orf'cer bhoy knew ut, and I knew ut, but the comp'ny did not. And there, mark you, is the vartue that no money an' no dhrill can buy — the vartue av the ould soldier that knows his orf'cer's work an' does ut — at the salute!

“Thin the Tyrone, wid the Ould Rig'mint in touch, was sint maraudin' and prowlin' acrost the hills promishcuous an' unsatisfactory. 'Tis my privit opinion that a gin'ral does not know half his time fwhat to do wid three-quarters his command. So he shquats on his hunkers an' bids thim run round an' round forninst him while he considhers on ut. Whin by the process av nature they get sejuiced into a big fight that was none av their seekin', he sez: 'Obsarve my shuparior janius! I meant ut to come so.' We ran round an' about, an' all we got was shootin' into the camp at night, an' rushin' empty sungars wid the long bradawl, an' bein' hit from behind rocks till we was wore out — all except Love-o'-Women. That puppy-dog business was mate an' dhrink to him. Begad, he cud niver get enough av ut. Me well knowin' that it is just this desultorial campaignin' that kills the best men, an' suspicionin' that if I was cut the little orf'cer bhoy wud expind all his men in thyrin' to get out, I wud lie most powerful doggo whin I heard a shot, an' curl my long legs behind a bowlder, an' run like blazes whin the ground was clear. Faith, if I led the Tyrone in rethreat wanst I led them forty times. Love-o'-Women wud stay pottin' an' pottin' from behind a rock, and wait till the fire was heaviest, an' thin stand up an' fire man-height clear. He wud lie out in camp too at night snipin' at the shadows, for he niver tuk a mouthful av slape. My commandin' orf'cer — save his little soul! — cud not see the beauty av of my strategims, an' whin the Ould Rig'mint crossed us, an' that was wanst a week, he'd throt off to Cruik, wid his big blue eyes as round as saucers, an' lay an information against me. I heard thim wanst talkin' through the tent-wall, an' I nearly laughed.

“He runs — runs like a hare,' sez the little orf'cer bhoy. “Tis demoralisin' my men.'

“Ye damned little fool,’ sez Cruik, laughin’. ‘He’s larnin’ you your business. Have ye been rushed at night yet?’

“No,’ sez the child, wishful that he had been.

“Have you any wounded?’ sez Cruik.

“No,’ he sez. ‘There was no chanst for that. They follow Mulvaney too quick,’ he sez.

“Fwhat more do you want, thin?’ sez Cruik. ‘Terence is bloodin’ you neat an’ handy,’ he sez. ‘He knows fwhat you do not, an’ that’s that there’s a time for ivrything. He’ll not lead you wrong,’ he sez, ‘but I’d give a month’s pay to larn fwhat he thinks av you.’

“That kept the babe quiet, but Love-o’-Women was pokin’ at me for ivrything I did, an’ specially my manoeuvres.

“Mr. Mulvaney,’ he sez wan evenin’, very contempshus, ‘you’re growin’ very jeldy wid your feet. Among gentlemen,’ he sez, ‘among gentlemen that’s called no pretty name.’

“Among privits ‘tis different,’ I sez. ‘Get back to your tent. I’m sergeant here,’ I sez.

“There was just enough in the voice av me to tell him he was playin’ wid his life betune his teeth. He wint off, an’ I noticed that this man that was contempshus set off from the halt wid a shunt as tho’ he was bein’ kicked behind. That same night there was a Paythan picnic in the hills about, an’ firin’ into our tents fit to wake the livin’ dead. ‘Lie down all,’ I sez. ‘Lie down an’ kape still. They’ll no more than waste ammunition.’

“I heard a man’s feet on the ground, an’ thin a ‘Tini joinin’ in the chorus. I’d been lyin’ warm, thinkin’ av Dinah an’ all, but I crup out wid the bugle for to look round in case there was a rush, an’ the ‘Tini was flashin’ at the fore-ind av the camp, an’ the hill near by was fair flickerin’ wid long-range fire. Undher the starlight I beheld Love-o’-Women settin’ on a rock wid his belt and helmet off. He shouted wanst or twice, an’ thin I heard him say: ‘They should ha’ got the range long ago. Maybe they’ll fire at the flash.’ Thin he fired again, an’ that dhrew a fresh volley, and the long slugs that they chew in their teeth came floppin’ among the rocks like tree-toads av a hot night. ‘That’s better,’ sez Love-o’-Women. ‘Oh Lord, how long, how long!’ he sez, an’ at that he lit a match an’ held ut above his head.

“Mad,’ thinks I, ‘mad as a coot,’ an’ I tuk wan stip forward, an’ the nixt I knew was the sole av my boot flappin’ like a cavalry gydon an’ the funny-bone av my toes tinglin’. ‘Twas a clane-cut shot — a slug — that niver touched sock or hide, but set me bare-fut on the rocks. At that I tuk Love-o’-Women by the scruff an’ threw him under a bowlder, an’ whin I sat down I heard the bullets patterin’ on that good stone.

“Ye may dhraw your own wicked fire,’ I sez, shakin’ him, ‘but I’m not goin’ to be kilt too.’

“Ye’ve come too soon,’ he sez. ‘Ye’ve come too soon. In another minute they cud not ha’ missed me. Mother av God,’ he sez, ‘fwhy did ye not lave me be? Now ‘tis all to do again,’ an’ he hides his face in his hands.

“So that’s it,’ I sez, shakin’ him again. ‘That’s th manin’ av your disobeyin’ ordhers.’

“I dare not kill meself,’ he sez, rockin’ to and fro. ‘My own hand wud not let me die, and there’s not a bullet this month past wud touch me. I’m to die slow,’ he sez. ‘I’m to die slow. But I’m in hell now,’ he sez, shriekin’ like a woman. ‘I’m in hell now!’

“God be good to us all,’ I sez, for I saw his face. ‘Will ye tell a man the throuble. If ‘tis not murder, maybe we’ll mend it yet.’

“At that he laughed. ‘D’you remimber fwhat I said in the Tyrone barricks about comin’ to you for ghostly consolation. I have not forgot,’ he sez. ‘That came back, an’ the rest av my time is on me now, Terence. I’ve fought ut off for months an’ months, but the liquor will not bite any more, Terence,’ he sez. ‘I can’t get dhrunk.’

“Thin I knew he spoke the truth about bein’ in hell, for whin liquor does not take hould, the sowl av a man is rotten in him. But me bein’ such as I was, fwhat could I say to him?

“Di’monds an’ pearls,’ he begins again. ‘Di’monds and pearls I have thrown away wid both hands — an’ fwhat have I left? Oh, fwhat have I left?’

“He was shakin’ an’ thremblin’ up against my shouldher, an’ the slugs was singin’ overhead, an’ I was wonderin’ whether my little bhoy wud have sinse enough to kape his men quiet through all this firin’.

“So long as I did not think,’ sez Love-o’-Women, ‘so long I did not see — I wud not see — but I can now, what I’ve lost. The time an’ the place,’ he sez, ‘an’ the very words I said whin ut pleased me to go off alone to hell. But thin, even thin,’ he sez, wrigglin’ tremenjus, ‘I wud not ha’ been happy. There was too much behind av me. How cud I ha’ believed her sworn oath — me that have bruk mine again an’ again for the sport av seein’ thim cry. An’ there are the others,’ he sez. ‘Oh, what will I do — what will I do?’ He rocked back an’ forward again, an’ I think he was cryin’ like wan av the women he dealt wid.

“The full half av fwhat he said was Brigade Ordhers to me, but from the rest an’ the remnint I suspicioned somethin’ av his throuble. ‘Twas the judgmint av God had grup the heel av him, as I tould him ‘twould in the Tyrone barracks. The slugs was singin’ over our rock more an’ more, an’ I sez for to divart him: ‘Let bad alone,’ I sez. ‘They’ll be thryin’ to rush the camp in a minut.’

“I had no more than said that whin a Paythan man crep’ up on his belly wid his knife betune his teeth, not twinty yards from us. Love-o’-Women jumped up an’ fetched a yell, an’ the man saw him an’ ran at him (he’d left his rifle under the rock) wid the knife. Love-o’-Women niver turned a hair, but by the Living Power, for I saw ut, a stone twisted under the Paythan man’s feet an’ he came down full sprawl, an’ his knife wint tinklin’ acrost the rocks! ‘I tould you I was Cain,’ sez Love-o’-Women. ‘Fwhat’s the use av killin’ him? He’s an honest man — by compare.’

“I was not dishputin’ about the morils av Paythans that tide, so I dhropped Love-o’-Women’s burt acrost the man’s face, an’ ‘Hurry into camp,’ I sez, ‘for this may be the first av a rush.’

“There was no rush afther all, though we waited undher arms to give thim a chanst. The Paythan man must ha’ come alone for the mischief, an’ afther a while Love-o’-Women wint back to his tint wid that quare lurchin’ sind-off in his walk that I cud niver undherstand. Begad, I pitied him, an’ the more bekaze he made me think for the rest av the night av the day whin I was confirmed Corp’ril, not actin’ Lef’tenant, an’ my thoughts was not good.

“Ye can undherstand that afther that night we came to talkin’ a dale together, an’ bit by bit ut came out fwhat I’d suspicioned. The whole av his carr’in’s on an’ divilmints had come back on him hard as liquor comes back whin you’ve been on the dhrink for a wake. All he’d said an’ all he’d done, an’ only he cud tell how much that was, come back, an’ there was niver a minut’s peace in his sowl. ‘Twas the Horrors widout any cause to see, an’ yet, an’ yet — fwhat am I talkin’ av? He’d ha’ taken the Horrors wid thankfulness. Beyon’ the repentince av the man, an’ that was beyon’ the natur av man — awful, awful, to behould! — there was more that was worst than any repentince. Av the scores an’ scores that he called over in his mind (an’ they were dhrivin’ him mad), there was, mark you, wan woman av all, an’ she was not his wife, that cut him to the quick av his marrow. ‘Twas there he said that he’d thrown away di’monds an’ pearls past count, an’ thin he’d begin again like a blind byle in an oil-mill, walkin’ round an’ round, to considher (him that was beyond all touch av being happy this side hell!) how happy he wud ha’ been wid her. The more he considhered, the more he’d consate himself that he’d lost mighty happiness, an’ thin he wud work ut all backwards, an’ cry that he niver cud ha’ been happy anyways.

“Time an’ time an’ again in camp, on p’rade, ay, an’ in action, I’ve seen that man shut his eyes an’ duck his head as you wud duck to the flicker av a bay’nit. For ‘twas thin he tould me that the thought av all he’d missed came an’ stud forninst him like red-hot irons. For what he’d done wid the others he was sorry, but he did not care; but this wan woman that I’ve tould of, by the Hilts av God she made him pay for all the others twice over! Niver did I know that a man cud enjure such tormint widout his heart crackin’ in his ribs, an’ I have been” — Terence turned the pipe-stem slowly between his teeth — “I have been in some black cells. All I iver suffered tho’ was not to be talked of alongside av him... an’ what could I do? Paternosters was no more than peas for his sorrow.

“Evenshually we finished our prom’nade acrost the hills, and thanks to me for the same, there was no casualties an’ no glory. The campaign was comin’ to an ind, an’ all the rig’mints was bein’ drawn together for to be sint back home. Love-o’-Women was mighty sorry bekaze he had no work to do, an’ all his time to think in. I’ve heard that man talkin’ to his belt-plate an’ his side-arms while he was soldierin’ thim, all to prevint himself from thinkin’, an’ ivry time he got up after he had been settin’ down or wint on from the halt, he’d start wid that kick an’ traverse that I tould you of — his legs sprawlin’ all ways to wanst. He wud niver go see the docthor, tho’ I tould him to be wise. He’d curse me up an’ down for my advice; but I knew he was no more a man to be reckoned wid than the little bhoys was a commandin’ orf’cer, so I let his tongue run if it aised him.

“Wan day — ‘twas on the way back — I was walkin’ round camp wid him, an’ he stopped an’ struck ground wid his right fut three or four times doubtful. ‘Fwhat is ut?’ I sez. ‘Is that ground?’ sez he; an’ while I was thinkin’ his mind was goin’, up comes the docthor, who’d been anatomisin’ a dead bullock. Love-o’-Women starts to go on quick, an’ lands me a kick on the knee while his legs was gettin’ into marchin’ ordher.

“Hould on there,’ sez the docthor; an’ Love-o’-Women’s face, that was lined like a gridiron, turns red as brick.

“‘Tention,’ says the docthor; an’ Love-o’-Women stud so. ‘Now shut your eyes,’ sez the docthor. ‘No, ye must not hould by your comrade.’

“‘Tis all up,’ sez Love-o’-Women, trying to smile. ‘I’d fall, docthor, an’ you know ut.’

“‘Fall?’ I sez. ‘Fall at attention wid your eyes shut! Fwhat do you mane?’

“The docthor knows,’ he sez. ‘I’ve hild up as long as I can, but begad I’m glad ‘tis all done. But I will die slow,’ he sez, ‘I will die very slow.’

“I cud see by the docthor’s face that he was mortal sorry for the man, an’ he ordhered him to hospital. We wint back together, an’ I was dumbstruck; Love-o’-Women was cripplin’ and crumblin’ at ivry step. He walked wid a hand on my shoulder all slued sideways, an’ his right leg swingin’ like a lame camel. Me not knowin’ more than the dead fwhat ailed him, ‘twas just as though the docthor’s word had done ut all — as if Love-o’-Women had but been waitin’ for the ordher to let go.

“In hospital he sez somethin’ to the docthor that I could not catch.

“‘Holy shmoke!’ sez the docthor, ‘an’ who are you to be givin’ names to your diseases? ‘Tis ag’in’ all the regulations.’

“‘I’ll not be a privit much longer,’ sez Love-o’-Women in his gentleman’s voice, an’ the docthor jumped.

“‘Thrate me as a study, Docthor Lowndes,’ he sez; an’ that was the first time I’d iver heard a docthor called his name.

“‘Good-bye, Terence,’ sez Love-o’-Women. ‘‘Tis a dead man I am widout the pleasure av dyin’. You’ll come an’ set wid me sometimes for the peace av my soul.’

“Now I had been minded to ask Cruik to take me back to the Ould Rig’mint, for the fightin’ was over, an’ I was wore out wid the ways av the bhoys in the Tyrone; but I shifted my will, an’ hild on, an’ wint to set wid Love-o’-Women in the hospital. As I have said, Sorr, the man bruk all to little pieces undher my hand. How long he had hild up an’ forced himself fit to march I cannot tell, but in hospital but two days later he was such as I hardly knew. I shuk hands wid him, an’ his grip was fair strong, but his hands wint all ways to wanst, an’ he cud not button his tunic.

“‘I’ll take long an’ long to die yet,’ he sez, ‘for the ways av sin they’re like interest in the rig’mintal savin’s-bank — sure, but a damned long time bein’ paid.’

“The docthor sez to me quiet one day, ‘Has Tighe there anythin’ on his mind?’ he sez. ‘He’s burnin’ himself out.’

“‘How shud I know, Sorr?’ I sez, as innocent as putty.

“‘They call him Love-o’-Women in the Tyrone, do they not?’ he sez. ‘I was a fool to ask. Be wid him all you can. He’s houldin’ on to your strength.’

“But what ails him, docthor,’ I sez.

“They call ut Locomotus attacks us,’ he sez, ‘bekaze,’ sez he, ‘ut attacks us like a locomotive, if ye know fwat that manes. An’ ut comes,’ sez he, lookin’ at me, ‘ut comes from bein’ called Love-o’-Women.’

“You’re jokin’, docthor,’ I sez.

“Jokin’!’ sez he. ‘If iver you feel that you’ve got a felt sole in your boot instead av a Government bull’s-wool, come to me,’ he sez, ‘an’ I’ll show you whether ‘tis a joke.’

“You would not belave ut, Sorr, but that an’ seein’ Love-o’-Women overtuk widout warnin’ put the cowlid fear av attacks us on me so strong that for a week an’ more I was kickin’ my toes against stones an’ stumps for the pleasure av feelin’ them hurt.

“An’ Love-o’-Women lay in the cot (he might have gone down wid the wounded before an’ before, but he asked to stay wid me), and fwat there was in his mind had full swing at him night an’ day an’ ivry hour av the day an’ the night, an’ he withered like beef rations in a hot sun, an’ his eyes was like owls’ eyes, an’ his hands was mut’nous.

“They was gettin’ the rig’mints away wan by wan, the campaign bein’ inded, but as ushuil they was behavin’ as if niver a rig’mint had been moved before in the mem’ry av man. Now, fwwhy is that, Sorr? There’s fightin’ in an’ out nine months av the twelve somewhere in the Army. There has been — for years an’ years an’ years, an’ I wud ha’ thought they’d begin to get the hang av providin’ for throops. But no! Ivry time it’s like a girls’ school meetin’ a big red bull whin they’re goin’ to church; an’ ‘Mother av God,’ sez the Commissariat an’ the railways an’ the Barrick-masters, ‘fwat will we do now?’ The ordhers came to us av the Tyrone an’ the Ould Rig’mint an’ half a dozen more to go down, and there the ordhers stopped dumb. We wint down, by the special grace av God — down the Khaiber anyways. There was sick wid us, an’ I’m thinkin’ that some av them was jolted to death in the doolies, but they was anxious to be kilt so if they cud get to Peshawur alive the sooner. I walked by Love-o’-Women — there was no marchin’, an’ Love-o’-Women was not in a stew to get on. ‘If I’d only ha’ died up there!’ sez he through the doolie-curtains, an’ then he’d twist up his eyes an’ duck his head for the thoughts that came to him.

“Dinah was in Depot at Pindi, but I wint circumspectuous, for well I knew ‘tis just at the rump-ind av all things that his luck turns on a man. By token I ad seen a dhriver of a batttery goin’ by at a trot singin’ ‘Home, swate home’ at the top av his shout, and takin’ no heed o his bridle-hand — I had seen that man dhrop under the gun in the middle of a word, and come out by the limber like — like a frog on a pave-stone. No. I wud not hurry, though, God knows, my heart was all in Pindi. Love-o’-Women saw fwat was in my mind, an’ ‘Go on, Terence,’ h sez, ‘I know fwat’s waitin’ for you.’ ‘I will not,’ I sez. ‘Twill kape a little yet.’

“Ye know the turn of the pass forninst Jumrood and the nine mile road on the flat to Peshawur? All Peshawur was along that road day and night waitin’ for frinds — men, women, childer, and bands. Some av the throops was camped round Jumrood, an’ some went on to Peshawur to get away down to their cantonmints. We came through in the early mornin’, havin’ been awake the night through, and we dhruv sheer into the middle av the mess. Mother av Glory, will I ever forget that comin’ back? The light was not fair lifted, and the furst we heard was ‘For ‘tis my delight av a shiny night,’ frum a band that thought we was the second four comp’nies av the Lincolnshire. At that we was forced to sind them a yell to say who we was, an’ thin up wint ‘The wearin’ av the Green.’ It made me crawl all up my backbone, not havin’ taken my brequist. Thin, right smash into our rear, came fwat was left av the Jock Elliotts — wid four pipers an’ not half a kilt among thim, playin’ for the dear life, an’ swingin’ their rumps like buck rabbits, an’ a native rig’mint shrieking blue murther. Ye niver heard the like. There was men cryin’ like women that did — an’ faith I do not blame thim. Fwat bruk me down was the Lancers’ Band — shinin’ an’ spick like angels, wid the ould dhrum-horse at the head an’ the silver kettle-dhrams an’ all an’ all, waitin’ for their men that was behind us. They shtruck up the Cavalry Canter, an’, begad, those poor ghosts that had not a sound fut in a throop they answered

to ut, the men rockin' in their saddles. We thried to cheer them as they wint by, but ut came out like a big gruntin' cough, so there must have been many that was feelin' like me. Oh, but I'm forgettin'! The Fly-by-Nights was waitin' for their second battalion, an' whin ut came out, there was the Colonel's horse led at the head — saddle-empty. The men fair worshipped him, an' he'd died at Au Musjid on the road down. They waited till the remnint av the battalion was up, and thin — clane against ordhers, for who wanted that chune that day? — they wint back to Peshawur slow-time an' tearin' the bowils out av ivry man that heard, wid 'The Dead March.' Right across our line they wint, an' ye know their uniforms are as black as the Sweeps, crawlin' past like the dead, an' the other bands damnin' them to let be.

"Little they cared. The carps was wid them, an' they'd ha' taken ut so through a Coronation. Our ordhers was to go into Peshawur, an' we wint hot-fut past the Fly-by-Nights, not singin', to lave that chune behind us. That was how we tuk the road of the other corps.

"'Twas ringin' in my ears still whin I felt in the bones of me that Dinah was comin', an' I heard a shout, an' thin I saw a horse an' a tattoo latherin' down the road, hell to shplit, under women. I knew — I knew! Wan was the Tyrone Colonel's wife — ould Beeker's lady — her gray hair flyin' an' her fat round carkiss rowlin' in the saddle, an' the other was Dinah, that shud ha' been at Pindi. The Colonel's lady she charged at the head av our column like a stone wall, an' she all but knocked Beeker off his horse throwin' her arms round his neck an' blubberin', 'Me bhoy! Me bhoy!' an' Dinah wheeled left an' came down our flank, an' I let a yell that had suffered inside av me for months, and — Dinah came. Will I iver forget that while I live! She'd come on pass from Pindi, an' the Colonel's lady had lint her the tattoo. They'd been huggin' an' cryin' in each other's arms all the long night.

"So she walked along wid her hand in mine, askin' forty questions to wanst, an' beggin' me on the Virgin to make oath that there was not a bullet consaled in me, unbeknownst somewhere, an' thin I remimbered Love-o'-Women. He was watchin' us, an' his face was like the face av a divil that has been cooked too long. I did not wish Dinah to see ut, for whin a woman's runnin' over wid happiness she's like to be touched, for harm aftherwards, by the laste little thing in life. So I dhrew the curtain, an' Love-o'-Women lay back and groaned.

"Whin we marched into Peshawur, Dinah wint to barracks to wait for me, an' me feelin' so rich that tide, I wint on to take Love-o'-Women to hospital. It was the last I cud do, an' to save him the dust an' the smother I turned the doolie-men down a road well clear av the rest av the throops, an we wint along, me talkin' through the curtains. Av a sudden I heard him say: —

"'Let me look. For the Mercy av Hiven, let me look!' I had been so tuk up wid gettin' him out av the dust and thinkin' of Dinah that I had not kept my eyes about me. There was a woman ridin' a little behind av us, an', talkin' ut over wid Dinah aftherwards, that same woman must ha' rid not far on the Jumrood road. Dinah said that she had been hoverin' like a kite on the left flank av the column.

"I halted the doolie to set the curtains, an' she rode by walkin'-pace, an' Love-o'-Women's eyes wint afther her as if he would fair haul her down from the saddle.

"'Follow there,' was all he sez, but I niver heard a man spake in that voice before or since, an' I knew by those two wan words an' the look in his face that she was Di'monds-an'-Pearls that he'd talked av in his distresses.

"We followed till she turned into the gate av a little house that stud near the Edwardes's Gate. There was two girls in the verandah, an' they ran in whin they saw us. Faith, at long eye-range ut did not take me a wink to see fwhat kind av house ut was. The throops bein' there an' all, there was three or four such, but aftherwards the polis bade them go. At the verandah Love-o'-Women sez, catchin' his breath, 'Stop here,' an' thin, an' thin, wid a grunt that must ha' tore the heart up from his stomach, he swung himself out av the doolie, an' my troth he stud up on his feet wid the sweat pourin' down his face. If Mackie was to walk in here now I'd be less tuk back than I was thin. Where he'd dhrawn his power from, God knows or the divil — but 't was a dead man walkin' in the sun

wid the face av a dead man and the breath av a dead man held up by the Power, an' the legs an' the arms of the carps obeyin' ordhers!

“The woman stud in the verandah. She'd been a beauty too, though her eyes was sunk in her head, an' she looked Love-o'-Women up an' down terrible. ‘An’,’ she sez, kickin' back the tail av her habit, — ‘An’,’ she sez, ‘fwhat are you doin' here, married man?’

“Love-o'-Women said nothin', but a little froth came to his lips, an' he wiped ut off wid his hand an' looked at her an' the paint on her, an' looked, an' looked, an' looked.

“‘An' yet,’ she sez, wid a laugh. (Did you hear Mrs. Raines laugh whin Mackie died? Ye did not? Well for you.) ‘An' yet,’ she sez, ‘who but you have bettther right,’ sez she. ‘You taught me the road. You showed me the way,’ she sez. ‘Ay, look,’ she sez, ‘for ‘tis your work; you that tould me — d'you remimber it? — that a woman who was false to wan man cud be false to two. I have been that,’ she sez, ‘that an' more, for you always said I was a quick learner, Ellis. Look well,’ she sez, ‘for it is me that you called your wife in the sight av God long since!’ An' she laughed.

“Love-o'-Women stud still in the sun widout answerin'. Thin he groaned an' coughed to wanst, an' I thought 'twas the death-rattle, but he niver tuk his eyes off her face not for a wink. Ye cud ha' put her eyelashes through the flies av an E. P. tent, they were so long.

“‘Fwhat do you do here?’ she sez, word by word, ‘that have taken away my joy in my man this five years gone — that have broken my rest an' killed my body an' damned my soul for the sake av seem' how 'twas done? Did your expayrience aftherwards bring you acrost any woman that gave more than I did? Wud I not ha' died for you an' wid you, Ellis? Ye know that, man! If ever your lyin' sowl saw truth in uts life ye know that.’

“An' Love-o'-Women lifted up his head and said, ‘I knew,’ an' that was all. While she was spakin' the Power hild him up parade-set in the ‘sun, an the sweat dhropped undher his helmet. ‘Twas more an' more throuble for him to talk, an' his mouth was runnin' twistways.

“‘Fwhat do you do here?’ she sez, an' her voice whit up. ‘Twas like bells tollin' before. ‘Time was whin you were quick enough wid your words, — you that talked me down to hell. Are ye dumb now?’ An' Love-o'-W omen got his tongue, an' sez simple, like a little child, ‘May I come in?’ he sez.

“The house is open day an' night,’ she sez, wid a laugh; an' Love-o'-Women ducked his head an' hild up his hand as tho' he was gyardin'. The Power was on him still — it hild him up still, for, by my sowl, as I'll never save ut, he walked up the verandah steps that had been a livin' corpse in hospital for a month!

“‘An' now'?’ she sez, lookin' at him; an' the red paint stud lone on the white av her face like a bull's-eye on a target.

“He lifted up his eyes, slow an' very slow, an' he looked at her long an' very long, an' he tuk his spache betune his teeth wid a wrench that shuk him.

“‘I'm dyin', Agypt — dyin',’ he sez; ay, those were his words, for I remimber the name he called her. He was turnin' the death-colour, but his eyes niver rowled. They were set — set on her. Widout word or warnin' she opened her arms full stretch, an' ‘Here!’ she sez. (Oh, fwhat a golden mericle av a voice ut was!) ‘Die here,’ she sez; an' Love-o'-Women dhropped forward, an' she hild him up, for she was a fine big woman.

“I had no time to turn, bekaze that minut I heard the sowl quit him — tore out in the death-rattle — an' she laid him back in a long chair, an' she sez to me, ‘Misther soldier,’ she sez, ‘will ye not go in an' talk to wan av the girls. This sun's too much for him.’

“Well I knew there was no sun he'd iver see, but I cud not spake, so I wint away wid the empty doolie to find the docthor. He'd been breakfastin' an' lunchin' ever since we'd come in, an' he was as full as a tick.

“Faith ye've got dhrunk mighty soon,’ he sez, whin I'd tould him, ‘to see that man walk. Barrin' a puff or two av life, he was a corpse before we left Jumrood. I've a great mind,’ he sez, ‘to confine you.’

“There’s a dale av liquor runnin’ about, docthor,’ I sez, solemn as a hard-boiled egg. ‘Maybe ‘tis so, but will ye not come an’ see the corpse at the house?’

“‘Tis dishgraceful,’ he sez, ‘that I would be expected to go to a place like that. Was she a pretty woman?’ he sez, an’ at that he set off double quick.

“I cud see that the two was in the verandah were I’d left them, an’ I knew by the hang av her head an’ the noise av the crows fwhat had happened. ‘Twas the first and the last time that I’d ever known woman to use the pistol. They dread the shot as a rule, but Di’monds-an’-Pearls she did not — she did not.

“The docthor touched the long black hair av her head (‘twas all loose upon Love-o’-Women’s chest), an’ that cleared the liquor out av him. He stud considherin’ a long time, his hands in his pockets, an’ at last he sez to me, ‘Here’s a double death from naturil causes, most naturil causes; an’ in the presint state av affairs the rig’mint will be thankful for wan grave the less to dig. Issiwasti,’ he sez, ‘Issiwasti, Privit Mulvaney, these two will be buried together in the Civil Cemet’ry at my expinse, an’ may the good God,’ he sez, ‘make it SO much for me whin my time comes. Go to your wife,’ he sez; ‘go an’ be happy. I’ll see to this all.’

“I left him still considherin’. They was buried in the Civil Cemet’ry together, wid a Church of England service. There was too many buryin’s thin to ask questions, an’ the docthor — he ran away wid Major — Major Van Dyce’s lady that year — he saw to ut all. Fwhat the right an’ the wrong av Love-o’-Women an’ Di’monds-an’-Pearls was I niver knew, an’ I will niver know; but I’ve tould ut as I came acrost ut — here an’ there in little pieces. So, being fwhat I am, an’ knowin’ fwhat I know, that’s fwhy I say in this shootin’-case here, Mackie that’s dead an’ in hell is the lucky man. There are times, Sorr, whin ‘tis betther for the man to die than to live, an’ by consequence forty million times betther for the woman.”

“H’up there!” said Ortheris. “It’s time to go.” The witnesses and guard formed up in the thick white dust of the parched twilight and swung off, marching easy and whistling. Down the road to the green by the church I could hear Ortheris, the black Book-lie still uncleansed on his lips, setting, with a fine sense of the fitness of things, the shrill quick-step that runs —

“Oh, do not despise the advice of the wise,  
Learn wisdom from those that are older,  
And don’t try for things that are out of your reach —  
An’ that’s what the Girl told the Soldier  
Soldier! Soldier!  
Oh, that’s what the Girl told the Soldier!”

## 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 marry 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 purgathory." 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 complimint 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, clean-shaven 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 disrespect-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 makin’ 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 about two inches av shirt-tail hanging round his neck an’ a disthressful light in his oi. ‘Sahib,’ sez he, ‘there’s a reg’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 murdher 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 jildiest 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 considered fwhat I wud look like wid me head shaved as well as me 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 meetin’ wid the cook-room mop last year?”

“Thin I knew ut was a draf’ av 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 wint 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 digressshin’. ‘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 nonsinse. 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’ confin’in’ 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 inthroduced 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 matther. The nearer my throlly came to the rest-camp, the woilder was the shine, an’ the louder was the voice of Peg Barney. ‘Tis good I am here,’ thinks I to mysilf, ‘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 dursin’ 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 Dhramshticks, being so full he dane disernimbers the Brigade-Major an’ the Judge-Advokit-Gen’ral.

“Do you not 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 bhoy — 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 tent-pole 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 bhoy 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 presince, 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 counthry. Can you trust your noncoms, Sorr?’

“‘Yes,’ sez he.

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

“‘To the next station,’ sez he.

“‘Betther 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 inship at all, at all. Or there won’t be a rag av kit betune thim whin you do.’

“‘Twas a dear little orf’cer bhoy, 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 things out av the boats for their Lord High Mightinesses. That made me orf’cer bhoy woild wid indignation.

“‘Soft an’ aisy, Sorr,’ sez I; ‘you’ve niver had your draf’ in hannd 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 me ould frinds. ‘Tis no manner av use thryin’ to shtop the divilmint now.’

“‘Wid that I wint out into the camp an’ inthrojuiced 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 bhoy he conies round, dacint 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 thricks to-day, 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 bhoy 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 squshed 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 minut’s 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 me 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’ fwhat to do.

“Get to your tents!’ sez me orf’cer bhoy. ‘Sargint, put a sinthry 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 sinthry over the two, an’ Scrub Greene blubberin’ like a child. ‘Twas a chilly night, an’ faith, ut sobered Peg Barney.

“Just before Revelly, me 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 undherstand 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, bully-damned ‘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 mlm’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 mysilf. 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 mudtipper wid a hod on me 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 MUTINEY OF THE MAVERICKS

Sec. 7 (1) — Causing or Conspiring with other persons to cause a mutiny or sedition in forces belonging to Her Majesty's Regular forces, Reserve forces, Auxiliary forces, or Navy.

When three obscure gentlemen in San Francisco argued on insufficient premises they condemned a fellow-creature to a most unpleasant death in a far country which had nothing whatever to do with the United States. They foregathered at the top of a tenement-house in Tehama Street, an unsavoury quarter of the city, and, there calling for certain drinks, they conspired because they were conspirators by trade, officially known as the Third Three of the I. A. A. — an institution for the propagation of pure light, not to be confounded with any others, though it is affiliated to many. The Second Three live in Montreal, and work among the poor there; the First Three have their home in New York, not far from Castle Garden, and write regularly once a week to a small house near one of the big hotels at Boulogne. What happens after that, a particular section of Scotland Yard knows too well and laughs at. A conspirator detests ridicule. More men have been stabbed with Lucrezia Borgia daggers and dropped into the Thames for laughing at Head Centres and Triangles than for betraying secrets; for this is human nature.

The Third Three conspired over whiskey cocktails and a clean sheet of note-paper against the British Empire and all that lay therein. This work is very like what men without discernment call politics before a general election. You pick out and discuss, in the company of congenial friends, all the weak points in your opponents' organisation, and unconsciously dwell upon and exaggerate all their mishaps, till it seems to you a miracle that the hated party holds together for an hour.

"Our principle is not so much active demonstration — that we leave to others — as passive embarrassment, to weaken and unnerve," said the first man. "Wherever an organisation is crippled, wherever confusion is thrown into any branch of any department, we gain a step for those who take on the work; we are but the forerunners." He was a German enthusiast, and editor of a newspaper, from whose leading articles he quoted frequently.

"That cursed Empire makes so many blunders of her own that unless we doubled the year's average I guess it wouldn't strike her anything special had occurred," said the second man. "Are you prepared to say that all our resources are equal to blowing off the muzzle of a hundred-ton gun or spiking a ten-thousand-ton ship on a plain rock in clear daylight? They can beat us at our own game. Better join hands with the practical branches; we're in funds now. Try a direct scare in a crowded street. They value their greasy hides." He was the drag upon the wheel, and an Americanised Irishman of the second generation, despising his own race and hating the other. He had learned caution.

The third man drank his cocktail and spoke no word. He was the strategist, but unfortunately his knowledge of life was limited. He picked a letter from his breast-pocket and threw it across the table. That epistle to the heathen contained some very concise directions from the First Three in New York. It said —

"The boom in black iron has already affected the eastern markets, where our agents have been forcing down the English-held stock among the smaller buyers who watch the turn of shares. Any immediate operations, such as western bears, would increase their willingness to unload. This, however, cannot be expected till they see clearly that foreign iron-masters are willing to co-operate. Mulcahy should be dispatched to feel the pulse of the market, and act accordingly. Mavericks are at present the best for our purpose. — P. D. Q."

As a message referring to an iron crisis in Pennsylvania, it was interesting, if not lucid. As a new departure in organized attack on an outlying English dependency, it was more than interesting.

The second man read it through and murmured — "Already? Surely they are in too great a hurry. All that Dhulip Singh could do in India he has done, down to the distribution of his photographs among the peasantry. Ho! Ho! The Paris firm arranged that, and he has no substantial money backing

from the Other Power. Even our agents in India know he hasn't. What is the use of our organisation wasting men on work that is already done? Of course the Irish regiments in India are half mutinous as they stand."

This shows how near a lie may come to the truth. An Irish regiment, for just so long as it stands still, is generally a hard handful to control, being reckless and rough. When, however, it is moved in the direction of musketry-firing, it becomes strangely and unpatriotically content with its lot. It has even been heard to cheer the Queen with enthusiasm on these occasions.

But the notion of tampering with the army was, from the point of view of Tehama Street, an altogether sound one. There is no shadow of stability in the policy of an English Government, and the most sacred oaths of England would, even if engrossed on vellum, find very few buyers among colonies and dependencies that have suffered from vain beliefs. But there remains to England always her army. That cannot change except in the matter of uniform and equipment. The officers may write to the papers demanding the heads of the Horse Guards in default of cleaner redress for grievances; the men may break loose across a country town and seriously startle the publicans; but neither officers nor men have it in their composition to mutiny after the continental manner. The English people, when they trouble to think about the army at all, are, and with justice, absolutely assured that it is absolutely trustworthy. Imagine for a moment their emotions on realising that such and such a regiment was in open revolt from causes directly due to England's management of Ireland. They would probably send the regiment to the polls forthwith and examine their own consciences as to their duty to Erin; but they would never be easy any more. And it was this vague, unhappy mistrust that the I. A. A. were labouring to produce.

"Sheer waste of breath," said the second man after a pause in the council. "I don't see the use of tampering with their fool-army, but it has been tried before and we must try it again. It looks well in the reports. If we send one man from here you may bet your life that other men are going too. Order up Mulcahy."

They ordered him up — a slim, slight, dark-haired young man, devoured with that blind rancorous hatred of England that only reaches its full growth across the Atlantic. He had sucked it from his mother's breast in the little cabin at the back of the northern avenues of New York; he had been taught his rights and his wrongs, in German and Irish, on the canal fronts of Chicago; and San Francisco held men who told him strange and awful things of the great blind power over the seas. Once, when business took him across the Atlantic, he had served in an English regiment, and being insubordinate had suffered extremely. He drew all his ideas of England that were not bred by the cheaper patriotic prints from one iron-fisted colonel and an unbending adjutant. He would go to the mines if need be to teach his gospel. And he went, as his instructions advised, p. d. q. — which means "with speed" — to introduce embarrassment into an Irish regiment, "already half-mutinous, quartered among Sikh peasantry, all wearing miniatures of His Highness Dhulip Singh, Maharaja of the Punjab, next their hearts, and all eagerly expecting his arrival." Other information equally valuable was given him by his masters. He was to be cautious, but never to grudge expense in winning the hearts of the men in the regiment. His mother in New York would supply funds, and he was to write to her once a month. Life is pleasant for a man who has a mother in New York to send him two hundred pounds a year over and above his regimental pay.

In process of time, thanks to his intimate knowledge of drill and musketry exercise, the excellent Mulcahy, wearing the corporal's stripe, went out in a troopship and joined Her Majesty's Royal Loyal Musketeers, commonly known as the "Mavericks," because they were masterless and unbranded cattle — sons of small farmers in County Clare, shoeless vagabonds of Kerry, herders of Ballyvegan, much wanted "moonlighters" from the bare rainy headlands of the south coast, officered by O'Mores, Bradys, Hills, Kilreas, and the like. Never to outward seeming was there more promising material to work on. The First Three had chosen their regiment well. It feared nothing that moved or talked save the colonel and the regimental Roman Catholic chaplain, the fat Father Dennis, who held the

keys of heaven and hell, and blared like an angry bull when he desired to be convincing. Him also it loved because on occasions of stress he was used to tuck up his cassock and charge with the rest into the merriest of the fray, where he always found, good man, that the saints sent him a revolver when there was a fallen private to be protected, or — but this came as an afterthought his own gray head to be guarded.

Cautiously as he had been instructed, tenderly and with much beer, Mulcahy opened his projects to such as he deemed fittest to listen. And these were, one and all, of that quaint, crooked, sweet, profoundly irresponsible and profoundly lovable race that fight like fiends, argue like children, reason like women, obey like men, and jest like their own goblins of the rath through rebellion, loyalty, want, woe, or war. The underground work of a conspiracy is always dull and very much the same the world over. At the end of six months — the seed always falling on good ground — Mulcahy spoke almost explicitly, hinting darkly in the approved fashion at dread powers behind him, and advising nothing more nor less than mutiny. Were they not dogs, evilly treated? had they not all their own and their national revenges to satisfy? Who in these days would do aught to nine hundred men in rebellion? Who, again, could stay them if they broke for the sea, licking up on their way other regiments only too anxious to join? And afterwards... here followed windy promises of gold and preferment, office and honour, ever dear to a certain type of Irishman.

As he finished his speech, in the dusk of a twilight, to his chosen associates, there was a sound of a rapidly unslung belt behind him. The arm of one Dan Grady flew out in the gloom and arrested something. Then said Dan —

“Mulcahy, you’re a great man, an’ you do credit to whoever sent you. Walk about a bit while we think of it.” Mulcahy departed elate. He knew his words would sink deep.

“Why the triple-dashed asterisks did ye not let me belt him?” grunted a voice.

“Because I’m not a fat-headed fool. Boys, ‘tis what he’s been driving at these six months — our superior corp’ril with his education and his copies of the Irish papers and his everlasting beer. He’s been sent for the purpose, and that’s where the money comes from. Can ye not see? That man’s a gold-mine, which Horse Egan here would have destroyed with a belt-buckle. It would be throwing away the gifts of Providence not to fall in with his little plans. Of coorse we’ll mut’ny till all’s dry. Shoot the colonel on the parade-ground, massacre the company officers, ransack the arsenal, and then — Boys, did he tell you what next? He told me the other night when he was beginning to talk wild. Then we’re to join with the niggers, and look for help from Dhulip Singh and the Russians!”

“And spoil the best campaign that ever was this side of Hell! Danny, I’d have lost the beer to ha’ given him the belting he requires.”

“Oh, let him go this awhile, man! He’s got no — no constructiveness, but that’s the egg-meat of his plan, and you must understand that I’m in with it, an’ so are you. We’ll want oceans of beer to convince us — firmaments full. We’ll give him talk for his money, and one by one all the boys’ll come in and he’ll have a nest of nine hundred mutineers to squat in an’ give drink to.”

“What makes me killing-mad is his wanting us to do what the niggers did thirty years gone. That an’ his pig’s cheek in saying that other regiments would come along,” said a Kerry man.

“That’s not so bad as hintin’ we should loose off on the colonel.”

“Colonel be sugared! I’d as soon as not put a shot through his helmet to see him jump and clutch his old horse’s head. But Mulcahy talks o’ shootin’ our comp’ny orf’cers accidental.”

“He said that, did he?” said Horse Egan.

“Somethin’ like that, anyways. Can’t ye fancy ould Barber Brady wid a bullet in his lungs, coughin’ like a sick monkey, an’ sayin’, ‘Bhoys, I do not mind your gettin’ dhrunk, but you must hould your liquor like men. The man that shot me is dhrunk. I’ll suspend investigations for six hours, while I get this bullet cut out, and then — ”

“An’ then,” continued Horse Egan, for the peppery Major’s peculiarities of speech and manner were as well known as his tanned face; “an’ then, ye dissolute, half-baked, putty-faced scum o’

Connemara, if I find a man so much as lookin' confused, begad, I'll coort-martial the whole company. A man that can't get over his liquor in six hours is not fit to belong to the Mavericks!"

A shout of laughter bore witness to the truth of the sketch.

"It's pretty to think of," said the Kerry man slowly. "Mulcahy would have us do all the devilmint, and get clear himself, someways. He wudn't be takin' all this fool's throuble in shpoilin' the reputation of the regimint — "

"Reputation of your grandmother's pig!" said Dan.

"Well, an' he had a good reputation tu; so it's all right. Mulcahy must see his way to clear out behind him, or he'd not ha' come so far, talkin' powers of darkness."

"Did you hear anything of a regimental coortmartial among the Black Boneens, these days? Half a company of 'em took one of the new draft an' hanged him by his arms with a tent-rope from a third-story verandah. They gave no reason for so doin', but he was half dead. I'm thinking that the Boneens are short-sighted. It was a friend of Mulcahy's, or a man in the same trade. They'd a deal better ha' taken his beer," returned Dan reflectively.

"Better still ha' handed him up to the Colonel," said Horse Egan, "onless — but sure the news wud be all over the counthry an' give the reg'ment a bad name."

"An' there'd be no reward for that man — he but went about talkin'," said the Kerry man artlessly.

"You speak by your breed," said Dan, with a laugh. "There was never a Kerry man yet that wudn't sell his brother for a pipe o' tobacco an' a pat on the back from a p'liceman."

"Praise God I'm not a bloomin' Orangeman," was the answer.

"No, nor never will be," said Dan. "They breed men in Ulster. Would you like to thry the taste of one?"

The Kerry man looked and longed, but forbore. The odds of battle were too great. "Then you'll not even give Mulcahy a — a strike for his money," said the voice of Horse Egan, who regarded what he called "trouble" of any kind as the pinnacle of felicity.

Dan answered not at all, but crept on tip-toe, with long strides, to the mess-room, the men following. The room was empty. In a corner, cased like the King of Dahomey's state umbrella, stood the regimental Colours. Dan lifted them tenderly and unrolled in the light of the candles the record of the Mavericks — tattered, worn, and hacked. The white satin was darkened everywhere with big brown stains, the gold threads on the crowned harp were frayed and discoloured, and the Red Bull, the totem of the Mavericks, was coffee-hued. The stiff, embroidered folds, whose price is human life, rustled down slowly. The Mavericks keep their colours long and guard them very sacredly.

"Vittoria, Salamanca, Toulouse, Waterloo, Moodkee, Ferozshah, an' Sobraon — that was fought close next door here, against the very beggars he wants us to join. Inkerman, The Alma, Sebastopol! 'What are those little businesses compared to the campaigns of General Mulcahy? The Mut'ny, think o' that; the Mut'ny an' some dirty little matters in Afghanistan; an' for that an' these an' those" — Dan pointed to the names of glorious battles — "that Yankee man with the partin' in his hair comes an' says as easy as 'have a drink'... Holy Moses, there's the captain!"

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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