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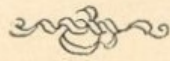
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DIGGER SMITH ***

E-text prepared by Geoffrey Cowling

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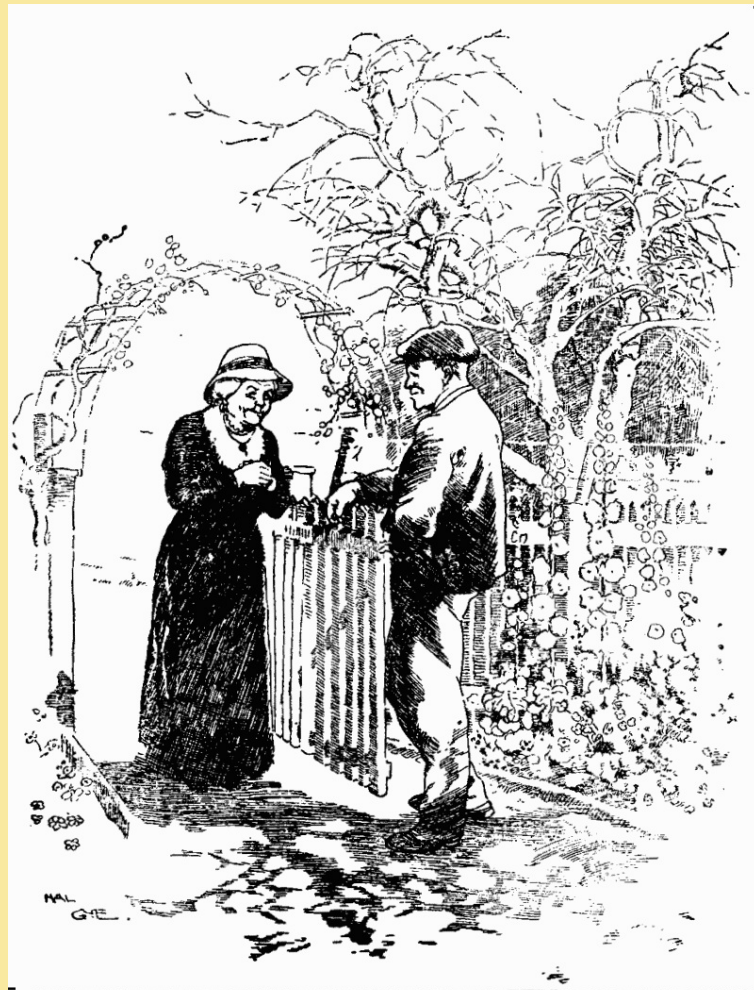
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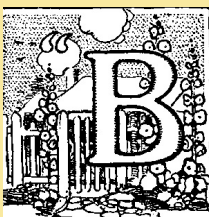
. GLOSSARY

I. BEFORE THE WAR



*"... e's jist your kind.
Not quite so 'an'some, p'r'aps, nor so refined."*

Before the War



BEFORE the war," she sighs. "Before the war."

Then blinks 'er eyes, an' tries to work a smile.

"Ole scenes," she sez, "don't look the same no more.

Ole ways," she sez, "seems to 'ave changed their style,

The pleasures that we 'ad don't seem worth while--

Them simple joys that passed an hour away--
An' troubles, that we used to so revile,
'Ow small they look," she sez. "'Ow small to-day.

"This war!" sighs ole Mar Flood. An' when I seen
The ole girl sittin' in our parlour there,
Tellin' 'er troubles to my wife, Doreen,
As though the talkin' eased 'er load uv care,
I thinks uv mothers, 'ere an' everywhere,
Smilin' a bit while they are grievin' sore
For grown-up babies, fightin' Over There;
An' then I 'ears 'em sigh, "Before the war."

My wife 'as took the social 'abit bad.
I ain't averse--one more new word I've learned--
Averse to tea, when tea is to be 'ad;
An' when it comes I reckon that it's earned.
It's jist a drink, as fur as I'm concerned,
Good for a bloke that's toilin' on the land;
But when a caller comes, 'ere I am turned
Into a social butterfly, off-'and.

Then drinkin' tea becomes an 'oly rite.
So's I won't bring the fam'ly to disgrace
I gits a bit uv coachin' overnight
On ridin' winners in this bun-fed race.
I 'ave to change me shirt, an' wash me face,
An' look reel neat, from me waist up at least,
An' sling remarks in at the proper place,
An' not makes noises drinkin', like a beast.

"'Ave some more cake. Another slice, now do.
An' won't yeh 'ave a second cup uv tea?
'Ow is the children?" Ar, it makes me blue!
This boodoor 'abit ain't no good to me.
I likes to take me tucker plain an' free:
Tea an' a chunk out on the job for choice,
So I can stoke with no one there to see.
Besides, I 'aven't got no comp'ny voice.

Uv course, I've 'ad it all out with the wife.
I argues that there's work that must be done,
An' tells 'er that I 'ates this tony life.
She sez there's jooties that we must not shun.
You bet that ends it; so I joins the fun,
An' puts 'em all at ease with silly grins--
Slings bits uv repartee like "'Ave a bun,"
An' passes bread an' butter, for me sins.

Since I've been marri'd, say, I've chucked some things,
An' learned a whole lot more to fill the space.
I've slung all slang; crook words 'ave taken wings,
An' I 'ave learned to entertain with grace.
But when ole Missus Flood comes round our place
I don't object to 'er, for all 'er sighs;
Becos I likes 'er ways, I likes 'er face,
An', most uv all, she 'as them mother's eyes.

"Before the war," she sighs, the poor ole girl.
'Er talk it gets me thinkin' in between,
While I'm assistin' at this social whirl. . . .
She comes across for comfort to Doreen,
To talk about the things that might 'ave been
If Syd 'ad not been killed at Suvla Bay,
Or Jim not done a bunk at seventeen,
An' not been 'eard uv since 'e went away.

They 'ave a little farm right next to us--
'Er an' 'er 'usband--where they live alone.
Spite uv 'er cares, she ain't the sort to fuss
Or serve up sudden tears an' sob an' moan,
An' since I've known 'er some'ow I 'ave grown
To see in 'er, an' all the grief she's bore,
A million brave ole mothers 'oo 'ave known
Deep sorrer since them days before the war.

"Before the war," she sez. "Yeh mind our Syd?
Poor lad. . . . But then, yeh never met young Jim--
'Im 'oo was charged with things 'e never did.
Ah, both uv you'd 'ave been reel chums with 'im.
'Igh-spirited 'e was, a perfect limb.
It's six long years now since 'e went away
Ay, drove away." 'Er poor ole eyes git dim.
"That was," she sighs, "that was me blackest day.

"Me blackest day! Wot am I sayin' now?
There was the day the parson come to tell
The news about our Syd. . . . An', yet, some'ow
My little Jim!" She pauses for a spell. . . .
"Your 'olly'ocks is doin' reely well,"
She sez, an' battles 'ard to brighten up.
"An' them there pinks uv yours, 'ow sweet they smell.
An'--Thanks! I think I will 'ave one more cup."

As fur as I can get the strength uv it,
Them Floods 'ave 'ad a reel tough row to hoe.
First off, young Jim, 'oo plays it 'igh a bit,
Narks the ole man a treat, an' slings the show.
Then come the war, an' Syd 'e 'as to go.
'E run 'is final up at Suvla Bay--
One uv the Aussies I was proud to know.
An' Jim's cracked 'ardy since 'e went away.

'Er Jim! These mothers! Lord, they're all the same.
I wonder if Doreen will be that kind..
Syd was the son 'oo played the reel man's game;
But Jim 'oo sloped an' left no word be'ind,
His is the picter shinin' in 'er mind.
'Igh-spirited! I've 'eard that tale before.
I sometimes think she'd take it rather kind
To 'ear that 'is 'igh spirits run to war.

"Before the war," she sez. "Ah, times was good.
The little farm out there, an' jist us four
Workin' to make a decent liveli'ood.
Our Syd an' Jim! . . . Poor Jim! It grieves me sore;
For Dad won't 'ave 'im mentioned 'ome no more.
'E's 'urt, I know, cos 'e thinks Jim 'urt me.
As if 'e could, the bonny boy I bore. . . .
But I must off 'ome now, an' git Dad's tea."

I seen 'er to the gate. (Take it frum me,
I'm some perlite.) She sez, "Yeh mustn't mind
Me talkin' so uv Jim, but when I see
Your face it brings 'im back; 'e's jist your kind.
Not quite so 'an'some, p'r'aps, nor so refined.
I've got some toys uv 'is," she sez. "But there--
This is ole woman's talk, an' you be'ind
With all yer work, an' little time to spare."

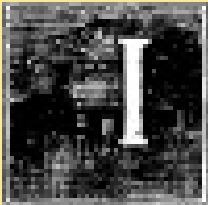
She gives me 'and a squeeze an' turns away,
Sobbin', I thort; but when she looks be'ind,
Smilin', an' wavin', like she felt reel gay,
I wonders 'ow the women works that blind,
An' jist waves back; then goes inside to find
A lookin'-glass, an' takes a reel good look. . . .
"Not quite so 'an'some, p'r'aps, nor so refined!"
Gawd 'elp yeh, Jim," I thinks. "Yeh must be crook."

II. DUMMY BRIDGE



"Rubbidge!" shouts Poole.

Dummy Bridge



F I'd 'a' played me Jack on that there Ten,"

Sez Peter Begg, "I might 'a' made the lot."

"'Ow could yeh?" barks ole Poole. "'Ow' could yeh, when

I 'ad me Queen be'ind?" Sez Begg, "Wot rot!

I slung away me King to take that trick.

Which one! Say, ain't yer 'ead a trifle thick?

Now, don't yeh see that when I plays me King

I give yer Queen a chance, an' lost the slam."

But Poole, 'e sez 'e don't see no sich thing,

So Begg gits 'ot, an' starts to loose a "Damn."

'E twigs the missus jist in time to check,

An' makes it "Dash," an' gits red down 'is neck.

There's me an' Peter Begg, an' ole man Poole--

Neighbours uv mine, that farm a bit close by--
Jist once a week or so we makes a school,

An' gives this game uv Dummy Bridge a fly.

Doreen, she 'as 'er sewin' be the fire,

The kid's in bed; an' 'ere's me 'eart's desire.

'Ome-comfort, peace, the picter uv me wife

'Appy at work, me neighbours gathered round
All friendly-like--wot more is there in life?

I've searched a bit, but, better I ain't found.

Doreen, she seems content, but in 'er eye

I've seen reel pity when the talk gits 'igh.

This ev'nin' we 'ad started off reel 'ot:

Two little slams, an' Poole, without a score,

Still lookin' sore about the cards 'e'd got--
When, sudden-like, a knock comes to the door.
"A visitor," growls Begg, "to crool our game."
An' looks at me, as though I was to blame.

Jist as Doreen goes out, I seen 'er grin.
"Deal 'em up quick!" I whispers. "Grab yer 'and,
An' look reel occupied when they comes in.
Per'aps they'll 'ave the sense to understand.
If it's a man, maybe 'e'll make a four;
But if"--Then Missus Flood comes in the door.

'Twas ole Mar Flood, 'er face wrapped in a smile.
"Now, boys," she sez, "don't let me spoil yer game.
I'll jist chat with Doreen a little while;
But if yeh stop I'll be ashamed I came."
An' then she waves a letter in 'er 'and.
Sez she, "Our Jim's a soldier! Ain't it grand?"

"Good boy," sez Poole. "Let's see. I make it 'earts."
"Doubled!" shouts Begg. . . . "An' 'e's been in a fight,"
Sez Missus Flood, "out in them furrin' parts.
French, I suppose. I can't pronounce it right.
'E's been once wounded, somewhere in the leg. . . ."
"'Ere, Bill! Yeh gone to sleep?" asks Peter Begg.

I plays me Queen uv Spades; an' plays 'er bad.
Begg snorts. . . . "My boy," sighs Missus Flood. "My Jim." . . .
"King 'ere," laughs Poole. "That's the last Spade I 'ad." . . .
Doreen she smiles: "I'm glad yeh've 'eard from 'im." . . .
"We're done," groans Begg. "Why did yeh nurse yer Ace?" . . .
"My Jim!" An' there was sunlight in 'er face.

"I always thought a lot uv Jim, I did,"
Sez Begg. "'E does yeh credit. 'Ere, your deal."
"That's so," sez Poole. "'E was an all-right kid.
No trumps? I'm sorry that's the way yeh feel.
'Twill take yeh all yer time to make the book." . . .
An' then Doreen sends me a wireless look.

I gets the S.O.S.; but Begg is keen.
"My deal," 'e yaps. "Wot rotten cards I get."
Ole Missus Flood sits closer to Doreen.
"The best," she whispers, "I ain't told yeh yet."
I strains me ears, an' leads me King uv Trumps.
"Ace 'ere!" grins Begg. Poole throws 'is Queen--an' thumps.

"That saves me Jack!" 'owls Begg. "Tough luck, ole sport." . . .
Sez Missus Flood, "Jim's won a medal too
For doin' somethin' brave at Bullycourt." . . .
"Play on, play on," growls Begg. "It's up to you."
Then I reneges, an' trumps me partner's Ace,
An' Poole gets sudden murder in 'is face.

"I'm sick uv this 'ere game," 'e grunts. "It's tame."
"Righto," I chips. "Suppose we toss it in?"
Begg don't say nothin'; so we sling the game.
On my wife's face I twigs a tiny grin.
"Finished?" sez she, su'prised. "Well, p'r'aps it's right.
It looks to me like 'earts was trumps to-night."

An' so they was. An', say, the game was grand.
Two hours we sat while that ole mother told
About 'er Jim, 'is letter in 'er 'and,
An', on 'er face, a glowin' look that rolled
The miles all up that lie 'twixt France an' 'ere,
An' found 'er son, an' brought 'im very near.

A game uv Bridge it was, with 'earts for trumps.
We was the dummies, sittin' silent there.
I knoo the men, like me, was feelin' chumps:
Foolin' with cards while this was in the air.
It took Doreen to shove us in our place;
An' mother 'eld the lot, right from the Ace.

She told us 'ow 'e said 'e'd writ before,
An' 'ow the letters must lave gone astray;
An' 'ow the stern ole father still was sore,
But looked like 'e'd be soft'nin', day by day;
'Ow pride in Jim peeps out be'ind 'is frown,
An' 'ow the ole fool 'opes to 'ide it down.

"I knoo," she sez. "I never doubted Jim.
But wot could any mother say or do
When pryin' folks asked wot become uv 'im,
But drop 'er eyes an' say she never knoo.
Now I can lift me 'ead to that sly glance,
An' say, 'Jim's fightin', with the rest, in France.'"

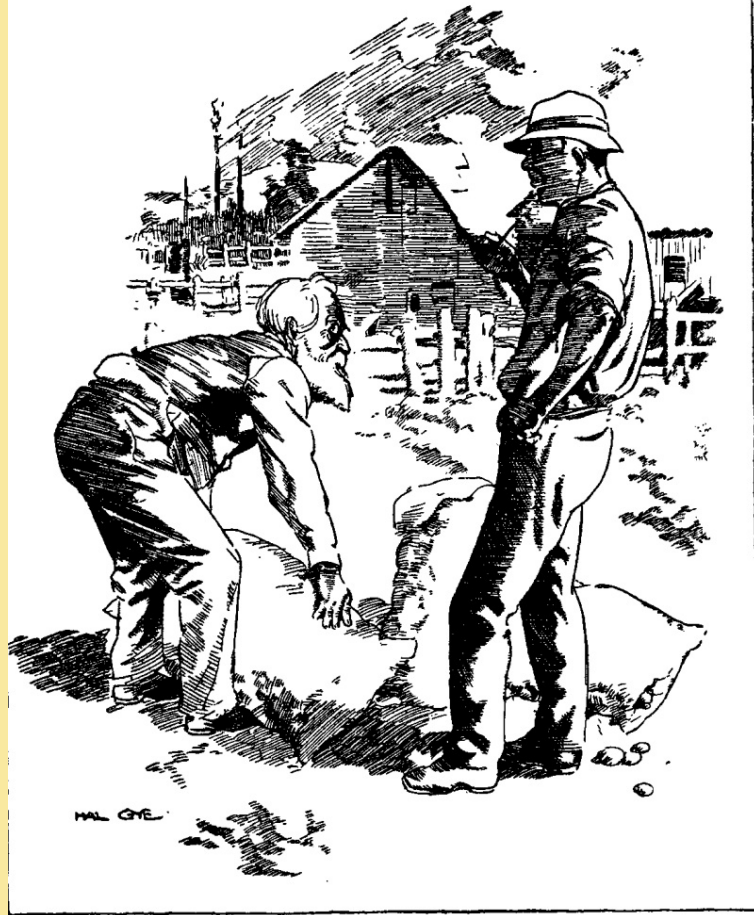
An' when she's gone, us four we don't require
No gossipin' to keep us in imploy.
Ole Poole sits starin' 'ard into the fire.
I guessed that 'e was thinkin' uv 'is boy,
'Oo's been right in it from the very start;
An' Poole was thinkin' uv a father's part.

An' then 'e speaks: "This war 'as turned us 'ard.
Suppose, four year ago, yeh said to me
That I'd sit 'eedless, starin' at a card
While that ole mother told--Good Lord!" sez 'e
"It takes the women for to put us wise
To playin' games in war-time," an' 'e sighs.

An' 'ere Doren sets out ot put 'im right.
"There's games an' games," she sez. "When women starts
A hand at Bridge like she 'as played to-night
It's Nature teachin' 'em to make it 'earts.
The other suits are yours," she sez; "but then,
That's as it should be, seein' you are men."

"Maybe," sez Poole; an' both gits up to go.
I stands beside the door when they are gone,
Watchin' their lantern swingin' to an' fro,
An' 'ears Begg's voice as they goes trudgin' on:
"If you 'ad led that Queen we might 'ave made. . ."
"Rubbidge!" shouts Poole. "You mucked it with yer Spade!"

III. DAD



"Got no work uv yer own?"

Dad



I've knowed ole Flood this last five year or more;
 I knoo 'im when 'is Syd went to the war.
 A proud ole man 'e was. But I've watched 'im,
 An' seen 'is look when people spoke uv Jim:
 As sour a look as most coves want to see.
 It made me glad that this 'ere Jim weren't me.

I sized up Flood the first day that we met--
 Stubborn as blazes when 'is mind is set,
 Ole-fashioned in 'is looks an' in 'is ways,
 Believin' it is honesty that pays;
 An' still dead set, in spite uv bumps 'e's got,
 To keep on honest if it pays or not.

Poor ole Dad Flood, 'e is too old to fight
 By close on thirty year; but, if I'm right
 About 'is doin's an' about 'is grit,
 'E's done a fair bit over 'is fair bit.
 They are too old to fight, but, all the same,
 'Is kind's quite young enough to play the game.

I've 'eard it called, this war--an' it's the truth--
 I've 'eard it called the sacrifice uv youth.
 An' all this land 'as reckernized it too,
 An' gives the boys the praises that is doo.
 I've 'eard the cheers for ev'ry fightin' lad;
 But, up to now, I ain't 'eard none for Dad.

Ole Flood, an' all 'is kind throughout the land,
 They ain't been 'eralded with no brass band,

Or been much thought about; but, take my tip,
The war 'as found 'em with a stiffened lip,
'Umpin' a load they thought they'd dropped for good,
Crackin' reel 'ardy, an'--jist sawin' wood.

Dad Flood, 'is back is bent, 'is strength is gone;
'E'd done 'is bit before this war come on.

At sixty-five 'e thought 'is work was done;
'E gave the farmin' over to 'is son,
An' jist sat back in peace, with 'is ole wife,
To spend content the ev'nin' uv 'is life.

Then come the war. An' when Syd 'esitates
Between the ole folk an' 'is fightin' mates,
The ole man goes outside an' grabs a hoe.
Sez 'e, "Yeh want to, an' yeh ought to go.
Wot's stoppin' yeh?" 'E straightens 'is ole frame.
"Ain't I farmed long enough to know the game?"

There weren't no more to say. An' Syd went--West:
Into the sunset with ole Aussie's best.

But no one ever 'eard no groans from Dad.
Though all 'is pride an' 'ope was in that lad
'E showed no sign excep' to grow more grim.
'Is son was gone--an' it was up to 'im.

One day last month when I was down at Flood's
I seen 'im strugglin' with a bag uv spuds.
"Look 'ere," I sez, "you let me spell yeh, Dad.
You 'umpin' loads like that's a bit too bad."
'E gives a grunt that's more than 'arf a groan.
"Wot's up?" 'e snaps. "Got no work uv yer own?"

That's 'im. But I've been tippin' that the pace
Would tell; an' when 'is wife comes to our place,
An' sez that Dad is ill an' took to bed,
Flat out with work--though that ain't wot she said--
I ain't su'prised; an' tells 'er when I'm thro'
I'll come across an' see wot I can do.

I went across, an'--I come back again.
Strike me! it's no use reas'nin' with some men.
Stubborn ole cows! I'm sick uv them ole fools.
The way 'e yells, "Keep yer 'ands off my tools!"
Yeh'd think I was a thief. 'Is missus said
I'd better slope, or 'e'd be out uv bed.

'E 'eard us talkin' through the open door.
"Oo's that?" 'e croaks, altho' 'e tries to roar.
An' when 'is wife iexplains it's only me
To 'elp a bit: "I want no charity!"
'E barks. "I'll do me work meself, yeh 'ear?"
An' then 'e gits so snarky that I clear.

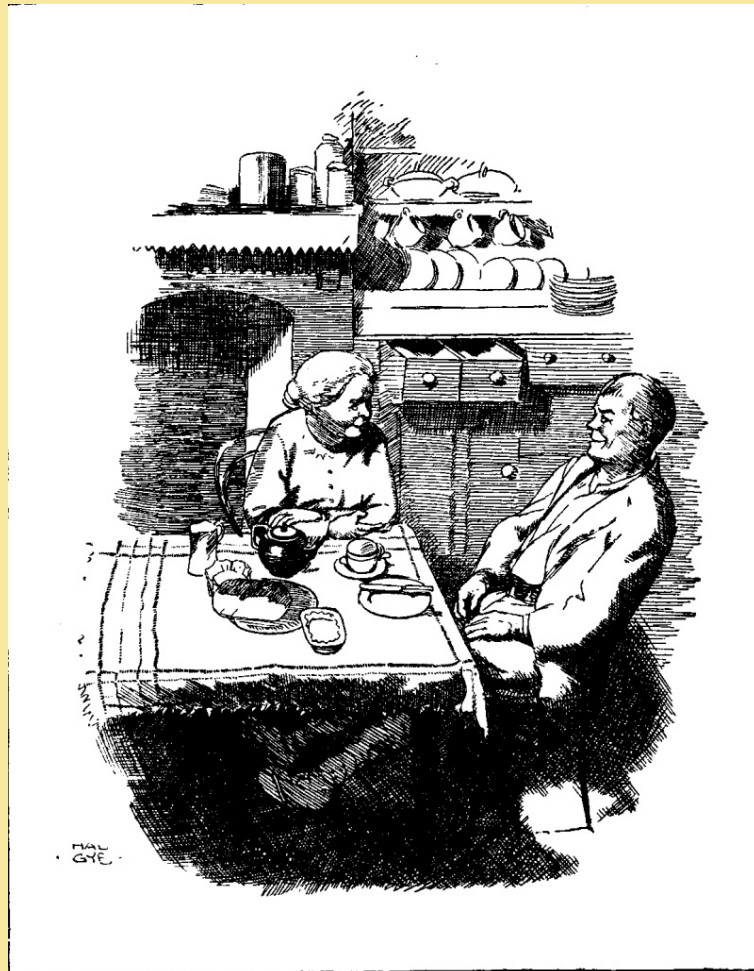
But 'e'll do me. I like the ole boy's nerve.
We don't do nothin' that 'e don't deserve;
But me an' Peter Begg an' ole man Poole,
We fairly 'as our work cut out to fool
The sly ole fox, when we sneaks down each day
An' works a while to keep things under way.

We digs a bit, an' ploughs a bit, an' chops
The wood, an' does the needful to 'is crops.
We does it soft, an' when 'e 'ears a row
'Is missus tells 'im it's the dog or cow.
'E sez that it's queer noises for a pup.
An'--there'll be ructions when ole Flood gits up.

It ain't all overwork that's laid 'im out.
Ole Pride in 'im is fightin' 'ard with Doubt.
To-day 'is wife sez, "Somethin's strange in 'im,
For in 'is sleep sometimes 'e calls for Jim.
It's six long years," she sez, an' stops to shake
'Er 'ead. "But 'e don't mention 'im awake."

Dad Flood. I thought 'im jist a stiff-necked fool
 Before the war; but, as I sez to Poole,
 This war 'as tested more than fightin' men.
 But, say, 'e is an 'oly terror when
 Friends try to 'elp 'im earn a bite an' sup.
 Oh, there'll be 'Ell to pay when 'e gits up!

IV. DIGGER SMITH



'E looked like 'e was booked for keeps.

Digger Smith



D CALLS me Digger; that's 'ow 'e begins.

'E sez 'e's only 'arf a man; an' grins.

Judged be 'is nerve, I'd say 'e was worth two
 Uv me an' you.

Then 'e digs 'arf a fag out uv 'is vest,
 Borrers me matches, an' I gives 'im best.

The first I 'eard about it Poole told me.

"There is a bloke called Smith at Flood's," sez 'e;
 Come there this mornin', sez 'e's come to stay,
 An' won't go 'way.

Sez 'e was sent there be a pal named Flood;
 An' talks uv contracts sealed with Flanders mud.

"No matter wot they say, 'e only grins,"
 Sez Poole. "'E's rather wobbly on 'is pins.
 Seems like a soldier bloke. An' Peter Begg
 'E sez one leg

Works be machinery, but I dunno.
I only know 'e's there an' 'e won't go.

"'E grins," sez Poole, "at ev'rything they say.
Dad Flood 'as nearly 'ad a fit to-day.
 'E's cursed, an' ordered 'im clean off the place;
 But this cove's face
Jist goes on grinnin', an' 'e sez, quite carm,
'E's come to do a bit around the farm."

The tale don't sound too good to me at all.
"If 'e's a crook," I sez, "'e wants a fall.
 Maybe 'e's dilly. I'll go down an' see.
 'E'll grin at me
When I 'ave done, if 'e needs dealin' with."
So I goes down to interview this Smith.

'E 'ad a fork out in the tater patch.
Sez 'e, "Why 'ello, Digger. Got a match?"
 "Digger?" I sez. "Well, you ain't digger 'ere.
 You better clear.
You ought to know that you can't dig them spuds.
They don't belong to you; they're ole Dad Flood's."

"Can't I?" 'e grins. "I'll do the best I can,
Considerin' I'm only 'arf a man.
 Give us a light. I can't get none from Flood,
 An' mine is dud."
I parts; an' 'e stands grinnin' at me still;
An' then 'e sez, "'Ave yeh fergot me, Bill?"

I looks, an' seen a tough bloke, short an' thin.
Then, Lord! I recomembers that ole grin.
 "It's little Smith!" I 'owls, "uv Collin'wood.
 Lad, this is good!
Last time I seen yeh, you an' Ginger Mick
Was 'owling rags, out on yer final kick."

"Yer on to it," 'e sez. "Nex' day we sailed.
Now 'arf uv me's back 'ome, an' 'arf they nailed.
 An' Mick. . . . Ar, well, Fritz took me down a peg."
 'E waves 'is leg.
"It ain't too bad," 'e sez, with 'is ole smile;
"But when I starts to dig it cramps me style."

"But I ain't grouchin'. It was worth the fun.
We 'ad some picnic stoushin' Brother 'Un--
 The only fight I've 'ad that some John 'Op
 Don't come an' stop.
They pulled me leg a treat, but, all the same,
There's nothin' over 'ere to beat the game."

"An' now," 'e sez, "I'm 'ere to do a job
I promised, if it was me luck to lob
 Back 'ome before me mate," 'e sez, an' then,
 'E grins again.
"As clear as mud," I sez. "But I can't work
Me brains to 'old yer pace. Say, wot's the lurk?"

So then 'e puts me wise. It seems that 'im
An' this 'ere Flood--I tips it must be Jim--
 Was cobbbers up in France, an' things occurred.
 (I got 'is word
Things did occur up there). But, anyway,
Seems Flood done somethin' good for 'im one day.

Then Smith 'e promised if 'e came back 'ome
Before 'is cobber o'er the flamin' foam,
 'E'd see the ole folks 'ere, an' 'e agreed,
 If there was need,
'E'd stay an' do a bit around the farm
So long as 'e 'ad one sound, dinkum arm.

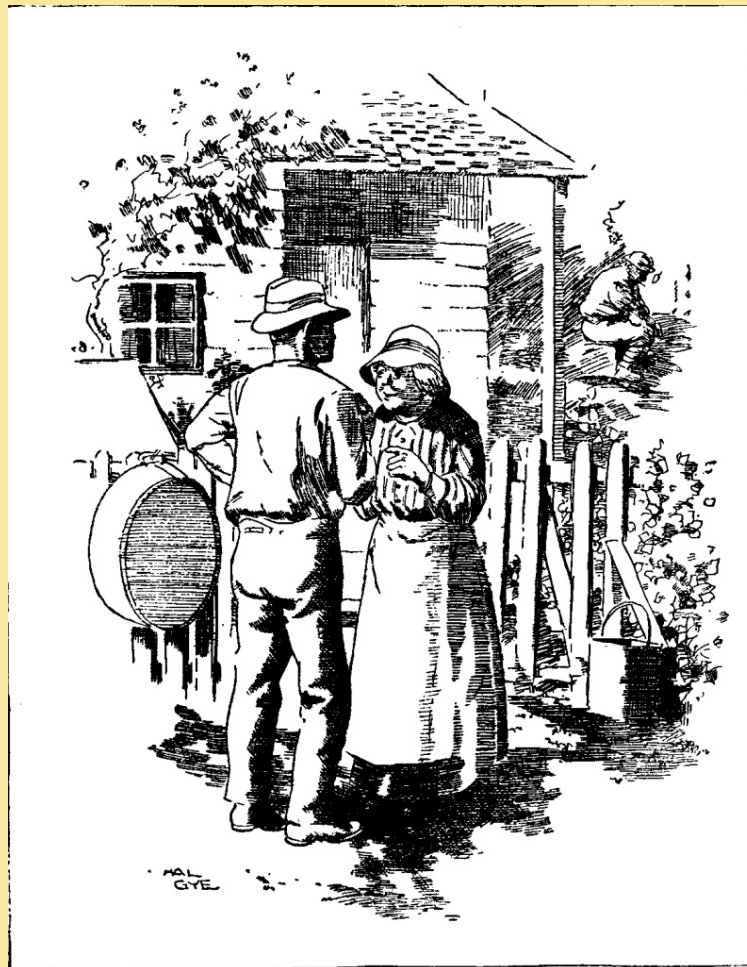
"So, 'ere I am," 'e sez, an' grins again.
"A promise is a promise 'mong us men."

Sez I, "You come along up to the 'ouse.
Ole Dad won't rouse
When once 'e's got yer strength, an' as for Mar,
She'll kiss yeh when she finds out 'oo yeh are."

So we goes up, an' finds 'em both fair dazed
About this little Smith; they think 'e's crazed.
I tells the tale in words they understand;
Then it was grand
To see Dad grab Smith's 'and an' pump it good,
An' Mar, she kissed 'im, like I said she would.

Mar sez 'e must be starved, an' right away
The kettle's on, she's busy with a tray.
An', when I left, this Digger Smith 'e looked
Like 'e was booked
For keeps, with tea an' bread an' beef inside.
"Our little Willie's 'ome," 'e grins, "an' dried."

V. WEST



*An' when I ask Mar Flood she sighs—
An' sez 'e's got the Anzac eyes.*

West



'VE seen so much uv dirt an' grime
I'm mad to 'ave things clean.
I've seen so much uv death," 'e said--
"So many cobbers lyin' dead--
You won't know wot I mean;
But, lad, I've 'ad so much uv strife
I want things straightened in my life.

"I've seen so much uv 'ate," 'e said--
"Mad 'ate an' silly rage--
I'm yearnin' for clear thoughts," said 'e.
"Kindness an' love seem good to me.
I want a new, white page
To start all over, clean an' good,
An' live me life as reel men should."

We're sittin' talkin' by the fence,
The sun's jist goin' down,
Paintin' the sky all gold an' pink.
Said 'e, "When it's like that, I think--"
An' then 'e stops to frown.
Said 'e, "I think, when it's jist so,
Uv God or somethin': I dunno.

"I ain't seen much uv God," said 'e;
"Not 'ere nor Over There;
But, partly wot I've seen an' read,
An' partly wot the padre said,
It gits me when I stare
Out West when it's like that is now.
There must be somethin' else--some'ow.

"I've thought a lot," said Digger Smith--
"Out There I thought a lot.
I thought uv death, an' all the rest,
An' uv me mates, good mates gone West;
An' it ain't much I've got;
But things get movin' in me 'ead
When I look over there," 'e said.

'E's got me beat, 'as little Smith.
I knoo 'im years ago
I knoo 'im as a reel tough boy
'Oo roughed it up with 'oly joy;
But now, well, I dunno.
An' when I ask Mar Flood she sighs--
An' sez 'e's got the Anzac eyes.

She sez 'e's got them soldier's eyes
That makes 'er own eyes wet.
An' we must give 'im wholesome food
An' lead 'is thoughts to somethin' good
An' never let 'im fret.
But 'e ain't frettin', seems to me;
More--puzzled, fur as I can see.

The clouds above the hills was tore
Apart, until, some'ow,
It seemed like some big, shinin' gate.
Said 'e, "Why, lad, I tell yeh straight,
I feel like startin' now,
An' walkin' on, an' on, an' thro',
Dead game an'--Ain't it so to you?"

"I've seen enough uv pain," 'e said,
"An' cursin', killin' 'ordes.
I ain't the man to smooze with God
To get to 'Eaven on the nod,
Or 'owl 'ymns for rewards.
But this believin'? Why--Oh, 'Struth
This never 'it me in me youth.

"They talk uv love 'twixt men," said 'e.
"That sounds dead crook to you.
But lately I 'ave come to see." . . .
"Old on," I said; "it seems to me
There's love uv women too.
An' you?" 'E turns away 'is 'ead.
"I'm only 'arf a man," 'e said.

"I've seen so much uv death," said 'e,
"Me mind is in a whirl.

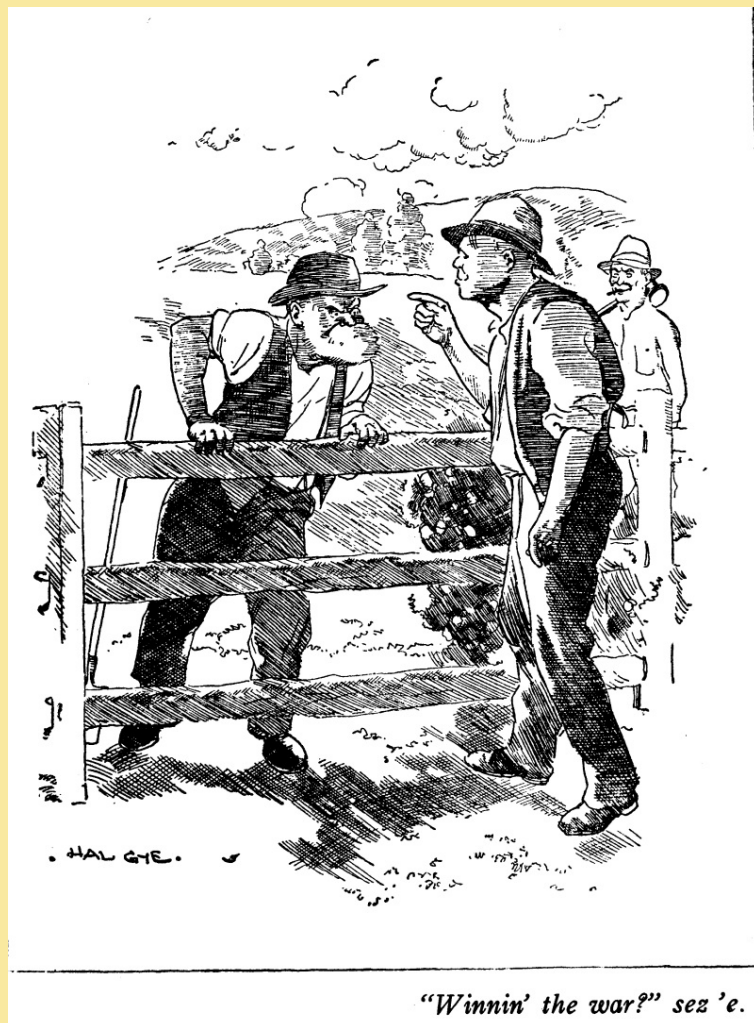
I've 'ad so many thoughts uv late." . . .
Said I, "Now, tell me, tell me straight;
Own up; ain't there a girl?"
Said 'e, "I've done the best I can.
Wot does she want with 'arf a man?"

It weren't no use. 'E wouldn't talk
Uv nothin' but that sky.
Said 'e, "Now, dinkum, talkin' square,
When you git gazin' over there
Don't you 'arf want to cry?
I wouldn't be su'prised to see
An angel comin' out," said 'e.

"Gone West!" said Digger Smith. "Ah, lad,
I've seen 'em goin' West,
An' often wonder, when I look,
If they 'ave 'ad it dealt 'em crook,
Or if they've got the rest
They earned twice over by the spell
They spent down in that dinkum 'Ell."

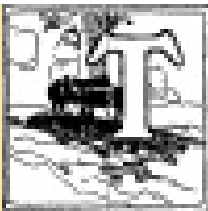
The gold was creepin' up, the sun
Was 'arf be'ind the range.
It don't seem strange a man should cry
To see that glory in the sky
To me it don't seem strange.
"Digger!" said 'e. "Look at it now!
There must be somethin' else--some'ow."

VI. OVER THE FENCE



"Winnin' the war?" sez 'e.

Over the Fence



AIN'T my idea uv argument to call a man a fool,
An' I ain't lookin' round for bricks to 'eave at ole man Poole;
But when 'e gets disputin' 'e's inclined to lose 'is 'ead.
It ain't so much 'is choice uv words as 'ow the words is said.

'E's sich a coot for takin' sides, as I sez to Doreen.
Sez she, "'Ow can 'e, by 'imself?" Wotever that may mean.
My wife sez little things sometimes that nearly git me riled.
I knoo she meant more than she said be that soft way she smiled.

To-day, when I was 'arrowin', Poole comes down to the fence
To get the loan uv my long spade; an' uses that pretence
To 'ave a bit uv friendly talk, an' one word leads to more,
As is the way with ole man Poole, as I've remarked before.

The spade reminds 'im 'ow 'e done some diggin' in 'is day,
An' diggin' brings the talk to earth, an' earth leads on to clay,
Then clay quite natural reminds a thinkin' bloke uv bricks,
An' mortar brings up mud, an' then, uv course, it's politics.

Now, Poole sticks be 'is Party, an' I don't deny 'is right;
But when 'e starts abusin' mine 'e's lookin' for a fight.
So I delivers good 'ome truths about 'is crowd; then Poole
Wags 'is ole beard across the fence an' tells me I'm a fool.

Now, that's the dizzy limit; so I lays aside the reins,
An' starts to prove 'e's storin' mud where most blokes keeps their brains.
'E decorates 'is answers, an' we're goin' it ding-dong,
When this returned bloke, Digger Smith, comes sauntering along.

Poole's gripped the fence as though 'e means to tear the rails in two,
An' eyes my waggin' finger like 'e wants to 'ave a chew.
Then Digger Smith 'e grins at Poole, an' then 'e looks at me,
An' sez, quite soft an' friendly-like, "Winnin' the war?" sez 'e.

Now, Poole deserves it, an' I'm pleased the lad give 'im that jolt.
'E goes fair mad in argument when once 'e gets a holt.
"Yeh make me sad," sez Digger Smith; "the both uv you," sez 'e.
"The both uv us! Gawstruth!" sez I. "You ain't includin' me?"

"Well, it takes two to make a row," sez little Digger Smith.
"A bloke can't argue 'less 'e 'as a bloke to argue with.
I've come 'ome from a dinkum scrap to find this land uv light
Is chasin' its own tail around an' callin' it a fight.

"We've seen a thing or two, us blokes 'oo've fought on many fronts;
An' we've 'ad time to think a bit between the fightin' stunts.
We've seen big things, an' thought big things, an' all the
silly fuss,
That used to get us rattled once, seems very small to us.

"An' when a bloke's fought for a land an' gets laid on the shelf
It pains 'im to come 'ome an' find it scrappin' with itself;
An' scrappin' all for nothin', or for things that look so
small--
To us, 'oo've been in bigger things, they don't seem reel at all.

"P'r'aps we 'ave 'ad some skite knocked out, an' p'r'aps we see more clear,
But seems to us there's plenty cleanin'-up to do round 'ere.
We've learnt a little thing or two, an' we 'ave unlearnt 'eaps,
An' silly partisans, with us, is counted out for keeps.

"This takin' sides jist for the sake uv takin' sides--Aw, 'Struth!
I used to do them things one time, back in me foolish youth.
Out There, when I remembered things, I've kicked meself reel good.
In football days I barracked once red 'ot for Collin'wood.

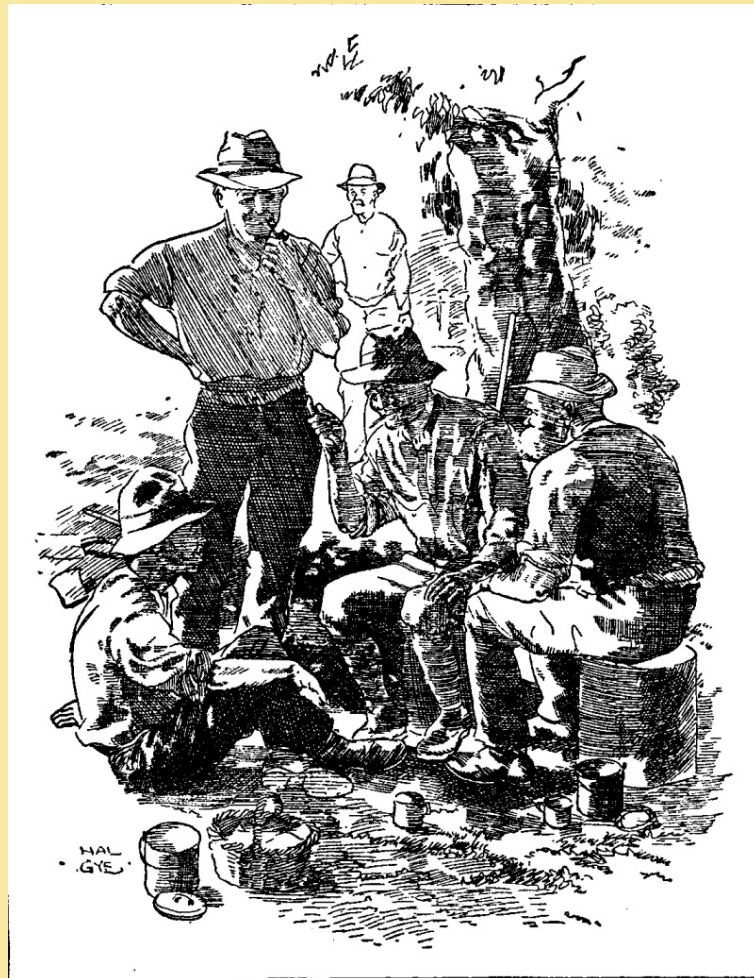
"I didn't want to see a game, nor see no justice done.

It never mattered wot occurred as long as my side won.
The other side was narks an' cows an' rotters to a man;
But mine was all reel bonzer chaps. I was a partisan.

"It might sound like swelled-'ead," sez Smith. "But show me, if yeh can." . . .
"Old 'ard," sez Poole. "Jist tell me this: wot is a partisan?"
Then Digger Smith starts to explain; Poole interrupts straight out;
An' I wades in to give my views, an' 'as to nearly shout.

We battles on for one good hour. My team sleeps where it stands;
An' Poole 'as tossed the spade away to talk with both 'is 'ands;
An' Smith 'as dropped the maul 'e 'ad. Then I looks round to see
Doreen quite close. She smiles at us. "Winnin' the war?" sez she.

VII. A DIGGER'S TALE



"You 'ear a lot," sez little Digger Smith.

A Digger's Tale



Y oath!' the Duchess sez. `You'd not ixpect
Sich things as that. Yeh don't mean kangaroos?
Go hon!' she sez, or words to that effect--
(It's 'ard to imitate the speech they use)
I tells 'er, 'Straight; I drives 'em four-in-'and
'Ome in my land.'

"You 'ear a lot," sez little Digger Smith,
"About 'ow English swells is so stand-off.

Don't yeh believe it; it's a silly myth.
I've been reel cobbers with the British toff
While I'm on leaf; for Blighty liked our crowd,
An' done us proud.

"Us Aussies was the goods in London town
When I was there. If they jist twigged yer 'at
The Dooks would ask yeh could yeh keep one down,
An' Earls would 'ang out 'Welcome' on the mat,
An' sling yeh invites to their stately 'alls
For fancy balls.

"This Duchess--I ain't quite sure uv 'er rank;
She might uv been a Peeress. I dunno.
I meets 'er 'usband first. 'E owns a bank,
I 'eard, an' 'arf a dozen mints or so.
A dinkum toff. 'E sez, 'Come 'ome with me
An' 'ave some tea.'

"That's 'ow I met this Duchess Wot's-'er-name--
Or Countess--never mind 'er moniker;
I ain't no 'and at this 'ere title game--
An' right away, I was reel pals with 'er.
'Now, tell me all about yer 'ome,' sez she,
An' smiles at me.

"That knocks me out. I know it ain't no good
Paintin' word-picters uv the things I done
Out 'ome 'ere, barrackin' for Collin'wood,
Or puntin' on the flat at Flemin'ton.
I know this Baroness uv Wot-yeh-call
Wants somethin' tall.

"I thinks reel 'ard; an' then I lets it go.
I tells 'er, out at Richmond, on me Run--
A little place uv ten square mile or so--
I'm breedin' boomerangs; which is reel fun,
When I ain't troubled by the wild Jonops
That eats me crops.

"I talks about the wondrous Boshter Bird
That builds 'er nest up in the Cobber Tree,
An' 'atches out 'er young on May the third,
Stric' to the minute, jist at 'arf pas' three.
'Er eyes get big. She sez, 'Can it be true?'
'Er eyes was blue.

"An' then I speaks uv sport, an' tells 'er 'ow
In 'untin' our wild Wowsers we imploy
Large packs uv Barrackers, an' 'ow their row
Wakes echoes in the forests uv Fitzroy,
Where lurks the deadly Shicker Snake 'oo's breath
Is certain death.

"I'm goin' on to talk uv kangaroos,
An' 'ow I used to drive 'em four-in-'and.
'Wot?' sez the Marchioness. 'Them things in Zoos
That 'ops about? I've seen 'em in the Strand
In double 'arness; but I ain't seen four.
Tell me some more.'

"I baulks a bit at that; an' she sez, 'Well,
There ain't no cause at all for you to feel
Modest about the things you 'ave to tell;
An' wot yeh say sounds wonderfully reel.
Your talk--an' 'ere I seen 'er eyelids flick--
'Makes me 'omesick.

"I reckerlect,' she sez--'Now, let me see--
In Gippsland, long ago, when I was young,
I 'ad a little pet Corroboree,'
(I sits up in me chair like I was stung.)
'On its 'ind legs,' she sez, 'it used to stand.
Fed from me 'and.'

"Uv course, I threw me alley in right there.
This Princess was a dinkum Aussie girl.
I can't do nothin' else but sit an' stare,
Thinkin' so rapid that me 'air roots curl.
But 'er? She sez, 'I ain't 'eard talk so good
Since my child'ood.

"I wish,' sez she, 'I could be back again
Beneath the wattle an' that great blue sky.
It's like a breath uv 'ome to meet you men.
You've done reel well,' she sez. 'Don't you be shy.
When yer in Blighty once again,' sez she,
'Come an' see me.'

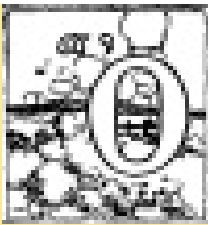
"I don't see 'er no more; 'cos I stopped one.
But, 'fore I sails, I gits a billy doo
Which sez, 'Give my love to the dear ole Sun,
An' take an exile's blessin' 'ome with you.
An' if you 'ave some boomerangs to spare,
Save me a pair.

"I'd like to see 'em play about,' she wrote,
'Out on me lawn, an' stroke their pretty fur.
God bless yeh, boy.' An' then she ends 'er note,
'Yer dinkum cobber,' an' 'er moniker.
A sport? You bet! She's marri'd to an Earl--
An Aussie girl."

VIII. JIM'S GIRL



"Jim used to talk to me at night."



O is that girl," sez Digger Smith,

"That never seems to bother with
No blokes: the bint with curly 'air?
I've often seen 'er over there
Talkin' to Missus Flood, an' she
Seems like a reel ripe peach to me.

"Not that I'm askin'" . . . 'Ere 'is eyes
Goes sort uv swiv'ly, an' 'e sighs.
"Not that I'm askin' with idears
Uv love an' marridge; 'ave no fears.
I've chucked the matrimony plan,"
'E sez. "I'm only 'arf a man."

This Digger Smith 'as fairly got
Me rampin' with 'is "'arf man" rot.
'E 'as a timber leg, it's true;
But 'e can do the work uv two.
Besides, the things 'e's done Out There
Makes 'im one man an' some to spare.

I knoo 'is question was jist kid.
'E'd met this girl; I know 'e did.
'E knoo Jim Flood an' 'er was booked
For double when the 'Un was cooked.
But, seein' 'er, it used to start
'Im thinkin' uv another tart.

"Oh, 'er?" sez I. "She is a pearl.
I've 'eard she used to be Jim's girl;
But she was jist a child when Jim
Got out. She 'as forgotten 'im."
I knows jist wot was in 'is mind,
An' sez, "Wade in, if you're inclined."

'E give me sich a narsty look
I thought 'e meant to answer crook;
But, "I ain't out for jokes," sez 'e
"Yeh needn't sling that stuff to me.
I only was jist thinkin'--p'r'aps
There's some," 'e sez, "that sticks to chaps.

"Some girls," sez 'e, "keeps true to chaps,
An' wed 'em when they've done with scraps,
An' come 'ome whole. Yeh don't ixpec'
No tart to tie up to a wreck?
Besides," 'e sez. . . . "Well, any'ow,
That girl's all right; I know it now.

"I know," sez Smith. "I got it right.
Jim used to talk to me at night
About a little girl 'e tracked.
'Er name is Flo. Ain't that a fact?
That's 'er. I know she writes to 'im
Each mail. She ain't forgotten Jim.

"I'd like to swap my luck for Jim's
If 'e comes 'ome with all 'is limbs.
An', if 'e don't--well, I dunno.
I've taken notice uv this Flo,
An' wonder if"--'e stares at me--
"If there is more like 'er" sez 'e.

Now, Digger Smith 'as learned a lot
Out fightin' there, but 'e ain't got
The cunnin' for to 'ide 'is 'eart.
'E's too dam honest, for a start;
'Is mind's dead simple to a friend.

I've read 'im through from end to end.

I've learned from things 'e 'asn't said
Jist wot's been runnin in 'is 'ead.
I know there is a girl, somewhere;
Some one 'oo 'ad the 'eart to care
For 'im when 'e went to the war.
I know all that, an' somethin' more.

I know that since 'e came back 'ere
'E 'asn't seen that girl for fear
She'd turn 'im down--give 'im the bird,
An' 'and 'im out the frozen word,
Because 'e's left a leg in France;
An' 'e's afraid to take a chance.

Well, not afraid, per'aps, but--shook.
It's jist the form 'is nerves 'ave took.
Now 'e's been watchin' Flo an' seen
'Er style, an' 'ow she's always keen
For news uv Jim. Then 'e starts out
To 'ope, an' 'esitate, an' doubt.

'E wonders if 'is own girl spoke
Jist this same way about 'er bloke.
'E wonders if in 'is girl's eyes
That same look came; an' then 'e sighs,
An' dulls 'is senses with the dope
That 'arf a man ain't got no 'ope.

'E makes me tired. But, all the same,
I tries to work a little game.
"Look 'ere," I sez. "About this Flo.
Jim mightn't come back 'ome, yeh know.
You 'ave a fly; yeh're sure to score;
Besides, all's fair in love an' war."

"Sling that!" 'e sez; but I goes on
"Ole Jim won't blame yeh when she's gone.
'E knows, the same as me an' you,
These silly tarts, they can't keep true."
I piles it on until I've got
'Im where I want 'im--jumpin' 'ot.

An' then 'e sez, "'Ere, sling that talk!
I might be groggy in me walk;
But if yeh say them things to me
I'm man enough to crack yeh; see?"
"Righto," sez I. "That was me plan.
Now wot about this 'arf a man?"

'E stares at me, an' then sez, slow,
"Wot is yer game? Wot do yeh know?"
"Nothin'," I tells 'im, "only this
When there's a waitin' tart to kiss
Yeh're only 'arf a man; but when
There's blokes to fight, yeh're twenty men."

"Wot tart?" 'e asks. "Yeh mean this Flo?"
"P'r'aps not," I sez. "You ought to know."
I waits to let me words sink in.
An' then--'e beats me with that grin.
"Match-makin', Bill?" 'e laughs. "Oh, 'Ell!
You take up knittin' for a spell."

IX. THE BOYS OUT THERE



*. . . Our Gran'dads; and their women, too,
That 'ad the grit to face the new.*

The Boys Out There



"HY do they do it? I dunno,"

Sez Digger Smith. "Yeh got me beat.

Some uv the yarns yeh 'ear is true,
An' some is rather umptydoo,

An' some is--indiscreet.

But them that don't get to the crowd,
Them is the ones would make yeh proud."

With Digger Smith an' other blokes

'Oo 'ave returned it's much the same

They'll talk uv wot they've seen an' done
When they've been out to 'ave their fun;

But no word uv the game.

On fights an' all the tale uv blood
Their talk, as they remark, is dud.

It's so with soldiers, I 'ave 'eard,

All times. The things that they 'ave done,

War-mad, with blood before their eyes,
An' in their ears wild fightin' cries,

They ever after shun.

P'r'aps they forget; or find it well
Not to recall too much uv 'Ell.

An' when they won't loose up their talk

It's 'ard for us to understand

'Ow all those boys we used to know,
Ole Billo, Jim an' Tom an' Joe,

Done things to beat the band.

We knoo they'd fight; but they've become
'Ead ringers at the fightin' game.

Well, wot I've 'eard from Digger Smith
An' other soldier blokes like 'im
I've put together bit by bit,
An' chewed a long time over it;
An' now I've got a dim
An' 'azy notion in me 'ead
Why they is battlers, born an' bred.

Wot did they know uv war first off,
When they joined up? Wot did I know
When I was tossed out on me neck
As if I was a shattered wreck
The time I tried to go?
Flat feet! Me feet 'as len'th an' brea'th
Enough to kick a 'Un to death!

They don't know nothin', bein' reared
Out 'ere where war 'as never spread--
"A land by bloodless conquest won,"
As some son uv a writin' gun
Sez in a book I read
They don't know nix but wot they're told
At school; an' that sticks till they're old.

Yeh've got to take the kid at school,
Gettin' 'is 'ist'ry lesson learned--
Then tales uv Nelson an' uv Drake,
Uv Wellin'ton an' Fightin' Blake.
'Is little 'eart 'as burned
To get right out an' 'ave a go,
An' sock it into some base foe.

Nothin' but glory fills 'is mind;
The British charge is somethin' grand;
The soldier that 'e reads about
Don't 'ave no time for fear an' doubt;
'E's the 'eroic brand.
So, when that boy gets in the game,
'E jist wades in an' does the same.

Not bein' old 'ands at the stunt,
They simply does as they are told;
But, bein' Aussies--Spare me days!--
They never thinks uv other ways,
But does it brave an' bold.
That's 'arf; an' for the other part
Yeh got to go back to the start.

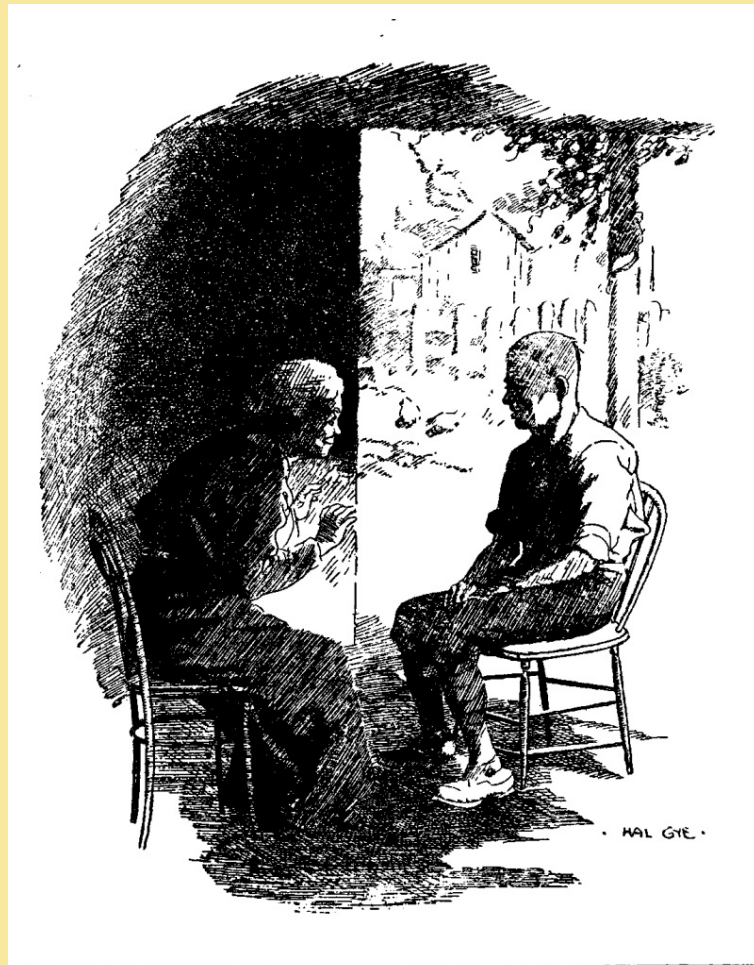
Yeh've got to go right back to Dad,
To Gran'dad and the pioneers,
'Oo packed up all their bag uv tricks
An' come out 'ere in fifty-six,
An' battled thro' the years;
Our Gran'dads; _and their women, too_,
That 'ad the grit to face the new.

It's that old stock; an', more than that,
It's Bill an' Jim an' ev'ry son
Gettin' three good meat meals a day
An' 'eaps uv chance to go an' play
Out in the bonzer sun.
It's partly that; but, don't forget,
When it's all said, there's somethin' yet.

There's somethin' yet; an' there I'm beat.
Crowds uv these lads I've known, but then,
They 'ave got somethin' from this war,
Somethin' they never 'ad before,
That makes 'en better men.
Better? There's no word I can get
To name it right. There's somethin' yet.

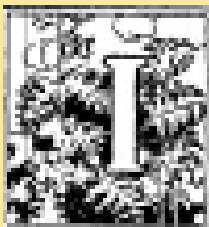
We 'ear a lot about reward;
 We praise, an' sling the cheers about;
 But there was debts we can't repay
 Piled up on us one single day--
 When that first list come out.
 There ain't no way to pay that debt.
 Do wot we can--there's somethin' yet.

X. HALF A MAN



*Then, 'fore 'e knows, 'e's told, to 'is su'prise,
 Name an' address—an' colour uv 'er eyes!*

Half a Man



WASH me 'ands uv 'im," I tells 'em, straight.

"You women can do wot yeh dash well like.
 I leave this 'arf a man to 'is own fate;
 I've done me bit, an' now I'm gone on strike.
 Do wot yeh please; but don't arsk 'elp from me;
 'E's give me nerves; so now I'll let 'im be."

Doreen an' ole Mar Flood 'as got a scheme.
 They've been conspirin' for a week or more
 About this Digger Smith, an' now they dream
 They've got 'is fucher waitin' in cool store
 To 'and 'im out, an' fix 'im up for life.
 But they've got Buckley's, as I tells me wife.

I've seen 'em whisperin' up in our room.
 Now they wants me to join in the debate;

But, "Nix," I tells 'em. "I ain't in the boom,
An' Digger Smith ain't risin' to me bait;
'E's fur too fly a fish for me to catch,
An' two designin' women ain't 'is match."

I puts me foot down firm, an' tells 'em, No!
Their silly plan's a thing I wouldn't touch.
An' then me wife, for 'arf an hour or so,
Talks to me confident, of nothin' much;
Then, 'fore I know it, I am all red 'ot
Into the scheme, an' leader uv the plot.

'Twas Mar Flood starts it. She got 'old uv 'im--
You know the way they 'ave with poor, weak men--
She drops a tear or two concernin' Jim;
Tells 'im wot women 'ave to bear; an' then
She got 'im talkin', like a woman can.
'E never would 'ave squeaked to any man.

She leads 'im on--It's crook the way they scheme
To talk about this girl 'e's left be'ind.
Not that she's pryin'! Why, she wouldn't dream!--
But speakin' uv it might jist ease 'is mind.
Then, 'fore 'e knows, 'e's told, to 'is su'prise,
Name an' address--an' colour uv 'er eyes!

An' then she's off 'ere plottin' with Doreen--
Bustin' a confidence, I tells 'em, flat.
But all me roustin' leaves 'em both serene
Women don't see a little thing like that.
An' I ain't cooled off yet before they've got
Me workin' for 'em in this crooked plot.

Nex' day Mar Flood she takes 'er Sund'y dress
An' 'er best little bonnet up to town.
'Er game's to see the girl at this address
An' word 'er in regard to comin' down
To take Smith be su'prise. My part's to fix
A meetin' so there won't be any mix.

I tips, some'ow, that girl won't 'esitate.
She don't. She comes right back with Mar nex' day,
All uv a fluster. When I seen 'er state
I thinks I'd best see Digger straight away;
'Cos, if I don't, 'e's bound to 'ear the row,
With 'er: "Where is 'e? Can't I see 'im now?"

I finds 'im in the paddick down at Flood's.
I 'ums an' 'ars a bit about the crops.
'E don't say nothin': goes on baggin' spuds.
"Ow would yeh like," I sez to 'im, an' stops.
"Ow would it be" . . . 'E stands an' looks at me
"Now, wot the 'Ell's got into you?" sez 'e.

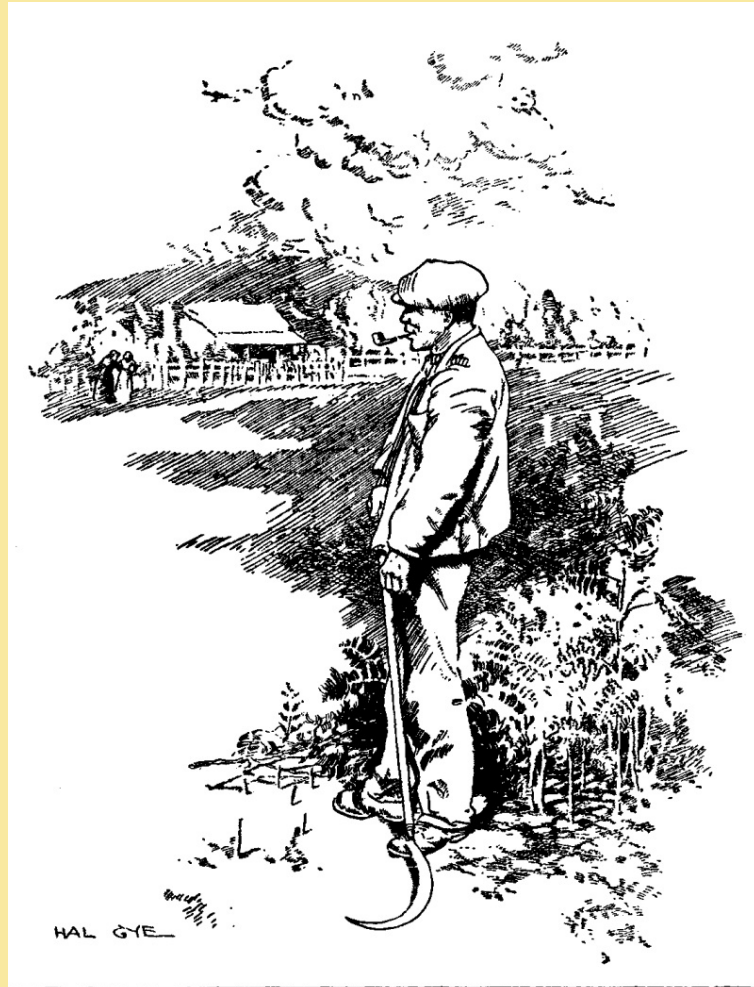
That don't restore me confidence a bit.
The drarmer isn't goin' as I tipped.
I corfs, an' makes another shot at it;
While 'e looks at me like 'e thinks I'm dipped.
"Well--jist suppose," I sez; an' then I turn
An' see 'er standin' there among the fern.

She don't want no prelimin'ries, this tart;
She's broke away before they rung the bell;
She's beat the gun, an' got a flyin' start.
Smith makes a funny noise, an' I sez, "'Ell"
Because I tumbles that I'm out uv place:
But, as I went, I caught sight uv 'er face.

That's all I want to know. An', as I ran,
I 'ears 'er cry, "My man! Man an' a 'arf!
Don't fool me with yer talk uv 'arf a man!". . . .
An' then I 'ears ole Digger start to larf.
It was a funny larf, so 'elp me bob:
Fair in the middle uv it come a sob. . . .

I don't see Digger till the other night.
 "Well, 'Arf-a-man," I sez. "'Ow goes it now?"
 "Yes, 'arf a man," sez 'e. "Yeh got it right;
 I can't change that, alone, not any'ow.
 But she is mendin' things." 'E starts to larf.
 "Some day," 'e sez, "she'll be the better 'arf."

XI. SAWIN' WOOD



But nothin's doin'. They jist goes on in.

Sawin' Wood



WONDERED wot was doin'. First I seen
 Ole Missus Flood wave signals to Doreen.

I'm in the paddick slashin' down some ferns;
 She's comin' up the road; an' if she turns
 An 'andspring I won't be su'prised a bit,
 The way she's caperin', an' goin' it.

She yells out some remark when she gets near,
 Which I don't catch, I'm too fur off to 'ear.
 An' then Doreen comes prancin' to our door,
 An' Missus Flood she sprints, an' yells some more;
 My wife runs to the gate an' waves 'er arms. . . .
 But I lays low; I'm used to these alarms.

A marri'd bloke, in time, 'e learns a bit;
 An' 'e ain't over keen to throw a fit
 Each time the women calls the fire-reel out.
 It's jist a trifle 'e'll know all about

When things get normal. That's a point I learn;
So I saws wood, an' keeps on cuttin' fern.

At least, I cut a few. I got to give
Reel fac's, an' own I was inquisitive;
 An' these 'ere fireworks gets me fair perplexed.
 I watch the 'ouse to see wot 'appens next;
But nothin's doin'. They jist goes on in,
An' leaves me wonderin' wot's caused the din.

I stands it for a full 'arf-hour or more;
Then gets dead sick uv starin' at the door.
 I goes down to the 'ouse an' 'unts about
 To find some 'baccar, which I 'ave no doubt
Is in me trousers pocket all the while.
When I goes in, the talk stops, an' they smile.

I sez I've lost me smoke, an' search a bit,
An' ask Doreen wot 'as became uv it,
 An' turns the mantelshelf all upside-down,
 An' looks inside the teapot, with a frown;
Then gives it up, an' owns I'd like a drink;
When Missus Flood sez, "Bill, _wot do you think_?"

Now, ain't that like a woman? Spare me days,
I'll never get resigned to all their ways.
 When they 'as news to tell they smile, an' wink,
 An' bottle it, an' ask yeh wot yeh think.
It's jist a silly game uv theirs, an' so,
I gives the countersign: "Wot? I dunno."

"Then guess," she sez. Well, I'm a patient bloke,
So I sits down an' starts to cut a smoke.
 (To play this game yeh've got to persevere.)
 "Couldn't," I sez, "if I guessed for a year";
Then lights me pipe, an' waits for 'er to speak.
At last she sez, "*Jim's comin' back next week!*"

"Go on," sez I; an' puffs away awhile
Quite unconcerned. But for to see 'er smile
 Was jist a treat: 'er eyes was shinin' bright,
 An' she'd grow'd ten years younger in a night.
Jist 'ere, Doreen she sez to me, "Good Lor,
Wot do yeh want *two* plugs uv 'baccar for?"

I takes me pipe out uv me mouth an' stares,
An' stammers, "Must 'ave found a piece--somewheres."
 But, by the way she smiles--so extra sweet--
 I know she twigs me game, an' I am beat.
"Fancy," she sez. "Yeh're absent-minded, dear.
Sure there was nothin' else yeh wanted 'ere?"

"Nothin'," I sez, an' feels a first-prize fool;
An' goes outside, an' grabs the nearest tool.
 It was the crosscut; so I works like mad
 To keep me self-respect from goin' bad.
"This game," I tells meself, "will do yeh good.
You ain't proficient, yet, at sawin' wood."

XII. JIM



"Rooked for 'arf me tucker jist to get it cooked?"

Jim



OW, be the Hokey Fly!" sez Peter Begg.

"Suppose 'e comes 'ome with a wooden leg.
 Suppose 'e isn't fit to darnce at all,
 Then, ain't we 'asty fixin' up this ball?
 A little tournament at Bridge is my
 Idear," sez Peter. "Be the Hokey Fly!"

Ole Peter Begg is gettin' on in years.
 'E owns a reel good farm; an' all 'e fears
 Is that some girl will land 'im, by are by,
 An' share it with 'im--be the Hokey Fly.
 That's 'is pet swear-word, an' I dunno wot
 'E's meanin', but 'e uses it a lot.

"Darncin'!" growls Begg. We're fixin' up the 'all
 With bits uv green stuff for a little ball
 To welcome jim, 'oo's comin' 'ome nex' day.
 We're 'angin' flags around to make things gay,
 An' shiftin' chairs, an' candle-greasin' floors,
 'As is our way when blokes come 'ome from wars.

"A little game uv Bridge," sez Peter Begg,
 "Would be more decent like, an' p'r'aps a keg
 Uv somethin' if the 'ero's feelin' dry.
 But this 'ere darncin'! Be the Hokey Fly,
 These selfish women never thinks at all
 About the guest; they only wants the ball.

"Now, cards," sez Begg, "amuses ev'ry one.
An' then our soldier guest could 'ave 'is fun
If 'e'd lost *both* 'is legs. It makes me sick
'Ere! Don't yeh spread that candle-grease too thick
Yeh're wastin' it; an' us men 'as to buy
Enough for nonsense, be the Hokey Fly!"

Begg, 'e ain't never keen on wastin' much.
"Peter," I sez, "it's you that needs a crutch.
Why don't yeh get a wife, an' settle down?"
'E looks reel fierce, an' answers, with a frown,
"Do you think I am goin' to be rooked
For 'arf me tucker, jist to get it cooked?"

I lets it go at that, an' does me job;
An' when a little later on I lob
Along the 'omeward track, down by Flood's gate
I meet ole Digger Smith, an' stops to state
Me views about the weather an' the war. . . .
'E tells me Jim gets 'ere nex' day, at four.

An' as we talk, I sees along the road
A strange bloke 'umpin' some queer sort uv load.
I points 'im out to Smith an' sez; "'Oo's that?
Looks like a soldier, don't 'e, be 'is 'at?"
"Stranger," sez Digger, "be the cut uv 'im."
But, trust a mother's eyes. . . . "*It's Jim! My Jim!*"

"My Jim!" I 'ears; an', scootin' up the track
Come Missus Flood, with Flo close at 'er back.
It was a race, for lover an' for son;
They finished neck an' neck; but mother won,
For it was 'er that got the first good 'ug.
(I'm so took back I stands there like a mug.)

Then come Flo's turn; an' Jim an' Digger they
Shake 'ands without no fancy, gran'-stand play.
Yeh'd think they parted yesterd'y, them two.
For all the wild 'eroics that they do.
"Yeh done it, lad," sez Jim. "I knoo yeh would."
"You bet," sez Smith; "but I'm all to the good."

Then, uv a sudden, all their tongues is loosed.
They finds me there an' I am intrajuiced;
An' Jim tells 'ow it was 'e come to land
So soon, while Mar an' Flo each 'olds a 'and.
But, jist as sudden, they all stop an' stare
Down to the 'ouse, at Dad Flood standin' there.

'E's got 'is 'and up shadin' off the sun.
Then 'e starts up to them; but Dad don't run
'E isn't 'owlin' for 'is lost boy's kiss;
'E's got 'is own sweet way in things like this.
'E wanders up, an' stands an' looks at Jim.
An', spare me days, that look was extra grim!

I seen the mother pluckin' at 'er dress;
I seen the girl's white face an' 'er distress.
An' Digger Smith, 'e looks reel queer to me
Grinnin' inside 'imself 'e seemed to be.
At last Dad sez--oh, 'e's a tough ole gun!
"Well, are yeh sorry now for wot yeh done?"

Jim gives a start; but answers with a grin,
"Well, Dad, I 'ave been learnin' discipline.
An' tho' I ain't quite sure wot did occur
Way back"--'e's grinnin' worse--"I'm sorry, sir."
(It beats me, that, about these soldier blokes
They're always grinnin', like all things was jokes.)

P'r'aps Dad is gettin' dull in 'is ole age;
But 'e don't seem to see Jim's cammyflage.
P'r'aps 'e don't want to; for, in 'is ole eye,
I seen a twinkle as 'e give reply.
"Nex' week," 'e sez, "we will begin to cart

The taters. Yeh can make another start."

But then 'e grabs Jim's 'and. I seen the joy
In mother's eyes. "Now, welcome 'ome, me boy,"
Sez Dad; an' then 'e adds, "Yeh've made me proud;"
That's all. An' 'e don't add it none too loud.
Dad don't express 'is feelin's in a shout;
It cost 'im somethin' to git that much out.

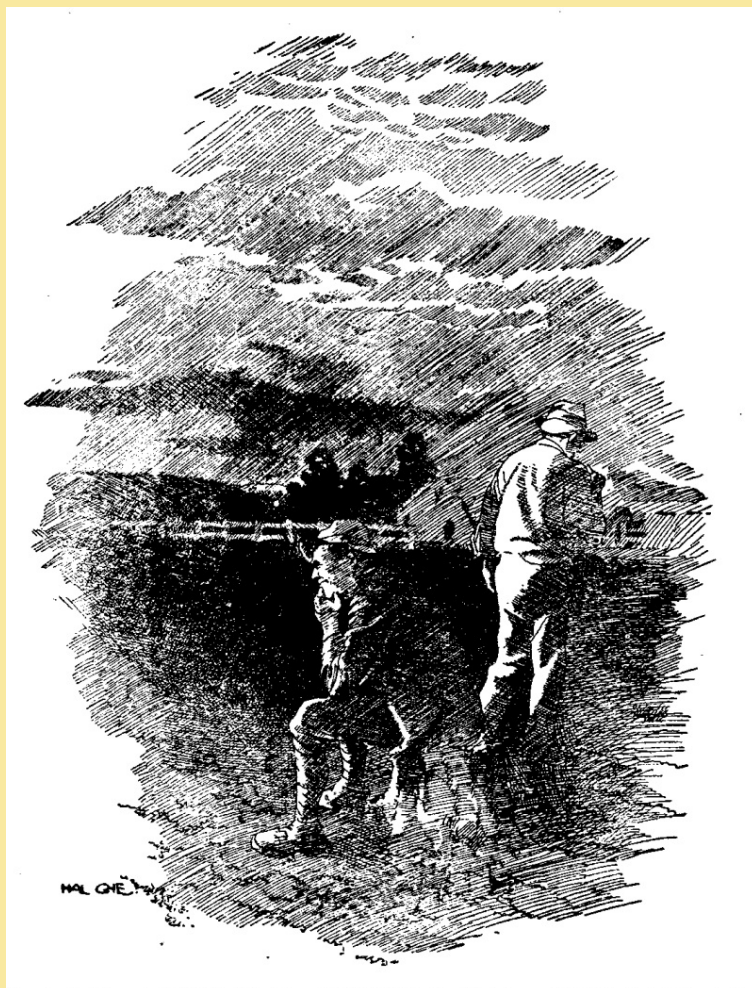
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We 'ad the darnce. An', spite uv all Begg's fears,
Jim darnced like 'e could keep it up for years;
Mostly with Flo. We don't let up till three;
An' then ole Peter Begg, Doreen an' me
We walk together 'ome, an' on the way,
Doreen 'as quite a lot uv things to say.

"Did you see Flo?" sez she. "Don't she look grand?
That Jim's the luckiest in all the land--
An' little Smith--that girl uv 'is, I'm sure,
She'll bring 'im 'appiness that will endure."
She 'ugs my arm, then sez, "'Usband or wife,
If it's the right one, is the wealth uv life."

I sneaks a look at Begg, an' answers, "Yes,
Yeh're right, ole girl; that's the reel 'appiness.
An' if ole, lonely growlers was to know
The worth uv 'appy marridge 'ere below,
They'd swap their bank-books for a wife," sez I.
Sez Peter Begg, "*Well! Be the--Hokey--Fly!*"

XIII. A SQUARE DEAL



*Then I gets up an' steals away,
An' leaves 'im with the dyin' day.*

A Square Deal



REAMIN'?" I sez to Digger Smith.

"Buck up, ole sport, an' smile.

Ain't there enough uv joy to-day
To drive the bogey man away
An' make reel things worth while?
A bloke would think, to see you stare,
There's visions on the 'ill-tops there."

"Dreamin'," sez Digger Smith. "Why not?

An' there is visions too.
An' when I get 'em sorted out,
An' strafe that little bogey, Doubt,
I'll start me life all new.
Oh, I ain't crook; but packed in 'ere
Is thoughts: enough to last a year.

"I'm thinkin' things," sez Digger Smith.

"I'm thinkin' big an' fine
Uv Life an' Love an' all the rest,
An' wot is right an' wot is best,
An' 'ow much will be mine.
Not that I'm wantin' overmuch
Some work, some play, an' food an' such."

"See 'ere," I sez. "You 'ark to me.

I've done some thinkin' too.
An' this 'ere land, for wot yeh did,
Owes some few million solid quid
To fightin' blokes like you.
So don't be too dam modest or
Yeh'll git less than yeh're lookin' for."

"Money?" sez Digger. "Loot?" sez 'e

"Aw, give that talk a rest!
I'm sick uv it. I didn't say
That I was thinkin' all uv pay,
But wot was right an' best.
An' that ain't in the crazy game
Uv grabbin' wealth an' chasin' fame.

"Do you think us blokes Over There,

When things was goin' strong,
Was keepin' ledgers day be day
An' reck'nin' wot the crowd would pay?
Pull off! Yeh got it wrong.
Do you think all the boys gone West
Wants great swank 'ead-stones on their chest?

"You chaps at 'ome 'as small ideer

Uv wot we think an' feel.
We done our bit an' seen it thro',
An' all that we are askin' you
Is jist a fair, square deal.
We want this land we battled for
To settle up--an' somethin' more.

"We want the land we battled for

To be a land worth while.
We're sick uv greed, an' 'ate, an' strife,
An' all the mess that's made uv life." . . .
'E stopped a bit to smile.
"I got these thoughts Out There becos
We learnt wot mateship reely was."

.

The hills be'ind the orchard trees
Was showin' misty blue.
The ev'nin' light was growin' dim;
An' down I sat 'longside uv 'im,
An' done some dreamin' too.
I dreams uv war; an' wot is paid
By blokes that went an' blokes that stayed.

I dreams uv honour an' reward,
An' 'ow to pay a debt.
For partin' cash, an' buyin' farms,
An' fittin' chaps with legs an' arms
Ain't all--there's somethin' yet.
There's still a solid balance due;
An' now it's up to me an' you.

There's men I know ain't yet woke up,
Or reckernized that debt--
Proud men 'oo wouldn't take yeh down
Or owe their grocer 'arf-a-crown--
They ain't considered, yet,
There's somethin' owin'--to the dead,
An' Diggers live for more than bread.

"We learnt wot mateship was," 'e sez.
"Us Diggers found the good
That's hid away somewhere in chaps,
An' ain't searched for enough, per'aps,
Or prized, or understood.
But all this game uv grab an' greed
An' silly 'ate--Why, where's the need?"

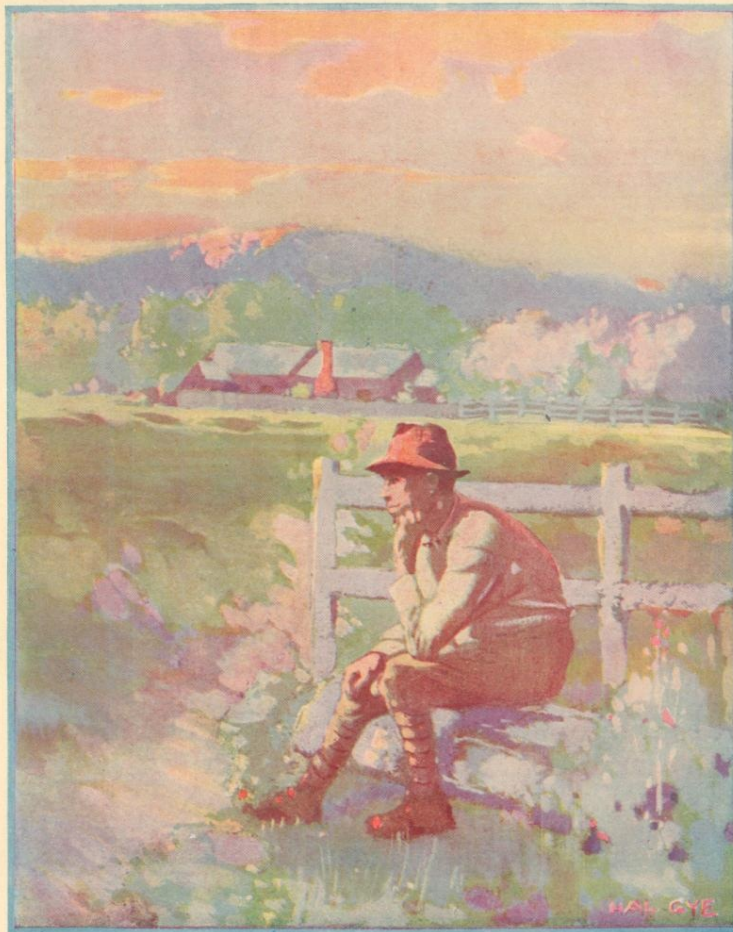
The hills be'ind the orchard trees
Jist caught the settin' sun.
A bloke might easy think that there,
'Way back be'ind the range somewhere,
Where streaks uv sunlight run,
There was a land, swep' clear uv doubt,
Where men finds wot they dreams about.

.

"Beauty," sez Digger, sudden-like,
"An' love, an' kindliness;
The chance to live a clean, straight life,
A dinkum deal for kids an' wife
A man needs nothin' less. . . .
Maybe they'll get it when I go
To push up daisies. I dunno."

"Dreamin'," sez Digger Smith. "Why not?
There's visions on the hill." . . .
Then I gets up an' steals away,
An' leaves 'im with the dyin' day,
Dreamin' an' doubtin' still. . . .
Cobber, it's up to me an' you
To see that 'arf 'is dream comes true.

THE END



*I leaves him with the dyin' day,
Dreamin' an' doubtin' still. . .*

GLOSSARY

Alley, to throw in the.
To surrender.

Ar.
An exclamation expressing joy, sorrow, surprise, etc.,
according to the manner of utterance.

Aussie.
Australia; an Australian.

Bag of tricks.
All one's belongings.

Barrack.
To take sides.

Beat the band.
To amaze.

Bint.
Girl.

Bird, to give the.
To treat with derision.

Blighty.
London.

Blind.
Deception, "bluff."

Bloke.
A male adult of the genus homo.

Bluff.
Cunning practice; make-believe; to deceive; to mislead.

Bonzer,
The best. [In text, only Boshter]

Book.
In whist, six tricks.

Booked.
Engaged.

Buckley's (Chance)
A forlorn hope.

Buck up.

Cheer up.
Bunk, to do a.
To depart.

Chap.
A "bloke" or "cove."

Chuck off
To chaff; to employ sarcasm.

Chuck up.
To relinquish.

Chump.
A foolish fellow.

Cobber
A boon companion.

Coot.
A person of no account (used contemptuously).

Cove
A "chap" or "bloke." q.v. (Gipsy).

Cow.
A thoroughly unworthy, not to say despicable person,
place, thing or circumstance.

Crack
To smite.

Crack hardy.
To suppress emotion; to endure patiently;
to keep a secret.

Crook.
Unwell; dishonest; spurious; fraudulent.
Superlative=dead crook.

Crook.
A dishonest or evil person.

Crool.
To frustrate; to interfere with.

Dead.
In a superlative degree; very.

Deal.
A "hand" at cards.

Digger.
An infantryman; a comrade.

Dilly.
Foolish; half-witted.

Dinkum.
Honest; true.

Dipped.
Mentally deficient.

Dizzy limit
The utmost; the superlative degree.

Dope.
A drug.

Dud.
No good; ineffective; used up.

Fag.
A cigarette.

Final, to run one's.
To die.

Final kick.
Final leave.

Fly.
A turn; a try.

Game.
Occupation; scheme; design.

Grandstand play.
Playing to the gallery.

Groggy.
Unsteady.

Grouch.
To mope; to grumble.

Hokey Fly, by the.
A mild expletive,
without any particular meaning.

Hump, to
To carry, as a swag or other burden.

Job.

Work, occupation.

John 'Op (or Jonop)

Policeman.

Jolt.

A blow.

Keep one down.

Take a drink.

Kick.

Leave.

Kick about.

To loaf or hang about.

Kid

A child.

Kid, to.

To deceive; to persuade with flattery.

Lob, to

To arrive.

Lurk

A plan of action; a regular occupation.

Moniker.

A name; a title; a signature.

Mug.

A simpleton.

Nail.

Catch.

Nark.

s., a spoilsport; a churlish fellow.

Nark, to.

To annoy; to foil.

Neck and neck.

Side by side.

Nix.

Nothing.

Nod, on the.

Without payment.

Pal.

A friend; a mate (Gipsy).

Part.

Give; hand over.

Pins.

Legs.

Pull, to take a.

To desist; to discontinue.

Pull off.

Desist.

Pull my (or your) leg.

To deceive or get the best of.

Punter.

The natural prey of bookmakers (betting men).

Push up daisies, to.

To be interred.

Quid.

A sovereign, or pound sterling.

Rag.

Song in rag time.

Rattled

Excited; confused.

Recomeniber.

Remember.

Renegue.

To fail to follow suit (in playing cards); to quit.

Rile

To annoy.

Riled

Roused to anger.

Ringer.

Expert.

Rook, to.

To "take down."

Rouse (or Roust).
To upbraid with many words.

Ruotions.
Growling; argument.

Run 'is final.
Died.

Sawing wood
"Bluffing;" biding one's time.

School.
A club; a clique of gamblers, or others.

Scoot.
To hurry; to scuttle.

Scrap.
Fight.

Shicker
Intoxicating liquor.

Skite.
To boast.

Slam,
Making all the tricks (in card-playing).

Sling.
Discard; throw.

Slope, to.
To leave in haste.

Smooge.
To flatter or fawn; to bill and coo.

Snarky
Angry.

Sock it into.
To administer physical punishment.

S.O.S
Signal of distress or warning, used in telegraphy.

Spare my days.
A pious ejaculation.

Spell.
Rest or change.

Sprag
To accost truculently; to convince.

Spuds.
Potatoes.

Square.
Upright; honest.

Squeak.
To give away a secret.

Stoke.
Eat.

Stop one.
To receive a blow.

Stoush
To punch with the fist. s., Violence.

Strength.
Truth; correct estimate.

Strike me!
The innocuous remnant of a hardy curse.

'Struth!
An emaciated oath.

Stunt.
A performance; a tale. [At the front: a battle, engagement]

Swank.
Affectation; ostentation.

Swap.
Exchange.

Swiv'ly
Afraid, or unable, to look straight.

Take down.
Deceive; get the best of.

Tart.
A young woman (contraction of sweetheart).

Tater
Potato.

Throw in the alley.
To surrender.

Tip.

A warning; a prognostication; a hint.

Toff.

An exalted person.

Tony.

Stylish.

Tossed out on my neck.

Rejected.

Track with

To woo; to "go walking with."

Treat.

Very much or very good.

Tucker.

Food.

Twig.

To observe; to espy.

Umptydoo.

Far-fetched; "crook."

Up to us.

Our duty.

Wade in

Take your fill.

Wise, to put.

To explain; to instruct.

Wowser

A narrow-minded, intolerant person.

Yap

To talk volubly.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DIGGER SMITH ***

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