

GINGER
AND McGLUSKY

A. G. FALES

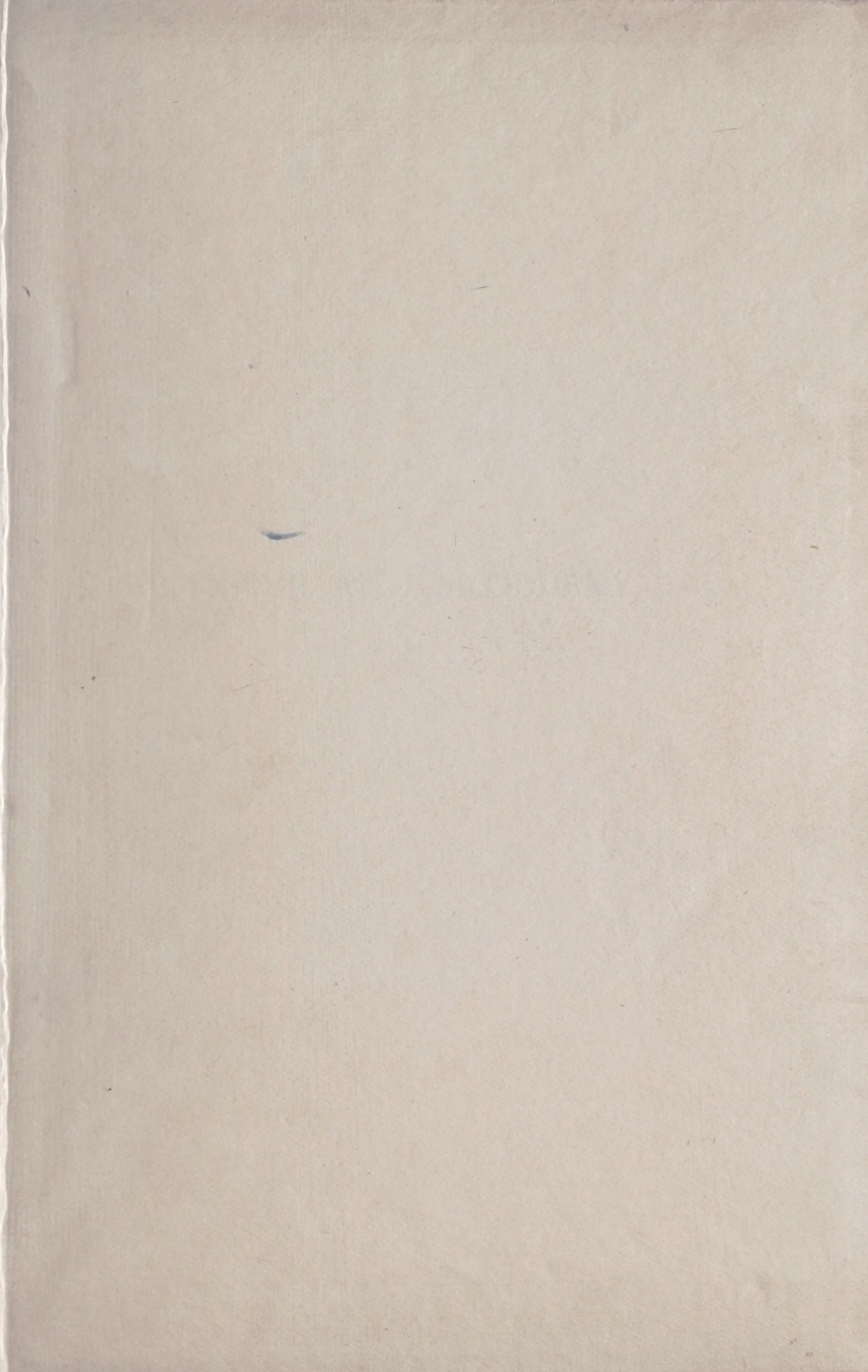


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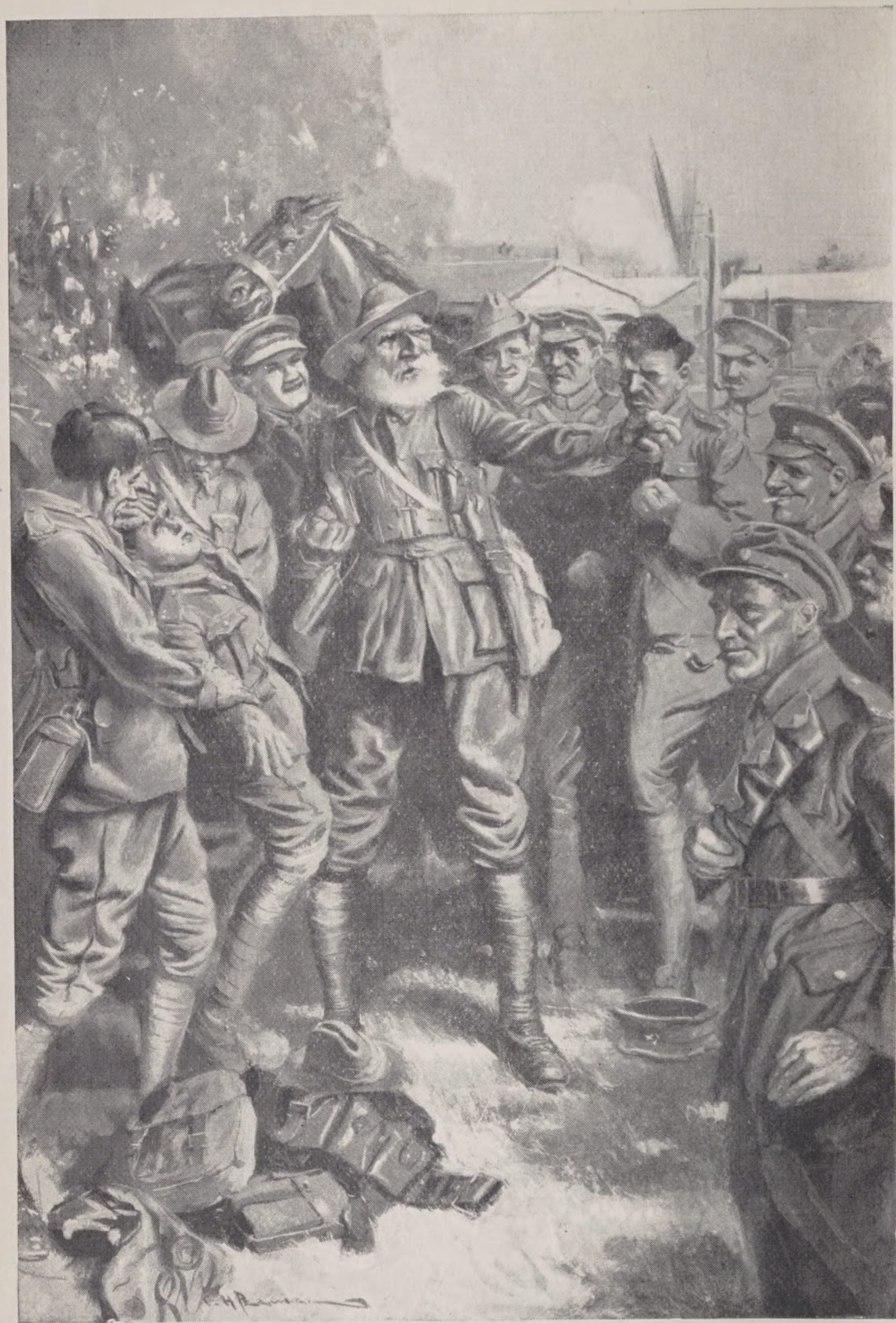
GINGER AND McGLUSKY

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“A’m no’ quarrelsome, ye ken, . . . but . . . A’ll alter th’ geography o’ his face so’s th’ mither av all th’ monkeys wud no’ care ta ca’ him kin.” [page 7.]

GINGER AND McGLUSKY

By

A. G. HALES

Author of "McGlusky's Great Adventure"



HODDER AND STOUGHTON
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DEDICATION

Other men must write the history of the great war, mine is the task of the novelist only, and this novel I dedicate as a simple tribute to the wonderful women who have so royally acted as nursing sisters to the Empire's matchless men—God bless them.

A. G. HALES.



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CHAPTER I

McGLUSKY AND GINGER ARRIVE IN FRANCE

‘YE will na.’

‘Won’t I? Who’ll stop me?’

‘A dinna say A’ll stop ye, but if ye lift yer han’ ter yon laddie, ye big owergrown gommerill, A’ll pound y’r carcass until ye’re sae saft yer frien’s will be able ter pour ye inta a bottle an’ no’ hae ta cork ye doon ta keep ye theer.’

The big, Roman-nosed gaunt man in the uniform of an Anzac private soldier looked round upon a sea of faces, as he very calmly but emphatically stated his intentions. There was no sign of anger upon his rugged face, and his lounging figure was not tremulous with passion. He spoke as one stating a fact which he was ready and willing to demonstrate without further parley.

‘A’m no’ quarrelsome, ye ken,’ he continued, throwing out one big knotted hand in a wide and comprehensive gesture towards the crowd, ‘A’m a poet an’ a lover o’ peace an’ concord; this hell’s broth ye ca’ war doesna appeal ta me. A was suckled on peace, an’ A love it, but gin yon body wi’ th’ face o’ a transport mule an’ a mind like a mud-heap lays a han’ on ma laddie, A’ll alter th’ geography o’ his face so’s th’ mither av all th’ monkeys wud no’ care ta ca’ him kin.’

The crowd of soldiers grinned joyously, but being fighters themselves, they knew by instinct this was no boaster; they began to drop remarks that proved that the person whose physiognomy had been so poetically described was no favourite with them. That worthy, truth to tell, was not as beautiful as an artist's dream—unless the artist did his dreaming on a demi-john of old Bourbon rum. A big fellow belonging to the artillery, but loutish in his carriage, in spite of all the drill sergeants had done for him; in civilian life he was the sort of person who would spend most of his time keeping a corner post from falling down, by propping it up with his shoulder, the kind of human who discovers sufficient exertion in brushing flies off his own face on a summer's day—not lazy, but born tired—the sort of man who leans against the fence with a straw in his mouth and gives advice, whilst his wife digs the garden and plants the winter vegetables. Strong as a dray-horse, but lacking virility. This person's face was ablaze with anger; his big fists were clenched; from his spurs to the crown of his cap, he was the personification of unbridled anger. A little way from him stood a slim, boyish soldier, with a flaming head of hair that could have given an African sunset three or four shades of colour and a bad beating; his belt was on the ground at his feet, his tunic unbuttoned ready for stripping, and he was expostulating vigorously with two Anzacs who held him.

'Och, Shnowy, let me go; Oi'm not afraid av th' big baste.'

The soldier addressed as Snowy looked about as youthful as the red-headed imp he was helping to

hold; his hair was so fair it was nearly white, and his good-looking face had never known the need of a barber's tools.

'You're too light f'r him, kid, you're not nine stone, and he's thirteen—and fit.'

'Oi'll hit him thirteen times to his wanst, an' that'll make ut even, Shnowy.'

'You keep still an' leave him to th' Old Timer, you limb of evil,' growled the man who was helping Snowy hold the boy back.

'Och, Flamingo, sew y'r ugly mouth up. Is th' Auld Timer ter be dhry-nursin' me till Oi die av auld age?'

The artilleryman did not like the comments passed upon him by the soldiers, and he turned his sullen face upon them and shouted:

'The kid called me a——'

'Ginger,' demanded the big man who had stepped in as champion for the youth. 'Ginger, did ye ca' yon mon by a name that reflected on his mither?'

'Och, an' Oi did, sorr.'

'Then, wee mannie, ye did na dae richt, an' A'll apologeese f'r ye ter yon gunner. Mon, eef yer mither was no' married when she brocht sic a thing as yersel' inta th' world, she was punished enough f'r her side-steppin' by th' sicht o' sic a face as yer ain wi'oot havin' her shame pitchforked at yersel', an' eef she was lawfu' wedded, th' wee laddie ha' leed, an' that's no' lawfu', but A'm theenkin' y'r feyther——'

'I'm goin' to lick that kid.' The hoarse voice of the gunner broke in on the apology of the gaunt Anzac.

'Bide a wee, bide a wee, we'll hae th' justice o't first. Ginger, for why did ye say sic a thing to yon

mon? Noo, wee mannie, tell th' truth, y'r on y'r honour.'

Thus appealed to, Ginger faced the elderly man who had constituted himself both judge and champion.

'Sorr, he mis-called the padre—our padre.'

'That didn'a justify ye in miscallin' his mither, Ginger, an' th' good padre wud be th' first ta rough ride ye f'r doin' it.'

'Och, an' indade, sorr, Oi wasn't thinkin' av his mother when Oi said ut. Oi don't belave he ivver had a mother; they foind thim sort in a dhrain afther a political meetin', he's a misfit an' a misscue, an' a dirty-tongued baste. Anyhow, sorr, if yez had heard what he said about th' padre, ye'd have found a worse name f'r him than Oi did, an' the worse ut was th' betther ut'd fit him.'

The gunner here interjected something concerning the padre and all holy Romans in general, that would burn a book if it was put in print. Ginger's champion went towards him mincingly, on his toes, like a ballet-dancer, and Snowy let a smile like a new dawn illuminate his face.

'Och, an' ut's my throuble, sorr, let me ate av ut,' stormed Ginger, but the Flamingo put a half-nelson grip on him and choked him into quietness.

The gaunt old warrior went close to the gunner.

'A ha' no' a veesitin' card wi' me, but ma name's McGlusky, an' p'raps this wull do in place o' ma card.'

He brought the back of his right hand across the gunner's mouth and stepped quickly back and threw himself easily into a posture of defence. 'A'm no' a Holy Roman masel,' he said in an explanatory fashion, 'but A ken mony who air, an' richt fine men

in a scrap too ; as f'r th' padre, he was wi' us in Gallipoli, an' though he's no' a big mon, he's got mair pluck an' spunk than a forty-acre paddock full o' things like yersel'—noo come on.'

The gunner needed no second invitation. He bounded forward, and as he did so a big black object hurtled through the air, and plunging into the ground, burst with a rending roar, scattering earth and stones and bits of trees and shreds of iron in all directions. Half a dozen men fell in various attitudes, but the elderly man who had called himself McGlusky turned a sort of double handspring, and then rolled over several times as if he had been fired out of a giant catapult, nor did he stop until he brought up with some violence against the wheel of a gun carriage. The youth 'Ginger' rushed to him ; kneeling by his side, the lad cried in accents filled with anxiety :

'Och, an' are yez kilt this toime, sorr? Sorra's th' day we ivver came ta France.'

Slowly the big veteran lifted his gaunt frame into a sitting posture, and began wiping dirt and gravel from his eyes and mouth.

'Whisht, Ginger,' he whispered thickly, 'whisht, wee laddie, A'm no' an angel yet.'

'Glory be,' chanted the youth, 'Oi thought yez was, ye looked loike wan a minnit ago, sorr.'

The young, fair-haired soldier who had stepped forward with a water-bottle in one hand and a flask in the other, drifted into the conversation in a casual way, by drawling :

'Funny idea you must have of angels, Kid ; the Old Timer looked more like something in a circus than a he-angel, when he hit the gun wheel. Good

job the gun carriage was there though, or the Old Timer'd be travelling yet.'

'Bad cess to yez, Shnowy, sew yer face up an' kape ut sewn up. Ye've no dacint feelin's at all, at all.'

Snowy chuckled and handed both the water and the flask to the man on the ground. McGlusky helped himself, and when he handed the nearly empty flask back to its owner, Snowy remarked in his quaint way, after a rapid glance at the wee drop of whisky that was left :

'The Old Timer may look like an angel, Ginger, but if angels drink like him, I wonder it ever rains.'

'A'm better noo,' interpolated McGlusky ; then, with an expression of wonder on his cast-iron face, he added, 'Losh, laddies, it were a waesome punch yon gunner gie'd ma. Say, Snowy, where did he swat ma ? A'm theenkin' A'll ha' ta be carefu' th' next round, or A'll get hurtit before A beat him.'

A slow smile twisted the lips of Snowy, the Anzacs' great sharpshooter, but Ginger exploded on the spot.

'Divil run away wid th' gunner, sorr, he didn't hit yez at all.' Then, with a fine atmosphere of contempt, 'Th' gunner cudden't hit yez off y'r fate loike that, sorr, not if yez lent him a sledgehammer ; ut was er German shell that did ut, wan av thim Jack Johnsins we heard about on th' way here.'

'A'm a bit dizzy in ma upper story yet ; A ha' na clear recollection o' events ; th' last A remember th' gunner was comin' at ma like a bull at a gate, an' A thocht he must ha' landed ma a bit clip on th' chin ; A felt shook up a wee bittie, ye ken. Hoo did a shell get here, Snowy ?'

'Oh, they drop 'em behind our lines sometimes,

Old Timer ; they want to blow up our reserve communications, you know.'

McGlusky pondered over this information, shaking his grizzled head as if he had bees in it. When he had collected his ideas, he took up his parable, saying :

' A'm no' thankfu' ta half-witted Wullie o' Berlin f'r interferin' wi' th' sportin' arrangements o' gentlemen. A ha' a sma' matter tae settle wi' a mon, if A'm no mistaken. Ginger——'

' Yes, sorr.'

' Where's th' gunner ? '

' Och, sorr, nivver moind th' gunner, he's adjacent, but he's busy, sorr.'

' An' what's keepin' th' buckie beesy, wee laddie ? '

' Th' padre's kapin' him busy, sorr, or he's kapin' th' padre busy ; th' Howly Father's washin' about half Alsace Lorraine wid bits av threes in ut out av th' gunner's eyes.'

' A'm hopin' he's no' blin', Ginger.'

' He's not blind, Old Timer, but he's got a bit to go on with, so have half a dozen others ; you only missed gettin' it by th' skin o' your teeth.'

The rugged Scot Australian dusted his face with his Anzac hat, and pondered over his deliverance.

' Laddies, A'm theenkin' th' Lord is savin' ma f'r a purpose. He wull na cut ma off like a flower. A dinna ken wha' work he has in store f'r ma, but A'll dae it wi' all ma micht ; maybe He'll be wantin' ta mak' a general oot o' ma ta swat th' ungodly Pheelistines who air treadin' th' little nations unner foot ; weel, weel, A'm no prood, A'll no' seek th' deesteention, but A'll no' refuse it if its offered ma.'

Snowy's eyes were dancing ; he had not fought all

through the Gallipoli campaign with this raw giant without learning some of his idiosyncrasies.

'Did they give you the V.C. while you were in England for blowing up the ammunition depôts at Gallipoli, you two?' was Snowy's query after he had helped the veteran to his feet.

'They didn'a; they said they cud na, because we were neither o' us sojers, an' only sojers cud win honours, but they gie'd us leave ta join oop in a regular way, an' noo we're here.'

'Kind of 'em,' drawled Snowy.

'Na sae bad, conseederin'; ye ken we'd been fechtin' in Gallipoli wi'oot leave.'

'Disgraceful conduct, Old Timer; men have had—had poetry written about 'em for less than that.'

Mac missed the sarcasm in the slow voice; he was too busy hunting in his clothes for a paper. He found it, and Ginger winced.

'Y'r gey wise sometimes, Snowy, though ye ha' a great gift o' makin' a fule o' yersel' noo an then; ye spoke true this time aboot th' poetry. A ha' made a wee bit masel' on Ginger. A'll read a bittie o't.'

'Och, an' yez will not, sorr. What have Oi ivver done ter yerself, sorr, that yez should illusthrate me wid poethry. Ye can take yer belt ta me, if yez loike, but th' dam poethry's not fair, is ut, Snowy? Poe-thry's not f'r men, uts f'r—f'r faymales, an' ondacent faymales at that—lasteways none av th' dacint wans 'll sthand th' poethry yez make, sorr. Three boardin' houses we sthayed at in London, Snowy, an' in aich av thim th' landlady gave us th' key av th' street, throwed us out neck an' crop, bag an' baggage, bekase he wrote what he called a lyric on thim. Oi don't

know what a lyric is, but thim landladies said he tuk more liberties wid their anatomy than a masseur at a Turkish bath takes wid th' anatomy av a fat proize foighter rejucin' weight.'

'Th' women mistuk ma meanin', Snowy. A reverence a' women, they're little bits o' heavin.'

'Yez didn't say that about th' last wan, sorr, th' wan that jabbed yez from behind wid th' toastin' fork.'

'Maybe A did na, Ginger—whiles she was beesy wi' th' toastin' fork an me on ma knees seekin' refuge unner th' dinin' room table. Ye ken A'm no' feared o' th' steel in a fecht, Snowy, but A'm no' likin' it when a woman ha' been toastin' muffins f'r breakfast an' serves it up hot fra behin'. When a woman's gey angry,' he added pathetically, 'she's onparticular where she jabs a mon.'

'You two seem to have been having the time of your lives in London, thrown out of three boarding houses in a month.'

'In a week,' chirruped Ginger. 'The Auld Timer didn't start mashin' landladies until th' last sivin days.'

'Hope you didn't destroy the poetry you made for the ladies, I'd—I'd love to read 'em out to the boys in th' trenches,' murmured Snowy with dangerous sweetness.

'Th' women destroyed 'em,' replied Mac sadly.

'They must ha' been hot stuff, Old Timer.'

'They were true ta nature, Snowy: th' last one was composed on a fine gran' woman, but she had bow-legs. Ye ken the fule fashion all th' women ha' o' wearin' short frocks th' noo; eef they dinna want a mon ta ken they're as bandy as a Greek boatman, f'r

why dae they wear frocks na longer than kilts, th' bow-legged yins, an' th' spindle-shanked yins, an' th' knock-kneed yins too? A poet ha' tae be true ta nature ye ken that fine; if he is no', he's no true ta art. A put wha' A saw in ma lyrics, an'——'

'Och, ter blazes wid his lyrics,' chortled Ginger, who seemed to have a decided grudge against the poetic muse. 'The first lan'lady he wrote his ondacent stuff to was a foine woman: she brung me me breakfast in bed, tay an' toast an' ham an' eggs, fit fer a juke, an' at dinner she heaped me plate twice, an' there was alwis plenty av raisins in th' puddins. She fed us loike fightin' cocks, an' on Sunday she dhressed in wan av thim frocks which is all th' fashion, ut was most short enough ter call it an apron an' not a frock, but Oi didn't moind, th' faymale cud cook grub loike a seraphim, an' she only put on her war duds ter plaze th' Auld Timer, Shnowy, f'r she was as swate on him as a hen turkey is on a gobbler in the love sayson. Whin th' Auld Timer sees her in that frock, he sez: "Losh, luk at th' legs av her, wee laddie, yez cud drive a gun carriage through 'em an' not touch ayther soide, she's as bow-legged as a camel-ridin' Bedouin." She heard part av what he said, an' her face wint as red as a divil that's been half baked an' half boiled. "Was he referrin' to me, son?" she sez whin she got me alone. "He was *not*, mam," sez Oi, perjurin' me pore soul f'r his sake, an'——an' f'r th' sake av th' ham an' eggs f'r breakfast. "He was talkin' about a Turkish princess we tuk prisoner at Gallipoli," an' Oi sent th' woman away happy, an' thin he wrote her a lyric, an' put th' same things in ut, only worse, an' we lost our happy home.'

'Oh, haud yer gab, Ginger, A'm fashed wi' y'r bletherin'; th' only soul ye've got lives in yer stummick. Noo, Snowy, show me where th' Anzacs are campin', A've got ter report masel' f'r duty.'

So the trio marched through the greatest camp Britain had ever created, and McGlusky's fierce eyes sparkled as he noted the mighty array.

'This luks like real war, laddies; our army at Gallipoli was only a corpril's guard compared ta this. Losh, it beats th' Assyrians av old.'

'Who was thim, sorr?'

'A dinna richtly ken who they weere, wee laddie, but they were heathen o' some kind, 'nd had an army that covered th' groon' like grasshoppers; they were goin' ter skelp th' army o' th' Lord, but He blew 'em all oot wi' his breath in yin night.'

'Do yez belave ut, sorr?'

'A do, wee mannie.'

'Thin, sorr, why don't the Lord blow out th' Germans?'

McGlusky halted in his stride.

'Laddie, a fule can ask mair questions in a minnit than Solomon cud answer in a month. Dinna ye go speirin' inta th' ways o' th' Lord; ask ma anything wi'in reason, an' A'll do ma best ter satisfy y'r cravin' f'r knowledge—but by ma soul y'r so thirsty f'r information, ye'd pump a bench o' bishops dry in a week. Noo, quick march, use y'r een an' shut y'r capacious mouth. Yon's a gran' sicht—a gran' sicht, millions on millions o' men an' a' fechtors—every mither's son o' them. They'll skelp th' mad Kaiser.'

But Ginger would not be put off in this way. Twenty strides farther on he opened fire on the veteran again.

'Sorr, is th' Kaiser sure mad?'

'A'm theenkin' he maun be, else,' with a great wave of his hand, 'why wud th' daft buckie try ta fight these yins, the pick o' th' earth an' th' salt thereof?'

'Thin tell me, sorr, fer why did th' Lord let a mad baste get on a throne an' make war on th' worruld?'

'A'm no' sure, mannie, but A'm theenkin' th' Lord wanted ta purge th' world o' th' Germans, they're a race o' ravishers an' bullies, ye ken.'

'Och, sorr, thin why didn't th' Lord blow 'em all out in a night, loike he did thim Assyrians, an' not fill th' world wid th' weepin' an' wailin' av Frinch an' British widdies an' orphins?'

'Ye onreeleegious slip o' Satan, wud ye question th' ways o' Providence? Here's th' only answer ye'll unnerstan'.'

As he spoke, McGlusky launched a kick in the direction of the Irish boy, but Ginger, who knew by past experience the form the Scot's theology was apt to take, sprang nimbly out of range.

'Talk tae him, Snowy, for a wee bittie,' growled Mac, 'he means na harm, ye ken, but the questions th' impie speirs at ma amaist mak's ma faith in ma relee-gion slip its anchor.'

'He's got a deuce of a thirst for information, and that's a fact, Old Timer,' cooed the wonderful marksman soothingly, and then added, 'Don't let him worry you, pardner, I think half his questions are put out of sheer contrariness.'

'Na, na, dinna dae th' wee laddie eenjustice, he's got a wunnerfu' brain, eef he didn'a find oot things, he'd—he'd bust.'

And Snowy chuckled as he chewed his quid of plug

tobacco, for Ginger's hunger for information did not always lead him into theological pastures, and Snowy had a scarlet recollection of some of the questions the wayward Irish boy had put to him in the days when they had fought the Turks side by side in the East. Ginger, whistling like a bird, kept himself discreetly in the rear, and McGlusky noticing it, remarked *sotto voce* :

'Th' wee mannie ha' peecked up a wunnerfu' assortment o' knowledge.'

'He has,' assented Snowy, and the grin that illuminated his face would have cracked a cup.

CHAPTER II

McGLUSKY GETS A RISE IN LIFE

SOLDIERS on active service are not demonstrative folk as a rule; most of their emotions are first worn razor-edged, and then so badly blunted that they keep them well out of sight and hearing, but one of their own kind, a real fighter, can usually stir them from their normal apathy. But to few men is it given to receive such a welcome into camp as the old Anzac regiments gave to McGlusky. They caught sight of him coming into their lines just as they were off duty, and with one spontaneous yell they engulfed him.

'Whisht, laddies, wisht, they'll be hearin' ye in Berlin,' he cried warningly, as hundreds of sinewy hands were thrust out to grip him.

'Here he is, whiskers and all,' chanted some one, and a storm of laughter shook the daredevil crew.

'Aye,' he said with a tinge of bitterness in his voice, "here A am, whuskers an' a', but A've got orders ta tak' me whuskers off th' nicht, an' A'm goin' ta tak' 'em off, but A'm theenkin' it'll no' be lucky—Samson had na luck, ye ken, after he were shorn.'

'Samson gave up his whiskers f'r a woman. What are you giving up yours for, Mac?'

The voice that put the query was bubbling with merriment, the dour man took it seriously.

'A'm gi'en up mine f'r duty ; th' General at Alder-shot said A'd ha' ta shave or stay oot o' th' airmy, an' A axed him if A micht wear 'em until A joined up again wi' ma regiment. A was afeared, ma buckies, ye wad na ken ma eef A came amang ye wi' ma lugs bare.'

'Wonder the General trusted you out of England with your hair on.'

'A had served ane campaign o' three years' length wi' him, an' he kenned ma, he knew A'd tak' ma whuskers off th' nicht A joined ma regiment, if A had ta bite 'em off inside. A'm no' a leear, an' eef any mon amang ye is insinuatint' A am, A'll be obleeged eef he wull step oot here th' noo an' eef A dinna twist his innards like a wire entanglement, ye may marry ma ta a mummy an' ca' me Pharaoh.'

Ginger's welcome by his old comrades of the fateful Eastern campaign was as warm as that given the veteran, and it was not long before he was being introduced in rough soldier fashion to the men of the new Australian and New Zealand contingents which were brigaded with the veterans of Anzac fame.

'A nice quiet kid, but not much devil about him,' was the general verdict of the new acquaintances, whereat Snowy and the old brigade grinned hugely, but all Snowy said was :

"They don't know Ginger—yet."

That night McGlusky shaved his long beard and moustaches ; he made almost a religious rite of it, but the face that emerged from the tangled forest of hair fairly delighted Ginger.

'Och, sorr,' he cried, 'an' if Oi'd only knowed you was hidin' away a face loike that in them old

whiskers, Oi'd ha' burnt 'em off in y'r shleep. Yez look young enough ter be ma big brother. Och, Oi'll marry yez to a countess wid a pot o' money, whin we get back ter Blighty.'

'Ma face feels like a ham ta ma, wee laddie.'

'Faith, divil a bit do ut look like a ham, sorr, uts an iligant face, hard as railroad iron, an' th' mouth o' yez will frighten any Fritz who sees yez, sorr. Uts—uts loike the doorway ter hell wid th' hinges off ut, uts betther'n a wolf thrap; all yez want is three new front teeth to make up f'r thim wans th' Turk shot out av yer head th' day yez was clamberin' up the heights av Gallipoli in th' first big fight. We'll buy some, sorr, th' first toime we get lave an' go ter Paris.'

'A'm theenkin' that wud be a sinfu' waste o' good siller, Ginger, A'll be scrappin' wi' Germans th' morn, please God, an' A'm told most German bodies ha' gude teeth; A'll keep ma eyes open when A'm scrap-pin', an' th' first German A see wi' fine front teeth, A'll drop ma rifle an' just gie him a clump wi' ma fist; eef A dinna bring his teeth oot, they'll ha' ta be screwed in. A'm theenkin' that's no' unlawfu', th' Turk took mine, an' the Turks an' Huns air allies; between 'em they owe ma twa teeth fra th' top an' yin fra th' bottom o' ma mouth, an' laddie, A'm no' a lover o' them that dinna pay wha' they owe.'

'Bedad, yez'll get th' teeth if yez say so, Oi know that, but, sorr, how will yez fix 'em in y'r mouth?'

The big man looked into the eager boyish face with an expression of mild surprise.

'Hoots, wee mannie, did ye no' ken A was a bush

blacksmith ance in Australia? A niver fitted teeth inta a body yet, but A ha' fitted a tyre ta a waggon wheel, an' A ha' pulled monay a mon's watch ta pieces an' put it thegether agin. A'd tak' shame ta masel' eef A cud na fix in ma ain teeth—a bush blacksmith maun be a handy mon, ye ken.'

'Och, if Oi lose any teeth, Oi'm goin' ter wait till Oi go ter Paris ter get 'em in, sorr. Will yez be afther drivin' yer own in wid a hammer?'

'Hec, na, na, ye gommerill, maybe th' German body A get ma teeth fra wull ha' a bit gold in his pooch, A'm theenkin' it wull na be unsoldierly ta tak' it frae him f'r a gude purpose. Gie Jamie McGlusky th' gold ta mak' a mouth plate an' th' teeth ta fix ta it, an' a wee hammer an' a smooth stane f'r an anvil, an' gin A dae na fix my teeth as beautiful as tombstones in a cemetery y'r at leeberty ta tie a napkin roon ma neck at meals an'—an' feed ma wi' a spoon.'

'Sorr?'

'Aye, Ginger.'

'Y'r a jaynius, yez can make or mend maist anything.'

'Na, na, laddie, no' a genius, but A ken th' Almichty gie'd a mon brains ta theenk oot ways ter help hissell'. Some men air brocht oop sae badly, Ginger, they think shame ta dae a day's work wi' their han's; th' mair useless th' puir saft bodies air, th' finer gentlemen they conseeder themsel's. That's ane o' th' greatest curses o' Englan', mannie. Mony o' th' feckless fules dinna ken if it's th' end they put in a saddle, or th' end that carries a hat that was intended by th' Creator f'r a theenkin' machine. Dae ye mind

that gommerill they ca'ed King Alfred we was readin' about in th' buik?'

'The wan that had na gumption enough to cook cakes, sorr?'

'Yes, that yin, an' they kept him king after that, an' th' ither yin who didn't ken hoo a woman managed to get an apple inta a dumplin', because he cud na see th' hole—fancy sic a feckless fule body rulin' a keengdom. Men like them yins should be made ter work f'r their livin', nothing teaches a body sound sense like hard work. Some day when the world has grown wiser, mannie, reverence an' respec' wull fa' on th' men an' women who dae th' worl's work, not on th' fules who loaf through life. Did ye ivver watch a bee-hive from its beginnin' to its endin', Ginger?'

'Oi did not, sorr; Oi watched wan whin it was full o' honey in England, an' Oi didn't know th' bee-keeper's son was watchin' me; he pushed th' bee-hive on top av me wid a pole, and the bees got busy—talk av something else, sorr, Oi've lost me intherest in bees, Oi'm goin' ter invent a way ter make honey wid machinery whin Oi grow up.'

'A was only goin' ta say, Ginger, that bees air the wisest beasts o' th' field; they ha workers an' sojer bees, an' drones an' a queen; they put up wi' their drones an' let 'em live on the fat o' th' hive f'r a long time, thin they hold an indignation meetin', an' they kill 'em, every yin o' them, not a divil o' a drone do they spare.'

'Good f'r thim. Oi didn't think th' bastes had so much sinse, sorr.'

'Ginger, when A tak' ye to Australia or New Zealan',

an' we ha' a little cottage wi' a garden fu' o' roses an' cabbages an' daisies an' turnips, A'll build a beehive oot o' glass an' ye shall study 'em; a queen bee an' her life an' loves is th' deepest study a mon can get below th' stars; dae ye ken, laddie, a queen bee is th' only real incarnation o' love, mother love, sweetheart love, passion love, that can be foond on this planet? She's a murderer for love's sake, she's as lustfu' an' imperious as that ondacent faymale Cleopatra we studied in Egypt; nothing in fur or feathers, in wings or in—in petticoats is as amorous as a queen bee, an' when she gives herself in love, its just yin sparkle o' splendour in mid air; she an' th' lover they sparkle for their wee hour like twa burnished jewels, an' thin she kisses him good-bye, an' he comes floatin' doon ta earth like yin o' those dry leaves from th' pear tree, an' he's as dead as frozen mutton, an' she, th' queen, she flashes back to her hive full o' splendid life, an' starts th' ruction agin th' drones, an' has 'em all killed off.'

'Is that all thrue, sorr, or is ut by way av bein' a parable.'

'Laddie, it's a' true. A kept bees in glass hives on purpose ta watch 'em, they're wunnderfu' beasts.'

'Sorr, does th' bull bee th' queen bee goes gallivantin' in the air wid, love only wanst an' thin die av ut?'

'He does, Ginger, he dies in a blaze o' intoxicatin' splendour.'

'Sorr?'

'Weel, mannie?'

'Ain't yez dam glad yez wasn't born a bee, yez wud ha' been dead before yez got inta throuisies.'

The following morning McGlusky's commanding officer sent for him, and said :

'Look here, Mac, they tell me you are a clever mechanic ; is that so ?'

'A'm na sa bad f'r a jack-o'-all-trades, sir.'

'Were you ever a dentist in Australia ?'

'A niver was, sir.'

'Then that red-headed young sweep of yours is a fearful liar. I overheard him telling some men of an Irish regiment that you had been, and he said you made a fortune putting false teeth in race-horses, and when I cross-questioned him, he swore it was true. He wouldn't know the truth if he saw it in a shop window.'

'A'm no' sure he's a leear, sir ; Ginger's just developin' his eemagination, he gets haud o' a wee bit fancy, an' then puts peecturesque trimmin's on 't.'

'I'll put picturesque trimmings on him, if he works off any more of his lies on me. Did you ever build a steam-boat out of a couple of broken-down steam ploughs ?'

'Not that A remember, sir.'

'Nor invent a machine for extracting gold from sea water ?'

Mac shook his head negatively.

'Perhaps you made an instrument you call a thought-aphone, which registers a man's secret thoughts as accurately as a rain-gauge records a rainfall? That lying imp said you had.'

Mac smote his big hands together exultantly.

'Losh, sir, he's a won'er, he's jest bubblin' ower wi' gran' ideas.'

' He is, and I'll take some of the bubble out of him. I was wanting a man with brains, not the ordinary cut and dried mechanic of the shops ; they're mostly all one pattern, they'll do what they're told, but I wanted a man who could think out a line for himself, and go ahead with it, and somehow it got about, and that poppy headed understudy of yours told me such yarns about you, I thought I'd found the man I wanted. I'll——'

' What line o' mechanics air ye wantin' a mon f'r, sir? A'm no' a genius, but A'm handy.'

The look of annoyance on the C.O.'s face passed, and gave place to a grin.

' Say, McGlusky, did you manufacture a machine that would shear sheep and comb the wool as it came off? Your familiar devil said you did.'

' That's jest his loyalty ta his frien', sir; he's f'r ivver puttin' ma on a pedestal. Tell ma what ye lack, an' eef its in ma, A'll dae it.'

' I want a man who can put any of our damaged aircraft right; we are losing rather too many good flying men through machines going wrong; the lads are good and game, but not one in twenty knows when a machine is going "sick." They go up in a hurry, and—well, you know what happens. Can you help me, eh?'

' A'm theenkin' A can, sir, but——'

' Well, out with it.'

' A cam' ta France ta fecht, no' ta tinker oop sick machinery. Gin ye'll promise ta let ma gang aloft an' ha' a fecht noo an' then ta keep ma bluid cool, A'm wi' ye.'

' I think you're here to do as you're told, McGlusky.'

'Verra weel, sir, tell ma wha's wrang wi' th' machines, an' A'll dae ma best ta put 'em richt.'

'Oh—h, I have a regiment of mechanics who can do that.'

'A'm no' deesputin' it, sir.'

'You cranky, contrary son of satan, it's your own way you're wanting. Men have been strapped to a gun-wheel for less than you've done. I've handled your sort in the bush, and on the gold fields, and——'

'They dinna seem ta ha' eemproved y'r manners, sir. A'm a sojer, noo, but A'm a man.'

'You're not. You're six feet odd of Scotch Australian pig-iron gotten into a uniform.'

McGlusky's sinewy frame grew loose all over, every joint seemed to grow limber, every muscle supple and ready for action, as is the way with real fighters; it's the novice or the dunce at the game who tightens up all over like the spring of an overworked clock.

'Australian A am, an' dom prood o' 't. Scotch bluid's in ma veins. Where ye foond yer ain, sir, only God kens. A'm theenkin' it was wrung oot o' a dish-clout an' made inta a mon, not meanin' any disrespec' ta yer rank, sir.'

'I'm as Australian as you are, McGlusky, and I wish to the Lord I hadn't this uniform on, I'd give you a lesson in manners.'

'A'm theenkin' ye wud na, a mon canna gie wha' he hae na got; but, sir, we may meet in th' bush, when war's ower, just twa men wi' a deeference between us, an' then——' his gesture was eloquence petrified.

'All the pleasure won't be with you, Mac, if we do meet.'

'A'll hae ma share, sir.'

'Very well, let it go at that. I've an idea you're the man I want just now. I'll agree to let you go up in a fighting machine and scrap with the Germans, if you make good in my way, and just listen to this: our aircraft are the eyes of the army, and the Germans are working night and day to improve their machines; sometimes they invent something that gives 'em a pull over us, and they boss the air for a while, and whichever army bosses the air, bosses the earth, for the airmen are the eyes of the guns, savee?'

'A teething child cud grasp that, sir.'

'Very well, use your brains, and if you can hit on an idea that will give us a pull over the enemy, if only for a week, it may make more difference than you imagine.'

'A'll mak' na promises, an' A'll mak' na boasts; A'll jest dae ma durndest, na mon can dae mair, but if a Scot has na mair brains in his skull f'r machinery than a squareheaded Hun, th' last generation o' Scottish mithers maun ha' been daft bodies mair fitted f'r nunneries than nurseries.'

'The fathers too, I'm thinking, Mac.'

'Hoots, an' y'r wrang; ye hae na studied th' pheesiology o' th' human species; it's fra th' mithers we get all oor sense; raisin' weans is like gettin' music oot o' a barrel-organ, all th' fathers ha tae dae wi' it is tae turn th' hannle, it's th' women that mak' or damn a nation.'

The C.O. chuckled.

'Say that from Nelson's monument, McGlusky, and say it often enough, and the women will put you in Parliament.'

'They micht dae waur than that, A'm theenkin'!

men wi' less abeelity ha' been premiers o' Englan'—an' wull be again.'

'Your modesty won't choke you, McGlusky.'

'No *men* air really modest concernin' their ain sel's, sir; some wear modesty as a wanton woman wears a cloak, ta hide wha's unner, an' that which a mon hides is maistly best ta be hidden. A'm no' hankerin' tae be a poleeteecian, ye unnerstan', f'r it's na a clean job at the best, but A wud na say nay if th' country wanted anither Cromwell.'

When Ginger heard of McGlusky's new post, he was delighted, for he had dreams of becoming an airman.

'Oi got yez the job, sorr,' he chanted.

'Why did ye tell yon C.O. sae mony awfu' lees, wee laddie?'

'Och, an' yez make me toired, sorr. Ring off about lyin', divil a lie did Oi tell, ut—ut was diplomacy. Ye've got the job, anyway, an' Oi'm y'r assistant.'

McGlusky revelled in the work, for to his finger-tips he was a mechanic; he worked early and late, and he made Ginger work until the Irish imp remarked:

'Oi think Oi loike sojerin' better'n bashin' machinery wid a hammer, sorr,' but his complaints did him no good. The big Scot, grease to the ears, only hustled him the harder, and soon the word passed along that the C.O. had found a treasure. It did not matter what hour of the night anything went wrong with aircraft, or what kind of a night it might be; the rain might be pouring down in sheets, and a savage wind blowing, out the veteran would go, and Ginger, swinging a lantern and cursing pic-

turesquely, would trudge at his heels, for the storm was never brewed that would make him desert his friend. When Mac wasn't working, he was thinking, planning some improvement that might help to put the British airmen a bit ahead of the Huns. Once a rather cheeky young air officer, to whom the Scot had offered a practical suggestion, told him to 'close his head and mind his own business, which was to repair damages and not to offer advice.' McGlusky wagged a thick forefinger which looked like a stick of tar at him.

The officer backed away, and fell across Ginger.

'Who—who is he?' he demanded. 'Is he a maniac?'

'Och, yes, sorr, ye've hit ut in wan guess, he's a maniac all right, he's a Roossian prince in disguise, workin' here loike Pether the Great did in thim auld days, whin he was learnin' ship buildin'.

'I—I thought from his accent he was Scotch.'

'That's part av his disguise, sorr; he's Roossian, an' a prince, all right, sorr.'

'Is he always as violent as this?'

'Vi'lent, och, sorr, yez caught him in a dhrame av shwateness; y'r luck was in, sorr; he don't often tell people he'll twist th' nose av 'm wid a spanner—he does ut.'

A minute later McGlusky, watching the flying man moving off, said: 'Ginger, what did ye say to yon birrd boy?'

'Me, sorr? Och, Oi said nothing at all that matters, sorr; Oi just remarked that Oi thought ut'd be a foine day f'r flyin' termorrer.'

'A'richt, Ginger, that's a'richt, ye please me weel

when y'r canny an' discreet. A theenk y'r improvin' now y'r away frae Snowy an' the rest o' th' buckies.'

' Oi think Oi am, sorr; Oi'm just bustin' wid goodness.'

' Dinna get puffed up wi' it, wee laddie, dinna luk doon on ither folk, y'r gudeness is na merit o' y'r ain; y'r jest as God A'michty made ye."

Then Ginger went about his work singing like a bird, and McGlusky, pausing enraptured to listen, wondered why there was so much chuckling in his melody.

' The dear wee buckie,' he murmured, ' losh, he's mair 'n half angel th' noo.'

In the course of time the big Scot evolved from his clever mechanical brain an improvement that—if it would only work—would enable our airmen to play havoc with the German scouts of the sky, who by virtue of their superior machines had been having far too much of their own way for the Commander-in-Chief's liking. McGlusky, with characteristic dourness, kept his secret between himself and Ginger; he knew he could trust the imp, for volatile as Ginger was in all other respects, in anything relating to McGlusky he was a wedge of silence. When, by permission of the C.O., Mac began scrapping a number of old machines, to get material to build his new one, it leaked out that the Old Timer had hit on an idea, and a good many 'experts' fluttered round. They soon found they could not pump McGlusky, so turned to Ginger, and then heaven opened for Ginger, and many a grim chuckle broke from McGlusky, as he caught scraps of the information (?) the Irish boy dealt out with a liberal hand to those inquiring experts.

If a tithe of what Ginger told them had been true, Mac's aircraft would have been the most wonderful thing that ever emanated from the brain of man. He would never talk in the presence of two people; he got each of his victims by himself. 'Oi loike aich wan on his lonesome,' was his way of expressing it to the Scot, and as he had a soul that was not above 'tips,' it proved a golden period for him. He had quite a goodly array of inquirers, and he swore each one to solemn secrecy with dark and deadly oaths, and then proceeded to fill them up with his own vivid imaginings, and McGlusky noted with wonder that he never told the same tale to any two people, and the stories bubbled out of him at the shortest possible notice. Sometimes Snowy the sharpshooter, when off duty, would drift to McGlusky's works, which were close up in the rear of the fighting line, and Snowy would join up with Joe McNamara, an Irish soldier from Argentina, whom Mac had requisitioned as a helper, and the pair of them would follow Ginger's brilliant flights of fancy with undisguised joy.

'That kid's a marvel, Joe,' Snowy would murmur between pulls at his pipe; 'he don't invent those tales, they live in his bones, his marrow's brim full o' them, and the blessed funny part about it all is that his tales sound so feasible, he never overdoes it, and he can talk aircraft as if he'd been born in one, and yet I know he never saw one, except in the sky, until he came to work here with the Old Timer.'

'What Oi loike best about th' little swine's lies is the way he suits 'em to his company. Notice him wid a crusty old banshee av a Colonel: he just drops hints and suggestions, an' sort o' defers to th' Colonel

as if the old boy knew all about it, till the Colonel goes away as flattered as a widdy wid a wooden leg who's been told she looks th' image av Ramuska th' Russian ballet-dancer.'

'The Old Timer don't seem to mind him lying to people about his inventions,' remarked Snowy with his slow twilight kind of smile.

'Divil a bit. Oi put it up to him, an' he said: "'Tain't lyin' he's doin', it's guardin' an army secret he is, an' he's doin' it wid circumspection an' jaynius an' profit to himself all mixed.'"

'Yes, that's the way with the pair o' them—scratch Ginger, an' you hurt McGlusky; light a match near th' Old Timer, an' you set Ginger on fire. Hullo, Joe, who's this bunch coming towards the works? Looks like more souls thirsty for knowledge—an' more fun for Ginger.'

Joe took a long look at them.

'Bedad, Oi know 'em, Snowy, they're war correspondents. Ginger will have to keep his eye-teeth skinned.'

'I'll lay odds on the peony-headed whelp, Joe, we'll be readin' some wonderful an' various yarns about airship inventions by an' by, when th' London papers come across. I'll give Ginger a tip; perhaps he'll spread himself.'

'Spread himself,' chuckled Joe; 'he don't need to; he's an aigle f'r flights o' fancy at any old time.'

When the sharpshooter had conveyed his news, Ginger smiled.

'Och, let me alone, they're dead aisy. Oi'll give 'em some av their own game; uts alwis aisy to catch a man at his own game, bekase he thinks he knows ut all—an' he don't—no one does.'

The war scribes drifted towards the machine and one unslung a camera; then a huge gaunt man in dirty overalls, begrimed with grease, a man with a vast nose like the beak of a vulture, and a mouth like a steel potato peeler, appeared from the far side of the aircraft. He had been cutting wooden wedges, and the tomahawk was still in his right hand. He strode to the man with the camera and shook the tomahawk menacingly.

“Gin ye open that dom theeng near ma aircraft, A’ll gie it a skelp wi’ ma chopper.’

‘My man, we—er—we are accredited war correspondents, we—er—we have our permits, we—er—the C.O. told us we were at liberty to use anything for the press that you told us, we——’

‘Weel, A tell ye ta gang ta blazes—use that. A ken ye a’ fine; A ha’ been an editor masel’ in ma time. Noo joomp.’

“You’re a most outrageous person. I suppose we can stand on the earth, eh?’

‘Not this bit o’ earth. A’m needin’ th’ bit y’r standin’ on this minnit, buckie, an’ A’m goin’ ta ha’ it.’

He lunged forward, and drove the blade of the tomahawk at the left foot of his questioner, who got well back with the agility of a wild goat, and the rest with him. To them strolled Ginger, who knew how to seize the psychological moment in a crisis of this kind with unerring certainty. He was the personification of courtesy.

‘Oi’m hopin’, gintlemen, ye’ll not be moindin’ th’ eccentricities av me mechanic.’

‘He’s a wild beast; he’s not a man,’ splurged the scribe whose foot had been threatened with the axe.

'Yez mustn't moind him, gintlemen, he's mad. Ut was a sthroke av th' sun he got in India, whin he saved th' great General Roberts at the retrate av Kandahar. Oi have ter put up wid him bekase av his mechanical gifts; there's not another man loike him alive.'

The scribes said they hoped not, from the sample they had had. Ginger, with the air of a soldier who wanted greatly to ingratiate himself with superior beings, continued his parable.

'Yez see, gintlemen, uts loike this. Oi ain't a draughtsman, Oi can't put me oideas on paper loike yez can do yerselves, Oi can only explain 'em wid me mouth; if Oi explain 'em to an ordinary mechanic, th' man sez he can't work without drawin's an' specifications, but if Oi tell this man he grasps th' idea at wanst, an' works ut out loike—loike er dairymaid works butter out av crame.'

'Then you—you are the real inventor?'

'Me? Och no, me an' him betwane us. Oi foind th' ideas, an' he puts 'em into wood an' iron; he's the rale janius, not me.'

The ingenuous air of modesty that accompanied the words would have charmed a plaster saint off its pedestal.

'Got 'em first shot, Joe,' whispered Snowy to McNamara, for the pair, apparently non-attentive to their surroundings, had loafed within earshot. Ginger saw them. He became austere in a moment, and called out sharply as any sergeant-major drilling an awkward squad:

'Now thin, me lads, out o' this. If Oi have ter spake to yez again, Oi'll—Oi'll report yez.'

Snowy and Joe saluted.

'Didn't mean any harm, Mr. Inventor; jest havin' a smoke.'

The diffidence in Snowy's voice and manner helped Ginger a lot with the scribes. They began to work the pump, but Ginger soon let them know in an indirect way that he wasn't *giving* anything away. He detached himself from them, and strolled away in an apparent brown study. One of the news gatherers followed him, and the two watching soldiers saw a very neat piece of sleight of hand work, which enriched Ginger not a little and left the war correspondent no poorer, seeing the transaction would be charged up to his office probably as 'horse feed,' a correct designation, as it provided a good deal of chaff amongst the soldiers later on. A couple of the scribes took Snowy and Joe in hand for information concerning the young genius—and they got it. Joe had the most picturesque style, but for wealth of detail Snowy was hard to beat.

'Never heard of that kid before?' he said pityingly. 'Never heard of the patent crane he invented, and the Old Timer made out of scrap iron in Gallipoli, for hoistin' men 'nd things up the cliffs?'

The news seeker said he hadn't.

'Fair smasher at inventin' things, that poppy-headed nipper. It used ter take about sixty mules an' a lot o' men to haul a gun up a cliff a hundred feet high an' straight as the side of a church. The kid invented a hauling lift. He said it come to him in a dream. One man could work it easy. I've done it myself many a time. All you had to do was sit on a rock and twiddle a bit of a handle with your finger; that

worked a lot of cogs an' things, and you could lift up a mule as easy as liftin' an empty biscuit tin. If he'd only had an education, he'd be on the staff now, instead of being only a private. We're awful proud of him.'

' Good reason you soldiers have to be proud of him ; he's no ordinary lad, he's—he's a landmark in our times, and such a modest young fellow too.'

' Yes,' agreed Snowy, looking at the war correspondent without the flicker of his eyelids. ' He is modest. Modesty is Ginger's strong point.' And Joe, who caught that part of Snowy's oration, nearly exploded at the bare idea of coupling Ginger and shyness.

Joe had not been idle himself ; he had furnished *his* victim with a full account of the young inventor's parentage which, as the correspondent affirmed, would make juicy ' copy ' for his journal. According to the gospel by Joe, Ginger's father had died in the arms of glory, charging up an African kopje in the teeth of a storm of lead, to save a British gun, and the honour of a regiment, and then with a tear on his tongue, he added :

' An' his pore little divil av a son was thrown on th' baggiest part av his throusies on a cold world to live—or—or die, till the Old Timer found him an' got him into the army.'

Later, when the three correspondents came together, they compared notes. The one who had been with Ginger said :

' I know all about the new aircraft ; it's—by Gad—it's simply wonderful. That ship will surprise the Boches ; why, it can do any mortal thing it likes, except play the piano. I got it all from the inventor

kid—wonderful gift of description he's got, and—it only cost me a fiver. What did you fellows get?'

'Got the young inventor's life and adventures and his gallant father's life and death; cost us three pound between us, and dirt cheap at the price.'

He might not have thought so if he'd heard Ginger telling Joe that his father wasn't dead, not by a bagful, but was doing time in Dublin gaol for sheep stealing in Ireland.

When McGlusky saw the conspirators dividing up the spoils he asked:

'An' what air ye goin' ta dae wi' th' siller, ye ill-condeetioned gommerills?'

'Goin' to put it away to build a hospital for idiots,' crooned Snowy, and Ginger gurgled.

'Och, don't mention ut, Snowy darlin', ut makes me ill; ut was loike takin' bread an' butther from a blind boy.'

'Weel, it's th' last ye'll get this way, ye three scuts; th' machine's ready noo, an' A'm goin' ta take her oop an' try her oot as a fechter th' morn; her gun's a' ready an' works like a watch. A'll be hopin' ta ha' a fecht about a mile fra th' earth, an' gin ma gun dinna shake a' th' reevits loose an' bring her doon, she'll dae fine, A'm theenkin'.' Then, turning with beaming face to Snowy and Joe, he added: 'A've a great honour an' a gran' treat in store f'r ye baith, ma buckies. A'm gawn ta tak' ye oop wi' ma.'

Snowy's eternal chuckle cracked the silence that tollowed. Then Joe remarked meekly:

'Oi've done a bit o' flyin', Old Timer, but—er—what use wud Oi be in—er—in your new invention?'

'Ye'll dae f'r ballast, Joe ; ye can steer whiles A work ma gun. Noo grup han's on it, A won't go back on ma promise ta ye baith, but walk canny an' dinna be puffed up wi' th' honour.'

Neither Snowy nor Joe looked as if joy was going to be the death of either of them, but McGlusky was supremely unconscious of the gloom he had cast on their lives.

CHAPTER III

'TWIXT EARTH AND HEAVEN

AT intervals during the whole time he had been mending 'sick' air craft, the big Scot had gone into cloudland with various airmen, and had quickly picked up the art of 'flying.'

'It's no' hard ta learn,' he had remarked. 'A find it easier ta han'le aircraft in th' hivins than a motor ar on a road ; there's no' so mony things ta hit.'

In due course Ginger had gone up with him, and picked up the business, as McGlusky said: 'Like pickin' oop pennies frae a church plate.' At first the youngster had not warmed to the flying idea at all.

'It's just gran' skimming along unner an' over th' clouds,' the Scot had explained, and the Irish imp had retorted:

'Och, sorr, th' skirmishin' part's right enough ; what Oi don't loike is th' droppin'. Oi don't want ter come down a thousand feet turnin' han' springs in th' air, an' landin' on me spine on a church steeple ; Oi'd rather die dacent wid a bullet or a bit av a baynit in me. Oi don't want ter be skewered by no auld church steeple, specially wan wid weather-cocks on ut.'

'Wee mannie, ye won't come doon unless y'r shot doon ; ye'll be as safe wi' ma as a birrd on the wing. Don't A unnerstan' engines ?'

'Bedad, ut won't make ut any th' swater ter be shot first an' fall after, sorr, will ut?'

'A'm shamed o' ye, Ginger. Eef A didn'a ken ye, A'd theenk ye were frichted.'

'Bedad, an' Oi am, sorr.'

'Whisht, mannie, doesn't ivvery birrd o' th' air tak' th' same chance in peace or war time? Buckies ha' been shootin' at them f'r ages. Y'r Anzac, an' no Anzac is feared ta tak' th' same chances as a birrd.'

'Bedad, sorr, y'r logic may be dam good logic, but there's no sinse in ut. Birds don't take thim chances because they loike 'em, they take 'em because they must, an', sorr, Oi'm no canary or aigle ayther. Oi'll scrap in me boots wid any one, but ut makes me sick in th' sthummick ter think av divin' three thousan' fate an'—an' a church steeple wid a spike on ut waitin' f'r me.'

For all his dislike of the idea, Ginger went into the air—it was that, or forfeit McGlusky's good opinion, and rather than that, Ginger would have gone to Hades in search of ice. The first hour in the air he was as nervous as a stray dog on a strange doorstep, but in a little while the exhilarating influence of the higher altitudes acting upon his Irish temperament like old wine on a new drinker, made him almost drunken with the joy of life, and the glory of conquering the unknown. Soon McGlusky had to expostulate vividly with him, saying:

'Canna ye keep still, ye scarlet-tinted spawn o' mischief? Dae ye theenk yer in a rockin' cradle, or joy ridin' ta th' deevil? Eef ye move agin f'r half an hoor, A'll ding ye a clout wull mak' th' drum o' yin ear play bagpipes in th' ither. If A was no' a God-

fearin' mon, ye'd mak' ma pollute th' atmosphere wi' langwidge that wud blister y'r hide. Dae ye no' ken th' groon' is twa miles below us, an' if ye empty us oot we'll be hurtit.'

The man who was accompanying them at the time as pilot never said a word—he couldn't, but when they reached the earth he chased Ginger for a mile with the metal spoke of a broken gun-wheel.

All these things being duly considered, it was only natural that the imp should feel confident that he was to make one of the crew on McGlusky's trial flight. Fierce was his wrath when the Scot informed him that such was not his intention.

'Y'r takin' Shnowy, sorr.'

'Aye, laddie, Snowy's a gran' snapshot, an' A may meet wi' ane or mair Germans up there.'

'Y'r takin' th' Irisher, Joe MacNamara, wid yez, sorr.'

Ginger's voice was deadly cold and dispassionate.

'A'm takin' Joe. A kenned him well in Argentina—a wild buckie, but a gran' fechter, an' he can han'le ma wee cannon maist as well as A can masel'.'

'Och, an' what are yez goin' ter do yerself, sorr?'

'Me, Ginger? A'm goin' tae be comman'er in chief, luk after th' engines, an' fecht ma ship generally.'

'An' whoy are yez lavin' *me* out, sorr?'

'Because it's a trial trip, wee laddie, an' gin ma invention gangs wrong, hivin's going ter be richer by three souls th' day.'

'Hivin,' sneered Ginger. 'Snowy an' Joe won't know the way there.'

'A'll tak' ye next time, wee mannie, eef th' invention's a success.'

‘ Will yez ? ’

Something in the boyish voice, something that rasped like steel ripping from the scabbard, made the Scot look straight into the big, beautiful Irish eyes, and he recoiled as if he had been struck. Something that was almost hate blazed out of those eyes that had always beamed on him in love. The young face was white with the grey whiteness of storm-swept sleet, and the usually laughing lips were curled in a sneer.

‘ Wee mannie, ye ken A lo’ ye like ma ain bairn, but y’r young, ye dinna dream o’ th’ danger ; eef—eef ma invention’s no’ a success, it’s—death.’

With a gesture that was sublime in its tenderness, the big man stretched out both hands yearningly, but Ginger, with a mocking, sneering smile, bitter as bitter aloes on thirsty lips, never relented.

‘ Och, *Mister* McGlusky, yez needn’t be frettin’ about meself ; sorra’s the day yez ivver picked me out av th’ gutther ; ye’ve thried meself out an’ weighed me an’ found me a—coward.’

Mister McGlusky ! The prefix from Ginger cut like a wet lash on a green wound.

‘ Ginger ! ’

The one word came in a deep bass growl, freighted with pain.

‘ Ginger ! ’

But without a word, the laddie swung round on his heel and marched off, and made straight for his dug-out.

McGlusky’s hard face worked strangely for a moment, then his figure straightened ; he turned and went across to his aircraft, and, picking up a screw-wrench and an oil-can, he busied himself putting the finishing

touches on his engine, preparatory to flight. To him drifted Snowy, cool and unconcerned in demeanour as ever. McGlusky told him what had happened with Ginger, finishing with :

'An', Snowy, he, ma ain laddie, ca'ed ma *Mister* McGlusky, an' didn'a weesh ma farewell an' God speed.'

Snowy, chewing his plug methodically, ruminated for a few moments, then :

'Old Timer, I heard an Englishman say once that we Australians are the cruellest breed of men under the sun ; we always hurt the things we love most, an' by G—— I believe it.'

'Dinna say ane word agin ma wee mannie, Snowy ; he——'

'I'm not, Old Timer ; if I'm saying anything against anybody, it's against you.'

'Agin ma ?'

Mac almost closed his eyelids and peered hard at the sharpshooter.

'Yes, you, Old Timer.'

'Wha's wrang wi' ma ?'

'You turned the kid down, put me an' Joe before him, an' you told him so yourself. If—Old Timer—if I'd loved kid Ginger half as well as you do, I'd rather have shot him.'

'A did it ta save him frae th' danger.'

'Danger !' For once Snowy lost his eternal calm, and his slow voice was vibrant. 'Do you think, Old Timer, that kid fears danger ? I mind the night when the Flamingo and the Mutineer an' me saw him go to a hill which Turkish shells were turning into a merry hell to look for you when you were wounded.'

I mind how he and the Mutineer followed you to what looked like certain death, when you blew up the reserve ammunition at the evacuation of Gallipoli. Danger!' —Snowy's lip curled—'Old Timer, if you was sortin' cobwebs in hell an' wanted a drink, that Irish scut would bring it to you, if he had to climb down the flue to find you.'

McGlusky laid a great hand on Snowy's throat.

'Haud yer bletherin'. Dae ye theenk A dinna ken it a'? He's too good ta be wastit in a trial scheme like this yin. You an' me an' auld Joe dinna matter; he's gaun ta be a great mon, a—a landmark yin o' these days. Haud y'r gab, f'r y'r tearin' at ma heartstrings.'

Anzac Snowy, who feared neither man nor devil, looked into the big, savage face, and his own wore the same expression Ginger's had worn when McGlusky had turned him down.

'It isn't in me, Old Timer, to love any one, man, child or woman, as the kid loves you, but if I did, an' you turned me down—to save me—I'd hate you with a mad dog hate all my days. Don't you understand, he thinks you're a tin god, and he knows—we all know—what you think of gameness, and you've pushed him away from your side when you're going into danger. If he lives to be a thousand, the memory of that will hurt him. What would you do if the C.O. came and pulled you off this job and put a man in your place, because of the danger, Old Timer?'

'Me? What wud A dae? A'd tak' th' ither buckie by th' boots, an' use him as a baynit ta bust ma machine, no' in anger, ye ken, but ta mark ma sense o' eenjustice done ma.'

'You've been more unjust to the kid, Old Timer.'

Then Snowy, the hero of a hundred heroic deeds, did the bravest thing of his fearless life. He risked being considered a coward. Touching the rugged hand nearest him, he said :

'You say you only want two men with you on this trip. Cut me out. Take Joe an' Ginger. I—I don't cotton to this flying game; it—ain't—my line.'

The Scot peered at the smooth, expressionless young face that he had seen so often close to his own in the mad melee of battle, and gasped.

'Wha's wrang wi' ye, Snowy? Ye—ain't—lost—y'r nerve, laddie?'

'Seems like it, Old Timer.'

'Weel, A'll be dommed. Ha' ye been drinkin' o' late on the quiet?'

'Soakin in it.'

'Not bad news fra hame, buckie?'

'Yes—the worst. Now you go an' get Ginger; he's not as good a shot as I am, but he's thundering good.'

'Wud no' a dram or two buck ye oop f'r this yin trip? A dinna believe in it on general preinciples, but whiles whusky's good.'

'I'm not going; go an' get Ginger.'

McGlusky threw down his screw-wrench and strode off to Ginger's dug-out. Irish Joe McNamara caught Snowy's hand.

'By the green ribbon av St. Patrick, Snowy, y'r a pal worth callin' a pal.'

'Oh, cut it out, Joe,' replied the slow voice, really weary this time. 'I've lost the respect of the only man I ever cared a tinker's cuss about. He thinks I'm a quitter—but—I had—to be fair to the kid.'

McGlusky came back from the dug-out; his hard face was strangely perturbed.

'The wee laddie's gone,' he said; 'packed his traps, rifle an' a' an' gone, an'—nivver a gude-bye ta ma, an' A loved him like a mither.'

'Th' young swine,' growled Joe.

Mac turned like a wild boar.

'Dinna open y'r head that gate, Joe McNamara, about ma wee mannie; eef ye dae, A'll bend th' top part back an' th' bottom part doon till y'r mooth luks like a stew-pot waitin' ta be filled. Yon laddie's a gran' laddie, an' he wud na be haf so gran' eef he no' had fau'ts.'

Snowy's tongue clicked on his palate, for he knew how any one would fare who maligned Ginger in the presence of the veteran.

'Where do you think th' kid's gone, Old Timer?'

'Dunno, ma buckie, but ma heart's in ma wame concernin' him.'

'Lay you a thousand to one I place him, Old Timer.'

'Where, Snowy? Tell me; y'r awfu' wise in some things, though ye hae na th' sense o' a he-goat in ithers.'

'The kid has gone to th' trenches. I'll bet my hat he's up alongside th' Flamingo, potting Boches.'

'Wha' mak's ye theenk so, buckie?'

'Where does a lame dog crawl to when it's hurt? Does it go to strangers, or to men it knows, Old Timer?'

'Losh, buckie, on yin side o' yer head y'r a theenker; ye've hit it, that's where ma wee mannie ha' gone sure enough. A'm hopin' th' Flamingo'll tak' care o' him, but he's a waesome fule in a fecht, is th' Flamingo.'

' Don't worry, the Flamingo's all right ; he joined up ter get his light put out, because his best girl threw him over in Australia ; but those chaps who try to get killed have a devil's charm with 'em : they swing like a gate on one hinge, an' never fall. Flamingo tried his darndest ter get a ticket ter go west in Gallipoli. I saw him asking for it a hundred times ; so did you, Old Timer ; but he'll look after the kid for your sake.'

' For ma sake, Snowy ? '

' Yes, the Flamingo thinks a mighty lot o' you ; don't know why, unless it's on account of your fatal beauty ; perhaps you remind him of the girl who chucked him. From what I know of the Flamingo he'd be liable to fall in love with a girl all bones an' bruises.'

' A've no time f'r it, Snowy, or A'd swat ye ower th' mooth. A maun gang an' find anither mon ta gang up wi' ma in y'r place.'

There was a moment's silence whilst the Scot was putting bombs into his aircraft, then Snowy's slow, even drawl crawled lazily along the silences.

' Thought I heard you say something about a couple of nips you had stowed away in a bottle somewhere, Old Timer.'

Mac turned with a flicker of hope in his eyes.

' Dae ye think a wee drappie wud put ye richt enough ta gae oop wi ma, Snowy ? '

' I'm feelin' better'n I did ; I think I'd be able to hit a house with my rifle if I had a drop under my shirt, Mac.'

With a snort of delight, Mac dived into his kit-bag and produced a black bottle.

'A got it f'r medicine, or f'r accidents, agin—er—agin snake-bites,' he explained.

Snowy helped himself bashfully to 'two fingers.'

'Dinna be afraid o' it, buckie; tak' three fingers ta settle y'r stummick, an' three mair ta put th' Gallipoli glint inta y'r een, laddie, an' then A ken it's God help the Boche that comes wi'in a mile o' y'r rifle.'

There's nothing on earth so generous as a generous Scotchman, and to a man he warmed to Mac would give his shirt. It may seem a small thing to hand out a bottle of whisky, but when it's your last, and you know the virtue as well as the vice that underlies a cork, and you may go months before you can replace that bottle, it's not such a small matter as it looks on paper. Snowy helped himself, and made it 'three fingers,' then he said :

'Say, Old Timer, Joe's lookin' a bit white about the gills; think he wants some medicine too. You've built this old machine o' yours out o' scraps and odds an' ends; it may hold together, an' it may not; if it don't, we're all goin' halo-huntin', see?'

'Gie Joe a taste. Air *you* feelin' better, Snowy?'

'Me? Oh, I'm beginning to feel fine.'

He threw his rifle up to his shoulder, and flashed his unerring eyes along the sights.

'Think I could hit a hayrick as it is, Old Timer.'

McGlusky beamed upon him.

'Ye're a wunner when y'r in form, Snowy; ye cud pick th' nine spots oot o' th' nine o' spades wi' a rifle as far as ye cud see th' cards. A've seen ye dae it, an' dae it too when bullets were blisterin' th' air roon' y'r ears. Aye, gie Joe a drink; twa o' *his* fingers

wull dae f'r him ; his fingers are as thick as bamboo sticks, an' A've only yin bottle, ye ken.'

Joe, with a bashful grin, took hold of the bottle, and helped himself, and being Irish he held his fingers wide apart.

'Losh,' growled McGlusky, 'ye've dom near filled th' pannikin, Joe. A'd begrudge it ye, ye chimpanazee, if A didn' a ken ye f'r a fechter.'

'Have a wee sup yerself, Old Timer,' cooed Snowy.

'Not a dom drappie f'r ma ; A'll hae mine whin ma machine mak's good, laddie. Noo all aboard, an' remember th' eyes o' th' universe air on us.'

Joe and Snowy got aboard, and Snowy, half atheist and all materialist, cooed :

'Got any spare chunks of religion, Joe? If you have, ladle 'em out now, for we're going three miles up' with a mad Scotchman who didn't know what fear meant when he was being suckled, and hasn't had time to learn it since.'

Joe grinned back.

'We're part of a lunatic emporium, we are ; Berlin for us, or an untimely grave in a bunch of trees.' Then his happy face cracking all over with laughter : 'Snowy ?'

'Yes, Joe.'

'I'd be dam near happy if the kid was with us ; I don't like the thought of him in the trenches with th' Flamingo.'

'Oh, cut it out ; you don't know the Flamingo, he'll dry-nurse the kid all right, same as I would ; if the kid tries to get killed foolish, th' Flamingo'll bash him with th' butt, an' all the old gang of Gallipoli will enter into a conspiracy of action to prevent the kid

from committing harakiri; we know the kid an' th' Old Timer too; th' brigade don't want th' Old Timer ragin' among them for the sake of a red-headed Irish whelp who wanted to run amuck; think *they* don't know th' Old Timer? You bet your hat they do. Ginger couldn't be safer in a church choir than he'll be with th' Flamingo an' his pals, when they tumble to his story, and they'll tumble mighty quick when they see his white face an' his hungry eyes. Now you watch Mac, you're goin' to have the time o' your life; you'll wish you was a potato in old Ireland before this circus is over. I know th' Old Timer; he's got his fighting boots on; this ain't no trial trip in the ordinary sense; he means fight, an' when he means fight, he gets it; it's a way the beast has. The English are mad, the Irish are madder, but the Scotch are maddest of all when they see a fight anchored in the offing.'

'Glad you told me,' grinned Joe, 'I wish I was a little boy selling papers in th' streets av dear dirty Dublin.'

'You're a liar; you wouldn't be out o' this scrap for the D.S.O. or the V.C. Look at the Old Timer jumping like a mountain goat from his darned machine to his levers; if ever a man was happy, he is now. God help you if you don't make good with the gun.'

After the first rush of a hundred yards or so over level ground, MacGlusky's machine rose gloriously and sailed into the blue empyrean, and the fighting men stood to their task. Upward ever upward climbed Mac's ship.

"Be me soul, Oi think he's steerin' f'r hivin's gate,' commented Joe.

'He'll lose part of his crew before he gets through then ; you're not ripe for heaven yet, Joe.'

'Oi don't see any wings growin' on you ayther, Snowy.'

'Wish you could. I'd feel a big lump more comfortable in this old tin can if I had wings, Joe. Lord,' he continued in his placid drawl, 'did you hear this old sardine tin rattle then ? Every time he changes her course suddenly, she chatters as if she had the ague. Listen to them blasted rivets now ; they rattle like loose teeth in the head of an old man. He's had to use any old thing to build her.'

Joe took a peep over the side.

'Howly Saints, Snowy, Oi think we must be up about six miles. Oi can't see the earth.'

'What's the odds if we're up sixty ? It won't hurt any more from here than it would from a hundred yards, if we have a bust-up, an' anyway we'll have a longer fly f'r our money.'

Joe thought it all out for a bit, then the grin on his face, like a moonbeam gilding a mud barge, he announced :

'Oi'm not goin' ter be relegious when Oi get back ter earth ; Oi didn't think it cud be so blamed uncomfortable near hivin.'

So chuckling and jesting as they juggled with death, the citizen soldiers of Empire waited and watched, whilst McGlusky, happy as a schoolboy, worked like a demon. Suddenly, after a glance at his distance recorder, which was at his elbow, he shouted :

'We've done it, boys ; we've beat th' altitude record. That part o' ma eenvention's a' richt ; we'll be able ta get above the Boches' machines noo when we please, an'

top dog's th' winnin' dog in th' air. Noo haud y'r breath, A'm goin' ta tak' a dive; eef she dives as weel as she climbs, she's a bird. Noo dinna fash eef y'r innards get oop in y'r heads, as A dive; A'll stop her afore she hits th' earth—eef ma engine acts like a lady.'

'If the blessed old tea kettle he calls his engine acts like a cow instead of a cock kingfisher and I think its likely, Joe, we're goin' to sample some o' th' soil o' France.'

'Hope we hit a part that's been ploughed, Snowy.'

'Whatever we hit, Joe, we won't come up again till next spring, an' then we'll be vegetables.'

'Oi won't,' chortled Joe; 'Oi'll be a shamrock.'

'Yes, ye're green enough,' sniggered the sharp-shooter.

Mac's warning voice rang clear :

'Noo, buckies, keep y'r nerve.'

The 'ship' ducked her nose and, like a fish-hawk diving on its finny prey, shot downwards. The last thing they heard the big Scot say was :

'If Ginger was here, he'd be singin' f'r varra joy.'

The rush downwards took the breath out of Snowy, but he managed to gasp :

'An' if I was where Ginger is, I'd be singin' for joy too.'

Joe, between gasps for breath, pointing an accusing finger at McGlusky, choked out :

'Och, Snowy, uts a fallin' sthar he thinks he is.'

'Well—he's—fallin'—ain't he?' came the answer in a wheezing gurgle.

But McGlusky, if he heard, made no reply. He

sat strapped to his seat, his big feet braced against a wooden bar, his hands clenched on his driving gear, his head thrown far back, his crew of two seeming almost beneath his feet where they sat, so straight did he dive. In that moment his face was a sight for the old gods to revel in; every clean-shaven feature seemed hewn out of railroad iron; his clenched mouth was a red line only; his frowning brows lapped over his piercing eyes; his eagle nose seemed to curve even more than usual, by the pressure of the facial muscles; nothing about him moved, except his big nostrils, which opened and closed like bellows in action. Snowy, grand fighting man that he was, looked upward at the iron face, and muttered:

'He's good enough to go to heaven with.'

The next moment he thought he'd got there. Mac's fierce old eyes had flashed on to the instrument that told him at a glance how near the earth he was; his wrists worked like the wrists of a rider on the reins when a horse is fighting for its head; the levers did their part; the 'ship' rose by the nose and sank by the stern, until she floated on an even keel, and every joint in her whole outfit protested loudly, and for an instant Snowy thought her back was broken, and glanced over the side to see if the church with the sharp spire on it, which Ginger used to talk about, happened to be right underneath. It was, and he commented on the fact to Joe, by way of cheering the man from Argentina in case he was feeling neglected. One hasty glance was enough for Joe.

'Uts a church spire all right, Snowy, an' uts got an iron lightnin' conductor tin fate long sthuck straight up on th' top av ut. Och, Oi'm awful fond o' th'

church, but Oi don't want that end av ut ; th' lightnin' conductor's f'r you, Snowy.'

' Not f'r me, Joe ; I'm no Churchman, never was—I'm a fresh-water Baptist, I am. You stick to your church, Joe.'

' Oi will, if Oi fall on that blamed loightnin' conductor ; Oi'll——'

At that instant, something flashed up past the ' ship ' and burst above her ; there was a puff of white smoke, a gleam of wicked-looking red, yellow and heliotrope flame, and some odds and ends of shrapnel came whizzing round and past them like angry hornets.

' Glory be, we're in f'r a scrap ; this is dacent.'

Joe's voice rose in a whoop of sheer delight, and he depressed the muzzle of his gun whilst Snowy languidly unshipped his rifle, measured the distance with eyes that never erred, and shook his head at McGlusky sorrowfully.

' Too far f'r me, Old Timer ; Joe's gun might do something.'

' Can ye see any sojers doon there ? '

' Looks like a bunch away to the right.'

Bang—bang. A couple more shells exploded perilously near.

' Dinna fash about y'r gun, Joe, not yet ; maybe they'll send some o' their airmen up after us, then ye can get beesy. You, Snowy, get a couple o' bombs ready ; A'm goin' ter rise a wee ter spoil their gunners' range, then A'll run ower th' top o' that bunch o' sojers an' you put a wee bit acteevity inta 'em wi' th' bombs. A'm theenkin' they'll no' like it.'

' They haven't got ter like it,' cooed Snowy, ' but they've got ter get it.'

Mac stirred his engine; the 'ship' shivered, and plunged ahead, and as she did so, shells burst right in the space she had just left.

'Just missed goin' on to your pet spire, Joe.'

The Irish soldier chuckled.

'They're havin' a beanfeast down there, peltin' us with shells.'

'We'll return their hospitality in a minute or two. Jerusalem! ain't the Old Timer makin' this jam-tin scoot along! Now, Bill Kaiser, here's love an' kisses from the British army.'

Snowy leant far over the side to get a good view as he spoke, and loosed a bomb. He didn't waste time watching its flight through space, but deftly prepared for a second delivery. Joe, however, was watching.

'Be th' saints, Snowy, how do yez do ut? How do yez gauge time an' flight an' distance as ye do? Ye've dropped yer bomb right in the middle av a mob av German helmets, an' ye've splashed a lot av thim Boches in little bits about th' adjacent counthry. Ye're a wizard.'

'Make yer hand follow yer eye, an' it's easy,' was the sharpshooter's only comment on his comrade's eulogy. "Swing her round a point or two, Old Timer; that's it, now easy does it.'

McGlusky began to chant a hymn.

Snowy sped the second bomb.

'Somethin' droppin' from above for Bill Kaiser. Hope he gets it in person; it'll be a blessin' in disguise; but he won't think so,' remarked the famous Anzac. 'Better scoot a bit up nearer the golden stairs, Old Timer; we're goin' to hear from some of their big guns.'

‘Losh, eef ane o’ their big shells hits ye, Snowy, it’ll blaw ye through a rivet hole.’ Then, as he whirled upwards, he cried, ‘Man Joe, dae ye see ony sign o’ their aircraft comin’ oop after us? A’d like ta tempt ane or two into th’ empyrean f’r a fecht. A want ta ken hoo ma ship wull stand th’ racket o’ ma gun. Dinna be alarmed wi’ th’ contortions o’ ma ship; A’m goin’ ta mak’ her wobble about a bit, like as if she was drunk, next time a shell bursts near us; they’ll theenk we’re a lame duck, an’ coom oop ta capture us; thin Joe, dinna forget there’s a few acres o’ hell uninhabited, an’ dae y’r best ta populate ’em.’

A big shell burst so close to them that the rush of air carried away Snowy’s broad-brimmed Anzac hat, and a small splinter cut McGlusky’s cheek, bringing a stream of blood.

‘Have they got you, Old Timer?’

As he spoke, Snowy began to cast loose the straps that bound him to the machine, in order that he might clamber to the Scot.

‘Na, buckie, na, it’s jest naethin’, somethin’ a wee bit hard like dinged agin ma lug; haud fast, A’m goin’ ta wobble her.’

He let the machine sink a few yards, and then zig-zagging and wavering, he climbed upwards again; then he swung her suddenly and made her lurch and stagger like a badly beaten horse, and finally careened so far over that Joe yelled:

‘Och, sorr, if uts all the same to yerself, wud yez move on a bit before yez tip us all inter space; there’s a fince right below us now wid iron railin’s to ut; Oi’m not ambitious to be spoiked loike er butterfly to a boy’s book.’

And Snowy chortled : ' Fer God's sake, Old Timer, stop wobblin' her ; you'd make a whale seasick.'

A snarl broke from the cast-iron Scot.

' Weel, weel, A thocht A'd brocht twa men wi' ma ; y'r no' fit ta be oot o' th' nursery.'

Still, in deference to their wishes, he steadied his craft a bit, and made her go limping towards the British lines. So cleverly did he handle her that she looked from below like a badly stricken thing that would soon crack up, but if left alone might just manage to reach friendly territory before falling.

' She's a dandy ; she's behavin' like a well-bred lady, Snowy,' cooed Mac, his face, in spite of his wound, joyously alight like an eastern sunset with lots of red in it.

' Is she ?' responded the sardonic sharpshooter. ' Then I'll never take a well-bred lady to church ; a shop-girl who knows how to walk as if she wasn't half full of old rye whisky will do for me.'

' Here's a German ship coming down the wind hell for leather, sorr,' shouted Joe.

' Dinna swear, Joe, dinna swear, it's awfu' ta hear ye, mon ; get y'r gun in han' an' blaw Windy Wullie's folk ta blazes when A gie th' word.'

' Here comes another, Old Timer, crossin' th' wind, an', by gosh, there's a third tryin' to climb to get the sky-line of us.'

McGlusky swept his eyes round the horizon, and the lion light that his comrades knew leapt into his eyes.

' A cud rin f'r safety an' mak' th' British lines easy enough, buckies, but A ken y'r baith as eager as masel' ta see just wha' ma invention is capable o'. A'm only feared o' yin thing, laddies : th' material

A built her oot o' is no' new, an' yon gun *may* shake th' reeveets oot o' her; an' eef it does, we'll taste th' beetterness o' a whackin'. A'm glad Ginger is no' here; it wad be awfu' tae ha brocht th' wee mannie ta his death.'

The two hardy soldiers shot glances at each other and grinned silently. His own life or theirs did not matter, but even in such an hour nothing was too good for Ginger. Mac had been manoeuvring all the time; now he spoke in his crisp battle accents:

'Ye'll tak' y'r orders fra ma, Joe, an' fire yon gun when A gie th' word; ye, Snowy, wull use y'r rifle when ye wull, an' no' wait f'r orders; A ken ye know mair than A can tell ye aboot pickin' men off at the richt moment, an' which men ta pick, gunners or steersmen. Noo, Windy Bill Kaiser, ha' at ye, th' odds air jest richt, y'r three ta yin.'

He touched his levers; the craft shot away at full speed, and the transformation from the lame duck to the rushing cyclone must have puzzled the Kaiser's airmen not a little. Snowy was sitting, or rather lounging, as if half asleep, his rifle carelessly sloping across his knees; a less imposing warrior it would have been hard to conjure up; his eyelids had dropped until his steady, implacable eyes were almost hidden; nothing about him suggested the reckless daredevil of the stern Gallipoli fighting. Now and again, as he chewed his tobacco, he sent a jet of juice in methodical fashion over the side; once, with a twinkle in his eyes, he sent some of it on Mac's engine, and instantly there came a growl from the Scot.

'Snowy, ye waster, gin ye dae that again, A'll heave ma screw-wrench at th' head o' ye.'

And yet at the moment three ships of the air were bearing down upon them, bent on destruction. The German craft that had been racing down the wind seemed to take the eye of both the Scot and the sharp-shooter. Mac suddenly shot a quick glance at Snowy, who nodded comprehendingly. These two had sniped Turks for so many long months together, separated by a few yards of distance in their hiding-places, that they had somehow established a system of eye telegraphy conveying meanings without words. As Snowy received the veteran's quick glance, he gave his right shoulder a kind of hunch as if to see that every muscle was in working order, but the indolence of his pose never altered.

'Yon's a mon worth ca'in' a mon,' murmured the veteran; then he flung his weight on a lever, and his 'ship' careened until Joe thought he and his gun were going overboard, whilst Mac's 'ship' shot away on a new tack which brought the pilot of that German craft that was coming down the wind into such a position that Snowy could see him. Then the Anzac marvel-moved, not hurriedly but with supreme swiftness. His rifle went up and cracked all in a second; if he had aimed, he did it by some occult instinct. The shot satisfied him, for McGlusky saw the shadow of a smile creep slowly round the close-gripped lips.

'Hell's richer by yin,' he confided to his engine.

He asked no question of the Anzac; he only looked, and Snowy nodded casually; he had shot the breach-bolt back and discharged the empty cartridge case, and was watching for another shot. The German pilot had scarcely moved after Snowy's rifle spoke; his hands had just dropped from his machine to his

sides, and his chin had fallen on his chest ; that was all, but there was an ugly little lilac splotch of colour in the middle of his forehead, as if made by an indelible lead pencil. The German machine was running adrift ; her gunner *had* to take the pilot's place or court certain disaster ; he took a chance and crawled forward, and for a fraction of a minute he was visible to Snowy, and at that short range, short as the time was, it was more than enough.

'Got him,' shouted Joe, as the rifle snarled.

'Haud y'r yammerin',' snapped Mac. 'Snowy'd get a mon through a keyhole at that deestance.'

'Look out, Old Timer, or that chap up above will get us,' was Snowy's contribution to the conversation.

The German machine that had been climbing to get the drop on the British seemed to have reached an altitude that suited her commander, for he manoeuvred to get right over the Briton.

'That means bombs in a jiffy.'

This remark from Joe did not disturb McGlusky ; he was alternately watching the craft overhead and the one that had come across the wind, and he was handling his craft so as to keep the German from using his gun with effect. He had been zigzagging in all directions, yet there was method in every move ; now slow, now fast, anon reversing his engines, he proved himself a master tactician, for the reputation of his beloved machine was at stake.

'Ever play cricket, Joe?' drawled Snowy.

'Oi did. Why?'

'Well, be ready ter catch a bomb in a few shakes ; we're goin' ter get one.'

'Oi'd rather get out, an'—an' walk, if Oi was web-

futed; Oi wasn't thrained on bombs. Ye make all yer jokes in a graveyard, Snowy.'

The machine up above suddenly poised itself like a bird arrested on the wing; they could distinctly hear the reversal of her engine, and in that second of time Mac gave his engine all that was in it, and shot from under the overhanging Hun, and as he did so, down came a shower of bombs.

'Glory be,' gasped Joe; 'if we was there this minnit, we'd be in hivin.'

'Would we, Irish? Well, I think we'd be in fragments.'

McGlusky, working like a demon, let his comrades jibe at one another; he rose high, dived low, swept in a circle, and the Hun on the lower level missed with his gun, and the one above failed to connect with bombs. The third Hun had long since sunk to earth. Joe was beginning to think he'd never have a chance to try his luck, for Mac had given him no order; rifle and revolver bullets had come their way in plenty, but the luck of the game was with them. Snowy had a flesh wound in the thigh, and the blood was trickling down one of McGlusky's arms from what he termed 'a wee bit graze on th' collar-bone.' The Hun on the lower plane got weary of being out-manœuvred, especially as it was obvious that Mac was manœuvring his foes nearer and nearer to the British lines. Some signals passed between the two enemies, and then the lower machine made a rush to close in.

'Noo, Joe, noo's y'r chance; dinna flurry, buckie, blaw her ta blazes.'

Joe McNamara, wildest and most irresponsible of men in off hours, was congealed concentration in a

real crisis. He did not hurry, but he wasted no time ; up and down, now rising a little, now depressing, moved the muzzle of his gun, until he got the range he sought. Mac, following the movements of the muzzle with hawk eyes, saw the gun sit still.

‘ Away wi’ her ! ’

The next second, Joe’s gun belched destruction, the shell tearing through everything for nearly the whole length of the Hun, sending her headlong to ruin, but the discharge and the recoil made McGlusky’s ‘ ship ’ of scraps shake as if she had the ague ; rivets jumped from their places and the engine shifted on its bed, whilst her whole framework rattled and clattered like a rack full of dinner plates in a storm. Joe, who had flushed with triumph over the success of his shot, looked round with an air of amazement, and well he might, for McGlusky’s ‘ ship ’ rattled from stem to stem like dry peas in a pod. A sardonic chuckle broke from Snowy, then his soft voice came low and distinct :

‘ Good boy, Joe, you’ve blasted th’ Hun, an’ you’ve shivered us to pieces. Hope there ain’t a church spire beneath us.’

‘ Sew y’r mooth up, Snowy ; come ta me, ye an’ Joe help ma haud this dom eengine in its place ; ma eenvention’s a gran’ success, na yin can deespute it ; gin A can haud th’ blamed ship thegither till A lower her in th’ Breetish lines, we’ll hae a pattern ta build by wull mak’ us masters o’ th’ air f’r all time. But, buckies, A’m dootfu’ ; A’m theenkin’ Joe’s gun ha’ busted ivvery reevet in her oot o’ ’ts place. We ha’ tried her richt oot, an’ it’s been a gran’ trial ; A’m more than satisfied, buckies.’

'Och, an' so am Oi; f'r th' love av th' saints, thry an' let her down on a hay-rick; Oi'm fed up wid experiments.'

'Haud yer blether, Joe. Ye Irish ha' na mechanical pride at a'; y'r only gude f'r fechtin'; ye'll no' ha' th' honour o' comin' wi' ma on a trial trip again.'

'Ye can take yer oath on that, an' divil a bit will yez perjure yerself,' retorted Joe, whilst he and Snowy were clinging to the engine that was bucking about like a newly branded steer.

Slowly they crept earthwards, behind their own lines, whilst the last of the Germans made off to report that the English had a new machine that rattled like a musical box, but was unbeatable in a fight, even against odds. Yard by yard Mac coaxed the groaning, quivering derelict nearer mother earth, talking to it, humouring it, blessing and blaspheming it all in a breath.

'Wish Oi cud get him on a gramophone record now,' chortled Joe. 'Oi'd go on th' halls wid ut, an' nivver wud Oi nade ter do another turn o' hard work afther th' war.'

Fifty feet from the ground, Mac broke out into an adoring ecstasy of admiration.

'Buckies, she's just gran', she's a jewel, she's great, she's——'

Then everything gave way at once. Snowy said afterwards her bottom tumbled out. Joe swore her sides caved in. Mac vowed her back broke. The only point they agreed on was that they came those last fifty feet in a hurry and landed hard. Snowy was pulled out of the débris cursing softly, but fluently, and when the padre asked him if he wasn't ashamed

of himself for using such language after coming out of the jaws of death, he replied :

' No, padre, I'm not ; I'm goin' to teach every word of it to my parrot when I get home to Australia. You'd swear yourself, padre, if you'd been up experimenting in a jam-tin with wings on it, and—and a mad Scotchman for company.'

McGlusky had fared the worst of the lot : he had landed in an extra deep shell-hole, and Joe's gun and part of his beloved engine had rolled on him.

' Are ye busted, Old Timer ? ' queried the Flamingo, who dragged the veteran tenderly into a sitting posture, with his back against a tree stump. Mac took time to think it over and explore himself, then he mumbled, for his mouth was clogged with gravel :

' A'm no' busted, Flamingo, but yon eengine was na saft ta fa' on a body, an' th' gun was a wee bit hard ; it dinged holes all ower ma—ha' ye seen Ginger ? '

CHAPTER IV

GINGER TURNS MALCONTENT

WHEN Ginger had departed from McGlusky, his whole being was outraged; two men had been preferred before him by the man he had so long idolized; neither of those men was more experienced in aerial warfare than himself; therefore, from his hasty and passionate viewpoint, McGlusky must have considered him less than they in point of nerve, courage and resource. He knew that mere brainless, bulldog courage did not appeal to the Old Timer, who, though a Berserk himself when the fighting fury was upon him, yet always kept a certain amount of artful canniness up his sleeve. The youngling in his hot and jealous rage did not pause to think that it was the Scot's great love and high estimate of his, Ginger's, future importance to the world, that made him loth to risk a life so young, and in McGlusky's eyes, so full of promise. The reason for the Scot's selection of the other two in preference to himself seemed plain to Ginger.

'Och, Oi'm no good in a toight place; he thinks Oi'm a quitter; Oi'll nivver spake to 'm again, dead or aloive.'

He had gone to his dug-out and packed his kit, and then, rifle in hand and bayonet on thigh, he had marched

straight to his old Gallipoli company commander, and reported himself for duty in the trenches

'Thought you were with the Old Timer in the aerial service.'

'Oi was, sorr, but Oi wasn't fit f'r ut; didn't loike ut; me—me nerve wasn't sthrong enough.'

'Never knew anything wrong with your nerve.'

'Ut's gettin' off th' ground does it, sorr. Oi'm all right on me feet, but Oi wasn't built f'r a birrd.'

'Don't think I'd fancy it myself, lad—did the Old Timer send you to me?'

'He did, sorr; he's got Snowy, an' Oi'm ter do me best ter take his place sharpshootin'.'

The company commander, who knew the whole bunch of McGlusky's little coterie of intimates, fixed steady eyes on Ginger. He had sampled that young man's skill at dodging the truth in times past.

'Funny game to put a chap at who has lost his nerve, my lad.'

'Oi can't shoot as well as Snowy or the Auld Timer, sorr, but Oi can run rings round th' Flamingo, an' he's a sharpshooter.'

'Haven't had a row with the Old Timer, have you, eh?'

'Divil a worrd av a row, sorr; he just said to me: "Clear out to th' trenches; Oi've got th' min that'll suit me wid me machine," an' Oi'm here, sorr.'

'All right, get busy; you know your way about.'

'Right-ho, sorr.'

As Ginger moved off, the company commander said to his veteran sergeant-major:

'That kid Ginger has turned up asking for a sharpshooter's job—ripping fine little sharpshooter he is,

too—but there's a screw loose somewhere: his face is as white as buttermilk, and his eyes are fighting mad; just keep an eye on him, and see he don't do any damn fool thing. I'll get the truth out of McGlusky later on.'

'Bet you didn't get it out of Ginger, sir, if he had anything to hide.'

'Know the little devil too well to waste time trying.' Then with a swift laugh, for he and the sergeant had been schoolmates: 'Do you remember the yarn he pitched the provost marshal over two missing hams at Gaba Tepe?'

'I do; I jolly well had cause to; I nearly lost a stripe over that, for I was supposed to look after the shipment of hams; I heard him give his evidence, and though I knew him, I'd have believed him that day. He was a statue of innocence—in front of the provost marshal.'

'I never knew the rights of it, sergeant. Did he loot those hams?'

'No, but he knew who did, and the lies he told cleared the looters. He—he lied like an angel, and the yarn he told about the Turkish prisoners who escaped, grabbing a ham each and bolting into the darkness, was perfect; the way he told it an' acted it for the benefit o' th' provost.'

'Perhaps it wasn't lies after all, sergeant.'

'Wasn't it, sir? Why, the young sweep hid the hams for the looters—an' where do you think he hid 'em, sir?'

'The Lord knows.'

'Right in the provost marshal's own tent! He crawled in, scooped a hole in the dirt, an' buried 'em

there, an' every time th' provost marshal sat down to write dispatches, he was sittin' on ham, an' didn't know it.'

'The young swine. How did you find out?'

'Watched *him*. I knew he'd have his share of that ham if it was in camp; he's always hungry; saw him creep into the tent and dig it up whilst the provost was at mess one night.'

'You never reported that capture, sergeant.'

'I didn't, sir. What was the good? I'd had my bullying for losing it, and the thing had blown over.'

'Sergeant?'

'Yes, sir.'

'What became of those hams ultimately?'

'I—I fergit, sir; never did have any memory f'r hams'; and the sergeant went off to shepherd Ginger whilst the company officer watched him with twinkling eyes. He knew the sergeant would bear no malice to Ginger over the old ham incident, for was it not the law and the dictum of the prophets amongst Anzacs that man might do many unlawful things to strangers, but the Anzac who betrayed an Anzac in ever so slight a manner, even if the other was his personal enemy, was a pariah dog and unclean at that?'

The old group were as busy filling heaven with Germans as they had of old time been busy making angels of Turks, when Ginger sauntered amongst them by way of a communication trench.

'Hullo, birrd boy!' shouted the Flamingo, and was so astonished by the reception his friendly greeting received that he put his head above the parapet and narrowly missed getting it shot off, for Ginger turned a white face to him, and let off a mouthful of bitter

language that was a disgrace to him, yet there were few people on earth whom Ginger liked better than the Flamingo.

'Why—kid, what's been bitin' you?' was all the Flamingo could say in response.

'You sew your mouth up an' let me alone. Which was Snowy's pitch when he was here?'

'That shell-hole just beyond th' trench; it angles th' German trench in front of us a bit, but you can only get in and out after dark, an' when you are in you've got to lie stiller'n a rat. Snowy made it so hot for the Boches from there, they've got a bunch of crack shots watching it, an' some of those Boches can shoot—got one of our lieutenants right where you're standin' ten minutes ago; he wanted to take a snap look at their line, an' I'll swear his eyes wasn't above the parapet a third of a second before he got hit an' went west.'

Ginger was looking at the shell-hole, and measuring the short distance with his eye, when a soldier known as Sunny Jim, a good-natured new arrival from Australia, whose description of himself was that his redeeming features were unfailing good nature and hatred of work, spoke up in a friendly, warning way, he being an utter stranger to Ginger:

'New to this game, ain't you, kid?'

Ginger took him in, boots and all, with a glance, and his lips snarled:

'Yes, Oi'm new, an' Oi'm feared near ter death; Oi ain't had yer expayrience av bloody war, but if Oi hev ter die, Oi hope Oi won't take the mim'ry av yer silly grin wid me.'

Sunny Jim looked pained, and well he might, for

Ginger's reception of his friendly overtures was not cordial, to say the best of it. The rest of the bunch looked at Ginger in keen amazement and unqualified disapproval; this was a new Ginger to them, and they preferred the old, laughing, gibing, prank-playing, singing pal of Gallipoli.

'The Old Timer ought to give you a taste of his belt again; it'd do you no harm,' asserted one.

A white, twitching face was instantly turned upon him, and a sneering, nasty voice said:

'Och, an' wud he? There ain't wan av yez that'd do ut—twicet—an' him least av all.'

The padre, who had a habit of eternally poking about in the hottest corners, had heard pretty well all that had taken place.

'Let him alone, boys; something's gone almighty wrong with Ginger, or—he's possessed of a devil.'

'He'll get this devil kicked out of him before he's back with us long, padre.'

The padre, in passing, gave the lad a hearty smack on the back, and cried in his ever cheerful voice:

'Glad to have you back, sonny.'

'Oi can dust me own tunic, padre; Oi'm not needin' a lady's maid yet, sorr.'

The sneer that accompanied the words brought a flush to the padre's weather-beaten face, but his eyes were full of pain as he looked the young soldier squarely in the eyes. Ginger did not avoid the priest's gaze, and what the padre read in the beautiful big Irish eyes made him draw a long, quivering breath.

'Be aisy wid him ter-day, an' patient, boys; lave him ter time an'——' He threw his right hand upward

in a gesture of such simple dignity that the wildest blade there was awed.

'I didn't think it was in the pup,' growled Flamingo.

Ginger was still watching the shell-hole; it seemed to fascinate him. Sunny Jim, who as usual was shirking work, butted in once more.

'It's no use lookin' at that shell-hole; Snowy's th' only man who could live there, an' he only lived because he was quicker'n any Hun.'

'Ter blazes wid Snowy an' you too. Wait till y'r weaned before ye give advice, an' thin give ut ter thim that wants ut. You an' yer Snowy!'

He sauntered to the end of the trench, where a broken quick-firing gun was standing on end, put his foot on it, and vaulted out of the trench and dived for the shell-hole like a rabbit for its burrow. Nothing saved him but the utter madness of his exploit; if he had lifted his head for a moment above the parapet to take a look before he leapt, he would not have lived a minute. The German sharpshooters had been used to dealing with a sane man, and an extraordinarily cute man in that shell-hole; they were unprepared for an exhibition of lunacy, but as it was, Ginger had scarce flattened his lithe body in the shell-hole in his headlong dive, ere bullets cut the shell-hole edges at every conceivable angle. He did not attempt to move; he just lay there; but his bitter gibes came floating to the British trenches.

'Och, an' indade, th' great Snowy's th' only man that cud live here—thin Oi'm dead.'

'Ye will be if ye move an eyelid; f'r th' love av Mary kape still, Ginger dear.'

It was the voice of the Flamingo pleading almost piteously.

'Yez lave me to ut, an' kape y'r mouth f'r y'r rations,' was the brutal retort.

The sergeant-major came on the scene, and he adopted no wheedling tactics; he trusted to discipline.

'Say you, Ginger,' he snapped, 'do you hear me?'

'Oi do, sergeant-major.'

'Well, if you move, I'll give you pack drill till your d—— back breaks. You lie doggo.' There was a moment or two of silence, and the non-com. whispered: 'That's fixed him—he's too good a soldier to disobey an order.'

Then came Ginger's voice freighted with a sneer.

'Sergeant-major?'

'Yes.'

'Hev yez got any h-a-m?'

The whole trench exploded into a big roar of laughter at the non-com.'s expense, for all knew the tale of the two hams. Even the non-com. grinned, as he went down the trench keeping his wise head well below the parapet.

'What did he mean about the ham?' queried Sunny Jim who, not being of the old brigade, was in the dark.

'You ask the sergeant-major,' chortled 'Prospector' Brown, and again the trench chuckled.

Ginger, in his long, shallow shell-hole, knew that for a long time he must not show as much as an eyelash; he knew also that in time his exploit would reach Mc-Glusky's ears, and he was keen to prove that he not only had as much nerve as the famous Snowy, but as much wit and resource as well. Turning carefully over

on his back with his rifle beside him, he filled his pipe and lit it, looking up at the sky as he smoked, and as he looked he saw McGlusky's aircraft fighting the three Huns. He watched the battle in the air phase by phase; sometimes the airmen got out of his view as the circle of fight enlarged, but they came back, and as the unequal battle in the blue wore on, Ginger's chest heaved, and he began to sob, for his love for the veteran was marrow deep.

'Och, why did yez send me away from yez, sorr, loike a lame dog? Oi'm as good as thim wans wid yez. Glory be, he's got wan, ut's comin' down.'

He shouted the last words, and an answering cheer came from the British trench where the men were watching the sky-fight gleefully.

'Is it th' Old Timer up there, Ginger?' called Flamingo.

'Och, pawn yer throusies an' buy some sinse, Flamingo. Av coorse ut's him; who else cud foight like that but him?'

'That sounds a little more like our old Ginger, eh?' laughed the padre to Flamingo.

'Sounds good to hear him like that, padre. Wonder what bit him; he was plumb mad a while ago.'

By and by the air-fight moved its zone of action more over the German lines, and Ginger could not follow it, as it was out of his horizon; then his quick wit began to work; he knew the men in the British trench were watching the battle, because he could hear their remarks on its various phases, so he argued that the Germans would be watching also, and might therefore forget him for a time. He determined to chance it. Inch by inch, with infinite caution, he got

his eyes over the edge of the shell crater. No bullet pinged near him. He searched the enemy line carefully for a German sniper, and at last he saw what he searched for—a foe cunningly hidden from the British trench was visible to him from the shell-hole, a sniper, doubtless the man Snowy had tried to get and failed. Ginger's hand crept slowly down and felt for his rifle. Slowly, an inch or two at a time, he drew it up until the supreme moment arrived when he must throw it forward and aim and fire. He knew it must all be done with one movement, and that he must get back to safety as quickly as a diver duck takes water, or be potted himself by some other sniper. He was quite cool and collected now; his rage against the man who he thought had supplanted him in the heart of McGlusky gave way to the all-absorbing passion of the man-hunt which makes tiger-hunting seem a tame pastime. He flung the barrel forward, fired, and the Hun sniper sprawled out of his hiding-place and clawed spasmodically at the earth, and Ginger's head disappeared from view as a dozen bullets zipped past the spot where his red head had been shining like a glorified peony.

'Good for you, sonny; Snowy cudn't have done it better,' yelled the Flamingo.

'Aw, Shnowy! Yez make me tired wid yer Shnowy. Oi'll bate th' socks off av *him* before Oi come back to yer auld trinch,' was the ungracious retort that Ginger flung back, and that remark let a little light into the quick brain of the padre, for he said to Flamingo:

'Ginger's jealous of Snowy; he thinks McGlusky has jilted him, but I know better.'

'Why, Ginger used to love Snowy, padre.'

' So he does now ; only he's bursting with jealousy. It's uncanny the way that boy worships the Old Timer.'

There was a short spell of quietness in the German front trench, and then over came a bomb, hurled at the shell-hole where the young sharpshooter lay, but the distance was too great, and the bomb exploded harmlessly ; half a dozen others followed in quick succession, but none reached the lad's hiding-place. Warning shouts told him what was going on ; he was on his back again, smoking his short wooden pipe and searching the skies eagerly for signs of Mc-Glusky's ' ship,' but the air-fight had drifted out of his very limited range of vision. One bomb, hurled by a strong and an expert hand, rolled pretty close to the shell-hole ; it was a time-fuse explosive, and as it rolled after lobbing, the Flamingo yelled :

' Lie doggo, Ginger, doggo !'

' Och, bite yer whiskers off inside. Think Oi can't play bow-wow widout you leadin' me wid a sthring ?'

' Don't lift yer head, they're trainin' a machine-gun on yer shell-hole,' shouted a strange voice.

' Who's spakin' thim words av wisdom ?' jeered Ginger.

' Sunny Jim,' came the reply.

' Och, is ut that veteran sojer ? Why are yez wastin' yer wisdom on me, Sunny Jim ? Ye ought ter be at head-quarters enlightenin' th' commander-in-chief on what ter do wid *his* head.'

A gurgle of laughter rippled along the trench at Sunny Jim's discomfiture.

' Don't mind him ; th' young beast's in a divil av a temper,' muttered the padre. ' I'll put the gloves on with him the first time I get him behind the lines for

this,' and the men who knew what the padre could do with the gloves smiled and pitied Ginger.

A minute or two later, the padre, with something wrapped up in the remnants of an old shirt, was balancing himself for a throw.

'Ginger?'

'Yes, padre.'

He knew all the voices of the old brigade as well as he knew their names and *noms de guerre*.

'I'm going to try and throw something to you; if it lobs on you, don't jump and expose yourself.'

'If uts a testamint, Oi've no toime f'r readin', padre. Oi'm—Oi'm studyin' German at prisent.'

Then the padre made his cast, and a parcel fell on Ginger's stomach. Opening it carefully, he found a rough trench-made periscope, which would enable him to watch the Germans without exposing himself.

'Got it, Ginger?'

'Yes, padre. Who made ut?'

'Sunny Jim—made it in one av his many abstractions from duty.'

'Tell him to have two fits an'—an' make somethin' useful.'

'You snarlin' little baste, I'll——'

'Thank yez, padre, f'r that exhibition av th' soothin' power av y'r religion.'

The padre's reply was lost in the rattle of the German machine-gun that had been trained on the shell-hole, and for a long time it rained lead, but the enemy couldn't get the required elevation to drop bullets into the shell-hole. Ginger had turned over on his stomach, and in spite of his derogatory remarks concerning Sunny Jim's handiwork, he was using the

periscope, and as he explained later, his rifle, 'lay adjacent.' 'Wan av thim squareheads is sure to have a peep whin the gun stops,' was his comment, and one poor wretch did, and Ginger's bullet bored through his face; he had evidently forgotten that the shell-hole angled his trench. A whole-hearted hurrah rang out from the British.

'Bully f'r you, kid!' bawled 'Kurnalpi.'

'You can knock spots off the Flamingo sharpshootin',' cried 'Prospector' Brown.

'Aw, the Flamingo! Are ye manin' him that was crossed in love?'

The whelp heard the laughter this brutal sally provoked, but he did not see the flush of pain on the Flamingo's homely face, or he'd have bitten the top off his too ready tongue.

Just then the Germans opened rifle fire all along their trenches on the full length of the Anzac line, and in addition reserves in the same trench threw bombs; they could reach the trench, though they could not quite reach Ginger's shelter. Machine-guns, posted at points of vantage, spluttered lead. The British accepted the challenge and sent back bullets and bombs, and they threw their bombs better, as might have been expected from a race of cricketers. Ginger watched the fierce duel through his periscope, and then amused himself taking what he termed 'wing shots' at any arm he saw hurling a bomb, and he made good practice. It was not often that he saw a hand and part of an arm above the opposite parapet, but now and again some enemy, carried away by the zest of battle, did expose a bit of his anatomy as he hurled a bomb, and on such occasions Ginger got busy.

No one knew better than he himself that he had not Snowy's unerring instinct for a snap-shot, still he did not do badly. The fight was fierce whilst it lasted, but the rifle and machine-gun fire died down at length; then the Germans, thinking to take the British by surprise, came over the parapet with the bayonet. They were very brave, those fellows, or very weary of life. Out blazed the British rifles, and few if any snapped faster than Ginger's; enemies who were racing forward with bombs ready to hurl into the British trench were his speciality, and at that short range few on whom he pulled the trigger, exposed as they were, travelled very far. The German rush faded away to a frazzle, and those who escaped bolted back to their trench, but as they turned to run, one of them hurled a bomb at Ginger's shell-hole, and a heap of stones and dirt flew in all directions. As soon as the Germans had got to shelter again, the Flamingo cooed softly, but got no reply, so he called :

'Are ye kilt, kid?'

'Oi am, Oi'm kilt an' buried, an' Oi'm listenin' to th' voice av an angel this minnit.'

'What are yez doin', Ginger?'

'Faith, Oi'm pickin' bits av gravel out av me anatomy, Flamingo, so don't be axin' ondacent questions, an' ye'll get no ondacent particulars.'

'He's all right, don't worry,' was the padre's comment.

'How th' divil did he escape that bomb, padre?'

'Since you're on such familiar terms wid th' divil, Flamingo, ask *him*, for I can't tell you.'

By and by came Ginger's voice again :

'Have yez a dhrop av wather ye can spare? If ye

have, chuck ut to me, Oi'm most full av dirt. Oi loike France, but Oi don't loike atin' ut.'

Sunny Jim, who was nearest the end of the trench, picked up a stone bottle full of water and tossed it into the shell-hole, and the language that came from that direction told that Ginger had got it, or it had got him.

'Cudn't yez throw a canvas wather bottle? Think Oi ain't got stones enough druv inta me carcass by that bomb?' A pause followed, and Ginger's voice, full of sarcasm, demanded: 'What jaynius was ut pelted me wid a stone wather bottle.'

'It was me—Sunny Jim—I—I didn't think.'

Back came the answer in a tired drawl;

'Och, ut was you, was ut? Oi moight have known ut was th' act av a—a veteran.' Ginger took a drink and cleaned some of the dirt away, and again he began his gibing: 'Och, Sunny Jim, are yez one av twins?'

'No; why?'

'Oi thought yez was, because ye have only half an intellect.'

It would have taken worse jeering than that to upset Sunny Jim's placid disposition, for, as the padre declared, a mule might kick him into a hole, but a team of mules couldn't kick him into a bad temper. He held out a vocal olive branch almost at once to the sneering little sweep who was sharpshooting.

'Say, Ginger?'

'Och, the veteran again.'

'Th' C.O. was here just now, an' he said you'd done fine; said you was a better shot than Flamingo.'

'Give th' C.O. me cyard, an' thank him f'r nothing

Didn't Flamingo make his reputation in Gallipoli by shootin' a mule in mistake f'r a Tur-rk ?'

A howl of merriment broke from the Anzacs of the old brigade, for in the very early days of Gaba Tepe Flamingo, waking one night from a half-doze in the trench, and seeing something move, had laid out a mule, and some wag had made a song about it, which the whole army corps sang until they knew the Flamingo better.

'Ginger's got a wasp under his tongue to-day; he'd sting his own mother,' was all Flamingo said in reply to the merry gibes his comrades levelled at him.

By and by a watcher, peeping through a periscope, saw the Irish imp toss the offending stone bottle out of the shell-hole, and instantly three or four German bullets splashed against it. Then, in sheer bravado, the youngster, lying prone in his hole, began to sing. He improvised things concerning the Kaiser, and fitted them to Irish melodies, and there wasn't a verse in the lot that the Kaiser would have had framed if he'd heard them. The Germans shouted back many things that were far from complimentary, for many of them had been in England as waiters in clubs and hotels, and the things they said concerning some British celebrities would have made a bushranger blush. Nothing daunted, Ginger sang the deeds of the Germans in Belgium and northern France, the ravishing of vestals, the befouling of matrons, the butchering of babes, and the murdering of women and children at sea, and at the end of every verse he taunted the Germans with a refrain that reflected upon their courage as soldiers in action: 'Kamerad, Kamerad, give mercy to th' Hun, we only butcher babies, Mистер

Atkins, here's me gun. Kamerad, Kamerad, Oi'm me mother's only son, Oi've no stummick f'r fair fightin', an' Oi'm too damn tired ter run.' In the end the enemy turned a machine-gun on his shell-hole again, and Ginger was happy. After dark he wriggled along the ground and rolled himself into the British trench, and nearly succeeded in getting himself bayoneted.

CHAPTER V

McGLUSKY IS BANISHED THE AERIAL SERVICE

LYING in a field hospital, not far from one another, McGlusky, Joe and Snowy were comparing notes, after their aerial adventure.

'Feel very bad, Old Timer?'

'No' so bad, conseederin', Snowy.'

'No bones bruk, Oi hope, sorr?' This from Joe.

'Na, na, buckie, naething wrang wi' ma worth speakin' aboot. A've yin lump in th' sma' o' ma back aboot th' size o' a watter melon, an' yin mair on ma head, an' twa o' ma reeb's ha' a bit kink in 'em where th' gun fell on ma, an' A've a few burns an' bruises an' bits o' cuts, but naething tae fash aboot. Hoo's it wi' yersel's, laddies?'

'Nothing wrong with me, Old Timer; I'm in clover; anyway, I'm in cotton wool from head to foot. Say, Old Timer, got any more inventions in your head, or did the landing shake 'em all out?'

'Hoo is 't wi' you, Joe? A'm hopin' y'r no' tired o' flyin'; y'r no' a bad gunner.'

'Sorr?'

'Aye, buckie.'

'Oi'm nivver goin' in an airship till Oi'm born again, an' thin only if Oi'm hatched. Th' air's th' place f'r birds, not men.'

'Weel, A'll be dommed! A didn'a theenk a wee bit bump cud frecht a' the ambeetion oot o' sae gude a fechter. A'm theenkin' ye young asses air ower saft.'

The padre came in and sat down for a chat, for all three adventurers were favourites of his. As soon as he satisfied himself that none of them were damaged beyond repair, he started a whimsical story, for he was far too wise in the ways of the world to try and ram religion down the throats of men of that kind.

'Ha' ye seen ma wee laddie; ha' ye seen Ginger, padre?' interposed McGlusky.

'Faith, an' I have, Old Timer; seen him and heard the limb of the evil one too.'

'Ye mauna misca' ma wee mannie, padre; ye dinna unnerstan' him; he's no' a limb o' Sautan; he's a noble wee soul.'

'Did you ever hear him curse? I don't mean just the silly swear words that men get into the habit of using, but real, blistering, bad cursing.'

'A canna say A ha'. Ginger is maistly varra discreet in his language; noo an' again he fa's frae grace, but no' as a habit; there's mair gude ta th' square inch in that laddie than ye'll find ta the square mile in maist men, padre.'

A derisive grin strayed amongst the bandages on Joe's wounded face, whilst a wink that had a volume in it was contributed by Snowy.

'Ginger must have learnt a lot during the few hours he has been away from you then, McGlusky,' murmured the padre.

'Ye'll no' mak' ma believe ma wee mannie ha' deesgraced himsel', padre.'

'With his tongue and his infernal temper he has,

but he's covered himself with glory with his hands.'

'A ken weel ye never lee, padre; y'r too brave ter lee; but ye maun be mistaken.'

Then the padre, who knew the big Scot was aching for news of the youngling, told of Ginger's arrival in the trenches and of his deeds in the shell-hole, and he cut out a good deal that would have discredited the Irish lad. When the recital was over—and few men could tell a tale of heroism or humour as well as the padre—Snowy interpolated in his dry way:

'Game little blighter. I know that shell-hole, Old Timer, and the man who went there in daylight and did what th' kid's done ought to have the V.C. an' all th' other bally fixings f'r adornin' a soldier's tunic. Always knew he was built right.'

'Oi,' said Joe, 'Oi wish Oi'd been there ter take down thim songs he made up about the Germans durin' th' fightin'. Cud yez repate wan or two av 'm, padre, or do yez disremember 'm?'

'I'm tryin' to forget 'em, Joe, and if I ever hear of you asking Ginger to remember 'em, I'll set ye a penance that will make ye wish ye'd never seen France.'

'A'm hopin', padre, y'r no' suggestin' ma wee mannie was no' decent. He's a gran' poet whin th' fit's on him, an' A'm theenkin' ye've mistook poetic licence f'r th' ither kind o' licence.'

This came from Mac in a menacing growl, and the glances he shot at the padre were not friendly.

'Let's put it down to poetic frenzy, Mac, and say no more about it, but—I hope Ginger will stick to prose in the future.'

After the padre had taken his departure, McGlusky watched for the coming of Ginger, and as hours length-

ened into days, and the freckled face and red head never appeared amongst the visitors, both Snowy and Joe noticed the hungry light growing fiercer and fiercer in the Scottish eyes, and when the time for visitors passed both soldiers saw the veteran lie for hours with knitted brows, glaring into space, and Snowy whispered to Joe:

'When I'm mended and feel well, I'm going to put the gloves on with that kid.'

And Joe, who was next door to a professional himself in the art of boxing, and knew what an artist the sharpshooter was, felt sure there were stormy days ahead for Ginger, and he rejoiced in the knowledge, but McGlusky never again asked for news of his protégé from any visitor, but took to religion and spent most of his time thereafter reading his old Bible bound in kangaroo-hide. One day the padre calling, found him asleep with the open book on the blanket beside him, and one big rough finger seemed to mark a text. The padre, leaning carefully over so as not to disturb the sleeping giant, perused the verse, and read the bitterest words that man ever penned: 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child.' The padre went on tip-toe, and Joe and Snowy, catching sight of his face, exchanged glances full of meaning. By and by Snowy said softly:

'Ever see the padre box, Joe?'

'No.'

'I have.'

There was silence for a good while, then Snowy spoke again:

'If you're up on your pins before I am, Joe, you

hunt Ginger up, and ask him what his idea of hell is. I'll bet my trousers he'll tell you it's a place with a priest and a pair of boxing gloves in it. I saw the padre thump the socks off a chap in Cairo for belting a donkey with three strands of twisted fencing wire, which he'd made instead of using a whip.'

'Bad cess to th' blackguard! Was the donkey much damaged, Snowy?'

'It was, it was cut all over, so was the chap who used the fencing wire—when the padre had done with him, 'nd there wasn't a bit o' skin left on th' padre's knuckles.' Then, as if following a certain train of thought, he continued: 'Joe, Ginger's goin' ter get what's comin' to him; th' padre had th' same look on his face just now that he had when he walked up to the big stiff in Cairo, and near shook his head off with a straight left that made th' fellow's nose look like a Dutch tulip after you've trod on it. Th' padre can hit as hard as Les Darcy, only quicker—yes, Ginger's goin' ter get what's comin' to him.'

And Ginger did.

The padre met him coming from his dug-out.

'A word with you, my son.'

That was all he said, but the words seemed to come from between his teeth, like grit.

'Oi'm not needin' spiritual comfort at presint, sorr.'

There was insolence in tone and manner, for Ginger had deteriorated sadly of late.

'It's not spiritual comfort I'm going to offer.'

'Oi'm not needin' advice ayther, sorr.'

'I'm not going to offer that.'

'What thin—sorr?'

'You asked me at Lemnos Island on our way home

from Gallipoli to give you lessons with the gloves when I had time—I have time now.'

Soldier and priest were looking grimly into each other's eyes, both of the same blood, the same faith, and both bitterly angry. Ginger's sneering voice came at last.

'Glad you've so much toime—sorr, Oi haven't.'

A cold smile flickered round the padre's mouth; his eyebrows went up.

'Ah—a—coward.'

Then he turned on his heel.

'Yez loi, padre or no padre.'

'What?'

The one word flashed out like lightning from a thunder-cloud.

'Oi'm ready to prove Oi'm no coward—sorr.'

'Step this way then.'

Ginger knew what lay in front of him, for he also had seen the padre deal with the brute who had ill-treated the donkey in Cairo, but he went, and he did not take any illusions with him. There was a little clump of trees behind the lines, which the padre used as a sort of chapel wherein he "confessed" those of his flock who sought grace before battle. It was a spot every soldier, Protestant or Freethinker, respected and treated as holy ground, so no one intruded as the pair moved in that direction. The padre threw a set of light gloves on the grass in an open space well screened from view by trees. They were old gloves that had seen much service. The padre removed his upper garments, and his spare, sinewy figure stood revealed. Ginger removed his top hamper and his spurs. The padre motioned him to take his choice of gloves, but

the diabolical spirit of raillery was seething in Ginger's brain. With a lofty gesture he declined the invitation ; his lip curled, and he said :

'Yerself first, sorr, th' Church takes th' pick av everything.'

A quick glance the padre shot at him in reply. Then he bent his fine head as if to an emperor, and said :

'I thank you for your courtesy—soldier—the Church will repay.'

They pulled on the gloves and faced each other, the padre with the superb ease which comes of perfect self-confidence, Ginger with the reckless air of a lad who knew he had as much chance of beating his opponent as he had of finding the North Pole, and yet meant to prove his blood.

'Sorr ?'

'Well ?'

'Is ut a—a lesson, or a foight ?'

A flicker of a smile twisted the padre's lips at the mere thought of a 'fight' between himself, the perfect master of science, and this raw novice.

'Ye shall judge of that at the finish—soldier—in the meantime do your best and your worst.'

The Irish lad did not fail to note that the padre had not once addressed him as 'Ginger'—the old familiar and friendly sobriquet of the trenches.

'Ready—soldier.'

'Ready an' waitin', sorr.'

Bing—something that might have been a hive of hornets bent on business, shot from the padre's left shoulder and landed on Ginger's nose, and he sat down on the grass without the least ceremony. Lots

of men had sat down just like that under similar circumstances; even the great Jim Hall, Australia's wonderful professional, had once done so. Ginger did not know this, and if he had, it would not have helped him very much. He felt for his nose with more loving tenderness than he had ever displayed in his life before, and was astonished to find it was still on the front of his face. Then he arose and his eyes were glinting. The padre seemed absorbed in the scenery; he drifted forward as Ginger put his hands up, and without an effort—or apparent effort—he struck again, and once again Ginger's nose and that magic left hand connected. This time Ginger measured his full length on the grass. Both blows had hurt, but the perfect ease with which his punishment had been served out hurt more than the punches. He felt he was being treated with contempt, and the thought roused him to fury, as is the case mostly when a game greenhorn meets a master of ring-craft. He lay gasping for a full half minute, then he scrambled up and rushed like a tiger, letting go both hands as he travelled at his opponent's body; he made two big holes in the air, but he did not touch the padre, who had calmly side-stepped him, and stood in a musing attitude as if pondering over the frailty of poor human nature. As Ginger turned and saw the lean, indolent figure, and the calmly contemptuous face, he had a brain-storm—he rushed, and a long left hand like a section of an iron park paling brought him to a sudden standstill. He rushed again, and ducked his red head as he did so, and a right handed clip under the chin made him stand straight once more. But if he was nothing else, he was game. He rushed a few steps,

then with the nimbleness of youth, he leapt on one side, and then instantly hurled himself right against his enemy, and began pounding with left and right at ribs and stomach. But every swinging blow was stopped by a bony elbow, every straight half arm punch at the belly found a rigid forearm in the way. Do what he would, he could not break through that perfect guard, and the padre did not give back one inch; he stood his ground and checked the storm of blows which Ginger's perfect physical condition enabled him to rain in. The scientific defence crazed Ginger, but the half pitiful, half-mocking expression on the lean bronzed face of the padre nearly sent him amuck. A word slipped from between his clenched teeth; it was not the sort of word you find on the head-lines in copy-books. Instantly a swift jolt under the chin sent him reeling back a yard, then a long left thudded on his lips—he repeated the word—and the blow was repeated too, and a calm voice said:

'Soldier, it's not manners to speak with your mouth full.'

Again in sheer defiance Ginger's mouth opened, and his bruised lips framed themselves to utter the same expression, but this time he was knocked clean off his feet, and rolled over and over like a rabbit that has got the first barrel and got it good.

'Had enough, soldier?'

Ginger's cut and swollen lips writhed themselves into a grin.

'Och, Oi'm only beginnin' ter loike ut.'

The first gleam of good humour shot from the padre's eyes, for of all things on earth, next to his religion, he loved gameness in man or bird or beast.

'Take your time; I've an evening off; and—soldier—I'm willing to devote it to your education.'

The unquenchable spirit of devilment in Ginger prompted his reply.

'Och, sorr, me education's goin' on foine; Oi'll take a double blue soon, or—a black an' blue.'

'I admire your thirst for knowledge, soldier, but not your discretion. Better take it whilst it's warm; it's worse with the chill off.'

'Och, an' Oi'm not frazin', sorr.'

As the last words left his impish lips, Ginger struggled up and renewed the utterly hopeless combat, and as Snowy with prophetic vision had foreseen, he got all that was coming to him, and perhaps just a bit over for luck, or future guidance.

He dropped and lay absolutely beaten at last, and a better specimen of beaten fighter it would have been hard to find anywhere on this old planet. Then the padre brought lukewarm water and sponged him, and gave him a nip out of a flask that was the colour of good tea, but was brewed nearer Jamaica than China; then, with the laddie's head cradled in the hollow of his arm, he talked to him of McGlusky. He was a spell-binder, a word-wizard when he cared to talk, that padre, and he talked for that young private soldier's benefit; had he exerted himself on his own behalf nearly as much, he might have worn a cardinal's red hat, but he was one of God Almighty's few who forget self and think mainly of others. He took Ginger back on the wings of memory to the night when the brawny Scot had found him, a poor waif of a sea-port slum, and adopted him, and he walked in soul with Ginger and McGlusky along

the many paths of danger and tribulation the pair had trodden together, until he woke a pain that was worse than all the punches Ginger had got that day, the bitter pain born of the knowledge of ingratitude.

'Och, sorr, why did th' Auld Timer turn me down? Oi'd have died f'r him—but he—he thought Oi was a coward.'

'He did not, an' deep down in th' sinful heart of ye, Ginger, you knew he didn't; you were mad jealous of Snowy and Joe.'

'Sorr, Oi——'

'Don't lie, Ginger; you knew the man who had seen you climb the cliffs at Gallipoli on a wild-goat track in the starlight to bring comfort to him when a prisoner, *knew* you were no coward.'

'Yez called me a coward yerself ter-day, sorr,' gasped Ginger, snatching vainly at this shred of sophistry to save his face, as the Chinese say.

'I did, laddie, and I lied when I said it, an' I knew I lied, an' I'll do penance for it later.'

'Och, don't, sorr.'

'Every man must pay the price of his own misdoings to his Creator, laddie. I lied when I called you a coward, and I knew it, and—I'll pay.'

'So did Oi, sorr,' whispered Ginger, feeling for his nose, that seemed to have got round past his ear.

'Yes, you paid, and paid up like a man—to me, but what about McGlusky? He's been eating his big heart out all the days you kept away from him.'

Ginger's voice, thick and husky, came struggling through the dusk that had fallen:

'Oi'll *throy* an' pay him, sorr. Oi've been a—a dog.'

'Worse than that, Ginger, you've been a—a cur. I'm sorry to have to hit you now you're down, but the greatest thing in this world is the truth; the worst dog I ever saw wouldn't have gone back on such a friend as McGlusky out of jealousy. Swallow your medicine, lad; you've been the worst kind of a cur—the ungrateful kind.'

There was a long hush, broken only by something that sounded like half-strangled sobs from Ginger; then a very penitent voice:

'Padre?'

'Yes, Ginger.'

'Will yez do me a favour? Will yez boot me from here to th' hospital, an' Oi don't care if all th' Anzacs see yez do ut.'

The padre bent, and in the gathering gloom his lips touched the lad's forehead.

'Go in peace, Ginger; go back to the lines, and tomorrow you can call and see the Old Timer. I'll fix that for you. My son, I thank God I've opened your eyes; now go.'

Ginger, as he went, put his fingers to his face, and knew that one eye at least the padre had closed so that it wouldn't open for a week, but he understood.

'I had to do it that—way—for the sake of his sinful soul,' murmured the padre. 'I had to batter the pride and stubbornness out of him—but he took his gruel like a man, and I—think—it hurt me more to give it him than it hurt him to take it.'

Two French soldiers who, lying on their stomachs amid the trees, had watched the whole episode, went their way thanking God devoutly that they had no Irish padre to lead them to the light. They discussed

the matter that night around a French bivouac, and a veteran Frenchman who listened said :

‘ Pouf, you do not understand, you are children— what you saw explains why the Irish never lose in a fight or fail in a charge ; they dare not go back and tell their padres they have failed, so they go on and win.’

When Ginger reached his bivouac, his body was very sore, but his heart was singing. The Flamingo caught sight of his battered face, and exclaimed in deep concern :

‘ Howly Grail, Ginger, where you been samplin’ mules, eh ? ’

‘ Och, shut up, Flamingo, Oi’ve been in hivin.’

The Flamingo took another long look at the padre’s handiwork.

‘ Been in hivin, have you ? Then, Ginger, th’ other place f’r me.’

But when he heard the merry laugh that rang out from Ginger’s sadly distorted mouth in response to this sally, he said to Sunny Jim :

‘ Be all th’ saints ! Wherever he’s been, he’s found his soul again ; it’s our old Ginger come back to camp.’

‘ Bally glad of it,’ answered Sunny Jim. ‘ I didn’t cotton to the sample I had of the new Ginger.’

‘ Sweetest kid on earth ; not a bit o’ harm in him,’ was Flamingo’s explosive reply.

‘ Oh, isn’t there ? ’ chortled Sunny Jim. ‘ Thought he was a rattle-snake in trousers when he was in that shell-hole.’

‘ Rattle-snake ? Ginger ? He wouldn’t hurt anything on earth, bar Turks an’ Germans.’ Then turning to Ginger : ‘ Seen th’ Old Timer yet, kid ? ’

A flush of shame floundered amongst the bruises on Ginger's face at this query.

'N-o—not yet, Flamingo'; then, in a pitiful attempt to make good in the estimation of the fine fighter who was cross-questioning him, he added, 'Oi've been waitin' f'r a chanct ter do somethin' agin th' Germans, Flamingo, ter make me worthy ter go near him, but uts no use waitin', Oi'll never be worthy, so Oi'm goin' ter see him ter-morrow.'

'That's the ticket. Tell him about the shell-hole, an' he'll be satisfied.'

Sunny Jim, who always seemed to ask the right questions in the wrong place, wanted to know how Ginger got his face made like a landscape with all the pretty parts knocked out of it.

'Och, Oi just got pokin' round askin' fool questions that didn't concern me, an'—an' things happened,' and the bivouac laughed, and decided that Ginger must have strayed into one of the adjacent villages and given the glad eye to a matron in mistake for a maid, and reaped a harvest accordingly; and Ginger, with many grins, acquiesced, thinking one falsehood would serve as well as another. The truth he could not and would not tell, and he knew the padre never would, and by this means he established a reputation as a gay Lothario, which he neither desired nor deserved.

That night Ginger planned how best he might make up to McGlusky for his recent display of vile temper. Plan after plan entered his fertile brain, only to be rejected as not half good enough for the occasion. Of one thing alone he was quite sure in his own breast: the opening of the hospital should

find him waiting at the door. But man is often the sport of circumstance, as Ginger was to find to his cost. The night was half through, when furious fighting broke out, and soon the news came that the Germans were storming the front trenches in force. Then came the order to Ginger's section to advance and help repel the attack. Out into the night the men swarmed, ready and eager for a brush with the bayonet with the foe, for it had long been known to them that the enemy's front line troops in their vicinity were the Kaiser's much vaunted Bavarians, whose boast it was that they had beaten Russian and French troops whenever they had met them. Lots of these fellows could talk English, and often sent the taunt across 'no man's land' from their trenches that they would drive the Anzacs in front of them like sheep. The answer had invariably been: 'Come and try your luck, Fritz.' Now at last they had come, not mere recruits learning the game of war, but veteran fighters who had marched across Poland at the heels of their god Hindenburg. Some of the Anzacs had learnt their trade against the Turks, and had learnt it well; some had done much gallant fighting in France; but many were raw, unblooded troops fresh from Australia and New Zealand, and the enemy knew it, as they knew pretty nearly everything, thanks to their spy organization; and being German they thought they could create a panic by striking in the night with the steel at the places where the raw troops were posted, knowing that nothing tries the nerve of unblooded soldiers so highly as a rush with the steel in the dark. In this case some order of the German high command must have miscarried, for the enemy had thrown

his first onslaught at the real Anzac trenches, and the Bavarians were learning that the men who had stemmed the torrent of so many mad, fanatical Turkish night attacks, were not to be lightly handled. Still the Bavarians were in great force, and the Anzacs in reserve were called to the front with all speed. Ginger was on his feet in a moment, and as he girded on his bayonet and got the news from the Flamingo, he snapped :

'Take *us* wid th' steel—th' damn cheek av ut !
Ter blazes wid 'em ! They'll be thryin' ut on th' rale
Irish next.'

For it was an article of faith, born of his breeding, with Ginger, that 'wid th' spoons,' as he termed bayonets, nothing born of woman could equal the Irish.

Down into the trenches leapt the reserves, and away along the communication trenches towards the front line they scurried ; and now the star rockets arching from the sky, made the scene of conflict vividly visible against the surrounding darkness. It was an awful scene upon which the reserves gazed whilst they stood a few yards back waiting the order to get in and mingle with the fight. The Bavarians, relying upon their well-known, animal-like ferocity, were fighting like wild beasts. The slouch-hatted, long-limbed Anzacs, cooler, less noisy, but possibly fiercer than their foes, had met for a death tussle the gem of the German army. The waiting, watching men saw the thrusting steel, the deadly lunge with all a man's weight behind it, the swift parry, which tried the sinews of the strongest wrists and arms, the miss, the lurch, the half struggle, and—the death thrust.

They saw men club their rifles and beat heads to pulp with one sledgehammer blow; sometimes it was a soft, slouch hat that went down mid broken bone and blood, sometimes a spiked helmet. There was the horrible rasping of steel as strong men thrust together, and often both went down, and those who fell like that were down to stay. Shouts and yells of both nations filled the chambers of the night with hideous sounds; rifles cracked, not in regular cadences, as when companies volley, but as individual fingers found time to touch trigger. It was an inferno, but it was Homeric, and many a warrior wrote his own epic with the steel, and those who blundered wrote their own epitaphs.

The Flamingo tore his eyes from the sight, and turned to say something to Ginger, only to find the lad had slipped from his side; the last Flamingo had heard from him, he had shouted:

'Och, th' Auld Timer wud be worth three min in this mess-up, be gosh he wud.'

Flamingo glanced down to see if a stray bullet had got the youngling, but at that moment Ginger was squirming his way past wounded men in the last communication trench, and was within a few feet of the fight. He said afterwards in reply to his company sergeant-major:

'Faith, Oi saw a vacany f'r wan in front, an' Oi tuk ut. Oi was toired av bein' part av th' scenery,' which was all right, as the advance reserves had orders to use their own initiative and get into the fighting as occasion served, but not to crowd in and hamper their comrades' movements. The non-com's were supposed to direct the advance of these reserves in the main,

and so when, after the bitter battle, Ginger made the above explanation, the sergeant-major replied :

‘ Well, kid, let it go this time, but if you do it again, I’ll—I’ll boot you.’

It was well for Kurnalpi that Ginger had ‘ seen a vacancy and taken it,’ for just as the lad arrived on the scene of action, Kurnalpi had thrust with his bayonet at a private, and the Bavarian had grabbed the steel with both hands, to the detriment of his fingers, and as this occurred a German officer stepped up and lifted his revolver to Kurnalpi’s head, but Ginger, firing from his hip, had, as he picturesquely put it later, ‘ blown a lot av th’ officer’s helmet away, an’ some av his head wint wid ut.’ Kurnalpi, out of the tail of his eye, saw who his rescuer was, and grunted, ‘ Oh, you, is it ? ’ and went on with his work—and ghastly work it was, for Kurnalpi was a white savage in a bayonet action, Ginger’s description of him being, ‘ Kurnalpi’s just a misfit f’r hell at th’ best av times, but wid th’ bayonet he’s ondacent ; he gets familiar wid every part av an inemy, ayther front, or—or beyant.’

It was a long and stubborn fight, and Ginger soon forgot Kurnalpi ; he was too busy looking after such of the enemy as he came personally in contact with, and in taking a certain amount of care of himself. He was Irish from the soles of his feet to the tips of his flaming hair, and every inch of Irish in him thrilled to such a fight as this, and the greatest master of the bayonet in the wide world had taught him every trick of the trade, and there are more tricks in a bayonet in the hands of an expert than in a menagerie of monkeys. Ginger did not know it, but every now and again he

sent his lovely singing voice above the roar of battle in the line of a song, and the song was always the same, the rebel Irish song the drunken cobbler had taught him before he could barely run. It came from his subconscious brain, as a very learned philosopher explained to him long afterwards, to which Ginger replied :

‘ Bedad, thin, perhaps that explains me father’s fondness f’r other min’s mutton ; perhaps that’s why he stole shape in Oireland an’ got gaol for ut ; he wasn’t a thafe afther all, glory be, he was a subconscious un-rectitudinarian,’ a point of view that rather upset the philosopher who happened to own many sheep in Ireland, and had a weakness for eating his own mutton.

The Bavarians made a stubborn fight of it before they admitted themselves beaten, and made for safety, and the following morning Ginger, who was in the first line of defence, hung a sign over the parapet, which read : ‘ Anzac pleasure-grounds—warm welcome ter visitors,’ to which the Bavarians replied with a signboard saying : ‘ We called and left a card, return our call and hear our band play.’

Little pleasantries of that kind became common. One optimistic Bavarian hurled a jam tin containing a note in perfect English, stating : ‘ Our Kaiser will celebrate his birthday in London.’ To which Ginger added, ‘ Yes, whin oysters are hatchin’ in hell,’ and hurled it back. A German with a fine baritone voice, who had evidently been an operatic star of some magnitude before the war, sang a jovial song of love and moonlight kisses, and the whole Anzac line applauded, shouting ‘ Encore, Fritz, encore !’ A laugh-

ing voice from the German trench shouted back :

‘ No, no, its your turn now, Anzacs ; give us something with a kangaroo in it.’

‘ Didn’t yez have all th’ kangaroo yez wanted last night, Fritzy ? ’ yelled Ginger.

‘ Was that kangaroo you gave us for supper when we called, sonny ? ’

‘ Ut was.’

‘ One meal a day of that sort will do, thanks,’ came the cheery answer, and both front trenches roared. After a bit a German voice queried :

‘ Say, Anzacs, *can’t* you sing ? ’

‘ Got a kid here can knock spots off anything you’ve got,’ roared the Flamingo.

‘ Let’s have a sample of him, then.’

Instantly there rose a shout of ‘ Ginger—Ginger.’

‘ Sounds like hot stuff,’ chortled the German voice.

Ginger cleared his throat, and his exquisite voice, loaded with quips and quirks of his own birdlike fancy, trilled, ‘ When the Bright May Morn is Shining.’ The applause from the enemy trench was spontaneous and full-throated, so Ginger gave them ‘ Sally in our Alley,’ and even Santley in his best days could scarce have rendered it with more artistic skill.

‘ Say, Anzacs, where did you catch that canary-bird ? Do they grow wild over your way ? ’

It was the voice of the enemy singer that called the question.

‘ Got a few of our own, Fritz, but this wan came from th’ place where th’ shamrocks grow,’ replied Flamingo, and so the game went on for a little time, and no one would have dreamed that those men had, only a few hours before, been locked in a grapple of

wounds and death, and would soon be again. It was what McGlusky in one of his philosophical moods described as 'One o' th' complexities o' human nature as revealed by th' lantern light o' bluidy war.'

Days went by before Ginger could get leave from the trenches, for it was expected by those in authority that the crack Bavarian corps would not rest at all content without having a try to remove the smirch on their prestige caused by the severe reverse in the night attack. But as soon as he got free, he made a beeline for the hospital, and met Snowy and Joe walking rather weakly, and looking very downcast. Snowy's sarcastic drawl brought a vivid flush to Ginger's face.

'Don't rush yourself to death, kid; you've been in such an almighty hurry to get here, you'll have the provost marshal after you for exceedin' the speed limit on foot.'

For once the youngster had no reply ready to his tongue; he stood abashed in the presence of the two warriors who knew of his desertion of his benefactor, and he saw that he had fallen to zero in their estimation.

'Oi'm goin' ter see th' Auld Timer,' was all that he could utter.

'Where?'

'In th' hospital.'

'He's not there.'

A great fear gripped Ginger's heart.

'Snowy, f'r the love av hivin—don't tell me he's—he's——'

The sharpshooter remembered the wrong McGlusky had done the boy in the first place by turning

him down over the flying experiment, and he relented a bit in his favour.

‘ No, he’s not dead, kid.’

‘ What is ut, thin?’

‘ He’s missin’.’

‘ Oi’m not understandin’, Snowy.’

Then the sharpshooter told him all that had taken place in the hospital, adding :

‘ He waited, an’ waited, watchin’ th’ door f’r a sight o’ your ugly mug, and th’ day before yesterday, when we woke up, his bed was empty ; he’d taken his hook in the night—deserted.’

A low snarl broke from Ginger.

‘ Him? Deserted? An’ the inimy close up? May yez stew in y’r own grease till Judas finds repentance f’r that lie, Snowy.’

‘ That’s what they’ve marked up against his name, kid.’

Ginger’s face was as white as a good woman’s soul, for he knew the seriousness of such a charge in the presence of the enemy. His voice was thick with pain and passion.

‘ Snowy, uts a lie—Oi’d say ut was a lie if th’ angels in hivin wrote ut across the sky.’

‘ They may shoot him f’r it all th’ same, kid, when they find him ; all sorts of staff officers have been round to see him about that invention of his ; he’s explained it, but there’s something they can’t catch on to, and they’re drawin’ maps of it an’ makin’ plans ; they want that machine in a big hurry to offset a new one the Germans have, and at th’ critical moment he takes his hook—he’d have got his commission for that invention if he’d sat tight, and now——’

'Who's th' officer who's doin' th' plans, Snowy?'
The sharpshooter told him.

'Oi'm goin' to him. Oi know that auld machine as well as the Auld Timer did; Oi lived wid ut, slept wid ut; Oi was proud av him over ut; Oi know ivery damn bolt an' nut an' curve an' line in ut; often whin he was asleep Oi crawled all over ut, oilin' ut, shcrewin' up a nut, polishin' an' scrapin' an' cleanin', an' whin he wanted somethin' f'r ut he hadn't got, Oi wint to th' workshops beyant th' C.O.'s tent an' prigged ut f'r him, an' hid what Oi prigged among his things where Oi knew he'd be sure ter find ut, an' whin he did, he'd say: "Ginger, A ken weel th' han' o' proveedence is helpin' ma wi' ma ship, f'r th' things A need come ta ma in a maist meesterious way." If he'd heard th' engineers an' fitters in th' shops cursin' whin they missed things, he wouldn't have been so sure av th' hand o' providence, an'—an' th' noight before he turned me down Oi begger a wee bottle av howly wather fr'm th' padre an' Oi sprinkled ut on his ship f'r luck, an' now—wirra—wirra, Oi'm——'

'Did the padre give you the bottle of holy water Ginger?'

'Well, he didn't exactly give ut me Oi begged f'r ut, an' he seemed doubtful, seein' th' Auld Timer isn't av the faith, an'——'

'Well, kid?'

'Ut got mixed up wid me box av matches in th' padre's dug-out; it was near dark in there, Snowy, an'—an' somehow ut came away wid me in me pocket.'

The sharpshooter put an arm around Ginger's neck and nearly choked him with a hug.

'You may be unleavened sin, kid, but, by gosh, y'r

unleavened love too—prigged holy water to bless th' machine. Y'r a Holy Roman—when y'r anything, but I believe you'd prig th' Vatican to help th' Old Timer.'

'Pooh—you an' y'r Vatican, Snowy, Oi'd—Oi'd prig the Pope.'

CHAPTER VI

GINGER IN THE HANDS OF THE GERMANS

WHEN the three friends parted, it was on the understanding that Joe and the sharpshooter should try and get on the track of McGlusky, whilst Ginger was to try his fortunes with that officer who was making the plans of the new airship.

'Don't tell him any lies, Ginger; stick to the truth,' warned Joe.

'Oi nivver tell a lie whin th' truth will do,' retorted Ginger, and Snowy grinned until his ears flapped.

'Ever in Holland, Joe?'

'Oi was. Why?'

'Ever see th' tulip beds in bloom round Haarlem?'

'Yes. Why?'

'Looks like a rainbow rolled flat, don't it, eh?'

'Well, what av ut?'

'Nothing, only a Haarlem tulip field in full bloom is a fool to the yarn Ginger will pump into that staff officer, and all the brightest and best colours in Ginger's yarn will cluster round the name of th' Old Timer. I've seen the kid spread himself before to-day. My mother died before Ginger was born, but if I lent him her portrait and a lock of her hair, he'd make me believe he played marbles with her on St. Kilda beach, if he wanted to. All we've got to do is to

find the Old Timer ; Ginger will get him out of serious trouble with the staff.'

' Don't see how he will, Snowy ; I'm a pretty good single-handed liar myself, for a pal, but——'

' You ! ' sniffed Snowy. ' You're a child, Joe. I can see your lies comin' round a corner in th' dark, but Ginger's an artist ; he never lays his colours on too thick ; his lies creep on to you like the coming of dawn when you're on sentry-go ; if he only had an education, he'd make the finest diplomat in Europe.'

' What's diplomacy boiled down into English, Snowy ? '

' It's the art of lyin' like a gentleman, Joe.'

' Gentlemen don't lie, Snowy.'

' Don't they ? Then the Psalmist wasn't a gentleman, for he said, " All men are liars." '

' What about women, Snowy ? '

The dry saturnine smile of his kind curled the sharpshooter's thin lips.

' Women, Joe—you ask the Psalmist ; he forgot to mention them, or perhaps he was married and wasn't game. Men are always squealing about women's lies—in books, but if I had a wager with the devil, I'd stake my soul more men have been saved by women's lies than were ever hurt by them. Joe, you take this tip from me : a woman lies oftener by keeping her mouth shut than by opening it, and nearly always it's the woman who pays ; my own impression of men in the lump is they are curs—I don't mean in a fight—any damn fool thing in trousers can an' will fight, but in the things that matter. Why, Joe, in the next twenty years women are going to jolly well run the world, and the world will be the better for

the change. Man's the most selfish bully on this old planet. When God Almighty planned this old universe, He ought to have ordained that when a wife had a child, the husband ought to have had a pram to lug it round in, or else made the sexes change places every five years.'

'If He had,' said Joe, 'I'd have stayed home the five years I was a man, and gone fightin' th' five I had to be a woman.'

'So'd most of us, Joe.'

'Didn't know till now you was such a woman lover, Snowy—wonder you ain't married.'

'Me?' The thin lips curled sardonically. 'Me, Joe?—no good woman'd look at me, an' I'm not such a damn fool as to want the other sort for keeps.'

So chatting and exchanging views, they marched towards a village that lay snugly in a sheltered spot well behind the lines.

'What makes you think we'll find th' Old Timer among th' Frinch?' demanded Joe.

'Dunno; got a hunch we'll hear of him if we don't find him; when he's hard hit he only has two trails t' follow: one's religion, 'nd one's fire water. I've a hunch that it's not a religious trail he's on this time, and we've got to get him back to the lines somehow, and leave the rest to th' wee image, an' we can fall back on th' padre to help.'

Ginger in the meantime had sought out the officer who was responsible for the making of the airship plans, and having found him, he boldly presented himself, trusting to his mother wit to pull him through. It was a very irate officer whom he confronted, and the greeting he got was not soothing.

' Well, what do *you* want ? '

' Oi've just come from th' tranches, sorr, where we've been knockin' Ballyhooly out av thim Bavarians. Oi was tould yez was makin' a map av our machine, an' Oi thought Oi might be useful to yez, sorr.'

' " Our " machine ? Whose machine ? '

' Th' wan me an' th' Auld Timer invented betwane us, sorr.'

' You mean the aircraft that beat the altitude records and whipped three Germans ? '

' That same, sorr.'

' What had you to do with it ? '

Ginger put on a look of pained surprise.

' Me, sorr ? Why; all th' war correspondents know Oi was th' rale inventor.'

' I saw something about that in one of the newspapers, but I thought the veteran did the inventing.'

' Och, no, sorr ; Oi can bate him blind at inventin'.'

' Where is he now—do you know ? '

' Only th' good Saints know that, sorr. Oi'm thinkin' some av thim hospital orderlies want shootin'.'

' What for ? '

' Fer not watchin' him betther, sorr. Oi'm feared he's lyin' dead in wan av thim fields beyant, an' him th' gran' man—ut's a shame, sorr.'

' What was wrong with him ? '

' Fits, sorr ; a dog bit him in Cairo, not a mad dog, but wan wid fits caused by the sun, an' whinever he has throuble, ut brings on wan av thim fits, an' he's no more responsible f'r what he does than th' dog av Agypt that bit him.'

' Did he have any trouble lately besides the smashing of his machine ? '

'Throuble!' Ginger's wonderful eyes rolled in his head. 'Ye may well ax it, sorr; he was brimful av throuble, an' sorra th' day, ut was meself that was at th' bottom av ut. If Oi only hadn't writ that letther to him!'

'What letter?'

'The wan tellin' him his only son was dead av his wounds in—in Lemnos, an' him an' his boy parted in anger—Och, it was meself that was a blamed fool an' deserve kickin'.'

'You do; but—can you put me right about this machine?'

'Oi can, sorr.'

Ginger lifted his eyes as he spoke, and saw the padre gazing fixedly at him, and knew his lie had been overheard, but his graceless spirit would not be quelled, and he threw the good padre a wink that besought silence. The officer went to find his drawings, and the padre took the imp by the collar.

'You young liar! McGlusky never had a son.'

'Wrong f'r you, padre, he had.'

'He isn't dead, and didn't die of wounds at Lemnos, you—you spawn.'

'Cud yez take yer oath on th' book on that, padre?'

'N-o, but——'

'There are some things,' remarked Ginger loftily, 'some things a padre shudden't meddle wid, an' wid all respect, sorr, this is wan av thim.'

'Did a crazy dog bite the Old Timer in Cairo, you——'

'Oi was excited at th' toime, padre; perhaps ut was a goat; but——'

The toe of the padre's boot ended the sentence, and

Ginger had just picked himself up from the far end of the dug-out when the officer returned with his roll of drawings.

‘Hullo, what were you after down there, eh?’

‘Glow-worms, sorr,’ answered Ginger. ‘Oi’m makin’ a collection av thim, sorr.’

The padre went out, and as soon as his back was turned his face broke into a grin that made him look very human.

‘The little lump of unleavened sin!’ he muttered. ‘I don’t wonder th’ men love him.’

In half an hour Ginger had put the officer right; the defect in the plan had been caused by breakage in a part of McGlusky’s machine, which was vital to it’s success, and as the parts had been badly smashed and mixed up, only some one familiar with the original could have explained it. Before he left, Ginger put in an earnest plea for the Old Timer. The officer’s eyes twinkled.

‘What do they call you in the ranks?’

‘Ginger, sorr.’

‘Well, Ginger, where did that mad dog come from that bit your friend?’

‘Oi dunno, sorr.’

‘I think I do; that kind is generally kept in a little black bottle and ought to be labelled “dangerous”; but since you’ve helped me out, why go and find your friend and take him to the lines; can’t have people in the aerial service who’re subject to fits. Now clear out, and tell your friend—when he’s sober—that you’re the best “inventor” off your own bat I ever met—march.’

With his slouch hat cocked at an unholy angle, and

whistling a merry lilt, Ginger marched at the double in search of Snowy and Joe. Soldiers coming back from the village 'put him wise' to their whereabouts, and it was not long before he came upon them in the midst of a small crowd of French folk crowding round a cabaret. McGlusky was seated on the end of a table on the verandah, a bottle in one hand, a mug in the other; he was holding forth with drunken dignity in English to the French folk on the folly of intemperance. They couldn't understand more than a word here and there, but Mac was too far gone in his cups to know this, or to care. The landlady, a rotund person whose waist Goliath couldn't have spanned, came to Mac and playfully tried to get the black bottle away from him, whereupon he promptly wound one arm as far around her as nature would permit, and laying his head upon her shoulder offered his heart and hand and the glory of his name. She knew enough English to appreciate her conquest, and her jolly laugh, accentuated by the rolls of fat in her double chin, rolled out gleefully. She called him a 'droll,' and when he saluted the cheek that was nearest him with a smack of the lips that sounded like the slamming of a garden gate, her fat sides fairly shook with merriment, but she was cunningly edging the black bottle away from him all the time, for the rough soldier who had been drinking so hard all the while he had been under her roof had won her good will, he had said no word to hurt the feelings of maid or matron, drunk as he had been and was, and had not been quarrelsome in his cups, even when Jacques Codint, a soldier of the line, had been rude to him, and Jacques could have walked under his arm;

all McGlusky had said in reply to the rudeness was :

‘Gang y’r ways, wee mannie. A’m no’ fechtin’ wi’ ma allies, but gin ye mak’ ma angry, A’ll mak’ a mouthful’ o’ ye, an’ spit ye ower th’ garden hedge.’

The black bottle had nearly disappeared behind the landlady’s ample form, when Mac missed it, and after a playful struggle, the dame had to yield it to him again ; whereupon Mac helped himself to a liberal portion, and the liquor changed his mood. He no longer felt like an orator or a lover, he wanted to sing ; and so, stretching out his long legs, he moaned and wailed in most unmelodious fashion Annie Laurie, the song all Scots persist in inflicting on creation when overfull of good, or bad, liquor. Whatever Annie Laurie did in this world before she passed into song, she has paid for since, for her poor ghost has been stirred in every clime under heaven by that wail of woe ; but to do the Scots justice, few of them ever sang so badly or in such a stomach-aching voice as did McGlusky. All the Frenchmen within hearing lifted their hats reverently, saying :

‘Hark, the big man is mourning his dead mother, who was done to death by the Boches ; she must have died an awful death, or he would not make a noise like that.’

When the veteran came to the last verse, he tossed up his arms, and cried :

‘Noo, ma buckies, althegither, gie Annie a gude send off.’

Whereupon Ginger lifted up his voice in all its youthful purity, and made the old welkin rock. McGlusky had not seen him join the throng, but skinful as he was, as soon as the dearly-loved voice broke

in a flood of melody on his fuddled senses, he upreared himself to his full height, and stretching out his big arms, waited until the last throbbing note died away, then like a clarion call to battle his voice rolled over the throng:

'Ginger—ta ma, Ginger, A'm deein' f'r a sicht o' ye,' and Ginger, caring nothing who saw, leapt like a young stag through the startled French folk and flung his arms round the rugged neck.

'That does th' trick, Joe; th' Old Timer'll come like a lamb now,' was Snowy's drawling comment. 'I didn't know the limb was in the crowd, and I was afraid th' Old Timer'd be pullin' his fightin' boots on soon.'

'Bedad, thim two wans won't want *us* f'r a bit, Snowy; let's give the girls a trate,' and with this end in view the irrepressible pair strolled off to air their very limited stock of French amongst the lasses who always made a British soldier welcome, for though the Tommies might not be saints, they were angels in comparison with the bestial Germans by whom that part of France had been overrun.

Ginger, having found McGlusky, now set to work to try and wean him from the bottle for the purposes of getting him back to the lines, but liquor to the veteran was like blood to a tiger; his will was iron as long as he was away from it, but when once it had bitten him he was as weak as water until his fevered thirst was sated. Picking up the bottle, the youngling began in his most wheedling manner:

'Faith, sorr, an' uts toime we was marchin'. Take hould av me arm; Oi'll carry th' bottle, an' we'll be back to our dug-out in a jiffy.'

'A'm no' drunk, laddie.'

'Och, drunk! Who said yez was drunk, sorr? Y'r jist a bit excited wid—wid th' scenery, sorr.'

'A'm—A'm excited, Ginger.'

'Ye are, sorr.'

McGlusky shook his big head with half drunken solemnity.

'A maunna let ma officer see ma excited, Ginger; gie ma a wee drappie ta cool ma down.'

'Divil run away wid me silly tongue! Did Oi say yez was excited? It's cool an' collected as a judge ye air this blessed minute, sorr.'

'Y'r sure o' 't, wee mannie?'

'May Oi nivver ate fish on a Friday if y'r not, sorr.'

Mac wagged a finger at him.

'Y'r richt, laddie, so yin mair pull at th' bottle won't hurt ma. Gie it ma th' noo.'

Ginger knew how artful the veteran was in his cups, so he tried another tack.

'Oi'm wantin' yez at me dug-out this blessed noight, sorr; uts—uts me birthday, an'——'

McGlusky snatched the bottle and upreared himself unsteadily.

'Ginger's birthday, ma wee buckie's birthday, an' me no' drinkin' his health! Ginger, here't ta ye.'

He put the bottle to his lips and let the spirit gurgle down his throat like water down a brook, and when he lowered his arm there wasn't enough liquid in that bottle to wet a bee's boots, as Ginger explained to Joe later on.

'Ye'll be comin' wid me now, sorr.'

McGlusky closed one eye and leered at him.

'Stan' still, Ginger, A can see sax o' ye jumpin' roon; it's no'—no' deegnified. Stan' still.'

'Come along wid me f'r the love av Mary,' pleaded the lad. He feared the giant's kindly mood might change at any moment under the influence of the liquor, and if it did he knew what would happen, and a French picket might try to arrest the Scot, in which event there would be fireworks and the Lord only knew what else to follow at the hands of the provost marshal.

McGlusky's chin had sunk on his chest; he looked sullen and untractable; he was getting to the stage when the liquor roused the brute in him.

'Where's Snowy? Ca' him, Ginger; A'm gawn ta crack a bottle wi' him.'

Quickly the lad found the sharpshooter, who was taking lessons in French in a very pleasant fashion.

'Come an' help me wid him, Snowy; he's dhrunk enough now ter hev th' black dog av Tyrone on his shoulder; an' whin he's loike that, a wink from a ghost wud set him fightin'.'

'I know, kid; it's like that with some; the whisky turns to snake juice. How'll we handle him? Me an' Joe have just come out of hospital—don't want to go back, do we, Joe?'

'We'll thry tactics; we dursen't thry force.'

'What's yer idea of tactics, kid?'

'Oi heard th' Auld Timer say wanst, Snowy, you cud carry whisky ter beat th' band.'

'I don't often feel like it, but when I do, I can shift a good drop, kid.'

'Do ut make yer dhrunk, Snowy?'

‘ Never been drunk enough to try an’ walk home backwards yet, young ’un.’

‘ Well, thin, you come an’ drink wid th’ Auld Timer till he’s dead dhrunk, thin we’ll wheel him home in a wheelbarrer ; thim’s me tactics.’

‘ Easiest way out of a deep hole, kid ; he’s near fightin’ drunk now ; I’ll set him a pace that’ll carry him over that, and land him in butterfly land. I can manage it, seein’ th’ start he’s got on me, though I wouldn’t like to try if we had an even break.’

‘ If yez happen ter want a little help——’ insinuated Joe, but Ginger cut him short.

‘ Help,’ he sniffed scornfully. ‘ By th’ toime Snowy had the Auld Timer under th’ table we’d have *you* on the roof, Joe. Wan lunatic at a time’s a faste av reason.’

The three conspirators got back to McGlusky just in time to prevent a breach of the peace. The little Frenchman who had been rude to the big Scot and had escaped with impunity, had trespassed on the laws of civility again, but this time it was a very different animal he had to deal with. Mac lurched to his feet, steadying himself with one hand on the table ; he glared with red, angry eyes at his insulter.

‘ Man, there’s—ower much draught—comin’ through yon keyhole—an’ A’m gawn ta push ye inta it—A dinna like draughts—ye—ye—.’

Ginger, full of resource, flung his arms around the Scot’s neck, and whispered :

‘ Sorr, don’t hurt ut—don’t hurt ut, f’r uts a woman in disguise indade, an’ yez mustn’t hurt a wee woman.’

‘ A wumman ! Losh, laddie, A kenned A was near

drunk, but A didn'a ken A was as bad as a' that ! Bring th' wee de'il here, an' A'll kiss her an' dan'le her on ma knee.'

The buxom landlady came to the rescue, and hustled the troublesome one off the scene, and there was neither ceremony nor sweetness in her methods. Whereupon Mac, turning from the angry to the amorous mood, swore he would 'dan'le' the big landlady on his lap, if he 'dee'd f'r it.' But Snowy thrust a glass half full of fire water into his hand, and challenged him to drink, and the big man, seizing the glass, hurled the liquid down his throat, and Snowy met him fairly. Ginger, having taken the plunge, made up his mind that it should be no fault of his if his 'tactics' failed ; he acted as waiter, and he adopted cavalry tactics, rushing Mac past the quarrelsome stage into the maudlin. Further than that he could not get him ; the cast-iron man refused to fall to pieces. Snowy's eyes were shining like stars, and a little bit of the devil of his nature showed itself in the turned down corners of his mouth.

'Get the barrer, Joe, we'll thry him now ; th' woman's frightened, an' won't sell any more liquor.'

'Small blame to her,' was Joe's comment, as he went off and brought the vehicle.

'Now thin, sorr, hang on to me an' Snowy ; y'r motor's waitin'.'

McGlusky was raised from his chair, the landlady helping by pushing from behind, and the brawny giant sprawled into the barrow on his back and was wheeled off, blowing kisses to the fat landlady, who waved him a glad farewell. Joe did the wheeling, and they progressed in good shape towards their

bivouac, until they met a young lieutenant who snapped :

‘ What’s wrong with that man ? ’

Ginger, saluting, replied in deferential tones :

‘ Motor accident, sorr.’

‘ This man badly hurt ? ’

‘ Surgeon-major who examined him, tould us ter take him to th’ hospital, sorr ; concussion av th’ brain an’—an’ octerdegeneration av th’ spinal column, an’——’

‘ By gosh, that sounds pretty bad, my lad ; better get him in quick.’

As they moved along, Joe asked :

‘ An’ what’s octede-generation av th’ spinal column, Ginger ? ’

‘ Uts somethin’ fools get f’r axin’ silly questions,’ snarled the imp. ‘ Glory be, here’s our lines. Now, if we don’t run into a staff officer, we’ll have the Ould Timer in th’ trenches termorrer, an’ he can take his sore head out av th’ Huns—an’ he will.’

They had almost reached safety when that officer who had the drawing of the airship plans to attend to, walked almost on top of them in the dusk. All might even then have been well, if McGlusky had not sat up and, removing his hat with drunken gravity, demanded to be saluted, failing which he promised to plant whiskers on the officer’s face and shave him afterwards. Joe broke into a run, and Snowy held the maniac down on his back, as he ran by the side of the barrow, and a dozen Anzacs coming on the scene threw their overcoats on top of the cursing Scot, drowning his savage outcries, and so they got him to camp, but Ginger was alone with the officer.

‘ Well, what have you to say for yourself ? ’

‘ Sorr——’

‘ Well ? ’

‘ Let me have his punishment, sorr.’

Then the lad, who knew how grave the offence was, and how drastic the punishment might be for his friend, opened the floodgates of his soul, and told what Mc-Glusky had been to him, and seldom has a man pleaded for his own life with more unfeigned eloquence than Ginger pleaded for the Old Timer’s. Now it happened that this officer had seen much service, much sorrow and suffering, and the heart within his bosom was a man’s heart, warm and human.

‘ I’ve been hearing about you—and him, from the padre this afternoon. You’ve got a good streak in you, and so has your friend.’

‘ He—he’s an angel from hivin, sorr.’

‘ Didn’t sound like one just now—nor look like one ; he looked like a beast.’

‘ Ut was the dhrink, sorr—Och, damn the dhrink, sorr. Why ain’t thim that make ut an’ sell ut court-martialled an’ shot ? ’

‘ Do you drink ? ’

‘ Not much, sorr ; he’d belt th’ backbone out av me if Oi did.’

‘ Queer beggar, he is, my lad. Now I’ll give you and your friend a fighting chance.’

‘ Yes, sorr, glory be, Oi’ll take ut, whatever th’ odds.’

‘ The padre tells me that you never break a solemn promise, though in other respects you—well, you’re an extraordinary inventor.’

Ginger blushed and hung his head. He knew his story of the morning was stripped naked.

'Will you give me your promise that as long as the war lasts nothing shall tempt *you* to touch liquor?'

'Yes—by th' book, sorr.'

There was a strange ring in the young voice, and the officer, who had handled many men, knew what it meant.

'No excuse, my lad; you'll stand by your word?'

'Oi'll be crucified before Oi'll bust me pledge, sorr.'

'Very well, I'll trust you, and as far as I'm concerned, I'll forget what I've seen and heard to-day. You've the making of a man and a soldier in you. Now go and do your best for that poor chap; he's not the first the drink has cursed. One moment—what was your real share in that aerial invention?'

Ginger shrivelled. All the stuffing went out of him.

'Oi—Oi lied, sorr.'

'Why?'

'To—save him, sorr.'

'Wouldn't the truth have done as well?'

'Oi thought you wouldn't listen if Oi didn't say Oi helped invent ut, sorr, an' Oi knew Oi cud put you right; Oi know th' machine backwards.'

'It's a pity; I think I should have listened; I'm no preacher, I'm a soldier; try and go straight; you're only a youngster—good night.'

As Ginger moved away he had a lump in his throat, for a kind word will often break a stubborn spirit that would only grow callous under harsh treatment. Old service men who have been through the mill know this, it's the young prig, pushed into power which he has neither the guts nor the brains to deserve, who never learns this fundamental truth; he starts life

with a fool's equipment, and his men, who for the time being are the mills of God, find him out.

When McGlusky awoke in the morning, his tongue was as a piece of old shoe leather pinned to his palate, and his head was like to split. Ginger was bustling about the dug-out, cooking breakfast. Snowy came in; he had been up half the night on special duty. Ginger was frying eggs on a piece of galvanized iron that had been beaten flat, and did excellent service as a frying pan.

'Where did you get them eggs?'

The question came from Snowy. Ginger looked up from the business in hand.

'Found 'em.'

'Didn't hear any hens cacklin' around here, Ginger.'

'No,' said Ginger, blowing puffs of smoke away, 'No, Oi was out whistlin' me mornin' prayer, an' Oi met a girl from th' village wid a basket av fresh eggs, a dozen, Snowy.'

'Yes, what happened?'

'The eggs happened; they're here, ain't they?'

'Seems like it. Did she want to sell them?'

'No, not exactly; she axed me th' way to th' General's headquarters, an' Oi said, "Oi'm th' General's ordherly, mam'selle." "Weel, monsieur, sez she, "will yez take these eggs?" an' Oi tuk 'em, an' that's all there is to ut, Snowy.'

'Ginger?'

'Yes, Snowy.'

'Did you ever prig a battleship?'

'Not yet; Oi niver had a chanst—how do yez loike yours done, Snowy, wan side or—turned over?'

'Both ways f'r me,' gurgled Snowy; then heartily:

'Come on, Old Timer, Ginger's been raisin' chickens, and I've news f'r you.'

'What may ut be, buckie?'

'We're goin' to storm the Boche trenches by open daylight. Our idea is to take him by surprise; no big gun fire first, just a sudden jump over the parapet, and a bit of steel to do the trick.'

McGlusky propped himself up on his elbow.

'A've been prayin' ta th' Lord ta show ma ma path-way clear, an' A see it noo. Dinna ye laddies ever say th' Lord doesn'a answer prayer.'

He got out of his bunk and sat on the side in his shirt, his hairy legs dangling nakedly, and his whisky-inflamed face crowning his gaunt angular frame.

'A see ma duty noo,' he proceeded. 'A ha ta swat Boches. A thocht A was gawn to mak' a name f'r masel' in th' aerial world, but that was vanity, buckies. Ha ye ma auld rifle an' bay'nit handy, Ginger.'

The Irish imp produced it spick and span, for he had cherished it lovingly. McGlusky looked it over in every detail with the eye of a master in such matters.

'Ginger,' he said in a voice that had a kink in it, 'Ginger, th' wumman ye fa' in love wi' wull ha' na cause f'r complaint; ye'll keep her polished fore an' aft; ye'll be father an' mither, bed an' breakfast ta her. A ken that by th' way ye ha' cherished ma gun. Chuck me ma pants, Snowy, an' let's bury th' General's eggs; it's na use leavin' circumstantial eevidence in oor dug-out. A'm theenkin' th' General wull no' like it when he finds his breakfast ha' gone astray; th' higher a man gets in this world, th' less abeelity he develops ta ken a joke.'

They ate the purloined breakfast, and then

McGlusky, who was suffering the pangs of the aftermath which treadeth on the heels of a debauch, said :

' Wee laddie, A'd gie ma immortal soul this minute f'r a good stiff dram. Ye ha' a quick brain, buckie ; cud ye no' help ma just this yince ? Ma innards are burnin' like Tophet, an' ma tongue whacks up agin' the roof o' ma mooth like th' clapper o' a bell agin th' sides on a joy day. Yin dram wud mak' a mon o' ma ; ye ken A'll be a'richt after A've soothed ma feelin's wi' a bit play wi' th' steel amang th' Germans.'

' I tried to loot a bottle o' rum for you, Old Timer,' cooed Snowy. ' I knew how you'd feel when you woke up, but I had no time to pick an' choose. I went into the surgeon's dispensary with a fairy tale, and coming out I grabbed a bottle, but it turned out to be castor oil, so I gave it to a little Gurkha for a plug of tobacco—told him it was a new kind of drink invented for the sahibs on the staff who wear red bands on their caps. He was pouring it down his neck when I left, and,' cooed Snowy, ' from what I remember of castor oil, he'll wish to Jeosophat the staff sahibs had it in about an hour's time.'

' A thank ye, buckie,' replied McGlusky, in his quaintly courteous way. ' A'm glad ye gave it to th' heathen ; A'd ha' drunk it if ye'd brocht it, though A ken it's no' refreshin'. A'd drink maist anything th' morn ; ye ken A ha' been soakin' in fire water f'r three days.'

' Oi got a bottle whin Oi was out foragin' before Oi woke ye, sorr, but——'

' Ye wee angel, what was it ? '

' Och, Oi dunno if yez can dhrink ut, sorr ; ut's called

methyated spirits; ut's stuff they clane th' woodwork o' th' General's motor-car wid, an'——'

'Wee mannie, wee mannie, ye've been a blessin' ta me ivver since A clapped eyes on ye.'

'Can yez dhrink ut, sorr?'

'Can A? Ye bet yer breeks A can; it's no' what A'd ca' tasty stuff, but A've drunk worse mony a time. Only, laddie, after A've had yin or twa drams, A mauna light ma pipe wi' a match, f'r fear ma breath catches, fire an' turns ma inta a torch. Dinna stay ter pu' th' cork, jist knock th' neck off th' bottle, an' gie ma a swig.'

'Sorr.'

'Weel ma cherub.'

'Oi brought this because Oi cud'nt get ye decent stuff to wet yer whistle wid.'

'A ken ye did yer best ma mannie, noo gie the bottle a skelp. A've got the desert o' Egypt mixed wi the fires o' Tophet in the back o' ma gullet—it's—it's maesome.'

'Faith, sorr, this stuff 'll bite the dhry spot like er serpent. Oi brung ut to yez ter show yez Oi'd done me best f'r yez.'

'A'm no dootin' ye.'

The boy went close to the veteran and ran his fingers through the rough hair lovingly.

'Sorr.'

'Weel, weel.'

'Don't dhrink ut, sorr, dhrink drags yez down, sorr, ut—ut near bruk me heart ter see the lads laughin' at ye yesterday whin yez had a skhin full. Oi' nivver had a haro before, sorr.'

'Hero—A'm no hero, Ginger.'

'Ye are whin yer sober sorr, yer *my* haro,' an Oi

wuddent swap yez f'r wan wid a halo—damn the dhrink, sorr, bust the bottle wid yer rifle butt, sorr.'

'Just yin dram, laddie.'

'Plaze—no sorr.'

McGlusky reached out in his torment and seized the bottle, for his life long curse was tearing at his vitals, his eyes glared at the lad he loved and for one horrible moment Snowy feared he would strike the boy, but Ginger never flinched though his brave face turned white to the lips, and placing his hands on McGlusky's arm, he whispered hoarsely:

'If yez dhrink, Oi'll—Oi'll dhrink too an' perjure me soul.'

Then in swift, eager words, he told of his promise of the night before to the staff officer. Slowly Mac's big right hand clenched on the bottle, slowly he raised it, and poured the contents out on the floor of the dug-out. Then he hurled the empty bottle through the opening of the dug-out, and the company sergeant-major, who was coming in, got it on top of his breakfast and sat down in pained silence; but when he got his breath back again, he painted a picturesque and fanciful picture of all McGlusky's forbears, right back to Noah's Ark; the picture was so comprehensive and faithful in regard to detail that, as a work of unstudied art, it won Snowy's unbounded admiration.

'A'm varra sorry, sergeant-major. A was just castin' oot de'ils.'

'An' when th' devils were cast out, they entered into th' swine,' supplemented Snowy, whose biblical knowledge, like that of most Australians, was far more extensive than his practice of the same.

The non-com. glared at the grinning sharpshooter

whom he loved, for had not Snowy carried him in when he fell wounded and Turks were jabbing at him with their bayonets ?

'Ger out, might have known *you* were in this.' Then, turning to McGlusky, 'You've made a nice mess of your chances—chucked away a commission, that's what you've done.'

'Thought it was a bottle th' Old Timer chucked,' drawled Snowy the imperturbable.

'I'm not alludin' to what he's just done. What did he want to go to the village an' make a holy exhibition of himself for, after inventin' the best airship in th' Empire, an' fightin' it too, like a bally air adm'ral ?'

'I knew a man once,' came the soft voice of Snowy, 'a man who was boss of the biggest cattle station on the Murrumbidge before he was twenty-three, won his job too by brains and grit, an' one day he went into a little bush township and filled up to the ears on cheap rum, an' painted that township red—including his boss, who came to remark on his behaviour. He got th' sack an' had to turn round and work as a common station hand. Why did *he* do it, sergeant-major ?'

'Because he was a magenta idiot, Snowy.'

'Most of us are at times, sergeant-major.'

'I was that time, Snowy,' growled the sergeant-major, 'but I didn't think you'd throw it in my face, sonny, an' I guess the Old Timer was when he went ragin' after th' bottle the other day. Well, can't be helped now. You three go an' fall in; we're goin' over the parapet directly; the old man has got a hunch he'd like those German trenches.'

'What for, Oi'd like ter know?' demanded Joe, who had come in.

'Dunno,' chirruped the non-com., 'unless perhaps he's goin' ter plant pertaters or—or tulips; all I do know is he wants 'em, an' we've got to take 'em.'

'Och, thin some av *us* will be planted,' grinned Ginger.

'Sure thing, but it's all in th' day's work. Get out now; this place stinks of whisky like a boozing ken.'

'Nice nose you've got, sergeant, it ain't whisky; it's—what was it, Ginger?'

'Ut was methylated spirits, Snowy, an'—an' we got ut to clane our mud floor wid.'

'The reward of virtue f'r us, kid,' came the tired drawl of the sharpshooter; 'th' more we do in this blessed old world, th' less we get thanked for it.' Then with a devilish kind of chuckle all his own, he added, 'I wonder what that Gurkha thinks of castor oil as a pick-me-up by this time!'

McGlusky had buckled on his bayonet.

'Come awa' wi' ye a',' he growled. 'A'm hopin' Windy Wullie or his deegenerate son is makin' a call on his Bavarians th' morn; A'd like ta push ma bay-nit through yin o' them an' carry him on ma shoulther ta Berlin, no' in malice, but as a warnin' ta fules no' ta dream th' earth's yin mon's footstool.'

As the men of the old brigade fell into line preparatory to entering the communication trenches to back up the first line men when the order to go over the parapet should arrive, the C.O. walked slowly from end to end inspecting each man with an eagle glance, that missed no detail of warrior or equipment. When he got to McGlusky he halted,

' Thought you were lost to the infantry, Old Timer ; fancied you were going to the aerial corps ; glad to have you to-day, anyway—feeling fit, eh ? '

With the free and easy warmth of the privileged ' old brigade ' Mac made answer :

' A've felt better, an' A've felt waur, sir, but gin A get ta grips wi' yon buckies, A'm theenkin'—A'm no' sure—A'll add a wee bittie ta th' population o' hell afore A coom back. Are we ta tak yin trench an' hold it, sir, or gang oor ways an' tak' th' lot ? '

' Leave that to your officers, Old Timer ; they'll carry you on or hold you back according to instructions.'

' Varra weel, sirr, A'll fix ma een on a machine-gun, an' gin A tak' it, A'll jest tote it back on ma shoulther.'

Straight as pines the men stood rank upon rank, faces brown as saddle-flaps, eyes sombre and steady, lips sullenly clenched, every man trained to the hour like wrestlers ready for a world's championship, greater perhaps in their individual might than any body of men that earth had ever seen unleashed for war, some of them so young they should have been at school, yet all were veterans of many hand to hand engagements with the steel, and as the C.O. looked at them his eyes kindled.

The order came at length, and the reserves went into the trenches and lined up ready for the word, and when it came, the earth seemed to spew forth men, so swiftly did the athlete host go over the parapet and across ' no man's land.' The surprise was complete, for the attack had been heralded by no gun fire ; normal conditions had been kept up until the

moment the signal to advance was given, and the first inkling the enemy had of the happening was the sight of the men hurling themselves forward with bayonets fixed. Still, though surprised, the Germans had been watchful, and the flash of their rifles, the deadly rattle of machine-guns and the bursting of bombs told the deadliness of their purpose. The front line of attackers was gapped dreadfully by the first couple of volleys; the third volley swept it away—not an officer, not a man was left upon his feet, and at that short range sixty-five per cent of those who went down were down and out. The second and third lines got fearfully mauled, for the machine-guns swept every inch of space, and only the angels know how any single soldier escaped the rain of death, but the third had covered the advance of the first line of reserves, and in that line raced Ginger and McGlusky, Flamingo, Snowy and Joe. True to his purpose, the big Scot had fixed upon a quick-firing gun as his objective, and he went for it as a hawk to a heron. He hurled bombs as he rushed, as did most of the reserves, and their bombs fell not alone in the German front trench, but in the second trench as well. As he charged, McGlusky shouted:

‘Rin ahint ma, Ginger; A’ll keep th’ lead off.’

‘See yez in blazes first, sorr.’

Then with an Irish whoop the sunset-headed imp dashed forward like a greyhound; there was no thought in his mind of letting the veteran cover his advance; his one dream was to be the first man in the enemy trench, and he was, for a moment after he had hurled his last bomb, his toe stubbed on something just outside the trench, and he dived headlong into the

depths below, and just missed a couple of bayonets that shot upwards to welcome him, and for a moment he lay sick and silly where he fell, for he had landed on his red head, and how he did not break his neck it would have puzzled a priest to explain.

Once in the trench, it was the Anzacs' turn to get busy; they fought with what the French term *elan*, a fiery vigour that characterized all their efforts, and though the Bavarians were game and stubborn foes, they could not stand against the cold fury of the boys from down under, and the longer the fight raged, the worse it was for the Germans, for they had not the wire and whipcord stamina of the Anzacs. The free life of the great open-air spaces, the reasonable hours of labour and the muscle making open air games and good food spoke for themselves in that hour, and the sap that had been brewed in the bones of their fathers and mothers in the bush and on the wide rolling plains in God's sweet sunshine, stood to the sons of New Zealand and Australia as in the days of old such things had stood to the Vikings.

McGlusky, as he later on recorded, was 'no' idle.' He had come for a gun, and a gun he meant to have; his bayonet was wet and his forehold on his rifle was sticky with blood that had been brewed in Germany, ere he came near the accomplishment of his desire; then he grasped a quick-firing gun in his sinewy hands and tossed it out of the trench, and as he did so, some Bavarian, who as Mac explained was 'no' gentle,' brought the butt of a rifle down on the back of his skull, and if it had not been for the fact that Mac with true canniness always went into action with the roof of his hat solidly padded with cotton wool,

that blow would have sent him drifting up the golden stairs in search of his harp. He lay prone for a time, taking very little interest in his surroundings, then, as his senses cleared, his rage awoke. 'Th' dom pagan'—every one who hit him was a pagan to McGlusky. He reached a hand out amid the trampling feet, in search of a rifle, and his fingers closed on the handle of an American axe that had been in use for cutting and driving stakes to 'shore up' the side of the trench. 'It was no' a gentle eenstrument,' as he explained to the company sergeant-major by a bivouac fire, 'but gey useful.' In the hands of any man an American axe is not a tool to be trifled with, but in the hands of one who had hewn forest tracks by the mile in the Australian bush and New Zealand mountains, it was something to see—and run from, if a man had room to run. But there was not much room for running in that trench. McGlusky rose, beat down a bayonet thrust made at his midriff, with the flat of the axe, then, with the woodman's skill and subconscious deftness, he turned the axe edge downwards, lifted himself on his toes, and smote at a German helmet.

'A did na split th' buckie *all* th' way doon; A was oot o' practice, ye ken; but A'm theenkin' it made na deeference ta him.' So he explained what he termed 'th' wee happening' to Snowy in milder moments.

The swing of the axe, the clangour of battle, got into his blood; spiked helmets cracked like hazel-nuts beneath his blows; vain was any attempt to parry his strokes; he towered head and shoulders over the Bavarians, and when the edge of his axe glanced from a helmet, it got a shoulder, and the result, as

far as the Bavarians were concerned, was the same. Six and a half pounds of tempered steel on the end of an ash handle, in hands like his, would have made light of anything that was not armour-plated. The Bavarians in the front trench had more than enough of the good things that were going ; they tried to escape by the communication trenches, but choked the passages in the rush, whilst those who clambered over the top were swept away by the machine-gun fire of their own comrades in the second and third trenches. In that mad mêlée, McGlusky would have been killed many times if it had not been for Snowy. The big Scot in his fierce Berserker lust of battle gave no thought to anything but cracking spiked helmets, and fighting, raging Germans coming upon him from behind would have driven their bayonets through him, but Snowy, who carried a block of ice where his head ought to have been, got close to the veteran, and turning back to back either warded off thrusts of steel, or touched a trigger at the right moment.

The communication trenches were cleared, the second line was assailed and defended with desperate valour ; German slogans, Maori war yells, wild Australians cries mingled with the clash of steel, and McGlusky's unmelodious voice bellowing above the rest in what he claimed to be a battle hymn :

'Th' sheaves air fallin' thick an' fast
 In th' vineyard o' th' Lord,
 Th' pearly gates air openin' wide
 For thim that knew th' word.
 We air Thy gentle husbandmen,
 Who strive ta do th' right,

On, ye Anzac buckies, on!
Lord, teach 'em hoo ta smite;
Lord, teach 'em hoo ta smite, teach 'em hoo ta smite.'

The second trench was in the hands of the British, and the officers who knew how stern the battle had been, and how much vitality had been taken out of the troops, wisely checked the onslaught.

'Losh,' growled McGlusky, 'gie me a few thoosan' gude axemen wi' weapons like this yin, an' a rovin' commession, an' A'd blaze a trail ta Berlin.'

'Nice tool,' cooed Snowy, 'but I like a rifle at eight hundred yards, an' a little carryin' wind behind me, an' just a haze over the sun to stop the glare.'

'A dunno, Snowy, what the gommerills that equip armies air about ta neglect th' axe; it's no' pretty, but it gets there. A had feefy Yankee frontiersmen wi' ma in Maxico yince, all armed wi' axes, an' we cleaned oot a toon; tuk it fra five times oor number, an' they wi' bayonets.'

'Yes, Old Timer, in street fightin' you could be rude to people with an axe, or in a trench, but in the open give *me* a rifle an' a spoon.'

'A wonner where that wee buckie Ginger's got ta? A dinna see his copper top gleamin' in th' ranks o' war, dae ye?'

'No, Old Timer; last time I saw the kid he was divin' down a German trench as if he meant to come out somewhere in Sydney harbour. Don't worry about him; he's got the luck of the devil; anyway, we'll soon know—there's our stretcher-bearers at work.'

'A'm no' worryin', Snowy, but '—Mac ran his forefinger over the gapped edge of his axe—'eef Ginger's

gone west A'll steel ma heart agin peety th' next time A fecht—losh, A wull.'

Hearing which, a slow smile crept round the sharpshooter's rather cruel lips, for he had not noticed any undue amount of pity about McGlusky's methods in the fighting just ended.

'Were you ever really cross in a fight, Mac?' he queried in his quizzical, leg-pulling voice.

'No' often, Snowy, but A was yince.'

'When was that?'

'A buckie A lent a kangaroo dog ta in th' bush left it tied up in camp, an' went away on the spree, an'—an' it was midsummer, an' blazin' hot, an' he left na watter f'r ma dog, an'—A foond it ravin' mad, an' put it oot o' it's agony.'

'Yes, and then?'

'Then A went an' foond th' mon; he had gone in th' saddle thirty miles to a toonship, an' A had ta foot it, A had na horse.'

'Well?'

'A was cross, ye ken. A foond him, an' A tuk his horse an' his stockwhip, an' A drove him like a beast ta where ma dog lay. He was on foot, ye mind. A gie'd him th' law an' th' justice o' th' bush; A drove him ower th' hills an' plains wi' th' stockwhip, an'—A gie'd him na watter, an' it was midsummer an' hot at that, an' Snowy, ye ma' believe ma or no', but as A sat in th' saddle hoor by hoor an' drove him, A saw th' ghost o' ma dog trottin' at his heels till he fell.'

'Good G——! Didn't he ever get to camp again?'

'A dinna ken. A left him wi' the ghaist o' ma dog. A gie'd th' law an' th' justice o' the bush; ye'd

ha' done th' same yersel', ye're no' a weaklin', Snowy.'

'I dunno. I love dogs an' horses same as you do, but I think I'd sooner have given him *this*.' Snowy's hand caressed his rifle.

'No, na, that would ha' been th' law o' th' wilderness, but na justice; th' dog suffered five days, why should th' mon escape wi' five seconds' pain? A love justice, Snowy.' Then, pulling at his pipe and looking with eerie eyes into futurity, he murmured: 'Aye, buckie, justice, an'—an' gentleness air gawn ta redeem this sinfu' world; ye can pile y'r banners roon that gran' truth, buckie, it's th' law o' creation.'

'God save me from his gentleness,' murmured Snowy to his own soul, and something like awe crept into his eyes as he watched the granite face of the man he loved.

When the order came for the 'reserves' to get back to camp, McGlusky carried a quick-firing German gun on his shoulder as if it had been a feather.

'A said A'd dae it, an' A did it,' was his only comment as he dropped it at the feet of the C.O. 'Noo, sir, ma' A gang an' speer amang th' wounded f'r Ginger? He's no' in th' ranks, f'r A've watched f'r him.'

'Ginger's a prisoner with the Germans, McGlusky; the sergeant-major saw them lug him off after he dived over their parapet. Don't worry, they won't hurt him.'

'Eef they dae, sir, A'll push ma thumb into yin ear till it comes oot o' the ither o' th' buckie that does it, eef A ha' ta gang ta Berlin ta find him.'

CHAPTER VII

McGLUSKY DISGRACES THE ANZACS

THE day following the attack upon the German trenches McGlusky presented himself to his C.O., asking that he might be included in any patrol sent out by the British for purposes of spying out the land.

'A ha' it in ma bones A may glean tidin's o' ma wee mannie, sir,' was his wind-up to his appeal.

'I don't see how you can learn anything, Mac, but I'll include you in any patrol I send out,' was the C.O.'s reply.

'A dinna exactly see hoo A'll glean tidin's masel', sir, but ye never ken wha' may happen; perhaps A'll drop across a German doin' some scoutin' on his own account, an' if A dae an' he kens anything about Ginger, A'll dae ma best ta coax it oot o' him.'

'You mustn't do anything unlawful to prisoners of war, Mac.'

'A ken that as weel as yersel', sir. Gin A get hold o' yin o' th' Kaiser's spawn, A'll reason wi' him, an A'm theenkin eef he kens anything o' ma laddie, he'll tell.'

The C.O., who knew Mac, thought it more than probable that the German would tell—if he was wise. So it came to pass that Mac went out with a squad

which had been detailed for special duty, and every man had been carefully selected for his nerve and experience. The party left the British lines and entered a wood that stretched well out towards the enemy's lines of battle; they made their way cautiously, for secrecy was the very essence of their efforts. They were all experienced bushmen, and flitted from tree to tree like so many ghosts, for they never knew the moment when they might happen upon a German patrol engaged upon a similar errand, and the hardiest of them all knew that a rifle bullet would stop the bravest, and it was a maxim of theirs that it was more blessed to give than to receive. They had nearly cleared the wood when a dozen bullets splashed amongst the trees in their vicinity.

'Lie doon, buckies, an' crawl ta yon clump o' young tim'er.'

Down went every man at full length, and with infinite caution they made their way to the spot indicated, whilst bullets continued to splash in the timber they had just left. The firing had come from their right flank, which rather puzzled them, as in that direction the French were known to be keeping a sharp look out. As soon as they reached close cover, McGlusky said:

'Yon's regular soldiers; they're no' bushmen; they're firin' wi' th' regularity o' church bells ringin'. Eef we squat as close as partridges, we'll bag th' lot; it willn'a be long before they show theirsels.'

In this the veteran was mistaken, for though the Anzacs lay as still as shadows, no enemy put in an appearance. After a bit he said:

'They've mair sense than A gie'd 'em credit for.'

Ye bide still, an' A'll wriggle back an' see if there's no' a way ta circumvent 'em.'

Slipping his rifle along his back, he wriggled back to the danger zone, and for a goodly time his comrades neither heard nor saw anything. By and by, however, there came another volley from the right flank, and some one whispered: 'They've spotted the Old Timer.' But they did not move; they had the patience of the trained bushmen and simply sprawled at full length and chewed tobacco.

He came back as he had left them, wriggling with skill born of much practice, and as soon as they saw him they noted that he was hatless and shirtless, and that his face wore a grin that would have illuminated a dustbin.

'Located 'em, Mac?' whispered Flamingo.

'Sure thing, buckie. A crawled ta th' place where we laid doon, an' A took off ma shirt an' put it on ma rifle, an' ma hat on top o' that, an' A held it so's a bit o' ma hat an' a bit o' ma shirt deescovered 'emselves roon' th' trunk o' a tree, an' they plugged lead at ma claes, an' they're no' sic bad shots; ma hat was blown away, an' ma shirt is no' short o' button-holes th' noo, though some o' them air in places where A dinna wear buttons.'

'See anything o' them, Old Timer?'

'Not when they fired; A was no' sic a fule as ta lift ma head; A just leestened, an' A got their bearin's fra th' crack o' their rifles, an' A wriggled where A cud see 'em.'

'How many are they?'

'Maybe a dozen, maybe mair, but—they're no' Germans, they're French; leastway, they're niggers

in French uniforms. It's a surprise party belongin' ta our ally.'

' Why didn't you tell 'em who we are ? '

' Ma French is no' so gude, an' A thocht they micht mak' a cherubim o' ma before A'd learnt enough French ta explain. Which yin o' ye speaks th' lingo ? '

They all looked at each other and grinned ; not one in the crowd could talk more than enough of the tongue of France to get himself into trouble with a cabman in Paris.

' Ye seem awfu' bashfu', ma buckies, yet A've heard some o' ye tell terrible lees aboot th' conversations ye've had wi' French lasses.'

' Oh, ring off on that, Old Timer, love talks all languages,' chortled one of the bunch, and the rest chuckled.

' Losh,' growled Mac, ' eef leein' was lovin', ye'd be gran' han's at it.'

' Perhaps some of them talk English,' suggested a scout.

' The officer micht, but A ha' ma doots aboot th' niggers. A weesh Ginger were wi' us.'

' Ginger couldn't talk French.'

' He cudn'a, but he kenned a verse o' a French song, an' that wud ha' done ta break th' ice.'

' I never heard him sing any French, Old Timer.'

' A did, an' so did th' padre, an' the gude padre told him if he ever heard him sing it again he'd boot him first, an' beat th' face o' him afterwards, so A'm theenkin' it was no' a hymn.'

' I can whistle the Marseillaise,' crooned Flamingo.

' Whustle it then, an' eef they shoot, duck y'r head an' keep it ducked.'

'I will,' remarked Flamingo emphatically.

A little later he whistled the war melody of the Republic, and a bullet almost immediately cut the bark on a tree about nine inches above him.

'Keep it goin', y'r doin' gran', cried McGlusky.

'Some one else have a turn,' answered Flamingo modestly.

One of the others tried Rule Britannia, which brought three bullets, and the whistler said he only knew one verse. The next to try his musical talent was young Murrumbidgee, and he whistled 'The Battle of the Boilin' Water,' which caused Paddy Hogan to call him names which would have taken the gilt off a brass button.

'A've got it, let's a' sing God save th' King—even th' pagans must know that.'

So, forgetting that Germans have ears as well as Frenchmen, they lifted up their voices and sang, all except Paddy Hogan, who swore by his pet saint that he wouldn't sing anything loyal after being insulted 'wid Boilin' Wather.' Hardly had they finished a verse when rifles began to rattle behind them, and to add to their happiness the French posse, taking the whole affair as a German trap, opened upon them also.

'Now we've struck it—Frinch on wan side an' Kaiser Bill's birds on the other.'

'This is the time f'r tactics, ye gommerill,' snarled McGlusky; 'crawl away on th' left flank, an' let th' Frinch an' Germans advance on each ither, an' we'll enfilade th' Germans' position at th' richt moment.'

This manœuvre was carried out with considerable skill and no delay, for bullets from both sides were zipping about in a manner which did not invite any

dawdling of an unnecessary character. Slowly French and Germans drew closer to each other, each side taking all the cover possible, then at last the Zouaves lost patience and spoiled McGlusky's plan; their officer had fallen, and they made a sudden rush with the steel, but the Germans, keeping cleverly under cover, mowed them down, and as one or two survivors turned to flee, dodging in and out amongst the trees, the Germans rushed in pursuit, and the Anzacs, unable to use their rifles effectively on account of the timber, fixed bayonets and jumped to save the Zouaves, but the Germans were in much greater force than they had appeared to be, or else the sound of firing brought up supports. The few remaining Zouaves, recognizing their allies' uniform, turned and went with them into the fight, and it was wicked whilst it lasted. Mac, seeing the hopelessness of the odds, shouted an order to fight on the retreat, and the Scouts did as they were bidden. They had nearly cleared the wood, and knew that help would soon reach them when, to their unutterable amazement, they saw McGlusky throw down his rifle and hold up his hands in token of surrender—he, the grizzliest, gamest fighter of them all, had given in after the tamest resistance of a lifetime.

In camp that night men spoke of it in queer, hushed tones; the surrender of the veteran hurt them as though a battalion had turned tail and lost its guns.

'Only goes to show yer,' remarked Prospector Brown, 'that a chap never knows what he may come to, but if any one had told *me* th' Old Timer'd have lost his nerve in a scrap, I'd ha' said things about his mother would ha' made him think she was no lady.'

'Me too,' contributed Kurnalpi, 'but yer never

know yer luck. I knew Billy Delaney when he was the best buckjump rider on this planet; he'd travel fifty miles f'r th' mere pleasure of ridin' an "outlaw" that no other man could sit f'r three minutes, an' th' last time I met Billy, we had ter blindfold him to get him on to th' back of a tame station hack; he'd lost his nerve. But I thought McGlusky would go th' whole course before he broke down. I ain't ever goin' ter say again I'll never chuck my rifle down an' sprint f'r th' back trail after this.'

'You never know yer bloomin' luck,' was Murrimbidgee's contribution to the discussion; 'tryin' ter guess what a man'll do when he's rattled is like a mug tryin' to pick th' lady when I'm shufflin' th' cards.'

Snowy, though often appealed to, said nothing, but his funny mouth wore a crooked smile most of the time, and once he chuckled audibly, as he bit off a corner of his tobacco plug. 'Smooth' Jimmy, the one man in the battalion who was suspected of having a tendency towards cold feet in time of danger, and had achieved his *nom de guerre* by the descriptions he was wont to give of his personal deeds of slaughter by day or night, was the person responsible for the break-up in Snowy's imperturbable calm. Every one knew that 'Smooth' Jimmy hated McGlusky, because the big Scot had once dragged him up from the bottom of a trench where he lay shamming dead at Gallipoli during a fight.

'I—I had a fit,' 'Smooth' Jimmy had explained.

'Dinna ha' anither yin, or it wull be yer last; ye stan' next ta me an' fecht, an' eef ye feel a fit comin' on, prepare yer sinfu' soul f'r judgment.'

And as the man was more afraid of McGlusky

than he was of Turks, he had no more fits. He thought his chance had arrived as the men were discussing the Scot's surrender.

'Him,' he growled contemptuously, 'I never could see why you all thought so much of that old stiff. I alwis *knew* he had a yellow streak in him a yard wide.'

Without a word, Snowy drove his fist into the slanderer's mouth, causing him to sit down very abruptly, and he remained in that posture until Snowy's voice, slower and even more sarcastic than ever, queried:

'Well, ain't you going to get up, or do you think you're a broody hen on a sittin' of eggs?'

'You coward, Snowy,' chortled Murrimbidgee, 'what do you mean by hittin' a feller twice as big as yerself?'

'Yes, he's twice as big, or near it, an' th' biggest part about *him*'s his mouth.'

Murrimbidgee, who was a devil unchained when roused, in spite of his years, contributed another question pregnant with sarcasm:

'What's you try to break "Smooth" Jimmy's big heart for, Snowy, makin' him sit on it so awful sudden?'

The culprit rose and took himself to a more congenial sphere, and the discussion concerning McGlusky continued until 'blankets' were the order of the night.

When reveille sounded next morning there was consternation on all sides, for Snowy, the invincible sharpshooter, was missing. That particular company had a few hours off, as they were acting as reserves, and every one, officers and men, discussed the surrender

of McGlusky and the disappearance of Snowy with energy and wonder, excepting Murrumbidgee the gambler; that queer mixture of original sin and daredevil heroism squatted down in a lonely place and shuffled his cards, and dealt 'hands' to imaginary players, but there was a faraway look in his eyes all the time. To him came the padre on soft falling feet.

'Ah, me son, getting comfort from your familiar devil, eh?'

'That's about it, padre.'

'What do you make of what's happened, Murrumbidgee? You've the cleverest head in the lines; more's the pity, the use you put it to.'

'Sit down a minute, padre, an' I'll ask my familiar devil.'

'Don't be a heathen, Murrumbidgee.'

'I'm as I was fashioned, padre.'

The young face was hard and defiant, and his eyes never flinched from the padre's steady gaze.

'Me son, y'r in trouble.'

'Man was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,' quoted Murrumbidgee flippantly.

The padre sat down, and taking the cards from the gamester's hand, examined them, and as Murrumbidgee noted the long, delicate fingers of the churchman, he smiled; his own fingers had been cut in a similar mould. The padre noticed the half-whimsical, half-bitter smile.

'Why are you smiling, me son?'

'Padre, you're a good gambler—wasted.'

The churchman almost dropped the pack, for he had felt the nameless thrill which comes to some men as soon as the painted cards were in his hands; he had

noted the sensation before on more than one occasion, and had always put it down to a subtle temptation of the father of evil; he had never paused to consider it might be merely a physical and hereditary taint in his blood, as so many things are which we in our cowardice shoulder on to the devil. Murrimbidgee's smile deepened.

'You've got th' fingers an' th' temperament an' th' nerve. I could teach you more in an hour than I could teach any man in th' Anzacs in a year, bar Ginger.'

The padre sat silent, following this new train of thought that had been thrust upon him.

'You believe in God, padre?'

'Of course, my son; do you think I'd preach what I do not believe?'

'I'd bet my best girl against a butterfly *you* wouldn't, padre; you're too game.'

'Only a coward would, my son.'

'Yes, an' there's lots o' cowards, padre.'

The churchman sighed; he knew the remorseless truth of this born logician who seemed to have been born with an analytical brain and a dead soul.

'What do you tie up to? What keeps you sure in your faith? It isn't reason, it isn't knowledge, for, padre, no man hath seen God, an' there isn't a scrap of original evidence in existence to prove the verity of the book you build on.'

'My faith grows out of faith, my son, as raindrop added to raindrop makes a river.'

'An' if you had been born without the power of faith—what then, padre?'

'God only knows,' murmured the padre solemnly.

'Perhaps I'd have struggled through to the light; perhaps I'd——'

'Perhaps you'd have been as I am, padre.'

The padre made a pitying gesture that was full of tenderness, for he had knowledge of Murrumbidgee, had known him in the mining camps before the war, and Murrumbidgee knew that he knew.

'Life's a pack o' cards, padre. If I shuffle fair an' deal fair, anything may turn up a king o' hearts or—a jack o' knaves; if I shuffle on the "cross" an' deal on the "cross," I can turn up what I like—you know that.' The padre nodded. 'Well, padre, I haven't had a fair deal—an' you know it.'

The churchman looked dreamily in front of him, his shapely fingers locked as if in prayer, and when he spoke it was as if to some one not visible to human eyes.

'In that day the dark ways shall be made plain and the crooked paths be made straight.'

Murrumbidgee shook his head, and a smile that was worse than mourning wreathed his lips.

'Now you're dealin' from the bottom o' th' pack; it's not a straight game, padre.'

'Why?'

'You're hintin' at justice in futurity.'

'Well?'

The young gamester leant forward, his eager, intellectual face blasted with bitterness.

'What guarantee have I—have you—that the power that gives me a crooked deal *here* will give me a straight deal hereafter?' He waited for an answer, but the churchman was praying inside himself. 'Padre, in th' game o' chance, I might ha' been you an' you might ha' been me—don't be hard, padre.'

'Hard!' The word came from the brave churchman's lips with ineffable sweetness. 'Hard—have I *ever* been hard with you, my son?'

'No-o, you knew too much to blame me; you knew my mother—she was a soft, pretty, trusting fool—so I've heard—I never saw her, to know her—an' my father. Say, padre, if there is a hell, I hope he's playin' f'r red hot cinders an' gettin' 'em by th' shovel.' The padre went on with his praying. 'What do soldiers talk about at the war?' sneered the hard young voice; 'their beautiful mothers, eh? Well, I'll talk of mine this once, because you know. Just a little fool of a governess on a big cattle station—nursery governess at that—and my beautiful father, too—sent out as a "jackeroo" by his family to learn cattle-raising in Australia; sent out because he was a card-sharp and a crook, and had disgraced a name that had never been disgraced before. He promised to marry my mother—and—'—the gamester laughed—'forgot. I have three of his letters now. I don't suppose he ever gave *her* another thought after he went home, an' she died, an' I've inherited my father's precious qualities.'

'No, your father was a coward, and there's none braver than you in Anzac.'

'You still say you believe in a just God?'

'Yes.'

'Then you think I had a fair deal—me, born without a name, without a character, without *power* to believe what you believe, padre.'

The padre shook all over, for his keenly sympathetic soul made him feel the lad's agony in every fibre of his being.

'The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation,' he said solemnly. 'I can't understand it, my son; it's all hidden from me, but it's the plan.'

'Then I'm just a piece of the pattern in the carpet, eh, padre? Don't seem to me like a fair deal; it's just as if I "stacked" the cards when gamblin' with a blind man.'

'You wouldn't do that, my son.'

'No,' said Murrumbidgee rather weakly, 'no, I wouldn't do *that*, but this time it seems to me as if I'm th' blind man an' some one—something is doin' th' stackin' o' th' cards—Let's talk about McGlusky an' Snowy, padre.'

'What do you think of what's happened?'

Murrumbidgee slowly shuffled the cards with fingers that had eyes in them. He flicked out the king of hearts.

'That's Ginger.'

The padre watched the deft fingers as if magnetized.

'Yes,' he answered, 'that's Ginger.'

Out fluttered the king of clubs.

'That's McGlusky, padre.'

'H'm, yes; clubs describe him better than anything else in the pack.'

A subtle movement of a thumb, and the ace of hearts was beside the two kings.

'That's Snowy, padre, and here's what my familiar devil tells me. Ginger got taken prisoner when we went over the Boche trench, and McGlusky gave himself up as a prisoner to be near th' kid; that old devil wouldn't have thrown his hands up to the whole Prussian Guard if his "wee mannie" hadn't been

carted into their lines. Some of the fools think he lost his nerve; when he parts with his nerve in a fight, you'll find oysters growin on apple trees, an pink-eyed rabbits eatin' 'em. He's not gone to make a present of himself to Kaiser Bill; he's gone to help the kid to escape—ever pray for the soul of a Prussian, padre?'

'Not often, I'm afraid, but I think I could—even for a Prussian.'

'Well, you pray for the soul of that one who gets in McGlusky's way the night he's tryin' to get off with Ginger—that Prussian will need prayin' for, padre.'

'And, Snowy, where does he come in?'

'Oh, him; I thought you had eyes, padre. Snowy has only one god—and his name's McGlusky. Bet you my chance of a harp against th' bottom of a biscuit tin Snowy walked right into the arms of a German sentry last night, and gave himself up as a deserter; those three will not be far away from each other by this time, an' between 'em they've got brains enough to beat the band; they'll escape all right if McGlusky don't insist on trying to bring back a German standard or—or th' Crown Prince, when he comes.'

'Murrimbidgee?'

'Yes, padre.'

'You think a good deal of Snowy, don't you?'

The gamester lit a cigarette and went on shuffling his eternal cards, then:

'About as much as you think of heaven, padre. He's the only man in the battalion who doesn't hold me cheap behind my back.'

'Why don't you make a pal of him?'

The gamester laughed, and the churchman, who

hated cursing, would rather have heard him swear.

'Snowy is as straight as I am crooked ; he wouldn't have me for a pal.'

'Still, you are fond of him.'

'If he's ever in a tight place, and I'm round, I'll try 'nd show you how fond I am, padre.'

There was no trace of boastfulness in the tired young voice, but the eyes of the two men met and the churchman understood.

'Snowy's a fine chap,' was all he said.

'He's ace high,' was the quiet rejoinder. Then, throwing away his fag, Murrumbidgee thrust his cards into his tunic pocket and rose. 'Conference closed now, padre ; good day.'

'Give yourself a fighting chance, Murrumbidgee—give your soul a fighting chance.'

'Cut it out, padre ; if I'm paying for the sins of my father, my soul hasn't got a fighting chance—never had—'nd I'm damned if it's a fair deal. I'll take what's comin' to me, an' I won't snivel over it, but if my father is getting what I hope he is, he'd pay a big price for a block of ice just now. S'long, padre. I'm playin' a poker game with destiny, an'—destiny has earmarked all the trumps in th' pack.'

All that day, as he went about his manifold duties, comforting the wounded and cheering the weary, the padre had the memory of the bitter voice and the hard, relentless face of the gamester with him, and at night, in his dug-out, he knelt and prayed for the power to get a grip on the soldier's soul ; but all the time he prayed, though his eyes were closed and the dug-out in darkness, he could see two brown, shapely hands fondling a pack, and long, deft fingers flicking cards hither

and thither. Spades and hearts, diamonds and clubs, fell in front of him, face upwards, and through the pleading of his praying a voice that was not human seemed to mock him. 'Life's all a gamble; if you had been born in his shoes, you would be as he is.' And the padre bowed his head humbly and prayed for himself, and his own soul, and when he came forth in the morning, though his face was drawn and wan, he was a bigger and a better man than ever before, and nearer to the kingdom of heaven. So in that strange way it may be that the gambler had helped the padre. Who knows, except the Master Artisan, who dovetails life into life to make, perhaps some time in the faraway future, a perfect humanity out of a seeming comedy of errors. Some such thought must have been passing through the cynical brain of Murrimbidgee as he stood on sentry duty, for he muttered impatiently:

'We're all of us horses an' asses, an' some one or something is drivin' us all, though we can't see th' reins—where to? Damned if I know, an' if the angels do, they won't tell.'

A German sniper sent a bullet whistling so close to his face that he said he smelt the lead as it went past.

'That's something I do understand,' he muttered as he dropped full length and gave a couple of artistic and spasmodic kicks and leg twitches, then lay still. The sniper lifted himself from cover to view his work, and Murrimbidgee fired, and got him.

'Another little light blown out,' jeered the gamester. 'Well, if no one misses *him* more than I'd ha' been missed if he'd got me, there won't be tears enough to make the daisies grow in Germany.'

CHAPTER VIII

'LORD, GIE MA PATIENCE'

'SO you're the Anzac canary-bird, are you?'

The speaker wore a spiked helmet and a grey great-coat, and his accent was perfect.

Ginger nodded.

'Och, Oi hope Oi'll have a nice gilt cage, Fritz.'

'You will.' This with a chuckle. 'See the bars of your cage?' He pointed to a row of German bayonets as he spoke, and Ginger grimaced. 'You don't seem to like 'em. They won't like 'em either when they see a million of them in London.'

'Faith, an' that's a dhrame; how're yez goin' ter get ter London whin yer fleet only goes f'r an airin' in th' Kayal Canal? Tell me that now, Fritzy.'

'It came out at Jutland, didn't it?'

'Bedad, ut did, an' ut wint back—some av ut. Did ye people kape a record av th' speed y'r fleet thravelled at on th' way back?'

"Why should they."

'Faith, an' ut's a pity; ut must ha' bate socks off the world's racin' record.'

'We beat the British at Jutland.'

Ginger chuckled.

'Did yer? Oi'm thinkin' ut's like th' batin' a boy

named Denis Sullivan give me when we had a foight. Oi chased him down his alley, an' whin he got inside an' slammed th' door, he tould his mother he'd given me th' devil av a hidin'. "Did ye?" sez she, "thin what's he chasin' yez f'r now?" "Och, him," sez Denis, "he wants me ter cripple him so's th' people'll make up a subscription f'r him afterwards." Oi'm thinkin' y'r victory at Jutlan' was on thim lines, Fritz.'

The German seemed to be a good-natured fellow, and rather relished Ginger's sarcasms. He knew a good deal more about England than his prisoner did and explained his knowledge by saying he had been a professional singer and had toured Britain many times in his professional capacity.

'Thin you're th' chap Oi had th' singin' match wid in th' front tranches?'

'Yes; you've got a lovely voice; ought to get it trained after the war.'

'Whin'll that be?' asked Ginger.

The German sighed.

'I'm like you, I'm only guessing; I wish it would end to-day; I'd love to see my wife and children again, and eat good food, and sleep in a clean bed.'

'Oi didn't know much about beds or food ayther before th' war; me food was scraps an' me bed was an unilegant blanket on th' floor, an' not always that.'

Then the youngling told how McGlusky had rescued him, and of his life in the army, and the German told him of life in the Fatherland before the trouble came.

'It will never be the same again,' he prophesied.

'Ye mane whin y're licked?' queried the Irish lad. He did not mean in the least to be offensive; he was

just voicing the sentiments of the army to which he belonged.

' Perhaps we won't be licked ; none of your people, certainly not your newspaper editors or statesmen, know how we are prepared for a long struggle. But licked or not, things will never be the same in Germany after the war.'

They were well out of earshot of soldiers or other Prussians, and that particular soldier did not seem afraid to express his opinions.

' It's going to be different with the Kaiser and the Junkers,' he continued, as if glad to have some one to unbosom himself to.

' Och, th' Kaiser ! Why don't yez dhrown him ? He's a baste ; he's loike that mad divil Nayro.'

' Kaisers and Junkers have had their day all over the world ; they belong as a class to an age that is passing. This war is going to move the world on a thousand years, and mankind is going to be all the better for it in the long run, and no one will benefit so much as Germany by the change, for win or lose, she'll be free of the so-called ruling classes.'

' What good's thim so-called rulin' classes, anyway—och, they only fill in the scenery an' ate th' grub.'

The German smiled broadly.

' I don't suppose you've studied the question, but I'd describe you as an incipient socialist, Tommy.'

' Me name's Ginger.'

' Very good, Ginger. How did you pick up the seeds of socialism ?'

' Oi expect Oi picked ut up wid the odds an' ends av grub Oi picked up when Oi cud before th' war.'

' Well, if you're a prisoner until the end, you may

see a revolution following a war, and it will be crueller than the war.'

' Oi shan't do any weepin' if all thim Junkers an' Crown Princes an' Kaisers get what's comin' to 'em.'

' They're going to get it, and all the military caste and multimillionaire class too.'

' Sounds as if yez meant ter do th' job proper when yez start, but tell me, why didn't you Germans have a go on y'r own, an' clear things up respectable an' dacent wid a few illigant hangin's ter make sure, instead av takin' the lid off hell an' spillin' th' contents over th' face av th' worruld? '

' The Kaiser had too many bayonets behind him, but we're too used to bayonets now to be afraid of them, and Germany is not the only country that will be revolutionized.'

' If yez mane England, y'r wrong. Oi've heard 'em talkin' about ut in th' army often; they say their race evolutes an' don't revolute.'

The German smiled at this crudely expressed idea.

' Revolution *is* evolution; only it's evolution in action, Ginger.'

' Is ut? Thin,' with one of his sunshine grins, ' Oireland, th' land that had the honour av producin' me, must be mighty active; they wear mournin' there if they don't revolute about something once a year; revolution's like boils wid th' Oirish—if they don't come out, they bust in th' blood.'

' I've travelled in Ireland; they never succeed as revolutionaries because they all want to be leaders; the Irish trouble is they have too much brains.'

' Now Oi know what's wrong wid me; Oi'll thry an' put a sthopper on me mental expansion; ut's no

use bein' a jaynius if jaynius is as common as all that.'

The German took no notice of the jibe.

'The Irish,' said he, 'have too much imagination to make good revolutionaries: they upset the laws of revolutionary gravitation; they place revolution *before* evolution. The English are different: they have more patience; they will be ripe and ready before they move.'

Ginger was tired of the subject; it was a trifle heavy for him; he rose and shook himself like a water spaniel.

'Ut's dinner I'm wishin' was ripe an' ready, Fritzy; if yez ever get tuk prisoner, you ask f'r the man Oi was tellin' yez about, McGlusky—he'll argue wid you till fish grows feathers.'

'Is he a revolutionary?'

'Och, no; he's th' most peace-lovin' man aloive; only he loves ter kape th' peace wid a crowbar. If yez get into a argument wid him, Fritzy, an' he begins walkin' round on his toes, you drop your end av th' argument; ut's—ut's his way av advertisin' the comin' av throuble.'

'Perhaps your good friend will get taken prisoner, Ginger.'

Whereupon Ginger broke into scornful laughter.

'Him!—och, yer auld Kaiser will be goin' around Berlin wid a monkey an' a barrel organ playin' rag-time f'r pennies before McGlusky chucks up the sponge. He's——'

Just then there broke out considerable uproar; and some soldiers were seen advancing. In their midst walked a mighty man in the Anzac uniform, and Ginger heard a Scottish voice exclaim:

' Lord, gie ma patience a wee while ; dinna forsake they ewe lamb in the midst o' these spawn.'

An officer walking directly behind the big man administered a kick that ought to have made the prisoner's hair grow. He wheeled round, and the flat of the officer's sword took him across the cheek, leaving a crimson weal an inch wide ; then the officer, who had ' Junker ' written all over him, swiftly presented the naked point of his blade at the prisoner's heaving chest.

' March, you swine !'

The prisoner, who had looked as if he intended to leap on the steel, curbed his anger with a great effort, wheeled round and marched, and as he did so the officer administered another kick with such violence that the prisoner was propelled forward almost at a run, and again his cast-iron mouth moved and he prayed : ' Lord, gie ma patience a wee while.'

A cry of rage broke from Ginger, and he took a quick step forward, but the German soldier by his side grasped his collar:

' Be quiet, my friend ; you can do no good, only harm. Your comrade is learning the law of the Junker.'

' Wan av these days—wan av these days——'

That was all the red-headed lad could gasp, but his beautiful eyes were fixed on the Junker officer's face, and he saw it as through a haze of blood—Ginger was seeing red.

McGlusky was pitched neck and crop into the place where the lad was stationed, and the Junker heaped upon him every kind of insult and abuse ; it was evident to Ginger that the ruffian was making

every effort to induce the big Scot to lose control of himself, in order that he might have an excuse to run his sword through the unarmed man.

'If your friend lifts a finger, he will be a dead man,' whispered the decent soldier to Ginger.

'Och, can't Oi see his dirty game, th' sweep, but there's wan thing, if th' Auld Timer does lose his self-control, that Junker's goin' ter hell on an express ticket: th' Auld Timer'll tear his jaws asunder.'

Three or four of the military police, who are probably the basest breed of bullies on the planet, slaves of the Junker class in peace and war, panderers to their vices and willing accessories to their crimes, took McGlusky in hand, and he sampled Tophet.

'What's ut all for?' demanded Ginger, whose face was blanched with the fury that raged within him.

'The Junker was reprimanded by the Kaiser in front of his regiment because he let the Anzacs drive him out of a village; he lost a standard and some guns that day, and he's taken it out of the big man,' was the German soldier's explanation.

'Faith, Oi know all about that village; Oi was in that foight, an' ut was a good foight; his men sthuck to ut like men, but we had th' numbers av 'em that day. Blast th' dirty baste; sorra's th' day if Oi do not get even wid him f'r this.'

'You keep quiet, you young fool, or you'll get the same, perhaps worse.'

When the military police had finished with McGlusky, he was a spectacle—for their boots were heavy—yet he never once resisted; only when they called him a coward, his battered and broken lips writhed themselves into a grin that would have ornamented a

gargoyle on a castle battlement. As soon as the Junker and his gang had removed themselves, Ginger sprang to the veteran, and kneeling by him, he pillowed the battered face on his arm, and broke into a passion of sobbing.

‘Whisht, wee mannie, dinna greet; they ha’ no’ been kind ta ma, especially wi’ their spurs in ma face. A kent ye were here; A saw ye oot o’ th’ tail o’ ma een when they flung ma in here; it was that helped ma ta bide ma time.’

‘Tell me, sorr, in th’ name av hivin, how did they take ye prisoner?’

‘They didn’a tak’ ma, A gie’d masel’ oop ta come an’ help ye escape. A feared they’d manhandle ye, an’ drive ye ta dae something fulish, then they’d wipe ye off th’ map. So A surrendered ta be wi’ ye, an’ gie ye counsel; ye’ll na let ’em get th’ best o’ ye, mannie.’

‘Yez can bet y’r slice o’ hivin agin a hole in y’r socks Oi won’t, sorr; Oi’ll take whatever they’re sendin’ an’ grin an’ bear ut, for Oi must live ter wipe out what’s been done this day. Oi meant ter escape first chanst Oi got on me lonesome; ut’ll be aisy now we’re together.’

‘A’m glad ye feel A’ll be helpfu’, wee laddie; it was no’ nice, th’ theengs they did ta ma, but since y’r glad A’m here, A ha’ no’ suffered in vain—A’m content.’

He was very quiet and gentle, and as Ginger washed his battered face and sponged the matted hair free of blood, he smiled. Once he murmured:

‘Ginger, adversity’s a gran’ school ta learn in once ye’ve mastered th’ rules; ye ken th’ words th’ padre’s

sae fond o', "Greater is he that mastereth hissel' than he that taketh a ceety."

'Ye mastered yersel' grand, sorr; Oi dunno how yez managed ut.'

'Love taught ma hoo, wee laddie; A kenned weel eef A ran amuck, ye'd be jumpin' in too, an' then they'd ha' wiped ye oot, an' there's a gran' work in th' world f'r ye tae dae; ye mind hoo A tellt ye ta fix yer thochts on yin o' thim stars in th' hivins, an' try an' climb ta it?'

Ginger nodded; the lump in his throat was too big just then for him to trust his voice.

'A've watched ye close since then, mannie,' continued the strangely gentle voice. 'Ye've side-stepped noo an' agin, but that's only human. A've been proud o' ye, laddie.'

Ginger, remembering the days when he had hardened his heart against this good friend, wished he was a rabbit and could burrow in the ground and hide his shame. The German soldier, who had been forced to overhear a good deal of what passed between the comrades, slipped a pipe and tobacco into the veteran's hand.

'Smoke,' he said; 'it helps.'

Mac slipped the pipe between his teeth, and took a long, slow, delighted pull at the rank tobacco. Then with the one eye he could still see out of, he surveyed the helmeted soldier; and he said:

'Man, seein' y'r a German, A dinna see hoo ye can escape gaein' ta Tophet, but eef ye dae, A'll bring ye a drink. Man, ye've got bowels av compassion, but A hope ye dinna theenk A'm a cooard an' a weaklin' because A took ma manhandlin' like a lamb th' noo; it's—it's no' ma way generally, ye ken.'

'I know a brave man when I see one; any one could run amuck and get killed under punishment; it takes real courage to suffer and be still.'

Mac jerked his head comprehendingly:

'Ye've got th' root o' th' matter; an' considerin' y'r a "squarehead" an' ha' been trained unner th' eye o' that child o' th' pit, Windy Wullie o' th' red hand, y'r no' so far fra th' kingdom o' heaven, an' A stan' by th' promise A made ye: gin ye gie ma a shout fra th' hoose o' torment, an' A hear ye above th' sweet music o' th' bagpipes in heaven, A'll bring ye th' watter.'

The German, who was an educated man, smiled at the grim certainty of his prisoner's assurance of his own domicile in the land beyond the shadows.

'We're not all like those beasts who manhandled you; they stand for Junkerism, the curse of our land and all others. I hope you'll get a chance to even up with that officer; he'd as soon treat me like that as you, if I crossed him.'

'A'm no' revengefu', crooned McGlusky, 'but gin A ever lay ma twa han's on him during th' war or after th' war, eef A dinna put yin han' on th' top o' his head an' yin unner his chin an' squeeze him as flat as an auld wife's pastry-board, ma' ma marrow turn ta dishwater in ma bones; it's his sort theenk God A'michty made them a' oot o' pure porcelain an' th' rest o' us oot o' dirt fra their boots, but the world's done wi' 'em, th' earth's goin' ta ha a new dawn, an' th' wind o' th' new day shall scatter their dust for th' fowls o' th' air ta scratch in; this bluidy war didn't leap frae th' womb o' hell f'r naething.'

'Amen to that,' growled the German socialist

soldier, and his voice was almost as hoarse with fury as the voice of the Scot. 'Amen to every word of it, Anzac, and if I'm reincarnated as one of the fowls of the air for my sins, I'll scratch in it. I'm the last of my family; we were nine, all men of peace who hated war, and only asked to be allowed to live at peace and work for our living, and two were only boys. They were all sacrificed to the golden calf, the money god and Junkerism.'

He held out his right hand impulsively.

'A canna tak' it,' said the grim Anzac with a touch of pity in his savagery. 'A canna touch a German han' in friendship till th' bluidguiltiness o' y'r nation is purged an' swep' clean like a threshing floor, an', buckie, th' washin' oot maun be done in red blood. Ye should ha' hanged yer Kaiser an' y'r Junkers fra their ane lintels afore ye let them lead ye a' tae defame wummin, butcher peasants an' mak' th' world a shambles—ye maun pay th' price.'

For two or three days the two Anzacs were left in peace, but they were not removed very far from the firing line, which rather surprised them, as they learned from the kindly soldier that it was usual to send prisoners inland almost immediately. One day at about noon a couple of soldiers marched a prisoner towards them, and long before they could see his face they recognized the Anzac uniform.

'It's yin o' oor buckies, Ginger.'

'Divil a doubt av ut, sorr.'

A moment later McGlusky blurted out:

'Laddie, eef it's no' Snowy, ye ma' ca' ma a fule.'

'Och, y'r right, sorr. How in the name av Mary did they get him? Oi nivver reckoned th' y'd be clever

enough ter take Snowy; he was as wide awake as a weasel.'

'A'm feared he must be sair hurtit.'

'He don't march as if he had anything wrong wid him, sorr.'

The prisoner proved to be no other than the great sharpshooter, and he seemed on pretty good terms with his captors. They put him in with Mac and Ginger, and gave him tobacco and a pipe, and McGlusky's hair nearly stood on end as Snowy's voice drawled to the guard:

'I'm damned glad to be here; I've had enough o' th' bally war.'

McGlusky went to the sharpshooter with an expression of grave concern on his face.

'A kenned ye must be sair wounded, Snowy. Where did ye get it, buckie? In the head, eh?'

'I'm not wounded, you old fool, an' what's more, I ain't goin' to be. I've had all I want o' fightin', that's all.'

McGlusky's eyes began to bulge with astonishment, then a gleam of pity came into them, and his voice when he answered was as the voice of one who soothes a sick child.

'A ken hoo it is wi' ye, buckie, y'r no' in y'r richt mind yet, y'r a wee bit daft like; ha' yet got a buz-zin' in y'r ears?'

'Go to blazes an' keep away from me! I don't want any truck with anything in a British uniform. Put that in your pipe an' smoke it.'

'Eh, buckie, y'r waur than A thocht ye; ha' ye been oop in a flyin' machine an' had a fall?'

He put his hand gently on Snowy's shoulder, and

the sharpshooter put out both hands and thrust him rudely away.

'You be shot. I haven't had a fall; I've surrendered because I'm sick of fightin', sick of bein' bullied, see?'

McGlusky went across to Ginger.

'He's as mad as a sun fish in a snowstorm.'

'Lave him to me, sorr.'

Ginger lounged across where Snowy was standing near the guards.

'Are yez in much pain, Shnowy?'

The back of the sharpshooter's hand fell smartly on Ginger's mouth.

'Come near me again, an' I'll knock y'r copper top off!'

For a second Ginger stared in bewilderment; he saw that the Anzac was not wounded, and he felt the blow tingling on his mouth. With a snarl of rage, he sprang at Snowy, and met a left hand punch that made him reel, but he dashed back and ducking under another straight drive, he clinched. Then the pair fought like wild cats until McGluskys tore them apart and held them at arm's length, one in each hand, whilst they both struggled furiously, but vainly, to renew the combat.

'Ye scut av th' worruld, ye dirty renegade!' yelled Ginger.

'You Irish gutter spawn,' snarled Snowy.

McGlusky's face was the picture of misery, for he loved them both. The German guards enjoyed the picture; it added variety to their daily menu. The officer who had illtreated McGluskys on the first day arrived upon the scene, and he beat Mac with his

scabbard as if beating a mad dog, and the big man bent to the storm. When he had tired of his pastime, the officer, wheeling suddenly, bestowed a kick upon Ginger that made him think he was a flying machine that had slipped its moorings, and Snowy only escaped a similar visitation by sprinting round the enclosure. For the rest of the day McGlusky and Ginger sat in gloomy silence in one corner of their prison, whilst Snowy sullenly chewed his tobacco as far away from them as possible, whilst the guards jeered at them mercilessly, and at times pelted them with offal. The kindly soldier had been removed, and the guards placed over them were from the charcoal-burning regions of the Black Forest, white savages filled to the ears with primeval passions; they had been tasting Anzac steel for a month past, and their joy in having these prisoners to torment was unbounded.

The night must have been just about half through when Ginger, always a light sleeper, was awakened by feeling a hand groping over his face. He knew it was not McGlusky's, for the Scot's hand was like a saddle-flap. The instincts that had lain dormant in Ginger since the nights when he used to sleep in the lee of any pile of timber or luggage on the wharf of the English seaport, woke at once, and he buried his teeth in the lower joint of the groping thumb, a process of defence which drew a rich and vivid volley of curses in English from the midnight marauder. A strong, slim hand closed on Ginger's windpipe and forced his mouth open.

'Wha's wrang, Ginger? Are ye ha'in a nightmare? Dods, laddie, gin ye kick like that agin, A'll skelp ye, A wull. Are ye dreamin' y'r a Junker de'il or a mule?'

It was the voice of McGlusky in the darkness.

'Shut up, Old Timer, you'll have th' guard on us.'

'Is it yersel', Snowy?'

'Sure thing.'

'Th' murtherin' renegade!'

'Ring off, Ginger, or I'll choke you.'

'Wheest, Ginger, A'm theenkin' Snowy's foond his senses agin.'

A low, long drawn-out chuckle reached the ears of the Scot and his wee laddie.

'Guess I'm th' only one in this outfit that has kept his senses.'

'A'm no' unnerstanin' ye, Snowy.'

'If I'd made friends when I was brought in, th' guard would have watched us.'

'You—you've been play-actin' a' th' time, buckie?'

'Looks like it, Old Timer.'

'An' ye were no' hurtit when ye surrendered?'

'Not on your life.'

'An' why did ye gie yersel' oop?'

'Knew a couple of fools who were prisoners, an' thought some brains might be useful to 'em, so brought along th' brains.'

Ginger was massaging his wind-pipe in the gloom.

'Shnowy?'

'Well?'

'Ye've sphoilt me singin' voice.'

'You've spoilt my thumb, so we're quits, Ginger.'

'Och, you an' y'r thumb! What did yez put yer thumb in me mouth for in th' dark if yez didn't want me ta bite ut?'

'I forgot the size o' yer mouth, kid; most o' yer face is mouth, ain't it?'

Both the young soldiers chuckled; the situation appealed to the inherent devilment in their natures.

'Shnowy?'

'What is it, kid?'

'Don't yez take up play-actin' f'r a livin' afther th' war.'

'Why not?'

'Ye're too damn raalistic, Shnowy; that swipe across th' mouth yez gave me this afternoon cudn't ha' been raler if yez had meant ut.'

'No use half doing a thing, kid. I had to impress the guard.'

'Next toime yez want ter impriss any one, Shnowy, you bash a German an' let me be th' audience; Oi don't want no sthar part in thim kind av performances.'

'Thought you liked leading parts, kid; seemed to enjoy yourself when that Junker was kickin' you through the roof; you—you rose to the occasion.'

'Oi did. Oi rose nine fate. He's a big baste, an' he kicks harder'n a camel. Wud yez loike an invitation, Shnowy?'

'Don't mind, kid.'

'Well thin, you come an' see what Oi do to him whin me chanst comes. Oi'll make no promises, but he'll kick all right, an' squeal too, providin' Oi have a bit av spare toime on me hands on th' occasion.'

'He must have hurt you awful when he booted you, you poor little devil.'

'He did; Oi'll hev ter sit down sthandin' up f'r about a year; Oi didn't know Oi had a funny bone in thim parts av me anatomy.'

'I did, kid; I was courtin' a girl once in Australia,

and her father made th' discovery f'r me; he was a plate-layer on the railway, and had steel toe-caps to his boots too. I thought I was a comet when he kicked,' drawled Snowy's serious voice; 'anyway, kid, I knew I had a tail.'

McGlusky said very little that night; he was content in the knowledge that Snowy was a true man, for the Scot had always looked upon the sharpshooter as one who knew no fear, and his behaviour whilst a prisoner had hurt the Old Timer more than the Junker officer's blows and insults. He lay ruminating; part of the time he was planning ways and means of escape, and a portion of the night he devoted to the devising of new and quaint forms of punishment for the arrogant Junker. Towards morning Snowy broke in upon his musings.

'Pretty quiet, Old Timer; are you making poetry?'

'Don't, Shnowy,' whispered Ginger pleadingly—'kape him off th' poetry f'r th' love av Mary; he'll be readin' it ta me all day.'

'A ha' manufactured yin verse o' a wee bit lyric, Snowy; wud ye like ta hear ma recite it th' noo?'

'You bet I would. Pull out the plug, Old Timer, 'nd let th' divine stream bubble out.'

'Och, an' Oi thought yez was a pal,' growled Ginger.

McGlusky cleared his throat and chanted his 'lyric,' and his deep voice boomed through the aisles of night.

'There's a castle in th' Fatherland,
 · On a crag beside th' Rhine;
 It's th' cradle o' a Junker dog,
 Th' last o' all his line.
 His lady mither waits f'r him,
 Till war an' strife air done,

But A've a sma' account ta close
 Wi' her son o' a — o' a son.
 He kickit me, a man o' peace,
 Until his bootmarks rose
 Like water-melons through a leafy haze,
 Ye cud see 'em through ma clothes.
 He beat me wi' his undrawn sword,
 Across ma Scottish face,
 A'll dae th' same an' mair ta him,
 Gin th' Lord wull gie ma grace.'

McGlusky paused, having lost the thread of his rhyme through turning over on his back, and thus bringing one of the 'water-melon' bumps the Junker's boot had raised into contact with the hard earth, whereupon he cursed softly, but as fluently as if urging a bullock team in a boggy place into action.

'*That* doesn't sound like poethry,' giggled Ginger, 'but ut sounds a lot thruer than th' poethry stuff, Shnowy.'

'I like the poetry,' cooed Snowy, who knew every weak point in McGlusky's armour.

'Dae ye like ma verse, buckie?' It was McGlusky's voice, full of the pride of authorship.

'Ye-s,' drawled Snowy the leg-puller, 'your poetry only has one little fault, Old Timer.'

'What is it, buckie?'

'Sounds a bit like Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion*, only better.'

McGlusky cogitated over this sophistry, then :

'Weel, ye ken, buckie, A've read Walter Scott, an' ha' had a chance tae avoid his fau'ts, but he was no' so bad, seein' he on'y had Shakespeare as a model.'

'Got any more o' that Rhine Castle stuff on tap, Old Timer?'

Ginger kicked the Anzac on the shin in the dark.

'A can mak' a bit mair if ye like it, Snowy.'

'Like it, I should think I did; don't know how the thunder you do it. Do you mix it with your food and digest it, or—or how?'

'A get it oot o' ma brain, no' oot o' ma belly, ye gommerill. Here's a wee bittie mair A'll just dash off f'r ye:

'His lady mither by th' Rhine
 May weep an' wait about,
 F'r gin A git ma han's on him,
 A'll tweest his innards out.
 Twa loomps A'm sittin' on the' noo,
 Cry oot wi' vengefu' cries,
 An' yin low doon is fu' o' pain,
 Oh, dom yon Junker's eyes.'

'That touches the spot, eh, Ginger?' gurgled Snowy.

'Ut don't,' growled Ginger; 'an' don't you touch ut wid y'r knee, Snowy; ut'll take more'n a plaster av home-made poethry ta take th' pain out o' *my* lumps.'

'A ken weel hoo y'r feelin', Ginger. A saw him kick ye, an', wee laddie, it hurtit ma mair tae see ye get it than it did ye ta receive it.'

'Did ut, sorr? Thin, bedad, th' German baste must ha' had double-barrelled boots on.'

'A ken; it was th' hurt ta yer deegnity, wee laddie.'

'Ut was not, sorr; ut was th' hurt to th' flat part av me lower sphinal column. Oi don't carry me dignity down there. You go on insultin' him wid y'r poethry, sorr, if ut aises y'r feelin's. If Oi have toime Oi'm goin' ter light a fire an' make him sit on ut.'

'Ye've a verra vengefu' speerit, an' it's no' Christian, Ginger. F'r masel' A'll be content eef A can wring him inta a funnel till he's dry, an' what's left ower o' th' Junker, buckie, we can push through th' meshes o' a barbed-wire fence. Burnin' people's no' a Christian way o' evenin' oop scores; we maun be gentle an' reasonable in a' things.'

When the guard came on the scene next morning, they found Snowy with his knees drawn up to his chin, sleeping in the farthest corner away from his fellow-prisoners. It was bitterly cold, and he had no blankets, but he slept, for he had been nurtured on hardship all his days; not for nothing had he been a kangaroo and scalp hunter almost from his cradle. They gave him a good breakfast, but the other two got little or nothing, so Snowy, to relieve his feelings and please the German guard, every now and again pelted the other two with scraps of food, calling them opprobrious names as he did so, and cadging more food from the delighted Huns.

'Yon Snowy's a clever de'il,' was Mac's comment to Ginger, as he gathered up the morsels thrown at him, and stowed them away for future eating when the guard might not be watching.

Later in the day, when McGlusky was limping round the wire-enclosed space set apart for prisoners, the Junker officer arrived with a couple of trained hounds at his heels. With a cry of malignant pleasure he set the hounds upon the big Scot and coursed him like a hare round and round the enclosure, the 'sport' bringing tears of joy to the Junker's eyes and tears of blood down McGlusky's trousers. No one laughed so heartily as Snowy, but Ginger was beside himself

with rage, and seizing an opportunity when one of the hounds was snapping at the big man's legs, he let go a kick which caught the trained beast squarely under the jaws and sent it rolling.

' Ach, Gott im Himmel ! ' roared the Junker. ' You vant some of ze sport ? You shall haf him.' And forthwith Ginger was started round the enclosure.

He limped very slowly—at first, because of the booting he had previously received, but it is surprising how much lameness a human being can forget when a couple of savage, snarling wolf dogs are fleshing their fangs in his carcass, and Ginger was soon travelling like a racehorse. The brutes had been especially trained by their gentle Junker owner for the pursuit and punishment of prisoners who might try to escape ; they were of the breed the Kaiser used when he went wild-boar and wolf hunting in the forests, and for sheer ferocity no hounds on earth could surpass them. Once Ginger tripped and fell, and the pair were upon him instantly, and the Irish lad's obituary notice would have been written then and there, had not McGlusky been running close by. Then the grinning German soldiery obtained an idea of the giant Anzac's stored-up strength. He clasped both arms around the middle of the beast that was on top of Ginger, and lifting it high above his head, he hurled the animal to earth with such crashing violence that, if dogs think, that one must have imagined that there was a cyclone in the vicinity. The other animal turned from Ginger and sprang at McGlusky. And then began a fight that was reminiscent of the ancient Roman arena in the gladiatorial days. The hounds used claws and fangs, and launched themselves headlong at the

Scotch Anzac, and he used boots and fists. He forgot the grinning, gaping crowd, forgot Ginger, and all else in the mad lust of the fight; he was prehistoric man, a cave-man battling with brute forces. When he drove his fist into lean ribs and rolled a howling beast over, his big voice would boom forth exultantly: 'That's yin f'r Windy Wullie!' and then, dashing forward and nearly putting his boot through the belly of the other animal, he'd loose the Anzac battle-yell and chant: 'Yin f'r auld Bill, the balmy butcher, an' yin f'r his unclean spawn Wee Wullie, th' degenerate!' And the Junker, who had been joined by a group of his own detestable class, gnashed his teeth and yelled the hounds on: 'Ach, at him, Fritz, on to him, Kaspar!'

How the carnival of brutality would have ended it is hard to say, for the joy was not all with the hounds. They had grown weary, and were circling round the tattered warrior with fangs bared and hair bristling, when a man in civilian clothes came upon the scene.

'Say, whose dogs are they?' His voice rasped with the Yankee accent.

The Junkers scowled at the speaker, but no one answered. The hounds were closing in on a smaller circle, when the American, producing an automatic pistol in the manner of one who never fools with fire-arms, snapped out:

'I guess you know who I am. Call those dogs off, or——'

He jerked the pistol up in a businesslike way, and covered 'Kaspar.'

'Goin' to call those curs off? You'd better; I never miss.'

The menace in his eyes made his words doubly impressive. The Junker whistled his animals off, muttering something about a dangerous prisoner who had tried to escape. McGlusky, with a couple of quick strides, went to Ginger, and picked him up, crooning over him like a baby. The American turned and looked at Snowy, who still had a grin on his face like a lost sunbeam. A wave of cold contempt swept over the American's features.

' Well, son,' he snarled, ' you're about the limit, laughing at a comrade's danger ; I thought they bred *men* where you come from.'

The sharpshooter's mouth with its turned down corners took on a sardonic smile.

' None o' my circus, Yank ; an' anyway I had a front seat, hadn't I, eh ? '

' You really enjoyed seeing a fellow-countryman getting hurt ? '

' Well, the Old Timer was gettin' his share of what was going, wasn't he ? What's your song about ? Why don't you spread the American eagle over him ? '

' I'd like to spread a dog-whip over you, son.'

' I'm always lookin' f'r new experiences, mister.'

The American gave Snowy a glance that ought to have burnt him black, even if Egypt and Australia had not tanned him as tough as leather, and turned away. The Junkers, all of whom understood enough English to follow the conversation, were delighted by Snowy's insolent manners and words to so great a personage, and one of them threw him a packet of tobacco, much as he would have tossed a bone to a dog. The sharpshooter caught it, and his joy was so manifest that even the surly guards smiled ; how

were they to know that Mac and Ginger between them would smoke every scrap of that tobacco in the still watches of the night? But so it was, for as soon as it was safe Snowy crawled over to the tormented pair and passed on the spoil.

'Feelin' bad, kid?'

'Och, no, Shnowy; Oi alwis wanted ter be a circus performer; now Oi am wan; but whin Oi go in f'r th' thrade proper, Oi'm goin' ter perform wid lions; Oi'm—Oi'm fed up wid dogs.'

The invincible spirit of the lad woke Snowy's admiration.

'You're the gamest bit o' stuff f'r yer weight I know of, kid.'

'Aw, cut ut out, Shnowy; yer talkin' like a gramophone record.'

McGlusky soothed the youngster with strange gentleness for one so rough and crude.

'You got what was coming to you to-day, Old Timer.'

'A got what was brought ta ma, Snowy, an' A gie'd some change back. A weesh it had been th' Junker instead o' th' dawgs.'

'I don't—you'd have killed him, an' they'd have bayoneted you, an'—I want that Junker to be a long time dying; I wouldn't put him out of business to-night if I had my rifle and had fifty chances to put his light out; when he goes west he's goin' by inches, if I have my way.'

The cold concentrated fury in Snowy's usually droll voice was another page in the mysteries of human nature which Ginger learnt in that minute, and he thought he knew Snowy. By and by, in spite of his pain, Ginger chuckled.

' Dog medicine seems ta agree wi' ye, wee mannie.'

' It do not, sorr,' came the emphatic response, ' but, sorr, there's three of us wants th' Junker.'

' A'm no' deesputin' it, mannie, but A canna see why ye mak' a noise like a hen that's been layin' awa' frae home.'

' Do yez moind Murrimbidgee, th' card sharp? '

' A dae—weel, what o' him? '

Ginger chuckled again.

' He'd throw down three cards an' say " pick th' lady." '

' He'll be daein' that in heaven or the ither place, A'm theenkin'.'

' Och, thin, sorr, if we three get th' Junker, it'll puzzle him ter pick th' lady, Oi'm thinkin'.'

' A'll dae th' pickin' f'r him when we get him, ma certie, A wull; dae ye ken yin o' his dawgs got awa' wi' a bit o' ma anatomy that it is no' respec'fu' ta name? '

' Much of it, Old Timer? '

' Na, no' mooch, on'y aboot a poond; th' de'il came ahint ma when A was beesy wi' his mate; A didn't ken hoo fond A was o' masel' till A lost that loomp, but A'll ha' it back if I ha' tae bite it oot o' yon Junker buckie.'

CHAPTER IX

THE DAWN OF HOPE

FOR many days the prisoners were left in peace, and the sharpshooter dressed the wounds of his friends, for the good Samaritan who had befriended them at first had returned and had charge of them. One evening he whispered to Ginger :

‘ If you fellows think of escaping, you’d better do it to-night.’

‘ Why ? ’

‘ The officer who likes not you and the big man returns to-morrow, and he will make it not nice for you. Ach, when this war is ended, we, the people, will make it not nice for him and all his class. They are swine, these cursed Junkers ; what the French did to their Junkers in the great Revolution will seem child’s play to what we will do to ours when the time comes.’

That night the three held a council of war, and Snowy told how he had made use of his friendship with the soldiers to purloin many things that might be useful when the hour came to bolt.

‘ I’ve two knives and a chopper,’ he explained.

‘ Ye may gi’e ma th’ wee bit chopper,’ suggested McGlusky. ‘ A dinna want ta boast, but A’m maist

certain th' mon A hit wi' it will no' fash about who wins th' war. A'm handy wi' a chopper, ye ken, havin' been a bushman maist o' ma days. Where is it noo, Snowy?'

'Down the leg o' my pants, Old Timer.'

'Weel, eef we start wi' a chopper an' twa knives, A'm theenkin' it won't be long before we'll ha' all th' weapons we want. A'll tap th' first sentry A meet on th' head wi' it, and yin o' ye can dress in his uniform, halmet an' a'.'

'Simple as bitin' a bun! If once we get into German uniforms the rest will be easy, Old Timer, but when you tap a sentry with the chopper, don't go and spoil the helmet—one of us will have to wear it.'

'Why not make a jump out to-night.? Oi don't want that Junker manhandlin' me any more while Oi'm a prisoner,' pleaded Ginger.

McGlusky's voice, low and full of deadly menace, made reply.

'Na, wee mannie, no' th' nicht; A'm gawn ta wait till A see that spawn o' evil again; A hae it in ma bones th' Lord will provide a way f'r ma ta get even wi' him; A hear th' sma' wee voice o' providence wheesperin' in ma soul like a wheesper in a dream.'

'Faith, sorr, an' so do Oi, an' my whisperin' voice says: "Hop ut, ye damn fool, hop ut, before the Junker makes ye play rabbit to his dogs."'

'The voice ye hear, Ginger, is a voice fra the pit; mine is th' voice o' inspiration. A'm no' goin' till A ha' lookit yince mair in th' face o' ma persecutor; maybe th' Lord wull deelever him inta ma han', an' A'll bind him an' gag him an' carry him into oor lines.'

Snowy groaned aloud, for he knew that if Mac had

got hold of the idea that 'voices' were directing him, no influence on earth would turn his cranky will from its fixed purpose.

'Och, you an' yer spirit voices, sorr,' grumbled Ginger. 'Oi suppose if yez heard wan av thim tellin' ye ta walk into German head-quarters an' pick up Bill Kaiser by th' scruff an' cart him to our lines, ye'd be afther doin' ut?'

'A wud,' answered Mac quietly. 'Didn't Samson hear th' voice tellin' him ta arm himsel' wi' th' jaw-bone an' go an' knock hell out o' an army of Philistines?'

'Oi belave that was a pipe drame, or—or else thim Philistines couldn't scrap f'r toffy; th' only wans who can slay people wid asses' jawbones is lawyers, sorr.'

'A'm goin' ta stay,' was all McGlusky's reply to this tirade, and the others had perforce to fall into step with his humour, but Ginger looked forward with dread to the morrow.

'Oi'll be dramin' dogs all th' blessed night, Shnowy,' he lamented, and the sharpshooter's heart went out to him in sympathy, for he had dressed the savage wounds the hounds had made. True to expectations the Junker appeared on the scene on the following morning, and the malevolent grin he gave the captives boded no good for them.

'Nice kind man, eh?' commented Snowy; 'wonder what he's got up his sleeve?'

Ginger exploded into sweating profanity, but McGlusky said nothing; he just sat there with a faraway look in his eyes and a beatific smile on his lips.

'Give you a bob f'r yer thoughts, Old Timer; you

look as sweet an' happy as a kid sucking a sugar-stick.'

'A was theenkin' o' yon Junker, buckie.'

'Shouldn't have guessed that would make you happy.'

'Y'r oot in y'r reckonin', Snowy; it made ma verra happy. A was plannin' hoo A'd be able to han'le him masel' when A tak' him inta oor lines. Ye ken, th' General won't let ma ha' ma will o' him; he'll treat him as a prisoner o' war; so A'll no' let any one ken A ha' th' buckie, then he'll be mine ta dae wi' as A wull.'

'Got a programme mapped out f'r th' Junker?'

'A ha'. It's no' a bad programme—f'r me, but A'm theenkin' he'd no' like it.'

'You surprise me, Old Timer. I should have thought you'd consult the Junker's feelin's.'

'A wull. Ye were never in Afghanistan, were ye, Snowy?'

'No.'

'A was, an' them hill men know mair ways o' makin' a mon die than any one A ken aboot; an', Snowy, they niver waste anything, an'—A'm no' goin' ter waste this Junker beastie.' He pushed his face close to Snowy's, and his throat rumbled. 'Buckie, A'm goin' ta flay him an' mak' a saddle oot o' his skin; he made dogs' meat oot o' some o' mine; he'll no' be wastit, gin A ha' ma will o' him.'

'No,' murmured Snowy, 'he won't be wasted, but it's not an original idea, Old Timer; it's not the first time a saddle's been made out o' pigskin.'

'A kenned weel ye'd unnerstan' ma, Snowy; we air th' meenisters o' justice; we'll no' do aught in

malice ; we'll do oor duty all in order, but we'll dae it ; th' mon that wudn'a ought ta gie his breeks tae a dustman, wear petticoats an' ca' himsel' a flapper.'

That evening the Junker gave a dinner to some of his friends ; the wine, cigars, and most of the eatables had been looted from French houses. As the feast wore on, and the wine-cup passed more swiftly, the Junkers demanded sport, and the host shouted :

' Bring in those Anzac dogs, and see if we can't get some sport out of them,' and the three comrades were dragged to the festive board.

The host met them with a curse.

' You wait upon me and my guests, and when you get an order, attend to it in double quick time, or——' He did not finish the sentence ; there was no need ; his cruel eyes were eloquent enough.

Some one shouted for wine, and Snowy coolly and quickly attended to it. One of the guests, a cavalry officer, flung a champagne cork in his face, and Snowy smiled as if that were the kind of treatment he relished more than anything else on earth. He had made up his mind that nothing short of attempted murder should make him lose his temper, but if things got as far as that, he would use the ' chopper ' that hung down the leg of his trousers. McGlusky and Ginger also worked hard to avoid giving cause for complaint, but once an officer knocked the bottle Mac was filling a glass from with his elbow, and a drop or two of rich burgundy was spilt upon the officer's cuff. He half rose and brought the back of his hand across McGlusky's mouth.

' That will teach you to be careful in future—remember it.'

'A wull, sir.'

That was the only reply he made, but his comrades knew by the tremor in his voice how the insult stung him. A little later the host shouted to Mac :

'You pigs come from Kangaroo-land, don't you?'

'A do—sir.'

'Well, curse you, show us how a kangaroo hops ; go on, up and down the room.'

The big Anzac went brickdust red in the face, but Snowy gave him a warning glance, and at the same instant turned his eyes on Ginger. The look said as plainly as words, 'Do it for the kid's sake,' and McGlusky, holding his two hands out as a kangaroo holds its forepaws, hopped the full length of the room, though the wounds made by the teeth of the hounds gave him agony all the time. The exhibition pleased the bullies ; they roared with laughter, and soon compelled Snowy and Ginger to join McGlusky in kangaroo-hopping, and the gallant Junkers, most of whom had run like hares in front of Anzac steel on the battle-field, yelled with merriment, and pelted the prisoners with corks and half rolls of bread, and any handy thing that lay around, until they wearied of the amusement. Then they sent a corporal out in search of singers to help pass the time, and in the confusion McGlusky got close to Snowy and whispered :

'Gie ma th' wee bit chopper, buckie, an' A'll gang amang 'em for a wee bittie ; if A dinna get them a', ye may ca' ma an auld spaewife. A'll show 'em what a kangaroo jump is like when A leap ower yon table an' fa' on ta them.'

'Not on your life. Think o' th' kid.'

'Tell Ginger ta mak' a bolt inta th' nicht.'

'An' leave you here in a scrap? I think I see him doin' it.'

'There's only nine o' them, an' yin swat each wi' th' chopper wud——'

'Don't go seein' red, Old Timer; I've a hunch we'll get a better chance than this.'

A soldier began to sing; it was the good Samaritan, and Ginger remembered how the man had sung in the trenches. Song after song he sang until his fine baritone got thick and hoarse. He sang of war, and wine, and women, and still they shouted for more. Suddenly the man remembered Ginger's voice, and thinking that if the Irish lad could only succeed in pleasing the half-drunken bullies he might make things easier for himself and his comrades, he saluted respectfully and spoke of the youngster's gift of song. Then, to his unutterable disgust, Ginger was bidden to enliven the feast.

'Sing Irish songs, boy,' whispered the good Samaritan.

So, with a sullen face, the young soldier stood forth and sang. They were brute beasts, those Junkers, but they knew good music when they heard it, and in spite of his environment Ginger could not help singing well, and gave them freely of his rich store of rebel minstrelsy. After a time one tormentor demanded of McGlusky:

'Can *you* sing?'

'A ha' n' a tunefu' gift—sir.'

'Can you play any musical instrument?'

'A can mak' a joyfu' noise on th' bagpipe—sir.'

It was an unhappy allusion, for the officer and his

regiment had had to face a bayonet charge by the London Scottish only two days before, and the kilties had been played into battle by their gallant piper. The Junker officer had seen his men break and run before that irresistible storm of steel, and he himself had not been the last to reach safety in German trenches. With an oath he dashed the contents of his glass in McGlusky's face, and followed the liquor with the glass. As McGlusky reeled back, Snowy heard him gasp: 'Hoo long, O Lord, hoo long?'

'What did the big beast say?' demanded the Junker, his hand on his sword-hilt.

Snowy, whose clever head was like a snow bank in a crisis, rose to the emergency in unfaltering fashion.

'He said he was sorry if he annoyed you, sir.'

The Junker spat in McGlusky's face, and sat down heavily.

'Th' chopper, th' wee bit chopper; A hear ma speerit voices sayin' "dae it noo, dae it noo."'

For a moment the gallant sharpshooter wavered; his own bitter blood was boiling, then he squared himself.

'Take a pull, Old Timer; wait till I get a chance to do in the sentries, then you can gorge yourself on the rest.'

The host at that moment struck a whimsical idea: pointing to a heavy harp, part of the loot from some refined French home, he motioned McGlusky to sit and play an accompaniment for Ginger.

'A canna play a dom tune wi' it,' whispered Mac.

'Never mind, make a row,' cooed Snowy.

'Now, you know what our U-boats did to the *Lusitania* and hundreds more British ships?'

'All the woide world knows—sorr.'

'We're blockading the British and starving them. Does Britannia rule the waves? Does she, gentlemen? Does Britannia rule the waves any more?'

A yell broke from the Junkers, a yell of derision and black hate.

'Sing this cursed song, sing it,' stormed the host, 'and you,' turning to McGlusky, 'play for him.'

McGlusky twisted his fingers round the harp strings and pulled as if he were pulling a waggon wheel out of a mud hole, and succeeded in making unholy noises, whilst Ginger lifted up his voice and sang the song the Germans have hated for nearly a hundred years, 'Britannia Rules the Waves.' The Junkers joined in the singing with devilish mockery. Then they substituted 'Germans' for 'Britons,' and made Ginger do the same, and they sung it standing, with beakers of wine held high over their heads, and finished by giving three cheers for the murderers of women and children; they were so proud of their woman and baby-killers, they could not help cheering.

An orderly came with a message for the host from some one in authority; he rose, buckled on his sword and left, but the other Junkers kept up the carouse. Ginger was bidden to sing again, and he made the room throb with rebel melodies the drunken cobbler had taught him in childhood.

'You are Irish; why do you fight for the — English?'

The words came in guttural tones from the mouth of a stout major.

'Och, Oi had ter foight, or—or starve, sorr.'

'Will you fight with our men?'

'Bedad Oi will, sorr, whin Oi have a chanct.'

Ginger was telling the literal truth, but he did not mean quite the same thing as the major.

‘ Will you drink the Kaiser’s health ? ’

‘ Oi will, sorr. Sorra’s th’ day he was ivver druv into war by—by th’ powers av evil.’

‘ A’m shamed f’r the wee laddie,’ murmured McGlusky.

‘ Ring off, Old Timer. I wish they’d ask me. I’d drink to the Kaiser or satan himself ; I’m dry, I am.’

The major poured a bumper of rich red wine. ‘ Here, drink health to our Kaiser.’

Ginger grasped the flagon, raised it to his lips, and into his mind flashed the oath he had given the staff officer behind the British lines, never under any circumstances to drink liquor whilst the war lasted. His hand went down, some of the wine spilled on the floor ; he, the most inveterate young liar in the army, could keep an oath. Angry voices rang in his ears, savage faces glared upon him. He tried to explain—a blow on the mouth silenced him, and the red wine went on spilling. Snowy, who knew of Ginger’s pledge, stepped forward jauntily and lied that Ginger might keep his vow.

‘ It was a vow to his priest ; if he breaks it, he’ll never get out of purgatory ; it’s—it’s a top hole holy vow, sir ; he—he swore it to save his father from being hanged.’

‘ Drink to the Kaiser.’

The Junker major was on his feet, his sword-point at Ginger’s chest ; the beast was half-drunk and wholly savage, and Ginger knew that if he did not drink the toast the steel would go through him. ‘ Drink to our Kaiser.’ The sword arm went back ready for the lunge.

'To hell wid yer Kayser.'

The young voice like a silver bugle shrilled the insult and defiance, and goblet and wine went into the major's face. Then Snowy, the ice man, the imperturbable, level-headed Snowy of Anzac, hoisted a chopper from the leg of his trousers, and the major rolled under the table.

McGlusky leapt to his feet. 'Yin!' he yelled, as he saw the chopper descend. Then, having no other weapon handy, he whirled the harp aloft, and beat down the sentry at the door, and as he did so that Junker entered who had coursed him with dogs. The harp fell upon him and crumpled him into a sitting posture, though it had missed his head and fallen upon his shoulders. 'Ye wanted music, ma buckie'—the harp came upon the Junker's body again; 'A'm th' sweet singer o' Israel.' Why dinna ye sing, A'll 'company ye wi' ma harp. Once more the instrument, that had once been the joy of a home, came down on the bent back of the Junker, and if he liked his melody served up in that fashion, he must have been a glutton for harmony. McGlusky could have killed the brute, but he had promised himself that this man's passing should not be either swift or pleasant; the insults, the injuries and the degradations the Scot Anzac had received were rankling in his barbaric soul, and he meant to get his own back measure for measure, and a little over in the shape of interest.

Meantime Snowy was busy with the tomahawk amongst the half-drunken officers. No ten-stone boxer in the universe was faster on his feet than the sharpshooter, and his splendid physical condition added to his natural speed. He was in a white fury

of rage, yet he never lost his head, for he knew that what he had to do must be done quickly before the uproar brought assistance to his foes. Ginger had drawn the knife that Snowy had purloined and given him, and he fought like a hell-cat. The Junkers, when full of wine, had taken off their sword-belts which also carried their revolvers, and a servant had removed belts and weapons to a table at the far end of the room, and between them and that table were Ginger and Snowy—armed. The good Samaritan could have helped the Junkers, but he did not; German though he was, he hated his overlords with venomous hatred. Had they not struck, bullied and kicked him when in the ranks, even when he was doing his best, fighting the English and French? Had not one of them pistolled his youngest brother for a slight breach of discipline which any sane officer would have overlooked in so young and raw a soldier? He remembered all those things against his overlords, and did not lift a hand to save them, nor did he raise an outcry. The seeds that tyranny had sown ripened and bore fruit in that hour, and it was well for the Anzacs that they did. Soldiers within hearing of the din only shrugged their shoulders and said one to the other: 'The Herr officers are doing themselves well to-night; that French wine must be good stuff; the Junkers are having a high old time.'

They were. Ginger snarled as he stabbed. Mc-Glusky quoted Scripture and slabs of poetry, as he made his harp sing. Snowy made no sound; his breath whistled through his nostrils, and the tomahawk thudded, that was all, and he never struck twice at the same man—he had no need.

The Junkers, finding they could not reach their weapons, made a rush for the door, and met McGlusky. The fury of battle was on the big man now ; he whirled the harp around his head, as if it had been a feather pillow, and crashed it down on bare heads, chanting :

‘Th’ harp o’ th’ Lord in th’ han’ o’ a mon
 Brings peace ta th’ bruised an’ broken ;
 Dance, buckies, dance to th’ tune A play,
 F’r so hath th’ Lord God spoken.
 Mak’ a joyfu’ noise ta th’ tune o’ ma harp,
 Dinna slobber an’ scream an’ yell,
 Ye’ll dance th’ noo ta a hotter tune
 In y’r hame on th’ hobs o’ hell.’

‘The Herr Junkers are making the big prisoner sing, and hear how they are yelling ; he must be pleasing them,’ remarked a German soldier to a comrade some distance from the banquet-room in the village.

‘Bah, those Junkers, they drink too much wine when they get hold of loot, and little they care if we get food or not ; they are swine, those Junkers,’ was the comrade’s snarling reply.

All at once the noise in the banquet-room ceased ; the Anzacs’ work was done ; quickly they changed into German uniforms ; then, buckling on swords and revolvers, they turned to go. At the door McGlusky stopped and picked up the Junker who had hunted him with dogs.

‘Drop him, Old Timer.’

‘Na, Snowy ; there’s lots o’ life in him yet ; A didna’ kill him.’

‘We can’t take him with us.’

‘A can, an’ A wull. A pay ma debts in full—this yin’s only been half paid.’

It was no use arguing with the big man in that mood, so his comrades marched out at his heels, and the few German soldiers who caught sight of the procession laughed, for they thought it was the Junkers carrying a comrade loaded to the lips with wine.

At the end of the village street a sentry challenged. McGlusky grunted in reply, and pushed on. The sentry could make out officers' uniforms in the starlight.

'The Herr Officer will give the password.'

McGlusky dropped his hand to his sword-hilt and the soldier stepped on one side; he knew how drunken officers treated private soldiers who thwarted them. Snowy whispered to Ginger:

'Stagger a bit as if you're drunk, kid,' and suiting the action to his words, he half tripped and lurched against the sentry. Then the three fugitives passed on.

'Drunken swine,' growled the sentry, 'they'd cut me down if I interfered with them, and yet if they knew I let any one else pass without the "word," they'd put me against the wall double quick—damn the Junkers.'

A little way from the German lines there stood the remnant of what had once been a fine French forest; shells from the allied armies and from the Germans had each in turn wrought sad havoc with it; most of the trees were leafless, stripped bare by the storm winds raised by the flying projectiles, for each army had in turn occupied it, as also had the French; it was at this juncture a sort of no-man's country, lying between the advance posts of the foes. Towards this skeleton of a forest McGlusky steered his way, and at last the Anzac party reached it.

'A'm theenkin' we're safe noo,' grunted the Scot

as he cast his living burden none too gently to the ground.

The Junker protested, saying this was no way to treat an officer and a gentleman.

'A'm no denyin' ye may be conseedered a gentleman where ye were raised,' remarked Mac judicially, 'but a decent hog wudn'a claim ye as kin in any ither land; dinna open yer mooth agin, ma buckie, or A'll push th' spike o' yer helmet inta it ta keep yer teeth company.'

'I'm a prisoner of war, and——'

'Ye air that, ye misbegotten beastie.'

'I—I claim Christian treatment due to my rank for——'

'Y'r goin' ta get Chreestian treatment—my kind o' Chreestianity, an' A believe in daein' unta a mon as he does ta me an' ma comrades; ye'll ha' nothing ta complain about in regard ta short rations when A pay ma debt tae ye; ye theenk a' th' rest o' mankind is mud an' ye an' yer class air pure potter's clay, dom ye, dom ye; A'm gawn ta expand yer education on deemocratic lines before A part wi' ye.'

The Junker whined to Snowy, but that gentle youth gave him small comfort, saying:

'You gave us merry hell when you were top dog, cully, an' we'll fry your bacon on both sides to make even; I'm not strong on prayer myself, but if I was you, I'd begin sayin' all the little things I learnt when a kid—you'll need 'em. We're bad forgetters, we Anzacs.'

'Specially whin th' dog bites is fresh,' supplemented Ginger, who was aching all over.

When the trio were about to recommence their march, Snowy suggested that he and Ginger between

them should carry the prisoner for a bit, or else make him walk.

'Ye wull no',' snapped McGlusky; 'he's mine, an' A'll no' part wi' a hair o' him; it gives ma joy ta feel him on ma shoulder. A've longit wi' a longin' unspeakable ta get a good grup o' him these many days; nivver did a bridegroom grup a bride wi' a daintier thrill o' rich pleasure than A grup him. A can feel him groanin' in his innards a' th' time, f'r he's a cooard; he has no' th' spunk ta bite on th' bullet an' die like a fechter.'

'Shnowy,' chuckled Ginger, 'och, Shnowy, what a murtherin' pity y'r not a faymale!'

'Think so, kid? Why?'

'Th' Auld Toimer's fond av yez, Snowy, an' he might make yez his bride if yez was av th' faymale persuasion; ye heard what he said about huggin' brides just now.'

'Yes,' drawled Snowy; 'I guess he'd make a gentle lover; he'd embrace his bride like a steam winch.'

'A steam winch's a fool to him. Oi saw him hug wan av our London landladies; he said he was only illusthratin' a bit poem he'd wrote her.'

'What did she say, Ginger?'

'Och, she did not say anything for about two hours—she cudden't. Me an' a faymale boarder had ter work her by th' arrums an' legs like a pump ter get wind enough in her f'r a spache, an' thin she said she'd rather be run over by a fire engine than go through ut again.'

'So would this Junker he's carryin', I'll bet; Ginger.'

In this way the comrades passed through the wood, McGlusky crooning in religious ecstasy:

'Lord, all thy ways air wonnerfu',
 Though at times we doot thy grace,
 As A did when this Junker buckie
 Blunted his spurs upon ma face.
 But noo A ha' him in ma han'
 A see thy won'rous plan,
 Ye've gie'd him ower ta ma han'
 Ta mak' th' de'il a man.'

The Junker, carried on that hefty shoulder, did little but moan and curse for a good part of the journey, then in a panic of sheer despair he suddenly wriggled half out of the Scot's grip, and tearing off the helmet Mac wore jauntily over one ear, he seized the spike and using the helmet like a hammer on the hard skull he beat McGlusky to his knees. But dazed as he was by the unexpected onslaught, Mac's hate was too snow cold to let him lose his prisoner. Twining his gaunt arms round the Junker's hips, he brought him down, and then sitting astride his adversary, he did things to him with his helmet until Ginger interfered, saying :

'Bedad, sorr, sthop ut, y'r lettin' th' baste die too aisy.'

'Y'r richt, wee laddie, it is too easy—f'r him, but gin he were a decent body he'd no' be complainin' o' th' saftness o' his departure fra this world o' sin.'

'Are you hurt yourself, Old Timer?'

'Weel na, A'm no' what ye ma ca' hurtit, Snowy, but th' bash he dinged ma ower ma skull wi' th' helmet has ta'en awa' a cravin' A had f'r ma breakfast; but A dinna blame him f'r tryin' to get awa'; it's th' first manly thing th' buckie's done since A kenned him.'

'We must be near our lines now, sorr, an' ut will soon be daybreak. Are yez goin' ter take th' baste

inside? If yez do he'll be sent ter Blighty an' treated like a prince.'

There was a pause; then Mac remarked:

'A've gie'd th' matter ma conseederation, wee laddie; A'm theenkin' we'll mislay th' spawn o' evil.'

'How, sorr?'

'A'm no' sure, but A have it in ma bones th' Lord o' justice wad na ha put ma ta th' trouble o' cartin' this Junker a' this way ta let him gang ta Blighty ta be fed on corn cakes an' wine, an' a' manner o' dom fulishness; it wad no' be just, an' justice, not love, is th' root o' a' good in th' universe. A'm sure in ma bones th' Lord has a plan ta fit this son o' Belial.'

'If the Lord hasn't, I have,' cooed Snowy, half drawing the sword he had been wearing with great discomfort to himself ever since his escape.

'We're near th' Breetish edge o' th' wood, ma laddies; let us sit doon an' wait f'r th' fu' dawn, f'r if a patrol sees us in these togs we'll be filled wi' lead before we can explain th' seetuation, especially eef we come across a new draft; it's th' way o' recruities ta be ower quick on th' trigger.'

'I'd sooner go rat-huntin' in a magazine with a lighted fire stick than bump into a new draft suddenly in any uniform,' cooed the sharpshooter.

'Oi saw wan lot av recruities charge a hay-stack wid th' bay'nit in th' starlight; they said they thought ut was cavalry, an' th' C.O. said he'd haff a mind ter tie 'em up to ut an' make 'em ate ut.'

'Stop, Ginger,' growled McGlusky; 'A ken th' Lord loveth a cheerfu' leear in seasons o' sickness an' sorrow, but, wee mannie, y'r too dom cheerfu' a' th' year roond wi' y'r lees.'

CHAPTER X

THE ANZACS' EWE LAMB

AS the three comrades rested, waiting for the dawn, conversation drifted on to theological subjects, as it so often did when McGlusky and Ginger made two of the congregation, the Scot arguing that justice in the shape of retribution was the keystone of the arch of all things, a thesis Ginger would not accept without argument.

'If God believes in justice, sorr, why do some men have all th' honey av life an' some all th' gall av ut?'

'It's—it's part o' th' plan, mannie.'

'Oi don't know th' plan, sorr, but Oi'm seekin' knowledge.'

McGlusky began to squirm, for he knew Ginger in the guise of a seeker after truth, and Snowy grinned silently.

'Tell me, sorr, if this is justice: two children are born th' wan night, wan is born blind in poverty an' misery, th' other is born wid good eyes an' health, in th' midst av riches, born wid a rose in his mouth an' a gould spoon in each fist, so to spake.'

'Weel, mannie?'

'If God was just as yerself says, sorr, an' wan av thim kiddies had ter be born blind f'r th' sake av th' plan yez spoke av, wouldn't ut be only fair if th' blind kiddie had th' money an' th' crame av loife ter

make up f'r the loss av his eyes? Why give all to wan an' nothing to th' other?'

'Perhaps th' wean suffers f'r th' sins o' its fathers, mannie.'

'Och, an' indade, sorr, Oi didn't think av that. Do dogs sin, sorr?'

'No, Ginger, dogs ha' no' th' moral sense o' richt an' wrong; they canna sin.'

'Does a dog represint loife, sorr?'

'A form o' life, yes, laddie.'

'An' God made all life, sorr?'

'Yes, but A dinna want a deesquiseetion on sic things th' noo; ma head is too sair fra th' knock th' Junker loon gie'd it wi' the helmet.'

But Ginger would not be denied.

'Tell me, sorr, why is wan dog born to lie in a lady's lap an' another ter be grubbin' in th' gutters f'r scraps all uts loife, an' ter die shiverin' on a doorstep at th' finish, seein' ut can't be f'r th' sins av thim that begat ut? Where does "justice" come in? Oi see no justice in y'r "plan" f'r man or baste, sorr.'

'Wee mannie,' said McGlusky sadly, 'A ha' waded in deep watters masel' in ma day, an' like yersel' A thocht there was naething in th' "plan" but cruelty. A mind when A was gold-minin' on th' borders o' Bolivia. A was on ma lonesome, an' A took ta watchin' th' birds an' beasts, an' a' th' things o' nature, an' A thocht it was a' cruel an' A hated th' "plan."'

The veteran pulled reminiscently at his pipe. Ginger leaned forward eagerly; of all things, he loved to draw from the Old Timer some of his quaint natural history observations, and to this end he had skilfully manœuvred the conversation.

' Tell us about thim things, sorr, an' how they fit th' " plan."'

' It's a gey unchancy country, Bolivia, th' bottom on th' top most o' th' time. One day, bein' tired, A was watchin' th' big spiders crawlin' about in th' bell flowers o' th' creepers that climb an' twine over all things in their season: red bells, yellow bells, blue bells an' striped yins, half as big as lilies, dainty as Chinese porcelain, an' althegither lovely; all kinds o' insects climbed down th' cups o' th' bells ta drink th' honey at th' bottom, an' th' big spiders waited on the rim o' th' bells an' murdered 'em as they came up—it was cruel, an' A hated the big beasts; their hinder parts were near as big as walnuts, an' glossy black as velvet. A weeshed th' birds would kill them, but they didn'a; an' A saw wasps—not like them yins ye see here or in Englan', but big things marked like all their tribe wi' th' tiger stripes—an' A knew they cud sting, for A'd had some, an' A watched ta see if they would hunt th' spiders, but they didn'a—not then.'

The Junker who had been waiting an opportunity moved to crawl away. Snowy put his leg across the fellow's neck, and said quietly: ' Lay still, you,' and the Junker, with a hopeless moan, sank down again, and McGlusky took up his story.

' As th' season o' flowers wore on, A noticed swarms o' dainty wood flies comin' after th' honey in th' bell flowers; they had long wings like transparent silver, an' saft, gracefu' bodies—th' Indians ca' them th' nuns. These flies th' spiders murdered by swarms until it was hard ta find a flower that was no' littered wi' wings like silver gauze; it made me mad ta watch

th' robber spiders at their bluidy work an' A often took a stick an' killed wan or twa, but th' greedy robbers were there in thoosan's. Then A noticed a strange thing happen; towards th' time when th' bell flowers began ta die off, th' robber spiders that had never been afraid o' th' wasps, seemed ta fear 'em; when yin o' th' tiger-striped beasties wad come buzzin' roond, th' spiders wad climb un'er a bit bark or rin an' hide un'er a hollow leaf, an' this puzzled ma, f'r th' wasps didn'a touch 'em, so A watched an' saw that th' wasps were buildin' their nests; they dinna hive thegither as they dae here, but each pair builds a clay hoose o' its ain aboot as long as ma thumb an' a wee bit broader. They wad gather a peculiar kind o' clay an' plaster it ta th' side o' a rock an' th' only tools they had were their wings an' feet, but they made their hames sae hard A had ta gie a hard crack wi' ma hammer ta smash yin o' them. When a pair o' th' winged tigers had their hoose ready a' but th' roof, then they mated, an' A soon learnt why th' robber spiders were feared o' them, f'r as soon as th' hen wasp was ready ta lay her eggs, th' pair o' them wud seek a big fat spider an' sting him till he fell ta th' ground dazed like, then between them they would hunt th' black murderer in th' direction o' their hame, an' when he was close ta th' mooth o' it, th' pair o' winged tigers would fly at him like imps o' th' pit an' sting him until he lay comatose wi' th' venom o' their poison, but no' dead; ye ken, it was their plan ta keep life in him; an' then th' hen wasp would insert her long tube doon which her eggs pass deep inta th' hinder pairt o' th' spider, th' pairt where a' th' meat in his body was stored, an'

she would lay her season's batch o' eggs in his juicy black body. Then between them they wad drag th' comatose body an' push it inta there clay hame, an' prison it there by sealin' up th' roof wi' clay.'

'Och, an' he was a murtherer av innocents; serve th' baste right, sorr.'

'What happened after, Old Timer?'

'Weel, Snowy, th' spider kep' alive until th' warmth o' its body hatched th' wasp's eggs, an' th' grubs was born, an' they lived on th' living spider till spring; then from grubs they turned inta young wasps, an' th' united pressure o' them opened th' lid o' th' hame, an' they came oot inta th' sunshine. Dae ye see th' "plan," th' great plan o' a' nature, an' its law o' compensation? The' flies stole th' life juice o' th' flowers, th' spider murdered th' flies, an' the wasps lived on th' spider, an' if ye ha' eyes ta see, ye'll notice th' same thing runnin' through all nature fra tape-worms ta prima donnas, f'r man an' wumman air na mair exempt fra th' universal law than spiders. Noo, laddies, it's gettin' daylight, an' A'm theenkin' this Junker buckie ha' reached that sphere in his ac-teevities when he maun play his part in th' plan o' compensation. A'm theenkin' it wull no' be lang before he un'erstan's th' great meestery.'

'Goin' ter hang him, Old Timer?'

'Na, Snowy.'

'Och, sorr, let's give th' baste a flyin' start an' hunt him wid swords as he hunted us wid dogs.'

'Na, na, Ginger, that wudn'a be gentle, an' A wad ha' ye act like a gentleman in a' things. A've thocht hoo ta act wi' yon Junker lout. A'll fecht him masel' wi' swords.'

' Hardly fair to me an' the kid, Old Timer ; we want a bit o' him too.'

' Ye can ha' it, laddie,—ye can bury him.'

The Junker sat up ; his face was livid, for he had heard every word.

' I have got to fight you all, one after the other, is that it ? '

' Na, if ye kill me, ye'll gang free, but ye'll no' kill me. A feel th' speerit o' th' Lord workin' in ma ; ye may tak' off yer tunic an' roll th' sleeve o' y'r shirt o' y'r sword arm, an' dae y'r best, f'r as th' Lord leeveth A'm gawn ta hew ye asun'er as did Agag o' ould tu his enemies f'r deesgracin' ma in front o' y'r men. Eef ye'd like ta wheesper a bit prayer afore A send ye ta th' judgment hall o' th Almighty, ye can begin noo, but dinna mak' it ower lang, f'r A'm greedy ta be at ye.'

The Junker rose sullenly, spitting curses, and made ready to do battle for his life. McGlusky bared his gnarled right arm and knelt :

' Lord, remem'er thy ewe-lamb in this hoor an' gie ma grace ta split this buckie inta kin'lin' wood, Amen.'

' Och, Shnowy, look at the face av th' Junker baste ! He's got as much chanct wid th' Auld Toimer as th' black spider had wid the tiger wasps.'

' Hope I won't look like the Junker when my time comes ter go west ; he's gnashin' his teeth like a mad dog, an' th' Old Timer looks as happy as if he was goin' to his weddin', kid.'

' Yes,' said Ginger, ' he thinks he's th' instrumnt av what he calls " th' plan," an' whin he gets thim religious ideas before a fight he's ondacently happy '

Oi wuddent loike ter fight wid a man whose trained on religion.

The combatants were both big men, but built on different plans: McGlusky, big of bone but loose-jointed, with no flesh worth talking about; the Junker, solid and what Snowy termed 'dairy fed'—'Bafe an' beer to th' heels,' was Ginger's comprehensive description.

The moment the antagonists faced each other it was evident that the German was a swordsman and that McGlusky was not, yet the Scottish Anzac was radiantly confident and went to the fray like a nigger to a water-melon patch. Jumping forward, he drove the heavy cavalry sabre downwards with all his might; the Junker parried the stroke, and the steel met as a hammer falling upon an anvil. Swiftly the Junker thrust in reply, but McGlusky went away with a side-step that had saved him many a time when fighting with his fists.

'Good f'r yez, sorr,' shouted Ginger. 'Shnowy, he'll bate him wid his fate!'

'No chin music now, kid; don't take his attention off his job; th' squarehead knows this game better'n th' Old Timer.'

McGlusky was back at his man; his face was beaming like a sardine-tin in the sun. He feinted as if for a thrust, and slashed at the German's neck, a great swinging stroke; the Junker caught it on his blade, and lunging instantly afterwards ripped McGlusky's arm from wrist to elbow. The wound roused all the fighting venom in the veteran; his blade whirled and flashed around the Junker's head like lightning round a steel rod in a storm, but the German's defence was

superb, he deflected every stroke with the skill of a master swordsman. Ginger was twitching all over with excitement; Snowy, leaning quietly against a blighted tree trunk, smoked as if the spectacle had only a passing interest for him, for he was master of his emotions. The German, biding his time, waited until McGlusky's fury expended itself, then he attacked, and McGlusky leapt back, or stepped aside and saved himself a dozen times by just a hair's breadth. Then the Junker changed his tactics: he feinted low, and the veteran dropped his blade to parry the thrust, and the Junker, sweeping his blade across, sent a whistling stroke at McGlusky's neck which would have taken his head off if it had landed, but McGlusky ducked as many a time he had ducked under a swinging right-hand punch aimed at his jaw, but the edge of the blade just caught the skin of his scalp and the blood streamed down his cheek and neck.

'Faith, Shnowy, he's peelin' th' Old Timer like a pertater; let's call it a dhraw, an'—an' stop ut.'

'Dry up, kid.'

The fight went on its fierce, implacable way, one man fighting like a boxer, the other like a swordsman, yet the confidence never left the Scotch Anzac face. The Junker was showing weariness, and McGlusky was being bled weak by his wounds; not once had he landed edge or point on the German. Ginger whispered to Snowy: "Och, ut's not fair, an' jewelin's agin th' law, anyway. Shnowy, Oi'm not gain ter see th' Auld Toimer kilt. O'im goin' ter shlip a pistol bullet inta that dam Junker.'

'Wait a bit, kid.'

Suddenly the Junker thrust at the body; the veteran

screwed his frame edgeways on, as he would have done to avoid a straight punch ; the Junker, missing his objective, stumbled forward, and McGlusky struck him full in the face at short range with the heavy hilt of the cavalry sabre. It was not a stroke in sword-play according to any of the rules of the schools, but it served.

‘ Good f’r yez, sorr—illigant—swat him wid th’ sharp ind av ut now, sorr, poke ut through ’m anywheres, th’ scut.

Snowy brought the back of his hand across Ginger’s mouth, and sent him sprawling. The German had reeled back half-dazed by the unorthodox stroke he had received ; his backward move brought him close to a charred tree-trunk, and as McGlusky came at him he swept his blade round with all his force and, meeting the wood, his word snapped off six inches from the guard. McGlusky saw the misadventure and dropped his point to the ground, for it was not in him to take a mean advantage. The Junker gave one glance, and then hurling the hilt full in the veteran’s face turned and ran for his life. McGlusky stood for a second in amazement, then, snatching up the hilt that had not added to his beauty, he growled :

‘ Th’ lowdoon skunk, gin A catch him, A’ll mak’ him eat it.’

He rushed off in pursuit, but Ginger was before him ; fleet of foot as a greyhound, he sped on the Junker’s tracks, the cavalry sabre he had looted from the German lines bare in his right hand ; the only thought alive in his heart was that this man had once hunted him, and it was his turn now. Straight towards a great hole that had been made by many

bursting shells ran the Junker ; he intended to skirt it in the direction of the German lines, but a glance over his shoulder showed him Ginger dashing hot on his tracks. The wood on the opposite side of the great shell-hole was dense, and it seemed possible that if he reached its shelter he might evade his pursuers. With this in mind, he headed straight for the cavernous gap in the earth ; that hole had filled about half-way with rain-water and liquid slime, but the sun and wind had created a crust on the surface which looked firm ; the Junker chanced it and jumped, and Ginger, racing two yards behind, bent his body to spring after him, but Snowy made a desperate rush and grabbed his shoulder even as the Irish lad was about to leap, for no matter what the crisis Snowy's brain, cool as a glacier never deserted him, and he knew something of shell-holes by bitter experience.

'Curse yez, Shnowy, let——'

'Look, kid.'

Ginger looked, and so did McGlusky, who had come rushing upon the scene. The Junker was up to his hips in thick oozy foul slime ; he clutched at the sun-baked crust on either side of him and tried to drag himself upwards, but the pressure of his hands broke the frail support, and he sank to his sword-belt ; then he began to struggle madly, and every movement pulled him lower in the noisome mess. He turned a white face towards the three grim faces on the bank. 'Help !' His cry rang like a woman's shriek ; he must have heard many women shriek like that in heart-agony in Belgium and in Northern France when he and such butchers as he shambled and ravished the peasantry, aye, and in Poland and Serbia also, for he had been

there with the Kaiser's raiding hosts, and he and his Junker comrades had deemed it such fine sport. The three could not have saved him if they would ; they had no rope to throw ; and their putties had been discarded when they put on German officers' uniforms. The Junker made another mad effort, and again the crust broke, and he sank deeper still. ' Help ! ' His face was screwed round towards the watchers again, but he read no pity in the unwinking eyes that looked into his own. McGlusky slowly lifted his right hand and pointed to the skies.

' Ask help there ; that's where y'r gawn ta.'

' Bet he ain't ; he's goin' the other way.'

It was Snowy's cold, passionless drawl charged with hate of the ' baby murderers ' that knew no pity.

The German aristocrat was up to his chin in the filter, a long drawn wail of terror broke from his grey lips, then his head went under the slime and the tragedy was finished. For a moment the watchers gazed in silence, then McGlusky spoke :

' Laddies, it's th' fulfilment o' th' plan. Did A no' say th' Lord wud find a way ? We mortals air ower fond o' meddlin'.'

' Och, sorr, you an' y'r " plan ! " If he hadn't bruk ' his sword agin the tree you'd ha' been th' last act in yer auld plan.'

' Not quite th' last act, kid,' murmured Snowy significantly.

The three turned to retrace their footsteps, and from behind half a dozen trees glided little brown men holding knives in their hands.

' By the saints—Ghurkas !'

Ginger made an impulsive step forward, forgetting his German uniform.

'Stand still, you fool kid!'

The warning did not come a second too soon, for one of the bronze men had balanced his knife to throw, and as Ginger well knew, the 'kurri' would have gone through him unerringly; he knew, for it had been one of his many delights to watch Ghurkas practising. Snowy tossed his sword on the ground, the others did the same, and all held up their hands. Glances of annoyance and disappointment passed between the captors: they had expected a fight and hoped for it, for to the little bronze men nothing so much resembled their idea of paradise as a battle royal, and a battle with the steel above all things.

'Why you wear German uniforms an 'speak Inglis?' demanded the leader of the scouting squad.

'Sorra a bit av German do Oi know except "damn the Kaiser."'

Snowy chuckled, for it did not seem to him that Ginger's explanation proved that he knew much of the language of the Fatherland.

'Och, an' what are yez cluckin' like a hen for, Shnowy?'

'Your German sounded like Irish to me, kid.'

The serious brown faces were regarding them suspiciously. McGlusky stepped into the breach. With a large gesture of his right hand, he commanded attention.

'Hech, ma buckies, we're no' th' dogs o' Kaiser Wullie; we're British sojers escaped fra yonner enemy lines.' Then, indicating the three uniforms, 'Th' buckies who used ta wear these air in gehenna th' noo;

leastways, we gie'd 'em a gude start on th' journey. Ye'd best shift yer shanks an' tak' us inta oor lines; A've verra important information f'r th' Colonel sahib's ears, so get a move on an' dinna stan' glowerin' at us like wolves at a fat buck, or A'll be haein' a word wi' ye after A've done wi' th' ear o' th' Colonel sahib.'

At the well known sound of the Scottish accent, the Ghurkas grinned in delighted fashion, and the leader said :

'The young soldier with the head like an Indian sunset is not of the kilties.'

Ginger, who was touchy concerning the colour of his hair where strangers were concerned, flared up at once.

'May a banshee fly away wid y'r soul! Who are yez wid y'r face like boot-blackin' mixed wid pay soup ter be takin' liberties wid me hair?'

The Ghurka grinned until his mouth looked like a tobacco pouch that a poodle has played with.

'Truly,' he said to his comrades, 'I think these be sahibs of ours; none other speak their minds so plainly. The big man I know by his speech for a kiltie, and the young one is of that people who fight with their own shadows when they can get naught else to quarrel with. Have we not seen them in the bazars in our own country, ready to drink or to fight at all hours of the day or night? And the other—the young man with the quiet tongue and the steady eyes, his sort also have I seen—often.'

'Let us be careful; spies wear many tongues,' warned a comrade.

The first Ghurka smiled sardonically and caressed his 'kurri.'

' We be two to one, and armed ; it is not always a virtue to be over careful, Ram Jung. Then addressing McGlusky, he asked : ' Who was that one who died with his mouth full of filth in the shell hole, the one who screamed like a woman before the mire choked him ? He was not a brave man ; it is permitted a woman to cry out when she is hurt, but not a soldier.'

McGlusky told him, and also in a few graphic sentences described the treatment the Junker had given him and his comrades whilst prisoners.

' Why did you fight him when you had him in your power ?'

The big man's eyes grew baleful.

' A wanted ta feel th' steel bite inta his flesh ; A wanted ta lop off th' han' that struck ma when A was helpless an' th' fut that booted ma face when A was beaten ta th' groond ; you wud ha' wanted th' same, wee man.'

' I would have laid him open from the chin to the belt with this, and left him for the birds to bury, had he done so to me, and afterwards fell into my hand, but yours is the way of the kilties ; I have seen it many times on the borders of the hill country in my own country. Vengeance is only sweet to you and yours if you take it fighting ; vengeance is sweet to me and mine whenever it falls to our hand, hot or cold.'

' A ken that fine. A was no' on th' Afghan border f'r naething. Noo haud yer blether, wee man, an' tak' us ta th' Anzac Colonel ; ma wame is achin' f'r ma breakfas' an' it's ower time noo.'

Quietly the squad of little bronze men surrounded the three and marched them into the Anzac lines, and the first person they encountered was the padre,

who made a joyful rush at Ginger with hands extended and a smile on his face that McGlusky said would have made trout rise in midwinter if he'd only put it on a hook. Ginger gripped the extended hands and with whimsical dignity addressed the padre.

' Oi'm thinkin', sorr, you moight salute me ; don't yez see Oi'm a major o' a crack regiment ? '

' Whatever you've on your back, you've the flavour av dear dirty Dublin on y'r tongue, ye cub.'

' Oi'll be reportin' yez f'r insolence, sorr,' grinned Ginger, and then with a grip of his hands the good Father knew and understood, the imp whispered, ' An' God's blessin' an' th' saints' foller yer footsteps, padre, an' th' light av angel eyes be a lamp to yer fate, sorr.' Then, to hide the water that had gushed to his own beautiful eyes, he cocked his Prussian helmet at such an angle that the grinning Ghurkas said it was only the colour of his hair that kept it on his head at all, and his swagger and swank as he and the escort marched through the chuckling Anzacs' ranks set the lines agog with merriment.

' Hello, Old Timer, good luck to you, old cock bird ! ' shouted Flamingo. ' Couldn't kill him with an axe,' he supplemented to his cronies who in their own quaint slang hurled a rude but hearty welcome at the veteran.

' Give us a cake-walk, Ginger ! ' shouted a voice, and the imp, his face full of drollery, gave such a good imitation of a cake-walk and yet kept sufficiently within military bearing to accentuate the parody, that even grizzled officers had to tug their moustaches down to hide their merriment.

Snowy, moving along with his own particular

slouch which had defied all drill sergeants, came in for a thundrous welcome when he arrived abreast of his own company, and the only man who did not raise a yell was Murrimbidgee, who, of all men there, loved him the most.

'Murrimbidgee's jealous of Snowy,' sneered some one.

'Yes,' came the cold answer, 'even a liar like you can speak th' truth by accident sometimes. I'm more jealous of him than I'd be of Julius Cæsar.' And he meant it, though only the padre, who was near, understood. To have been as straight and clean as the sharpshooter, Murrimbidgee would have given his reckless life and pawned his soul, but to some men the golden gates of opportunity never seem to be open at the right moment.

When he and Snowy met in the lines a little later they exchanged a curt nod, that was all, and as Snowy sat that night the centre of an admiring throng, telling of the adventures of McGlusky and Ginger, and forgetting his own, Murrimbidgee sat apart, just near enough to hear the narrative without appearing to be interested; and as he sat every now and again in the silences that punctuated the sharpshooter's tale the soldiers could hear the rustle and crisp whisper of the cards that the gamester shuffled.

'Plays in his sleep, don't he?' whispered Sunny Jim.

'Could if he wanted to, an' then skin a fool like you to yer shirt,' snapped Snowy.

Ginger came to that particular group and was greeted hilariously. He saw the gambler sitting apart, and went to him, for the Irish lad never forgot the

days when he had been lonely before McGlusky found him.

'Yer ondacently fond o' yer own comp'ny, Murrimbidgee; come 'nd join th' ruck.'

'I'm all right, son.'

'Y'r all wrong; come on now.'

'Yes, that's what's th' matter with me, son, I'm all wrong.'

Something in the tone of the voice more than the mere words struck the imp and woke his swift Irish sympathies. He slipped a hand down round the gambler's face and squeezed the handsome head against his leg. Possibly that was the first genuine caress the gambler had received in all his life; he had had others that he had paid for, but none knew better than he the value of caresses you pay coin of the realm for to women of a certain sort—young as he was, he had few of life's illusions. He let his cheek rest against the youngling's leg for a moment, then—'Go to blazes, son,' he said softly, and went on shuffling his eternal pack.

Soon Ginger was the centre of the jovial, light-hearted group of warriors, and it was not long before the cry of 'Sing, Ginger, sing,' was heard, for those rough blades asked for nothing better in life after a hard day's fighting than to listen to the joyous melody of his glorious voice. McGlusky, at another bivouac, heard Ginger; the boy was singing a boatman's chanty picked up from some French Canadian soldiers, and soon the big man was amongst the lads audience, for he gloried in his singing. Ginger sang until even he was weary, and he loved his gift as a skylark does. Then a rough but kindly fellow offered

him a drink of rum and water. The lad refused, saying simply :

'Och, no ; Oi've cut ut out.'

Then some thoughtless fool jibed him, for fools are like potatoes, they grow in every land, and the pity is they can't be boiled. Ginger flushed, but said nothing, and the fool opened his mouth again. Then McGlusky pushed himself forward and said :

'Th' wee laddie ha' tell't ye he ha' cut th' drink out till th' war is ower. A ken why. He made a promise ta a staff officer he'd no' touch it ; he made that promise, an' he will no' break it—he'd dee first.'

Then McGlusky told the crowd how Ginger had kept his oath at the risk of his life in the midst of the Junker officers, and when he had finished he glared round him in silence, waiting for the ass to jibe again ; but the fellow was discreetly silent.

Murrimbidgee's cold, level voice broke in on the tension.

'You needn't wait for a reply from Black Hogan, Mac ; he's a dog that barks through a fence but never even raises a growl outside a gate.'

'A ken Black Hogan, Murrimbidgee ; he's aboot ma ain weight, an' A wad gie a month's pay if he wad say again wha' he said th' noo ta th' wee laddie.'

'He won't,' sneered Murrimbidgee. 'Black Hogan's th' sort that would defile a grave, but he'd never fill one—unless he could shoot some one in the back.'

Black Hogan glared across at the gambler, but that worthy remarked steadily :

'Needn't try to hoodoo me, Hogan ; there's lots of room just here if you care to come and look for it,

and you can have your belly full o' trouble any old way—with the bayonet if you'd prefer it.'

'A'm theenkin' A can supply a' Mr. Hogan's requirements, buckie, thankin' ye a' th' same f'r buttin' in.' Then Mac turned to Hogan. 'A cam' here fu' o' love f'r a' men, for A ha' passed through troubled watters these last days, an' th' Lord has been verra gude ta ma, gie'in' ma twa frien's that didn'a ken fear an' wudn'a desert a comrade in time o' trouble; th' Lord ha' treated ma as His ewe-lamb, an' A'm no' ungratefu'; ye ken ma weel, A'm no' a mon o' strife. A dinna mind dallyin' wi' a fecht noo an' then, but na snow-drop loves peace mair than masel', but, Black Hogan, eef ye misca' th' wee laddie again f'r stickin' ta his oath oboot th' drink, A'll push y'r whuskers doon y'r throat an' pu' 'em oot o' y'r ears.'

A gurgle of laughter ran through the group at this proof of McGlusky's peaceful disposition. Then Prospector Brown voiced the sentiments of the crowd :

'We all know Ginger, Old Timer; he's a top hole liar for fun; but no one ever knew the kid break a promise yet, an' the next chap who tries to coax him to drink is going to sample trouble.'

The padre, who had been lingering in the shadows and had heard all, went to his dug-out, his heart singing with joy, and on his way he found time to drop in upon that kindly staff officer who had once shielded McGlusky and extracted a promise from Ginger, and to him he told how the boy had kept his pledge in the midst of danger.

'He's a great bit of stuff,' was the officer's comment.

'He's an awful young pup wid a big spark o' th' grace o' God mixed up wid that same,' laughed

the padre; 'it'll be a case of "pull divil, pull baker," wid Ginger as long as he lives.'

'I wonder which will win; the master of evil has such a lot of pleasant knots in his end of the rope, padre.'

'I think a woman will settle it one way or the other; if he marries a good one, and thank God the world's full of 'em, he'll give satan th' slip. Good night, and good luck.'

The padre had ended rather abruptly, for his keen eyes, so used to reading men's faces, had seen the staff officer's face turn grey-white when he mentioned what a woman's influence might do for a soldier.

'God forgive me if I hurt his heartstrings with my clumsy fingers,' he muttered on his homeward way, 'for he's a gallant gentleman whatever his trouble may have been in the past.' Then softly to his own soul: 'I wonder if it was a woman of the wrong sort that drove him to the cursed bottle in the old Indian days, but that's between him and his maker.'

CHAPTER XI

'TA HELL WI' THE KAISER'

A GREAT roar of battle on the Western Front ; men fighting as they had fought for months against the pick of Germany's troops, always ready, always steady, or as McGlusky put it, 'three men in ane pair o' breeks.' The Anzacs had done their bit, and they had done it well. Close to them was an Irish regiment, that for some reason known only to the gods of imbecility seldom had its deeds of valour mentioned in print, yet even the Anzacs raised their slouch hats to the 'Paddies' who knew no fear.

'I love those Irish tykes,' drawled Snowy to a crowd around a bivouac fire in front of Pozieres. 'They go over the parapet as if they were goin' to a weddin' or a wake, and fear o' death is not in them, yet we never read about them. Funny, ain't it? Wonder what's the meanin' of it?'

'Politics,' tersely interpolated a voice on the other side of the small bivouac fire.

'Then,' drawled Snowy, 'politics be damned. What does it matter if a chap's a red hot rebel in Tipperary if he fights like hell-with-its-trousers-off out here? I'm going to vote the way I like when I get home again, but while I'm here I'm going to fight as the army does, and it's like that with Irish. Notice

them take those guns to-day—gee, they went over and through everything; made a bit more noise than we do when we're workin'; but they were busy once they got on the job.'

'Did yer notice th' kilties a bit farther down th' line last Monday?'

Snowy nodded. 'Yes,' he drawled, 'I noticed the kilties; so did the Kaiser's gang, I'll take my oath.'

'Never want to see anything better than the kilties when they are out for blood,' chirruped the other speaker. 'Made *me* feel glad I wasn't a German when they legged it over the strip of ground between their trench and the German line; they just went on as if they had tickets for Berlin, and hadn't time to stop for a drink till they hit the Brandenburg gate.'

'What's the best thing the Germans have in Berlin, Snowy?' asked a third bivouacker.

Snowy drew the back of his hand across his mouth in a long, slow pull, then, sucking his words in, said, 'Lager beer.'

'Oh, dry up,' chortled another, 'you make my mouth dry. I had some lager beer once,' he added ruminatively, 'when I'd carried my swag to Kurnalpi from Coolgardie; Christmas time, too, hundred and six in the shade, it was. When I've prayed since then, I've asked the Lord to let me go where there's lager beer on ice when I die.'

'You won't, son; you'll go where the buttons 'll melt off your breeches as soon as you enter. Lager beer on ice is for angels, not for soldiers o' the line,' chirruped Snowy.

' Hello, boys, tell me where I am, will you ? '

The voice came out of the darkness, and a moment later a dispatch-rider pushed his battered machine into the circle of light. As soon as the ' boys ' saw him there was a chorus of welcome.

' Hello, Geoff ! ' ' What's the news, boy ? ' ' When did you come back from Blighty ? ' ' Got over your gassing, old sport ? '

The new-comer, a tall, well-made man of thirty, did not answer the chorus ; he was busy examining his machine. At last he straightened up.

' That settles it, boys,' he said, ' my old tin can has got a bullet, an' she's no more good to ride. Say, tell me, are we near a road or track ? I'm a bit hustled.'

' Quite close, and you won't have long to wait for a dispatch-rider, if that's what you mean. They all go past here, and most of 'em hurry ; lots of shells just hereabouts, Geoff.'

' Well, we must stop the next one and he must take my dispatch on ; my machine is done in.'

' Look pretty near done in yourself, Geoff,' put in Snowy.

' Yes, not feeling too gay—never have felt top notch since I was gassed at Ypres, couldn't pull round properly in Blighty—awful climate, fog as thick as pea soup ; only difference is fog all the time, pea soup once a day.'

' Was out in a fog in London, and got lost with a girl, and——' put in a voice, which was drowned in a roar of laughter.

' What's bitin' you fellows,' roared the voice ; ' can't a feller get lost with a girl in London ? '

'Dunno,' drawled Snowy, 'I couldn't, and I tramped dash near to Epping Forest trying to.'

Another chorus of laughter followed this frank confession.

'See anything in London whilst you were on the sick list, Geoff?'

The boys in the fighting line were greedy for information. Geoff Lamard smiled. He who had fought through South Africa and for a couple of years in Europe, knew the call of the front firing line for news.

'Saw three Zepps brought down, two near Epping Forest, where Snowy tried to get lost with his girl.'

'Tell us about it, Geoff.'

So Lamard, being a good fellow as well as a good soldier, told the story.

'I'd been having dinner with an old Australian you all know, and he got wind about the Zepps, and put me on the lay, 'nd I took a taxi out in the right direction, whilst he went fossicking round for information concerning details to write a story for the papers, and that's how I saw the first one. It came down in a blazing mass, and all the crew were killed.'

'Good enough for the baby killers,' snarled the crowd around the bivouac fire.

A dispatch-rider came with a rush into the little circle of flame, and Lamard handed on his dispatch, which the new man pouched, took a gulp of steaming tea, and dashed off in the darkness. As he was leaving, Snowy said:

'About two hundred yards from here farther on there's a flat about a quarter of a mile across; don't stop for any bivouac fires you may see; ride like

blazes ; that flat is swept by shrapnel fire about every ten minutes ; you'll be lucky if you get through ; if you don't, old sport, we'll bury you decent in the morning.'

The Anzac on the wheel grinned.

'All right, son, I've crossed about a dozen patches like that to-night, and my luck held good.'

'All in the luck o' the game,' replied Snowy. 'Geoff Lamard crossed eleven patches of open ground, and his machine was put out of action in the last.'

'Was that Geoff Lamard who gave me his dispatch ?'

'Yes, partner.'

'Well, if he's been stopped, my luck must be in ; takes a bit to stop Lamard—tell him his pal Horne is out of action.'

'Gone west, eh ?'

'No, just a bit to go on with ; gas first, then a shell splinter. So long, old cock bird.'

'So long. Travel like blazes ; it's your only chance.'

'I'll make the old sardine-tin do her darndest, sonny,' and Banjo Williams, of New South Wales, dashed out into the starlight.

They buried him next day at noon, where they found him, ripped to bits by shrapnel, a hundred and fifty yards from their camp, and Snowy was chief mourner. His machine was intact, and Lamard had taken it and the dispatches, and had raced through the death zone. As he flashed amid the rain of flying iron, Snowy remarked :

'There goes a private soldier who fought all through Africa, starting when he was a kid. He's done two years of this damn game, and is still a private, 'nd he's

got brains to burn, and schoolboys are getting commissions who have never heard a gun go off, and yet they wonder why we don't win all our battles.'

'Ought to have had a commission yourself two years ago, Snowy,' remarked a voice.

'Oh, cut it out, pardner,' was the unsympathetic response, and Snowy went off to match his wit and skill against German sharpshooters, and the boys in his section knew they were O.K. whilst his unwavering eyes were glancing along his rifle barrel.

The next afternoon the Anzacs had a proof of how good the German system of espionage was. There had been just a whisper that the Anzacs were to charge the German trenches, and take them; to 'charge' and to 'take' was the same thing in their vernacular, for never once in the whole period of the war did they fail to take a position they were sent after. They gloried in this, and lived up to their traditions. On this particular afternoon, just when they were wondering if the order would really come for them to advance, the Germans placed a board above their foremost trench, and on that board was sketched an emu and a kangaroo, and underneath in big bold letters was printed: 'Advance Australia—if you can.' It was the Australian coat of arms and motto, with the three last words added in mockery. Swiftly the Antipodean wit supplied an answer. Up went a board over the front Australian trench, and on that board was a big 'iron cross,' and underneath was written: 'Fritz, this is-for valour—come and get it,' and a laugh went up from the trenches of both friend and foe.

'A'm theenkin' A'll tak' a keek behin' oor lines,'

said McGlusky to Snowy. 'There's some one coding messages ta th' Germans; it's a German disguised as a Belgian, A'm theenkin', an'——' he nodded sagely.

'Go ahead, Mac,' was the answer; 'an, say, Old Timer, don't worry about prisoners and court-martials if you catch him at it.'

'A'm no' theenkin' he'll need a coort-martial eef A see him coding a message; ye air ower loose in th' lip th' day, Snowy,' was the severe reply.

About two hours later Mac came back to his trench.

'See anything?' asked Snowy.

'Saw a mon coding to yon trenches.'

'Did you shoot him?'

'Na, A gied him th' butt.'

'Sure he's dead, Mac?'

'Ye can no' be sure o' anything in this wicked worl', Snowy, but if yon mon is no' dead, A'll no' be surprisit ta see Moses an' a' th' prophets turn oop ta mess th' nicht. A'm hopin',' he added, 'A didna shift th' sights o' ma rifle when A hit him wi' th' butt; the blow jarred ma arm richt ta th' shoulther, an' yet th' skull o' th' buckie didna seem any thicker than a goose egg; it's wonnerfu', Snowy, how frail we mortals air.'

Snowy looked at the mighty figure towering there in the dusk, toying with the heavy service rifle as if it were a straw, and did not wonder at the frailty of human anatomy under the circumstances.

'We are all like last year's grass,' whispered the big Scot. 'A'm no' exactly a weaklin', ye ken, laddie, but in this awfu' war A feel A'm na mair than a snow-drop bloomin' before th' breath o' spring.'

'Yes,' cooed Snowy, eyeing the rifle that had just done the spy's business so thoroughly, 'if there's one thing more than another you remind me of, Mac, it's a snowdrop.'

The next day was one that will live in Anzac history, for then was fought the grim battle of Pozieres. The troops were quivering with the lust of battle, waiting the word of command—it came at last.

'Ready, boys—steady for the word.' Soon the word came, and the Anzac warriors hurled themselves forward on Pozieres. They dropped in twos and threes, they fell in dozens, and where the machine-guns got them they went down in hundreds, but they never faltered. They never got out of touch, never wavered, never degenerated into an armed mob; their ranks were broken, their lines gapped, for that day Germany took bitter toll of the men from overseas for all they had done in France. Great guns thundered on them, the bursting shells forming craters into which the oncoming ranks dived as into a stone quarry. Smaller guns, that splashed all the spaces with shrapnel, kept up a hellish jubilee; the rat-tat-tat-ta of the quick-firing guns never stilled for a moment, and the massed rifle fire was murderous in its steady and deadly fusillade. How anything could live in face of such a tornado of destruction passes the comprehension of man. How men could be got to face it is one of the marvels that will puzzle future historians, but the Anzacs did it, as did every kind of regiment in the British army at one time or another in the great war, and as one line was swept away another took its place, and the closer they got the steadier and more determined they

grew. A general, standing on a little eminence with his glasses to his eyes, watched with set face the awful slaughter, and the steady advance; he saw gapped lines close up automatically, saw the fine young Anzac officers holding their men together as if they had served through a score of campaigns, and he smiled grimly, and well he might, for the earth knows no better leaders than the officers of Australia and New Zealand. An old staff officer standing by the general brought his glasses down with a click.

‘They’re as game as the devil, but they’ll never make it, General.’

The general kept his glasses to his eyes, and something like a laugh broke from his firm mouth.

‘They’ll die trying, then,’ he snarled. ‘Look at them; look at ’em now, they’re in amongst the wire, and every gun the enemy has in action is playing on them. Look—by G——, *that* regiment’s gone, but watch the fellows behind; they’re advancing at the double, but in spite of the enemy fire every rank is dressed as if on parade; those officers are made of gold.’

‘They’re the last word in pluck and discipline, General, but they’ll never win through; flesh and blood couldn’t do it; they *must* break directly.’

‘Not on your life, those lads will never break; if only a corporal’s guard gets to the enemy, they’ll go on.’

A few minutes of anxious watching, whilst the German guns played havoc, and then the general’s voice, thrilling with excitement:

‘Won’t do it—won’t they—look at ’em now, look at ’em. man, by G——, they’ve *done* it.’

If they hadn't done it, they were doing it; they were in amongst the German gunners, and never did men use the steel as they used it in that hour; no need to call the German a coward and talk of the throwing up of hands and the cry of 'Quarter, Kame-rad.' Most of the men who have heard that cry so often have heard it in their sleep, a hundred miles away from the fighting lines, and have made popular 'copy' out of it. The Germans fought for every gun, for every foot of ground, for everything that soldiers hold dear, and they died where they fought; they had to die or run when that dour army got amongst them. The pick of Bavaria was there, savage as wolves, and like wolves most of them died, and when the rest were pushed back from that slaughter borne by the quiet fury of Pakeha and Maori and full-blooded Australians, they left a grisly quota of their best behind them, who would never fight again, to tell how Pozieres was fought for and won.

McGlusky had been in the thick of the fray, but in such a fight as that individual effort was obscured by the doings of the many. For, as Snowy remarked later, if every man who performed some deed of magnificent daring in the battle of Pozieres had received the V.C., then Victoria Crosses would have been as common as blackberries. The commanding officer of the big Scot's section came along to have a word with his men, as his way was, and spying Mac, who was a favourite of his, he said:

'Well, Old Timer, what sort of a scrap do you think this was, eh?'

Mac ruminatively chewed a corner of his tobacco plug, then voiced his opinion.

' Na so bad, sir, na so bad ; it was hell on ice gettin' ta them, but when we did grup 'em it was a verra pretty mix-ooop ; they're no' bad fechtters.'

' What were you doing most of the time, Mac ? '

' Me ? Oh, A was jest fechtin'. A pulled a treeger at short range at one mon, gi'ed a bit jab in th' wame wi' th' baggonet ta anither yin, an' swung th' butt on ta th' skull o' anither buckie ; na ane seemed ta be payin' ony special attention ta me, so A jest got beesy, an' A nivver got a scratch, sir ; it's wunnerfu', ' he added reverently, ' hoo th' Lord looks after us in a fecht.'

The C.O. turned away quickly, in order that the Scot might not see his face, for he had run against Mac in the hurly-burly of the battle. The last recollection the C.O. had of McGlusky, he was charging with bayonet fixed, through a thick cloud of smoke, right into a Bavarian regiment, and as he charged he rent the air with a yell that must have come down to him from some ancient Highland border-raiding forbear. His tunic was back somewhere in the Anzac trenches ; his shirt-sleeves were rolled right up to the big, muscle-studded shoulders ; his shirt was undone all down the front, displaying his tremendous chest, and his hob-nailed boots tore up the dirt as he rushed on the foe. Into the thick of it Mac had gone like a whirlwind, followed by a company of West Australians, nearly as lamblike as himself. Through the smoke and haze of battle, the C.O. had seen the massive man thrusting, parrying, clubbing, tearing his way like some human avalanche through all opposition. Yet when the horrible mêlée was at an end, and Pozieres was won, the man who had been so ruth-

less was seen striding distractedly from place to place, looking for a red-headed Irish boy who had been at his elbow in the early stages of the fray.

'Ha' ye seen ma wee mannie? I ha' mislaid him somewheres. Wae's me! A clean forgot th' puir buckie in th' thick o' th' fechtin'. A'm feared he's doon an' oot.'

They tried to cheer him by bidding him remember Ginger's phenomenal luck.

'The puir wee mannie. A'm feared he's an angel th' noo,' was all McGlusky could groan, as he continued his search amid the smoke, and at that the irreverent Anzacs, with the reek of battle and sudden death still all around them, chuckled at the idea of Ginger as an angel.

'If that scarlet topped imp is in heaven,' drawled Snowy, 'I'll lay six to four he got in through a hole in the roof. Why,' he added, 'I don't think they'd keep Ginger in the other place as a permanent boarder if they could help it,' and that was the general consensus of opinion, for Ginger had been leaving footprints on the sands of time during his stay in France. Not that the boy was bad, but he was possessed of a spirit of devilry that made him the life and the burden of a whole brigade. The only person he never played tricks on was McGlusky, whose kindness to him he never forgot. For any one else he had neither respect nor fear—padre or general, it was all one to Ginger, if he saw an opening for his spirit of mischief to uncork itself. Even the transport mules knew him, and kept an unusually wary eye open when he was round. Yet he was a welcome guest at every bivouac, and it was a bad fit of the blues his angel

voice could not charm away, and the soldiers forgave him his diablerie for the sake of his singing.

McGlusky was sweating with anxiety, when at last he came upon the boy, sitting upon an overturned gun, smoking a cigarette and dangling three German helmets from a strap.

'A thocht ye were dead, ye wee gommerill,' was the man's rough greeting.

Ginger explained volubly that he was the livest kind of a corpse in the vicinity. McGlusky pointed an admonitory finger at the German helmets; he did not like the idea of taking anything, even a helmet, from the dead.

'Put th' helmets doon, laddie; it's no' decent ta tak' them.'

In the twinkling of an eye Ginger formed his line of defence; he wanted those helmets; he could barter them for many things his soul craved for in the villages behind the lines. He put all the pathos he could summon into his voice, as he tossed the trophies down at his feet.

'Och, an' indade, sorr, Oi didn't think ut wud be yerself wud make a poor bhoy break his oath on th' cross.'

'Wee mannie, ye ken weel A wud na dae sic a thing. What word did ye swear to?'

Ginger's big eyes grew wistful; he could look like one of Michael Angelo's saints when he wanted to.

'Yez moind Joe McNamara, sorr?'

'A dae—weel,' was the short response, for Joe, though a man grown, was a boy in heart, and just such another as Ginger, and it was a fetish with Mac that McNamara had led his puir wee laddie into a good



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deal of mischief, though as the Flamingo remarked, 'old scratch himself couldn't do much leading with Ginger.'

The imp let a faraway look steal into his eyes, and his usually clear voice was thick, as he whispered, 'Poor Joe.'

'Dom Joe McNamara; he was a fine fechter; but he——'

'Och, sorr, wud yez spake ill o'—th'—dead?'

With two big strides McGlusky was at Ginger's side, his arms around him.

'Wee mannie, A didna ken, A didna ken, an' A kenned ye were awfu' fond o' Joe. Hoo did he dee?'

'A big shell blowed him inter eight hundred and ninety-four bits, sorr. Och, wirra, wirra, sorra's th' day f'r poor Joe.'

A badly smothered laugh came from the smoky gloom near by where Snowy was standing, unknown to the man and lad.

'Losh,' muttered McGlusky, ruminating over Ginger's arithmetic, 'yon shell maun ha' gie'd puir Joe a skelp.'

'Oi promised Joe, sorr, Oi'd send a helmet to his mother, an' wan to his sister in Buenos Aires.'

'Hoo cud ye, laddie, if he was blowed ter blazes in wee bits? There cud na ha' been eneuch o' him left ta mak' a promise ta.'

It took a good deal to stump Ginger, and a little thing like that was not going to do it.

'Oi made the promise, sorr, whin Joe was quartered wid us, sorr, when we was buildin' th' airship; he—he had a presentiment he was soon goin' to a bether world, sorr.'

' Did he, wee mannie? Weel, weel, ye never can tell, but A had a presentiment it micht no' be althegither a better world Joe wud be trackin' tae; he was awfu' joco'.'

' Oi'll not be able to kape me worrud to me dead—pal.'

As he uttered this lament, Ginger rose from the gun and started to move off, but Mac snatched up the three helmets attached by a strap, and thrust them on the imp.

' Here, mannie, tak' 'em, an' as long as ye leeve be as ye air th' day; A'm awfu' prood ta see ye thinkin' so much o' y'r word; there ha' been times when A thocht ye had a wee bittie too little respec' f'r th' truth,' and with a parting pat on the shoulder the giant strode off to attend to his duties, and Snowy materialized from the shadows.

' You awful little liar; Joe McNamara isn't dead; he's in England on furlough. I got a letter from him yesterday. What're you goin' to do with those helmets, Ginger?'

' Goin' ter give you wan, Shnowy.'

' All right, hand it over, and, say, kid, if the Old Timer ever catches you foolin' him he'll skin you alive.'

' Och, ring off; think Oi won't spend most o' what I git fer the helmets on things f'r him?'

' I know you will, or I'd boot you now myself. Why in thunder do you lie like that?'

' Och, cut ut out, Shnowy; ye've no imagination at all, at all; ut's not lyin', ut's what th' padre calls me unthrained artistic timperamint; Oi'm only practisin' now, Shnowy; some day O'im goin' ter write a book; ut's—ut's born in me, ut's jaynius, an' com-

mon sojers who don't know enough ter come in out o' the wet are alwis jealous av jaynius,' and Ginger disappeared out of the reach of Snowy's boot on the run, for at odd intervals there wasn't a scrap of ceremony about the famous sharpshooter, and, as Ginger knew by experience, he was nearly as good with his boot as with a rifle.

McGlusky helped his comrades consolidate the ground won at Pozieres, and then they settled down to hold it, for what they took they held. The Germans set themselves the task of making the new Anzac quarters as uncomfortable as possible, so many guns did they train upon the spot, the range of which they had to a mathematical exactitude that the wonder was how anything with life in it could remain in the trenches.

'It's rainin' shells,' grumbled the Flamingo. 'This ain't the handiwork o' man; the bally clouds are droppin' iron.'

'It's the handiwork o' man right enough, Flamingo,' retorted Snowy; 'it's Bill Kaiser's doin's, damn him; he must have a lot o' shares in iron mines somewhere, an' wants ter send up th' stock.'

'It's no' rainin' iron, ma buckies; losh, it's a deluge,' was McGlusky's contribution to the chorus.

'Bedad, Bill Kaiser ought ta ha' been a blacksmith, he's so mighty fond o' throwin' iron about,' chortled Ginger, who was tying up a nasty graze on the calf of his left leg, caused by a glancing splinter. 'Hope Oi'll get a shot at Windy Bill one o' these days,' added the youngster viciously:

'Hullo, Ginger, lost y'r luck at last, and got a little bit to go on with, eh?'

It was Snowy's voice, and Ginger replied in his finest sarcastic vein :

'No, you idjit, Oi did this meself ter dodge goin' ter th' padre's soul drill.'

He was noted for such replies. Once when taking a badly wounded comrade to the base, a civilian who by some means had blown in on a tour of inspection, and had discovered that the 'base' was near enough for him, meandered over to Ginger's wounded pal and asked, 'Did he get *that* in hand to hand fighting, my lad?'

'No, sorr,' gurgled Ginger, 'he's too—good ter foight; he was shavin' himself wid a table knife, an' th' handle bruk, sorr.'

On another occasion, when minding a maimed man, a fussy civilian said unctuously: 'Ah, gallant chap, gallant chap, got his wounds going over the parapet, eh?'

'Och, no, sorr, he was dustin' a chair f'r his officer, an' he fell off ut,' and every one grinned except the fussy civilian.

Snowy, who loved him, came and helped him tie his bandage, and asked slyly :

'How's your book gettin' on, Ginger; wrote any of it yet?'

'Gettin' on foine, Snowy; will yez lend me two bob ter buy some paper ter write it on, an' Oi'll put yez in ut.'

Snowy took him by the collar and shook him.

'You and your book, Ginger, you scut—where's the five bob I lent you and Joe McNamara to get post cards from Paris for the French artist chap to draw our pictures on?'

'Joe's got your five bob, Shnowy—an' he's in England,' chuckled the imp.

'Hello, looks like poison gas comin',' shouted the Flamingo.

Ginger picked up his rifle, and hobbled off to join McGlusky.

'If ut's poison gas comin' the Boches won't be far behind ut,' he snarled, and began jamming cartridges home.

A gun of theirs pushed forward a bit, and came rapidly into action.

'Firin' shrapnel point blank; that luks as eef you were richt, wee laddie.'

'Bedad, Oi'm right, sorr, that's Major Edmonds in charge o' th' gun, an' he's alwis in th' thick of ut. Och, sorr, there's three of his men down.'

A little group of Anzacs jumped out of a trench and ran to take the places of the fallen men by the gun. The major, who was little more than a boy himself, and had won his rank on battle-fields, tossed a smile of welcome to the volunteers, for he knew their sort, and went on sweeping the German trenches with shrapnel. Ginger had been peering through the haze, not at the trenches, but up the stretch of 'no man's land' to the right. Those intervening spaces between the enemies were always 'no man's land' until they were taken. The boy caught sight of something through the haze.

'Here's a dispatch-rider comin',' he yelled, 'racin' his machine like blazes.'

'Racin' through gas, right under the muzzles o' the Boche sharpshooters' rifles, too,' snapped Snowy, his usual drawl gone for the moment.

'Noo, laddies, a' ready, we maun save yon rider.'

As he spoke McGlusky took a chance, and sprawled his body over the parapet, and Ginger, Snowy and the Flamingo did the same, the four deadliest rifles in France poised and ready. Snowy was the first to loose off; he didn't say what he fired at, and no one asked; they knew he never got jumpy and wasted lead. Then Mac's rifle cracked, then the Flamingo's, but Ginger never fired; he was like a piece of stone still as granite, his fingers coiled round his trigger. Snowy saw him out of the tail of his eye, and muttered 'Good kid.' The dispatch-rider was coming at a great pace, his machine jumping and bumping over the shell-torn ground. Something hit him, for he swayed and sagged in his saddle. Then the whole German line leapt to life, and a murderous rifle fire opened on the Anzac line. The Flamingo dropped his rifle, lifted his body up by placing his palms on the earth, then he slid back into the trench again in a crumpled heap, falling as only dead men fall. The Flamingo had tempted fate once too often. The dispatch-rider pitched off his machine. McGlusky sprang up then. Racing like a wild steer he went through gas, lead and iron, as the men who carry his blood have always gone in peril. Snowy, leaning far out, on his left elbow, balancing his rifle lovingly, watched for an enemy sharpshooter, though lead was splashing all around him. Ginger lay close by him, so quiet one might have counted him a dead man. McGlusky stooped and picked up the 'rider' and saw it was Geoff Lamard who had been with him in Africa, and as he did so, a sharpshooter in the German lines lifted his body above the parapet. Then Ginger fired,

and the German slid down again ; this time he was crumpled up. But others were there ready as the Anzacs themselves to take chances, for the German, though a military bully, is not the craven he has so often been represented to be. Snowy had always been noted for the rapidity of his shooting, but never had he shot as on this day, else had the big Scot and his ' rider ' been riddled with lead. Ginger, too, was at his best, for no blood is steadier than Irish blood, when once it is under control. McGlusky was coming towards them with the ' rider ' in his arms, and they noticed that the big Scot wobbled strangely, yet they knew that the ' rider,' though a heavy man, would have been nothing for him to carry. Suddenly Mac went down and lay tangled up with the body of the soldier he had been carrying. Before Snowy or Ginger could move they heard a yell, and saw a man bound towards McGlusky and lift him across his shoulder and run to their trench.

' Good boy—its Murrimbidgee.'

The words came from Snowy with a chuckle. It was the gambler. He dropped Mac like a sack of oats into the trench, and turned back for the ' rider.'

' Keep him covered, Ginger.'

It was Snowy, cool as of old time, who knew that in such an emergency a sharpshooter's rifle is worth ten men's courage or strength, and they kept him covered until he clambered into the trench, and an officer came and took the ' rider's ' dispatch from his tunic pocket. A doctor, working under that heavy fire, reported on the rider and McGlusky, in his terse way, and the padre, who was there too, and loved Ginger in spite of his sins—or perhaps because of them, for

the best padres are very human—came along and shouted above the rifle fire :

‘ Come under the parapet, and drag that boy in too, Snowy. The Old Timer and Geoff the rider have both got a “ Blighty ” wound, boys, but they aren’t going west this trip.’

‘ Thanks, padre, that makes good hearing. Now, Ginger, clean your rifle, unless you want it to shoot round corners.’

‘ Hould on a minute, Snowy.’ Ginger pushed his way to the padre.

‘ Well, me son ? ’

‘ Och, padre, Oi want yez to boot me.’

‘ All in good time, but this ain’t the time, me son.’

‘ Oi tuk the flask av whisky from yer pocket three nights ago, padre.’

The padre’s eyes twinkled.

‘ Was that why ye came an’ told me th’ place was haunted ? ’

‘ Och, sorr, so ut was ; there *was* spirits there—before Oi tuk ’em.’

‘ Did ye drink the stuff, Ginger ? ’

‘ Oi did not, padre ; Oi gave every drain av ut to a wounded kiltie.’

‘ Why did you take my whisky ? Wouldn’t some one else’s have done, boy ? ’

‘ Oi thought, padre, ye’d mixed yours wid holy wather, an’ Oi knew if anything wud save the kiltie, that would.’

The padre’s hand fell on the lad’s ear, and Ginger, feeling this was intended as a sort of benediction (it was the kind of benediction he usually got), went off

happily, whilst the padre muttered just loud enough to be heard in heaven :

'God bless th' little divil ; it's just raw mischief he's full of ; an' as f'r his lyin', it ain't lyin' at all ; it's undeveloped artistic temperament. He'll be an author some day—if he's not hanged.'

When Ginger got back to Snowy, he heard that artist remark :

'The poison gas is liftin' right over us ; some sort of air-current spoiling the Boches' little game.'

So he cleaned his rifle during a lull in the shelling, and he and Snowy talked.

'What made you tell the padre you thought his whisky was mixed with holy water ? You knew it wasn't.'

'Can't explain them things ter you,' said Ginger loftily. 'They're beyant yer understandin'. Oi tould yez before, ut's jaynius ; Oi'm inspired, loike Oi will be when Oi write me book, if ye'll lend me the money f'r ter buy th' paper.'

Snowy looked at him very steadily.

'I know you inside out, you streak o' sin, an' yet you've wheedled lots o' silver out o' me.'

'You'll be proud o' me some day, Shnowy,' was Ginger's audacious reply, as he squinted down the barrel of his rifle to see if it was clean. After a pause the honey-sweet voice came again : 'Wud yez loike me first book dedicated to yerself, Shnowy ?'

'I'd like my five bob back that I gave you when you said the French soldier artist was going ter paint all our pictures—yes, I'd like that five bob back.'

'Och, fergit it, Shnowy ; yez ought ter cultivate a soul above thrifles.'

'What became of the French sojer artist, anyway?'

'Och, th' poor man, Oi nivver seen anything loike ut, Shnowy: a shell tuk him just in th' back-av-beyant.'

Ginger covered his eyes with his hands, as if to shut out the memory of an awful sight, and Snowy manœuvred so as to get a good kick at the 'back-av-beyant' of Ginger's anatomy, but the genius was watching him through his fingers, and promptly backed up against the far side of the trench. Ginger was about the most wide-awake 'genius' that ever came to this planet, and would surely know how to take care of himself with publishers if he ever had any.

'Well, tell me about the Frenchman.'

Ginger leant upon his rifle.

'Th' shell tuk him just where Oi tould yez, Shnowy, an' blew him into sivin hundred an'——'

'That will do; don't you go workin' off none o' your arithmetic on me, you—you copper-headed toad. You put your arithmetic in your book. I don't believe there ever was any French artist.'

'There was thin.'

'Well, what did you do with my five bob? Buy a tombstone to put on his grave?'

'Give me a fag, Shnowy, an' Oi'll tell yez straight.'

After a moment's hesitation the sharsphooter did so, for there was little he could refuse Ginger, who had sat by him when he was wounded in Gallipoli, and sung the blues out of him.

'It's th' truth yez want, an' no romancin,' Shnowy? Well,' in answer to the affirmative nod, 'me an' Joe McNamara was goin' ter the village behind th' lines

ter post yer five bob ter Paris, an' we met a girl sellin' cigarettes.'

' Yes, well ? '

' Well, that's where we mislaid yer five bob, Shnowy.'

' I believe you've told me the truth for once. Joe couldn't say " no " to a girl to save his Irish soul, an' you couldn't say " no " to a cigarette, Ginger.'

' Oi didn't, Shnowy,' chuckled the insolent image, holding out his hand, and Snowy, remembering the convalescent days in Gallipoli, when Ginger had ' found ' fags and brought them to him, handed over his cigarette case, simply remarking :

' Remember that lesson I gave you with the gloves a month ago—I'll give you another later on.'

' Oi'm through wid boxin', ' remarked Ginger loftily. ' Boxin's low.'

Just as night was setting in, the Germans came to try and retake Pozieres with the steel ; they flung themselves upon the position like sea waves on granite coasts, and the Anzacs flung them back, but none of the men who were in that bitter fighting would ever call the opposing side cowards. The German proved himself a mad brute-beast under military rules in conquered territory ; he spared neither matron nor maid, old men nor little children ; he ravished women sworn to Holy Church, and shambled priests upon the altar-stone ; he looted like a Hun and burnt like a destroying angel ; but in the hour of battle, give the devil his due, he knew how to die, and there were piles of dead in front of the Anzac trenches when at last the German host rolled back broken and beaten.

CHAPTER XII

THE ADVENT OF GWENNIE

McGLUSKY had got a 'Blighty' wound, nothing to make a fuss about, or, as he phrased it to Ginger, 'Wee mannie, A'd tak' yin mair like it f'r a bottle o' Bass.' Murrimbidgee had also a souvenir sent from Germany, and the two of them were despatched to Blighty to recover. Ginger and Snowy managed to get down to the base to see them ere they departed—at least, they went to see the Old Timer off; no one thought much about the gambler, except the padre. The two wounded men were lying close to one another, and whilst Ginger was talking to Mac, Snowy, noticing Murrimbidgee, turned to him and said:

'Feelin' much pain, cully?'

'Nothing to make a psalm about, Snowy.'

The sharpshooter fidgeted uneasily for a moment, then looking down into the dark handsome face, he said:

'I don't suppose you care a damn what I think, Murrimbidgee; don't fancy you care what any one thinks for that matter, son; but I'd like to say you won the V.C., whether you get it or not, the day you brought the Old Timer and Geoff Lamarde in under fire. I've seen a few big things done here an' in Gallipoli, but that was the biggest.'

A quick rush of colour swept through the palor of the wounded Anzac's face, and his eyes grew wistful as he met the gaze of the sharpshooter.

'Cut out the V.C., Snowy ; I didn't want it—got no one who'd be proud if I won it.'

'I don't go much on ornaments myself, Murrimbidgee, but I'd like that one.'

'You've won it a dozen times, Snowy ; all the brigade knows that.'

'Shucks !'

Something in the gambler's eyes seemed to strike Snowy. He dropped one hand on Murrimbidgee's slender fingers and gripped, and a light that no one had ever seen before leapt into the gamester's eyes.

'You—mean—it, Snowy ?'

The words came in a whisper, but the sharpshooter heard, and for the first time understood. He nodded :

'Sure.'

That was all he said, but the gambler's lips quivered, as he turned his eyes away.

A strange clergyman pushed himself in upon the scene. He meant well, but he spoilt a moment that was pregnant with destiny for the wounded man.

'Can I do anything for you ?'

He addressed his words to the gamester. Murrimbidgee looked at him, and his old cynical smile came back to his beautifully chiselled lips.

'Yes, sir.'

'What, my man ?'

'There's something in the breast pocket of my tunic.'

'I'll get it.'

The cleric got the tunic and saw the outline of what

looked like a testament or prayer-book. He pointed to the outline and smiled.

'Ah, you prize this, a—er—never failing help in time of trouble, eh?'

The sardonic smile deepened on the curved lips.

'I've never known it fail me—sir.'

The cleric thrust his hand into the pocket, and drew forth—a pack of well-thumbed cards. He dropped the pack on the stretcher.

'Don't be cynical, my lad. God send you may replace the pack with a Bible some day. You're too good a soldier for this kind of thing.'

Then the cleric left.

'What's the—card—on top, Snowy?'

'Knave of diamonds, Murrimbidgee.'

'Good old destiny,' jeered the gambler; then with a sneer: 'That sky pilot is a four flusher, Snowy, or he wouldn't have jumped his job like that.'

'Perhaps destiny was turnin' up f'r him, son, not f'r you.'

Ginger was saying good-bye to his veteran friend.

'Och, an' yez'll be takin' care o' yourself in Blighty, sorr.'

'Dinna fash, wee mannie, there's naething ta be afraid o' in Blighty.'

'Bedad an' there is, sorr; Oi'm more afraid f'r yez there than Oi am here in th' trenches. What wid thim widdies an' lan'ladies ye'll be in mortal peril o' losin' y'r freedom, sorr, if Oi'm not there ter protect yez.'

'Hoots, buckie, A can tak' care o' masel'.'

'Ye can *not*, sorr. Yez think ye're th' divil wid th' wimmin, but anything in a petticoat can twist yez

round uts finger like er string ; if Oi don't have th' luck ter be wounded an' come across ter yer rescue, one av thim she-pirates will be yankin' yez off ter church an' marryin' yez widin a month ; thin how'll yez take me prospectin' f'r gold across th' sea ? '

' A'm theenkin' ye no ha' th' richts o't, wee buckie ; A confess A ha' a fatal charm f'r th' wummin, but they a' ken A'm no' a marryin' mon.'

' Indade,' remarked Ginger sarcastically. ' If yez only knew how often Oi've pulled yez out o' th' jaws av matrimony, ye wouldn't be so cocksure, sorr.'

' Ha' ye been drinkin', Ginger ? '

' Divil a sup, sorr. Do yez moind th' lan'lady in Fetter Lane, th' wan ye asked ter marry yez ? '

' A was a wee bit fu' o' whusky at th' time, Ginger.'

' Ye was, sorr, but she wud ha' held yez to ut.'

' Th' wumman didn't, wee mannie.'

' No, sorr, because Oi had a worrud wid her in private ; Oi told her you had a woife and nine childer in Australia ; Oi said Oi was yer stepson an' ye'd married me mother, an' Oi said yez was wan av th' Elders av th' great Mormon church in Salt Lake City in Australia.'

' Salt Lake City is in America, not Australia, ye scut.'

' Th' lan'lady didn't know that, sorr.'

' Ye tuk away ma character, laddie.'

' If Oi didn't, she'd ha' tuk yez ter church or—or a registry office, sorr ; she was powerful set on gettin' married, that wan.'

McGlusky ruminated over the information given him ; then he asked plaintively :

' What is it th' hens see in masel' that makes 'em

want ma, laddie? A'm no' a winder-plate ter look at.'

'Och, sorr, some wimmin are like camels.'

'A dinna theenk they're that bad, buckie.'

'Oi don't mane in regard ter there looks, sorr, but in—in their appetite f'r men. If yez turn a camel out on good grass, ut won't ate a blade av ut; th' baste'll wander f'r ten miles till ut finds a scraggy auld thorn bush an' ate that, thorns an' all, an' smack uts lips f'r more. Some wimmin are like that too; they won't cock an oye at a good-lookin' man, but show 'em a freak in trousers, an'——'

'Ye're no' complimentary, ye wee bounder. Eef A was no' on ma back A'd skelp ye, A wad that.'

As the ambulance train pulled out of the depôt, Ginger turned to the sharpshooter.

'Och, Shnowy, Oi wisht ut was yerself had th' Blighty wound instead av Murrimbidgee.'

'You're a nice kid.'

'Well, Oi do, Shnowy. What does a wound or two matter? You'd be wid th' Auld Timer.'

'What's wrong with him, son?'

'Wrong,' grumbled Ginger bitterly, 'when he's wid us he's safe, barrin' th' fair chances av war, but Oi'm afraid av thim faymales annexin' him.'

'Is there any one in particular, kid, or is it just the usual danger we all run of annexation?'

'Are ye joshin' me, Shnowy?'

'Me? Do I ever josh any one?'

'Th' saints only knows when y'r not joshin', Shnowy; yez never smile an' yer oyes don't twinkle, but Oi never know when yez say wan thing that yez don't mane another.'

'I meant just what I said, son; woman is the huntress

always ; she has been all through the ages ; an' she's so blamed clever at it that whilst she's huntin' a man her hardest, she makes the fool think *he's* doin' the huntin', an' when she gets him in a corner where he can't escape, she flops her head on his shoulder an' sez : " I surrender," an' she puts her arms around his neck an' sez : " Darlin', you were too strong fer me, I'm yours," an' she means all the time he's hers, an' he mostly is.'

' Well, Shnowy, if wan av thim bags th' Auld Timer, Oi'm goin' ter board wid thim, an' if she ain't screamin' f'r a divorce widin a year, yez can call me a Hun.'

McGlusky had had a visit from a gallant young Anzac officer just prior to the advent of his two comrades, though they knew nothing of it. The officer had brought a small souvenir of the great battle of Pozieres, and requested Mac to deliver it to his sister in London as soon as he was well enough to get out of hospital.

' A'll dae it wi' pleasure, sir, an' be proud ta tak' a message f'r yin like yersel'. A've seen ye fecht, an' a de'il o' a thorn ye've been in th' side o' Windy Wullie an' his Huns.'

The officer smiled, well pleased to hear such praise from the old warrior, who would not, as he well knew, stoop to flatter a prince or a peer.

' All right, Mac,' he responded cheerily, ' you go to Blighty and get patched up and come back quickly ; we'll want you before we get to Berlin.'

The wounds that McGlusky and Murrimbidgee had received, though painful, were less serious than the surgeons at the front had imagined, or possibly it may have been the wondrous vitality of the men born and bred in the sunlit lands that accounted for the rapid

progress they made at the superb hospital at Harefield in England. They were placed in beds side by side, but there was no very deep love between these two. The veteran, who knew the debt he was under to the gambler, did his level best to grow warm towards him, but Murrimbidgee, cynical as some thousand-year-old man might be, noticed the effort, and froze up all the veteran's good intentions, and when Mac in a spirit of brotherhood tried to inoculate him with his own home-made brand of theology, the gambler met him in debate and routed him on all points. Murrimbidgee never got angry, though Mac very often did. Cool and seemingly passionless, the gamester with his clear, analytical brain was sure to beat a man like McGlusky on such debatable ground as theology, for he believed nothing, revered nothing, whilst Mac believed and revered much. One day after he had been badly routed in an argument concerning life after death, Mac, raising himself upon one elbow, glared across at the gamester whose coldly smiling face rested upon the pillows, and said :

' Mon, A believe ye were born wi' a dead grey soul inside o' yer body ; ye love naething on earth or in heaven ; ye haven't a human spark in ye. Brave as a lion in battle ye air—a ken that—but love ! Losh, laddie, ye never knew the meanin' o' th' word. A dinna believe ye loved th' father that begat ye, or th' mither that bore ye.'

' Right, Old Timer, I didn't.'

A sullen fire gleamed in the veteran's eyes.

' A owe ye ma life, buckie, but before ma Maker A say A'd maist as soon ha' lost it than owe it ta ye."

'Cut that out; I'd have done as much—or more—for a dog, Mac.'

The veteran glowered at the handsome, cynical, sneering young face.

'Ye're the handsomest, wickedest, coldest mon A ever saw. Ye say ye'd ha' done mair f'r a dawg; why did ye go inta that hell o' German fire f'r me-an' Geoff th' "rider"?''

'Ever been tired of life, Old Timer?'

'No,' thundered McGlusky; 'life's a gran' thing, a glorious, splendid thing.' Then in a hushed and hoarse whisper: 'Life, every human life, is a little bit o' God Almichty, crowded f'r a time an' a purpose inta a human carcass. Tell me, did ye ha' no ither reason f'r daein' what ye did?'

The handsome head opposite lifted a moment from the pillow; the sneering smile left the clean-cut lips; the usually mocking jibing voice came soft and sweet like the whisper of a spring breeze through young green leaves.

'You were Snowy's pal, and—he would have been broken-hearted if you had gone west.'

McGlusky gasped. Rude as his soul was, rough and uncouth as he was in every fibre of his body, brain and spirit, he knew he had been permitted one swift glance into the wells of a human soul. He reached out a big hand.

'Losh, laddie, ye're no' so dead inside yersel' as in ma eegnorance A thocht——'

'Go to hell, Old Timer.' And Murrimbidgee spun over on to his other shoulder, and turned his back on the veteran's outstretched hand.

When the doctor came round later, Murrimbidgee

asked that he might be removed to the other end of the ward, away from Mac.

'Why?' demanded the doctor.

'Can't stand him, Doc; he's too busy trying to patch up my immortal soul, and I came here to have my body patched up, that's all.'

The medico, who knew them both, looked hard into the sneering young face. He did not like the gambler.

'Sure you've got a soul, Murrimbidgee?'

'Sure you've got one yourself, Doc?'

'Yes, I'm sure.'

'Well, Doc, move me to the other end of the ward and mend me, and when I'm well I'll play you a game of poker for the pair.'

'You've played with a better player than I and—lost, I'm afraid, Murrimbidgee,' was the stern retort.

'I'm not squealin', Doc.'

They shifted the gambler because it was their duty to mend bodies, but none of them guessed that he had asked to be moved because of that glimpse he had given McGlusky into his inner self.

One day some visitors walking through the ward stopped at Murrimbidgee's bedside and chatted with him as with others. One of the group was a fair-haired lass from Devon, as sweet and dainty a maid as ever filled a man's eye. Her friends were kindly folk who talked the usual banalities to the wounded soldiers, and Murrimbidgee's caustic tongue was at work upon them, for the scapegrace had more intellect than is vouchsafed to most men, and nothing pleased him more than to amuse himself at the expense of visitors who treated soldiers as demi-gods whilst

wounded, for he knew that many of these folk would treat soldiers coldly enough a month after war ceased. One fussy gentleman remarked to the gamester :

‘It is splendid to see men like you fighting our battles ; you must love the grand old Empire to come fourteen thousand miles and risk life and limb for it.’

‘Don’t think you’ve quite got it right, sir,’ said Murrimbidgee sweetly ; ‘it was five shillings a day and a bit of adventure brought me into this game. Fighting Germans is less monotonous than shearing sheep or sinking post holes in the wayback country.’

His smile, his mocking voice and his handsome face caught the eyes and ears of the Devon lass, and she gazed at him intently. He caught her gaze, and for the first time in his bitter life the lure of sex stirred him. She was lily fair, and he as dark as a Spanish creole. For quite a dramatic moment blue eyes and dark brown held each other, but they spoke no word. Then the voice of the fussy man crossed that line of silent communion :

‘You—er—surprise me, my man ; I didn’t think you Colonials were mercenaries ; I thought you were too brave for that.’

‘I only spoke for myself, sir. As for bravery, most of our chaps are brave, but I was not built that way. I’m all right when I’m excited, but——’ He threw one slender hand out in an explanatory gesture.

‘Well, well, you surprise me, young fellow.’

The fussy person turned away abruptly, and his party followed him, and as they moved from bed to bed Murrimbidgee’s eyes never left the slender, graceful figure of the Devon lass. The group reached McGlusky’s bed, and soon the fussy individual and the veteran

were in the midst of an imperialistic debate. The Devon lass slipped away from her friends and came back to Murrimbidgee. She had a small bunch of flowers in her hand, and she laid the bouquet by his side, and again blue eyes and brown signalled the old sex signals that came to the earth with the first man and woman, and will remain until the last pair flit from this planet.

‘Thank you, you are very kind.’

Few, if any, of the gambler’s comrades would have recognized his voice as he uttered those simple words, fewer still would have known the expression upon his face. The gambler had never mixed with good women, but he knew one when he saw her as surely as a humming bird knows honey. A soft flush spread over the girl’s face.

‘Why did you speak of yourself to my uncle as you did just now?’

‘Why shouldn’t I?’

‘Because it was not the truth.’

‘Why do you think so?’

‘I don’t think, I know.’

Then, as she turned to rejoin her friends, she flashed a glance that was half a challenge straight into his eyes and said:

‘It was stupid to call yourself a coward; only a fool would believe you.’

A smile like a lightning flash lit up his dark face.

‘That’s rough—decidedly rough—on your uncle, for he believed.’

The girl laughed, and at the sound of that rippling music many a soldier turned and looked in her direction, and, looking smiled in sympathy.

'She looks good enough to eat,' remarked Stockwhip Wilson to Sandy Green. Then, knitting his brows in puzzlement, he added: 'Wonder what the blazes Murrimbidgee could have said to make her laugh like that. She's not his sort.'

A good many others besides Stockwhip Wilson were wondering the same thing. As the girl joined her friends, she heard McGlusky say in reply to some remark of her uncle's:

'Th' dark yin at th' far end o' th' ward, th' yin they ca' Murrimbidgee.'

'Yes, my friend, that's the one; is he only brave when he's excited?'

Mac stared at his interlocutor.

'Air ye pullin' ma leg?'

'Certainly not; no, most certainly not; I only repeat his own words.'

'Sir,' growled McGlusky impressively, 'yon buckie never gets excited; he'll be cooler in hell stokin' fires f'r th' souls o' German Junkers than ye'll be in heaven—if ye get there.'

'He's not a coward then?'

Mac, who was sitting up in bed, craned his gaunt, unlovely body forward, and catching hold of the lapel of his questioner's coat, snarled:

'Sir, eef God A'michty doesn'a gie ye sense until yon laddie shows th' white feather in danger, ye'll gang hirplin' roun' th' world wi' an empty head till fish grow feathers.'

The girl gave McGlusky a smile for his defence of his comrade that kept the veteran awake half that night trying to make smiles rhyme with sunbeams. He didn't connect Murrimbidgee with the sudden

flash of white teeth through rose-red lips; he knew nothing of the episode by the bedside of the gambler, and he fancied some hidden charm of his own had worked the miracle, for McGlusky was a man, and no man is ever utterly divorced from vanity where lasses are concerned, until some one has carved his epitaph on his tombstone. Vanity is the solace of the female, but it is the breath of life in the nostrils of the male.

That visit of the Devon girl to Harefield hospital was the dawn of a new era for Murrimbidgee, and the nursing sisters noticed the change in him. They were very human, those splendid women who worked so tirelessly and so well for the broken warriors, and when they saw how the lad's eyes watched the door of the ward, they said little, but they thought much. The Devon lass came often and visited many, but she always lingered long by Murrimbidgee's bed, and when she took her departure he would lie very still and dream dreams. One day Stockwhip Wilson, who had been so christened because of the explosive nature of his laughter, came from the gambler's bedside with a look of unutterable amazement upon his battered face.

'Murrimbidgee's got religion, got it bad,' he whispered to Stringybark Allenson. He spoke as if the gambler's complaint might have been cholera or smallpox.

'He's got something dashed bad,' agreed Stringybark. 'What makes yer think it's religion? I never thought he'd catch that.'

'I went to him,' whispered Stockwhip, 'to cheer him up a bit, as he seemed down in the mouth. Notice how quiet he's been this last month? Haven't heard him curse once.'

'Yes, we've all noticed it; go on with your psalm an' don't put no flowers in it.'

'Well, I wanted to give him a game o' cards—just ter pass th' time, an' he shook his blessed head an' said: "Thanks all the same, Stockwhip, I think I'm through with cards."'

Stringybark whistled a long, low, ruminative kind of whistle.

'He don't look as if he was dyin', does he, Stockwhip?'

'Dyin' be blanked—he's gettin' better of his wound every hour.'

'Then it must be religion—or rabies. Perhaps a dog bit him in Cairo.'

'You and your Cairo dog, Stringybark,' snapped a nurse. 'Of course it's religion; he's been seeing angels unawares to you; anyway, Murrimbidgee thinks it's an angel, and I don't fancy he's far out.'

Stockwhip scratched his head.

'Blest if I ever thought it would be up to Murrimbidgee to see angels, sister, unless,' he added as an afterthought, 'it might be th' queen o' diamonds.'

'Why not the queen of hearts, you big simpleton?' snapped the good sister, as she whisked away with a roll of bandages to a waiting patient.

It was strange that every sister in Harefield knew exactly what was the matter with the handsome reprobate, but not a man guessed. Somehow Murrimbidgee and a good woman never associated themselves in the minds of the men; the gambler had never railed at women, but his life had seemed cut off, a thing apart from domestic felicity, and all agreed with Stringybark that the change in him could only be due

to religion or rabies, with perhaps an odd chance in favour of sunstroke.

McGlusky put Murrimbidgee's complaint down to stomach trouble.

'It's no' releegion, it's his innards. Eef he wad let ma prescribe f'r him, A wad gi'e him a herbal mixture o' ma ain invention that wad shift everything bar his conscience and his trooser buttons.'

When a nurse hinted that it was an affair of the heart, Mac glared at her in amazement.

'Ye say that, an' ye ken Murrimbidgee! Wumman, ha' ye been drinkin'? If ye ha', tak' mair watter wi' it next time or it wull be gettin' ye doon an' worryin' ye.'

However, the ward soon had something else to think and talk about, and McGlusky himself became the cynosure of all eyes, and once again a lassie was the cause of the upheaval. The veteran was approaching the stage when wounded men begin to weary of bed and long for their trousers, when a nurse brought a young lady to see him. She was very tall—half a head taller than the Devon lass and very slender; her mouth was merry and her eyes wells of mischief. It was the sort of face that a man might look at for a lifetime and never weary, for each time he looked with understanding eyes he would discover a fresh charm, and unless he was a very wise man those clever eyes would discover in him a new weakness, for she had the face of one who could not be a fool if she sat up and worked overtime trying to be one. The whole ward watched her with critical eyes, though no one who did not know the Anzacs would have guessed it. They did not obtrude their interest;

those who were lolling about dressed were helping the bedridden to pass the time, and they went on with their various tasks to all appearances oblivious of the presence of McGlusky's visitor, for it is an article of faith with the breed never under any circumstances to appear interested in anything less than an earthquake. None the less, they watched the fair visitor out of half-closed eyes and in casual whispers sized her up to one another.

Stockwhip Wilson murmured *sotto voce* to his pal Stringybark that 'she carried her clothes as if she'd paid for 'em.'

'Yep,' assented Stringybark, 'carries her rags like a fig-tree carries its fruit,' which was their way of saying she was well dressed and well bred, and altogether desirable.

'Notice how she went up the ward?' murmured Blue Gum Bates to Murrimbidgee. 'She didn't swim an' she didn't prance, she just *walked*; not one in a hundred of 'em know how to walk naturally; some do the angel act and try to float, some pick up their feet as if they meant to hit the roof, an' some just drift along as if their legs wanted waking up. The drifters think they look like duchesses doing the Royal Drawing-room act.'

'What's the odds as long as they're happy? They don't fool any one but themselves, Blue Gum.'

'I like a lass who knows how to carry her feet,' grumbled the other. Then, as if solving an enigma: 'It's the fault of them damn writing fellows; they put in print that a thoroughbred girl walks like a thoroughbred filly in trainin' f'r th' Oaks. Now if I had a girl that tried to walk like a race-horse, I'd rope

her to a tree till she could run round it on egg-shells without crackin' 'em. Now there's that girl o' yours, Murrimbidgee, the one that comes here three times a week an' has a topknot like a golden tulip with the sunlight on it, she can walk.'

Murrimbidgee was sitting up in bed. His big eyes blazed like the eyes of a tiger about to spring, his dark face blanched white with passion.

'My—girl—you——'

The hand nearest to Blue Gum shot out and closed that warrior's mouth. The astonished soldier moved quickly away, and Stockwhip Wilson said to him :

'What is the matter with Murrimbidgee?'

'Dunno,' growled Blue Gum, 'but whatever it is, you blokes can take it from me it ain't religion, or if it is, he's fell from grace, an' next time he falls, I hope he won't fall my way. Them three teeth he knocked out cost me thirty bob in Alexandria.'

The innocent cause of the various remarks was chatting merrily to McGlusky.

'I got a letter from my brother at the front,' she was saying ; 'he told me he was sending me a souvenir of the battle of Pozieres by you, Mr. McGlusky, so I hunted the hospitals until I found you—not for the souvenir, but I wanted to talk to some one who had been in the awful fighting ; it was horrible, wasn't it?'

'It was, Miss—for the Germans, an' none so nice for us either.'

'Do you know, Mr. McGlusky, I can't imagine my brother killing men ; he was such a quiet boy. I don't think he ever hurt any one or anything in his life until he went to this war.'

'Th' quiet yins mak' th' best killers when they're roused, Miss.'

'You like fighting, don't you?'

'Me?' McGlusky's face was full of unaffected amazement. 'Na, na, ye're wrong; it's awesome work pushin' a baggonet inta a feller mon, but gin ye ha' tae dae it, it's best tae push it richt through. Is it no' written, "whatsoever y'r han' findeth ta dae, dae it wi' a' y'r micht"? But A'm no' a fechter by nature; A only fecht when A theenk it richt to fecht. A love beautiful things; A'd rather grow cauliflowers wi' hearts like milk an' shieldin' leaves like livin' emeralds than mak' widders o' wummin, but it's no' what a mon likes that he has tae dae; duty's th' beginnin' an' end o' life for any mon who is a mon's son.'

'Surely some of those Germans must be good men, Mr. McGlusky?'

'Maist o' them air—when they're dead. A never bear malice masel', Miss; A always forgive a mon as soon as he's burried.'

A little later some remark of the girl's brought up a story concerning Ginger, and when once the Veteran got started on that theme he waxed wondrous eloquent; his love transfigured him; his fierce eyes that had blazed in many a battle grew tender; his face softened; now and again he laughed as he told of Ginger's droll devilment; and the girl, not comprehending the love of man for man, when such love has been suckled on hardship, privation and danger, wondered at the change in him.

'Is—is Ginger good-looking?' she asked.

'Some of him is, lassie; his eyes wad draw a weanin' calf fra a fu' milk-pail. A never saw sic eyes

in th' face o' man or maid ; they're like flowers wi' dew on th' petals, an' th' lashes brush his cheeks, an' his teeth, they'd shame an ice-cream cart, white an' even an' strong. Did ye ever crack a cocoanut an' see th' fruit inside ? White it is, but no' so white as th' teeth o' ma wee laddie. An' his mouth, it's a gran' mouth f'r a mon ; when ye've done explorin' it ye're up against his ears, or no' so far away ; it's th' sort o' mouth that makes boardin' housekeepers raise their prices as soon as they see him ; but his lips air fu' o' quirks as if hidin' laughter a' th' time ; they ha' a tweest at th' corners that mak's ye want ta grin yersel' ta keep him company.'

' Is he dark or fair ? '

' Weel, gin ye get past th' freckles, A'm theenkin' he'd be fair, but by ma soul, lassie, yin freckle's as close ta its neebour as holes in muslin.'

' Has he red hair ? '

' He has, lassie ; it's sae red ye cud see ta shoot by it on a moonless nicht, but gin ye ever meet him ca' it golden, an' he'll steal a church ta please ye.'

' Is he tall or short ? '

' Y'r tall yersel' mair than ordinair, an' eef Ginger was standin' beside ye wi' his arm roon yer waist—an' 'twould be if he was there three minutes—ye'd pass f'r twins.'

A nurse came on the scene and intimated that it was marching time for visitors.

' I hope you'll let me come again, Mr. McGlusky,' said the lassie as she gathered up her belongings.

' A'll be mair than proud if ye wull, Miss.'

' Oh, don't call me "Miss." All my real friends call me Gwennie.'

McGlusky turned the name over in his mouth, as if it were a sweet morsel.

'Gwennie,' he muttered. 'Losh, lassie, it fits ye like a kilt fits a hielan' mon; it's neither too lang nor too short—it's th' name A'm meaning', lassie, no' th' kilt.' And for the life of him McGlusky could not understand why the girl's cheeks flamed like a peony, or why she struggled to hide her laughter as she took her departure.

That was how the veteran came to know Gwennie, but as he grew convalescent he saw a lot of her, for she visited him often, bringing him flowers, and in return he bombarded her with home-made poetry, and the word went round Harefield that this time the Old Timer had struck the matrimonial trail in dead earnest and meant to keep it.

'He's doomed,' growled Stringybark to a coterie of comrades; 'he hasn't got Ginger here to head him off th' danger; he'll be roped an' branded before he's out of Harefield a month.'

'Lucky old sinner, I call him,' put in Saddleflap Smith, who had been so designated because of the abnormal size of his hands. 'Lucky old bounder, is my summing up of his complaint. Every time that girl comes here she makes me think of strawberries at a shilling a bite; she looks sweet enough to eat, to me.'

'Better go in an' try an' cut him out, Saddleflap,' suggested a comrade.

'Not much; I've had all the hospital I want. Say, boys, Harefield's gettin' a dashed sight more dangerous than th' trenches, what with th' Old Timer up to his back hair in love, an' Murrimbidgee on th' tin roof with religion or something; it ain't homey any more.'

'Can't make out myself,' speculated Stockwhip, 'what a classy girl like that can see in th' Old Timer. He's a noble old ruin, an' as a soldier he can give us all points, but still he is ancient, ain't he, compared to her, an' I shouldn't ha' thought she was th' sort ter go huntin' round old curiosity shops pickin' up antiques.'

'Think she might have turned her lovelorn eyes on you, eh?' jeered 'The Cherubim,' who had been so christened because the chargers in the horse lines backed away from their oats when they saw his face.

'Me?' grunted Stockwhip. 'Oh, I ain't takin' any tickets on th' love microbe myself—don't believe in it. When I see the girl *I* want, I'm goin' ter put th' proposition to her straight; I'll say: "Feel like doublin' up, missie?" If she says "Yes," why we'll double up; if she says "No," I'll double off, an' watch out f'r a suitable second edition with more sense.'

One of the Anzac nurses who had overheard most of the conversation dropped a bomb in amongst the group by remarking:

'You all seem so sure the girl is in love with McGlusky. I don't think she is a bit; she's in love with his stories; he's always talking about Ginger and Snowy and others, never about himself, and that's the kind of man a real girl likes to listen to.'

'Well, sister, you can't say Mac isn't in love with the lass,' said a bystander.

The bright eyes of the nursing sister twinkled as she measured the group man by man.

'Oh, you and your loves,' she jeered; 'put a petticoat on a bed-post, and McGlusky would be saying his prayers to it in a week. He's—he's a man.'

As the sister fluttered off, Woolfaced Willie, one-

time champion shearer of New South Wales, looked round on the grinning faces, remarking :

‘Boys, I’d like to interpolate a few remarks to the effect that Sister Agnes knows a good deal besides puttin’ antiseptic bandages on shrapnel wounds, or pluggin’ bullet holes with cotton wool.’

‘Sure thing,’ grunted the Cherubim, ‘Sister Agnes has been studyin’ th’ inside o’ male anatomy as well as th’ crust. Th’ man who marries her’ll have ter be home by nine-thirty every night, or have a broken leg to show why he wasn’t.’

CHAPTER XIII

GINGER AS A FORLORN HOPE

A STARCHY officer walking near an Anzac battery was unburdening his soul, and his language was enough to stop grass growing, if there had been any grass near to stop.

'Where's your observation officer? How the deuce do you expect to do any good with the guns with no one on observation duty? Pluggin' shells anywhere in between here an' the Rhine ain't going to break the German line.'

'We've lost three observation officers attached to this battery in a fortnight, sir, and——'

'Well the guns must have eyes, sir, even if you have lost three officers.'

'Yes, but we've got to be careful of 'em, sir; good men are running short, and——'

'Careful! What's the good of an observation officer who's careful of his own skin? Don't know what's comin' to the service, sir—service going to the devil, sir—Careful!' He finished with a snort of disgust, and began sweeping the country with his glasses. 'Hullo—why—what th' blazes is that red patch in that tree in front, sir, eh?'

The irate officer looked and noted that every Anzac wore a smile as boundless as a mother's blessing.

'That's th' red head of Ginger, one of our best sharpshooters, sir. There's another one called Snowy somewhere out in front of Ginger, hiding in a shell-hole ; they hunt in couples those two, sir.'

'What are they so far advanced for? Rank nonsense to risk men like that. What are they out for, eh?'

'They're covering our observation officer at present, sir ; he's in front somewhere, and Ginger and Snowy are sniping snipers.'

'That what you call being careful in this battery, eh?' grunted the officer. 'Don't wonder you lost three in a fortnight. Does your observation officer think he's got orders to *go to the Rhine*, I—— Hullo, what's that? Your red-headed sharpshooter's got himself potted.'

The officer's words were true. Ginger had come tumbling out of the tree like a winged black cock. A dozen volunteers sprang forward.

'Halt, men!'

The sharp command brought the volunteers to a standstill.

'Can't allow you to throw your lives away ; the German snipers have their glasses on that tree, and they'll get you good, every man of you.'

It was their own C.O. who spoke, and the Anzacs stood scowling but obedient—they knew the C.O. There was a pause, then the C.O. spoke again :

'Wait a bit, boys ; Snowy's not far from Ginger, and he'll get to him if he can ; if he don't, one of you can risk it in a minute or two ; we mustn't lose Ginger.'

A voice at his elbow said :

'Sure, I'll go, sorr ; I won't be missed.'

'No, padre, you stand easy.'

' But, sorr——'

' That will do, padre ; an order's an order. Would you set a bad example ? '

The padre stood back, his eyes flashing angrily. Amongst the men a sharp altercation had arisen.

' It's me f'r this job as soon as the C.O. gives th' word.' Sunny Jim slipped off his tunic as he spoke.

' You ? Who told you to butt in, Sunny Jim ? ' growled Kurnalpi. ' You're too fresh ; it's me f'r Ginger ; an' I'll put one acrost th' jaw of any man who tries to jump my claim, see ? '

' Not much you won't, Kurnalpi. I'll gesticulate in th' direction of *your* jaw if you move a peg. I've been dry nurse to Ginger ever since th' Old Timer went to Blighty, leastways when Snowy wasn't around ter handle th' spoon, an' me an' this job was made f'r each other, see ? '

It was the mellifluous voice of Prospector Brown that jarred its way into Kurnalpi's ears and understanding, and that gentleman having on a recent occasion sampled some of the diet outlined in the prospector's oratory, muttered fierce oaths and family reminiscences concerning the whole Brown family for many generations.

' There's a chap—crawling along the ground—he's dragging your red-headed sharpshooter towards a—shell-hole.'

It was the voice of the staff officer. Then he added :

' Dunno where the devil the second chap came from—must have grown there—like a mushroom—I was watching, and I didn't see him advance from anywhere.'

' That's Snowy for a million,' cried the C.O.

'That so? Jolly careful sort of chap he must be, that Snowy.'

'Yes, he is; he's built like that; knew he'd save Ginger if any one could.'

The men grinned as they heard their C.O. speak in reply to the staff officer, for like him they knew how 'careful' Snowy could be on occasion.

After a little lapse of time, Snowy wormed his way back to the lines in his own inimitable fashion, creeping from shell-crater to shell-hole, and reported:

'Ginger's got a bit to go on with; one of the Huns picked him out of his tree like a winkle out of a shell.'

'Serious, eh, Snowy?' queried the C.O.

'Don't think so, sir; just a joy-ride to Blighty. Bullet tumbled him off his perch; saw him fall; his red head looked like a young comet coming to earth. When I reached him, I thought he'd got his little lot; the fall had stunned him; he's under cover now, and I've given him first aid. Better let a couple of stretcher-bearers go out for him after dark.'

'Will he be all right till then?'

'Yes, I'm going back to look after him now.' Snowy chuckled, 'he thinks I'm scouting round to get his bally rifle; he cursed awful when he woke up and found I hadn't brought it in.'

'Nice little beast.'

'A bit promiscuous in his language, sir, but one o' th' best.'

'I think I come in here, don't I? Wounded men belong to me.'

It was the padre's smooth voice chipping in. The C.O. grew rusty.

'Oh, if you must chuck your life away, padre, do so by all means.'

'Better stay here, if you want wounded men, padre,' drawled Snowy, 'the Bosches are going to try something big in this direction pretty soon if I know the signs. I'm taking a gas mask out for Ginger and one for myself. So long, padre; better loose a prayer or two for Ginger, f'r if th' gas hangs low he'll need 'em.'

He spoke of loosing prayers as if speaking of loosing pigeons, but the padre knew he meant no irreverence.

Fortunately the wind lifted the gas that came a bit later, and when the stretcher bearers crept out in the dark they found Snowy lying by the side of Ginger, pulling contentedly at a stumpy old briar that he called his 'microbe killer'—the wonder was that it did not kill him, it was strong enough.

So it came to pass that one day when McGlusky was lounging in the main corridor of Harefield Hospital, he saw Ginger carried in on a stretcher.

'Wha's wrang wi' ye, wee buckie? Dinna say ye're sair hurtit.'

The humorous curves at the corners of the big boyish mouth deepened, and the wonderful eyes sparkled.

'Whisht, sorr, don't be afther spakin' above y'r breath, or they'll be sendin' me back. Oi'm not hurtit at all, Oi just tuk a thrip over t' see yerself, sorr.'

'Ye wee leear. Where ha' ye got it?'

'Och, ut's nothin', just a bullet, sorr.'

A nursing sister drove McGlusky away, and a doctor came and examined the lad. When the examination was over he said to the attendant nurse:

'Go and tell that big ruffian McGlusky it's nothing serious; you'll find him prowling in the corridor; he'll fret himself into a fever if you don't hurry.'

Ginger, who knew every trick worth knowing, and a lot that were not, in regard to wheedling, thinned his voice down as thin as a knife blade, like one on the point of collapse, and addressed himself to the medico.

'Sorr——'

'Well?'

'May Oi have a fag, sorr? Me stummick's cravin' awful; Oi'm feared Oi'll be spittin' blood, sorr.'

'You may, Ginger—in three weeks' time.'

'May Oi see a—a padre, sorr?'

'What for?'

'Oi'd loike ter confess before Oi go west, sorr.'

The medico, who had heard a thousand stories from wounded men concerning Ginger and his tricks, looked down into the young face that had suddenly been drawn into the lines of the dying.

'Feel as bad as you look, Ginger?'

The glorious eyes took an upward turn as if peering through the roof.

'Oi,' he whispered, 'Oi can see hivin openin', sorr.'

It'll be a long time before it opens for you, you rascal.

'Och, dochter, ut's th' cravin' in me stummick. Oi'm feared Oi'm hurtit internally—that gun carriage did ut.'

'Tell me about that.'

'Afther Oi was shot an' lay on th' ground, dochter.'

'Yes?'

'A German gun carriage ran over me; wan wheel went over me belly an' wan over me fut, an——'

'Must have been a mighty narrow gun carriage, Ginger. Sure it wasn't a perambulator?'

'Yez wouldn't be laughin' yerself, docther, if yez had been thrampled on by three battery mules an' tuk in th' middle wid a gun wheel.'

'Is it a pain or an ache, Ginger?'

'Ut's a bit av both, sorr, wid a weary cravin' in betune.'

'That describes your complaint beautifully, you young liar. What you want is a black draught, and if I hear any more talk of "fags" for three weeks, you'll get a double dose every morning for breakfast.'

As the medico moved away he said to the matron:

'Don't let that red-headed image impose on you; he's as artful as a bag full of monkeys. He's got a nice clean wound, and a constitution like a steer, but he'll look like dying any time he wants to. The padre in his corps is my cousin, and I know Master Ginger like a book.'

"The scamp; he's too young for the army, and has picked up all the vices, eh?'

'Not a bit of it; he's as good as gold, only he's been understudying a battery mule for tricks.'

A day or two later a clergyman passing through the ward caught Ginger's eyes fixed appealingly upon him.

'What a heavenly expression that young soldier has,' he whispered to a nurse, and then glared because the soldiers near by had chuckled too audibly.

'He's a nice boy,' answered the sister, who had already been won by the imp's strange magnetism.

The good man went to the lad.

‘Are you Ginger, the wonderful soldier singer?’ he asked.

Ginger gulped down a lump in his throat.

‘Oi—Oi cud sing wanst, but me singin’ days are over.’

‘As bad as that, sonny?’

‘T’rough th’ lung, yer riverence, an’ ut’s set up triapochoneus combustion av th’ main clavicular cavity, which is th’ hole a singer keeps his musical box in—whin he’s well.’

‘Never heard of it,’ gasped the good man, ‘and I’m a bit of a singer myself; but this awful war teaches us a lot of things, my boy, doesn’t it?’

‘Ut do, sorr.’

Then putting on what Snowy called his ‘Kiss-a-dyin’-boy-for-his-mother’ expression, he murmured:

‘Yez said yez was a singer yerself, sorr.’

‘In a small way, only in a small way, my lad.’

‘Will yez lane over me so’s th’ others can’t hear, an’—an’ croon me fav’rite hymn f’r me, sorr?’

‘With pleasure, dear lad, with pleasure. Ah, how the dear old hymns come back to all of us in time of trouble! What is your favourite hymn, dear boy? Believe me, it gives me joy to know your thoughts are fixed on noble themes.’

‘Will yez croon a verse av “Onward Christian soldiers,” sorr?’

‘Ah, most appropriate; you have a fine sense of what is fit, for one so young, living in the midst of temptation.’

The good man beamed on the young rip, and his face fairly exuded benevolence. As for Ginger, he lay back with an expression on his freckled face that made Saddleflap whisper to Stringybark:

'Look at the young devil; he's got that sky-pilot by the leg good and hard. Wonder what his little game is?'

'Dunno,' replied Stringy, 'but he's up to no good when he works up that "heark-the-herald-angels-sing" expression. He's goin' ter fool that sky-pilot f'r something, you can bet your Sunday trousers on that.'

'Onward Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,'

crooned the good man, and as he sang he leant right over Ginger, as Murrimbidgee remarked like a hen brooding over one chick, and in that moment by some occult means the good man's cigarette case passed from his pocket under Ginger's bedclothes.

When the good man was leaving the ward, he remarked to a grim-faced Anzac:

'That young comrade of yours is one of the sweetest souls I have ever met; I—I hope you treasure him.'

'We do,' was the curt response, 'but when we're dealing with Ginger, we watch as well as pray,' and the cleric moved away and pondered over that saying, wondering what its hidden meaning might be.

Ginger caught the eye of a nurse, and beckoned to her.

'Well,' she said severely, 'want *me* to sing hymns to you, eh?'

'No, sister, Oi don't want ter be disturbed in me meditations, but——'

'But what?'

'Oh, th' gintleman that was waftin' me thoughts to the pearly gates dropped his silver cigarette case on me bed; ye'd betther give ut to him.'

The nurse took it and went swiftly after the good man, and as he opened the case and found it empty, some glimmering of the soldier's word 'We watch as well as pray when dealing with Ginger,' came to him.

'Goin' ter share th' loot?' demanded Saddleflap as he stood by the imp's bed.

'Share nothin'. Didn't Oi have ter stand his singin'? He's got a voice like a kerosene tin wid stones in ut—th' sufferer's worthy av his loot.'

Then he loosened a bandage and packed away his fags, and when the nurse came and searched him she found nothing.

'What d'y'r' take me for, sister?' he queried plaintively, turning the battery of his beautiful eyes upon her.

'Oh, don't try to work your eye-wash on me! I've had your sort before, you wicked young animal.'

'Ut's me fate ter be misunderstood by th' beautiful,' mused the unregenerate cub.

'Oh, I understand you right enough, and you can take it from me if you have the parson's fags, you shan't smoke them.'

A grin swept across the freckled face, and he chortled:

'Life's very hard f'r th' young, but what a soldier can't smoke he must chew, 'nd chewin's th' next best thing ter smokin'!'

The following day Stringy told him about McGlusky and Gwennie, the truth being that Stringy had wagered a week's pay that Ginger would upset the Ole Timer's dream of love before it ripened into matrimony.

Oi knew he'd be fallin' inter wan av thim she

thraps if Oi wasn't round ter take care av him, he's a child in thim things, Stringy.'

'She's got a half-nelson hold on him, kid.'

Ginger grunted. Then: 'Go on, bring him to me. An' Stringy——'

'Yes.'

'Moind you tell him Oi'm mighty bad, an'—an' Oi mustn't be crossed, or Oi'll be up wid th' skylarks in a month.'

'That cock won't fight, kid, he'd be askin' th' doc' an' th' nurses.'

'Och, yer a fool; tell him they're kapin' th' evil toidin's from him till he's well, because—because we're mates.'

Stringy, who was a splendid fighter but a poor strategist, looked admiringly at the youth.

'You f'r my dough every time, kid. I'll double my bet.'

'Go on, bring th' Auld Timer, ye're wastin' time. Oi—Oi might fade away any minnit.'

Stringy found McGlusky dressed in his hospital best; he was clean-shaven and had a flower in his coat; his eyes were on the door by which visitors enter. Without preamble the envoy broke into his theme.

'Been with th' kid, Ole Timer.'

'That's gude o' ye, ma man, he's daein' fine, they're tellin' ma.'

Stringy shot a keen glance at the hard face, then looked down and pawed the boards with one shoe. McGlusky rose to the clumsy bait.

'Wha's wrang?'

'Oh, nothing, Mac,' and Stringy began to whistle dolefully.

' Air ye keepin' onything fra me, Stringy ? '

' Me ? No, why should I ? '

' If ye air, ma' th' Lord help ye.'

' I'm not—but th' doctors an' nurses are. You go to Ginger, he—he sent me for you. An', Mac, don't you cross th' kid, he's—he mightn't be long f'r this world.'

Before he had finished McGlusky was gone. The big man found his protégé lying with a wan smile on his face.

' Ut's good av yez ter come, sorr, an' you waitin' an' longin' f'r her.'

' Whist, wee laddie, tell me what ails ye ? '

' Ut's nothin', sorr.'

The tears were welling in Ginger's eyes, they soaked through his voice and his fingers picked aimlessly at the bed quilt, a sign all soldiers dread because it is a superstition with them that quilt-picking heralds the end, which it very often does.

' Tell ma, mannie, they said it was only a bullet.'

' Ut was th' fall from th' tree that did ut, sorr ; ut's set up an enormity av th' prehistoric apparatus av th' pumpin' works av th' heart.'

' Air they gi'en ye onything f'r it, laddie ? '

Ginger's lip grew tremulous and he shook his head. The veteran took one young hand between his two big paws and silence stayed with them for a time. Then in a long-drawn whisper came the query :

' Sorr, ye'll not be forgettin' me when—y'r married ? '

' Ginger ! '

Only one word, but it nearly checked the reprobate in his villainy.

' Do you love her awful much, sorr ? '

' Dom her.'

' What's she like, sorr? '

McGlusky did his best under painful circumstances, making much of the maid's height and slimness.

' Sounds like a hop pole ter me, sorr. Oi alwis wanted yez ter marry a foine armful av a woman, somethin' worthy av yerself, sorr, thin yer childer wud be a race av giants, rale Anzacs, sorr. Ye said Australia an' New Zealand was th' place f'r grand women.'

' So it is, mannie.'

' Why don't yez wait till yez get there an' pick wan av thim, sorr? '

' So A wull, buckie. Dinna fash noo, ye get well an we'll gang ower th' watter thegither.'

' Ye mane ut, sorr? '

' A do.'

Ginger heaved a great sigh.

' Oi can die happy now, sorr.'

' Ye'll no' dee, A'll pull ye back fra th' jaws o' death wi' th' micht o' ma love. Try an' sleep a wee noo, A'll gang an' burn a' that dom poetry, an' A'll sit outside an' smoke an' be wi'in easy call. A'm goin' ta pull ye roon.'

He went away on tip-toe, and Murrimbidgee, who had been watching, took his place.

' Feel proud of yourself, kid? '

' You go to——, Murrimbidgee.'

' Hope I won't meet many o' your sort there when I do.'

' Who are you preachin' at anyway? '

' You, you gutter-snipe; every card you gave him you took from th' bottom o' th' pack.'

Ginger swore fiercely.

'Oi did, an' Oi'd do ut again. He's moine, ain't he? What right's any girl come stalin' him from me? He's—he's all I got.'

'Sure the girl wants him, kid?'

'Sure,' scoffed Ginger, 'of course Oi'm sure. Any girl or woman ayther 'd want him. Ain't he th' best that lives, ain't he been father an' mother an' brother an' sister, an—an— God A'mighty ter me? Oi'd lie me soul ter th' pit ter kape him. What's he want wid a woman anyhow? None of 'em's good enough f'r him.' Then with a flash of inspiration: 'Say, Murrimbidgee, you're as handsome as the divil—be a pal.'

'How kid?'

'Go in an' cut him out wid th' girl. He'll—he'll only bash yer an' thin fergit.'

'He might fergit, but any one he bashed don't, kid. Look here, I don't think th' girl cares two cents f'r him in that way, she's not his class.'

That brought Ginger's blood to a fury.

'What's that? Not his class? Och, there isn't a duchess good enough ter mend his socks—whin he has any.'

Into this atmosphere surcharged with emotion came Gwennie, her eyes alight with laughter, her cheeks dimpling, her slender figure swaying gracefully as she walked. A nicer picture of wholesome, unaffected girlhood it would have been hard to find in England or out of it, just a natural, unaffected slip of feminine niceness. Ginger was the first to see her.

'Hullo, who's this wan, Murrimbidgee?' Then,

after a keen glance at the girl: 'Praise be, but she ain't a thract distributor.'

Gwennie threw a smile and a nod to Murrimbidgee; though she being a woman guessed he was neck deep in love with the Devon girl; few women could look at his handsome, impassive face with the hint of tragedy underlying its calm, without wanting to look again.

'Somewan yez know?' questioned Ginger.

'Just a visitor,' was the laconic response. The gambler had no intention of enlightening the imp in regard to Gwennie and McGlusky.

Suddenly Ginger saw the dark face of his comrade flush, saw a glitter come into his eyes and noticed how the muscular, shapely figure stiffened. He followed Murrimbidgee's gaze, and saw the Devon girl coming down the ward, her arms laden with flowers, and in that instant the imp, with almost a woman's intuition, read the gambler's secret.

'Faith,' he murmured, 'this is the wan f'r my money. I loike thim red-headed wans meself. Go an' ask her f'r a bunch av thim flowers f'r a young soldier goin' west before his time.' His eyes were twinkling, his mischievous lips twitching.

'Red headed, you fool! Did you never see gold?'

'Not much av ut—an' Oi don't want to if ut's like that stuff under her hat.'

'Sew yer mouth up. Y'r not fit to dust her boots.'

'Well, Oi'm not askin' f'r th' job, am Oi?'

The Devon girl made an almost imperceptible motion, and the gambler went to her instantly.

'Well, Oi'm——' chuckled Ginger; 'he's the cleverest av our bunch, an' that girl can tie him in more knots

than she can tie her shoe string. No use ter try an get him to help me wean McGlusky away from the other gurl they call Gwennie. Wan fool in love alwis sticks up f'r another fool wid the same complaint. Th' love microbe seems ter be a dangerous kind av a baste; Oi'd loike ter see wan, Oi'd put a pin through ut an' fix ut toa card. Murrimbidgee's got wan in his bonnet as big as a butterfly.'

The Devon girl looked across at Ginger; instantly his face fell into lines suggestive of an advertisement in the agony column of a daily paper. Without a word to the gambler, the girl stepped quickly to Ginger's bedside and placed a beautiful bunch of roses by his side.

'May angels kiss yer hands f'r that, miss.' Then his better nature coming to the surface, he said in his honey sweet voice, 'Give th' flowers ter Murrimbidgee, miss, he'll—he'll prize 'em, an' God knows he needs a bit o' kindness.'

The Devon lass turned away with a colour in her cheeks that made the roses look mean.

'There's a lot of goodness in that laddie,' she said to Murrimbidgee.

'There may be,' he retorted, 'but it'd take a squad of sappers and a ton o' dynamite to find it.' Murrimbidgee and the Devon lass looking round them saw Gwennie passing from one wounded man to another, until she came to Ginger. She did not ask the questions so many women asked the wounded, she just chatted and laughed, and made the time pass very pleasantly, and Ginger met her half way, and his stories, told as only he could tell them, made her laugh until a passing nurse shook a reproofing finger at the pair.

In the next bed lay a Scot Australian named Dermot, who was noted for his surly, savage, uncouth temper, a man who bore pain badly. To him came a fat blonde woman who had placed a tract on every pillow in the ward. She was not a real visitor of the sick for the sake of the work as so many are, but a limelight seeker out for a little cheap kudos. Tracts were the only things she ever brought, except an inexhaustible capacity for asking questions. The irreverent Anzacs had christened her 'The pump in petticoats.' Seating herself by Dermot, she opened fire: 'Was he married?' 'Had he any children?' 'Wasn't it a dreadful war?' 'When would it be over?' 'Wasn't he proud to fight for the glorious Empire?' 'Would he be glad to go back to the trenches?' 'How did it feel to be hit?' 'What was his name?'

The surly one had been glowering at her, for it was one of his bad days, and his wound was wrenching him.

'Oot-an'-awa'-ye-hen,' he snarled.

'Good gracious!' muttered the pump, rising hurriedly, 'what a funny name, I—I didn't know you were a foreigner.'

She came to Ginger and unheeding Gwennie, butted in *sans cérémonie*. Ginger raised his one free hand and pointed a finger at his mouth then at his ears, then began to talk (?) the deaf and dumb language to her as well as he was able with one hand.

'Poor boy. Is it the result of his wound?'

'I—I think so,' murmured Gwennie, her dimples deepening.

'Well, dear, I'll leave a tract; perhaps he can read if he is deaf and dumb.'

She selected the most cheerful for a sick soldier :
 'Sinner, Prepare for Judgment.' Ginger looked up delightedly, then grasped her whole bundle and refused to return them. When the 'pump' moved off Gwennie asked :

' Why did you take all she had? Will you read them?'

' Divil a wan, miss, but they'll interest McG.—he's grand at theology.'

' You mean the famous Mr. McGlusky? '

' That same, miss.'

' Oh,' with the light of revelation dawning on her face, ' then you must be Ginger.'

The boy's brows came together in an ugly way.

' Oi am, an' yez seem ter know th' family.'

The girl laughed pleasantly.

' Well, I couldn't know Mr. McGlusky and not know you ; he talks of nothing else but you and Snowy. When did you come into hospital? '

' Not a minnit too soon, Oi'm thinkin',' growled Ginger sourly. Then, riveting his eyes on her face, ' Have yez seen th' Auld Timer ter-day? '

' No.'

' Th' mail goes out ter-morrow ; I expect he's writin' ter his wife an'—an' th' dear little kids.'

' He never told me he was married.'

' No,' said Ginger carelessly, ' he don't like ter talk av ut.'

' Why not? '

' You'll not be mentionin' it to a soul? '

' Of course not.'

' His wife's black.'

' Oh! '

' Yes, he was prospectin' f'r gold in th' Australian

bush, an' th' wild blacks speared him an' wan av th' black gins saved his life an'—an' he married her ter make a dacent woman av her.'

Once launched on the sea of romance, Ginger let himself go. He drew a vivid picture of McGlusky and a slim black gin, guiltless of wedding trousseau, being joined in holy wedlock by a mission priest. 'Him in a blue shirt an' ridin' breeches an' boots an' spurs, th' bride in nature's wardrobe only except f'r a wreath of wattleflowers on her head in lieu of orange blossoms. Then th' shame av th' unnatural alliance when all th' diggers an' stockmen ostracized him, ut nearly killed him, miss, when he realized he'd cut himself off from th' white race, ut brought on periscopeal inflammation av th' muscular intricacies av—av th' brain, an' th' least mention av his black wife makes him fit f'r the bug-house, that's why he came to th' war.'

Gwennie was probing Ginger with her eyes; she had heard much of him from others besides McGlusky.

'You are not married, are you, Ginger?'

'N-o, miss, an' Oi never wished ter be till—till an hour ago.'

He lifted his long lashes and let his eyes rest on the laughing face, and clever and debonair as she was, Gwennie felt the magic spell of the wonderful Celtic eyes for an instant, even though she had taken Ginger's measure to a nicety.

'Shall I come again and see you, Ginger?'

'Oi'll be countin' th' hours till yez do, miss.'

'Very well, I'll bring you some flowers on Wednesday.'

'Flowers,' said Ginger in a far-away voice, 'flowers

alwis make me think av funerals. A couple av packets av woodbines alwis kape th' memory green an' tender.'

'I expect some nice girl gave you those beautiful flowers on the bed, all the same.'

'Oh, thim,' said Ginger without a tremor, 'me ould aunt who kapes a whelk stall on Westminster Bridge sent thim to me ter give to a sodjer who used ter lodge wid her; he skipped widout payin' his board, an' th' flowers are ter remind him that though he's gone he ain't forgotten.'

'Your aunt talks in the language of flowers, then?'

'She do that, miss, you should hear her when she talks av th' money that sojer owes her.'

On her way out of Harefield Gwennie met McGlusky, and her reception of the veteran did not augur well for her faith in Ginger's black gin narrative. Never had she been so sweet to McGlusky as she was in that hour, but for a lover who had been guilty of writing many passionate poems, the veteran was strangely oblivious of the pearls thrown at his feet: his mind was fixed upon Ginger.

'Ye ha' been wi' ma wee mannie. A saw ye through th' window.'

'Yes.'

'Hoo did he seem ter yersel'? Ye may no' ha' th' weesdom o' Solomon, but y're no' all a fule. Miss Gwennie, dae ye think he'll—he'll be hittin' heaven this trip, or—f'r th' love o' God tell ma, dae ye theenk he'll get well, lassie?'

Gwennie would have laughed had it not been for the deep under-note of anxiety that throbbled in the big man's voice.

'You'll get to heaven before Ginger will, Mr. McGlusky.'

'Ye're no' fulin' ma?'

'Why should I?'

'Ye theenk he wull no' die?'

'Not this time. Why, he said his wound was nothing.'

'Th' spunky wee buckie.'

'I don't think he's very bad, I don't really.'

McGlusky drew very close to Gwennie and whispered hoarsely,

'Did he tell ye aboot his innards?'

Gwennie choked back her merriment.

'N-o.'

'Ye're sure?'

'Quite,' said Gwennie with deep conviction, and 'I—I don't think there's anything wrong with him—er—inside.'

'No' with his heart, lassie?'

'His heart? I don't think he's got one.'

'Lassie, ye're daft. Ginger's got a heart as big as y'r ain twa boots, an' ye've a gran' grup on th' roadway f'r a lassie.'

Gwennie drew her shapely feet well in behind the hem of her short walking-skirt.

'Oh, Mr. McGlusky, I didn't think my feet were so noticeable as all that.'

'Dinna fash aboot y'r feet, lassie, th' Almichty kens hoo ta mak' a wumman; y'r ower tall, ye ken, an' eef ye didna' ha' something fine an' flat ta stan' on, ye'd blaw ower in a breeze; wee feet air aricht f'r a wumman who is short i' th' shanks. A'll be wishin' ye good-day th' noo; th' wee mannie'll maybe

be missin' me; A'd no' ha' him feel neglectit f'r th' world.'

On his way in Mac met Murrimbidgee, who had just taken leave of the Devon lass.

'Ye seem mighty upliftit o' late, buckie.'

'I'm all right, Mac.'

The veteran put a big hand kindly on the young man's shoulders.

'Ha' ye foond y'r soul, ma son?'

Murrimbidgee looked him straight in the eyes, and the old mocking sneer did not curve his lips.

'I—think so, Old Timer.'

'Was it th' livin' word that did it, son?'

'I think it was a living woman, old sportsman.'

'Weel, weel, dinna cavil at th' way o' 't; a good wumman ha' been th' Almichty's messenger t' man mair times than there air leaves in th' forest.' He held out his right hand. 'A'm weeshin' ye weel fra th' bottom o' ma hairt, laddie. Gird up y'r loins an' fecht a gude fecht, an' eef ye only fecht th' auld de'il half as weel as ye fecht Turks an' Huns, ye'll shup him back to hell wi' his tail between his teeth. Dinna let go y'r grup on y'r soul, son, an' eef y'r in deefficulties any time an' a wee bit prayer can help ye, come ta me, son; ye ken A've wallowed in maist kinds o' mud masel', an' it's hard if A canna dig up a bit prayer from th' depths o' ma own expeerience that wull fit y'r need. It's th' yins who ha' never side-stepped an' slipped themselves that canna help a fellow-sinner; they're too dom sweet ta be wholesome, A'm theenkin'.'

Murrimbidgee gripped the rough hand, and his voice shook a little as he replied:

'All right, old cock bird; I'm out to run straight, no more marked cards in th' game o' life for me.'

'A'richt, see me to-morrow, we can ha' a smoke thegither, an' ha' a crack; a loose lip makes a licht heart—sometimes.'

'Thanks, Mac, but I've got to go to London to-morrow.'

He half drew a letter from his pocket and Mac caught the printed words on the envelope: 'On His Majesty's Service.' Murrimbidgee wavered a moment, then smiled and thrust the letter back into his pocket. 'The girl first,' he said in a half shamefaced way, the red blood sweeping up under his tan.

'A'richt, ma buckie,' and so the two men parted, and both were better for the meeting.

Mac found Ginger evidently much improved in health.

'What've ye been doin' wid yerself, sorr, all th' afternoon? Givin' y'r beauty an' airin', eh, sorr?'

'Ye seem better, Ginger.'

'Oi'm feelin' foine, sorr, ut's only whin th' pain comes inter me abdominal capacity that Oi crack up.'

'Does it get doon there too, laddie? A thocht ye said it was yer hairt that was hurtit.'

'So it is, sorr, but Oi ache all over in sympathy wid th' pain in me heart. Oi think meself, sorr, Oi might get betther av ut if nothin' happens ter upset me mental equilibrium.'

'Losh laddie, ye're gettin' on fine wi' y'r learnin'. It beats me where ye pick up some o' th' language ye use.'

'Ut's born in me, sorr,' sighed Ginger.

'Nothing can upset ye here, mannie, it's as peaceful as a graveyard.'

‘Nothin’, sorr—unless——’

‘Unless what, laddie?’

‘Och, unless yez get yerself joined up in th’ unholy trammels av matrimony.’

The following morning Murrimbidgee left Harefield for London, and came back in the evening; he told no one the business which had taken him away; his face still wore its expressionless mask, and his cold, reserved manner was as undisturbed as of old. A group of wounded men, nearly convalescent, were eagerly discussing the morning’s paper as he pushed past them.

‘Say, Murrimbidgee, did you ever run into an Anzac chap called Watson—William Henry Watson?’ demanded Stringybark in an aggrieved voice.

The gambler paused and eyed the group calmly.

‘Not that I remember. What’s wrong with Mister Watson anyway? Been burglin’ th’ Tower f’r th’ sake of th’ ancient relics or the Crown Jewels, eh?’

‘Burglin’ nothin’, he’s got the V.C. f’r unparalleled bravery, th’ paper says, got it yesterday. Who *is* he, that’s what we want to know?’

‘Sorry I can’t oblige, Stringy, I don’t carry Mr. Watson about in my pocket.’

‘Funny thing, none of us can place the beggar.’

‘Not so funny when you come to think of it; half of us don’t know each other’s real names; I know you as Stringybark; does any one here know what Saddleflap was christened? I don’t.’

Stringy scratched his head. ‘That’s a fact, ’nd not a blessed man here knows your real name, Murrimbidgee.’

‘Hush, an’ I’ll tell you boys, but mind it’s a secret :

I'm the Duke o' Doughnuts in disguise; I went out to Australia when I was very young to gain colonial experience: now you all know, and I expect you to keep it a dark an' deadly secret; some one might tell my folks 'nd get me disinherited.'

The crowd grinned, and Murrimbidgee passed on.

'You never get much out of Murrimbidgee by asking,' growled Saddleflap.

'Sits on his secrets like a cat near a mouse-hole,' admitted Stringy.

A nurse took the story to Ginger, and instantly he saw visions.

'Sister?'

'Well, Ginger?'

'Have yez got a little box ye cud lend me?'

'What sort of a box?'

'Och, wan like th' jewellers put a woman's brooch in.'

Ginger was a favourite of the nurse, and she was a bit of an imp herself.

'You're up to mischief, Ginger.'

'Stop takin' away me character, an' lend me the box, an'—an' a sheet av tissue paper.'

The sister, scenting fun, slipped away, and soon Ginger had what he asked for. Wrapping the tissue paper carefully round the box, he held it clasped in both hands in an adoring fashion. Murrimbidgee was the first to go to him.

'Hullo, kid, what's bitin' you? You look as sweet as honey in the comb.'

Ginger raised shining eyes to the quiet face, then nodded towards the box in his hands.

'Got a present, kid?'

' Oi'm near mad wid joy—an'—an' pride, Murrimbidgee.'

' What is it ? '

' You won't tell ? '

' Bet your sweet life, kid.'

' Ut's—ut's the V.C., Murrimbidgee.'

' Well done, kid. I didn't know that decoration was ever sent to a soldier ; thought a chap had to go and get it. Why not tell the boys ? They'll be as glad as I am. May I have a peep at it, Ginger ? '

' N-o, I must show it to th' Auld Timer first, an' he's out f'r th' day.'

' Good boy, keep it for him. Lord, he'll take th' roof off when he knows. You don't drink, an' I couldn't ask you to have one with me here if you did, but consider it done, kid.'

' Oi cud smoke on ut, though' as soon as Oi'm up.'

Murrimbidgee drew forth a packet half full of fags, and pushed them into Ginger's hand.

' Here you are, smoke these the first time you wear your V.C.'

' Thank yez kindly, Murrimbidgee, Oi'll smoke 'em all right, an' Murrimbidgee——'

' Yes ? '

' Yez can tell th' rest av th' boys if yez loike.'

The gambler soon passed the word round, and the Anzac soldiers with hearty smiles on their grim faces clustered round his bed congratulating him in unstinted terms. They knew why he would not let them see the V.C., and they applauded him for keeping the first view of the treasure for the man who had done so much for him. Then Ginger's magnanimity rose to Alpine heights.

' Yez may touch th' box wid y'r fingers if yez loike,' he whispered, and one by one they put their rough strong hands upon the tissue paper that they thought hid the cherished emblem for which each and all of them had hazarded life and limb on many a battlefield, and it was typical of the crowd that not a man begrudged Ginger the honour they fancied had come to him. Shyly they pressed gifts of tobacco and cigarettes upon him until the bedclothes bulged with his ill-gotten gains.

' Lave me now f'r a bit, boys, an' let me slape. Oi'm most overcome wid me honours an'—an' y'r kindness. Oi'll thry an' slape a wink.'

So they slipped away to talk over the great event, and Ginger beckoned his friend the nurse.

' You wicked little wretch,' said she.

' Garn,' he grinned, ' they've had *me* by th' leg hundreds av times, an' ut's my turn to-day; as th' Auld Timer'd say: 'Th' Lord gied them inter my hand.' Now sister, will yez take away th' spoils av war an' hide 'em f'r me again a day av famine.'

A little later Murrimbidgee came again.

' Say, kid, I've been looking down the list of V.C.'s. What is your real name? '

' Didn't yez know? ' queried Ginger innocently.

' No.'

' Faith, Oi thought everywan knew ut was William Henry Watson.'

Murrimbidgee straightened up like a bow unbent.

' You—you little devil, it's not; that's my name.'

' Oh, is ut? Well, I borrowed it f'r terday; yez can have ut back agin, Oi'm through wid ut.'

' And what was to-day's circus then, kid? '

'A grand leg-pullin' competition wid lots av fags f'r th' winner, an' that's me. Go away now, Murrimbidgee, Oi want ter meditate.'

'So will the chaps when they find out.'

'Let 'em,' chortled Ginger, 'many's th' time they've put ut acrosst me, ter-day Oi scalped th' lot.'

When the Anzacs discovered how they had been hoist with a petard they were fond of using themselves, their language was not the language of the psalmist.

'I don't mind him havin' me for a shillin's worth o' fags,' muttered Saddleflap, 'but when I think of the way he made me caress that damn box, I feel I'd only be doin' my Christian duty if I was to beat him up, an' I would too if he was well.'

Then some one chuckled, and a moment later the whole of Harefield was one big smile, even the very sick men in their beds forgot their pain for a few moments and giggled as they pictured the crowd of hard-baked warriors fingering a girl's empty brooch box reverently. It was characteristic of Ginger that as soon as he could hobble about, he went from one sick soldier to another and shared the plunder of that day. No one but the imp knew really who William Henry Watson was, and at a word from Murrimbidgee he held his peace. But there was dark trouble ahead for the gambler; some one who bore him a grudge had written to the Devon lass telling her what Murrimbidgee's calling had been before the war.

No one but a cur would have given Murrimbidgee away to the girl he had learned to love, and for whose sake he meant to throw the past behind him and live as only clean, strong men live, that he might make himself worthy to mate with a good lass; but there are

such men born into the world, creatures who are never happy unless they are wrecking the ladders by which other men are seeking to climb to the heights of redemption, and Murrimbidgee had made an enemy of such a one, who was bent on wrecking the only really beautiful episode that had come into the soulless, hardbitten life. Some men find a flower in their path at every step they take along life's highway ; some see but few ; and now and then a man is born whose fingers touch but one flower in the garden of the world in a lifetime, and of this latter kind was Murrimbidgee, who had been cursed from his cradle. The value such lonely souls put upon the rare prize that comes athwart their lives cannot be gauged by common standards ; the gifts the gods send so sparingly mean heaven on earth to them ; and woe to that man who comes between them and their rare treasure.

The creature who had thrown his baleful shadow on Murrimbidgee's happiness had done his work well. He had studied the Devon girl during her visits to Harefield Hospital ; he noted her pride in herself and her relations ; and on that knowledge he had planned and acted, feeling sure that the shock that would come to the girl with the knowledge of such a career as Murrimbidgee's had been would shatter her love and her faith, so he had written to the Devon lass, pouring all the venom of his putrid personality into his letter, and he stripped the gambler and presented him on the written page naked, vile, unclean, a leper amongst his kind. That blow fell upon the Devon girl like a thunderbolt ; it shattered her warrior idol as nothing else could have done, if it was true and her soldier was a bird of prey in peace time ; to love him meant shame

for her ; she knew if she mated with him it would break her mother's heart and bow her father's head in the dust. All through the long watches of a lonely night she wrestled with her grief, wondering, as the young will, why love, the divine gift, had been given her, tainted with the leprous taint of unutterable shame. The dawn found her still dressed, sitting by her bedside reading the hateful letter that had seared her soul.

'A gambler, a card-sharper and a blackleg,' murmured the girl as she sat with blanched cheeks reading the cowardly epistle, 'a man whom honest men shun and no decent woman would associate with.' She put her face in her hands and sobbed, for she loved him.

The next visiting day she went to Harefield as usual, and just inside the grounds she met McGlusky, who was lurking in the hope of seeing his own particular divinity, Gwennie. The Devon lass had heard much of McGlusky as a man who was straight and true. She paused, and he saw by her white, set face that she was in sore trouble.

'Ye'll be wantin' ta ha' a crack wi' ma, miss ?'

The girl searched his face with heavy, pain-dimmed eyes, then trusted her instinct. Putting the anonymous letter in his hands, she said :

'Tell me, do you know if this is true or false ?'

He read the letter slowly and carefully, and she heard his teeth grit together.

'A ken who wrote this letter, miss, it's like copper-plate ; na ither man in the Anzacs cud write like it but the yin who wrote it.'

'Is it true ?'

'Th' mon who wrote it is a leear; Smooth Jimmy is wha' th' boys ca' him. A ken him weel; a leear he was born an' bred, a leear by instinct an' choice, aye, an' a cooard ta his heart's core.'

'Is it true?'

The woman had gripped the bedrock of the matter, and would not let it go. McGlusky recognized this fact, and bending his shaggy brows and towering over her, he said, his rich, rough voice vibrating like a harp-string:

'Lassie, afore A answer ye, let me tell ye ye ha' a mon's soul in y'r keepin'. A ken Murrimbidgee, A ha' fought by his side against Turks an' Germans, A ha' bivouacked wi' him, thirsted an' half starved wi' him; there's no braver laddie on this planet, an' he has th' makin' o' a mon in him, an' a big mon, but he needs a helpin' han', a woman's han', an' lassie, ye air th' woman.'

'Tell me, Mr. McGlusky, is he, has he been what that letter says he is and has been?'

Then McGlusky's rugged figure stiffened, his fierce old eyes blazed, his big hands clenched, and his voice came deep and resonant.

'Tell ye? Who am A ta sit in judgment on ma brither mon? Who am A ta sit in th' seat o' th' scornful? Air ma own han's sae clean that A dare tae cast a stane at yin who is fightin' f'r his soul! Yon laddie ha' never had a chance in life—gie it him, noo's th' time tae prove yersel' a woman; eef ye'll no' dae it, y're only something tae hang a petticoat on.'

A figure moved quickly from between the trees and came and stood between the girl and the veteran.

A shapely, sun-tanned hand took the letter from McGlusky. The girl looked into Murrimbidgee's handsome face, white now in spite of all its tan, as he read Smooth Jimmy's damning epistle. Then the brown eyes and the blue met.

'Is it true?'

'Every word of it,' answered Murrimbidgee. "I meant to have told you myself, and explained. For God's sake give me a chance. I want to be square I want to go straight.'

'You were a gambler, card-sharper and a professed cheat?'

'Yes.'

The girl moaned, and her moan was strangely like that of some stricken animal; then she looked Murrimbidgee full in the face and turning, walked out of the grounds, and both men knew that for her there would be no looking back.

Murrimbidgee thrust his hand into his pocket, drew out a case and handed it to McGlusky. The veteran opened it and saw the coveted V.C.

'Wha' does it mean, buckie?'

'I'm William Henry Watson, V.C., that's all, Mac. I came to meet her and show her, I—thought—it might help to—blot out the past.'

'It's hell, laddie, cold frozen hell. Bide here a wee.'

'Where are you going, Old Timer?'

'A've a call frae th' Lord.'

'Where to, Mac?'

'Smooth Jimmy is leavin' th' hospital to-morrow, he's a well mon.'

'Yes, Mac.'

'A'm wantin' a word wi' him before he gets too far away, it will save carryin' him back here.'

'No, Mac, that's my job, I'll get him in France—if you touch him I'll hate you while I live.'

'Buckie,' whispered Mac, 'let ma ha' jest yin minute wi' him, jest yin.'

'Not half a minute. I know you and I know Smooth Jimmy; he's mine, Mac.'

'A'richt, A canna refuse ye, but A'm weeshin' th' de'il wud transform me inta a German f'r five minutes an' gie ma Smooth Jimmy tae deal wi' f'r seexy seconds; A'd fill a wee crevice in hell.'

They went into Ginger's ward together, and the hardest of the Anzacs gave Murrimbidgee a wide berth from that hour.

'He's found his familiar again,' grunted Stringy.

'Yes, an' brimstone hot too,' replied Saddleflap. 'Wonder what's bit him?'

A little later there came an urgent call for men to go to France, and McGlusky and Murrimbidgee applied to be allowed to go with the draft.

'Hardly fit, are you?' demanded the surgeon.

'Plenty worse than us out there doing their bit, and anyway we know the ropes,' snapped the gambler, and so they were included in the draft, and the last thing McGlusky saw as the train pulled out of the station was Gwennie holding up her sweet face to be kissed by her fiancé, a sprightly young lieutenant of artillery.

'Weel, A'll be dommed,' gasped McGlusky, 'there's twenty-four poems an' as many postage stamps gone ta blazes. Ginger was richt after a'; she was no' a stately cedar tae cling tae, only a hop pole, but A'd

ha' gie'd a year's pay tae ha' had those kisses !'

Murrimbidgee, who was sitting close to McGlusky, saw Gwennie also, and his thoughts travelled away instantly to that other maid whom all the wounded at Harefield called the Devon lass, and something more bitter than death came into Murrimbidgee's soul, for he knew that if it had not been for Smooth Jimmy's foul actions he might have won her. 'I would have told her myself,' he murmured to his own soul, 'and she would have given me a chance to redeem my past ; but he spoilt my chance—the only one I ever had, and she thought I was going to hide it from her, 'nd live a lie.' Then his brows came together and his teeth gritted as he muttered, 'This old earth ain't big enough to hold me an' Smooth Jimmy ; one of us has got to quit.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE WONDER OF BAPAUME

TIME, passing swiftly to the accompaniment of world-shaking events, brought Ginger, - McGlusky and Snowy together again in France. Many ironical remarks were hurled at Ginger from time to time concerning the V.C. he had won in Blighty, but this did not affect that young man's temper or appetite. He took what was coming to him philosophically and smiled his angel smile, and did his best to work off more leg-pulling combinations on all and sundry with whom he came in contact, but every day his task in this respect grew harder, his reputation spread so fast that he was forced to go outside the Anzac ranks when he really wanted a victim, and it was not at all unusual to see him come back to their own lines in a hurry, helped on his way by indignant Tommies who threw anything that was handy at him, to speed him on his way, and very often McGlusky had to intervene to save the young limb from condign punishment, and this led to more than one fight with the fists, in which the veteran came in for some pretty hefty handling, for many of the British Tommies were as good with their hands as they were with the bayonet. On one occasion Ginger purchased five dozen very small oranges from a French woman at a penny a piece, then, having been put wise to the trick

by prospector Brown, who had been amongst other things a purveyor of fruit in Australia, Ginger boiled those oranges, causing them to swell to a really royal size, the boiling not only causing the swelling, but rendering the fruit as tasteless as an old rag. Sauntering to the lines of a Scottish regiment, he swiftly disposed of his stock at threepence each, and was sidling off campwards, when a brawny Scot charged down upon him and gave him a hoist with his boot that made Ginger think a 'tank' had bolted from its moorings, and run into him. The cub did not pause to make inquiries concerning the reason of the assault, for half the kilties in his vicinity were coming towards him with wrath in their eyes and boiled oranges in their hands, and as he fled they bombed him with the hard boiled fruit. A group of Maoris lounging about after a hard day's fighting, saw the attack on their idol, and not knowing (and perhaps not caring) about the cause of the mêlée, ran laughing to the rescue, and one of them got a boiled orange right on the point of his nose, and it was hurled by a kiltie with an arm like a weaver's beam. With a yell the Maori sprang upon the Scot, and comrades of both sides joined in the impromptu fray. The Scots were big and brawny, but a Maori contingent on the war path takes a lot of beating, wrestlers and rough and tumble fighters to a man, and every man an athlete, they fought like dervishes. The kilties too were very willing, and the numbers were with them. Scottish slogan and Maori war yell rent the air as those solid brawny men grappled and smote with the naked fists, and gave the hip and the heel, and threw each other headlong to earth. Ginger had paused a moment

when the Maoris rushed ; for a second his Irish love of a shindy nearly took him back into the fray, but his ranging eyes and quick wit told him numbers must prevail. He sped away like an arrow to the Australian bivouac to bring up reinforcements. Quickly he told his story, omitting to state the cause of the ruction. McGlusky sprang into action at once.

'Maoris fechtin' f'r ye, an' ye runnin', Ginger ! A'm no' prood o' ye.'

'Oi was actin' as a galloper bringin' news av battle,' stormed Ginger.

'Oh, aye, aye, ye galloped sure enough ; noo right aboot face an' gallop back an' help ta swat th' kilties.'

With a howl of rage, Ginger wheeled in his tracks and shot off like a greyhound towards the combatants, Snowy, chewing a piece of gum, ran elbow to elbow with McGlusky, no sign of passion on his strangely youthful face, and Murrimbidgee ran level with Snowy. All the Australians who were near by were speeding to the mêlée, except Smooth Jimmy, who had no stomach for hard knocks.

The Maoris were not sorry to see the supports coming up, for battling against long odds they were getting badly mauled. It was not hard to mark Ginger's line of battle. Stung to the marrow by McGlusky's taunt, he had rushed into the fray yelling like a red-skin, and light as he was, he made his presence felt amongst the big kilties, for when his Celtic blood was up he was more like a catamount than a man, and he got a catamount's treatment from those heavy-handed Scots. A foreigner looking upon that scene might easily have been forgiven if he gleaned the impression that these men hated one another with a furious hatred,

but it was not so, it was just a diversion; each man did his best or his worst, but they kept to the rules of the game; there was no kicking or gouging, no using of belts, and the buckle end of a belt is an ugly weapon that will lay a head open like a sabre stroke. Officers who caught sight of the fracas turned discreetly away—it was a way the Jocks and the Anzacs had of relieving themselves from the *ennui* of soldiering. Lustily they smote each other for the good of their souls.

In the fury of the fray some one threw one of Ginger's oranges, which took McGlusky on the apple of the throat and sent him gasping to the earth. Snowy picked him up.

'What was yon?' he demanded as soon as he could speak. 'A didn'a theenk a kiltie wad spoil a pleasant evenin' by throwin' a stane.'

'Wrong, Old Timer, it wasn't a stone, it was fruit.'

'Fruit?—A'm glad ye tellt me, Snowy. Wha' kind o' fruit was it? Something they train elephants on?'

The picnic was over, so Snowy explained the situation to the veteran.

'Th' unchancy wee de'il, did he get threepence each from Scots f'r that kind o' fruit, Snowy?'

'He did.'

McGlusky chuckled.

'Th' wee beastie! A wonner they did na kill him.'

'Well, they haven't, but he's got the father of a beating, and this time Master Ginger has paid for his tricks.'

'It was no' done f'r gain, ye ken, Snowy, it was just th' high speerits o' th' buckie. There's no' an atom o' vice in him, it's—it's just his way o' expressin' himself.'

'Well, those kilties have been expressing themselves too, Ole Timer; look at Ginger now.'

McGlusky looked at his pet and a more dishevelled image it would have been hard to find anywhere.

'Losh, wee mannie, ye look as eef ye'd been takin' part in a Boxer rebellion, no' in a Christian fecht.'

'Faith, sorr,' said Ginger with his impish grin, 'y'r no hand paintin' yerself, sorr.'

When the Anzacs got back to their bivouac there was much rude chaff and laughter concerning the improvement or otherwise in their facial picturesqueness.

'Ye went f'r thustles an' ye got 'em,' chortled McGlusky.

'It wasn't a thistle that got me,' cooed Stringybark, 'it was a big fist full o' bones—I ran right into it.'

'Aye,' quoth Mac, 'y'r mooth is like a bed o' roses that a curate has been sittin' on, Stringy.'

'Why didn't you duck when the kiltie punched?' queried Smooth Jimmy.

'I'd have had time ter duck if I'd been a blanky long-range fighter like you,' snarled Stringy.

'Och, let Smooth Jimmy alone,' drawled Ginger, 'duckin' danger's th' only part of fightin' that he understands, he's a jaynius at ut, but when he gets ter Blighty again he'll be tellin' th' boys in th' bars how many kilties he laid out ter-day.'

Then, having exhausted the subject of the friendly little scrap which had left no trace of malice behind it, the Anzacs beguiled the time with songs and stories of other days. Murrimbidgee had taken no part in the banter that followed the scrap, though he had played no mean part in the fray, always sticking close to Snowy and more than once getting blows that

were intended for that cool-brained warrior. He thought those things were unnoticed, but Snowy did not miss much that went on around him, in a fight or out of it. Now Murrimbidgee sat as of old outside the circle, and as of old, he shuffled his pack of cards, but he never looked at them, his big eyes watched Smooth Jimmy, who was tolerated in the circle because he could play the violin like a wizard. He was playing now in answer to a call from a dozen throats, and Ginger sang to Smooth Jimmy's accompaniment, and never for a moment did Murrimbidgee's burning eyes leave the fiddler's face. The musician became aware of the eyes that watched, and he shifted uneasily where he sat. So had it been for many a night. The gambler had made no threat, given no hint by word of mouth that he knew of the letter Smooth Jimmy had written to the Devon girl from Harefield hospital, but the traitor knew that the gambler knew, and he went in quaking dread of his life. Once or twice, like the coward he was, he made overtures of amity, but Murrimbidgee only stared at him; never once did he speak, but night or day, when the two men were off duty, Murrimbidgee clung to Smooth Jimmy like a shadow, waiting, always waiting for the man who had robbed him of his one chance of redemption. In the trenches it was the same; somehow or another Murrimbidgee always managed to place himself next to Smooth Jimmy; he never smiled his sarcastic smile, never frowned, he just looked at his enemy until what little nerve the man had brought into the world seemed to shrivel up. He dared not move a yard after dark alone, and the whole company knew it. Mac had said to Murrimbidgee:

' Yon gommerill will be desertin' yin o' these fine days.'

The answer came like the snapping of a rifle.

' There will be two deserters that day, Mac.'

' Why dinna ye beat him up wi' y'r han's an' ha' done wi' it, laddie? '

' Did you ever see a man die of thirst in the bush, Mac?'

' A have, laddie, an' it's a sicht ta mak' de'ils weep.'

' I feel like that, an' Mac, no beating up will quench my thirst; you fergit it, Old Timer, it's Smooth Jimmy an' me for it when the chance comes.'

The traitor had gone to the padre with his story.

' What wrong did you do him? '

' None, padre.'

' You lie in your throat; men don't hate like that for nothing. I know men, and besides, you carry a lie on your face, in your eyes, in your voice, your conscience is flogging you with fear.'

' You won't help me, padre? '

' I won't help a liar. Tell me the thing you did and I'll see if you're past helping.'

Then Smooth Jimmy confessed.

' God may pardon you,' said the padre, ' William Watson, the man you all call Murrimbidgee, never will. I've known him from his childhood.'

' William—Watson, padre, is that his right name? '

' Yes, William Watson, V.C.'

With a fresh quake in his cowardly heart Smooth Jimmy had gone on his way, and the padre went to the gambler.

' Is Smooth Jimmy worth what you are going to do, Murrimbidgee? '

' No, padre.'

'Why do it then?'

'Do you know what he did to me?'

'Yes—the cur.'

'McGlusky told you?'

'No, he told me himself.'

'You're a good man, padre, about the only really good man I ever met—bar Snowy.'

Some padres might not have liked to be classed with the sharpshooter, but this one who knew Snowy root and branch did not object.

'I'm only a man, the same as you are, me son; we all have our secret failings.'

'You believe in heaven, padre?'

'I do, me son.'

'Well, if you had the power an' offered me a front seat in the choir there, I wouldn't alter my purpose; it's me an' Smooth Jimmy for it sooner or later.'

The spoken voice was so quiet, so full of deadly menace that the padre who, as he had said, knew men, turned sorrowfully away, knowing it hopeless to pursue the matter further.

On the night of the dust-up with the kilties Murrimbidgee's eyes gleamed like a panther's as he sat watching the man he hated; his blood was heated with the fight he had fought without malice, and his watching eyes unnerved his victim, who, ceasing to play, screwed his fiddle so violently that a couple of strings broke.

'That does it,' remarked Kurnalpi, 'no more melody—it's me for the village; I've got a permit. Any one else coming?'

A couple of soldiers sprang up, and Smooth Jimmy rose also.

'I—I'll go too, I've a pass; perhaps I'll get some new fiddle-strings in the village.'

He walked away with the others into the night. Murrimbidgee rose softly like a cat and joined the group. He didn't say he had a pass—he didn't say anything, but Smooth Jimmy did, and what he said wouldn't look nice in a book. The next minute he was back by the bivouac fire again, his teeth chattering as if he had the ague.

'Heard his blanky teeth goin' as if he was bitin' sun-dried beans,' declared prospector Brown. 'Watch out, Murrimbidgee, or he'll go loco an' slip a bullet into you.'

'Wish he'd try, I'm waiting for—just that.'

'You're a blanky good hater, Murrimbidgee.'

'My only virtue,' came the cold retort.

'He's let you down somehow, we all know that, though we don't know how.'

'He does.'

'Yes, th' carmine skunk, he knows; why did he do it?'

'He was a gambler, same as me, before the war; he put up a job on me an' I beat him at his own game.'

'Cards, eh?'

'No, dice; he thought he could make 'em talk.'

'Couldn't he?'

'Yes, but I could make 'em talk louder, that's why he put it across me in Blighty.'

'A woman or money, eh?'

'Go to blazes, prospector.'

That was all, but the Company knew, and the men watched the strange duel wondering when and how it would end; they saw through Murrimbidgee's game;

he was trying to get on Smooth Jimmy's nerves until he should, as prospector Brown phrased it, 'go loco' and attack with a weapon, either bullet or bayonet. That Murrimbidgee was taking big chances in the desperate game he was playing, all realized, because he meant to make the other man make the first move, and that move might mean a bullet through heart or brain, but how cool and quick he was, and how tirelessly watchful they also knew, and prospector Brown voiced the general opinion when he said: 'It's the fires of hell against a bundle of matchwood on Murrimbidgee, bar accidents.'

The whirligig of time brought the hour when the British began to speculate upon how long it would be before the High Command would order the taking of Bapaume with the steel. Every soldier knew that it must eventually be an infantrymen's job.

'Got to go an' hook 'em out with the "spoons"; the artillery can shake 'em, but not shift 'em,' vouchsafed a Tommy of the Manchesters one night to a group of whom the grim McGlusky was one.

'Oh aye, that's about it,' was the veteran's answer.

'You oughter be useful in a scrum o' that sort,' ventured the Tommy, eyeing the gigantic proportions of the veteran.

'A'm no' sae sure,' murmured Mac plaintively; 'th' sicht o' bluid always mak's ma stomach wamble.'

The Tommy, who was a new arrival from Blighty, and knew not Mac, was moved to great scorn by this amiable confession of weakness.

'Makes yer stummick wamble, does it? Well, you're a nice one to be in the fightin' line, you oughter be home with the conscientious objectors, you did.'

'Noo doot, noo doot,' agreed Mac, 'an', ma son, A'll no' be surprisit eef A weesh A was afore we get through wi' th' takin' o' Bapaume. A'm no' perishin' wi' anxiety f'r a Hun ta skewer ma wi' his baggonet.'

'Haven't you *ever* been in a fight, mister?'

'A have,' cooed the giant, 'an' that's wha' mak's ma feel wambly in th' innards, maybe A'd no' be scairt if A didna ken wha' A had ta be scairt about, but, ma son, half a yard o' baggonet in yer wame is no' a nice thing f'r breakfast, lunch or supper, it's—it's upsettin'.'

'Well, I wouldn't be such a damn coward as you, mister, f'r a acre of diamonds.'

'A canna help it,' crooned Mac, 'it's th' way a mon's constructed ba nature—y're a tiger in troosers yersel', an' dinna ken fear.'

'You old Scotch waster.'

Mac's eyes snapped fire.

'Dinna malign th' country that bred ma mither an' ma father, or by th' whuskers o' Mahomet A'll crumple ye oop in y'r claes an' pull ye bit by bit through th' meshes o' th' cloth.'

Ginger sidled up to the insulter.

'Och, ye damn fool, have a fit quick, an' we'll carry yez to yer own lines in one piece; if ye don't he'll manhandle yez, an' we'll have ter sweep yez up wid a broom.'

'But he's a coward, he said so himself.'

'He did, an' he's th' only man out o' hell that dares ter say it. Have a fit, or—or break all records over a hundred yards, or he'll ate yez,—that's McGlusky.'

The Scot had tossed away his belt and side arms.

'A'm needin' a wee bit o' divarsion th' noo,' he muttered.

'I'm not,' growled the insulter, on whom the name had acted like magic, 'I'm needin' a lot o' exercise,' and he took it.

'Weel, weel,' grumbled the big man, 'Ginger, th' next time ye interfere wi' ma pleasures, A'll skelp ye wi' ma belt; y're ower fresh f'r y'r age. What did yon buckie tak' ma for that he left sae hurriedly—a leeon tamer?'

'Think he took you for a fool killer at the finish, Old Timer,' drawled Snowy and every one laughed except the Scot.

'Na, na, A'm no' that, Snowy, eef A was A'd be in parliament, no' in th' army.'

Smooth Jimmy sidled up to the old war lock whose support against Murrimbidgee he had been sedulously courting.

'You put th' fear o' Gehenna into him, Mac.'

The veteran looked the speaker up and down, taking in every detail of his uniform, face and figure, then speaking over the head of his interlocutor, as if talking over a dirt-heap, he growled:

'Ginger and Snowy, eef ye see this worm wi' a mouth tae it address ma again, clamp his breeks close tae his body an' hold him against th' fire till he peels. Ye ken, A canna strike this sort, A canna even kick him, it's beneath ma.'

Murrimbidgee's dead level voice came clear and cold.

'The man who hurts Smooth Jimmy hurts me—come for a walk, Jimmy.'

His hand just touched the traitor's shoulder; Smooth Jimmy sprang back as if an adder had bitten him;

his hand went to his bayonet and clutched it. Murrimbidgee stood with both hands hanging loosely by his sides, his malignant eyes on the eyes of the other. Smooth Jimmy began to froth at the corners of his mouth.

'He'll run amok an' do it now,' whispered Kurnalpi.

'Faith, an' he won't,' retorted Ginger, 'he ain't got th' nerve, not wid them two eyes borin' inter him like ferrets borin' inter a rat-hole.'

Ginger was right, the coward hadn't the nerve; his hand dropped from his weapon, his chin fell upon his chest, and he dropped in a heap and sobbed as only a man utterly unstrung can sob.

It was the day following that on which Smooth Jimmy had covered himself with contempt by losing his nerve and breaking down in front of his implacable enemy; every man in the lines had the feeling that something big was about to happen; they had heard whispers and had shrewdly put two and two together; and though outwardly calm and unmoved every eye and ear was on the alert, and no one was astonished when the C.O. came striding down the ranks with his grim face set like stone and heard him say:

'A big day to-day, boys; it's over the ridge and into Bapaume.'

The Anzacs lounging in their lines caught the words of their C.O. and a cheer broke from them.

'Over th' ridge an' far away to Kaiser Bill in Bapaume town,' sang a voice from the back rank, paraphrasing 'Jock o' Hazeldene.'

'Good boys, it's got to be done, and you're the boys to do it,' said the C.O., who was inordinately proud of his troops.

After the first rustle of excitement had died away, the soldiers settled down for the solid work which they knew had to come, and when the order to advance came there was no rush, they just swung into their stride and went onward, the shells from the big British guns behind them whistling and screaming overhead as McGlusky quaintly remarked, 'like lost souls seeking a far country.' That covering fire from the British guns made the advance possible; without it the Anzacs would have been swept into eternity in short order, but the big shells made the enemy trenches on the ridge an inferno; they tore away the wire entanglements, half-filled trenches with dead Huns, silenced whole parks of quick-firing German guns, demoralized the enemy infantry and put many of the Kaiser's heavy guns out of action. The noise was devilish and continuous; it did not come in bursts and spurts, but was continuous and sustained like the reverberating roar of breakers on cliff-crowned coasts in storm time. The thunderous roar of Hindenburg's massed artillery added to the devils' jubilee, and soon came the fiendish clatter of rifles that had no number; lead flew as sand flies on a wind-swept desert, and men fell as snow flakes fall when a Highland hurricane is driving. Troops of all sorts and conditions were pressing forward, as well as the Anzacs, and the sunlight fell on mile after mile of blue steel bared for the fleshing. The British high command had issued its stern dictum that there was to be no halfway house this journey, it must be death or victory.

The man never came from the loins of man who could chronicle that advance and do justice to the troops engaged on the desperate quest. Men from a

thousand British villages, men from every great city in the sea-girt isles were there, facing death as death has seldom been faced in all the annals of the million-year old world. Men in the splendour of manhood, men past their prime, lads with the down still upon thin young faces, but old or young demi-gods all, giving death defiance and pacifism the lie, daring all for an ideal, and that ideal the cleansing of the world and the ultimate betterment of mankind, supporting militarism for the time being in the hope of crushing it for ever and bringing peace, glad-eyed and glorious, to a world wallowing in a welter of blood at the bidding of a half-mad ape who flaunted the royal purple.

As the troops pressed on, officers caught fleeting glances of brothers in arms they knew through the haze of smoke. A quick wave and answering wave of an arm, a shout: 'Hullo Taylor!'—'Hullo Edmonds—good luck'—then like ships that pass in the night they would lose each other, one to stand by his gun, one to push on to the ridge, some to fall, some to live through that inferno, according to the writing on the wall, the why or wherefore of such happenings unknown to all except the tireless writer in the book of fate, each life part of a plan that affected the whole, each death a strand in the cobweb of destiny; so was it at the beginning, so will it be to the end.

McGlusky had uttered one curt command at the beginning of the attack to Ginger:

'Keep close ta ma side this day, maybe it's ma last fecht.'

And Ginger, for all his recklessness, was not likely to disobey that order. So the veteran went into battle with the Irish imp on his left hand and Snowy

on his right, and the man of many forays thanked God for such comrades. Ginger, as always in a fight, was uplifted in spirit, but wofully downthrown in language; his Irish blood was seething, and he yelled at times like any redshank, and when the big shells ploughed a red path through Anzac ranks, he cursed as few could or would.

'Haud y'r swearin', Ginger, it's no' edifyin'; losh, laddie, y're awfu'.'

But the cub did not hear, or if he heard the voice of his mentor, he did not heed.

Once as they marched steadily on, a bird rose from its nest a yard in front of McGlusky, and he saw the young brood in the nest that must soon be trampled underfoot. The big man stooped without pausing in his stride, and took the nest of young in his hand, and the mother bird fluttered near. Passing an overturned gun carriage, the giant deftly placed the nest between the spokes of a broken wheel and swung onwards. Snowy looked at him, and for a moment there was a moisture in the eyes of the daredevil sharpshooter that was not brought there by the smoke of the battlefield.

'Rough as a steer, gentle as a woman,' he muttered. 'Well, if I can save him, he don't die to-day.'

Now the Anzac rifles began to speak not in gusts of passion, but steadily, sonorously; the men were aiming low, it was not their method to waste lead.

The ridge loomed in sight, a Maori yell full of the pent-up frenzy of the hour, loosed itself upon the smoke-laden air; the New Zealanders went forward with a rush and their bayonets lay level; up their side of the ridge they went like wild steers breaking

for the hills, and the Australians raced them. Then every German rifle snarled, every gun in the vicinity crashed in its quota of death and wounds, but nothing the Kaiser owned could stem that torrential rush. The charging men went down in smothers: companies that were, ceased to be; regiments were eaten up; but the residue went on. How it was faring with English, Irish, Welsh, or Scots, they did not know; they had not time to look or think, though had they known it, all who were in that fight were doing marvels and proving that the days of miracles are not past, for Britain's citizen army was on its toes to a man, willing and eager to fight. Valour great as the greatest the earth has seen was a commonplace that day; the steel was red and dripping; yell and counter yell broke above the storm of battle; Bavarian, Prussian, Saxon, all stood their ground, for a long, long fight hand to hand; standards waved and bugles tore through the devilish din; rifles crackled and big guns roared; but it was the steel that decided the mastery of the ridge. Who took it? The Lord only knows, but the Anzacs did their share, and when the bitterly contested ridge was taken and the Germans hurled back upon the fortified village of Bapaume, the order ran along the Anzac lines: 'At them, men, no rest for the Huns!'

In the grim rush that followed, McGlusky, Ginger and Snowy were with the vanguard. The young men had often seen the veteran fight before that day, but never had they seen him quite as he was then: his gaunt figure drawn up to the full of his inches, his leonine old head held high, he lifted his feet like a war horse and strode over or through everything

that lay in his path, a strange look of exaltation upon his rugged face. Every now and again he chanted verses from the Psalms, punctuating the rhythmic lines with fierce lunges of his bayonet when Anzac and German met.

'Why dae th' heathen rage an' th' people eemagine a vain thing? Th' kings o' th' earth ha' gathered thegither against th' Lord an' against His anointed. Hoot, ye de'il, hell's waitin' f'r ye!' and his dripping steel would plunge into a foe and come back to the 'ready' again like a lightning stroke.

Ginger was gasping, Snowy was reeling in his tracks, but the veteran never grew leg or arm weary.

Once a Prussian officer levelled his revolver point blank at the face of McGlusky and fired; he was only a few feet away, and at that range he simply could not miss. With the speed of thought, Snowy, watching by the big man's side, drove his shoulder into Mac's ribs and dashed him on one side, for Snowy had not been a crack footballer for nothing. The bullet travelled true, but Mac's head was not there to meet it, and before the Prussian could fire again Ginger ran forward a couple of steps, and his bayonet entering the Prussian's chest just below the Kaiser's iron cross, did his business.

Mac grunted as he regained his equilibrium:

'A'm no' bearin' ye ony malice f'r th' shove, Snowy, though ye're no' owerburdened wi' ceremony.'

'You'd have been overburdened with lead if I was, Old Timer.'

'A'll dee when ma hoor comes, no' before, laddie, but ye meant weel.'

Bapaume lay right in front of them, an awesome

spectacle, for British shells were raining into it by the ton. Fire and smoke met and mingled on all sides; red splashes of flame shot through the grey and dun clouds of smoke, as houses caught fire and flared up ruddily.

'Yon looks like a busy section o' Tophet,' cried McGlusky.

'It's busy all right,' answered Snowy. 'Those Germans are sticking it well and serving their guns like men.'

'Oh aye, ye're richt, an' it's no' exactly a pleasant spot f'r us, wha' wi' th' enemy artillery an' oor own guns, A'm no' sayin' A——'

Out rang the signal for the Anzacs to halt; the C.O. wanted to give them breathing time to be ready for the final desperate leap at Bapaume, and also to let the signallers warn the British gunners, so that they might not shamble their own men. As they stood leaning on their rifles, panting after the savage onslaught, a little flock of birds rose right over them singing blithely.

'Yon's a wonnerfu' sicht, laddies, nature at peace an' mon up to his hair in bluidy war.'

'Oi wisht Oi was a birrd,' panted Ginger, 'if Oi was, Oi wouldn't stop up there to do no singin', Oi'd make a big break f'r Holland or—or th' Canary Islands.'

'They're trustin' their Creator, Ginger.'

'Shucks, sorr, ut's because they don't know iron whin they see ut. If Oi had wiings, ye wouldn't see me tail feathers f'r dust.'

The advance sounded, and this time it was Bapaume or death. On the outskirts of the village the pick of Germany's infantry stood ready for the fray; volley

after volley they poured into the Anzac ranks, withering up those gallant lads like ripened grain before a prairie fire. A cloud of British airmen swept over them, dived down within pistol range, and blasted the German ranks with a hail of bombs, and still the Anzacs swept on, answering the call of the fighting pride that was their heritage. Bayonet met bayonet, and for a while nothing could be seen but a frenzied host of stabbing, hacking men—then the flower of the Prussian army crumpled up and fled, and Bapaume was won.

As the troops marched triumphantly into the village that had cost so many gallant lives to win, Murrimbidgee was seen slipping from one rank to the other, for in the fighting he had lost Smooth Jimmy, whose bump of caution had caused him to dodge back into the rear rank. Murrimbidgee asked no questions; he just peered into men's faces through the haze of smoke, and not finding the face he sought, passed on, questing like a hound after a lost scent. Smooth Jimmy had mapped out a programme for himself: he had made up his mind to surrender to the enemy at the first feasible opportunity, but the Germans were not taking prisoners that day—they had no time. When the village was won, Smooth Jimmy slipped out of the ranks, entered a side street, and moved off at no laggard pace in the direction in which he knew the Germans lay. It was a risky procedure, but the dread of Murrimbidgee was strong upon him, and he knew that his comrades loathed him to a man. So he passed into the ever-thickening smoke, looking like a shadow amid unreal things. The gambler had almost given up his quest in despair, when he caught sight of some one in the familiar uniform stealing

away from the main body, and the hate within him which never slumbered told him this was the man he sought. With a low snarling laugh, he jumped off in pursuit. He knew the punishment he would get for this breach of discipline, but it would have taken more than that to hold him back whilst his quarry escaped, for he divined Smooth Jimmy's intention. The fugitive had no idea he was being shadowed; he turned into an open space and then a light hand touched his shoulder. He spun round, ready to throw up his hands if it were a German, and as he turned he looked into two burning eyes and a white, set face that he knew and dreaded. Slowly he backed away, bending nearly double as he went. Then Murrimbidgee threw his bayonet forward. He did not speak, he did not hurry. Smooth Jimmy, brought to bay, yelled a protest:

'I never did you no harm, I——'

'Liar! I read your letter.'

That was all; then Murrimbidgee advanced, and like a rat in a drain, Smooth Jimmy stood to fight. He had one attribute: he was the best man with a bayonet in the Anzac forces—in the drill hall, but he had proved himself a rotten fighter in spite of his skill. But desperate men sometimes fight well, and he knew he had to fight or go west.

The Anzac troops came opposite that open space; they were a good way from the two duellists, and now their full band was at their head playing the battle music that the Southerners love. The troops were halted; fire and smoke from almost every house made a setting that suited those stern men, and as they halted the foremost ranks could see two men battling

fiercely with the bayonet, and by the slouch hats they knew them for men from 'down under.' No one could recognize a face through the haze; the two fighters were like shadow pictures thrown upon a screen.

McGlusky spoke tersely and to the point:

'Boys, th' day o' vengeance ha' come; Murrimbidgee's got Smooth Jimmy.'

They all gazed entranced by the strange drama; fighting was nothing to them, but this duel to the death after the long hunt and the wrong done held them riveted where they stood.

'Och, sorr, what a film ut'd make f'r th' pictures.'

'Ye mercenary wee de'il, haud y'r gab, ye've no poetry in ye.'

'It looks more like a picture film than the real thing, Old Timer,' said Snowy; then he added: 'I can't tell one man from the other in this smoke, but it's a fight to a finish.'

The two figures were advancing, retreating, side-stepping, thrusting, parrying. Suddenly one dropped its rifle and clutched and clawed at a bayonet that had passed right through the body, then dropped back and lay still.

'Th' fecht's ower—yin o' them has made a kill.'

'If it's Murrimbidgee who's killed I'm goin' ter have a word with Smooth Jimmy later on, Old Timer.'

'A'm no' theenkin' it's Murrimbidgee, Snowy.'

'Begob, they're both down, sorr?' cried Ginger.

An officer who had watched the strange duel rapped out an order:

'Here, two or three of you, slip across and see what's up over there, and bring those two maniacs in if they're wounded.'

McGlusky, Ginger and Snowy sprang out of the ranks on the run, and soon came to where the two men lay. Smooth Jimmy was lying on his back, a bayonet wound through his chest, and a glance told the three friends that his sands had run out. Murrimbidgee was resting on his side, and the film of the great shadow was deepening in his eyes. Snowy knelt and lifted the handsome head very tenderly.

‘I—got—him fair, Snowy.’

‘Yes, we saw it lad.’

‘He didn’t get me fair, he shot me—but—I’m—content—I got him.’

The gambler’s head fell back.

‘Gone west,’ said Snowy laconically, ‘but we’ll carry him in.’

‘Aye, will we, but yon can stay there.’

The padre came running up, but he was too late, and his grief was very real.

‘He died as he lived, padre, he was game.’

Reverently the padre felt in the pockets of the gambler for any letter or trinket, and his hand lit upon a small parcel. On the outside was roughly scrawled in pencil: ‘For Snowy—the only man I ever loved.’ With strangely tremulous fingers the great sharpshooter undid the package, and inside lay Murrimbidgee’s Victoria Cross, and the last act in a lifelong drama was over.

Back to the lines they all went—all except Smooth Jimmy, and then with their full band ringing in proud triumph, the Anzacs strode through fire and smoke to the very limits of Bapaume.

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