

Christmas Number

M E R E G E N

1942



M E R E G E N

E D I T O R I A L

"BY VIRTUE OF HAVING ASSISTED THE SOMEWHAT TROUBLED PASSAGE OF MERE GEN OVER THE VAGARIES OF 1942 I AM NOW ALLOTTED SOME 60 000 WORDS IN WHICH TO EXTEND, IN THE APPROVED XMASSY EDITORIAL FASHION, THE USUAL SEASONAL GREETINGS TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU. AS I AM NORMALLY ACCUSED OF BEING UNNECESSARILY VERBOSE, I WILL CONDENSE MY GOOD WISHES AND SAY THAT SUCH A GRAND CROWD OF PEOPLE AS YOURSELVES DESERVES THE HAPPY CHRISTMAS I PERSONALLY INTEND TO HAVE, AND MAY 1943 LOOK AFTER ITS SELF, AND OURSELVES :"

TED LIDDELL.

"I ALSO WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY OF WISHING ALL READERS OF OUR MERE GEN A VERY HAPPY AND CONVIVIAL CHRISTMAS, AND A PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR. CHANCES OF CONVIVIALITY ON OUR WATERED BEER, AND PEACE FOR THE NEW YEAR WOULD SEEM RATHER REMOTE, BUT NEVER MIND - JUST GET YOUR FEET UP AND ENJOY THIS SUPER EDITION. IT'LL SHAKE YOU." GORDON BATLEY.

"GONE FOR A WHILE ARE THE PIPING DAYS OF ROAST TURKEY MINCE PIES AND JOHNNY WALKER. LUCKILY CHRISTMAS ISN'T DEPENDENT ON THESE THINGS, BUT ON SOMETHING THAT LORD WOOLTON CAN'T RATION - GOODWILL. MIND YOU, A 'WEE DRAPPIE' OILS THE WHEELS OF FELLOWSHIP QUITE NICELY. THIS YEAR BEST MILD IS THE FASHION, SO HERE'S YOUR HEALTH: GOOD LUCK, A HAPPY CHRISTMAS, AND A JOLLY NEW YEAR. CHEERIO FOLKS. "

HAROLD SPEAK.

"THE TROUBLE OF ASKING MY EDITORIAL BOARD TO WISH YOU THE SEASON'S GREETINGS IS THAT IT LEAVES ME WITH VERY LITTLE TO SAY FOR MYSELF; BUT THOSE OF YOU WHO KNOW ME WILL RIGHTLY WHISPER 'IMPOSSIBLE' - SO I'LL TAKE THAT AS LICENCE TO REPEAT THEIR GOOD WISHES. I GIVE YOU A TOAST: 'CONFUSION TO ALL YOUR ENEMIES.' AND IF THAT DOESN'T BRING YOU A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR, NOTHING WILL."

STANLEY LOTT.

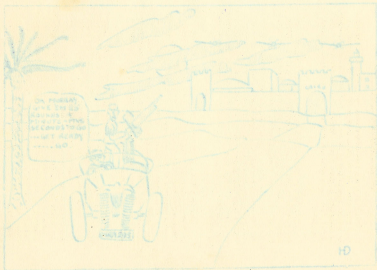
RADICAL RESOLUTIONS FOR 1943

WHILE I AM OLD FASHIONED ENOUGH TO RESPECT THE THOUGHTS THAT GAVE BIRTH TO THE USUAL CROP OF NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS, I AM SERVICE MINDED ENOUGH TO REALISE THAT THEY ARE BUT FIGMENTS OF OVERTAXED IMAGINATIONS! HOWEVER HERE ARE SEVERAL OF OUR BETTER KNOWN CONTEMPORARIES REVEALED IN A RARE RESOLUTE MOOD FOR 1943 !

SGT. TWEEDIE HAS PROMISED TO LEARN TO SPEAK ENGLISH AND NEVER AGAIN TO EMPLOY THAT BELLIGERENT WORD "QUIET". F/SGT. ALCORN INTENDS TO DISPENSE WITH ALL NOTICE BOARDS; AND SGT. PARSONS WILL NEVER AGAIN RESORT TO PROFANITY FOLLOWING A WINDY CYCLE RIDE FROM LINCOLN! L.H.C. SPEAK REFUSES TO DISCUSS INSURANCE; AND W.O. NOBLE PROMISES TO MEMORISE ALL CHRISTIAN NAMES WITH THE PRAISEWORTHY OBJECT OF FOSTERING SERVICE GOODWILL! KASHER LANGLEY AND CPL. WAIGHTS ARE GOING ON A RIGOROUS DIET; HARRY MAHER TALKS OF CLEANING HIS BUTTONS AND STAN LOTT IS GIVING UP HIS DRUMS ! (WHAT MORE CAN WE ASK OF 1943 ?)

CPL. JACK TONES IS SHAVING OFF HIS MOUSTACHE FOR THE DURATION; A.C.W. COLE IS CEASING TO WRITE SCURRILOUS VERSE; AND SHEILA EDWARDS WILL CONTROL HER TEMPERAMENT! CPL. JOHNSON PROMISES TO WEAR HIS RESPIRATOR OCCASIONALLY; AUDREY WESTON IS LEARNING TO TANGO; AND ERIC FRANE IS GIVING UP BINDING AS A HOBBY. CLIFF NORTON IS SENDING THAT CURLY CHIBOUQUE (SO SIMILAR TO A PIPE) FOR SALVAGE; PLAYBOY HOWARD IS TAKING UP "SUGAR BEETING" AND JOHNNY GORMAN IS RENOUNCING HIS VIEWS ON PROPAGATION !

PHYL CARR IS NO LONGER TO USE "STABLODNE" - JACK BELLERBY IS CHANGING HIS DANCING PARTNER (INCIDENTALLY SO IS PHYLLIS GODDARD) AND GEOFF PRICE IS LEARNING TO PLAY TABLE TENNIS. AUSTERITY ALLMAN IS TAKING UP WAFFING! SGT. UNSWORTH IS OUT TO REGAIN THAT FIGURE HE HAD IN PRE-SKEGNESS DAYS. MESDAMES BASS, BURTON, BEARD AND GLEDHILL ARE NEVER AGAIN TO APPLY FOR A LATE PASS. BILL ADAMS IS GIVING UP HIS PIPE SMOKING (WITH A VIEW TO GROWING UP.). CPL. RIPLEY IS TAKING UP PERMANENT RESIDENCE AT THE OXFORD HOTEL! AND SO THE WISHFUL THINKERS RESOLVE . . . WHAT'S THAT? "HOW ABOUT MYSELF?". WELL I COULD REFRAIN FROM WRITING 'BILGE' LIKE THIS, BUT THAT IS NOT A PROMISE. T.L.





WITHERNOAK

"WHEN MY AMERICAN AUNT DIED AND LEFT ME ALL HER PROPERTY I AT LAST SAW MY WAY CLEAR TO THE REALIZATION OF MY AMBITION. BECAUSE OF THE UNLIKELIHOOD OF MY EVER SEEING HER IN THE FLESH I USED TO TELL HER PRETTY FREELY OF MY AMBITIONS. IN HER WILL SHE SAID "THIS IS YOUR CHANCE, JOHN." I TOOK IT.

THERE WAS AN OLD GEORGIAN HOUSE TUCKED AWAY AT BORRIDGE HANDY TO BIRMINGHAM BY CAR, BUT REMOTE ENOUGH FROM ITS DIRT, SMOKE AND BUSTLE. I LOST NO TIME IN THE BUYING OF IT, AND WITHIN TWO MONTHS OF MY AUNT'S SUDDEN DEMISE, MARY, I, AND THE FIVE CHILDREN WERE INSTALLED.

AUNT POLLY'S CHUNK OF THE CITY OF ALBANY BROUGHT ME £100,000 WHEN I SOLD IT TO AN AMERICAN HOUSING SYNDICATE. SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO COUNT THE NUMBER OF WOODBINES I SMOKED, NOR DID MARY AND THE GANG (AS WE CALL THE YOUNGSTERS) NEED TO DENY THEMSELVES. PROSPERITY WAS HERE FOR US, AND WE MEANT TO ENJOY IT. ALSO I INTENDED TO BECOME THE WORLD FAMOUS WRITER I SECRETLY BELIEVED MYSELF TO BE.

BY PAYING DECENT WAGES, WE SOON ENTICED A STAFF OF SERVANTS FROM THEIR SITUATIONS IN THE LOCALITY. THE HOUSE HAD BEEN REMARKABLY CHEAP TO BUY - £5000 - AND WITH MOST OF THE £100,000 CAREFULLY INVESTED WE FOUND WE COULD AFFORD A COOK, TWO MAIDS, A BUTLER AND A BOOT-BOY, AS WELL AS A FULL TIME GARDENER.

MARY, MY WIFE, SAID THAT THE HOUSE HAD A CHILLY ATMOSPHERE, BUT THAT, OF COURSE, WAS BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN EMPTY SO LONG. ITS PREVIOUS TENANTS WERE A MAIDEN LADY AND HER BROTHER. THEY WERE BOTH ECCENTRIC, THEIR CHIEF REGULARITY BEING THEIR FONDNESS FOR DISAPPEARING DURING THE NIGHT AND STAYING AT TORQUAY OR THE SOUTH OF FRANCE FOR MONTHS ON END. FINALLY THEY HAD GONE TO NICE, AND FROM THERE THE BROTHER HAD WRITTEN INSTRUCTING THE SOLICITOR TO SELL THE PLACE, AS HE AND HIS SISTER INTENDED SPENDING THE REMAINDER OF THEIR LIVES IN THE MORE EQUABLE CLIME OF THE RIVEIRA. THAT WAS TWENTY YEARS AGO. THE HOUSE, OWING TO ITS SIZE, HAD STOOD EMPTY EVER SINCE.

WE MOVED IN DURING THE SUMMER, AND THE MONTHS WENT BY LIKE A DREAM. JULIA, OUR SIX YEAR OLD LITTLE GIRL, TOLD ME ONCE THAT "THE PRETTY LADY WITH THE BAD THROAT" HAD BEEN IN HER ROOM DURING THE NIGHT. THIS PUZZLED ME UNTIL I REMEMBERED THAT AGNES, THE MAID, USED TO WEAR A LACE NECK-BAND TO SHOW JANE, THE OTHER MAID, JUST WHO WAS THE SENIOR SERVANT. SO I FORGOT THE INCIDENT, AND WENT BACK TO MY WORK. BEING RELIEVED OF THE MORE PRESSING CARES OF FAMILY LIFE, I WAS DOING WELL AS A WRITER. MY ARTICLES AND STORIES WERE BEING ACCEPTED, MAINLY PERHAPS, BECAUSE I USED TO SUGGEST TO THE EDITORS OF THE MORE HARD-UP PUBLICATIONS THAT PAYMENT WAS SUPERFLUOUS.

ONE NIGHT I WAS WORKING IN MY STUDY WHEN I SAW A FAINT LIGHT IN THE GARDEN. IT APPEARED TO COME FROM SOMEWHERE BY THE ENORMOUS DYING OAK THAT GAVE THE HOUSE ITS NAME OF "WITHERNOAK". I WAS JUST ABOUT TO GO OUT TO INVESTIGATE, WHEN THE THOUGHT THAT THAT WAS THE BUTLER'S JOB, CAUSED ME TO RING FOR HIM. PERCIVAL ENTERED WITH THE IMPASSIVE AIR THAT HAD SO AWED ME BEFORE WE HAD DISCOVERED A MUTUAL FONDNESS FOR ANSELL'S BEER. "PERCE." I SAID, "JUST SLIP OUT AND SEE WHO IS IN THE GARDEN BY THE OAK. PROBABLY SOME LOU PINCHING OUR FLOWERS. IF SO, WARM THE SEAT OF HIS DIGNITY AND THREATEN TO HAND HIM OVER TO THE BOBBY". PERCIVAL DEPARTED. HE WAS SOON BACK. "AFTER A MOST EXHAUSTING SEARCH SIR, I FIND THAT THERE ISN'T NOBODY IN THE GARDING. WILL THAT BE ALL NOW SIR?" I INTIMATED THAT HE HAD EARNED "HALF A SNIFTER" AND WHEN HE HAD POURED OUT, WE DRANK TO EACH OTHER'S HEALTH AND BLESSED MR. ANSELL. HE RETIRED AND I WENT ON WITH MY WORK.

NOVEMBER WITH ITS DEAD SOODEN LEAVES, ITS MISTS, RAINS AND FROSTS CAME AND WENT. DECEMBER GAVE EVERY PROSPECT OF BEING CHRISTMASSY. SNOW FELL AND BLANKETED THE COUNTRYSIDE TO A DEPTH OF SEVERAL INCHES. WE LIT FIRES IN EVERY ROOM, AND THE LOCAL COALMAN SENT US A CALENDAR.

MARY INTENDED GIVING THE CHRISTMAS PARTY WE HAD ALWAYS DREAMED ABOUT. AN ENORMOUS CHRISTMAS TREE HAD ARRIVED, CASES OF WINE, BOXES OF CIGARS AND CIGARETTES, BARRELS OF GOOD OLD BEER, AND FOOD AND SWEETS OF ALL KINDS. A FATHER CHRISTMAS OUTFIT CAME FOR ME TO WEAR. FATHER CHRISTMAS WAS GOING TO ARRIVE ON CHRISTMAS MORN, AFTER WE HAD ALL DEEN TO MASS, AND

MARY AND I WERE AS THRILLED AS THE GANG WERE AT THE APPROACH OF THE FESTIVAL.

ORDERS WERE GIVEN TO KEEP THE CHILDREN OUT OF THE DRAWING ROOM, AND MARY AND I SPENT HOURS IN FIXING THE PRESENTS AND ORNAMENTS ON TO THE TREE. MY STUDY WAS ABOVE THIS ROOM, AND I WAS IN THERE WORKING ON A GHOST STORY THAT WOULD 'SHAKE' THEM, ONE NIGHT ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS, WHEN I WAS ASTOUNDED TO HEAR CRASHES AND THUMPS FROM THE ROOM BELOW. I DASHED DOWNSTAIRS TO THE DRAWING ROOM, AND FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR. THE TREE WAS LYING ON ITS SIDE, THE PRESENTS AND BROKEN ORNAMENTS WERE SCATTERED OVER THE FLOOR. THE ROOM WAS EMPTY. I DASHED TO THE WINDOW. IT WAS FASTENED. I PULLED THE BELL ROPE, AND THE PORTLY BUTLER APPEARED AS IF BY MAGIC.

"WHO'S BEEN IN HERE PERCE?" I DEMANDED.

"HI WAS JUST COMING TO HINVESTIGATE, SIR".

"IS THE GANG IN BED?"

"OF COURSE SIR."

"THAT'S DARNED FUNNY, PERCIVAL, HOW THAT TREE CAME TO FALL LIKE THAT."

A MOST PECULIAR THING HAPPENED THEN, A PICTURE FELL WITH A RESOUNDING CRASH.

"STRIKE ME PINK!" EJACULATED THE BUTLER. I THOUGHT RAPIDLY.

"LISTEN PERCE. KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT IN THE SERVANTS' HALL ABOUT THIS. IF AGNES AND JANE GET SCARED, THEY WILL LEAVE, AND WE SHALL BE IN THE SOUP OVER CHRISTMAS. I'LL FIND THE CAUSE OF THIS LITTLE LOT."

I TOLD MARY AN ACCIDENT HAD OCCURRED TO THE CHRISTMAS TREE, LETTING HER THINK IT WAS SOME CLUMSINESS ON MY PART. THEN I WENT BACK TO MY STUDY. THERE I HAD ANOTHER SHOCK. MY BOOKS AND PAPERS WERE SCATTERED ALL OVER THE FLOOR.

THE WINDOW WAS FASTENED ON THE INSIDE. THE WIND COULD NOT HAVE CAUSED THE DAMAGE, BECAUSE THE WEATHER, AS OFTEN AFTER SNOW, WAS STILL AND FROSTY. I WOULD NOT ADMIT THE SUGGESTION CLAMOURING TO ENTER MY MIND. THEN I DASHED TO SEE THE GANG'S ROOMS. IF ANYTHING HAD HAPPENED TO THEM! THANK GOODNESS! ALL FIVE WERE SOUND ASLEEP. I RANG FOR AGNES, AND WHEN SHE ARRIVED I TOLD HER SHE MUST MAKE HER BED IN JULIA'S ROOM UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. SHE WAS CURIOUS BUT I IGNORED HER QUESTIONING LOOKS. I DECIDED TO TELL MARY AND TRUST IN HER NATURAL COURAGE.

SHE WAS IN THE SITTING ROOM, HER PET "BLUE ROOM". SHE LOOKED LOVELY SINCE SHE HAD HAD THE BULK OF HER DOMESTIC WORRIES EASED BY OUR INHERITED MONEY. I TOLD HER ALL ABOUT THE NIGHT'S HAPPENINGS. "THE CHILDREN OFTEN TELL ME ABOUT THE POOR PRETTY LADY WITH THE BAD THROAT WHO STANDS BY THEIR BED AT NIGHT" SHE SAID. I WAS STAGGERED.

"ISN'T IT AGNES SEEING THAT THEY ARE ALRIGHT?"

"NO, LOVE, AND YOU AND I KNOW IT ISN'T."

"WHO DO YOU THINK IT IS?" I ASKED, KNOWING HER ANSWER.

"THE SAME PERSON YOU THINK IT IS" SHE SMILED.

I KISSED HER AND TOLD HER NOT TO WORRY AS WE SHOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEM SOMEHOW. SHE SMILED AND SAID THAT SO LONG AS THE GHOST REFRAINED FROM ANNOYING OUR CHRISTMAS GUESTS, SHE COULD STICK IT OUT. "IT WILL LOOK BAD IF YOUR GUESTS ARE HIT BY BOTTLES THROWN BY SPIRITS" SHE ADDED.

WELL, I THOUGHT IT OVER FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS, MEANWHILE ALL SORTS OF THINGS HAPPENED. PICTURES FELL OFF THE WALL, BELLS WERE RUNG, ORNAMENTS WERE SMASHED, SOOT FELL DOWN THE CHIMNEYS, AND SCREAMS WERE HEARD IN THE DRAWING ROOM, FOLLOWED BY A LOUD THUMP. THAT DECIDED ME. I HAVE READ TOO MANY TRUE STORIES OF THESE HAPPENINGS TO DISBELIEVE IN GHOSTS.

I WENT TO SEE FATHER MURPHY AT HIS PRESBYTERY, AND TOLD HIM WHAT WAS HAPPENING. HE TOLD ME THAT LOCAL GOSSIP ALWAYS ALLEGED THAT THE SISTER HAD BEEN MURDERED BY HER BROTHER. HE ALSO TOLD ME THAT THE ECCENTRIC COUPLE WERE CATHOLICS. I ASKED HIM WHAT HE THOUGHT OF THE BUSINESS AT WITHERNOAK. HE REPLIED THAT WHILE WE MUST BE VERY CAUTIOUS OVER ACCEPTING THE TRUTH OF 'GHOST STORIES' THERE WERE UNDENIABLE AND FULLY AUTHENTICATED CASES OF HAUNTED HOUSES, AND SIMILAR PHENOMENA. THE MAJORITY WERE CLEARLY CASES OF EVIL SPIRITS AT WORK, BUT CASES HAD BEEN KNOWN OF HUMAN SOULS WHICH HAD MET UNTIMELY ENDS, HAUNTING THE PLACE OF THEIR DEATHS UNTIL ABSOLUTION AND CHRISTIAN BURIAL HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THEIR REMAINS. I HAZARDED THAT THIS AT WITHERNOAK WAS A SIMILAR CASE. HE SAID HE WOULD COME ALONG THE FOLLOWING DAY AND SEE WHAT HE COULD DO. I THANKED HIM AND WENT HOME.

JANE AND AGNES WERE IN THE HALL, TRUNKS PACKED.

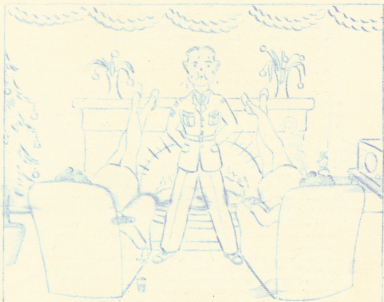
"TOO EARLY FOR SUMMER HOLIDAYS ISN'T IT?" I GRINNED.

"WE'RE LEAVING SIR," SAID AGNES UNCOMFORTABLY.

"OVER THE HAPPENINGS?"

"IF YOU CAN STAND OLD LADIES WITH THEIR THROATS CUT, WANDERING

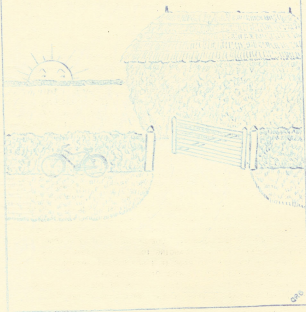
MERE RECRUITING



JOIN THE WAAF.
— AND SERVE WITH THE MEN WHO FRY!

— ALL AGES — IN TIME

"FROM THIS AND OTHER OPERATIONS, ONE OF
OUR HOPPERS FAILED TO RETURN."



ABOUT, WE CAN'T", SAID JANE, IN A MANNER THAT INDICATED HER BELIEF THAT I WAS TO BLAME. I MANAGED TO PERSUADE THEM TO STAY UNTIL AFTER THE VISIT OF FATHER MURPHY ON THE MORROW, ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IF HE COULDN'T CURE THE TROUBLE, THEY COULD GO.

THAT NIGHT WAS A REPETITION OF THE OTHERS. CHAIRS FLEW ACROSS ROOMS, ORNAMENTS SMASHED, SOOT FELL DOWN CHIMNEYS, DOORS SLAMMED, THE BELLS RANG, WINDOWS RATTLED, PICTURES CRASHED TO THE FLOOR. THEN THE FAMILIAR BUT NONE-THE-LESS DREADFUL SCREAMS, FOLLOWED BY THE INEVITABLE THUMP IN THE DRAWING ROOM. I ALSO NOTICED THE FAINT LIGHT BY THE WITHERED OAK, AND THEN THE SOLUTION DAWNED ON ME. WHAT WE WERE HEARING WAS A RE-ENACTMENT OF THE SISTER'S DEATH STRUGGLE, THE CUTTING OF HER THROAT, AND HER BURIAL AT THE FOOT OF THE TREE.

THE PRIEST ARRIVED NEXT DAY, BUT WE HAD BEEN UP EARLY THROUGH BEING TOO SCARED TO SLEEP. PERCIVAL, THE BOOT-BOY AND I, HAD BEEN DIGGING AT THE FOOT OF THE OAK. WE HAD FOUND FRAGMENTS OF CLOTHING AND A DECOMPOSED FEMALE BODY. THE BUTLER HAD GONE OFF TO NOTIFY THE LOCAL POLICE. I GREETED FATHER MURPHY, AND TOLD HIM THAT IT WAS ABSOLUTION AND THE BURIAL SERVICE THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO SAY. AFTER THE CEREMONY WAS OVER THE POLICEMAN ARRIVED, AND MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO REMOVE THE BODY.

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WELL, WE HAD A GRAND CHRISTMAS PARTY, MARY SAYS I WAS DRUNK, BUT I WASN'T - MERELY EXCITED. PERCIVAL HOWEVER ALLOWED HIS FONDNESS FOR AMSELLS TO OVERCOME HIS DEVOTION TO DUTY. WE FOUND HIM SOUND ASLEEP IN THE BEER CELLAR. AGNES AND JANE STAYED ON AND HELPED TO MAKE THE PARTY A SUCCESS. THE GANG HAD A PERFECTLY MARVELLOUS TIME, AND THE GUESTS WERE LOUD IN THEIR APPRECIATIONS. ONE OF THEM SENT ME A LOVELY SILVER CIGARETTE CASE. GLANCING IDLY THROUGH SOME OF THE NEWSPAPER HE HAD USED TO PACK IT I SAW THE FOLLOWING:

"ENGLISH RESIDENT OF NICE DIES SUDDENLY"

THE DEATH TOOK PLACE ON THE SAME DAY AND AT THE SAME TIME AS THE BURIAL SERVICE AT WITHEROAK. OF COURSE IT WAS THE BROTHER OF THE MURDERED WOMAN.

J.G.

MEMORIES OF AN AIRMAN IN SEARCH OF A PILLET

- " I'M SORRY, BUT MY HUSBAND IS ON NIGHTS, AND PEOPLE MIGHT TALK. "
- " I'M AFRAID NOT. YOU SEE MY WIFE'S EXPECTING A HAPPY EVENT SOON."
- " WELL IF YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN BED, WASH UP, CHOP STICKS, QUEUE FOR RATIONS, AND DIG THE GARDEN, WE MIGHT CONSIDER IT."
- " WE THOROUGHLY DISAPPROVE OF THE WAR, AND CAN'T BE ASSOCIATED WITH AN AIRMAN."
- " ARE YOU A WEE SLEE'UN?" (USUAL SPELLING WESLEYAN)
- " WE ARE RESERVED FOR OFFICERS!"
- " I SHOULD SAY NOT, WE'VE GOT A DAUGHTER 19."
- " MY HUSBAND HAS A MUCH BETTER SCHEME, HE KEEPS WRITING TO THE PAPERS ABOUT IT."
- " CERTAINLY NOT, MY HOME IS NICELY FURNISHED!"
- " I'LL TAKE YOU, BUT IT MUST BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD, MY DOGS COME FIRST."
- " THE DOCTOR SAYS MY NERVES WON'T STAND IT!"
- " WHY DON'T YOU TRY MRS. SO-AND-SO?"
- " WHY DOESN'T YOUR OFFICER PUT YOU IN A TENT OR SOMETHING?"
- " CERTAINLY, I KNOW HOW MY BOY IN THE ARMY FEELS ABOUT BEING AWAY FROM HOME."

T.L.

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SAYING OF THE WEEK.

"SOMETIMES PEOPLE COMMIT BIGAMY
TO PLEASE THE LANDLADY. "

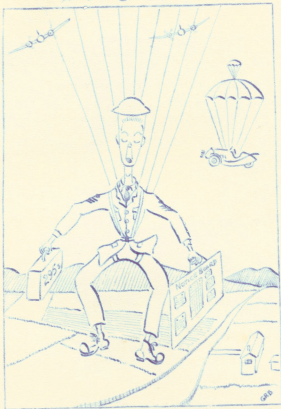
SAID BY SIR GERALD DOOSON. (RECORDER OF LONDON)

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AT A RECENT DANCE THE LOCAL
HOME GUARD BAND PLAYED STRAUSS.
NEED WE ADD THAT STRAUSS LOST?

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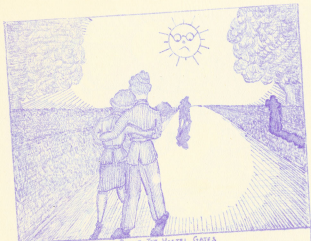
INTO BATTLE



or 'COME WITH THE WIND'



GREETINGS TO OUR N.C.O.S



NO LOITERING ROUND THE HOSTEL GATES
SO THE ORDERS SAY
BUT THOUGH THE "MOON" SHINE BRIGHT ABOVE
"LOVE WILL FIND A WAY."

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GEN

ANY CASUAL READER GLANCING AT THE COVER OF THIS MAGAZINE WOULD FORM THE IMPRESSION THAT 'GEN' WAS BEING REFERRED TO IN THE SAME DISPARAGING MANNER AS CAPTAIN FOTHERINGALE SMYTHE USED WHEN HE BEAT THE MAJOR AT 101 UP: "A MERE BAGATELLE MY DEAR FELLAH!"

THIS WOULD BE AN ENTIRELY ERRONEOUS CONCLUSION TO TAKE, AND I HAVE IT WITH GOOD AUTHORITY THAT THE EDITORIAL BOARD WILL PROSECUTE THROUGH THEIR LAWYERS (MESSRS. SPEAK SPEAK SPEAK AND SILENCE.) ANY PERSONS COMMUNICATING OR ALLEGING ANY MISCONCEPTION OF THIS MAGAZINE'S TITLE. GEN, AND THE PECULIARLY EXCITING INTEREST THAT SURROUNDS IT, ARE TOO DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE SERVICE TO BE DISMISSED AT A SINGLE STROKE OF THE PEN; AND MERE GEN IS OUR LOCAL VARIETY.

THERE ARE THREE FORMS OF GEN WHICH THE PERSONNEL OF THIS STATION ARE LIKELY TO COME INTO CONTACT WITH, THEY ARE, IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE, PUKKA GEN, DUFF GEN, AND LANDLADY GEN. THE LAST NAMED IS, I BELIEVE, PECULIAR TO THIS AREA. THE AMOUNT OF TRAFFIC PASSED IN THE ABOVE CATEGORIES IS IN DIRECT CONTRAST TO THEIR IMPORTANCE. I WILL DEAL WITH THEM IN INCREASING ORDER.

FIRST, PUKKA GEN, OR RELIABLE INFORMATION. THIS IS SO SCARCE, THAT, ON SECOND THOUGHTS, IT MAY BE DISMISSED AS NEGLIGIBLE. INDEED SOME OLD SWEATS ARE FIRM IN THEIR BELIEF THAT IT IS OF AN ENTIRELY MYTHICAL ORIGIN, OR CEASED TO EXIST ABOUT THE TIME F/Sgt. THOMPSON JOINED UP.

SECOND, DUFF GEN, OR UNRELIABLE INFORMATION. EVEN THE GREENEST SPROG CANNOT FAIL TO RECOGNISE IT WHEN HE, OR SHE, COMES INTO CONTACT WITH IT, BECAUSE OF ITS RECURRING CHARACTERISTICS, VIZ:--

- (A) IT IS INFORMATION THAT IS ALLEGED TO HAVE COME FROM THE ORDERLY ROOM.
- (B) IT IS INFORMATION THAT HAS SUPPOSEDLY BEEN PICKED UP BY AN EAVESDROPPER LISTENING TO THE W/O OR THE F/Sgt.
- (C) THE INFORMATION IS NEVER FIRST HAND, BUT HAS BEEN PASSED ON FROM SOMEBODY 'IN THE KNOW'.

(d) IT IS ALWAYS PROFUSE AND SWEEPING IN ITS STATEMENTS.

APART FROM THE SERVICE, THE SPREADING OF DUFF GEN HAS CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD. A LEARNED DOCTOR IN GERMANY HAS BROUGHT THIS OCCUPATION TO A FINE ART. AND I CANNOT SEE HIM BEING SURPASSED, UNLESS HE IS CHALLENGED BY THE BLOKE WHO KEEPS ON TELLING ME THAT CREDITS ARE DUE TO BE PAID NEXT WEEK.

LASTLY, LANDLADY GEN. THIS IS BY FAR THE MOST PROLIFIC, BUT ITS FIELD OF ACTIVITY IS USUALLY CONFINED TO THE SOCIAL LIFE OF WE IMMORAL AIRMEN. THIS TYPE OF INFORMATION DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE ANY MATERIAL USE, BUT APPEARS TO GIVE THE PURVEYORS UNLIMITED PLEASURE. IF POSSIBLE, THIS GEN SHOULD BE AVOIDED, BUT I AM AFRAID THAT IT IS, LIKE SHAKESPEARE SAID OF GREATNESS, "THRUST UPON US". THE CENTRE OF THIS ILLEGIT TRAFFIC IS, I UNDERSTAND, THE LOCAL OUTPOST OF THE C.W.S. IN CONCLUSION I MIGHT SAY THAT LANDLADY GEN IS GENERALLY IRRITANT, AND ALWAYS PERSISTENT.

N.L.

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THERE WAS A YOUNG LADY OF MALACCA,
WHO SMOKED ALL THE SERGEANTS TABACCA,
AS SHE TOOK HIS LAST FAG,
HE LONGED FOR A GAG,
OR A SLIPPER WITH WHICH HE COULD SNACCA.

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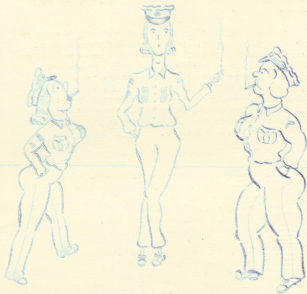
IS IT TRUE THAT A CERTAIN W.A.A.F. AT
MERE HOUSE IS SO DUMB THAT THE OTHERS
NOTICED IT ?

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FROM THE LINCOLN ECHO

"THE WAAFS HE SAYS, ARE MOSTLY "SMALL ROUNDED
UNAFFECTED AND FRIENDLY, AND CLUMP BUSILY
AROUND IN FLAT SHOES, HIDEOUS GREY COTTON STOCK-
INGS AND BROAD SMILES" !

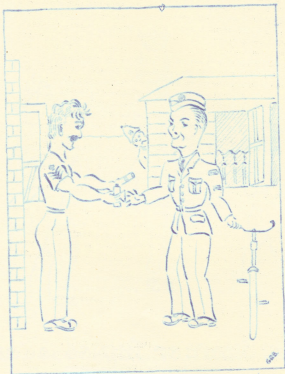
HE WAS LUCKY - EVEN ON NIGHTS OURS DO WEAR OVERALLS.



THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

NOW SHOWING

'HOPALONG WILKIE' -



- LOSES HIS MAN!

" LOVE COMES IN THE NEW YEAR "

ALF WAS BARTENDER AND ALF KNOWS ME, SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO ASK, HE HAD IT WAITING FOR ME. THREE MORE, AND THE GARISH ROOM SEEMED TO MELLOW. THE BRIGHT GREEN OF THE MURALS SWELLED AND SWAM, TWINING IN DARKS AND LIGHTS INTO PATTERNS THAT LEFT THE BALLOONS AND STREAMERS ALDOOF AND DETACHED. TOBACCO SMOKE WREATHED THE SHINING LIGHTS, AND THE BLACKOUT CURTAINS WERE SOMBRE PANELS IN THE SHIFTING COLOURS ON THE WALLS. I PEERED THROUGH THE THROG, THERE WERE TOO MANY PEOPLE I THOUGHT, TOO MANY RUDDY PEOPLE, HOW WAS I GOING TO FIND 'BETH WITH ALL THESE PEOPLE IN THE WAY? I'D COME TO SEE THE WIFE I HADN'T SEEN IN NINE MONTHS, AND I WOULD. I SHIFTED A JOCKEY'S CAP AND A HARLEQUIN AND PEERED AGAIN. A GIRL DRESSED IN SOME SORT OF TOGA PUSHED UP AGAINST ME. THE TOGA WAS LOOSE, SHE SMELT NICE. "TAKE ME TO THE BATHS" SHE GIGGLED, SHE WAS COCKEYED, SHE LEFT ME COLD. I CAUGHT THE TOP OF HER TOGA AND PULLED, SHE SPUN AWAY LEAVING THE THIN SILK IN MY HAND. THERE WAS A SCREAM FROM A COUPLE OF OTHER GIRLS WHO'D'VE LIKED TO HAVE THOUGHT UP THE IDEA THEMSELVES, AND SHE REVOLVED AWAY IN PINKNESS TO THE ARMS OF SOME PROTECTING MALE. 'PERHAPS HE PROTECTED HER IN THE BATHS. I DON'T KNOW, FOR THERE WAS 'BETH, GENTLY SERENE, STANDING BY MY SIDE, DAMN HER, SHE MUST HAVE SEEN. I TOOK A DEEP BREATH AND STOOD UP.

"DON'T BOTHER OLD MAN" SHE HAS A VOICE THAT SMOOTHS YOUR HAIR DOWN. "SIT WHERE YOU ARE, AND TELL ME WHY"

"WHY??". I WAS A LITTLE TIRED MAYBE, OR IT WASN'T SO UNDER-PROOF AS I THOUGHT. " . . . OH YOU MEAN THE TOGA WOMAN?"

"NO DEAR, SHE DESERVED THAT; WHY HAVE YOU BEEN DRINKING?"

"I ALWAYS DRINK".

"NO NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?"

"No."

THERE WAS A PAUSE, PERHAPS SHE SIGHED, I DON'T KNOW.

"ARTHUR WANTS ME TO MARRY HIM."

"ARTHUR CAN GO TO HELL."

"WITH YOU?"

"YEAH YEAH, WITH ME I'LL TAKE HIM THERE."

I DID STAND UP, I WAS GOING TO LOOK DIGNIFIED, I WAS DIGNIFIED.

"ARTHUR" I WAS ADDRESSING A MEETING, "ARTHUR IS THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS, AND HE SHALL BE THE END OF IT."

I LEFT HER.

THERE WAS SOMETHING MORE THAN SMOKE AND COLOUR IN THE BALLROOM TO TIE ME DOWN, AFTER A WHILE I GOT WHAT IT WAS; NOISE. A BAND WAS TEARING ITS GUTS OUT, THOUGH I GUESS IT STOPPED EVERY SO OFTEN TO POUR THEM BACK AGAIN. I NEEDED SOMETHING TO HELP ME WITH NINE. I CALLED A WAITER.

"SOMETHING" I SAID, "TO MAKE ME FORGET I'M DRINKING TO BE INDEPENDENT. SOMETHING" I SAID, "TO DROWN A RAT." HE BROUGHT IT.

THE NOISE WAS LOUDER NOW, FIERCER, I WENT NEARER. A CLARINET STOOD UP IN FRONT OF THE POUNDING RHYTHM, QUIET SOBBING NOTES THAT HUNG THERE AND WERE SHATTERED LIKE FLYING GLASS BEFORE THE EXULTANT SURGE OF THE TRUMPET, A TRUMPET THAT LIFTED YOU UP WITH IT AND FLUNG YOU, HIGHER AND FASTER, HIGHER AND FASTER, UNTIL IT LEFT YOU TO THE MERCILESS WHIPLASH OF A DRUMBREAK.

"BETH AND ARTHUR WERE DANCING. ARTHUR WAS SMUG, GREASY. HE'D HAVE LAUGHED AT YOU IF YOU HAD CALLED HIM WHAT HE WAS; HOME TRUTHS DON'T KILL, AND HE'D GOT WHAT HE WANTED, SO WHY SHOULD HE WORRY. -- MONEY GETS MOST THINGS, AND ARTHUR HAD MONEY. I FELT IN MY POCKET FOR NINE; A BUNCH OF KEYS, A POCKET KNIFE, IT WAS JIMMY'S -- HE DROPPED THINGS -- TWO HALF CROWNS, A SHILLING TWO SIXPENCES AND FOUR PENNIES. I WAS RICH. MAYBE I COULD WRITE ANOTHER ARTICLE WHEN I SOBERED UP; THAT'S WHAT 'BETH DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT ME, WHY SHE LEFT ME; I'D EARN WHAT I HAD TO ENJOY THE REST. THE DRINKS WERE FREE, I CHALKED UP ANOTHER AND LOOKED AROUND. IT WAS NEARLY MIDNIGHT, THEY WERE GETTING EXCITED, FORMING A RING, TIGHT PACKED HUMANITY, TOO MANY RUDDY PEOPLE. I WATCHED ARTHUR, HE WAS PULLED APART FROM 'BETH IN THE SWAY, HE WAS CAUGHT IN THE RING, 'WAY DOWN ON THE LEFT. "SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT" THE LIGHTS SWUNG ROUND, I SWAYED A LITTLE, AND HELD A TABLE HARD AGAINST MY SIDE TO SUPPORT ME. THE CORNER WAS JABBING INTO MY THIGH, HURTING ME, NO, IT WAS THE KNIFE IN MY POCKET, I PUT MY HAND IN TO MOVE IT. THEY WERE SWINGING ROUND NOW, OPENING THE CIRCLE I WAS PUSHED BACK TO THE WALL. 'BETH WAS OUT OF IT, I COULDN'T SEE HER, BUT ARTHUR WAS BEING DRAGGED TOWARDS ME, I COULD HAVE TOUCHED HIM WITH MY HAND. TWOPENCE FOR A RAT'S TAIL.

".FOR THE SAKE OF AULD LANG SYNE? I WAS SICK OF IT. I GOT OUT INTO THE OTHER ROOM. I WAS LOOKING FOR PEOPLE I KNEW. JIMMY WOULDN'T BE THERE, HE'D GONE AN HOUR AGO, HE WORKED ON A PAPER. ALF WAS STILL SITTING BEHIND THE BAR. ALF IS A FRIEND OF MINE. I SAT DOWN. IT WAS 1943.

"I THINK I'LL LET THE NEW YEAR IN HERE ALF.

"YES, SIR, A HAPPY NEW YEAR SIR."

"NOT YET ALF, NOT YET." I WAS GRINNING. "YOU'RE TOO EARLY YET."

THE NOISE IN THE END ROOM WAS TERRIFIC; THEY WERE ENJOYING THEMSELVES. ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE WAS A HUSH, THEN A SCREAM, THEN PANDEMONIUM. I DRANK UP. THE WALLS WERE STEADY NOW, THOUGH THE AIR WAS STILL THICK. ALF AND I WERE ALONE IN A DISSIPATED WILDERNESS, I TOLD HIM SO, I FELT GOOD I COULD SAY IT.

THEY WERE RUSHING IN FROM THE BALLROOM. "BETH WAS THERE SHE SAW ME.

"OH GEM, IT'S ARTHUR. HE'S . . . HE'S DEAD . . . STABBED."

I PUSHED A DRINK ACROSS AS SHE COLLAPSED INTO A SEAT. SHE LOOKED ILL.

"THEY CARRIED HIM ROUND IN THE CRUSH . . . THOUGHT HE WAS TIGHT . . . BUT HE WAS DEAD . . . GEM DON'T SIT THERE . . ." A NEW FEAR GREPT INTO HER VOICE.

"WHERE WERE YOU GEM?" SHE WHISPERED.

"HERE HAVING MY LAST DRINK . . . I MADE MY RESOLUTION . . . AFTER JUST ONE TO LET THE NEW YEAR IN . . . ALF I'LL TELL YOU."

"YES, SIR."

IT WAS TOO SOON FOR HER TO UNDERSTAND.

"OH THANK GOD . . . TAKE ME AWAY GEM."

I GOT UP AND TOOK HER BY THE ARM.

"FETCH ME A TAXI ALF. MY WIFE AND I ARE GOING HOME."

"YES SIR."

"OH, AND ALF . . ."

"SIR?"

"A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU."

S.N.L.

=====

THE EDITORIAL BOARD WISHES TO THANK A.C. FREDDIE VIAL FOR PRINTING THE COVERS OF THIS MAGAZINE; A.C.'S BOLT AND BURKHILL FOR THEIR WORK ON THE CARTOONS; AND MESSRS. WALKERS OF LINCOLN FOR THE DUPLICATION. THE EDITORIAL BOARD WILL THEN TURN ROUND AND CONGRATULATE ITSELF ON THE WORK ENTAINED IN BRINGING YOU THIS SPECIAL NUMBER. WE SINCERELY HOPE YOU LIKE IT.

WE LIKE THE WAY THEY SAY

" REGRET DAY OFF CANNOT BE CHANGED - SAME TO BE TAKEN AS PER
WATCH LIST. "

" ANY SNAGS YOU BLOKES? "

" HOW IS IT CHUMS, O.K. ? "

" YEEZAVHADIT ! "

" NOW WHEN I WAS AT OHEADLE "

" BUT GOOD HEAVENS MAN, THIS ISN'T AT ALL THE SORT OF STUFF
WE WANT ! "

" GOSH, I'M HUNGRY ! ANYBODY GOT ANY PIG FOOD ? "

" NOW THERE'S A THING IF YOU LIKE ! "

" AND I DON'T MEAN MAYBE! "

" I MADE THE BLINKIN' PATH SO I OUGHT TO KNOW. "

" WHEN I GET MY COURSE "

BUT MOST OF ALL WE LIKE THE WAY THEY SAY

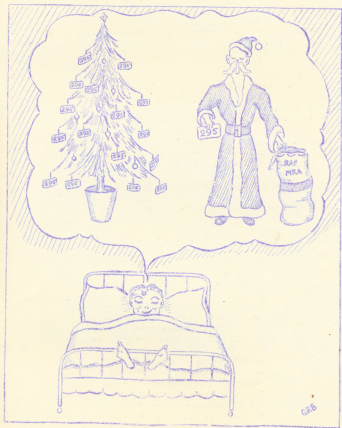
" SHALL I BREW UP NOW, SERGEANT ? "

F.B.

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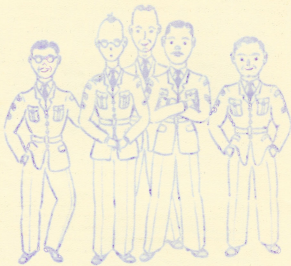
IF I COULD LEARN TO LOVE THIS PLACE
AND LEARN TO LOVE DAD ALCORN'S FACE
TO LOVE THE WAY HE STALKS AND WALKS
AND EVEN LOVE THE WAY HE TALKS,
IF I COULD LEARN TO LOVE HIS PRANKS
AND GET A WEEKEND WITH HIS THANKS,
MY SEVEN DAYS GET IN ADVANCE
AND LEARN TO LOVE HIS BACKWARD GLANCE
AND ALSO LOVE HIS JET BLACK HAIR
ADMIRING RIPPLES WHICH AREN'T THERE
IF I COULD LEARN TO LOVE HIS GRIN
AND LEARN TO LOVE THE MAN WITHIN,
IF I COULD LEARN TO LOVE HIS EYES
AND ALSO LOVE THE WAY HE SIGHS,
IF I COULD LEARN TO LOVE HIS SOUL
MY NAME WOULD BE ——— INSTEAD OF COLE !

D.C.



AN AIRMAN'S DREAM OF CHRISTMAS

GREETINGS
FROM
"THE MEN WHO GIVE YOU THE GEN"



of "THE RAGS WHO GIVE YOU THE MAGS"

BEFORE THE TIDES OF TALK.

IN DAYS BEFORE MARCONI ACHIEVED UNDYING FAME,
ERE ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL HAD LEARNED TO WRITE HIS NAME,
BEFORE THE CONGO CANNIBALS, BY BEATING ON THE DRUM,
RELAYED TO FAR OFF COOKHOUSE THAT SOON WOULD DINNER COME;
IN DAYS BEFORE OLD REUTER AND ASSOCIATED PRESS
SENT NEWS OF WHICH NEW TERRITORY OLD HITLER WOULD ADDRESS;
BEFORE SOME REDSKIN NEWSHAWK, IN FEAR OF 'CATCHEN POKE'
SCOOPED THE REDSKIN NEWSWORLD, AND SENT THE NEWS ON SMOKE,
BEFORE ALL WAYS, BOTH OLD AND NEW, OF SLICK COMMUNICATION,
THE FASTEST SERVICE OF THEN ALL EXISTED IN THIS NATION.

IN BRANSTON DOWN IN LINCOLNSHIRE, THERE DWELLS AN ANCIENT FOLK,
WHICH SPURNS THE USE OF WIRELESS WAVES AND SNEERS AT REDSKIN SMOKE
THE WOMENFOLK OF BRANSTON WHO USE AN ANCIENT RITUAL,
HAVE SUCH AN INSTINCT FOR NEW GEN THAT IT BECOMES HABITUAL,
WHEN ON THE TRAIL OF COPY THEY USE THE THIRD DEGREE
OF SOFT AND CUNNING QUESTIONS, WHEN AIRMEN HAVE THEIR TEA;
AND SOME WHO'VE BEEN IN SERVICE, AND ARE OF COURSE GO-GETTERS,
HAVE MYSTIC WAYS OF FINDING OUT THE NEWS IN AIRMEN'S LETTERS.
THE ANCIENT MATHEMATICS RULE THAT TWO AND TWO MAKE FOUR,
WHEN HANDLED BY SUCH EXPERT MINDS THEY OFTEN MAKE A SCORE.
AND NEWS FROM AHHNEN, SLYLY GOT BY INTELLECTUAL PILLAGE,
TRAVELS FASTER E'EN THAN LIGHT ITSELF, AND SOON IS ROUND THE
VILLAGE.

THE DEVISUS METHODS OF THEIR ART GO DOWN FROM MA TO DAUGHTER,
NO DIFFICULTIES THEM DETER, THEY'LL GO THROUGH FIRE AND WATER.
LONG'ERE THE WAAFS WERE POSTED HERE, BEFORE THE AIRMEN KNEW,
'T WAS COMMON GEN IN BRANSTON TO MORE THAN JUST A FEW;
THEIR ANCIENT SENSE FOR NEWS THAT'S FRESH, NOW SCENTED STRONGLY:
SCANDAL.
THEY THOUGHT THE AIRMEN GUNPOWDER, THE WAAFS WOULD LIGHT THE
CANDLE.

SO AIRMEN TAKING WAAFS A WALK, OR TO THE HALL FOR DANCES,
GAVE BRANSTON DAMES THE CHANCE TO HINT AT ILLICIT ROMANCES,
AND NOW OF COURSE IT IS WELL KNOWN - EXCUSE THE LACK OF REFINEMENT!
THE BRANSTON LADIES LONG TO HEAR THE NEWS OF A WAAF CONFINEMENT.!

J.G.

H O M E

I ALWAYS DREAM OF HOME SWEET HOME,
THE DEAREST PLACE I'VE EVER KNOWN;
A SMALL SQUARE HOUSE WITH DOORS OF GREEN,
THE GRANDEST PLACE I'VE EVER SEEN.

THE WINDOWS GLEAMING, OH SO BRIGHT,
THE SILLS THAT ARE SO VERY WHITE;
THE CASEMENT CURTAINS LOOK SO NEAT,
AND IN THE HALL - AN OLD OAK SEAT.

THE BRASSES ON THE PARLOUR WALL
SMILE SERENELY OVER ALL;
FOR THEY KNOW THAT LOVE IS HERE,
AND HAPPINESS IS EVERYWHERE.

A WELCOME, AND A SHINING FACE,
IS WHAT YOU MEET WITHIN THIS PLACE;
AND THOUGH A STRANGER YOU MAY BE,
THERE'S WELCOME THERE FOR YOU FROM ME.

MOLLIE FORD.

= = = = =

C O N V E R S A T I O N P I E C E

(SCENE - ANY BRANSTON PUB.)

" THE COUNTRY'S DECADENT " HE SAID,
" WE'VE LEFT THE REDS TO BEAR THE BRUNT "
" WE'VE NO REAL LEADERS AT THE HEAD."
" WE OUGHT TO HAVE A SECOND FRONT."

"WHAT'S THAT? WAS I IN IT BEFORE?"
" NOW REALLY DO BE SENSIBLE! "
" HOW COULD I FIGHT IN ANY WAR? "
" YOU KNOW I'M INDISPENSABLE! "

T.L.