

The Hydra: journal of the Craiglockhart War Hospital

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EDITORIAL.

Many of us who came to the Hydro slightly ill are now getting dangerously well.

Already we begin to see ourselves crouching before T.N.T., N.G., and other High and mighty Explosives, of which the one known as C.O. is not the least formidable.

In this excellent Concentration Camp we are fast recovering from the shock of coming to England. For some of us were not a little wounded by the apparent indifference of the public and the press, not indeed to our precious selves, but to the unimagined durances of the fit fellow in the line.

We were a little *too* piqued by the piquancy of smart women, and as for the dainty newspaper jokes concerning the men in the mud, we could not see them at all.

Perhaps it was that our eyes had been painted by the minute type of the roll of honour, and injured by the enormous headlines of Dreadful Dramatic Dream of Malcolm Murder.

Our reflections, like our reflexes, may have been exaggerated when, on first looking round England, we soliloquised thus:-

Who cares the Kaiser frowns imperially?
The exempted shriek at Charlie Chaplin's smirk.
The Mirror shows how Tommy smiles at work.
And if girls sigh, they sigh ethereally,
And wish the Push would get on less funereally.
Old Bill enlarges on his little jokes.
Punch is still grinning at the Derby blokes.
And Belloc prophecies of last year, serially.

If there is any one able to cure us of this cynicism it is our V.A.D.'s. They sigh often enough over us. We think it is time to thank them for their work in this Hospital. We do not thank them, together with all those friends who send gifts, and who come to entertain us on Saturday evenings.

The Monday night meetings of the Field Club are not as well attended as they should be: perhaps because there are so many other attractive institutions. Anyhow, one no longer hears the cry: What is the Club doing for us?

One contributor seems so well in love with the life that he writes inquiring:

Shall I mutter and stutter, and wangle my ticket? Or try another flutter, and go back and stick it?

We should like to print more of this, but must first consult our Home Service Pocket Book, paragraph on "Licences, poetic, officers for the abuse of."

One more word about contributions. (The remarks in our last number were rather vague, not to say smoky.) *We want more topical articles and verse.* And whereas the plea of would-be contributors, when asked for their work, is that it is not yet finished, most pieces submitted are much too lengthy. It reminds us of a remark of the greatest man Oxford ever turned out (forcibly, we mean), which, slightly parodied, is this: The great poets are above the pains of careful endings. Thus, Homer ends with lines that might as well be in the middle of a passage; Hesiod, one knows not how; and *The Hydra*, the new voice from Craiglockhart, does not end at all, but is still going on.

NOTES AND NEWS.

Model Yacht Club's First Regatta.

A regatta for the 24-inch class of sailing yachts was held by the Model Yacht Club at Craiglockhart Pond on Friday, 24th August.

The weather did not promise well at the start, being showery and the wind unsteady. After the first race, however, the sun came out, and the yachtsmen and their supporters had a most enjoyable and exciting forenoon.

Especial interest was centred around No. 5, "Mystery," a schooner built in less than twelve working hours, by Messrs Howe and Braggins, whose maiden race it was. This vessel swept all before her from the start, and was an easy and popular winner, taking nine first places out of twelve starts. It is interesting to note that her builders had had no previous experience whatever of boat building. Mr Mortleman, who took second prize, was also racing the first boat he had ever built. This would indicate that novices need have no hesitation in starting to make a yacht. They are assured of every assistance from other members of the Club.

The fastest time across the pond was made by Capt. Sillars' "Sunshine" - 55 seconds.

During the second half of the racing the wind freshened considerably, and it was thought that if some owners had shortened sail their speed might have been improved.

Results:-

Winner - "Mystery" (No.5), Messrs Braggins and Howe.

Second - "Navahoe" (No.2), Mr Mortleman.

Third - "Sunshine" (No.1), Capt. Sillars.

French.

Mr F. Brook has kindly started a class in this subject, to which new students - those who know but the "napoo" of it - those who wish to resurrect the knowledge gained in school days - those who desire more facility in conversation - will be heartily welcomed. The class meets in Room 6 at 10 a.m. daily, and the hour is devoted to reading, conversations, dictation, grammar, and phonetics. Any old grammar will serve; one book only need be bought, viz., "Features of French Life" (J.M. Dent & Sons, 1/4).

Field Club.

[Open Meetings every Monday at 8 in Room 6. Excursions on Fridays.]

Mr Quayle gave us an interesting paper on the "Bee," demonstrated by specimens of honeycomb and the queen bee cell.

The lecturer alluded to the frequent scriptural mention of bees and honey, tracing the antiquity of bee lore to the civilisation of the Egyptian dynasties, through the ancient philosophers and naturalists, to Virgil, whose fanciful method of generating a swarm of bees is described in perhaps that finest piece of poetry in the world, "The Episode of Aristaeus," in the fourth book of his "Georgics." His theory was refuted by the lecturer on the grounds that Virgil evidently could no more discriminate between bees and bluebottles than could the Biblical hero Samson. We learn from ancient records that during Saxon times bee-keeping was a flourishing industry, the bees being housed in rude hives formed of the bark of the birch; and we know, too, that the chief drinks of the time were mainly compounded of honey - the only sweetening medium used - and that the wax of the combs was utilised in the manufacture of an ancient form of candle or rush-light.

From this time forward bee-keeping was firmly established in these islands, and with the progress of civilisation and knowledge, the rude birch bark hive gave place to the straw skep, which in its turn has been succeeded by the elaborate wooden frame hive evolved by modern science.

The life-history of hive bees, their different castes - queen, worker, and drone - the evolution, of their habits, and the improvements in the present day hive were all touched upon.

How can we explain their elaborate systems of internal and external economy and the machinery of their wonderful organisations? Other and no less remarkable problems of their

sociological system, reasoning powers, the spirit of the hive and mystery of their government, were put forward by the lecturer, and a most interesting discussion on these other points resulted.

On the 20th inst. Mr Bayley gave us a paper on the "Birds of Midlothian."

He showed that birds constituted one of the best defined groups in the animal kingdom, and traced their family descent from the vertebrates or reptile order, connecting them by explaining the presence, in addition to feathers, of a covering of scales over the bodies of birds, the deposit of eggs, and other higher characteristics of their anatomy and brain power.

Of the vast distribution of the various classes of birds over the countries of the world, only a small group of some eighteen orders (principally the "perchers" and songbirds), including visitors of sporadic appearance, are now found in these islands, although geological evidence proves that other orders were once represented.

Attention was given to the structural detail and the more striking figures and developments in these living forms. Flightless birds, as the ostrich and emu, with raft-like breast-bones, were noticed, and others belonging to the orders of modern birds, with flat or keeled breast-bones, wings used as flippers for swimming and diving, on to the birds of prey, with their raptorial beaks.

A reference to the different orders having local representation during the present month (August) and to their many remarkable adaptations for separate methods of life, on the shore, the plains, and the uplands, followed.

A study of their external characteristics and peculiarities bearing upon their power of flight led to consideration of the main features of bird migration. All birds seem migratory to some extent, and, apart from the great autumnal exodus from our shores to the Continent and more southernly regions, regular and seasonal movements were observed in the inter-country "treks" - this, particularly in the case of birds whose haunts have been invaded by the "mushroom growths" of towns and cultivations, causing a retreat to fastnesses suitable as breeding places. Do we here trace a link with the past and the survival of an indigenous racial habit?

The usefulness of birds - or, to use an older term, bipeds - in creation, the magnificent and striking colour developments peculiar to many male birds, preferential mating, the relentless crusades by mankind for the destruction of the grain and fruit-eating finches and pigeons, their customs, curious nesting devices, habits, and diet, their power of song, sporting instincts, and aesthetic satisfaction were among the features Mr Bayley treated with a vein of philosophical zeal. The lecture covered a lot of intensely interesting ground, and his happy anecdotes and reminiscences, spiced with crisp criticisms and racy humour, subserved the knowledgable purpose of his attractive paper. A discussion followed in which our President, Major Bryce, joined.

Bowls.

It is intended, provided the entries are enough, to hold a Pairs Competition shortly.

Golf.

The Medal Competition announced in our last issue was played off on 13th inst., Lieut. Butler winning the first prize with a nett score of 72 (handicap 13). On the 16th we played our usual weekly match against the Merchants of Edinburgh, and were beaten by 5 to 3 (singles were drawn and foursomes 3-1 against us). On the 20th a driving, approaching, and putting competition was held. This was won by Lieut. Boak, Lieut. Hole gaining second prize. Owing to so many of our players being unable to play, our match against the Merchants of Edinburgh, which should have come off on Thursday, 23rd inst., had to be cancelled. A match against Mortonhall Golf Club has been arranged for Friday, 24th inst.

Tennis.

Every precaution was taken to complete the tournament during August, but the arrangements made for suitable weather appear to have failed miserably, probably due to lack of concentration on the part of the organisers. There has, however, been no lack of concentration on the side of the organisers of the "rain tournament", and there has been great competition among the days of August to carry off the prize for producing the most rain. At the moment of writing, the day bids fair to be an easy winner.

However, there is always Badminton for the very energetic, and, judging by the play during this month, many of the players have in this way been working off their concentrated fury at the behaviour of the weather.

DREAMERS.

Soldiers are citizens of death's grey land,
Drawing no dividend from earth's to-morrows.
In the great hour of destiny they stand,
Each with his feuds, and jealousies, and sorrows.
Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.

Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
They think of firelit homes, clean beds, and wives.

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain
Bank-holidays, and pictures-shows, and spats,
And going to the office in the train.

S.S.

"OLD DAGGER."

It was a great day for Old Dagger when the war cloud had burst and he had been dug out of the murky and dusty past by an anxious War Office, and his captaincy was announced in the *London Gazette*.

It was many years since he had ever claimed any association with the Army except through his bankers; and if his microscopical pension was barely sufficient to keep the proverbial wolf from the sacred precincts of his domestic hearth, you would never have guessed it, for he was a very proud man and carried himself as only a retired army veteran should.

Like many of his ilk who were bursting with energy and were ready to go to the furthestmost fields of operations, he was destined to take under his paternal wing the welfare and well-being of a railway bridge somewhere in Sussex and four hundred yards of a loop line. Still, with stoical resignation, he faced his duties with a set jaw and a really fierce eye.

For a martinet he would have been hard to beat, but his forty odd men didn't call him that. His noble band were all, of course, over military age, and to see him put them through it with a voice in keeping with his name was something to remember and put a Guards' commander to shame.

To his brother officers he was known as Old Dagger the Fire-eater, and from his face you'd have thought he drank it as well - which, if I may say so, just between you and me, he did.

As I said before, it was a great day when he emerged from the rural chrysalis a wonderfully fine specimen of the khaki moth. It was a great day, too, for him when the following advertisement appeared in the "Wants" column of *The Times*:-

Wanted:- An old sword and military accoutrements badly needed by an impecunious sub-lieutenant, who will be deeply grateful to any one having no further use for them. - Box 1976 T.

Within a week he had received over a hundred and twenty-five letters from persons in various parts of the country. Some were obviously from second-hand dealers, and others, military tailors, all posing as philanthropists in great cause of national crisis, and quite willing to supply the very things he needed for a very trifling consideration. About sixty-two were from parsons' widows, naval widows, elderly maiden ladies, and three or four from ladies whose deceased husbands' kit had been returned to them by a grateful yet sorrowing Government. For the commercial vultures he had no use at all, but with the dear old ladies and country folk the seed had fallen on good ground. To these generous people he individually replied, and thanked them with his deepest gratitude and a heart bursting with emotion. Within another week his front room was full, and presented the appearance of an ordnance officer's store and a camp equipment department at a large emporium.

To every one who had so generously responded to the advertisement, Captain Dagger wrote a letter of profound esteem and grateful appreciation from the impecunious sub-lieutenant. From the huge stock he was now able to equip himself very creditably, and acquit himself with perfect soldierly bearing when on duty.

The only fly in his ointment was the disposal of what he did not require, and, being unable to sell them to a dealer - of course he would not dream of giving them away - he saw no channel open but the one through which he had come by them; and in due course another great day in his life arrived, and a pathetic advertisement duly appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* as follows:-

For Immediate Disposal. - An officer's widow has a few articles of her husband's kit to dispose of. No dealers. - Box 91064 H.

Within a week there were fifty-seven letters from various persons in different parts of the country, some wanting valises, other swords; some wanted belts, flea-bags, and camp mirrors. Some, again, wanted binoculars, and revolvers were in great demand. There was a run on the compass department, and the enquiries for periscopes and gum boots far exceeded the supply.

The next phase of the affair obtains in Suffolk, where a widow, young and beautiful, had succumbed to the charms and attentions of a bold cavalier with a crown on his shoulder strap. He was shortly leaving for France, and was in sad need of a pair of binoculars. Knowing his very inmost needs, and the almost impossibility of procuring a pair for him except at a fancy megallo-Brobdingnagian price, and then a doubtful article at that, she searched the columns of the *Daily Telegraph*.

In a moment her eye caught the advertisement above, and with tears in her eyes for her unhappy sister in widowhood, she lived through her old trial again, and sat down to answer the pathetic appeal.

In a fragile feminine hand a letter arrived in due course, describing the glasses for sale and the price required.

Eleven guineas seemed a lot of money even for a good article, and second-hand at that, but with the generous thought of helping her suffering sister, and the fact that she could not buy Zeiss eights for untold gold, she despatched a cheque for the amount, with a kindly letter of condolence. She, woman-like, in her confidence unbosomed her own sufferings and informed the widowed lady that she had found a slight consolation for her loss in the only possible way, and had, accordingly, sacrificed herself yet once again on the alter of Hymen - and with a just pride signed her new name.

In due course a parcel arrived, nicely packed in a mutilated corset box, with a note of deep thanks for the help rendered.

Mrs Foydel-Hope's joy knew no bounds as she put down the letter and handed the box to her husband.

"There, darling," she exclaimed as she put her little soft arms around the major's neck, "here's a little gift from your dear little wife, and whenever you use them you will think of me."

He turned his face up, and, laughing, kissed her.

"You dear little minx! I'm afraid you're a very naughty little girl, spending your money on me like this. I wonder what it is?" And, taking out a pocket-knife, very tenderly cut the string.

The little lady, intoxicated with joy, leaned over his shoulder as he unwrapped the love-gift of his bride, and, as he removed the final piece of tissue paper, she gave vent to a scream. He was so surprised at what sounded like a steam-whistle calling its mate, that he nearly dropped the leather case.

"Whatever is it, dear?" he cried, with alarm.

"Look," she exclaimed, almost breathless, and she pointed at the binoculars.

"Yes, darling, I'm looking."

"Oh! oh! - look! - look!" and she clutched at her blouse, whilst her eyes fairly bulged. "They're Jack's!"

"Jack's?" inquired her husband, somewhat puzzled.

"Yes, Jack's," she sobbed; and then he took her in his arms, and, laying her little fluffy head on his martial breast, coaxed out of her, between her sobs, the story of how she had sent those

very binoculars to an impecunious sub-lieutenant a month before, and had paid a widow eleven pounds for them the day before yesterday.

The next scene is laid in a court of inquiry, where the "president and court did meet and assemble for the purpose of inquiring into", - and the case was read over. The finding of the court was that one Captain Dagger should be tried by court-martial, and so the officer in question was placed under arrest *en parole*, and the court-martial was held a week later, when, because of sufficient evidence having been unprocurable up to that time, the court had to adjourn for a fortnight.

It took nearly five months to follow up the articles and trace their original ownership, and old ladies wept and young widows were enangered; parsons' wives became positively vicious, and officers who were customers of the "widow" went mad with rage.

Everything had to be recovered and returned to its original owner; the old fire-eater had to shell-out and pay back as much as a garnished, microscopical banking account could disgorge, and it was found that His Majesty had no further use for his service.

Old Dagger's motley crowd were presented with a new commander, and a welcome change at the same time.

The last phase is none the less interesting. When the ex-captain moved into the maelstrom of London life, he was asked as a great favour to accept the command of the local Volunteer Reserve, and with great condescension he accepted the honour and was granted the rank of colonel immediately.

Every Saturday afternoon you could see him at the head of his loyal and faithful band manoeuvring in the park and on the Heath. On Sundays he led them to the church, and on every week night he lectured them on this and that and everything else.

And then another great day dawned in his life. The united forces of this noble guard of the metropolis met on the Thames Embankment, marched to Hyde Park, and all the officers were presented to the King, who shook them all cordially by the hand and said how proud he was of them, and that they were splendid fellows each and every one.

The last great day in Old Dagger's life up to date was when the War Office at last recognised the Volunteer Reserve and all the officers were gazetted.

Old Fire-eater as a full colonel holding His Majesty's commission with all his privileges of rank is something to dwell upon, and he has often told his daughter as they sat over the fire that it was those damned prismatics that brought them all their luck and a nice little nest egg for a rainy day.

SONG OF SONGS.

Sing me at morn but only with your laugh:
Even as Spring that laugheth into leaf;
Even as Love that laugheth after Life.

Sing me but only with your speech all day,
As voluble leaflets do; let viols die;
The last words of your lips is melody!

Sing me at eve but only with your sigh!
Like lifting seas it solaceth; breathe so,
Slowly and low, the sense that no songs say.

Sing me at midnight with your murmurous heart!
Let youth's immortal-moaning chords be heard
Throbbing through you, and sobbing, unsubdued.

THE CHRONOCLES OF A V.O.S.

(Very old Subaltern.)

By "JACK POINT."

Chapter XV. - *continued.*

The aftermath is of far more importance. Peter got it into his silly young head that Hammond had done all this especially to wrong him. Oh, how little he knew his Hammond!

His behaviour in consequence was reprehensible in the extreme - really, to see him walk past Hammond in the street you might have thought that they were Corsicans engaged on a vendetta! I could see, moreover, that it hurt Hammond. You may be quite sure I would not have troubled to exert myself in the matter for any less reason! The girl-of-the-past's ears must have been a pair of red-hot cinders during this period, if there is any truth in the saying that by thinking of another person you make that person's ears hot.

A week rolled by. Hammond was unhappy because a person he cared for had wronged and misjudged him when he had only done his duty, and a very unpleasant duty at that. Peter was beginning to realise that Hammond's fatherly kindness had filled a niche in his young life which was now deplorably empty. Both were too proud to make the quarrel up. I, for my part,

had suffered many things in the past from interfering in other people's affairs, and so bided my time.

At last Hammond came to me for help. It was a sad come-down for Hammond, and I do not for a moment pretend he did it as a compliment to my wisdom - perish the thought! He came to me because I was his old schoolfellow, and therefore his brother - at a great public school one accumulates scores of brothers - and because he felt that thus I was a person to be trusted with a bitter secret.

It was then that I learned the story (the one I do not mean to tell you) about the girl-of-the-past who could so well have been Peter's sister.

That evening - it might have been an evening cut out of the old Eton life and transplanted to Springley, for we sat and talked by the light of the fire alone, just as we used to do in the days when we had a dozen or more love affairs apiece - the results of the holidays, you know - and used to discuss them turn and turn about, quarrelling violently (in the physical sense) if one of us were to relate his tale out of turn, and making it all up again the next minute.

That evening was such a sadly pleasant reminiscent one that I shall put it away along with the girl-of-the-past, and go straight on with the solid facts of my story.

The next evening saw me again by the fire, but the opposite chair was filled by Peter - not Hammond.

I had supplied the lad with one of my extra special cigars (the kind I so seldom smoke in war time), and had thus got him into an amiable mood. I went pretty straight at the subject, and treated him to one of the adventures of that devilish young officer of whom you have heard so much, the one who used to be called Second Lieutenant Broadacre. It was all about how he had been "run in" by Neave, his skipper, a few weeks before he was wounded by a bomb, and recommended for a medal he never got.

Neave ran him in for neglect of duty, and he got his hair ever so much more roughly combed than Peter did - indeed, he came perilously near to taking the third step I told you about. And when it was all over was Neave still angry with him? Devil a bit. Neave was just as pleasant as if nothing had happened. The offence, not the offender, had been dealt with, and the incident was closed. Such was the Fusilier custom.

"And Hammond," I finished, "would be just as friendly as ever with you, my boy, if only you would let him".

Such was my lecture on military etiquette, and I was glad to see it bear fruit next morning, when the two friends walked to parade together in a very different frame of mind from that of the time I mentioned before.

I wondered if I had *really* done the wise thing. It was all so difficult to understand.

I might have worried a lot over it had not certain incidents (which we will reserve for the next chapter) taken my mind off anything so unimportant as the quarrels of an old friend and a young brother officer.

Cheer up, reader! Two more weary chapters and the V.O.S. will relinquish the stage once again to Miss Pauline Nasmyth!

Chapter XVI.

AN ACCIDENT

It was the very same afternoon that the big "two hundred" draft was given its orders to proceed overseas.

Major Waters was to take it, and needed a subaltern to go with him.

A draft-conducting officer is always entitled to take a subaltern with him when his draft is over a hundred strong.

In the ordinary course of events I would never have thought of volunteering for such a job, but, as it happened, a letter which I received that morning, and had not time to open till I got up to the orderly room, imbued me with a desire to see London again for a couple of days - let the visit cost what it might.

The letter was from Pauline, and contained the glorious news that she had given a fine big part in a new play, then on in London, and was longing for me to come and see her act it.

Of course, it was very kind of her to write so nicely to a mere male acquaintance like myself, and I valued the thought which had prompted her letter very much indeed, though, of course, it really did not mean anything serious.

For the space of half an hour (it was a slack morning) I sat with the letter in front of me and looked and longed. Eventually, I went over to George and asked if he could spare me.

George's reply - though uncomplimentary - was in the affirmative, and I was thus able to approach the adjutant.

I bided my time till that great man paused in his occupation of writing down voluminous notes in a big diary.

The pipe came out and was duly filled; then his lips closed on the gleaming black stem - a match fizzled and flared. With a satisfied smile on his face, the adjutant sauntered to the stove, and the moment was ripe for action.

"I believe, sir," I began, "there is a big draft going over to-morrow night?"

Joy! - he laughed - deep, sonorous "haws" - one by one.

"So you want to go, eh?"

"Well, sir, George says he does not want me, and I should certainly be very grateful."

He turned to George.

"Only too glad to get rid of him," snorted George; "one might get through some work then. He only sits there in the corner and writes books - he's writing one now."

The adjutant puffed once, twice, and again.

"You've got a court-martial tomorrow," he reminded me.

I had, but only as prosecutor with but a single case - and that, simple desertion and deficiency of kit - two witnesses, finishable in half an hour or so.

I said all this, and guaranteed to be back before lunch.

Four, five, and six times the adjutant puffed. Then he smiled on me, and I knew the day was mine.

"I think it might be arranged, Broadacre," he said kindly. "Forty-eight hours leave in town, eh?" Again the three deep and sonorous "haws."

"Well, sir, of course if you could see your way, and the Commanding Officer -"

"Haw, haw, haw - I think it might be done - eh, George?"

"I'm sure /don't want him," said George.

And so it was all fixed up, and I gave my servant the necessary orders for packing.

Next morning I took my train to Coalville, duly equipped with railway warrant, charge sheet, summary of evidence, and army forms B.115, O.1618, and B.296, intent on court-martialling, and was pleased to boast, in front of the other prosecutors while we waited for our cases to be taken, that I was bound for France that very night.

They, poor devils, were without exception crocks, either temporary or permanent like myself, and envied me the trip.

They tried to parcel out my two days in London - each man recommending me the play, musical comedy, or revue which he considered the most worth seeing. To have taken all the advice which they gave me I should have needed something more like two months in London than two days!

There was poor Robin Hood - lieutenant in the 3rd Cumberland L.I. - the boy might have been such a success with the opposite sex had not the place of his right eye been usurped by a hideous black patch - the work of the "All Highest." I mention him specially because it was his advice that I took. He had just returned from a week's leave in London and had seen Pauline in her new play - with the very natural result that he was deeply in love with her, and suffering horribly in consequence.

I did not tell him I knew her - it would have been a piece of useless boasting, and would only have made him more miserable than he was already.

My case over, I came back and reported myself in the orderly room.

When I got there, the adjutant was speaking down the telephone (the same one which always has such a proud look); he was anxiously inquiring if Charles - who had just been warned for overseas - could be kept back as bombing officer.

From the adjutant's conversation I gathered that there had been some sort of accident. I knew better than to interrupt his message, but directly he put the receiver down I was at him.

It appeared that the Twin had been throwing line that morning with some men of Hammond's company, and that Hammond, contrary to all regulations, had gone down into the bombing trench, with the Twin and the man who was throwing, to observe progress.

All had gone well for some time and a matter of thirty men had thrown - and had thrown remarkably well. Then, suddenly, and for no apparent reason, a bomb had exploded prematurely.

The bombs we used were timed to last several seconds before going off - beginning from the moment they left the thrower's hand. But this one had burnt almost on the very instant when the luckless Georgie released it.

Funnily enough, the man who, of course, was nearest to the explosion, had escaped with a few scratches in the arm and on the head.

The Twin had been hit in five places, the wounds averaging from an inch to three inches across. He also had got off pretty lightly.

But Hammond - my word!

It was difficult - the adjutant told me, quoting from the medical officer - to find any place on his body worth mentioning where he was not wounded.

All three had been attended to on the spot, and removed to hospital as quickly as possible.

Good reports had come back of the Twin and the soldier, but Hammond was pretty bad - in short, it was very doubtful whether he would get over it.

Of course, if I could have done so, I would have put off going with the draft - put off seeing Pauline in London - put off anything you like to be near my poor old friend. But one cannot do these things.

Having once volunteered for a job - however pleasant - it is not playing the game to back out of it.

Besides, had I there and then made a dash for the Coalville V.A.D. Hospital, I could have done Hammond no good.

I heard, on reaching the mess, that Peter had gone to see, as far as he could, how the three unfortunates were getting on, and he returned, just before I started for the railway station, with much the same report that I have already given you.

I saw the boy for a moment alone in the street, and was very glad to notice that he was subdued and miserable.

Then my watch told me it was time to be moving, and I turned my steps in the direction of the railway station.

(To be continued.)

CONCERTS.

The evening of 18th August opened finely with the march from "Tannhauser," in which the powerful work of the piano and first violin made good the lack of wind instruments in our orchestra.

The singers were, with the notable exception of the padre, Mr Winser, whom we hope to hear again, too well known to need comment.

The remaining hour and a half was scooped by the millionaire, Lucky Durham, with ever-growing interest in the principals. In these acts John Durham buys up his father's mortgaged estates, and takes revenge for the neglect of his childhood by turning his father, Lord Mountfallon, out of his old home, and reinstating his wronged mother to what he considers her rightful position as Lady of Mountfallon Castle. The scenes are frankly melodramatic, but melodrama at its best. The quarrel between Lord Mountfallon and his wife was vivaciously rendered in a crescendo of mutual abuse by Captain Sampson and Miss Goldie Scott. In beautiful contrast to these boisterous scenes stood the quiet, sad figure of "Mr Durham's Mother," the gentlest of gentlewomen - a character which gave us the pleasure of admiring yet another side of Mrs Pockett's genius. Her low, loving voice, turning away the anger of her son, forgiving the old misdeeds of Mountfallon, re-storing Helen Vallerton to her lover, and him to herself, filled the audience with all the emotions which the remaining players so well feigned. Indeed, all the actors justified our first expectations. Mr and Mrs Isaacson sustained their parts with unusual naturalness and ease. Major Bingham's and Mr Davidson's characterisations of solicitors were respectively perfect in their way; and these worthies, together with the "gay young Aerial," Tasker; the irresponsible black sheep, Reggie; his

blustering father and shallow, scheming mother, gave us as good occasion for laughter as the pathos of Mrs Durham gave us for tears.

The programme of 25th August opened with the customary prelude of noises at the back of the auditorium.

Mr Cottle and Mr Hubbard both being unfortunately indisposed, Mr Mortleman obliged with one of his ever welcome sailor songs. Mr Avery's sword-swinging was really a dazzling performance. It was regrettable that he was incommoded by the smallness of our stage, but his skills showed all the more creditably for that reason. Mr Francis Gibson followed with humorous items, only equalled by his later turn as "The Caretaker." But the most delightful comic touch of the evening came when Mr Gage, a blackie, who said every little while that he felt so blue, forgot what he wanted to say about his girl in Arizona, and had to refer, every little while, to what we will suppose was her last love-letter. Miss M'Laren's song had all the clear freshness a spring song should have, and Mrs Turner's selections were well suited to the wide compass of her voice.

We have not often seen, here or anywhere, comedians so entirely entertaining as the "Hydro-pathetic Pair." It was hard to believe that "Mr Craig," with his squirmy suggestiveness of Charlie Chaplin, was the staid, rather wooden Mr Vallerton of the previous concert; and it took us some time to make sure that "Madame Lockhart" (or was it Lockheart?) contained, some-where beneath her ample bosom, our old friend Captain Gilling. He twisted both leg and larynx with extraordinary effect.

Then followed an interval of animated conversation by the audience, boldly executed, entitled, "Selections by the Orchestra."

The piano playing of Lionel (Captain Sampson), a Bohemian artist, was really very pretty, which is more than we can say of his appearance or manners. Nor was there strength in the abundance of the Samsonian hair. The audience failed to see either the fair object of Lionel's passion, or the object of his drollery. Like the dog, the latter may have been a trifle padded. On the other hand, the humour of Major Bingham's recitations, intensified by the imperturbable solemnity of his delivery, was fully appreciated. The appearance of Mr Isaacson was, naturally, well applauded, and his rendering of the long and difficult "Ballad of East and West" showed how effective Kipling might be if properly recited.

The smaller attendance at this last concert, and other signs, go to prove that the legitimate drama (even without a legitimate hero) is more popular at Craiglockhart than a variety entertainment. On this score we may say that probably one day (other than Saturday) within the next fortnight a play will be specially produced. It may mean a slight tax on our little pockets, but be assured it will mean no slight tax on the great Pockett.

MUSTARD SEED.

ARRIVALS.

Major:- D.J. Johnstone, R.W. Kents; and Major Torbett, M.G.C.

Captains:- A.J.F. Monro, W. Ridings; A.D. M'Kinstry, Rifle Brigade; H. Nedeau, A.V.C.; J.W.E. Murray, R.E.

Lieuts.:- W.L. Jones, R.F.; A. Berrington, R.E.; F.E. Brandon, Borderers; E.H. Catt, R.N.D.; P.W. Scott, R.G.A.

2nd Lieuts.:- J. Clunie, Black Watch; J. Carmont, Black Watch; W. Hunt, M.G.C.; L.A. Travers, R.E.; W.S. Bates, Middlesex; C.P. Ross, Suffolk; W.D. Christian, Gen. Staff.

DEPARTURES.

Captain:- A. M'Millan, Seaforths.

Lieut.:- R. Johnson, R.E.

2nd Lieuts.:- J. Winn, R.F.A.; S. Dearing, London; E. Nagel, R.F.C.; A.L. Watt, L.N.L.; J.S. Gibb, R.S.F.; E. Farrell, E. Yorks.; J.M. Robertson, Gordons; H.J. Butler, Sherwood Foresters; K. Bark, London; H. Pearce, R.F.C.

TRANSFERS.

To Bowhill:- Lieut. Col. Rees, R.E.

To Lennel:- Lieut. Shuter, R.M.; Lieut. B.O. Chapman, Middlesex.