

# The Hydra: journal of the Craiglockhart War Hospital

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## EDITORIAL.

"Fuimus Trees..." Never before have we realised so fully the pathos of the shattered pride in that brokenhearted cry : never before have the Hydra's hundred heads withered in such impotent fury. Ridicule has been turned on our misfortunes, and the caustic touch of irony has seared our soul.

Craiglockhart has been called Subalterns' Home, for there in large numbers resort the most grossly underpaid elements of the community. With no "Union" to redress their wrongs, they cheerfully flourish a cheque-book, and hide beneath a proud exterior the poverty they have not deserved.

An old gentleman, walking up the drive a few days ago, met such an one, and said to him, with an irony we trust he did not mean:-

"Excuse me, sir, but this is the way to the Poor House, is it not?"

His poor victim, unable even to give the Quaker's historic retort, fled to a tram-car and wept bitterly, and the street of Princes has not seen him since.

The Hydra has already acquired a footing in the world outside, and when we found a copy reposing bashfully in a hairdresser's shop we were overcome with joy. Eventually, doubtless, it may even be found in a dentist's waiting room, but we fear the first issue was too recent to admit of that yet. A large numbers of people, too, have become subscribers on leaving the Hospital, and we hope others on departing will not wait to be approached, but will come forward of their own accord. We promise them a hearty welcome.

[Since the above was written, the Editor has unfortunately been taken ill. The Deputy-Editor hopes that any shortcomings in the present issue will be excused by subscribers on these grounds.]

## NOTES AND NEWS.

### Camera Club

The Camera Club, like old Brer Rabbit which has lain low and saw nuffin for a long time, now takes its courage in both hands and emerges into print. There was never much urgent need to advertise itself, for photography is such an excellent pastime and opens up such a wide outlook in life that all [Query - ED.] people of refined tastes possess themselves of a camera - and always in the orthodox manner.

The number of different models that are to be seen throughout the house testify to the great enthusiasm that obtains in photography, for almost every model, from the little Mr Brownie to the last word in cameras, are in evidence in the grounds on any fine day - and the other kind too. It would be interesting, though rather fatiguing, to take a census of the cameras in the house - oh, ye gods, for a statistician!

The prints as they go swimming round in the washer tell many stories of pleasant hours spent in pleasant company, but hush, not a word! they will recall in years to come the great recuperative powers of our excellent institution and the wise order of our physicians. But hark, dear reader who has read thus far: carry on the good work further. From time to time have we not observed an occasional point that indicated the indiscretion of an overzealous photographer? Yea, we shall go no further here.

The Chief Constable of Edinburgh when he gave us permission to photograph the beauties of the "auld toon," said that he was quite sure that the privilege would not be abused, and that he had every confidence that an officer of His Majesty's Forces would not be guilty of any breach of the Defence of the Realm Act by trying to take, or even succeeding in taking, a photograph of anything of military importance. He indicated in no uncertain tone that if such a thing could possibly occur it would involve the permit being immediately withdrawn. All this labour, gentle one, is for the purpose of assuring the safety of our new members who might, if unwarned, do the naughty deed and plunge us to perdition - *quel malheur!*

The attention of all concerned is drawn to the rules which committee were obliged to frame, and which it is hoped will adequately meet any contingency, and should they be insufficient then nothing remains but to call up our glad gladiator - aren't you glad he is a glad, glad gladiator? - to settle the point.

The opportunity is taken to point out one or two little things: first of all, after developing a film or print it is advisable to wash it before immersing in hypo-bath, and this is absolutely necessary, with hypo-soda, which stains badly the fixing bath, and makes those who develop films later on rather anxious about the efficiency of the fixer: and finally, brethren, you are abjured to watch that the print washer does not overflow, otherwise it will be necessary for our worthy O.C. to indent in the old familiar way for Boots Gum Thigh for officers 157 urgent. And now, fond reader, adieu!

BUCOLICS.

### **Badminton.**

Little has happened in the Badminton hall during the past fortnight worthy of remark. Most of the racquets have been absent, being repaired, but apart from that small interest has been

shown, many of the old players naturally preferring the outside attractions afforded by this glimpse of summer.

### **Lawn Tennis.**

Both the grass and the hard courts have been in constant use lately, and there has been heavy execution among the balls. It is hoped to start a tennis handicap shortly, and the entry should be large. We are requested to remind players to lower the net after use, especially in the evening as it is beginning to show signs of neglect in this way.

### **Cricket.**

The Hospital team, since the last edition went to press, has played two matches, one against George Watson's College, and the other against Edinburgh Academy.

The former found us on one of our very "off" days, and although the bowling was not very deadly, every one succumbed to "nerves," and we were disposed of for thirty runs. The boys batted well and reached a hundred for the loss of six wickets, most of which went to Dickinson.

Against the Academy, who batted first on a "plumb" wicket, we played better. Bad fielding, however, together with the absence of Dickinson, lost us the game. This match brought new talent in the form of Captain Sadler, a medium paced bowler from the Antipodes. Both he and Downes bowled well, but dropped catches told, and the Academy made 174. Our batting calls for little comment in its total of 89. Both Evans (27) and Downes (12) went out through attempting to force the runs. Lake (16) and Davies (15 not out) batted nicely.

Both matches were very enjoyable, and as Major Bryce, who nobly turned out for us, affirms that cricket is one of the finest cures he can prescribe for patients at Craiglockhart, it is hoped that more will turn out to practice in the future. Merchiston School have kindly lent their ground for practice on any afternoon except Wednesdays and Saturdays. The croquet lawn is also available for light practice, and all material, such as bats and pads, are provided.

The next match is against Merchiston School, on 6th June, when we hope to see some of the non-players present.

### **CONCERTS.**

26th May and 2nd June.

The Editor has given me a hint that as space is valuable I must cut down my usual criticism to a minimum. So therefore don't be too hard on me.

Mark you, I could say a lot; but the iron hand in the velvet glove, alone wielded by kings, emperors, and editors, is upon me.

The concert part for both weeks I pass over with the simple comment that all enjoyed it, and go on to the salient feature of both evenings. On 26th May, Mr Pockett produced act 1 of "Leah Kleschna," and on 2nd June, act 2. I think I am right in saying that this is the first big thing yet produced at Craiglockhart. Kleschna is an Austrian criminal living in Paris under the *nom de guerre* of Mons. Garnier; Schram, his accomplice, is passing as Joseph - a servant. With them lives the beautiful Leah, Kleschna's daughter. All three are plotting to rob certain jewels from the house of Mons. Sylvaine, a gentleman of upright character and prepossessing appearance, with whom Leah has been secretly in love for some time without knowing his name. Kleschna has pumped all his information concerning the jewels out of a young Raoul Berton, who is paying undesirable attentions to Leah; and Mons. Sylvaine himself comes to try and get the youth out of Kleschna's hands - this for the reason that he (Sylvaine) is engaged to his sister. Schram recognises him as the man Leah is in love with, and Leah also runs into him on the door-step and comes upstairs to ask her father about him. Very naturally the wily Kleschna withholds the necessary information, and the burglary comes off as intended. The second act sees Leah being sent into Sylvaine's house *via* the window, where she encounters the man she has come to rob, and gets a nasty shock on finding that he is her idol of the past few months. Needless to say, the good man has little difficulty in converting her, and all would end happily were it not for the unfortunate entry of the intoxicated Raoul, who quite mistakes Sylvaine's motive in having Leah in his rooms at three in the morning, and threatens to expose him. Leah counters by telling Raoul the truth, and then leaves the house - Sylvaine going down stairs to see her off the premises. Raoul takes this opportunity to steal the jewels himself, and the curtain falls on Sylvaine wondering which of the two has done it.

With regard to the players: without any intent to draw invidious comparisons the palm must most certainly be given to Mr Pockett, whose representation of the good-hearted and also broken-hearted Schram was all that genius and long practice could make it. Major Spencer gave us a forceful though gentlemanly criminal as Kleschna, and Mr Clark a dignified and very human Sylvaine. Mr Christopher was the libertine Raoul to the life, and showed especially good form in the second act, while Mr Scotchburn was also excellent in his double *role* of the irresponsible Valentin combined with the distinguished old General Berton. Mrs Queen proved herself a past mistress of the art of acting in the title *role*, and Mrs Bell did wonders with the comparatively small part of Sophie, the *fiancee* of Valentin.

I am sure that Mr Pockett has earned the gratitude, not only of the Hydro itself, but also of our outside visitors from the town, by the able and strenuous work which alone has made it possible to produce so ambitious a piece as "Leah Kleschna" on our stage.

It is confidently expected that the third act will follow next Saturday, and the fourth one the Saturday after.

"PEAS-BLOSSOM"

## THE PATCHWORK QUILT.

I am an anonymous contributor, but I have been asked to crush one of the heads of the Hydro with some stories. This, to begin with, suggests hospital, and I will begin with a story of a surgical operation. A dear old couple had lived their life through almost without medical assistance or advice. But in the end the old lady fell ill and her husband called in his doctor. He diagnosed appendicitis, and explained to the husband in an adjoining room that there would have to be an operation. The husband naturally said to the medical man, "You'll need to tell Barbara about this," and taking his duty upon him he went to the old lady's bedside, and in her husband's presence he broke the news to her. "Does that mean," said she, "that I'll ha'e to be opened?" "Oh well," said the doctor, "you may put it that way, but it will be a very simple operation, we do it every day." "Weel," said she, "if I'm to be opened, I want the meenister to be there." "Oh," said the doctor, "it's a very simple operation, I don't know why you want the minister. If you have any fear, I can get an additional surgeon." "Oh, it's no that," she said, "but I was just thinkin' that if I was to be opened, I would like to be opened wi' prayer."

Now, it will be quite obvious that this old lady had a great belief in the efficacy of prayer. Let me give you another story showing a different point of view, not, perhaps, as to the efficacy of prayer, but as to the necessity of the actual presence and fervency. A dairyman, with the charge of a large number of cows, was unfortunate enough to have his wife struck down with illness, necessitating operation, and a comparatively long period of convalescence. However, the wife had come through the ordeal, the daughters had given valuable assistance, and when the mother was convalescent the minister called, saw the dairyman outside, expressed a desire to see his wife, and was met by a most hearty welcome. "Come away in, Mr --, she'll be awfu' pleased to see you." So in the minister went, saw the lady sitting up in her bed, was immediately surrounded by the dairyman and his daughters, expressed great pleasure at her having so far recovered so well. Then he addressed the lady in bed as follows: - "My dear Mrs --, you have come through great danger, we think you are safe through on the other side now. These matters are all in the hands of Almighty God. With your permission, I will now offer up a prayer." The husband till now had been, with arms akimbo over the foot of the bed, then cut in with this interruption, addressing the minister,

"Weel, Maister --, ye'll have nae need o' me for a bit whilie. I'll awa' out to see about the beasts."

Now that I have led you to the operating table, and to the bedside of the living, I wish to take you to the bedside of the dying. A dear old neighbour of ours - I am speaking of my boyhood - lay a-dying. He was between eighty and ninety years of age, and his wife was only a year or so younger than he was. He was suffering from no disease, but was just dying because his life-work was accomplished. At last the end came, and his wife, now his widow sent for my mother as a neighbour that she might have some one to talk to who could comfort her in her distress. But the old lady needed little comforting. She was a shrewd Scotswoman, and she had looked forward to the event that had happened. Before I give you the words in which she addressed my mother I must tell you that she lived in Shawlands, which lies between Crossmyloof and Pollokshaws, often colloquially referred to as "The Shaws." At Crossmyloof there was the old famous Crossmyloof Bakery, and in the shop windows the best of the productions of the bakery were displayed. Now to return to the bedside, and the account of it given by the mourning widow. "O Mrs--, John's awa', but it's an awfu' comfort tae me tae think that he was calm and collected tae the vera end. Juist this vera forenoon I was sittin' at his bedside, and we were talking about a' the funeral arrangements, an' I juist happened to remark that the last time I had been past the Crossmyloof Bakery window I had seen some awfu' nice sponge biscuits which I said would be nice biscuits for the funeral. And would you believe it, Mrs --, but it juist shows how calm and collected he was tae the vera end, he said to me, 'Weel, Barbara, we've aye been gey weel served wi' Sproull in the Shaws (another baker) that when we have a thing' o' this kind I dinna see why we should gang by him."

Now I have told you the story of the hospital, the bedside of the living, and the bedside of the dying, in another communication I will give you some stories of the street.

## TO THE SUN.

Thy great and glorious loved one, hail!  
Thy streams of mercy pour thou forth.  
Thy warmth is like a gift from God,  
Which glows alike on hill or dale.

On poor man's cot or rich man's home,  
Impartial thou, thy gifts to spread:  
Thou crown'st the beauty of the crag,  
Thy glints of light enhance the foam.

What sweeter sound on summer's day  
Than children's voices clear and strong?  
Or birds, upon the branches, try  
To tender thee their sweetest lay?

What lovelier sight than break of dawn  
On mountain top, or ocean wide:  
Or sunset, midst the eternal hills,  
One mass of glory ere 'tis gone.

NORTH BRITISH.

## REVEILLE.

The sentry by the lonely guard-tent shivered as the chill of the dawn struck through his great-coat like needles of ice. The mists hanging in the valley concealed the steeple clock in the neighbouring village, but the men in the guard-tent were stirring, the pipers were gathered in a shivering group, and the bugler was standing at the tent-door comparing watches with the sergeant of the guard.

"Are you dam' penny whistlers nearly ready yet " queried the bugler off the group of pipers.

"As ready as you are," growled the band sergeant. "Fall in!"

Pipes on shoulder, and bags full, the band stood ready. The bugler turned to the sergeant of the guard:

"Right, I think?"

"Right!"

He took a pace or two forward, and with head bent down, breathed one or two light notes into the bugle. Then he raised his head, and sent three G's - the battalion call - pealing across the camp. Another breath; and the clear notes of that glorious morning call rang out, making responsive echoes in the wood-clad hills.

"Band, by the left, quick *march!*" The pipers drone, and the kettle drums clatter and roll as the big drum thunders forth the beat, "One, two , three," and the drone of the pipes rises to a scream, then -

"Hey! Johnny Cope, are ye waukin' yet,  
And are your drums a beatin' yet?"



If ye were waukin', I would wait  
To gang to the coals in the morning."

Back to the beginning goes the melody again: follow two lines of the same madly joyous lilt, but the third line breaks away in a rousing shout of reckless, light hearted defiance, the shout of a man with the very wine of the morning in his veins.

"Cope sent a challenge frae Dunbar,  
Charlie meet me an' you daur,  
And I'll learn you the art of war  
If you'll meet me in the morning."

The next measure commences with a major theme, but an echo of that wonderful shout still lingers, and the lure of its magic is irresistible. Back goes the fourth line to the minor mode, leading straight to the first notes of the minor theme, and the cycle commences afresh.

Listen to it! Listen as it sounds faint from the far end of the camp; listen as the pipers clear the big mess-tents and the notes come upon you clear, cool, and sudden as the quick thresh of summer rain. Sure all the beautiful things of the dawn are in that tune - the green of the sky before the sun has touched it to rose; the blaze of the whin blossom beneath the sun's first rays; the scent of wet heather, and the tang of peat smoke, the sound of a burn trickling in dark, cool recesses among mossy rocks, and the morning song of mavis and blackbird - all are in that tune, in the dancing madness of the melody, and the joyous ripple and laughter of the song.

It may be due to the effect of that stout echo in the major part, or the haunting suggestion, in the minor, of those yapped scales that the first Celts learned when the world was young, but this remains, that of all tunes that ever were made by gods or men, there is not one that can stand beside "Johnny Cope" on a summer's morning when the sun is on the hill.

BEAWULF.

## **THE CHRONICLES OF A V.O.S. (Very old Subaltern.)**

BY "JACK POINT."

### **CHAPTER III**

**A YOUNG LADY PUTS THE CAP ON IT.**

Lest I should annoy you by not finishing a story which I have once begun I will announce straight away that the listening post remained permanently in enemy hands. I was removed on a stretcher full of morphia and goodwill towards men.

The latter because I should now meet again a young lady of prepossessing appearance and distant relationship to myself, and should - with luck - have a piece of news for her which would bring her mind to the same opinion as my own on a very important subject which you may guess for yourselves.

The good news never came true, though Neave, my Skipper, being somehow pleased with the way I had sat in the listening post, tried to get his ideas put into a practical form - and the young lady's photograph hangs against my mirror and simply asks to have a razor wiped on it

It has much too happy a smile on its face for the peace of my soul - but we'll let all these things pass.

In the autumn of the year I was out of hospital, and my main form of exercise consisted in walking round Kensington Gardens on crutches with one leg hung round my neck. That most marvellous of women, my sister, Christina, accompanied me, and, as my wound was not quite healed up, nursed me - in fact, Christina did pretty nearly everything for me.

She helped me into a taxi the day we went to call on the "Cousin Joan Broadacres" - that memorable day from which I date the beginning of my old age. Merrily enough we bowled along the Portsmouth Road till the gates of Kingstone Towers hove in sight. Sir John came to the door to meet us, and said that the family (by which he meant Joan) was out in the garden.

Was it too far for me to walk?

Had I not better sit down where I was?

- *i.e.*, in Joan's drawing-room.

I explained that I could do the grand tour of Kensington Gardens with ease, and he let me pass.

Sir John was always very kind to me, and I supposed at the time that, knowing Christina as well as he did, he thought I could not be her brother without possessing some at least of her virtues.

It was not till later that I heard the old man was in the habit of dreaming a dream which resembled surprisingly the very one from which I awoke that afternoon.

I am an observant fellow when there is nothing of importance to observe, and I knew Joan's drawing-room very well - consequently, I was not in it long before I noticed a large silver frame containing a photograph of a young officer in khaki.

Damme! It was Chris Ormston - the small boy I used to father at school, and who would never have known my cousins at all had I not introduced him. What right had he to keep his

photograph in Joan's room? and such a size too! - sixteen inches by nine at the least, and a regimental crest on top!

The next minute I was in the garden. By good fortune Sir John had courteously gone back for my pipe which I had left in my great coat, and which he would not hear of my fetching myself.

It was thus that only Christina and I saw Cousin Joan in the arms of that charming photograph's original.

They were on a rustic seat with their backs to us, and too intent on the business in hand (to wit, kissing one another) to hear us coming.

Christina darted back to intercept Sir John in the drawing-room, and in the moment which passed before I created a diversion by falling skilfully off my crutches, I saw many things.

A young, devilish young man (myself, of course) was leaving for the East where his regiment was. He stood there in that same garden with only a little girl for company, and said things I knew only too well.

Now he was lying on his bed beneath a punkah - a dark man in a *Pagri* was giving him medicine.

"*Sah'b ke pine ke waste.*"

The young fool actually thought his bearer was a woman, for he mentioned a girl's name and turned an affectionate eye upon the dishonest old reprobate (later on, the bearer stole one turquoise tie pin and his mess wellingtons).

Next, he was on a stretcher in the glare of an acetylene bicycle lamp - the doctor was bending over him, and - well, I've told you what he was thinking of then.

There was something, too, *re* a consignment of turkish delight from Port Said sent with a rather ill-advised letter - but that was on his way to India, and should have come in first, if at all.

It has taken me nearly a quarter of an hour to write these last paragraphs, but my pen could scarcely have travelled from the ink pot to the paper in the time it took that shameless pair to run across the lawn and pick me up.

The queer part of it all was that they were not in the least ashamed of themselves - no apology. I was only given strict orders to keep it quiet for the present.

Tea would have been a chilly affair had not Chris, dear lad that he is - I beg your pardon, cursed supplanter that he is! - taken the public attention off my private affairs by questioning me exhaustively on my short stay in Flanders.

In the end I was glad to retire under cover of Christina, leaving him in possession of the field.

The whole matter was rather like the way I was wounded - an advance to an apparently safe spot, and then a bomb!

## CHAPTER IV

### I FIRST REALISE THAT I AM VERY OLD.

In a way Pauline Nasmyth is rather more responsible than Joan for my being so very old.

Joan, indeed, finished the work which the "All Highest" began, but it was left for Pauline - I should say for Miss Nasmyth (at the time in question I knew her only as Miss Nasmyth), to open my eyes to the fact. I will tell you in half a minute how she did this, but first I must give you some rough idea of who she was.

Christina, just after I left for Flanders, stayed a couple of months at an hotel in Surrey, and there met and made a friend of her.

She was an actress of the deeply serious kind, had just enough money to live independently of her profession, and abhorred the society of young men, and all other frivolous persons.

I have heard it said that this trait in her character was regrettable, mainly on account of her personal beauty, which was indeed a thing to marvel at.

She was slight of figure, and just the right height; her nose was straight, her eyes were the colour of the blue on a brand new Union Jack, her hair was extremely fair, cut short to the neck, and of a texture and radiance which flouted any suggestion of the artificial.

Her complexion - but I'm a poor hand at describing pretty things, and will merely refer you for a simile to the nearest rose garden.

When their friendship first began, Christina used to ply her with stories of a wonderful brother in the Green Fusiliers, and of all his doings and sayings - Christina would, bless her!

It speaks volumes for the sweetness of Miss Nasmyth's character that she did not get extremely bored, and that when she met us both in the lounge of that same hotel, she was pleased to see us. (This was a couple of months after the Joan affair.) She was a wonderful hand at making people at home in her presence. I am told that the best of American girls are just like that - and Miss Nasmyth was a Southern American, with just enough of that soft accent to make her talk quaintly delightful.

In those days, you will remember, a wounded soldier was very nearly a new thing - and consequently we were all rather frightened of telling our adventures in public, especially to a female audience. To be thought rather a hero is delightful, to be called it to your face makes you hot and uncomfortable, and uncertain which way to look.

Still, it was not long before Miss Nasmyth knew my story as well as I knew it myself. When I had finished it, I used to want her to tell me what life was like on the stage, but she would

not, insisting that it was for her merely a hand-to-mouth existence, where you worked hard for a good salary one month and were out of work and pocket the next, with never, at any time, a fixed hour for meals. Her deepest comment on the stage was passed on to me by Christina.

"Thank God, Miss Broadacre, I have got money."

You will see that my new friend was not incapable of an epigram... if saying a lot in two or three words be the meaning of that term.

I had known her about a fortnight when it came to me in a flash that for a girl who openly detested the opposite sex to be always ready for my company was something curious.

A prolonged study in the looking glass would have doubtless cured me of any illusions I had, but then illusions are lovely and pleasant things, added to which I was in an arm chair in the garden when the idea occurred to me, and Christina had forbidden me to leave it for the afternoon.

So instead of crutching my way to the nearest glass, I lit a pipe and dallied with the illusion. Until you fall in love, said I to myself, one girl is as good as another, and, mind you, I had deliberately ceased to be in love with Miss Joan, the moment I fell off my crutches - even a V.O.S. must be granted his own self-respect! This, then, being so - and it being assumed that Miss Nasmyth thought me a bit of a fine fellow - why had Joan spurned me as she had done? (I considered myself terribly spurned at the time.)

A brain wave came to my assistance - Joan was too young for me, and Christopher being some two years my junior (a long time when a man is twenty-one), was her more suitable partner.

On realising this, I almost did make for the glass to see if my hair were turning!

I looked down at the remains of what had once been a very passable leg and sighed - no more sport and games for you, Sam Broadacre, my lad, Germans will be killed by the thousand ere this war's over, but you won't be there to help in the doing of it.

It was the same evening that I put Miss Nasmyth to the final test - I told her the story of a soldier's coat.

This story is one I am bitterly ashamed of, as well I might be; but you shall hear it, as I feel what I have written might otherwise make you think me an offensive boaster.

It was a tale of how thirty men and a devilish young officer sat for sixteen hours up to their knees in water behind a flimsy parapet, which couldn't stop bullets, and in company with dead men who couldn't be moved. The wind cut them to the bone, and the sleet drenched their very souls.

Two shells came in, and one of them shattered the leg of a young Fusilier corporal; four brave men tried to carry him out, and one paid for the attempt with a bullet in the heart. So there the corporal had to stay.

The young officer (who was eventually carried out after dark) having fainted from cold, struggled through the clinging mud and half frozen water to do what he could for his N.C.O. But all that was wanted was another coat to cover him, and to keep a little of the sleet off.

The garment was supplied by a private soldier. There - I'm glad I've done writing it, and I've made it as short as possible. The strangest part of it all was that the men seemed to think no worse of their officer, and the soldier who gave the coat was pleased to see him when he came back from hospital.

That Miss Nasmyth should share these good fellow's feelings was more than I would have believed possible, but she somehow did, and I would rather she hadn't.

It seemed so unfair to the corporal (who died). But all the same I was proud of the fact, and it set me thinking.

Why did she like me?

I could be no gilded hero now!

Of course the answer was so simple - I was a fool not to think of it earlier.

It was only young men that this talented and beautiful girl disliked, and I was no longer a young man.

Heigh ho! thus we realise facts, even the most dense of us!

## **CHAPTER V**

### **MY PROCEDURE ON REALISING THIS.**

I was once considered a fairish amateur actor - that was before the All Highest rendered me permanently unfit for any part whatsoever, save, perhaps, that of Richard Crookback - and I suppose it must have been the theatrical instinct in me which first suggested those spectacles.

They were of tortoise-shell, and if you have a liking for exact figures, I will tell you that their lenses were exactly two and a half inches in diameter. I assure you I looked a noble fellow in them. Added to which they were in character with my part as an old man.

Deuced comfortable specs they were, too - and not so very unbecoming either. Christina tried them on, and so did Miss Nasmyth, and I cannot help feeling that this lent them a sort of reflected glory.

Anyhow, I love them and have them still, and I should be obliged if you would have the politeness not to laugh at the figure I cut in them. I got them in Piccadilly on the same great

day when Christina and I went to the doctor's together, for the "umpty umph" time since I left hospital, and returned without those abominable crutches.

What a treat it was to walk.

But there, I'm being very ungrateful - the crutches (Percy and Angus I used to call them) has served me faithfully for many months, and I have no right to call them names. Yes, my trusty twin brethren, I was glad (I must confess) to be rid of you - but how much gladder was I to cross my Lady's lawn at the hospital on the day when you beckoned to me and I arose from the bed on which I'd lain for nine weeks!

How many of us treat old friends in this way - welcoming them, and making much of them for just so long as they are of use to us, and then, when we don't need them any more - but there, I am trying to tell my readers (if any) a story, and have no business to moralise. Suffice it, Percy and Angus were placed on the retired list, and Christina, having no longer a cripple brother to nurse, turned her attentions elsewhere.

A certain Mrs Bretherington financed in these days a home for convalescent wounded soldiers - she sacked her matron for being too sentimental just a week before I started to walk like a human being, and begged Christina to take her place. So off the dear girl sped to the wilds of Kent, where this home was, and soon wrote to tell me that she was very happy and contented, and that the work suited her. Perhaps you want to know what Miss Nasmyth was doing all this time?

Well, she went up to London on the same day that saw Christina on her way to Kent, and took a part in one of the greatest of all Christmas plays. It was the part of a boy, she gave me to understand, and though it was none of my business, I did not approve of the idea. I had never seen the play, and did not wish to. I am rather old fashioned in some ways, and look upon the average Christmas pantomime with suspicion. Why can't they get a man to play Aladdin, or Prince Charming, or Jack o' the Beanstalk, or whoever the fellow may be, instead of tricking out some unfortunate lady in garments which she was never born to wear? These were my sentiments at the time; how I came to discard them you shall hear later. For the moment I promised Miss Nasmyth that I would come and inspect the entertainment in question at some date unfixed, and, having so promised, hurled Percy and Angus to the devil, and made tracks for Hendon.

I arrived at Hendon on a cheerless morning in December, and found the place inches deep in sticky black mud. My taxi stuck in it as I entered the Aerodrome, and my boots were caked with it long before I reached "Colonel" Pierrepont's office.

"Colonel" Pierrepont had at one time been an officer in the American Army, and on the strength of what must, I suppose, have been a glorious record, affected a tonsure not unlike that of the late "Buffalo Bill." This with the single exception that he kept his hair short.



He always wore loud tweed suits, was never under any circumstances seen without a long cigar in his mouth, and kept his bowler well on the back of his head. His tie pin was a thing I should like to write about at length, but it would take several chapters to deal with it properly, and a flow of language which I, unfortunately, do not possess.

I will say, however, that its stones were of three varieties, ruby, emerald, and brilliant, and its scintillated in the sunlight like a new shilling on a coal heap. For a reasonable sum the "Colonel" volunteered to make me complete master of a wonderful machine, with two propellers and a Gnome engine. "Some bus" was what he called it.

I afterwards learned that in aero circles one never talks of an "aeroplane" - it is always a "bus." In fact, there are several little tricks of speech which distinguish the old airman from the novice, *e.g.*, the novice "turns on the petrol," the airman "wangles the juice," and so on and so forth - all these and more was I to learn, said the "Colonel," and the net result was to be a continuation of the argument with "Fritz."

For this was my plan: to pay my money over the counter at Hendon - to take my pilot's certificate (properly referred to as my "ticket") - and then to bombard Adastral House until they accepted my services in the Royal Flying Corps for a period of four years.

The All Highest thought he had done with Sam Broadacre when he made him too groggy to fight on his feet, but he had reckoned without "Colonel" Pierrepont and the Flying Corps! I bit my nails and murmured, "Ha ha, my time will come."

Acting on the "Colonel's" advice I engaged rooms near the 'drome, made a deposit with the manager of the aviators' lounge to pay for my daily bread, and settled down to spend the remaining two months of my sick leave in a pleasing and useful way.

## CHAPTER VI

### MASTER NASMYTH, ESQUIRE.

For the space of the last chapter, and the interval of three weeks which is supposed to have elapsed between it and the one I am now writing, Miss Nasmyth rehearsed. She rehearsed all the morning and all the afternoon, lunching, like the famous private secretary, off a "glass of milk and a bath bun." I believe she sometimes rehearsed half the night as well, but I am not sure.

Just before Christmas all was in train for the opening night. I read a short notice in the papers which referred to the piece in glowing though brief terms, laying great stress on its being a revival of several years' standing. No mention, however, was made of Miss Nasmyth. I could not help feeling sorry for this, for even in a part which involved the wearing of utterly unmentionable garments, I should have liked her to have made a hit. I behaved badly, I must admit, for I could have easily got up to town and seen the piece as I had promised faithfully



to do, and didn't, for it was playing every afternoon, and twice a week in the evening. I excused myself on the grounds that by so doing I should be neglecting my work at the aerodrome - but I was a liar.

Eventually, however, I did go.

It was in the middle of the usual morning's routine that I got Miss Nasmyth's summons. I had "clocked on" at six in the morning (using the wonderful machine which the "Colonel" kept outside his office wherewith to register the exact time pupils and instructors entered the "drome"), and had gone up with Marchand, who was the instructor, in charge of "some bus." "Some bus" had refused - as she very often did - to fly any higher than a hundred or so feet off the ground, and Marchand had landed, walked all round her several times, swearing the while, and finally gone off to see the "Colonel" about it. I knew from experience what this meant, and consequently retired to the aviator's lounge for some coffee. The last I heard of the matter was Marchand's voice screaming in a high falsetto, "Colonel, Colonel! Ze ruddy ole bus, she von't go up! ze ruddy ole bus, she von't go up!" and then I turned the corner, and then the rest was lost.

Had I not found Miss Nasmyth's letter in the rack I should have wandered back later to see if the "something ole bus" had made up her mind to go up or not, but things turned out differently. Miss Nasmyth after rebuking me sternly for not having come to see her act, ended up by asking me to dinner that very night, if I could get away. I wavered a moment, and was lost. To hell with "ze ole bus," she might go up or not as she chose, I was for London.

It was a couple of minutes walk to my diggings, and the work of half an hour to make my Sam Brown, boots, and buttons worthy of a Green Fusilier Officer *en route* for a lady's dinner table. By walking to the top of Collindale Avenue, and catching the motor omnibus with the correct number, I reached Cricklewood. A second motor omnibus saw me to Kilburn Park, and from there I might tube it to within easy walking distance of my club.

I got out before the club, as it happened, because I was rather late (it was as late as 11 A.M. when "ze old bus" evinced her partiality for *terra firma*). Straight went I to the box office of the "wouldn't-you-like-to-know-which-it-is" theatre and acquired a stall. I then got outside sundry cold meats at a restaurant that happened to be handy, came back, dropped into my seat, and prepared for the worst.

The first act did not bring on Miss Nasmyth at all, but all the same I was strangely taken with it. I had once before seen a play from the pen of the same great master who wrote this one, and I recognised that curious suggestion of a laugh with a tear behind it, which characterises all his work.

I liked the acting too, but could not help feeling that Miss Nasmyth should by rights have had the chief part.

Then as the curtain rose on the second act, I took a firm grip of the arms of my chair, prepared to witness the awful sight of my dear Miss Nasmyth in boy's clothes.

She came through the trees in company with others - most of them wore furs, she for some reason was more simply dressed in a holland smock with fur at the neck and wrists. I don't want to give away the name of the piece, you all know it so well, and would guess at once if I gave you half a hint, but I honestly don't know how otherwise to get through with this chapter! she had quite a fair amount to say all along, but the act was half through before she came to the little scene which will always live in my memory.

A particularly jolly, though perhaps a trifle ethereal boy one moment, she was one of the most pathetic characters I have ever seen the next, when a misunderstanding, born of jealous fairy's ill will, plunged her and her friends (and I verily believe the whole audience as well) into the depths of despair.

This was a masterpiece, but even so the great Master does not allow us to be unhappy any longer than we want to, and the next minute Pauline Nasmyth, Esq., was as merry a lad as ever, and the whole incident had been set to rights in that delightful way that only the fairies are capable of.

In the third act she had another short scene to herself, and again a lot to say, but it was not a patch on what she had done already.

When I found there was a steady trickle running down my face just to the right side of my nose, I was not in the least surprised. The play itself, the music and the acting combined, made this the most natural thing in the world, and as I could plainly see a grey-headed Colonel of artillery, next to me, blowing his nose far more often than even a severe attack of "flue" would have warranted, I was not ashamed of myself.

This, on being re-read sounds the most awful nonsense, and it would be so easy to account for it all if I could tell you the name of the play, but as I can't, what's to be done? I think I shall ask the printer to put a red mark against it as a sign that it is better skipped! I did not say very much to Miss Nasmyth at dinner, beyond the usual formal congratulations, but when I got back to Hendon again, I thought a good deal - for a matter of three hours to be exact. The results of my meditations were two - firstly, I "clocked on" at ten next morning instead of six, which made the "Colonel" huffy, and, secondly, I sent a cheque to Fullers to provide Master Pauline Nasmyth with chocolates.

"Ze ole bus" was again in poor form, and I spent the morning - at least what was left of it - discussing coffee and cigarettes, and reading the paper.

In the amusements column of the latter I found that the one and only play was performed, as I believed I mentioned before, daily at two, and on two nights in the week at eight. These nights were Wednesday and Saturday, and for the rest of my stay at Hendon I attended

them, but never mentioned this fact in the letters which crossed between Miss Nasmyth and myself.

I attended those evening performance as punctiliously as if each one of them had been some serious religious ceremony, and on every occasion I had recourse to my handkerchief - like the artillery Colonel - and every Thursday and Sunday morning I was late on the "drome." In the end the "Colonel" Pierrepont came to look on me as a lost sinner, and the porter at the theatre thought me his oldest and best friend. So there, Master Nasmyth, if you think I did not appreciate your play after having given it a fair trial, read these pages and alter your opinion of me as I altered my opinion of principal boys!

*(To be continued.)*

## **A SUMMER IDYLL.**

No words of mine can half describe her charm.

I came upon her sleeping in the hay;

Her dimpled cheek was pillowed on her arm;

Her hair was in the sweetest disarray.

Two poppies at her bosom rose and fell,

Like anchored vessels on the ocean's swell.

For long I gazed, and then I softly knelt

And gently kissed a wandering golden curl;

And as its touch beneath my lips I felt,

She smiled - a smile that set my heart a whirl.

But still her eyes were closed, and so, I went.

Ah me! I wonder what that sweet smile meant?

SYNJIN.

## **THOUGHTS ON THE HUMAN BODY.**

It is impossible for the human mind to imagine anything more beautiful than the human body. It represents the limit of our imagination. Those who do not regard the human body as the highest expression of beauty have perverted minds, and the measure of their perversion

may be estimated according to the degrees of indifference; until positive evil becomes evident in those to whom "the human form divine" is an offence.

Cherubs, satyrs, mermaids, spirits, and all disembodied and de-sexualised conceptions represent man's impatience with his highest means of expression. They are the work of minds incapable of the highest sense of beauty, and are perverse attempts to grasp by phantasy that complete satisfaction which the human body represents.

To the properly appreciative mind the movements of the human body are more beautiful than the movements of water, clouds, fishes, birds, and beasts. Further, the movements of an aristocrat ought to be at least ten times as admirable as those of a navvy, because of the aristocrat's better opportunities for education. That they often are not, is due partly to the fact that modern civilisation holds in comparatively low esteem all the human form below the neck, and consequently subjects it to ignorance and perverse forms of repression. It is also partly due, of course, to the fact that aristocrats are not necessarily of that rank according to any worthy system of values: that is, neither in nature's nor true civilisation's esteem. But the better our education the more it should enable us to make our bodies obviously "temples of the Holy Ghost." Wise thoughts should produce graceful actions; happy thoughts, rapid movements; and so on, until our bodies are the beautifully expressive works of divine art they were intended to be.

If there is any measure of truth in these two reflections, such diverse subjects as the war and modern forms of dancing should provide fine opportunities for future satirists. Meantime, let those in favour sing the following hymn which has not yet appeared in any ancient or modern book:-

#### **THE INCARNATE WORD.**

If man can speak his mind,  
What of his soul?  
Whose voice is never heard  
Save as he find  
Spirit and flesh speak whole  
The incarnate word.

What language hast thou learned,  
Body of mine?  
Speak thy voice sweet as one  
Who hath discerned  
'Twixt tone and tone how fine  
The modulations run?

Or art thou as a clod  
With tongue as course  
As thy half-uttered thought?  
So that e'en God  
Must guess from sounds so hoarse  
Their true purport.

List how these bodies shout!  
This brazen tongue  
Pain to Love's soul doth bring,  
Until she flout  
Those she would dwell among  
Could they but sing.

O form so long despised!  
So long enslaved!  
To ignorance enchained,  
By shame disguised!  
To thee I have behaved  
With cruelty ingrained.

But love shall set thee free,  
Thy voice to hear;  
Thy native eloquence  
Unloosed shall be,  
And thou shalt weep no more with stammering fear  
For thy defence.

COCKNEY.