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DIGGER YARNS

ABOUT GENERAL BIRDWOOD.

The General Birdwood yarns poured in from all over Australia, and two facts were particularly conspicuous. The first, that the General enjoyed the whole-hearted esteem and affection of officers and men of the A.I.F.; the second, that the yarns concerning him were already all fairly well known. The Australian has a keen sense of humour, and it was not likely that any good yarn remained to be dug up by our competition. It was astonishing to note the growing pile of letters all recording the joke about the "feathers," . . . "Don't you know me, my man? I'm General Birdwood." . . . "Well, why don't you wear feathers like any other bird would." This simple play on words caught the fancy of the Digger, and his variations on the joke were numerous, and in one or two instances almost alarming.

It really does not matter how well-known a story is when one has to judge which is the best of a collection, and it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the yarn ending "I ducked" (which sufficiently identifies it in this paragraph) stands out as the best yarn associated with the name of General Birdwood. It came in freely and probably would have been in still greater numbers had not many competitors based their hopes on yarns not so familiar to the public. In judging this yarn the prize went to the soldier who told it most effectively. Judging by letters, the Digger was also greatly taken with the Gallipoli yarn about the mess-tin or pipe. Some of our contributors placed it on the Western front (indeed, many did the same with the advice to the General to "duck"), but it is a Peninsula yarn. Lord Kitchener, General Menro, and General Birdwood are conferring when a Digger bursts in and demands: "Which of you blighters pinched my mess-tin?" "Birdie" meekly replied, "I didn't."

Birdie and staff were showing some British journalists round the forward areas near Wytshaete. The newspaper men were dressed in civvy clothes plus the old tin hat, and had the Diggers puzzled, until one of the boys got a brain wave and yelled out: "Strike me dead, Birdie! Is that the Sixth Divvy you're leading in?"

Spoke one Digger: "Any'ow, old Birdie's not done to badly out of the bally war."
"Ow d'yer make that out?"
"Why, ain't his daughter married an Orstralian?"

It was in France during one of those monstrous but frequently-held ceremonial parades for the purpose of issuing decorations. Diggers from many battalions were formed up in a huge square to witness the ceremony. The proceedings were well on their way when the General unthinkingly held up two Military Medals on the palm of his hand. Silence reigned supreme, the General being about to speak, when some guy shouted: "A couple of francs he micks um," which made officers and men laugh heartily. The reference was to our national game—two up.

The following story is told amongst the "Birdwood Yarns" now appearing in the Sydney "Mail":—

"Fifteen bob wanted in the guts!" shouted "Skyline Mick." The scene was a two-up school at an old shell-battered village some few kilos behind the lines. "Nother fifteen bob! Come on, you 'tailies.' Right-oh! All set; up she goes, and—be's headed 'em! Come on, you headies. What about a bit in the old Y.M.C.A.? All set in the centre again; up she goes!"

'Twas a high toss and a good spin, and the spinner, with kip between thumb and forefinger, eagerly gazed up at the shining coins in anticipation of a pair of heads. Whatever had happened? The players and spectators were all moving back behind the spinner, while some were hurriedly walking away from the school.

"Red light!" whispered a mate in my ear. "Here's Birdie! What a mess!" The money remained in the centre; but the circle of players was entirely broken, and the spinner stood alone. It all happened in two seconds. The coins landed, and the spinner, intent upon the game stooping down to observe them, shouted "I've headed 'em!"

Just then he received a tap on the shoulder and the query: "Headed them, have you, Dig?"

Overwhelmed with surprise and consternation, and confronted by General Birdie himself, needless to state, the Digger was unable to make an immediate reply.

"Anyhow," said Birdie, "I shall pass over the offence this time, seeing that you are the only one to remain and play the game like a man."

"Didn't see you coming, sir, or I'd have scooted—bet your life!" said the Digger.

IN MEMORY.

ANZAC DAY, 1920.

What when, if remembering, we forget
The hope they held through anguished
days?

What then the worth of their great
gift,
What worth the tribute of our praise?

Surely we too held their faith,
That, won at great and bitter price,
A nobler age should bless the earth
As guerdon of their sacrifice.

Small worth to hold their memory,
With all their hopes, their faith denied
Nor shall they have reward till faith
Bring true the dream for which they
died.

Then in their regimented rows,
In many a lost and lonely place,
They shall have won the great reward,
And rest contented, by God's grace.

D.H., in "Quick March."

THE WOUNDED MAN SPEAKS.

(By Henry Oyen, of the Vigilantes.)

I left an ear in a dug-out,
When a shell hit made us dance;
And at Belleau Wood where the mixing
was good
I gave up a mitt for France.

I lay on a cot a-smoking
And thought I was getting well,
But the moon was bright on the bomb
plane's sight,
And the Gothas gave us hell.

They certainly spoiled my beauty;
And my leg is a twisted curve;
They busted me up a like a mangled pup
But—they did not bust my nerve!

I'll step off a ship at Hoboken
And I'll say: "Well, here I be,
Straight from Belleau Wood, and its
understood
That nobody grieves for me."

And no pussy-footing sissy
Shall grab at my one good hand,
And make me feel drunk with the good
old bunk,
Just to make himself sound grand.

For I'm damned if I'll be a hero,
And I ain't a helpless slob;
After what I've stood, what is left is
good,
And all I want is—A JOB.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SPORTS.

Among the many lovely things
That help to compensate us for
Peace and the dull routine it brings
After the lost delights of war,
I mark with inward exultation
How gentlemen of good report,
Be it on the land's regeneration,
Resume the Brotherhood of Sport.

And following those five barren years,
When guns on leave were much too
rare

For working off the long arrears
Accumulated in the air,
It is indeed a pleasant feature,
Now that his long reprieve is done,
To note how well the hunted creature
Catches the spirit of the fun.

Men have remarked, as something fine
With what a stout and reckless verve
The partridge now confronts the line
And sportsmanlike, declines to swerve,
Or how the grouse, in lieu of wheeling
A furlong and with the nicest feeling
A furlong off in fluttered rout,
Sits tight and with the nicest feeling
Waits for a dog to point him out.

Woodcock and snipe whose chief delight
It was by devious ways to go,
Adopt the less elusive flight
Which we associate with the crow;
The pheasant, once inclined to rocket
Right up the welkin like a lark,
Offers his tail for you to dock it
Ten feet from where your barrels bark.
The coney, too, who used to flit
—Swift as the greased lightning's
glance—
You see him slowing down a bit
To give his man a likelier chance;
The stag again, he takes a high line,
And, bidding panic fears begone,
A silhouette along the sky-line,
Invites your notice broadside on.

This spirit which inspires the game
By moor and forest, field and crag,
This true fraternity of aim,
This common interest in the bag,
This noble zeal that fur and feather
Show for the Cause—could men but
take

Example thence and work together,
Oh, what a difference it would make!

COUNTRY NOTES.

Through pressure on our space of last
issue the following country notes were
unavoidably held over:—

OTAUTAU.

Otautau has an energetic Progressive
League which directs its attention to the
advancement of the district. It was re-
cently decided to purchase half-acre Edu-
cation Lease and donate it to the Town
Board. The proposed site is for a
soldiers' memorial and gardens.

The school committee met on Tuesday
evening, there being present: Mr G. H.
Stevens (chairman), T. Walker, E. Har-
rington, S. T. Brooker, F. McDonald and
J. Kirk. The headmaster reported that
the present roll number was 216. During
the month of March the average atten-
dance had been 200. On behalf of him-
self and the staff, he wished to express
his appreciation of the services rendered
by Mr Kirk who was leaving the district.
At the conclusion of the meeting Mr
Stevens thanked Mr Kirk for the excellent
services he had rendered to the committee
as secretary. A presentation was made
consisting of a beautiful pipe, and other
members expressed appreciation of the
good work done by the secretary. At
the conclusion of this pleasant little func-
tion Mr Kirk was entertained at supper
by the School Board. Mr Lawless and
Master Sheedy spoke on behalf of the
band. Mr Kirk suitably responding.

An effort is being made to hold a winter
show. Last Monday evening a meeting
was held to make arrangements and fur-
ther the interests of the movement.

It was decided to hold the show on
Thursday 27th, and Friday 28th, May
next.

The following officers were elected:
President, Mr Wesney; joint secretaries,
Messrs J. Kirk and J. Fisher; stewards,
dairy produce, Messrs Holmes, Lindsay
and Beggs; preserves, baking, etc., Mes-
dames McLeod, Low and Bates; fruit,
Messrs McGill and Mooney; roots, veget-
ables, grain and seeds, Messrs W. Lindsay
and L. Burnett; school work, Mrs Lawless
and Misses McInman, Speden and Webb;
needlework, Mesdames Porteous, Macdon-
ald and Campbell and Miss Webb; poultry,
Messrs Sinclair, Clent, Lumsden,
Stevens and P. Brown.

The following judges were appointed:
Dairy produce, Mr A. Milne; fruit, veg-
etables, grain and seeds, Mr J. Lennie;
school work, Mr McCaw; needlework,
Mrs Donaldson; poultry, Mr H. E. Philp.
It was decided to ask Mr Adam Ham-
ilton, M.P., to open the show.

LAKE COUNTY.

Dr and Mrs Stewart and family, who
will be leaving for Melbourne shortly,
were entertained at a farewell social in
the Town Hall, Queenstown, on Wednes-
day evening, 7th inst. There was a re-
presentative gathering of town and coun-
try residents. The Mayor of Queenstown
(Mr A. Simson) presided, and during the
evening Dr Stewart was presented with a
well-filled purse of sovereigns. The speak-
ers of the evening were the Mayor, Messrs
P. Reid, A. J. Campbell, J. Cockburn, D.
C. Brown, E. Monson, J. Salmond, and
Rev. R. de Lambert, who all referred
in eulogistic terms to the many good qual-
ities of the guests of the evening. Dr
Stewart made a suitable reply.

WEDDING BELLS.

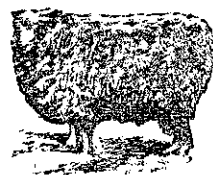
A very pretty wedding took place in
the Catholic Church, Wrey's Bush on
Wednesday last, when Mary Honora, eld-
est daughter of Mr and Mrs P. Clifford,
Clover Hill, Waikouaiti, was united in the
holy bonds of matrimony to Mr J. T.
Meehan. Rev. Father Welsh officiated,
and there was a large gathering of friends
and relations. After the ceremony the
party assembled at the residence of the
bride's parents, where the customary wed-
ding breakfast was held. The usual
toasts were proposed, and a sumptuous
repat was provided. The complimentary
speeches amply indicated the high esteem
in which the contracting parties were held
by the residents of the surrounding dis-
trict. For the ceremony the bride wore
a beautiful cream silk dress and the usual
spray of orange blossoms, and on going
away a neat grey costume. They departed
amidst a shower of rice and confetti and
good wishes of their numerous friends. The
presents received were many and costly,
included were some substantial cheques.

A wedding was celebrated at St.
Paul's Church, Arrowtown, when Miss
Matty Thomson, fourth daughter of Mr

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Garvice.

"The Girl who was too Good Looking,"
"The Wrong Mr Right," by Bertha
Ruck.

"The Stepmother," by Annie S. Swan.

"Round the Corner in Gay Street," "The
Indifference of Juliet," "Mrs Red
Pepper," "The Second Violin," by
Grace Richmond.

"Black Rock," by Ralph Connor.

"Red Men and White," "Lady Balti-
more," by Owen Wister.

"Eric Brighteyes," "Cleopatra" "Heart of
the World," "Swallow," by H. Rider
Haggard.

"The Trampled Cross," "The Man Who
Rose Again," by Joseph Hocking.

"The Return of Sherlock Holmes," by A
Conan Doyle.

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and Mrs Edward Thompson, Arrowtown,
was married to Mr Graham Sharp, third
son of Mr Andrew Sharp, of Castlemaine,
Victoria. The Rev. R. de Lambert, vicar
of Wakatipu, was the officiating clergy-
man. The Bride, who was given
away by her father, was attended
by her sister, Miss Mabel Thompson, and
Mr Sidney Ottery (Heriot), cousin of the
bridegroom, was the best man. The wed-
ding breakfast was partaken of at the
residence of the bride's parents, after
which the happy couple were motored to
Cromwell, en route to Oamaru, where
the honeymoon is to be spent. The future
home of Mr and Mrs Sharp will be
Springfield, Sutton, Central Otago