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SRGT. R. C. TRAVIS, V.C., D.C.M.,
M.M.

The following appreciation of the late Sgt. Travis is taken from the "Southlandian," the magazine of the Southland Boys' High School:—

I never quite knew how it was I became attached to the 14th South Otago Company. I started off a member of the Wellington Battalion but Fate was instrumental in my transference to the Otago's, and—well, somehow I found myself in the 14th's—the unlucky 14th's. Our whole battalion, by the way, was known at the "Unlucky Otago's"—last to get paid, last to leave bivvy's, last to finish route marches but—first over the top. And I don't suppose we really were so very unlucky after all, although providence did seem to ordain that our arrival in the line was the signal for a specially energetic raid from Fritz or a special heavy peppering with his heavies.

But personally I shall never consider myself unlucky, for never have I met a finer lot of fellows from our skipper down than I found in that same old 14th Company. But I am sure they will pardon me one and all when I say that the finest of them all was old Dick.

Yet even now I see that I am wrong. Who am I that I should claim Dick as the special property of the 14th Company? For Dick was battalion scout, and seemed to declare himself for any one particular company. So his coat badges were the 4th Company, his hat badge was the 8th Company, and—he dined and slept with the old 14th's. And it was because he dined and slept with the 14th's that I have quite come to regard Dick as our peculiar property.

No one seems to know exactly from what part of Southland he hailed from. Possibly he was as much of a roaming spirit here as he was over in France. He could never be prevailed to talk of home affairs, and somehow you never pressed Dick with personal questions—he wasn't the sort.

To this day they call him king of "No Man's Land." And his knowledge of that delectable locality, be it night or day, was absolutely uncanny. He could find his way from post to post in the dark with unerring precision, but just now and again he would strike a miss. I remember one night on Passchendaele ridge, when the rain was as usual falling in buckets, hearing a sudden sharp challenge in the darkness ahead, followed immediately by the unmistakable "bang, bang" of four Mills' bombs. Presently Dick loomed out of the darkness, chuckling in high glee. "I thought they were our own outposts," he said, "until they challenged me in their infernal lingo so I let drive with my whole packet." Investigation showed that that Fritz's outpost had been wiped clean off the slate!

At another delightful little health resort, called La Basseville, Fritz was holding one side of the Canal while we occupied a disused trench of his half a mile across the other side. Every evening Fritz treated us to a machine-gun peppering, and it was obvious that the machine-gun must be on our side of the Canal. Dick immediately got anxious. He even suggested to me that we might together occupy an old water tower on the banks of the Canal, stay there the night, and see if we could not solve the mystery. I declined with thanks. But away went Dick with his revolver his old note-book and his Fritz binoculars, and next day came back with a tale of a sunken bridge just below the surface of the Canal. Word was sent back to the artillery, and—well, no more machine-guns came over to our side.

One could go on multiplying such instances till further notice. In the line, they were his every-day doings. Colonels and captains would pore over his old notes and sketches with as much zest as an Egyptologist over a newly found papyrus from the tomb of Ramesses. But I like rather to think of Dick away from the line, the happy-go-lucky free-and-easy Dick of the billets, untidy yet always picturesque, fond of a dram of good cognac yet never quarrelsome, always bubbling over with spirits, always cheerful, always just—Dick.

We were ever a hard up lot in billets. But Dick had one unfailing source of revenue—the new officer. Whenever a brand new officer from New Zealand arrived, Dick would make his way to the officer's billet, and propound the terms of a compact. In consideration of the sum of ten francs, to be paid over to the sergeants, the mantle of protection was to be thrown over them—in fact, things would be made easy both in the line and out of it. And the officers were always sports—the ten francs, always forthcoming—a bottle of cognac always broached the same night by the sergeants, and—the promise always kept.

Then came the day when Dick, after on a favourite.

having served with his battalion for over two years, was ordered to England for a six months' duty tour. Poor Dick was most unhappy. The idea of Sling parades filled his roving spirit with horror. But it was the will of the Powers that be so Dick bade goodbye to his mates and returned to civilisation. There are two stories told of him which I believe to be true, but which I certainly must recount.

He had applied for fourteen days' leave from Sling Camp to visit Scotland, but for some unaccountable reason had only been granted ten. So at the expiration of ten days, the Adjutant of Sling Camp received a telegram "Returning end of week—Dick." From a sergeant, scarcely military, but from Dick, typical.

Then there was a C.O. parade at Sling, with full packs up, and Dick arrived on parade with a beautifully squared pack, quite the best on parade. The colonel noticed it too, and after telling the newly arrived reinforcement something of Dick's prowess in the field asked him to show how he managed to pack his haversack so neatly. Dick was too shy, so the Colonel himself unbuckled the straps and drew forth—a cardboard box containing three empty whisky bottles.

Unfortunately, I was not in France when the final tragedy took place, the tragedy that yet was a fitting end to a glorious life. Even the English papers published glowing accounts of the brilliant attacking movement which earned for him the highest honour that can be earned by any soldier, the Victoria Cross. And when within a week, when in company with his old messmate, Charlie Kerse, he was killed in action by a stray shell, dying in harness as he had always wished. They carried him behind the lines, and gave him a full military funeral. And so died Sergeant Richard Travis, M.M., D.C.M., French Croix de Guerre, Belgian Legion of Honour, 1915 Star, V.C. No more fitting epitaph could be had than that engraved in the memories of his old comrades, which being put into words might read: "He was Nature's own gentleman."

—A Comrade in Arms.

THE CURSE OF FOOD.

The laboratory expert emerged from his workshop on the run. In his eyes shone the deathless fire of a great discovery.

"While studying a prohibitionist pamphlet," he cried to his brother experts, "I came across figures showing how one glass of beer impairs a workman's efficiency. It declared that beer should be prohibited because it slows up a man's work, makes him sleepy, and increases the danger of accidents."

His brother experts regarded him coldly and shook their heads at each other, as if to intimate that here was a sad case.

"It immediately occurred to me," continued the laboratory expert, oblivious of the lack of enthusiasm about him, "that the symptoms induced by beer were strikingly similar to those induced by a full meal. I determined to investigate. I devoured a meal of oysters, turtle soup, fillet of sole, breast of guinea chicken, fried egg-plant, stuffed green peppers, potatoes au gratin, chiffonade salad, cafe parait, angel cake, cheese and coffee, after which I went back to work. I then found that it took me twenty minutes to do work which I had done in twelve minutes before eating. I was overcome by languor. I made several serious mistakes, such as adding nine and six and getting seventeen. I was horrified. A few moments of thought convinced me that the efficiency and vitality of the nation are being destroyed by the curse of eating. It is no different from the curse of drink, I have determined to start a crusade against the devouring of food!"

"But, surely," protested one of his brother experts, "surely you wouldn't go so far as to say that a man shouldn't have food in moderation, just because one meal affects his work a trifle?"

"Yes, I would, too!" shrieked the laboratory expert. "Food must be prohibited! No food! No waste! No more slowing up of work! No more necessity of food conversation! Three cheers for Food Prohibition!"

Unostentatiously one of the experts slipped from the room. A few minutes later two white-capped attendants entered quietly, and found the laboratory expert frothing at the mouth and preaching food prohibition at the top of his lungs.

"Is this the party?" enquired one of the white-capped attendants, rolling up his sleeves and producing a pair of handcuffs.

Two minutes later the Food Prohibitionist was lying in an ambulance, bound for the hospital, with one attendant sitting on his feed and the other on his head.

A huge cypress tree in the churchyard near Santa Maria del Tule, in Southern Mexico, is said to be between 5000 and 6000 years old.

FREE TOBACCO FOR LIFE FOR
BRIDEGROOMS.

Enticing young people to get married, although not figuring in our curriculum of State affairs, has more than once received the attention and support of foreign governments while municipal authorities and even the Church have "done their bit" to incite matrimony among the people.

The "Old Maid's Chart," once published by the American Government, caused consternation among backward wooers. In the form of a map printed in colour, it showed, at a glance, just in what localities bachelors were thickest, and in what region spinsters were most dense to the square mile. The fun came when some of the "seekers" afterwards found they were being "sought."

Coaxing young people into marriage by exempting them from taxes for five years, was a method employed in a certain Alsatian town. For a long time the municipal authorities had been worried over young people "fighting shy" of marriage, so they decided to induce tardy couples to the altar by lightening the burden of taxation. In some of the French towns, too, prosperous mayors have offered cash prizes of one hundred francs to those who married within their term of office.

Free tobacco for life for bridegrooms, and four pairs of gloves per annum for the brides, was the novel inducement employed by an Austrian. For a long time the upper class had found difficulty in getting peasants to work their estates, until they struck on the idea of encouraging with gifts. The ruse worked well, and there was scarcely an eligible man or woman who was not led to the altar, sooner or later. With the cheapness of tobacco and gloves prevailing at the time, one shudders to think what the result would be nowadays.

Some of the American churches have also played the role of matchmaking parents. Courtship parlors for engaged couples have been annexed to the churches, in some instances; while in others, young people were encouraged to do their sweetheating in the church pews.

A piano was occasionally provided, and an effort made to create the home atmosphere, where they could sit at ease.

Customs of ours, has done most to encourage sweetheating. On certain fete days in some parts of Brittany, the marriageable girls appear in red petticoats with white of yellow borders around them. The number of borders denote the portion the father is willing to give his daughter. Each white band denotes one hundred francs per annum; each yellow band represents one thousand francs a year. As the colours are somewhat conflicting at times, it is not to be wondered that mistakes occur, and thousand franc brides turn out to be hundred franc brides, or vice versa.

The annual marriage fairs are occasions of great rejoicing in Belgium. At these festivities, the eligible young men become the guests of the unattached spinsters desirous of matrimony, and are entertained by the maidens at an alfresco banquet, mutual friendships thus being formed.

Marriage lotteries are still in vogue during October in some parts of India. The names of both sexes eligible for marriage are written on slips of paper and put into separate earthenware jars. The local wise man draws one of each kind, and the youth whose name is drawn obtains a letter of introduction to the young woman whose name accompanies his, after which the courting commences.

Italy, of course, has marriage brokers galore. They are supplied with lists containing information as to the personal attraction of marriageable girls, together with particulars of their fortunes, if any. Make it worth the broker's while, and well—you give up working for a living and look after your bride's financial interests or yours.

For several years past England has had to depend on other countries for first-class jockeys, a fact that drew from the Special Commissioner of the "Sportsman" the following comment: "It is strange that our home stables produce so few really capable jockeys in these days, and there is much in the argument that, instead of raising the minimum weight in handicaps, it should be lowered. Certainly there were far more good boys in the old days than there are now, and it was possible to back a horse with 4.7 up and not be afraid that his jockey would not be able to do him justice. This may have been largely due to the fact that boys could be taken into stables far earlier in life than they are now, when the enforcement of book-learning up to a certain age cuts them off from the chance of early proficiency in riding, but this cannot be the sole reason, and it must be possible for trainers and owners to bring out more jockeys than they do, though backers are apt to complain if an unknown apprentice is put up.

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