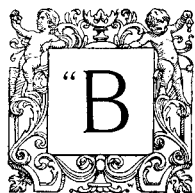


# Side Shows in Armageddon

BY SIR JOHN FOSTER FRASER



BETTER slow up a bit, eh?" suggested the Colonel with the red band around his cap.

I agreed.

Half a mile ahead, two German shells had burst on either side of the road, throwing up great black geysers of earth.

"The devils know we've got a battery behind that wood and they are trying to root it out."

It was early morning and the broken roads were miry. We sat and smoked our pipes in the gray car of the British War Office, waiting till the way was "a bit less unhealthy." We were both feeling something of the monotony of war, for even an artillery duel can become monotonous.

The old soldier with the tanned and crackled cheeks began to chuckle. "You know Thingamy?" he asked.

I did not know him personally. But he was a famous newspaper correspondent who wrote fervid descriptions of battle which made the blood pulse as one read them. I admired his brilliance, and said so.

"He was along with me in this very car last Sunday morning," said the Colonel, still laughing. "We were held up as you and I are held up by the boche. He's a great writer, is Thingamy. You see, when we got back to General Headquarters I had to censor his stuff."

"Well?"

"Well, it was deuced funny. We were having as lively a time as you and I are having; but it was wonderful. I didn't know till I read that article that we drove along the road with shells bursting by the dozens all round us, and that I was nervous and pale, while the newspaper man insisted that we drive on, though the car rocked with the convulsions of the explosions. It was good reading, exciting, though Thingamy did suggest I was a coward and he was very much of a hero." He chuckled again.

"And when you censored the article I suppose you cut out all that rubbish?"

"Not a line. Don't you know that it is not the business of a military censor to cut out lies? His job is to prevent unwise publication of the truth. I think we might slowly push on. Don't you?"

Modesty is a characteristic of the British soldier. Perhaps there is a little affectation about the modesty, for the man who tells about his own exploits is guilty of "bad form," and that is a heinous offense.

Here is a story I heard in an English hospital. There was a considerable rum-pus one day when it was discovered that money left lying on an attendant's desk had disappeared. Neither the doctors nor the nurses were suspected; the thief must have been one of the men. A strict watch was kept to see if any of the wounded soldiers had more money than he could be expected to have legitimately.

At last suspicion fell upon a Scotch soldier who most carefully guarded a purse under his pillow. The nurse tried to maneuver a peep into that purse, but the Highlander wouldn't minister to her inquisitiveness. Besides, his manner was confused.

So the matron went to him. She told him that, unfortunately, some people thought he had taken the money, and therefore she would like to see what was in his purse. He stammered and objected.

"But," said the matron, "I am told that whenever you think you are not being observed you take the purse and look at the money you have in it. Of course we do not want to use force, but if you don't want people to think wrong of you you'd better let me see."

The Scotch soldier sulked for a moment. "There you are," he said at last, pushing the purse toward her, "though what is in it belongs to me and has got nothing to do with anybody but myself."

The matron opened the purse. Within it was the Victoria Cross.

I know of one officer who talked freely about how he won the little bit of purple-and-white ribbon on his left breast, indicating the British Military Cross; but he talked only to assert he was not entitled to it. Suppose we say his name was Captain Smith-Jones.

He was well up to the front in a trench that was almost knee-deep in Flanders mud. It was raining and the English Tommy was "grousing" at the ruddy war—for the English Tommy is never a hero to himself. Suddenly the boche began to put some well placed shells in the vicinity of that trench.

"Indeed," said Smith-Jones to me, as he lay back in the club saddle-bag chair, "it began to be beastly unhealthy. After a time a message came over the 'phone that we were to get out, sharp. The men scooted to a safer spot where there were some funk holes. I decided to take a short cut by jumping over the trench. Just as I was about to take the spring the step struck into the bank, gave way and I floundered all my length in a foot-deep of slush. It got in my mouth, my ears, and my eyes. I flopped about like an old hippopotamus. When I scraped some of the mud out of my eyes so I could look about in the darkness, all my fellows had gone. So I didn't want to do anything else clever; I just crouched down a bit, scared, for those boche shells were lively. Then maybe ten minutes later I crawled along by a narrow communication trench. That's all—except that later on I heard I'd been recommended for the M. C. because under a heavy fire I was the last to leave the trench."

"And you took it?" I remarked.

"Of course I didn't want to take it. When I heard I'd been recommended I went to General X and explained I had no right to it, for the only thing which had caused me to be the last man in the trench was that I had fallen into a puddle and got my eyes full of mud, and there was nothing particularly gallant about that. The old general laughed and said: 'Take it, my boy. You'll be doing lots of things deserving the M. C. and nobody'll take any notice; so hold on to this one when you've got the

chance.' And that's why I'm wearing the bit of ribbon."

I tell the story as Smith-Jones told it me, though I do not believe it is the true one. He has always been a bit of a humorist, and no doubt, under frequent questioning, he thought that this was as good a yarn as another.

Nothing is more irritating to a real fighting-man than to be interrogated about himself. There was a sailor in a railway carriage. As he had only one leg, he excited the interest of two elderly ladies, who in a round-about way began endeavoring to find out how he lost his leg. For some time he sheered them off. He did not like being cross-examined, but neither did he like to be rude. So at last he said:

"Well, mums, if I tell you how I lost my leg will you stop asking me questions about it?"

"Of course we will," they agreed.

"Well, mums," he answered, slyly, "it was bitten off."

The public has an idea that soldiers are all aflame to "go over the top" and do some bayonet work among the Germans. The illustrated papers give pictures of the lads sweeping over a shelled land, driving their bayonets into Germans who are mostly represented lying on their backs, which is not always strictly accurate.

I remember one day when there was a "push." It was raining, and it is curious that most of the big British battles have been fought in the rain.

During the night a battalion had tramped many miles forward and was put in the shelter of a wooded hill, ready to be rushed forward at the moment the men were required.

It was a miserable day and the men were tired from their long march. There was heavy fighting a couple of thousand yards ahead. There were the bursting of shells and the rattle of the machine-guns, and overhead in the gray sky three aeroplanes were humming busily.

The men were ready for their work and they stood for hours at ease, waiting orders. Then they squatted on the ground and smoked their fags and made jokes. Any moment they might be sent forward to their death. That didn't

worry them. What caused them to curse was the wet and the clamminess and no food. Hour dragged after hour. It was about three o'clock when "Attention" was given. They pulled themselves up. Then the story ran along they were not needed ahead; they were to be marched back to their billets.

By all the rules they ought to have been indignant. They ought to have protested against being balked of their prey. They did not do anything of the kind. They let loose one great whooping cheer that fighting was "off" for the day and they were going back to get some grub. Which shows that there is a lot of human nature in the soldiers.

It was during the same battle that I found myself in the neighborhood of one of the medical dressing-stations. The wounded were being brought in rapidly—so rapidly that many of the poor fellows had to be laid on stretchers in the mud and rain to await their turns to be attended to by the doctors.

As I looked upon that scene I thought I should never be able to smile again in this world. With my companion I walked away, away toward a heave of ground where there was not a single blade of grass and not a single leaf on the stark branches of any tree. Then I saw a wonderful sight.

Down one of the broken trenches there was returning a party of men. The scene was not at all like military processions I had seen in Paris, in Petrograd, in London, and in New York, when the soldiers in fine uniforms marched along with sturdiness in their stride and valor in their eyes, with bands playing ahead and flags waving overhead and enthusiastic onlookers cheering rapturously. There was no such accompaniment to these men. They were not marching in step; they were stumbling along like the worn, tired men they were. Their cheeks were pale with the pallor of death. Their caps were gone; their tunics were torn; their putties were ripped. Their bare breasts were covered with blood and their hands were clotted with mire. There were less than a hundred of them—left out of a thousand. And as they lurched down the trench they were singing, "Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag and smile, smile, smile!"

At the time we were raising Kitchener's Army in Great Britain there was a good deal of crude humor evolved from the fact that married men were more eager to enlist than those who were single. The obvious joke was that men would rather go abroad to fight Germans than remain at home to be nagged by their wives. Indeed, it was only after Britain had raised a volunteer army of some four million that conscription was applied; and one of the reasons was the popular recognition of unfairness that young fellows should stay at home and draw increasing wages while the married men were risking their lives for scant pay.

In a night railway journey from Newcastle to London I fell in with a northern soldier returning to the front after short leave.

"Sorry to be going back?" I inquired in the course of conversation.

"Sorry! Garn!" and he made a grimace. "You won't be finding me in a hurry to get back to the missus," and again he made a wry face.

"So you're married?"

"I should just think I am married. Life's a bloomin' box of conundrums, isn't it?"

I agreed quietly.

"You see, guv'nor," he went on, "the missus and I didn't hit it. I didn't go into the army because I was any blessed Napoleon. I went and enlisted one Saturday night because I was fed up with her tongue. Perhaps you're a married man yourself and you'll understand.

"Well, you know how it is. Over there I did sometimes feel a bit lonely. I got a dose of being homesick. Sometimes I thought even a row with the missus would have been welcome. Though she had her bad points, she could cook; I'll give her her due, she could cook. And one got fed up with the army rations. And sometimes, when I was on duty or lying in the dugout and not able to sleep, I thought that maybe I was a bit to blame. You know how you feel when you're down, don't you?"

"'Course I wrote to her. At first I just wrote, 'Dear Liz.' Later on I was writing her, 'Dear old girl,' and telling her how lonely I was. I used to think a lot about the house and the puddings

she made, and I saw she wasn't such a bad sort, after all. Indeed, the more I thought, I knew she was a darned good sort. You know how sloppy a fellow gets when he's a long way from home, and he thinks about his missus and going to the movies on Saturday night and having some fried fish for supper and lying in bed on the Sunday morning, reading the papers. It sort of gets you by the throat, don't it?"

"Lord! how I did want to get seven days' leave and skip it home from France. You see, there was no telling when a German sniper would cause me to send in my checks, and I had no hankering after getting wounded—not on your life. You may laugh, guv'nor, but I started writing my Liz love-letters, just as I did when she was a slavey and I was running a coal-cart. I used to lie awake thinking how cumfy it would be at home with dear old Liz. Dare say other men is just the same as me—when they're away from their wives they forget all about the old shindies they used to have and they think their missus is a bit of a fairy queen. It's like that, isn't it? For three months I wrote and called her 'Darling'—s'help me, I did. And when I got my seven days' leave I was just all in a sweat to get home. And I've been home."

"And did you find your wife all that your fancy painted her?" I asked.

"Did I? Huh!" he answered, spitting on the floor despite the printed prohibition against spitting. "I found her the same old cat that ever she was. You don't find me in a hurry to ask for any more leave to go home to my wife! Garn!"

Curious have been the amenities between combatants. I have heard much more bloodthirsty talk four thousand miles away from the fighting-line than ever I heard four miles behind it.

In the old days of two years ago, when British and Germans seemed to be holding each other in a tight grip, the opposing trenches were often not more than twenty or thirty yards apart, so that it was possible to shout sarcasms across the tiny "No Man's Land"—and it is remarkable the number of Germans there are who speak English.

There is an infinity of stories of informal fraternization, though the next morning the two sides might be in the death grasp. A favorite amusement was to write something in chalk on a board, and hoist it above the trench so that it could be read through the spy-holes on the other side. It is quite true that one morning a German regiment hoisted a board addressed to the English, "You are Saxons and we are Saxons, so go gently." The next day the same board was hoisted with another message: "We are being relieved by the Bavarians tonight. Give them hell."

Some wags in an English regiment on a stretch of the line that had been quiet for weeks put up the message, "Lloyd George is coming along here this afternoon." In the afternoon a civilian billycock hat was obtained and poised on the top of a stick. It was carried bobbing just above the trench, as though there was a civilian beneath that hat. The Germans evidently thought the British Prime Minister was passing along, for at once a tremendous fire was opened on the trench and there were not a few casualties in the British line. Somebody I know got a wiggling for this joking which unnecessarily provoked the fire of the enemy.

I never saw any animus on the part of British soldiers toward their German captives. More often have I heard, "Cheer up, matey," while a cigarette has been offered to the German prisoner. And I recall being in Moscow just before the revolution, when a train-load of Austrian prisoners were brought in. They were not an unhappy lot, though many of them were wounded. I remember a badly injured Austrian being helped out of the carriage, and hearing a Russian soldier say, "You'll soon have a Russian girl as a sweetheart, and then you'll be all right." But there will not pass from recollection a German officer who was among those Austrian prisoners. The crowd of Russians were most good-natured and the Austrians were reciprocal. The German, however, stood haughtily, with a sneer of infinite contempt toward his captors. In all my life I have never seen a human countenance portray such utter loathing and arrogance.

But to cite a different experience: Once I was on board a British destroyer-leader somewhere off the coast of Scotland. After dinner the commander and I sat smoking and sipping port, and he told me his experiences during the sea battle of Jutland. I repeat one.

The British destroyer and a German destroyer had a "set to" which lasted twenty minutes. The upshot was that the German ship was sent to the bottom. The British destroyer at once put over a boat to save as many of the enemy as possible from drowning.

"Among those rescued," said my naval friend, in casual British-sailor way, "was the German commander. He was pretty exhausted from being in the water; so I took him into my cabin and gave him some whisky. Then while he was having a hot bath I got my man to hunt out some shore flannels of mine for him.

"Oh, he wasn't a bad chap, though he was terribly upset at having lost his ship. I cheered him up as best I could, said it was all in the game, and that night we dined together. He was anxious to know what I thought of the way he had handled his ship while we were fighting. With a couple of matches on the table we went through our maneuvering again. You would never have imagined, seeing the two of us sitting there smoking together after dinner, that he was my prisoner and that three hours before we were pelting one another to the death off Jutland. Well, it's all in the game, isn't it?"

In the summer of 1916 special business took me to Petrograd. I had luncheon one day with the Princess K—— and there met her uncle, General H——, who held a high position in the court.

In a chat afterward I lamented the erroneous idea held by the crowd in England and America about the life of the Czar and the Czarina, which I knew was very simple and chiefly engrossed with the welfare of their children. Then General H—— told me that Nicholas II had a cinematograph operator who had taken pictures of the royal family in unimperial circumstances. "Ah," I sighed, "if only I could get those pictures, how fascinating they would be when I lec-

tured in England about my experiences in Russia!"

The general thought the idea was a good one and said he would talk to the Emperor about it. He did, the very next morning. The Emperor recalled that he had not seen some of the pictures for some months, and so had the films run through the machine in his private theater, thoroughly enjoying the representations of himself and his family. Think of the scene: Russia at war, a revolution brewing, and the Czar with one companion spending over an hour enjoying "movies" of himself.

The general lunched with me at the Hotel Astoria that day, and later he handed over to me the negatives, from which I could make my choice of pictures. I found there was no reproducer in Petrograd. So I took the imperial films to Moscow, where Pathé Frères have an establishment, and I made the usual business arrangements for printing.

Two days later the manager came to me in alarm. Where had I got those negatives? What right had I to have them? Did't I know they were private films of the imperial family? Wasn't I aware of the crime it was to print such films without special authority? Had I authority?

I had no written authority, and, although I was amused, and assured the manager it was all right, he politely and nervously refused to have anything further to do with the films unless he had a royal warrant. I suppose he visioned a sojourn in Siberia.

I set the telegraph working to Petrograd. General H—— sent his authority. The French manager of Pathé Frères had never heard of General H——. So it took four days before special authority came from the Emperor himself.

No private individual ever had so unique a film. When ready, I had it run through a machine in a dark room for my special benefit. The pictures were delightfully informal. There was the Emperor playing tennis—not very well. There was the Emperor on a see-saw with his son, the Czarevitch. There was a tug-of-war between the daughters, the grand duchesses, and their imperial father; the Emperor lost and was hilari-



ously dragged along the ground. There was a snow-fight in which the Emperor was routed by his girls. There were picnic scenes. There was dancing on the royal yacht *Standart*.

The reel, some three thousand feet in length, was stuck in a tin box at the bottom of my trunk, preparatory to my return to England. Back in Petrograd, I telephoned to my friend the general to lunch with me, as I was off to England *via* Sweden the next morning.

He came to me in great trepidation. Those films! The Emperor did not at all object to me having them shown in England, but the Empress objected to those parts which were "not imperial." So there was a wish which amounted to a command that I would cut out the parts where the Emperor "lacked dignity."

And that afternoon the Russian court official and I went to a cinema firm for a private view, and with scissors we removed the sections where the Emperor "lacked dignity." What remained was interesting and appreciated when publicly shown in London.

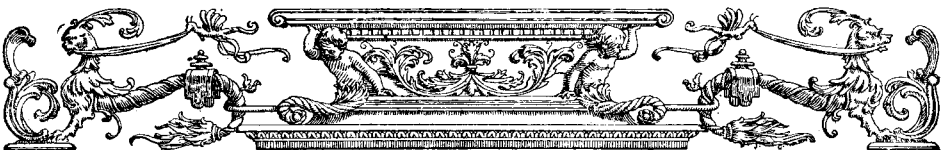
I have often been asked whether it is true that poppies grow where brave men lie sleeping the long sleep in Flanders and in France. Yes, it is true.

How wonderful it was to go across a battle-field, say the Somme, all scarred and torn, and see the poppies blooming over the graves of the soldiers, little rows by the roadside, graves in front of shattered and rusty tanks!

Some folk talk about restoration of this desolated region. Perhaps. Others think of the buried unexploded shells and of the sacrilege of driving plows over God's acre of heroes. I have heard it urged that the land be given over to forestation, so that tall and stately trees mark the saddest spot on earth.

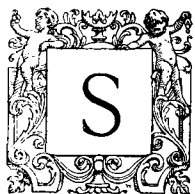
But often when my fancy is wayward I picture the battle-fields turned into a garden of the brave. I would have sunshine and brightness over the fields where lie the men who did their duty. In my mind's eye I see the flowers of America blossoming and flourishing where the Yankee boys rest. I picture the blooms of Belgium where the Belgians sleep. I see a great stretch of golden fleurs-de-lys to mark where the Frenchmen died so valiantly. There will be the gorgeousness of the maple where the Canadians lie, and the luxuriance of the wattle where the Australians are shoulder to shoulder. I think I see a carpet of vivid green, a mantle of shamrock, over the Irish. And blessed and tearful to my Highland eyes will be the stretches of purple heather, for I know that as I stand among it and the wind plays I will hear the wail of the pipes which are always to be heard softly over the graves of Scotch soldiers. And I see banks of roses, red and white, a sweet-scented monument, over the tomb of five hundred thousand Englishmen in France.

I know there can be no garden of the brave such as I fancy. Yet I often wish it were so!



# Education and Self-Government in Russia

BY MANYA GORDON STRUNSKY



SPeAKING last March before the Americanization Council, a distinguished and representative body, the Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, uttered the following judgment in reference to Russia:

"The cause of the Russian disaster was the ignorance of the Russian people, eighty per cent. of whom could not read or write, and none of whom, practically, ever had participated in the affairs of their own country." Secretary Lane, among our public men, is far indeed above the ordinary man in thought and feeling. But in this instance he was the victim of a dreary and unfortunate commonplace. Too often we hear, even from well-wishers of the Russian people, that the difficulty of establishing a responsible government in Russia, the surrender to the Lenine-Trotsky régime and its irrational utopian teachings, the demoralization of the army, the naïve peace negotiations with the Central Powers, the dismemberment of the empire, and numerous other evils preying upon the Slav nation, all emanate from the ignorance of the Russian masses. Having thus discovered the bacillus which ravages what would otherwise be the healthy Russian organism, they reason that it is too wide-spread a malady for America or her Allies to attempt to combat.

The thing is not quite so simple. Before venturing an opinion it is obviously essential to have at least an elementary knowledge of the facts of popular instruction in Russia and of social conditions, apart from the question of literacy, that are intimately related to a nation's capacity for self-government. Conceding that an enormous number of

citizens of free Russia can neither read nor write, is it true that they are as four to one against the educated portion of the population? In the second place, are we not in danger of thinking of the Russians as a solid mass of illiteracy, and forgetting that even a small percentage of literacy in so vast a population would give us a very respectable body of intelligence upon which to build a free government? But further than that, is literacy the only test of fitness for self-government? Have the Slavs a civic viewpoint apart from education? Wherein does the communal life of the ignorant Russian differ from the communal genius of other nations? What share have the masses had in recent educational development in Russia? What are the aspirations in that direction? What are the prospects? It is easy enough to make Slav ignorance responsible for Russia's collapse. Presumably it was Russia's illiteracy that made her a prey to the Bolsheviks. But bearing in mind what havoc has been wrought by evil leadership in highly literate Germany and Austria, one hesitates to agree with Secretary Lane's explanation for the "crumpling of Russia."

What are the facts as to Russian illiteracy? Out of a population of 130,000,000, according to the census of the year 1897, only 21 per cent. could read or write. If we deduct the number of children under nine years of age, that would make the literacy rate 27 per cent. Russia has now, or had till its dismemberment, a population of 175,000,000. But in spite of the obvious progress made in the last twenty years, the old ratio of illiteracy remains in the text-books and in too many writings and speeches about Russia. Against the prevalent conception, we may take the opinion of a specialist like Mr. J. V. Bubnoff, who, in