

family closet—in recent history, at any rate. He felt no animosity toward Pullar and the people for whom he was acting. He did not blame them for what they were trying to do. For the first time he really saw himself as he must have appeared to Pullar's wife, and his scorn for the good lady was not now so high and mighty—an unknown sprout of that unhappy race who kept sullenly to himself and persisted in letting the place go to rack and ruin, who slouched through the streets in neglected garments and cynically told Pullar himself that the place meant what it would bring, and nothing more; the overturned motor in front of the door; the first visitor a man who looked like a pawnbroker; the house guests a flashy Broadway notable and an unexplained girl—"

But in his self-abasement, Stiles had carried his argument just too far. With a sudden flash he remembered who the unexplained girl had proved to be. It shot all his gloom into nothing. He almost laughed.

"Pullar," he said, "I can't give you an answer now."

Odd to say, in spite of his orders, in spite of what must await him at home

and in the house of his brother-in-law, Pullar did not seem upset. He even seemed rather glad. One cannot tell a story as Pullar had told it without a reflex of compassion.

"That's all right," he replied. "Take your time, and when you can—"

They continued to the house, and, with a wave of his hand, Pullar drove off with his colonel. Stiles looked around, but Rose was not to be seen. He started to search inside, when he heard his name, and, after a minute, he located Eksberger's head bobbing back up the slope of the hill. The gray-checked suit had been stripped down to shirt-sleeves, Eksberger's hair was mussed, and on his face was a very queer look. He motioned with his hand, and, as Stiles hurried forward, Eksberger caught his arm as if to lead him away. As Stiles followed with him he looked to the right and the left.

"Stiles," he said, in a very low voice, "they were right. There's no car down there in the brook."

Stiles looked at him blankly, uncertain as to whether or not he should laugh.

"And what's more," gasped Eksberger, "there isn't any brook!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Rondeau of Any Soldier

BY SERGEANT LYON MEARSON

WHEN I come home from Flanders field,
 From Flanders field, from Flanders field,
 I'll know the taste of everyday,
 The little things we do and say,
 The joys an even life can yield,
 What potent peace a day can wield,
 For I have dreamed on Flanders field
 Of grace-notes in Life's scale to play
 When I come home.

I've seen the thrush grow mute and sealed
 On Flanders field, on Flanders field,
 For War does smaller things dismay;
 I want to live Life's common way,
 I'll know the secret War revealed
 When I come home.

About Writing Poetry

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The autobiographic frankness of the following pages has led the author to withhold his name—one, however, familiar to readers of this magazine, who on more than one occasion have seen it signed to verse and prose of peculiar distinction.]



I CANNOT remember when I began writing, any more than I can remember learning to read. By writing I mean, of course, composition; the baser mechanism of chirography I was taught when I was about five, and I distinctly recall discovering with surprise that the alphabet was nothing other than a list of the familiar letters from which words were made. So by then I must have been reading for some time. Of course all children make up rhymes and jingles of their own, and turn naturally to rhythm as alike an instinctive pleasure and an aid to memory. The only circumstance unusual in my case was that, by reading so early to myself I had more models. I was not (thank Heaven!) a virtuous and bookish child; but to read was as natural as mischief, and nearly as much fun. I would read anything that was a book, especially if there were pictures in it; and more especially if I had been told that it was too old for me to understand, for then I became curious. I did not read Ibsen in infancy, like the Boston child of comic fame; but I read Shakespeare and *The Swiss Family Robinson*, and Miss Parloa's *New Cook-Book* with entire impartiality, and Dickens and Scott and Burns and Longfellow along with Oliver Optic and Mayne Reid. I remember particularly a queer yellow volume called *The Geography of the Heavens*, which was not a geography at all, but contained, besides some stupid stuff about the stars, an account of an entirely new set of gods and goddesses and heroes with unpronounceable names, more reasonable than the fairies, and somewhat more humanly companionable than the patriarchs and angels of the Bible stories. These people I found also in a small, fat Pope's *Iliad* without a cover; and when

I tired of reading this I would build a sty for it under the table, and play that it was a pig. On these occasions a big Doré Milton was generally a cow. And there was an *Ancient Mariner*, illustrated also by Doré, which gave me very evil dreams. Of course I impersonated everything I read about, from grizzly bears to gorgons, and from Ivanhoe to Achilles. And equally, of course, I made up for myself, long before I learned or cared to write them down, stories and verses of my own in imitation of my reading. I dictated by the hour to my patient mother, who solemnly read me the result; and I knew when a line or sentence sounded wrong before ever I heard of grammar or versification.

For so much reminiscence I have some excuse, beyond the pleasure of anonymous egoism, for it serves very simply to explain the spirit of my reading ever since, and the instinctive trend of my own writing. From the first, all books were only books to me—a literary commune with no other aristocracy than that of interest. I could have no fear of a classic, being familiar with many before I had heard of such a thing; and I enjoyed endless rubbish, in ignorance of any critic against whom to defend my enjoyment. I had never the chance to be a prig about the one or a Philistine about the other. Milton I read contemporaneously with the Elsie Books, and recognized much the same theology in both, and the same tone of moral melodrama. Milton was better when comprehensible, because he made a gorgeous noise. Mrs. Finley, although equally familiar with the Deity, never called Him Jehovah thundering out of Sion; her hell also was less pictorial, and her heaven a place only for dead people. With these and the Bible stories my mythological gleanings formed a kindred category. I was, of course, informed that those were true stories and these