

of poets, the insinuating appeal that breathes in the exhalations of plants. In retrospective emotion smell is the strongest and the most provocative of the five senses. It is as subtle as music. The exile would lose half his homesickness if he were insensible to the smell of flowers.

Smells are surer than sounds or sights
To make your heart-strings crack;
They start those awful voices at night,
That whisper, 'Old man, come back.'

The Cornhill Magazine

That must be why the big things pass
And the little things remain,
Like the smell of the wattle at Lichtenberg
Riding in the rain.

I remember the effect on the Indians of the smell of the mimosa wafted across the stream from the tropical garden of the Arab port when they had come back into the palm zone after the scentless desert. It must have been as sweet to them as the smell of gorse to a gypsy out of prison.

MULLINS

BY A. A. MILNE

THERE are always bores in a mess, who want to talk about their adventures when you want to talk about yours. Mullins was as bad as any of them, but with this difference. The adventures of the others were adventures in search of the material: a petticoat, a golf ball, a gun emplacement. Mullins had only spiritual adventures. If, during those early days of training, he had fallen off the cliffs into the sea, he would have told you of his emotions on the way down, and said not a word of the splash at the bottom. Recovering in hospital, he would not have wondered whether he would always carry on his body the scars of the accident; he would have contemplated only the new scars on his soul. 'Do I look different?' he would have asked his nurse, quite seriously, his face swathed in bandages, and would have been surprised at her polite prevarication. What he would have meant would have been, 'Don't you understand

that, as a result of this extraordinary experience, I am a finer Mullins altogether?'

This is not to say that he was indifferent to his personal appearance. He was very tall and thin, talked in a high voice, and walked with his head well back in the endeavor to balance a pair of glasses on a nose apparently not meant for glasses. Had he been indifferent to his appearance, he would have worn spectacles. Spectacles may or may not be ugly, but they would have hidden from you the essential Mullins. The essential Mullins, in a material world where people fight each other, and the short-sighted must suffer no handicap in the battle, could be expressed more clearly by pince-nez. So Mullins strode past you on the parade-ground, with his head in air; and if you did not realize at a glance all the astonishing things that he meant to himself, you did at least admit that he was an interesting-looking

person. Which would have pleased him enormously to hear.

He went to France. He had often spoken of the changes in his mental and spiritual attitude which were likely to be caused by the battle-fields of France; but he had never wondered, as many so much less introspective have wondered, whether he would be afraid. He knew he would not be afraid, simply because whatever might come to him would only offer him yet another of those spiritual adventures for which he hungered. Death least of all he feared. For to a man like Mullins, whose every adventure is an adventure of the soul, the next world was simply an escape from the trammels of the body; a communion of spirits unfettered by spectacles and such-like matters, in which (I suspect) Mullins would do most of the communing.

But he had another reason for looking upon death with a kindly eye. He was already in communication with many of those who had begun the adventure of the next world. In his actions in this world he was influenced by what they of the next world told him (indeed, that is my story, as will be seen), and now he was eager to join them, and himself to get to that great work of helping and guiding the earth-bound mortals whom he had left behind, but of whom he had never quite been one.

All this sounds strange, and, perhaps, a little uncanny, but it was Mullins. If I say simply that he was a Spiritualist, you will think of table-rappings and other stupidities, and do him an injustice. If I say that he was just a Christian who really believed all that the other Christians profess, I may be nearer the truth; save that I do not know at all what his religion was. All I do know is that he believed the barrier between this world and the next

to be a slight one, and was himself quite ready to pass it.

And, of course, still more ready to talk about it.

To be absolutely without fear is not the only virtue required of a company commander in France. Mullins was given his company, and then taken away from it. He disregarded the material too openly. He saw beyond the crown on his sergeant-major's arm into the blankness in his sergeant-major's soul, and preferred to consult his batman, whose arm was devoid of anything but wound stripes, but whose soul shone with crossed swords and stars. He was wrong about the sergeant-major, and wrong about the batman; and, of course, still more wrong about the proper duty of an officer. So he was taken from his company and made intelligence officer instead.

He did not mind. As intelligence officer he had much more scope. No soul is so clogged by the material as a company commander's, whose twin cares must ever be the stomachs and the feet of others. True, a company commander is the lord of his company mess, and nobody can stop him doing all the talking, whereas, the intelligence officer at the H.Q. mess must let the colonel get in a remark at times. But it must be remembered that the intelligence officer's duties will take him to every part of the line, and consequently into all four company messes; and that if one mess is temporarily alert, another may be in that peaceful state when the uninterrupted soliloquy of a soul contemplating itself is inexpressibly soothing.

But it was not all soliloquy, of course. He had his arguments with the unbelievers. The unbelievers were of two kinds: the materialists, who held that there was no life beyond the grave, and the religious, who held that there was such a life, and that we

should know all about it one day, but certainly not to-day. All alike scouted his pretense that the spirits of the dead could and did communicate with the living. Mullins argued earnestly with them, but did not resent their attitude. They were just blind; they were waiting until he could open their eyes with the proof—possibly in this world, but more probably from that next world, when, as a spirit of the dead, he would have something to say to them.

It was after Mullins had been out a year, had won the Military Cross, and had shown himself as good an intelligence officer as he was a bad company commander, that he came into possession of the famous stick. A great friend of his had been killed, and Mullins, home on leave, had called on that friend's people. He had been asked to choose a memento of the dead man, and had chosen his stick—a short, heavy one, with plenty of weight in the head. During that night the dead man talked with Mullins, and told him how glad he was that Mullins had his stick. 'That stick will do great things for you,' he said; 'it will save the lives of many of your battalion.'

Mullins still had four days of leave; four days in which to tell everybody in London of this wonderful communication with the dead. Some, perhaps, believed; some smiled. Mullins himself was happy and excited. To the friends who saw him off, his last remark was, 'Look out for news of the old stick'; and he waved it gleefully at them. Two days later everybody in the battalion had heard that Mullins's new stick was going to save their lives, and had indicated that he was a silly ass. They also told him that he was just in time for the new push.

The battalion was held up, and resented it. The leading company on the

left licked its wounds in a disused trench,—God knows what trench or whose, for this bit of country had been fought over, backward and forward, for two years,—and wondered what to do about it. A hundred and fifty yards away, a Boche machine gun was engaged in keeping their heads down for them. The company commander squinted up at it, and squinted again at his watch, and cursed all machine guns. Suppose they charged it? But a hundred and fifty yards was the devil of a way, and that damned machine gun had killed enough of them already. Suppose he sent a couple of men out to stalk it? Slow work, but—he looked at his watch again. Why the devil had this happened, when everything had been going so well before? And here they were—stuck—and seemed to have lost the swing of it. Momentum—that was the word—momentum all gone. Well, something would have to be done.

He looked along the trench, considering—

And on the extreme right of it a tall, thin figure emerged from the ruck, and hoisted itself leisurely over the top. Mullins. He carried no revolver. His tin hat was on the back of his head, his coat collar, for some reason, turned up. Both his hands were in his pockets, and in the crook of his left arm lay the famous stick.

With an air of pleasant briskness he walked toward the Boche machine gunner. He did not hurry, for this was not so much an operation against the enemy as a demonstration to unbelievers on the home front. Neither did he dawdle. He just went to the machine gun as in peace days he would have gone to the post on a fresh spring morning.

He had a hundred and fifty yards to go. From time to time his right hand came out of his pocket, fixed

his glasses more firmly on his nose, and returned to his pocket again. Just in this way he must have walked out of the Great Court at Trinity to a lecture many, many times, hands in pockets, hunched shoulders, coat collar up, and gown or books tucked under the left arm. So he walked now — and still he was not hit.

I have tried to explain Mullins to you; I shall not try to explain that Boche machine gunner. He may have thought Mullins was coming to surrender. The astonishing spectacle of Mullins may have disturbed his aim. The numerous heads popping up to gape at the back view of Mullins may have kept him too busy to attend to Mullins — or there may have been other reasons. I do not know. At any rate, Mullins was not hit.

So Mullins walked up to the machine gunner. A yard away from him he took his right hand from his pocket, withdrew the stick from the crook of his left arm, and in a friendly way hit the machine gunner over the head with it. The man collapsed. Mullins picked him up by the collar, shook him to see if he was shamming, dropped him, replaced the stick in the crook of his left arm, fixed his glasses on his nose, took the man by the collar again, and started to drag him back to the British trench. Once or twice he got a little entangled between the stick, the prisoner, and the attention neces-

ary for his glasses, hesitating between dropping the stick and fixing the glasses with his left hand, and dropping the prisoner and fixing them with his right. But in the end he arrived safely at the trench with all three possessions. Once there, he handed the prisoner over, and then stood beaming down at the company commander.

‘Well,’ he said, pushing his glasses firmly on to his nose, ‘and what about the jolly old stick, *now?*’

If this were not a true story, I should say that Mullins got the Victoria Cross. Actually they gave him a bar to his Military Cross. Mullins, if he reads this, will recognize the incident, though he will protest that I have quite misunderstood his personality and have failed altogether to appreciate his spiritual attitude. Perhaps I have. A writer must be allowed his own way in these matters. We start with a fact or two, the impression of a face, and in a little while we do not know how much is reality and how much is our day-dream.

Yet, at least, he will admit that I have helped to open the eyes of the blind. I have put on record the ‘proof’ for which the unbelievers have been waiting.

But, for myself, I neither believe nor disbelieve. All I say is that, if to believe is to be as fearless as Mullins, I could wish that I believed.

Land and Water

THE TYRANNY OF PROHIBITION

MR. STEPHEN LEACOCK IN A SERIOUS MOOD

THE whole of North America, or all of it that lies between the Mexicans and the Esquimaux, is passing under a new tyranny. It is new, at least, in the sense that the particular form of it, under the name of Prohibition, is a thing hitherto unknown in the world. It is old in the sense that the evil that inspires it is that against which for ages the spirit of liberty has been in conflict.

It is time that people in England should have proper warning of the social catastrophe which has overwhelmed America. While there is yet time the danger should be averted. For the United States and Canada regret is too late. It is only too evident now that the proper time for protest and opposition was at the beginning of the insidious movement. But few people realized the power of fanaticism or the peculiar weaknesses of democratic rule upon which it fed. From the crusade of a despised minority, a mark for good-natured ridicule rather than fear, the prohibition movement became a vast continental propaganda, backed by unlimited money, engineered by organized hypocrisy. Under the stress of war it masqueraded as the crowning effort of patriotism. The war over, it sits enthroned as a social tyranny, backed by the full force of the law, the like of which has not been seen in English-speaking countries since the fires died out at Smithfield.

The precise legislative situation at the present moment is this. In the United States sixteen of the forty-

eight states are 'bone-dry'; this means that in these states 'liquor' can neither be sold nor can it be brought in by the individual citizen from outside. Eighteen other states are 'dry'; in these no liquor can be sold, but it may be imported. In these states, Brother Stiggins, while deploring with uplifted hands and eyes the evils of the liquor traffic, can still order in a comfortable little keg from the outside. The other fourteen states are still 'wet.' In this category belong Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Louisiana, states typical of the old culture of the country; while, by a strange freak of psychology, the wilder and woolier of the states are found among the list of the dry. Oklahoma, the latest flower of the prairies, is dry as a bone. In Idaho, even the possession of 'liquor' in a private cellar is a crime. Nevada is as dry as its own desert. Moreover, even the 'wet' states are spotted over with the arid areas of 'local option' municipalities that have dried up of their own local volition. In Kentucky one hundred and seven counties out of one hundred and twenty are dry. California, spurning the pleasant vineyards of its hill-sides, is half dry. Missouri announces itself as 'fifty-three per cent dry,' showing a majority, at least, on the side of virtue.

But all of this only represents the least part of the situation. When the nation sprang to arms in April, 1917, the prohibitionist sprang upon the platform. A War-Time Prohibition Act was passed through Congress