

Rudyard Kipling, "The Janeites," *Hearst's International, MacLean's, and the Story-Teller Magazine*, May 1924, collected in *Debits and Credits* (1926).

*Jane lies in Winchester, blessed be her shade!
Praise the Lord for making her, and her for all she made.
And while the stones of Winchester - or Milsom Street - remain,
Glory, Love, and Honour unto England's Jane!*

In the Lodge of Instruction attached to 'Faith and Works No. 5837 E.C.,' which has already been described, Saturday afternoon was appointed for the weekly clean-up, when all visiting Brethren were welcome to help under the direction of the Lodge Officer of the day: their reward was light refreshment and the meeting of companions.

This particular afternoon—in the autumn of '20—Brother Burges, P.M., was on duty and, finding a strong shift present, took advantage of it to strip and dust all hangings and curtains, to go over every inch of the Pavement—which was stone, not floorcloth—by hand; and to polish the Columns, Jewels, Working outfit and organ. I was given to clean some Officers' Jewels—beautiful bits of old Georgian silver-work humanised by generations of elbow-grease—and retired to the organ-loft; for the floor was like the quarterdeck of a battleship on the eve of a ball. Half-a-dozen brethren had already made the Pavement as glassy as the aisle of Greenwich Chapel; the brazen chapiters winked like pure gold at the flashing Marks on the Chairs; and a morose one-legged brother was attending to the Emblems of Mortality with, I think, rouge.

'They ought,' he volunteered to Brother Burges as we passed, 'to be betwixt the colour of ripe apricots an' a half-smoked meerschaum. That's how we kept 'em in my Mother-Lodge—a treat to look at.'

'I've never seen spit-and-polish to touch this,' I said.

'Wait till you see the organ,' Brother Burges replied. 'You could shave in it when they've done. Brother Anthony's in charge up there—the taxi-owner you met here last month. I don't think you've come across Brother Humberstall, have you?'

'I don't remember—' I began.

'You wouldn't have forgotten him if you had. He's a hairdresser now, somewhere at the back of Ebury Street. 'Was Garrison Artillery. 'Blown up twice.'

'Does he show it?' I asked at the foot of the organ-loft stairs.

'No-o. Not much more than Lazarus did, I expect.' Brother Burges fled off to set some one else to a job.

Brother Anthony, small, dark, and humpbacked, was hissing groom-fashion while he treated the rich acacia-wood panels of the Lodge organ with some sacred, secret composition of his own. Under his guidance Humberstall, an enormous, flat-faced man, carrying the shoulders, ribs, and loins of the old Mark '14 Royal Garrison Artillery, and the eyes of a bewildered retriever, rubbed the stuff in. I sat down to my task on the organ-bench, whose purple velvet cushion was being vacuum-cleaned on the floor below.

'Now,' said Anthony, after five minutes' vigorous work on the part of Humberstall. 'Now we're gettin' somethin' worth lookin' at! Take it easy, an' go on with what you was tellin' me about that Macklin man.'

'I—I 'adn't anything against 'im,' said Humberstall, 'excep' he'd been a toff by birth; but that never showed till he was bosko absoluto. Mere bein' drunk on'y made a common 'ound of 'im. But when bosko, it all came out. Otherwise, he showed me my duties as mess-waiter very well on the 'ole.'

'Yes, yes. But what in 'ell made you go *back* to your Circus? The Board gave you down-an'-out fair enough, you said, after the dump went up at Eatables?'

'Board or no Board, I 'adn't the nerve to stay at 'ome—not with Mother chuckin' 'erself round all three rooms like a rabbit every time the Gothas tried to get Victoria; an' sister writin' me aunts four pages about it next day. Not for *me*, thank you! till the war was over. So I slid out with a draft—they wasn't particular in '17, so long as the tally was correct—and I joined up again with our Circus somewhere at the back of Lar Pug Noy, I think it was.' Humberstall paused for some seconds and his brow wrinkled. 'Then I—I went sick, or somethin' or other, they told me; but I know *when* I reported for duty, our Battery Sergeant-Major says that I wasn't expected back, an'—an', one thing leadin' to another—to cut a long story short—I went up before our Major—Major—I shall forget my own name next-Major—'

'Never mind,' Anthony interrupted. 'Go on! It'll come back in talk!'

'Alf a mo'. 'Twas on the tip o' my tongue then.'

Humberstall dropped the polishing-cloth and knitted his brows again in most profound thought. Anthony turned to me and suddenly launched into a sprightly tale of his taxi's collision with a Marble Arch refuge on a greasy day after a three-yard skid.

'Much damage?' I asked.

'Oh no! Ev'ry bolt an' screw an' nut on the chassis strained; *but* nothing carried away, you understand me, an' not a scratch on the body. You'd never 'ave guessed a thing wrong till you took 'er in hand. It was a *wop* too: 'ead-on—like this!' And he slapped his tactful little forehead to show what a knock it had been.

'Did your Major dish you up much?' he went on over his shoulder to Humberstall, who came out of his abstraction with a slow heave.

'We-ell! He told me I wasn't expected back either; an' he said 'e couldn't 'ang up the 'ole Circus till I'd rejoined; an' he said that my ten-inch Skoda which I'd been Number Three of, before the dump went up at Eatables, had 'er full crowd. But, 'e said, as soon as a casualty occurred he'd remember me. "Meantime," says he, "I particularly want you for actin' mess-waiter."

"'Beggin' your pardon, sir," I says perfectly respectful; "but I didn't exactly come back for *that*, sir."

"'Beggin' *your* pardon, 'Umberstall," says 'e, "but I 'appen to command the Circus! Now, you're a sharp-witted man," he says; "an' what we've suffered from fool-waiters in Mess 'as been somethin' cruel. You'll take on, from now—under instruction to Macklin 'ere." So this man, Macklin, that I was tellin' you about, showed me my duties . . . 'Ammick! I've got it! 'Ammick was our Major, an' Mosse was Captain!' Humberstall celebrated his recapture of the name by labouring at the organ-panel on his knee.

'Look out! You'll smash it,' Anthony protested.

'Sorry! Mother's often told me I didn't know my strength. Now, here's a curious thing. This Major of ours—it's ail comin' back to me—was a high-up divorce-court lawyer; an' Mosse, our Captain, was Number One o' Mosses Private Detective Agency. You've heard of it? 'Wives watched while you wait, an' so on. Well, these two 'ad been registerin' together, so to speak, in the Civil line for years on end, but hadn't ever met till the War. Consequently, at Mess their talk was mostly about famous cases they'd been mixed up in. 'Ammick told the Law-courts' end o' the business, an' all what had been left out of the pleadin's; an' Mosse 'ad the actual facts concernin' the errin' parties—in hotels an' so on. I've heard better talk in our Mess than ever before or since. It comes o' the Gunners bein' a scientific corps.'

'That be damned!' said Anthony. 'If anythin' 'appens to 'em they've got it all down in a book. There's no book when your lorry dies on you in the 'Oly Land. *That's* brains.'

'Well, *then*,' Humberstall continued, 'come on this secret society business that I started tellin' you about. When those two—'Ammick an' Mosse—'ad finished about their matrimonial relations—and, mind you, they weren't radishes—they seldom or ever repeated—they'd begin, as often as not, on this Secret Society woman I was tellin' you of—this Jane. She was the only woman I ever 'eard 'em say a good word for. 'Cordin' to them Jane was a none-such. *I* didn't know then she was a Society. 'Fact is, I only 'ung out 'arf an ear in their direction at first, on account of bein' under instruction for mess-duty to this Macklin man. What drew *my* attention to her was a new Lieutenant joinin' up. We called 'im "Gander" on account of his profeel, which was the identical bird. 'E'd been a nactuary—workin' out 'ow long civilians 'ad to live. Neither 'Ammick nor Mosse wasted words on 'im at Mess. They went on talking as usual, an' in due time, as usual, they got back to Jane. Gander cocks one of his big chilblainy ears an' cracks his cold

finger joints. “By God! Jane?” says ‘e. “Yes, Jane,” says ‘Ammick pretty short an’ senior. “Praise ‘Eaven!” says Gander. “It was ‘Bubbly’ where I’ve come from down the line.” (Some damn revue or other, I expect.) Well, neither ‘Ammick nor Mosse was easy-mouthed, or for that matter mealy-mouthed; but no sooner ‘ad Gander passed that remark than they both shook ‘ands with the young squirt across the table an’ called for the port back again. It *was* a password, all right! Then they went at it about Jane—all three, regardless of rank. That made me listen. Presently, I ‘eard ‘Ammick say—

‘Arf a mo’,’ Anthony cut in. ‘But what was *you* doin’ in Mess?’

‘Me an’ Macklin was refixin’ the sand-bag screens to the dug-out passage in case o’ gas. We never knew when we’d cop it in the ‘Eavies, don’t you see? But we knew we ‘ad been looked for for some time, an’ it might come any minute. But, as I was sayin’, ‘Ammick says what a pity ‘twas Jane ‘ad died barren. “I deny that,” says Mosse. “I maintain she was fruitful in the ‘ighest sense o’ the word.” An’ Mosse knew about such things, too. “I’m inclined to agree with ‘Ammick,” says young Gander. “Any’ow, she’s left no direct an’ lawful prog’ny.” I remember every word they said, on account o’ what ‘appened subsequently. I ‘adn’t noticed Macklin much, or I’d ha’ seen he was bosko absoluto. Then ‘e cut in, leanin’ over a packin’-case with a face on ‘im like a dead mackerel in the dark. “Pa-hardon me, gents,” Macklin says, “but this is a matter on which I *do* ‘appen to be moderately well-informed. She *did* leave lawful issue in the shape o’ one son; an’ ‘is name was ‘Eney James.”

“By what sire? Prove it,” says Gander, before ‘is senior officers could get in a word.

“I will,” says Macklin, surgin’ on ‘is two thumbs. *An’*, mark you, none of ‘em spoke! I forget whom he said was the sire of this ‘Eney James-man; but ‘e delivered ‘em a lecture on this Jane-woman for more than a quarter of an hour. I know the exact time, because my old Skoda was on duty at ten-minute intervals reachin’ after some Jerry formin’-up area; and her blast always put out the dug-out candles. I relit ‘em once, an’ again at the end. In conclusion, this Macklin fell flat forward on ‘is face, which was how ‘e generally wound up ‘is notion of a perfect day. Bosko absoluto!

“Take ‘im away,” says ‘Ammick to me. “‘E’s sufferin’ from shell-shock.”

‘To cut a long story short, *that* was what first put the notion into my ‘ead. Wouldn’t it you? Even ‘ad Macklin been a ‘ighup Mason—

‘Wasn’t ‘e, then?’ said Anthony, a little puzzled.

‘E’d never gone beyond the Blue Degrees, ‘e told me. Any’ow, ‘e’d lectured ‘is superior officers up an’ down; ‘e’d as good as called ‘em fools most o’ the time, in ‘is toff’s voice. I ‘eard ‘im an’ I saw ‘im. An’ all he got was—me told off to put ‘im to bed! And all on account o’ Jane! Would *you* have let a thing like that get past you? Nor me, either! Next mornin’, when his stummick was settled, I was at him full-cry to find out ‘ow it was worked. Toff or no toff, ‘e knew his end of a bargain. First, ‘e wasn’t takin’ any. He said I

wasn't fit to be initiated into the Society of the Janeites. That only meant five bob more—fifteen up to date.

“Make it one Bradbury,” ’e says. “It’s dirt-cheap. You saw me ’old the Circus in the ’ollow of me ’and?”

‘No denyin’ it. I ’ad. So, for one pound, he communicated me the Password of the First Degree, which was *Tilniz an’ trap-doors*.

“I know what a trap-door is,” I says to ’im, “ but what in ’ell’s *Tilniz*? “

“You obey orders,” ’e says, “an’ next time I ask you what you’re thinkin’ about you’ll answer, ‘*Tilniz an’ trap-doors*,’ in a smart and soldierly manner. I’ll spring that question at me own time. All you’ve got to do is to be distinck.”

‘We settled all this while we was skinnin’ spuds for dinner at the back o’ the rear-truck under our camouflage-screens. Gawd, ’ow that glue-paint did stink! Otherwise, ’twasn’t so bad, with the sun comin’ through our pantomime-leaves, an’ the wind marcelling the grasses in the cutting. Well, one thing leading to another, nothin’ further ’appened in this direction till the afternoon. We ’ad a high standard o’ livin’ in Mess—an’ in the Group, for that matter. I was talon’ away Mosses lunch—dinner ’e would never call it—an’ Mosse was fillin’ ’is cigarette-case previous to the afternoon’s duty. Macklin, in the passage, comin’ in as if ’e didn’t know Mosse was there, slings ’is question at me, an’ I give the countersign in a low but quite distinck voice, makin’ as if I ’adn’t seen Mosse. Mosse looked at me through and through, with his cigarette-case in his ’and. Then ’e jerks out ’arf a dozen—best Turkish—on the table an’ exits. I pinched ’em an’ divvied with Macklin.

“You see ’ow it works,” says Macklin. “Could you ’ave invested a Bradbury to better advantage?”

“So far, no,” I says. “Otherwise, though, if they start provin’ an’ tryin’ me, I’m a dead bird. There must be a lot more to this Janeite game.”

“‘Eaps an’ ’eaps,” he says. “But to show you the sort of ’eart I ’ave, I’ll communicate you all the ’Igher Degrees among the Janeites, includin’ the Charges, for another Bradbury; but you’ll ’ave to work, Dobbin.” ‘

“Pretty free with your Bradburys, wasn’t you?’ Anthony grunted disapprovingly.

‘What odds? Ac-tually, Gander told us, we couldn’t expect to av’rage more than six weeks longer apiece, an’, any’ow, *I* never regretted it. But make no mistake—the preparation was somethin’ cruel. In the first place, I come under Macklin for direct instruction *re* Jane.’

‘Oh! Jane *was* real, then?’ Anthony glanced for an instant at me as he put the question. ‘I couldn’t quite make that out.’

'Real!' Humberstall's voice rose almost to a treble. 'Jane? Why, she was a little old maid 'oo'd written 'alf a dozen books about a hundred years ago. 'Twasn't as if there was anythin' to 'em, either. I know. I had to read 'em. They weren't adventurous, nor smutty, nor what you'd call even interestin'—all about girls o' seventeen (they begun young then, I tell you), not certain 'oom they'd like to marry; an' their dances an' card-parties an' picnics, and their young blokes goin' off to London on 'orseback for 'air-cuts an' shaves. It took a full day in those days, if you went to a proper barber. They wore wigs, too, when they was chemists or clergymen. All that interested me on account o' me profession, an' cuttin' the men's 'air every fortnight. Macklin used to chip me about bein' an 'air-dresser. 'E *could* pass remarks, too!

Humberstall recited with relish a fragment of what must have been a superb comminationservice, ending with, 'You lazy-minded, lousyheaded, long-trousered, perfumed perookier.'

'An' you took it?' Anthony's quick eyes ran over the man.

'Yes. I was after my money's worth; an' Macklin, havin' put 'is 'and to the plough, wasn't one to withdraw it. Otherwise, if I'd pushed 'im, I'd ha' slew 'im. Our Battery Sergeant Major nearly did. For Macklin had a wonderful way o' passing remarks on a man's civil life; an' he put it about that our B.S.M. had run a dope an' dolly-shop with a Chinese woman, the wrong end o' Southwark Bridge. Nothin' you could lay 'old of, o' course; but——' Humberstall let us draw our own conclusions.

'That reminds me,' said Anthony, smacking his lips. 'I 'ad a bit of a fracas with a fare in the Fulham Road last month. He called me a paras-tit-ic Forder. I informed 'im I was owner-driver, an' 'e could see for 'imself the cab was quite clean. That didn't suit 'im. 'E said it was crawlin'.'

'What happened?' I asked.

'One o' them blue-bellied Bolshies of postwar Police (neglectin' point-duty, as usual) asked us to flirt a little quieter. My joker chucked some Arabic at 'im. That was when we signed the Armistice. 'E'd been a Yeoman—a perishin' Gloucestershire Yeoman—that I'd helped gather in the orange crop with at Jaffa, in the 'Oly Land !'

'And after that?' I continued.

'It 'ud be 'ard to say. I know 'e lived at Hendon or Cricklewood. I drove 'im there. We must 'ave talked Zionism or somethin', because at seven next mornin' him an' me was tryin' to get petrol out of a milkshop at St. Albans. They 'adn't any. In lots o' ways this war has been a public noosance, as one might say, but there's no denyin' it 'elps you slip through life easier. The dairyman's son 'ad done time on Jordan with camels. So he stood us rum an' milk.'

'Just like 'avin' the Password, eh?' was Humberstall's comment.

'That's right! Ours was *Imshee kelb*. Not so 'ard to remember as your Jane stuff.'

'Jane wasn't so very 'ard—not the way Macklin used to put 'er,' Humberstall resumed. 'I 'ad only six books to remember. I learned the names by 'eart as Macklin placed 'em. There was one called *Persuasion*, first; an' the rest in a bunch, except another about some Abbey or other—last by three lengths. But, as I was sayin', what beat me was there was nothin' *to* 'em nor *in* 'em. Nothin' at all, believe me.'

'You seem good an' full of 'em, any'ow,' said Anthony.

'I mean that 'er characters was no *use*! They was only just like people you run across any day. One of 'em was a curate—the Reverend Collins—always on the make an' lookin' to marry money. Well, when I was a Boy Scout, 'im or 'is twin brother was our troop-leader. An' there was an upstandin' 'ard-mouthed Duchess or a Baronet's wife that didn't give a curse for any one 'oo wouldn't do what she told 'em to; the Lady—Lady Catherine (I'll get it in a minute) De Bugg. Before Ma bought the 'airdressin' business in London I used to know of an 'olesale grocer's wife near Leicester (I'm Leicestershire myself) that might 'ave been 'er duplicate. And—oh yes—there was a Miss Bates; just an old maid runnin' about like a hen with 'er 'ead cut off, an' her tongue loose at both ends. I've got an aunt like 'er. Good as gold—but, *you* know.'

'Lord, yes!' said Anthony, with feeling. 'An' did you find out what *Tilniz* meant? I'm always huntin' after the meanin' of things meself.'

'Yes, 'e was a swine of a Major-General, retired, and on the make. They're all on the make, in a quiet way, in Jane. 'E was so much of a gentleman by 'is own estimation that 'e was always be'avin' like a hound. *You* know the sort. "Turned a girl out of 'is own 'ouse because she 'adn't any money—*after*, mark you, encouragin' 'er to set 'er cap at his son, because 'e thought she had.'

'But that 'appens all the time,' said Anthony. 'Why, me own mother——'

'That's right. So would mine. But this Tilney was a man, an' some'ow Jane put it down all so naked it made you ashamed. I told Macklin that, an' he said I was shapin' to be a good Janeite. 'Twasn't *his* fault if I wasn't. 'Nother thing, too; 'avin' been at the Bath Mineral Waters 'Ospital in 'Sixteen, with trench-feet, was a great advantage to me, because I knew the names o' the streets where Jane 'ad lived. There was one of 'em—Laura, I think, or some other girl's name—which Macklin said was 'oly ground. "If you'd been initiated *then*," he says, "you'd ha' felt your flat feet tingle every time you walked over those sacred pavin'-stones."

"My feet tingled right enough," I said, "but not on account of Jane. Nothin' remarkable about that," I says.

"'Eaven lend me patience!" he says, combin' 'is 'air with 'is little hands. "Every dam' thing about Jane is remarkable to a pukka Janeite! It was there," he says, "that Miss

What's—herName" (he had the name; I've forgotten it) "made up 'er engagement again, after nine years, with Captain T'other Bloke." An' he dished me out a page an' a half of one of the books to learn by 'eart—*Persuasion*, I think it was.'

'You quick at gettin' things off by 'eart?' Anthony demanded.

'Not as a rule. I was then, though, or else Macklin knew 'ow to deliver the Charges properly. 'E said 'e'd been some sort o' schoolmaster once, and he'd make my mind resume work or break 'imself. That was just before the Battery Sergeant-Major 'ad it in for him on account o' what he'd been sayin' about the Chinese wife an' the dollyshop.'

'What did Macklin really say?' Anthony and I asked together. Humberstall gave us a fragment. It was hardly the stuff to let loose on a pious post-war world without revision.

'And what had your B.S.M. been in civil life?' I asked at the end.

'Ead-embalmer to an 'olesale undertaker in the Midlands,' said Humberstall; 'but, o' course, *when* he thought 'e saw his chance he naturally took it. He came along one mornin' lickin' 'is lips. "You don't get past me this time," 'e says to Macklin. "You're for it, Professor."

""Ow so, me gallant Major," says Macklin; "an' what for?"

""For writin' obese words on the breech o' the ten-inch," says the B.S.M. She was our old Skoda that I've been tellin' you about. We called 'er "Bloody Eliza." She 'ad a badly wore obturator an' blew through a fair treat. I knew by Macklin's face the B.S.M. 'ad dropped it somewhere, but all he vow'saifed was, "Very good, Major. We will consider it in Common Room," The B.S.M. couldn't ever stand Macklin's toff's way o' puttin' things; so he goes off rumblin' like 'ell's bells in an 'urricane, as the Marines say. Macklin put it to me at once, what had I been doin'? Some'ow he could read me like a book.

'Well, all *I* done—an' I told 'im *he* was responsible for it—was to chalk the guns. 'Ammick never minded what the men wrote up on 'em. 'E said it gave 'em an interest in their job. You'd see all sorts of remarks chalked on the sideplates or the gear-casin's.'

'What sort of remarks?' said Anthony keenly.

'Oh! 'Ow Bloody Eliza, or Spittin' Jim—that was our old Mark Five Nine-point-two—felt that morning, an' such things. But it 'ad come over me—more to please Macklin than anythin' else—that it was time we Janeites 'ad a look in. So, as I was tellin' you, I'd taken an' rechristened all three of 'em, on my own, early that mornin'. Spittin' Jim I 'ad chalked "The Reverend Collins"—that Curate I was tellin' you about; an' our cut-down Navy Twelve, "General Tilney," because it was worse wore in the groovin' than anything *I* ever seen. The Skoda (an' that was where *I* dropped it) I 'ad chalked up "The Lady Catherine De Bugg." I made a clean breast of it all to Macklin. He reached up an' patted me on the shoulder. "You done nobly," he says. "You're bringin' forth abundant fruit, like a good Janeite. But I'm afraid your spellin' has misled our worthy B.S.M. *That's*

what it is," 'e says, slappin' 'is little leg. "Ow might you 'ave spelt De Bourgh for example?"

'I told 'im. 'Twasn't right; an' 'e nips off to the Skoda to make it so. When 'e comes back, 'e says that the Gander 'ad been before 'im an' corrected the error. But we two come up before the Major, just the same, that afternoon after lunch ; 'Ammick in the chair, so to speak, Mosse in another, an' the B.S.M, chargin' Macklin with writin' obese words on His Majesty's property, on active service. When it transpired that me an' not Macklin was the offendin' party, the B.S.M, turned 'is hand in and sulked like a baby. 'E as good as told 'Ammick 'e couldn't hope to preserve discipline unless examples was made—meanin', o' course, Macklin.'

'Yes, I've heard all that,' said Anthony, with a contemptuous grunt. 'The worst of it is, a lot of it's true.'

'Ammick took 'im up sharp about Military Law, which he said was even more fair than the civilian article.'

'My Gawd!' This came from Anthony's scornful midmost bosom.

"Accordin' to the unwritten law of the 'Eavies," says 'Ammick, "there's no objection to the men chalkin' the guns, if decency is preserved. On the other 'and," says he, "we 'aven't yet settled the precise status of individuals entitled so to do. I 'old that the privilege is confined to combatants only."

"With the permission of the Court," says Mosse, who was another born lawyer, "I'd like to be allowed to join issue on that point. Prisoner's position is very delicate an' doubtful, an' he has no legal representative."

"Very good," says 'Ammick. "Macklin bein' acquitted——"

"With submission, me lud," says Mosse. "I hope to prove 'e was accessory before the fact."

"As you please," says 'Ammick. "But in that case, 'oo the 'ell's goin' to get the port I'm tryin' to stand the Court?"

"I submit," says Mosse, "prisoner, bein' under direct observation o' the Court, could be temporarily enlarged for that duty."

'So Macklin went an' got it, an' the B.S.M. had 'is glass with the rest. Then they argued whether mess servants an' non-combatants was entitled to chalk the guns ('Ammick *versus* Mosse). After a bit, 'Ammick as C.O. give 'imself best, an' me an' Macklin was severely admonished for trespassin' on combatants' rights, an' the B.S.M. was warned that if we repeated the offence 'e could deal with us summ'rily. He 'ad some glasses o' port an' went out quite 'appy. Then my turn come, while Macklin was gettin' them their

tea; an' one thing leadin' to another, 'Ammick put me through all the Janeite Degrees, you might say. 'Never 'ad such a doin' m my life.'

'Yes, but what did you tell 'em?' said Anthony. 'I can't ever *think* my lies quick enough when I'm for it.'

'No need to lie. I told 'em that the backside view o' the Skoda, when she was run up, put Lady De Bugg into my 'ead. They gave me right there, but they said I was wrong about General Tilney. 'Cordin' to them, our Navy twelve-inch ought to 'ave been christened Miss Bates. I said the same idea 'ad crossed my mind, till I'd seen the General's groovin'. Then I felt it had to be the General or nothin'. But they give me full marks for the Reverend Collins—our Nine-point-two.'

'An' you fed 'em *that* sort o' talk?' Anthony's fox-coloured eyebrows climbed almost into his hair.

'While I was assistin' Macklin to get tea—yes. Seem' it was an examination, I wanted to do 'im credit as a Janeite.'

'An'—an' what did they say?'

'They said it was 'ighly creditable to us both. I don't drink, so they give me about a hundred fags.'

'Gawd! What a Circus you must 'ave been,' was Anthony's gasping comment.

'It *was* a 'appy little Group. I wouldn't 'a changed with any other.'

Humberstall sighed heavily as he helped Anthony slide back the organ-panel. We all admired it in silence, while Anthony repocketed his secret polishing mixture, which lived in a tin tobacco-box. I had neglected my work for listening to Humberstall. Anthony reached out quietly and took over a Secretary's jewel and a rag. Humberstall studied his reflection in the glossy wood.

'Almost,' he said critically, holding his head to one side.

'Not with an Army. You could with a Safety, though,' said Anthony. And, indeed, as Brother Burges had foretold, one might have shaved in it with comfort.

'Did you ever run across any of 'em afterwards, any time?' Anthony asked presently.

'Not so many of 'em left to run after, now. With the 'Eavies it's mostly neck or nothin'. We copped it. In the neck. In due time.'

'Well, *you* come out of it all right.' Anthony spoke both stoutly and soothingly; but Humberstall would not be comforted.

'That's right; but I almost wish I 'adn't,' he sighed. 'I was 'appier there than ever before or since. Jerry's March push in 'Eighteen did us in; an' yet, 'ow could we 'ave expected it? 'Ow *could* we 'ave expected it? We'd been sent back for rest an' runnin'-repairs, back pretty near our base; an' our old loco' that used to shift us about o' nights, she'd gone down the line for repairs. But for 'Ammick we wouldn't even 'ave 'ad our camouflage-screens up. He told our Brigadier that, whatever 'e might be in the Gunnery line, as a leadin' Divorce lawyer he never threw away a point in argument. So 'e 'ad us all screened in over in a cuttin' on a little spur-line near a wood; an' 'e saw to the screens 'imself. The leaves weren't more than comin' out then, an' the sun used to make our glue-paint stink. Just like actin' in a theatre, it was! But 'appy. *But* 'appy! I expect if we'd been caterpillars, like the new big six-inch hows, they'd ha' remembered us. But we was the old La Bassée '15 Mark o' Heavies that ran on rails—not much more good than scrap-iron that late in the war. An', believe me, gents—or Brethren, as I should say—we copped it cruel. Look 'ere! It was in the afternoon, an' I was watchin' Gander instructin' a class in new sights at Lady Catherine. All of a sudden I 'eard our screens rip overhead, an' a runner on a motor-bike come sailin', sailin' through the air—like that bloke that used to bicycle off Brighton Pier—and landed one awful wop almost atop o' the class. "Old 'ard," says Gander. "That's no way to report. What's the fuss?" "Your screens 'ave broke my back, for one thing," says the bloke on the ground; "an' for another, the 'ole front's gone." "Nonsense," says Gander. 'E 'adn't more than passed the remark when the man was vi'lently sick an' conked out. 'E 'ad plenty papers on 'im from Brigadiers and C.O.'s reporting 'emselves cut off an' askin' for orders. 'E was right both ways—his back an' our front. The 'ole Somme front washed out as clean as kiss-me-'and! His huge hand smashed down open on his knee.

'We 'eard about it at the time in the 'Oly Land. Was it reelly as quick as all that?' said Anthony.

'Quicker! Look 'ere! The motor—bike dropped in on us about four pip-emma. After that, we tried to get orders o' some kind or other, but nothin' came through excep' that all available transport was in use and not likely to be released. *That* didn't 'elp us any. About nine o'clock comes along a young Brass 'At in brown gloves. We was quite a surprise to 'im. 'E said they were evacuating the area and we'd better shift. "Where to?" says 'Ammick, rather short.

"Oh, somewhere Amiens way," he says. "Not that I'd guarantee Amiens for any length o' time; but Amiens might do to begin with." I'm giving you the very words. Then 'e goes off swingin' 'is brown gloves, and 'Ammick sends for Gander and orders 'im to march the men through Amiens to Dieppe; book thence to New'aven, take up positions be'ind Seaford, an' carry on the war. Gander said 'e'd see 'im damned first. 'Ammick says 'e'd see 'im courtmartialled after. Gander says what 'e meant to say was that the men 'ud see all an' sundry damned before they went into Arniers with their gunsights wrapped up in their puttees. 'Ammick says 'e 'adn't said a word about puttees, an' carryin' off the gunsights was purely optional. "Well, anyhow," says Gander, "puttees *or* drawers, they ain't goin' to shift a step unless you lead the procession."

“Mutinous ’ounds,” says ’Amrnick. “But we live in a democratic age. D’you suppose they’d object to kindly diggin’ ’emselves in a bit?” “Not at all,” says Gander. “The B.S.M.’s kept ’em at it like terriers for the last three hours.” “That bein’ so,” says ’Ammick, “Macklin’ll now fetch us small glasses o’ port.” Then Mosse comes in—he could smell port a mile off—an’ he submits we’d only add to the congestion in Amiens if we took our crowd there, whereas, if we lay doggo where we was, Jerry might miss us, though he didn’t seem to be missin’ much that evenin’.

‘The ’ole country was pretty noisy, an’ our dumps we’d lit ourselves flarin’ heavens-high as far as you could see. Lyin’ doggo was our best chance. I believe we might ha’ pulled it off, if we’d been left alone, but along towards midnight—there was some small stuff swishin’ about, but nothin’ particular—a nice little bald-headed old gentleman in uniform pushes into the dug-out wipin’ his glasses an’ sayin’ ’e was thinkin’ o’ formin’ a defensive flank on our left with ’is battalion which ’ad just come up. ’Ammick says ’e wouldn’t form much if ’e was ’im. “Oh, don’t say *that*,” says the old gentleman, very shocked. “One must support the Guns, mustn’t one?” “’Ammick says we was refittin’ an’ about as effective, just then, as a public lav’tory. “Go into Amiens,” he says, “an’ defend ’em there.” “Oh no,” says the old gentleman, “me an’ my laddies *must* make a defensive flank for you,” an’ he flips out of the dug-out like a performin’ bullfinch, chirruppin’ for his “laddies.” Gawd in ’Eaven knows what sort o’ push they was—little boys mostly—but they ’ung on to ’is coat-tails like a Sunday-school treat, an’ we ’eard ’em muckin’ about in the open for a bit. Then a pretty tight barrage was slapped down for ten minutes, an’ ’Ammick thought the laddies had copped it already. “It’ll be our turn next,” says Mosse. “There’s been a covey o’ Gothas messin’ about for the last ’alf-hour—lookin’ for the Railway Shops, I expect. They’re just as likely to take us.” “Arisin’ out o’ that,” says ’Ammick, “one of ’em sounds pretty low down now. We’re for it, me learned colleagues!” “Jesus!” says Gander, “I believe you’re right, sir.” And that was the last word I ’eard on the matter.’

‘Did they cop you then?’ said Anthony.

‘They did. I expect Mosse was right, an’ they took us for the Railway Shops. When I come to, I was lyin’ outside the cuttin’, which was pretty well filled up. The Reverend Collins was all right; but Lady Catherine and the General was past prayin’ for. I lay there, takin’ it in, till I felt cold an’ I looked at meself. Otherwise, I ’adn’t much on excep’ me boots. So I got up an’ walked about to keep warm. Then I saw somethin’ like a mushroom in the moonlight. It was the nice old gentleman’s bald ’ead. I patted it. ’im and ’is laddies ’ad copped it right enough. Some battalion run out in a ’urry from England, I suppose. They ’adn’t even begun to dig in—pore little perishers! I dressed myself off ’em there, an’ topped off with a British warm. Then I went back to the cuttin’ an’ some one says to me: “Dig, you ox, dig! Gander’s under.” So I ’elped shift things till I threw up blood an’ bile mixed. Then I dropped, an’ they brought Gander out—dead—an’ laid ’im next me. ’Ammick ’ad gone too—fair tore in ’alf, the B.S.M. said; but the funny thing was he talked quite a lot before ’e died, an’ nothin’ to ’im below ’is stummick, they told me. Mosse we never found. ’E’d been standing by Lady Catherine. She’d up-ended an’ gone back on ’em, with ’alf the cuttin’ atop of ’er, by the look of things.’

'And what come to Macklin?' said Anthony.

'Dunno. . . 'E was with 'Ammick. I expect I must ha' been blown clear of all by the first bomb; for I was the on'y Janeite left. We lost about half our crowd, either under, or after we'd got 'em out. The B.S.M. went off 'is rocker when mornin' came, an' he ran about from one to another sayin' : "That was a good push! That was a great crowd! Did ye ever know any push to touch 'em?" An' then 'e'd cry. So what was left of us made off for ourselves, an' I came across a lorry, pretty full, but they took me in.'

'Ah!' said Anthony with pride. "'They all take a taxi when it's rainin'.'" 'Ever 'eard that song?'

'They went a long way back. Then I walked a bit, an' there was a hospital-train fillin' up, an' one of the Sisters—a grey-headed one—ran at me wavin' 'er red 'ands an' sayin' there wasn't room for a louse in it. I was past carin'. But she went on talkin' and talkin' about the war, an' her pa in Ladbroke Grove, an' 'ow strange for 'er at 'er time of life to be doin' this work with a lot o' men, an' next war, 'ow the nurses 'ud 'ave to wear khaki breeches on account o' the mud, like the Land Girls; an' that reminded 'er, she'd boil me an egg if she could lay 'ands on one, for she'd run a chicken-farm once. You never 'eard anythin' like it—outside o' Jane. It set me off laughin' again. Then a woman with a nose an' teeth on 'er, marched up. "What's all this?" she says. "What do you want?" "Nothing," I says, "only make Miss Bates, there, stop talkin' or I'll die." "Miss Bates?" she says. "What in 'Eaven's name makes you call 'er that?" "Because she is," I says. "D'you know what you're sayin'?" she says, an' slings her bony arm round me to get me off the ground. "'Course I do," I says, "an' if you knew Jane you'd know too." "That's enough," says she. "You're comin' on this train if I have to kill a Brigadier for you," an' she an' an ord'ly fair hove me into the train, on to a stretcher close to the cookers. That beef-tea went down well! Then she shook 'ands with me an' said I'd hit off Sister Molyneux in one, an' then she pinched me an extra blanket. It was 'er own 'ospital pretty much. I expect she was the Lady Catherine de Bourgh of the area. Well, an' so, to cut a long story short, nothing further transpired.'

'Adn't you 'ad enough by then?' asked Anthony.

'I expect so. Otherwise, if the old Circus 'ad been carryin' on, I might 'ave 'ad another turn with 'em before Armistice. Our B.S.M. was right. There never was a 'appier push. 'Ammick an' Mosse an' Gander an' the B.S.M. an' that pore little Macklin man makin' an' passin' an' raisin' me an' gettin' me on to the 'ospital train after 'e was dead, all for a couple of Bradburys. I lie awake nights still, reviewing matters. There never was a push to touch ours—never! '

Anthony handed me back the Secretary's Jewel resplendent.

'Ah,' said he. 'No denyin' that Jane business was more useful to you than the Roman Eagles or the Star an' Garter. 'Pity there wasn't any of you Janeites in the 'Oly Land. I never come across 'em.'

'Well, as pore Macklin said, it's a very select Society, an' you've got to be a Janeite in your 'eart, or you won't have any success. An' yet he made *me* a Janeite! I read all her six books now for pleasure 'tween times in the shop; an' it brings it all back—down to the smell of the glue-paint on the screens. You take it from me, Brethren, there's no one to touch Jane when you're in a tight place. Gawd bless 'er, whoever she was.'

Worshipful Brother Burges, from the floor of the Lodge, called us all from Labour to Refreshment. Humberstall hove himself up—so very a cart-horse of a man one almost expected to hear the harness creak on his back—and descended the steps.

He said he could not stay for tea because he had promised his mother to come home for it, and she would most probably be waiting for him now at the Lodge door.

'One or other of 'em always comes for 'im. He's apt to miss 'is gears sometimes,' Anthony explained to me, as we followed.

'Goes on a bust, d'you mean?'

'Im! He's no more touched liquor than 'e 'as women since 'e was born. No, 'e's liable to a sort o' quiet fits, like. They came on after the dump blew up at Eatables. But for them, 'e'd ha' been Battery Sergeant-Major.'

'Oh!' I said. 'I couldn't make out why he took on as mess-waiter when he got back to his guns. That explains things a bit.'

'Is sister told me the dump goin' up knocked all 'is Gunnery instruction clean out of 'im. The only thing 'e stuck to was to get back to 'is old crowd. Gawd knows 'ow 'e worked it, but 'e did. He fair deserted out of England to 'em, she says; an' when they saw the state 'e was in, they 'adn't the 'eart to send 'im back or into 'ospital. They kep' 'im for a mascot, as you might say. That's *all* dead-true. 'Is sister told me so. But I can't guarantee that Janeite business, excep' 'e never told a lie since 'e was six. 'Is sister told me so. What do *you* think?'

'He isn't likely to have made it up out of his own head,' I replied.

'But people don't get so crazy-fond o' books as all that, do they? 'E's made 'is sister try to read 'em. She'd do anythin' to please him. But, as I keep tellin' 'er, so'd 'is mother. D'you 'appen to know anything about Jane?'

'I believe Jane was a bit of a match-maker in a quiet way when she was alive, and I know all her books are full of match-making,' I said. '*You'd* better look out.'

'Oh, *that's* as good as settled,' Anthony replied, blushing.

“Jane’s Marriage”

Jane went to Paradise:
That was only fair.
Good Sir Walter followed her,
And armed her up the stair.
Henry and Tobias,
And Miguel of Spain,
Stood with Shakespeare at the top
To welcome Jane -

°Scott

°Fielding and Smollet
°Cervantes

Then the Three Archangels
Offered out of hand
Anything in Heaven's gift
That she might command.
Azrael's eyes upon her,
Raphael's wings above,
Michael's sword against her heart,
Jane said: "Love."

Instantly the under-
Standing Seraphim
Laid their fingers on their lips
And went to look for him.
Stole across the Zodiac,
Harnessed Charles's Wain,
And whispered round the Nebulae
"Who loved Jane?"

°Ursa Major

In a private limbo
Where none had thought to look,
Sat a Hampshire gentleman
Reading of a book.
It was called *Persuasion*
And it told the plain
Story of the love between
Him and Jane.

He heard the question,
Circle Heaven through -
Closed the book and answered:
"I did - and do!"
Quietly but speedily
(As Captain Wentworth moved)
Entered into Paradise
The man Jane loved!