

## "OLLA PODRIDA."

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WHAT a wealth of situations the average officer in the Corps is called upon to appreciate in his many and varied wanderings round the face of the globe! To the senior Major an appreciation means a harrowing experience in the wide open spaces, with tactical problems to suit the situation set by a Board who are keen to know the correct solutions. To a junior, especially in India, wards full of cases, temperatures soaring to the skies, entero-dysenteric symptoms and complications to suit, each of which demands an appreciation. The regimental ward orderlies' assurances in the early morning that all the stools are negative and that no "parachutes" have been found in the blood helps little, and so hours are spent endeavouring to solve a problem of great importance as regards diagnosis and treatment.

*Inter alia* the inspecting officer arrives, and pomp and circumstance take precedence over all other cares. All is prepared. His idiosyncrasies and pet problems are carefully studied beforehand. The situation duly appreciated—the "big stuff" is served by all concerned. Some of us are thinking of leave home, and on the result of the inspection we frame our hopes. Having seen everything the inspecting officer decides to peep into a ward cupboard, along the shelves of which he runs a prying finger. Out it comes covered with dust (which has been put there beforehand for him so to find) to the embarrassment of the ward sister and to the annoyance of the matron, who remarks to her O.C. in *sotto voce*, "his mother must have been a housemaid." Her appreciation may or may not be correct. Why worry!! He is pleased with the discovery, all goes well and in due course we get our leave.

The boat conveying us home is palatial, new, modern and jerry built. Tennis courts, swimming pools, cocktail bars, dance halls and all complete. Music, gramophones, dances, sweeps, the "dogs." Sweet young things in Lido "knick-knacks." All and sundry. Hoi and very much polloi—1,100 souls fleeing from the heat of an Indian summer (*sic*). What a wealth for the student of types to appreciate! My room mate—a taciturn tea planter—comments as we leave the Ballard Pier, tersely and thusly—"We now depart from the land of rice, pice, lice and vice," and says no more till on a cosy morning in the Red Sea, whilst nonchalantly leaning on the palings and contemplating a distant heat haze, he queries, "Tell me is that land or liver." His appreciation, incorrect in the first place, is possibly true in the second.

A heated discussion at table one night causes a Sassenach member of the Corps to asseverate that "all you Scots and Irish are merely soldiers of fortune, mercenaries, hirelings." Well, it may be true. History, language and dialects prove that our forebears soldiered in the wars and on the side of many of our continental brethren, viz., as mercenaries, and so why not continue to the benefit of the whole? As a result the Scot's dialect has been enriched by many expressions and delightful terms now part and parcel of our language. Our Scots association with the French, in soldiering, smuggling, religious wars, exilings and returns, the '45 and what not, is markedly evident. To appreciate—

On the morning of my return home on leave the breakfast table was graced by a Scot's delicacy known as a "bap" and sold as such. Merely a flat white morning roll and consumed in many if not all Scot's households at breakfast. A descendant of the French morning roll or "bas pain."

Should any of you be on tour in Scotland visit a pastry cook's shop and ask for "petticoat tails." You will receive delightful small shortbread cakes. Why the name? The pastry-cook's forebears came from France or learnt their cult there and made similar delicacies, but these were known as *petites gâtelles*.

The Scots medico may remember his landlady in his student days bringing in his "jigot" of mutton on an "asheet." She may have been unaware of such terms as *gigot* or *assiette*.

A thesis on appendicitis surely would be incomplete without reference to the "Eleck Pooshun," a disease known to the good wivies of Fifeshire many many decades ago. The surgical specialist's appreciation would be "Iliac Passion" (Fr.) or stoppage of the bowel.

Western Gales in Ayrshire is a golfer's paradise. Fairways and greens of glorious springy turf with the feel of a Persian carpet. Arran in the distance, sea, surf and sandy beaches nearby. The rough, also nearby, real tiger country. Complete in "Fourings" with hope, clubs and a pawky ex-soldier caddie, I essayed a round. After much effort in the rough my caddie suggested, "Why don't you try the coorse, surr, it's much easier than a' that danderin'." A correct appreciation. But did he wot of the term "dandiner" to wander aimlessly.

In Edinburgh, Kirkcaldy, St. Andrews, etc., are small streets known as "vennels." Therein of an evening can be found gangs of youngsters playing their noisy street games with shrill and shouting voice. Picture an irate mother emerging from her household cares "Awa' ben!" and espostulating with her young hopeful in the following terms: "That's an awfu' cannalie ye are wi'!" (Vernacular for: "What a mob you are playing with!") Her forebears came back from France some centuries ago with such terms on their tongues as *venelle* (a small street) and *canaille* (a rabble).

"Gawky" loons or "gowks" from the same venelles go out with catapults and in the woods shoot at "corbies." Possibly their great-great-

grandsires talked of "gauche" and "corbeau." Merely now a matter of pronunciation.

One of the interesting features in a train journey up country in India is the arrival at a large railway station. The sweetmeat, fruit, flower, toy, and other vendors pass and repass the carriage windows and in sing-song voices proclaim their various wares. Gifted with a very small knowledge of Urdu, one is liable to appreciate their offers and requests erroneously. Such was my first experience. "Mussulman pani pio," I interpreted to be a polite request on hygienic grounds for the Mohammedan to descend and pass water. Similarly until recently I thought that the old time "Dooly" man was something connected with the Indian "dhooly" or litter. Not so. Early in last century, perhaps earlier, the Dooly man hawked his milk through the streets of Edinburgh. The "du lait" man in fact.

Burns, when writing "John Anderson my Jo, John," did not mean his Jo to be interpreted as a diminutive of John. Far from it; rather as "Joie,"—my delight, my dear.

Nowadays, when one is approaching retirement, one studies the advertisements in various periodicals wherein are depicted desirable residences for sale—garden, golf, indoor sanitation, h. and c., etc., with particular emphasis on drainage and baths. Such problems did not affect the denizens of the High and other streets of Edinburgh in the preceding two centuries. With a cry of "Gardyloo," the indoor sanitation (or lack of it) became outdoor. From high up in the housetops, with her preliminary cry of warning—"Gardyloo"—(*Gardez l'eau*), the housewife hurled her excremental offertory into the street below. Passers by, irrespective of knowledge of French or otherwise, took cover or, if such were then in existence, put up their umbrellas.

Now Jean is a common name in Scotland, especially in Edinburgh and, possibly, the High Street. Picture the Jeans high up in the housetops of the High Street, taking due precautions without representations in the sanitary diary. Were they the precursors of our present Hygiene Department?