

HEARD IN A TRAM.

Enter two fully uniformed young women, overflowing with more animal spirits than refinement. It was evidently the "day off" of them both, and the passengers within earshot soon became acquainted with that, and many other incidents connected with their professional life.

There is always "l'une qui parle," and Chatterbox held the field with bursts of merriment, which it must be owned was rather infectious.

"I left my gas full on all night, so that my room might be nice and warm to get up in, in the morning." (Patriotic.) "Do you remember Nurse —, a fat little thing? She left to be a lady's maid. She wanted to argue with me that it was the same as being a lady's companion." (Much laughter.) "She was going out to India."

"No; to Egypt."

"Well, to Egypt. Anyhow, she hasn't got any further than Wood Green." (Renewed mirth.) "Miss — came to me yesterday, and she says: 'Go up to your room and empty your basin. It looks as if you had done a week's washing in it. I've spoken to you about it before.' I says: 'I've only washed my face in it.'"

"'Well,' she says, 'your face must have been pretty dirty.' I says: 'I'm not going to lower myself by arguing with you.' So I went up to my room and emptied my basin, and sat down and read a chapter of my book. I never come back under an hour when I'm sent on a message. I always swear I've met someone and they kept me."

"Oh, I never do that," replied her friend. "I'm rather duty-struck myself."

Chatterbox again took the field.

"I went up to S Block the other night, and there was an awful smell of burning. I couldn't make it out. You're not allowed to do any cooking up there. Well, there were five girls standing on their beds making toast over the gas. Nurse — wanted my butter, but I said I wasn't taking any."

Chatterbox was evidently going to deprive the institution in which she worked of her valuable services, or perhaps the wash-basin incident may have had something to do with it.

"The girls want to know when I am going to begin to pack. It will only take me about five minutes, anyhow. I shall just tip the contents of my drawers into my trunk, and sort them when I get home."

(Her services must have been even more valuable than I at first suspected.)

I had been sitting next to Chatterbox, and when I arrived at my destination, on leaving the car I took a glance at the girl who was "duty-struck." She had a nice bright face, and I wondered how long she would retain her excellent, if crudely expressed, attitude to her work.

Alas! Evil communications corrupt good manners.

H. H.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"GASPARD THE POILU."*

"Gaspard! Eh, Gaspard! Who is he?"

"He's a wonder! He's got a nose like a hook and a face that would make a fish laugh. He kept us laughing all night."

"What's his business?"

"He's had about all, from porter at the Halles to dealer in snails. He's a real *poilu*."

The news had just gone round that a train bringing soldiers from Paris had arrived, and Gaspard the *poilu* was one of the company. It was at the outbreak of the war at the beginning of the mobilisation of the French army.

These ten thousand men from Paris were disgorged into a country town in a corner of Normandy, which was offering a regiment also, but men of a different type from the gay rollicking Parisians.

The lawyer's clerk, who was standing near the station, looked amazed as Gaspard went by. While admiring the Parisian's determined attitude and his jovial spirit, he could not help thinking that, however much of a Parisian this man might be, he was obviously a workman and therefore not of *his* class.

Gaspard must have read his thoughts, for as he passed by he exclaimed:

"Eh, eh, you of the black coat, aren't you getting a ticket for Berlin?"

The clerk could not repress something of a shiver as he replied: "Of course I am."

But the passing of the Parisian had had its effect; the clerk suddenly felt as though he would like to run after Gaspard and follow him to the very front of the fighting line.

The entraining of the men for the front drew crowds of women to wish them farewell.

"Too bad my own little woman is not there," said Burette.

"Make up for it by looking at the others," said Gaspard. And to give a good example he exchanged many a wink and passing salute with all the good-looking women. The locomotive whistle was heard once again in a last and ardent farewell

* By René Benjamin. Heinemann, London.

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