



ATIC PAL

CLARK NZMC

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MY ERRATIC PAL

MY ERRATIC PAL

BY ALFRED CLARK, N.Z.M.C.

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TO MY FRIEND

LT.-COL. P. C. FENWICK, C.M.G.,

who, in spite of his excellent parts, his shrewd wit and his sense of humour, is constitutionally quite unable to understand either selfishness or disloyalty, and who was moreover invariably kind to my friend John, I dedicate this book.

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MY ERRATIC PAL

MY ERRATIC PAL

*T*HIS story is banal enough nowadays, and I am but ill-fitted to present it, as I have neither the art nor the science of the storyteller, but I feel that there are both native wit in my friend's verses and a certain queer heroism in the story of his life which render the tale worth telling, and obviously no one else is so well qualified as I to set it down, for I have been proud to call John my friend from his wild youth through all his patch-work career to what seems to me to be his final triumph.

Even in his early manhood, when he laid the reins on the neck of his desires, he was an idealist at heart although maybe a sensualist in practice, and, moreover, through all the years of our friendship I cannot recall if I would aught of meanness or unkindness.

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His boyhood was spent amongst the hills of Dorsetshire, in a village lying remote and apart from the utilitarianism of the nineteenth century, and the only trace of his boyhood's efforts at putting his feeling in rhyme which I have been able to obtain is the two verses on Thistles which follow. They show even then a love of independence and a certain insight into the spirit of nature which never left him.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ Thank God, who made the thistles !
Brave and tall on the windy hill,
With purple tassels to wave in the wind,
Unsheltered, unfettered and unconfined,
In drought and in storm unconquered still—
 Thank God, who made the thistles !

Thank God, who made the thistles !
Sturdy and short on the crisp hill-side,
Royal rosettes in a wreath of green,
Happy and glad in their low demesne,
Cringing to none in their honest pride—
 Thank God, who made the thistles ! ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

From one of his college notebooks I transcribe the next lines. Apparently he wrote them after trying to give himself expression in verse on some subject which he felt he was unable to tackle adequately and to his own satisfaction. They show something of the sincerity of the man, something of his idealism, something of his simplicity, and thus strike the keynote of his life.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ I am no poet, damn it, no !
Therefore my fancies ever go
Without a word to clothe them.
Naked and shivering they hide,
Within the cave where dreams abide,
And proper people loathe them,
But, if I had the gift of speech,
Perhaps these shrinking thoughts could teach
Some lessons folks are needing
To turn their sordid, useless days
To high endeavour, love and praise,
And shame them into heeding.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

That John did not wear the symbolic "white flower" may be inferred from the rather cynical verses which follow, though possibly he was writing rather of what he saw than of what he was. Indeed I have the feeling that I may be doing him less than justice in regarding all his verses as the record of his personal experience, for, to my matter-of-fact and unimaginative mind, his sympathetic understanding of the minds and ways of others was at all times an uncanny gift like that of second-sight, and I am therefore ill-qualified to discriminate between that which is to be taken as a personal record and that which is the work of the dramatist in him. I have, however, assumed that the verses are truly a record of his life in my attempt to arrange his posthumous papers into some form of connected whole, and their chronological order is preserved as faithfully as possible.

MY ERRATIC PAL

THE CYNIC

“ A twopenny cuss for the lady’s heart,
A twopenny cuss for her maidenhead !
'Tis better to laugh and shake hands and
part,
Than to make much ado for a love that’s
dead.

I could say my grace before all the world,
With a loud ‘ Amen ’ in its owlish face,
With an eye that winks and a lip that’s
curled,
And never once falter through all my grace.

For the broken heart and the broken vow,
The society smile, the purchased kiss
—They all are before me even now,
And I think that my soul is dead by this.”

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That he did not feel quite happy is perhaps to be expected, but he tries to persuade himself that he can say "Don't care!" with the best—or the worst of men.

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“Cursed by the Church and damned to everlasting,
Beyond all hope of pardon or release,
Through deeds of merit or through prayer
and fasting,
I rest in perfect peace.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

About this time, when he was twenty-two years old or so, John had an attack of calf-love—a prodromal symptom of a severe attack still delayed. It is some extenuation of his prodigal life that he is virile enough to champion stoutly Margaret, this early love of his, who seems to have been his social inferior, against the well-meant efforts of his female relations to release him from what they look upon as a silly entanglement.



TROOPER NO. 1



TROOPER NO. 2



TROOPER NO. 3



TROOPER NO. 4



Presented to

Lieut-Col. Davies, C.B.

by the old members of the
Hawera Mountain Rifles
of the 1st N.Z. Contingent
who served under him in the
South African Campaign.



TROOPER NO. 5



TROOPER NO. 6



TROOPER NO. 7



TROOPER NO. 8



PHIC SHIELD PRESENTED TO LIEUT.-COLONEL DAVIES, C.B.

Colonel Davies by the old members of the Hawera Rifles

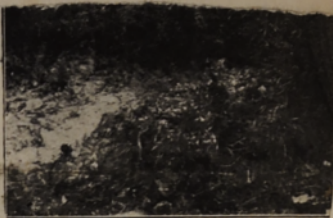
sign. The
Archbishop of Canterbury crowns the King,
but we understand that the Archbishop of
York will crown the Queen.

POINTS OF THE CEREMONY.

It may now be of interest to indicate the principal features of the service itself.

1. On the entrance of the Sovereign the anthem "I was glad when they said unto me we will go into the House of the Lord" is sung.

2. The Recognition of the Sovereign, who is presented to the people by the Archbishop, who calls on them to recognise him



BACK ROW.—H. Absolum, emergency ba
ward: A. Bonella, emergency
MIDDLE ROW.—Rod. McGregor, forward
FRONT ROW.—C. Brady, forward; S. J



WIS.
oto.

fore-
ted.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ She’s my girl and you need not look down,
Lady,
Her eyes are as bright as your own, Lady,
Or as any one’s else in the town, Lady,
And her heart is honest and true.
Both body and soul you sold, Lady,
For a purse ever filled with gold, Lady,
Though your heart was stranger and cold,
Lady,
So I would not change her for you.

And I’ve just one thing more to say, Lady,
—I don’t know whether you pray, Lady,
For God’s good grace every day, Lady,
But, if you do, pray for this :—
That your heart may be washed till it’s
white, Lady,
As the heart of the girl that you slight, Lady,
And as free from all shame in God’s sight,
Lady,
Then you will not have prayed amiss ! ”

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Then follows a time in which he seems to be living in a lover's paradise—goodness and Cupid know how such a shocking rake managed to pass the janitor at its gate—and his Margaret taught him a few lessons that he sadly needed, and added final emphasis to them by jilting him.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ Oh, Margaret ! fairest of daisies,
Compounded of sunshine and snow,
Stop your ears lest you blush at my praises,
Or list if my love you would know.

Your beauty a fellow abashes ;
You're an adept at smiles and at sighs,
You look down to show your long lashes,
You look up to show your blue eyes.

For a smile I would hazard my fortune,
For a kiss I would barter my soul ;
But my heart is too shy to importune
My Queen for so precious a dole.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

It is in verses to Margaret, too, he first shows signs of true tenderness. Indeed, I think that Margaret could not quite understand what he was driving at when he sent her or showed her these, which were written shortly before she threw him over. Perhaps they were the cause of her wise action, for to a healthy, commonplace, rather uneducated mind the imputation of leading anyone away to a Hill of Dreams would smack of insanity, and, of course, the sanity of the race must be preserved at all costs and without the least consideration for the personal feelings even of one's young man.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ MARGARET IS COMING ! ”

“ Down the street through the dust and din,
With her smiling eyes and proud little chin,
She comes to meet me and lead me away
To the happy hill, to the sunlit hill,
To the Hill of Dreams where the children
play !

Dressed all in white from top to toe,
Dainty as daisies and fresh as snow,
With golden hair and such frank blue eyes
And a heart that is full of Love's mysteries
She comes to meet me and lead me away
To the happy hill, to the sunlit hill,
To the Hill of Dreams where our children
play ! ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

He is rather bitter in his feelings towards the young lady. That he, John, should have his addresses turned down touches his self-love. He regards her as a coquette, and deeply resents being payed back for his former escapades in his own coin, being too sadly hurt in his pride and rather superficial affections to see how very salutary this shock is for him.

MY ERRATIC PAL

TO MARGARET AGAIN

“ False as the Devil, but fair—
Fair as a flower.
Love for an hour but beware !
Love for an hour.

Promise me kingship and crown—
Crown of pure tin :
Enthroned me and then put me down,
I care not a pin !

Nestle your head on my arm,
Settle to sleep ;
Kisses are cheap and no harm,
Kisses are cheap.

Teach me that secret obscure
The Butterfly's song :
So shall my Eden endure
All the night long.”

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I do not know what became of Margaret. John does not refer to her by name again, but from the fact that at this time he contrasts the happy lot of the young wife with that of the old maid, I gather that she did not throw him over for the milkman, but followed the sensible plan of going her own well-ordered, sane and sober way alone, leaving him to prosecute the quest of the Hill of Dreams in his own eccentric company.

THE WIFE

“ A big white pillow befringed with lace,
Dark hair plaits framing an oval face,
Loving white arms stretched out to me,
From sleeves of dainty embroidery :

Never a word but just arms to bid
Her lover a welcome the daylight hid ;
Never a blush for there is no shame :
It has all been burnt in Love's gentle flame.

MY ERRATIC PAL

Through the long night in my arms she lies,
Sweet is her breath on my hair and eyes,
Sweet is the rise and fall of her breast,
Sweet is her waking, sweet is her rest.
Time is defeated : Death has no sting :
No pain can touch her nor evil thing."

THE OLD MAID

" Futile, ungarlanded and unexpressed,
With hungry eyes and undeveloped breast,
Cramped by Convention and restrictive laws,
Something despised and something praised
because
She yields obedience, grudging but complete,
To rules of life that bind both heart and feet :
Her mother-love, perverted from its shrine
To worship dog or cat or church or wine,
Curdles to bitterness, to gall, to tears,
And mocks her down the vista of her years.

Give her a ' fag ' to love, a vote to cuddle,
And make an end of all the silly muddle ! "

MY ERRATIC PAL

Wiser for this lesson and richer by the experience (I may remark that I am proud of having chronicled this episode in John's life without stating that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all), he looks at the world from a distinctly higher and less personal standpoint. He is growing.

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REMEMBRANCE

“ Alas, for fading summer, and alas !
For all fair things that fade !
Our youth slips from us as we turn the glass,
And sunshine turns to shade.
Somewhere, I think, the tide of Time bears
not
Love, Youth nor Beauty to the shores of
Death,
Neither is aught of loveliness forgot,
For God remembereth.
And in His mind to rest is Paradise
For soul or sunset, smile or chansonnette,
But dateless Hell engulfs whatever lies
Within God’s oubliette.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

He looks outside himself and, searching for a mental and spiritual tonic, seems to find no adequate medicine nearer than Sirius. It is enough, however, to awaken his ambition, only I cannot tell what that ambition was. He was curiously reticent about it even to me, and though he probably told his mate, I am sure he told no one else in the world. Maybe he realized it. Judge for yourselves according to the light that is in you whilst you read his story.

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SIRIUS

“ Not a ripple on the river ;
Not a rustle in the rushes ;
Not a whisper in the cottage ;
Not a twitter in the bushes !

Like the shout of one who triumphs
And achieves beyond his dreaming,
Through the midnight one star blazes
All the gloom of earth redeeming ! ”

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On the same crumpled sheet of paper as the above there are verses which he has headed "Regret," and I suppose they were written about the same time. I cannot offer any definite opinion as to his reason for writing them. They do not seem to fit into any part of his history so far as I know it, and my knowledge is pretty intimate, so I conclude they do not refer to himself but probably to some mercenary marriage amongst his acquaintances. They are interesting though as an indication of a truer appreciation of relative values than he has previously evinced.

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REGRET

“ If I had known all those grey years ago
The length of days that drag unfilled and slow,
The bitter reaping of the things we sow,
When *this* was offered me I had said ‘ No ! ’
If I had known, if I had understood
The worth of Love, the sham of boasted
 blood,
When stone instead of bread I took for
 food—
If I had known the evil from the good
I should have chosen Love though Death and
 Pain
Had wrapped it round as husk about the
 grain,
I should have mocked at Life and Wealth as
 vain,
And bravely turned me to my love again.

But now the tale is written and the die
Is cast for Time and for Eternity,
And when ungarlanded and dead I lie,
My God shall say, ‘ He chose most ignobly.’ ”

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He was about twenty-five years old now and began to feel approaching senility and to seek for an Elixir Vitæ.

“ I drank the thin red wine of Love
And Friendship's lusty beer,
I greeted trouble with a laugh,
Convention with a sneer
When I was young.

Banal and dull Truth walked the earth
And prosed of verities,
Like butterflies with gorgeous wings
Lies fluttered to the skies
When I was young.

But sedentary decadence
Brings flesh to weight my soul,
And platitudes disgrace my lips.
That once were touched with coal
When I was young.

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And ears grow deaf to harmonies
That sounded plain and clear,
Across the roar of busy fools,
For Heaven itself was near
 When I was young.

And Age's shadow dulls my view
Of sea and star and flower,
That rapt me into ecstasy
For many a happy hour
 When I was young.

Thin, bright and clear give me that wine
Before my lips are dead,
And all the joys the years have seized
Shall be recoverèd
 And I be young ! ”

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At the end of February I went with him to London to celebrate his birthday by a jolly little tête-à-tête dinner at the Restaurant des Gourmets in Soho, and by seeing "Patience" afterwards. The next morning we were walking in Piccadilly when he pulled up suddenly and whispered to me, "The Devil!" It was not the Devil, however, which he was looking at, but a happy, healthy-looking English girl with smiling blue eyes and remarkably beautiful honey-coloured hair, who came up to him holding out her hand and wishing him "many happy returns of yesterday."

He replied rather awkwardly and then introduced me to her, calling her "Miss Margaret." We shook hands and passed on: he silent and frowning, I intrigued. This little event enables me to place his next verses in their exact position chronologically—that is, they were written on the 27th or 28th of February, 1912.

He has not quite succeeded in erasing Margaret from his mind, and seems to entertain still some idea of renewing his suit.

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PICCADILLY

“ Out of the gloom of grey London Town
You come to me down the street,
Fresh as the breeze from an English Down,
Fair as a gem in the English Crown
—So fresh, so fair, so sweet !

Out of the clamour of London ways,
Your voice comes gentle and clear
As the lark's voice comes in the windy days,
When the crocus blows but the rose delays
—But June will come, my dear ! ”

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Of the same date or thereabouts are the verses entitled "Picciola"—a book he had read and admired at school, written by Xavier Saintine, if my memory serves me after all these years—in which a prisoner finds solace for his captivity in the companionship of a flowering weed growing between the paving stones of the yard in which the prisoners were exercised.

Probably some quaint sense of similarity in the words "Piccadilly" and "Picciola" recalled the story to his mind whilst he was writing the above verses, and the flower name of the girl we met inspired those that follow.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ PICCIOLA ”

“ A flower I tended. Every day
I watched it grow. The sun's soft ray
Fell gently on it. Heaven's sweet rain
Washed from its leaflets dust and stain.

Ever its graceful tips revealed
New flowers and tendrils, that concealed
Within its buds' soft wombs had curled
Their beauties, hidden from the world.

Now it is killed, I know not how,
Its green leaves crushed, its blossoms low,
And, smeared with dust, its tender head
Lies limp and lifeless. It is dead !

I wept and wiped my eyes and then
Awoke to weary wont again,
But the cruel walls of Tyranny
Cannot confine fair Memory,
And still in fancy, leaf and bloom,
Grow on the flower that shared my gloom.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

A girl friend whom he had known from childhood was engaged to be married in a love-at-first-sight sort of way and with a considerable amount of precipitancy. He commends her for knowing her own mind although he has so roundly condemned Margaret for the same quality of prompt decision. But men are inconsistent creatures, and praise as virtues in the abstract those traits which enrage them in the concrete form of personal application to themselves.

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TO MISS MARY

“ Though some folk make a sad mistake
And pickles take for honey,
Or mouldy tarts for good plum-cake,
And pass by Love for Money,

True Love comes once to all of us
—We cannot be mistaken—
A gig is not an omnibus,
Nor peach-tart eggs and bacon.

And you, you shrewd, observant maid,
Discerned him in a minute :
You helped yourself to marmalade
Because you revel in it.

I wish you just this happy fate
That if your tastes should vary,
And you should long for chocolate
That you may get it, Mary.”

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John was always an abstemious chap in matters of eating and drinking. Not that he despised the pleasures of the table, but that much wine excited him more than it did most men so that he made an ass of himself. He was, however, an appreciative judge of both wine and beer, and drank only the best. The headache of the day after his birthday must not therefore be put down to an orgie of excess, but it was real enough for him to put on record.

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“ There’s an ingle-nook in my ivied home
That warms my heart wherever I roam :
No spot on earth can be half so dear—
But next to my Bible I love my beer.

My sweetheart lived in the sunny South,
A Cupid’s bow was her laughing mouth,
Her eyes were as blue as the noon-day
clear—

But next to my Bible I love my beer.

My head may ache from the foaming cup,
And the morning after Remorse rise up.
Yet, in spite of all, it’s awfully queer
That next to my Bible I love my BEER ! ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

A month later my parents celebrated their Silver Wedding, and John gave them much pleasure by bringing with him some votive verses. He used to tell my mother that he was filled with undying regret that my father had forestalled him in her affections.

THE SILVER WEDDING

“ Twenty or forty or sixty years old
It comes to the same when the tale is all
told !

Her eyes are the brightest,
Her kisses most sweet,
Her touch is the lightest
Her waist the most neat—

Twenty or forty or sixty years old
It comes to the same when the tale is all
told !

Eyes blue or hazel, coy, winsome or bold
It comes to the same when the tale is all
told !

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She likes pretty dresses,
She likes to be shy,
She likes your caresses
When no one is by—
Twenty or forty or sixty years old
It comes to the same when the tale is all
told !

Hair brown or silver, black, auburn or gold
It comes to the same when the tale is all
told !

Her love is your treasure,
Her beauty your pride,
Her will is your pleasure,
Her judgment your guide—
Twenty or forty or sixty years old
It comes to the same when the tale is all
told ! ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

That evening he told me abruptly that he was sick of his futile life in England and that he was going to leave for New Zealand next week and did not know whether he should come back or should settle out there, marry and bring up a huge family of immense sons and daughters. I think it was the sight of the happiness of my father and mother that made him think that it was a sound proposition to follow in their steps. At all events he carried out his plan of emigration—John usually did carry out his plans—and with the exception of a few days when he was invalided from Gallipoli I did not see him again. I saw him several times, however, whilst he was at the New Zealand Convalescent Hospital at Hornchurch, and he told me then of his life from the time he left England. He looked much older than his years, and his manner was changed to one of quiet earnestness and sincerity that was rarely relieved by a glimmer of his old humour and optimism. I remember, too, that he had a new manner of

MY ERRATIC PAL

detachment from his surroundings which made him seem as though he were always listening for something.

From our conversation of those few days, in which he seemed glad to have me to talk to, I have been able to get a perfectly clear view of his life from the time he had left us to go to New Zealand and to arrange his later poems in their proper order.

My own regiment was stationed in the South of England, and I rejoined it some weeks before he sailed for Egypt. After I left him he wrote to tell me of his meeting by accident in St. John's Church, Westminster, with an old school-fellow of ours who was an officer in the North-umberland Fusiliers—Major Butleigh. Butleigh had recently lost his wife, and his one child, Mollie, was with him at church. His leave expired that night, and he was returning to France. They all lunched together, and the old friends talked of their schooldays at Dorchester and of their careers since : Butleigh's a methodical, orderly, steady advancement in the Army ;

MY ERRATIC PAL

John's a mere patchwork of brilliant but apparently disconnected episodes. I give here his verses headed " Mollie " and those called " Somewhere in England," because I do not want to break the continuity of his story in New Zealand and Egypt by matter that might seem irrelevant.

MOLLIE

" In the hush of the great, grey church
Whilst the stately service sped,
Her little black figure was bent in prayer,
And the sun made gold of her copper hair
Which her father said was red.

Her blue eyes were red, it is true,
For the tears *will* come, you know,
When your Mother is dead and your Dad's
leave ends

To-night at seven (although one pretends
He wont really have to go).

It comforted just to kneel
With her father close to her side

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And hear the brave words of the Christ again
So steady and strong in His mortal pain
With the peace of the crucified.

But there can be lots of ache
Though the trees in the squares are green
And the sun shines bright on the London
street
And the sky is blue and the spring air sweet
And you're only just fourteen."

*So John's sympathy enabled him to voice the
inarticulate grief of childhood.*

MY ERRATIC PAL

*Before sailing to Egypt he spent a few days
in Dorsetshire, and no doubt then wrote :*

“ SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND ”

“ There is a valley in the English hills
Where drowse an ancient parson and his
flock,
From age to age each year its task fulfils,
Without a welcome break or bracing shock.

The brown stone church stands Warden of
the place,
Just like the Roman sentinel of fame,
Who long ago chose death before disgrace,
When old Vesuvius drenched the land in
flame.

The church, alas ! is dead, I fear, as he
Its spirit fled again to God who gave,
Crying to Him to look from Heaven and see
The poor, dead stones, and stretch His hand
to save

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Them from the endless shame of work un-
done,
Of souls untended and of minds untaught
The simple lesson of His Holy One,
Who, by His love, the whole creation bought.

His words are pearls indeed, but these no
swine :
They share with you and me the spark
divine."

MY ERRATIC PAL

On his arrival in New Zealand John applied for work to the Government Employment Bureau, and left his small fortune in the Bank to be untouched until he needed it. He was offered a job on the construction of the new railway line from Stratford to Ongarue, which runs through virgin bush far from any settlement. This is a fairyland for beauty, but the dwellers in the contractor's bush camp were incongruous inhabitants of its bowers and glades. Changing the scene from the ancient Dorsetshire village to the extemporized and temporary camp his verses on "Somewhere in England" would apply to somewhere in the sacred stillness of the Taranaki bush with equal truth. I may remark in parenthesis that the men found life in this camp so monotonous and their mental resources so small that they amused themselves by reading the advertisements on their jam-tins backwards, and competing as to who could accomplish this without a mistake the greatest number of times in five minutes, and the man who came last in

MY ERRATIC PAL

the competition was condemned to drinks (of vile bush whiskey) all round. They also conducted race meetings of admirable fairness on the canvas roofs of their tents. The racers were flies (by Dirt out of Laziness) and each man backed his fancy for a race over a measured yard. Try this for yourself and you will find it an exciting and intellectual recreation. Years of such life had so elevated and refined John's companions that the Bishop told the district missionary that he had better carry a revolver in his pocket when visiting this camp.

To John, however, the hard manual work, the rough food, the primitive peace of the place acted as a rest cure. He seems to have written nothing there ; at all events I can find no verses that bear on this period of his life. For months he toiled and sweat, ate and drank " billy " tea, smoked and slept, and finally seems to have come into the full inheritance of his soul. Then he drew his cheque, packed his swag and boarded the train for a holiday in Auckland. His hair properly cut, his face nicely shaved, he looked,

MY ERRATIC PAL

I imagine, much as he looked in England, but at last a grown-up man.

In the shade of the trees that grow in the gully beneath Grafton Bridge he saw a girl crying, and his pity overcoming his shyness he asked her if he could be of any service to her.

So their love story began. Her story was pitiful but common ; as old as the human race, but still sad enough to keep its rôle in the eternal tragedy. I need not say more than to give the words which John puts into her mouth. He has developed a good deal since the days of his cynicism, and can see now the other side of the tapestry picture of the libertine's life. He is in love at last ; is suddenly, unexpectedly overwhelmed by love and pity. When he hears her story he finds that to know all is to pardon everything, and feels that he himself is the only one who needs forgiveness.

MY ERRATIC PAL

FORSAKEN

“ I gave you all that a woman can,
My love, myself and my hope of Heaven.
You took them all like a very man
And never cared that my all was given.

Was I a fool, or was I wise
To grasp at Love when he stood so near ?
Were all your promises only lies
And your eyes but wrecker's lights, my dear ?

Tell me once more that my face is fair—
Your lips can speak though your love be
dead—

Flatter once more my eyes, my hair,
Though my eyes be sad and my beauty fled.

Give me once more a Judas kiss,
Hold me again in a false embrace ;
My prize was love and the price is this :—
A broken heart and a wistful face.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

He never alludes to his girl's past again. I think he really forgets it. It is for him and her as though their life only began on that sunny May morning in the first flush of early autumn. He never even told me her name. She was always "the Mate."

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ Fair, fair and rare !
I love the dusky glory of her hair ;
It has the gracious sheen
Of summer sunset through the forest seen.

Blue, blue and true !
I love her eyes of summer ocean's hue.
They have the nameless light
That Waitemata wears from dawn till night.

All grace is in her face
Of every saint in every holy place,
And every little imp of love and play
Bids me in turn to kiss, to laugh, to pray.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

Of course John did not return to the bush camp. To be nearer Mate he obtained work—for which he was little suited—in a city office. His association with modern business men and their methods awoke again his cynicism but in a nobler fashion, and he roundly condemns the materialism of the world just before the Great War.

“ I hope I never shall be wise
Nor learn to use my ears and eyes
Like those rich fools the gods despise—
Shrewd business men.
Who, when they hear the skylark's song,
Don't hear the prayer—or hear it wrong—
And much prefer the dinner-gong
Or clerk's ' Amen.'

Who, in the voice of wave and wind,
A quite unmeaning echo find
To jejune thoughts in hollow mind
Like devils seven.

MY ERRATIC PAL

Who, in the sunset's opal skies,
See naught but clouds before their eyes,
And miss the angel-shapes that rise
From earth to heaven.

Who turn from flower and silver brook
To cash, or wine, or rotten book
And find the joy for which they look
Nor dream of sweeter.
Then, when life's sands are running low,
To parson or to priest they go
And hope to dodge their devil so
And hoodwink Peter !

But man lives not by bread alone
That on the solid earth is grown
And sold at market-price per stone—
Adulterated—
He lives whose life is fed with dreams,
Is warmed by Love's unpurchased beams
And guided by the Hope that gleams
Far, far ahead ! ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

He cannot be suspected of a desire for wealth nor yet of meanness towards his Mate, yet his gifts to her were all of the simplest. He felt, I fancy, that it was so entirely hopeless to attempt to give material expression to his love for her that mere trifles were more fitting. When she was ill, however, he sent her a canary to cheer her convalescence, also he brought roses and, of course, verses.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ DICK AND YOU ”

“ When we have to lie and think
Through the lagging, idle hours
With naught but milk to drink,
Then the company of flowers—
Roses red and roses pink—
Are a blushing, magic link
With that absent love of ours.

If we listen very much
We can almost hear him speak,
And almost feel his touch
On our hair and on our cheek.
And our happiness is such
As the troubadour's fair ‘ Dutch ’
Would have roamed the world to seek.

We forget that we are sick,
And the time grows rich and mellow
As we lie and talk to ‘ Dick ’
Whilst he chatters, idle fellow,
And memories come thick
As we watch him on his stick
In his livery of yellow.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

Rubbish this, truly, but such rubbish as a sick sweetheart would like to receive and would read more than once, I think, and possibly would not burn afterwards. Neither would she burn what follows:—

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ If I had wealth (as I have none)
I'd send you bales of silks and gold
Unweighed, unnumbered and untold,
Just as old Cræsus might have done.
But Wealth has wings and flies, I fear,
In other skies than this of mine,
And Love bows not at Pluto's shrine
So I just bring you Love, my dear.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

New Zealand cast her spell over him as she does over all who have walked in the great green silences of her bush and by the shores of her many-hued seas.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ For the faith and the love that I bear,
 New Zealand, for thee,
For the magic and spell of thy air,
 Thy earth and thy sea,
Of words I would weave thee a crown
 Of blessing and prayer,
With Love for its fair centre-stone,
 Pure, priceless and rare.
May Wine for thy heart be outpoured,
 Red wine for thy soul,
Thy bread and thy oil be assured
 Whilst centuries roll.
May thy sword in its scabbard be bright
 In battle be keen
To champion thy God and His Right
 With heart and hand clean,
So ever brave, honest and wise,
 Thrice crowned and thrice blest
Shall the meed of the years be thy prize,
 Love, Honour and Rest.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

Happy though he is in his love he finds office routine and the sordid ideals of the day irksome, and amongst the verses of this grey period of anxiety he ventures to write a lampoon, which is quite bitterly cynical, on the professions of surgery and of politics. You must remember that his Mate is in hospital and that he can only see her on visiting days.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ To live the daily common round
With common folk of common sense,
Then count the recompense we've found
In shoddy, bread and cheese and pence,
Yet keep somewhere alive the flame
Of Humour and the true Romance,
The joy of life, the zest of game,
The happy scorn of opulence—
This is the poet's meed and gain
For wakefulness and weariness,
For tight-stretched nerves and jangled brain,
For utter, shameful loneliness.”

And again :—

“ Gloom comes to all and it comes to me
A low, black cloud of sheer misery,
So dense that no sun-ray through can slip,
And shutting out human fellowship.
Left to myself in this fog I lie,
Weary of life and wishing to die :
Shut in this dreadful, black solitude
Life seems so futile : Death seems so good,
If only he brings, on his broad black wings
Oblivion and end to my worryings.

MY ERRATIC PAL

What have I made of my life ? You say
Perhaps, I have served men well in my day,
But that is only because your heart
Quickly, instinctively takes my part
And argues against myself for me—
Ah ! there comes a break in the cloud, I see !
Your love pierces through and the fog turns
 bright
As the clouds turn gold with the sun's first
 light.
It is Love that brightens and Love that
 cures,
And the best of all Loves is that Love of
 yours."

His lampoon is called " Celebrities."

" I did a great operation
—Ether prevented pain—
So I took a man's intestines
And grafted them to his brain.
All was consummate, expert ;
Each stitch a triumph of Art ;
The technique a surgical marvel,
Perfect in every part.

MY ERRATIC PAL

But this was the flaw in the picture:
He suffered till he was dead
With meditative bowels
And flatulence in the head.
Yet in the time's full ripeness
We climbed to the height of Fame :
I was the land's chief surgeon ;
He Premier of the same."

MY ERRATIC PAL

One day during his Mate's illness he had gone to the Manukau Heads where the great hills rise from the blue Pacific, and there he wrote of his Vision which he never described, but the full understanding of which may have been that one ambition of his that he was so reticent about. As I said before, you must judge for yourselves.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ The chaffering crowd loves the dusty street :
Mine is a better road.
I climb the hill where the air is sweet
And the jewelled turf soft to my city feet
And I live with the thoughts of God.

High on the summit the Vision dwells,
Veiled by the rolling clouds,
But a breath of wind from the Throne blows
down

Parting the clouds, and I see the Crown
Of all my hopes and fears.

To God be praise that the breeze has blown
And a glimpse of the Crown of the days been
shown,

The guerdon of the years.

Alone we must live and alone we must die,
And our life and death are a mystery
Eternal—or vain and naught.

But the Vision abides though remote and
dim,

And I and the Vision both count to Him,
Who both for His pleasure wrought.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

When his Mate was able to be carried on to the balcony of the hospital ward and seemed on her way back to health, she remonstrated with him for what she considered his extravagance in some matter of furnishing the home he was preparing for her at Takapuna. Hence he teases her about being a shrew, and writes to her to make a bargain for the future order of the home that seems to be coming nearer every day.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ You have sense, you have wit, you have
passion,

You have loyalty, pluck and good taste,
You show in the most tempting fashion
The daintiest ankle and waist.

Your heart is my haven of refuge,
Your love is the wine of my soul.
Though afterwards cometh the Deluge
I shall feel I have scored on the whole.

My tyrant, my servant, my helpmeet,
Autocratic, devoted and true,
Just hold up your hands when I bid, Sweet,
And then I capitulate too.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

His optimism made him feel quite certain that all his dreams of happiness were coming true and he mocks at Time:—

MY ERRATIC PAL

“Time! I can mock at you. True you can
take

My hair, my teeth, my strength; that is
my stake.

You lose the game, old Antic! for I gain
Love, Hope and Heaven and so your score is
vain.

You might have played your hand much
better, Sire,

You might have robbed me of my heart's
desire

And let me take but Wealth and Luxury,
So you have played your game most foolishly.

Next time you play make sure you know
your man,

See what he values most, and, if you can,

Get him to risk it for a tinsel toy—

Lose that to him and rob him of his joy :

So you may chuckle as your scythe you whet
Over a joke you never will forget.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

One day whilst he was visiting her at the hospital the nurse brought her some medicine to take, and she protested that she neither liked it nor wanted it. John persuaded her to take it, and to coax her in his absence to please him in this little matter wrote "Cana" and sent it her so that there was no more refusal on her part.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ CANA ”

“ Do you remember Cana, dear ?
The simple village feast ?
That alchemy so wonderful
Since then has never ceased.

You take my dull, grey days of life
And somehow make them shine,
So once again at Love's command
The Water turns to Wine.

The bitter, muddy water, dear,
If Love the Chalice hold
Is sweet and clear as festal cheer—
A vintage never sold,

But freely poured for lovers' lips
In every land and clime
Just as it was in Galilee
In ' once upon a time. ' ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

In his lonely lodgings he found the time drag sadly, and he longed for the days when his Mate, dressed in her housewifely apron, should welcome him to their seaside home after the day's work.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ I’m hungry for a feed to-night,
I’m thirsty for a drink,
I’m hungry for a book to read
But hungrier I think
For anything that you can give—
A word, a look, a smile
From those bright eyes that never lie
And yet are full of guile ;
Of gentle, mocking tenderness,
Of love that likes to tease ;
To lure me on to hug you close
And then—‘ Oh ! don’t, dear, please !
You’re creasing my clean apron up,
You’re tumbling all my hair,
You’re much too rough to play with girls,
You know it isn’t fair ! ’ ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

The vanity, self-seeking and greed of the time rouses his sarcasm and he lashes it in "The Mart of Fools," kept by World, Flesh and Devil Ltd.

" I stand behind the counter in my shop
With all my wares behind me orderly
Arranged in due progression to the top
Of the Emporium's walls, and anxiously
I wait upon my customer's desires
That prick them on to buy with Envy's fires.

' You, Sir? Good morning. What may I
get you?
Promotion, Wealth and Orders? These are
nice.
I've lots to choose from. No: I'm not a
Jew,
I only ask your birthright: that's my price.
Only a trifle, I assure you, Sir,
Your honour and your heart. Yes: thank
you, Sir.

Oh! here's your discount for the ready cash!
The smiles of sycophants and love of whores:

MY ERRATIC PAL

Quite nice to look at though they may be
trash,

And dust and ashes when you reach the
shores

To which you're bound with all celerity.

Good day ! I wish you all prosperity.'

Good morning, Madam. What a charming
day !

'Tis good to be abroad in such fine weather.

What is it in my line you're lacking, pray ?

A coronet or wealth, or both together ?

I have them both in stock at your command,

You'll find I hold the best in all the land.

Charge them to your account ? With plea-
sure, Ma'am,

And you may settle with me some years hence.

Ha ! ha ! You're quite aware they're all a
sham ?

—Only my little joke and quaint nonsense !

I'll claim your heart, your happiness, your
peace

But what are they for solid goods like
these ? ' "

MY ERRATIC PAL

Black sorrow closed on John then, poor chap. His Mate had a relapse of the typhoid fever from which she had been recovering, and she died a week later, on July 26th, a few days before England declared war on Germany. I can make no attempt to describe the crushing grief which overwhelmed him. I was not with him, but I can imagine the appalling prospect which life without his Mate would present to him, for I know his capacity for suffering and pessimism was exactly in proportion to his wonderful appreciation of pleasure and beauty and his usually unbounded optimism, and it hurts me even to try to picture his pain and despair. His verses reflect this inadequately because of the futility of words for such emotion.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ I have watched from the daybreak cold and
grey
And iron-hard as the hand of Fate,
And never once turned my face away
From the changing clay that was once my
Mate.

I heard the first sad breeze awake
And a blackbird whistle, half afraid,
Then felt the day of mourning break
In the room where all I love is laid.

Ah ! I cannot press the thin, pale lids
To cover up her gay blue eyes—
It is not sleep the silence bids
And trust and hope preach hoary lies.

The chin has fallen ; the smile's a grin ;
The silky hair is dank and dull—
The hair that I twisted my fingers in—
The lips that I pressed and kissed so full

MY ERRATIC PAL

Tempt me no more, nor stir to fret
Or fierce delight as they used to do.
Outside the spring-time lawns are wet
With the tears of night—Day's healing dew—

But my eyes are gritty and blurred and red,
My mouth is parched and my ears a-buzz
While I watch as the dead beside my dead
Awaiting no hope as the Christian does.

The sun of noon shines in on her face :
It loves her not though she loved it so.
Its glare brings only her body's disgrace
And hastens the shame her flesh must know.

The moon shines white through the window-
pane
And mocks my grief with the peace of
Heaven,
And platitudes echo within my brain
Like ' Nunc Dimittis ' in pot-house even.

MY ERRATIC PAL

So I must watch till the changing hours
Bring burial rites for my heart and her,
And, hidden deep where the worm devours,
Kind darkness reigns and they disappear.

.

So frail a life for a love so great !
So gross a tongue for a grief so keen !
So dull an ear for your whisper, Mate !
So sad a churl for so rare a Queen !

MY ERRATIC PAL

*Then he writes wildly of joining her in that
land which he thinks of after the funeral for the
first time.*

“ Henceforward for me the world will be
A picture-show and a phonograph ;
The sunset will hold no mystery,
And the note will ring false in every laugh.

The fairest land that the sun shines on
Will hide for me but a horror of bones,
For the shadowy world where she has gone
Overshadows my world and nothing atones.

I strain my eyes to the skies to watch
Some glimpse of my Mate if her soul still live :
I strain my ears all in vain to catch
The message that she would surely give.

She's not in the air, for the clouds take
shapes,
Weird and wild or mockingly fair ;
Faces of houris, demons and apes,
But never hers that could ease despair.

MY ERRATIC PAL

I listen—that too is a hopeless quest,
And winds and waves make their sport of
me ;
The skylark gloats on the void in my breast,
And Philomel mocks at my misery.

It is enough. The ocean is deep,
And she, the strong mother, will hold me
close :
Down in the sea-weed is rest and sleep,
Where Tide is not, with its ebbs and flows.

And perhaps my senses will finer prove
When the pure salt sea has whitened my
bones,
That so I may come again to my love,
And such home-coming for all atones.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

Saner thoughts come to him : comfort perhaps from the soul that he aches to join again. He enlists in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and sails to Egypt with the 2nd Re-inforcements a few weeks after the beginning of the war. His old pluck returns. He has fought and beaten the devil of loneliness than whom no devil is greater and more potent.

MY ERRATIC PAL

ON THE TRANSPORT

“ The ship goes onward through the wind and
spray
And overhead the stars hang from God’s
hand ;
Before, the Plough drives on its destined way,
Emblem of work for God and Motherland :
Behind us in the southern sky, the Cross
Stands over her I love—the changeless sign
Of cheerful sacrifice and willing loss,
The pledge of Victory and of love divine.

And more ! the pointers of the Plough are
set
Towards the steadfast Polestar of God’s
Right,
The earth rolls on from grief to grief and yet
That beacon varies not through all our
night.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

The above verses and the next, which he wrote at Malta, where he had been evacuated from Gallipoli with typhoid, are (with the exception of the two written in England) the only ones I can discover him to have written between the time he enlisted and the time when he returned on active service to Egypt, where he rejoined the N.Z. Mounted Rifles in February, 1916.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ He hath me chastened in His love,
And I am glad that love to prove
In loneliness and pain :
Moreover, though my days be bright
I'll welcome those that have no light
But prove His love again.

And should He grant me strength I'll praise
His Name in many diverse ways—
In song, in life, in death.
The gifts He gave I'll hold in trust,
Proud of the spirit in my dust
That lives but by His breath.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

I am glad to find that John's sense of humour came back to him in the strenuous life under active service conditions and he could laugh at the heat and sand of Egypt and its manifold discomforts.

MY ERRATIC PAL

THE EGYPTIAN THIRST

“ When you’ve drunk six lime-and-sodas and
a pannikin of tea,
A lemonade, a ginger-beer and shandies two
or three,
And introspection finds you still as thirsty
as at first—
Why then you have—indeed you have—the
true Egyptian thirst !

When your mess-chits soar to hundreds and
you smile and sign again ;
When you think a Cairo lager is better than
champagne,
When you feed on water-melon until you
ought to burst
But still keep well and happy, you’ve the
great Egyptian thirst.

It’s something superhuman, Olympian and
divine,
That makes warm, yellow water taste like
good Falernian wine,

MY ERRATIC PAL

It is the greatest blessing wherewith man-
kind is cursed

This passionate, inordinate, unique Egyptian
thirst."

TEL-EL-KEBIR

" I am sitting in the Desert—the sandy, yellow
Desert—

The sandy, gritty Desert of sunburnt little
stones,

Where the gay dust-devils gyrate, the dun
dust-devils gyrate,

And fill my soul with anger. Perhaps they'll
hide my bones.

I am putting on my putties, my damned
contrary putties,

Contrary khaki putties that the Quarter-
master gave,

Whilst the 'fall-in' bugle's sounding, the
insistent bugle's sounding,

The untimely bugle's sounding and I ought
to have a shave.

MY ERRATIC PAL

But my Adjutant is waiting, my stern
Adjutant is waiting,
My most exigent Adjutant is waiting on
parade
In a mood that suits the Desert, the dried
up, heartless Desert,
So I double up and fall-in and my conscience
is afraid.

But Retreat will sound at sunset, sweet
Retreat at welcome sunset—
Retreat for dusty soldiers and sunset for the
land ;
And the flies will sink to slumber, weary flies
to fitful slumber,
And mosquitos wake to business at Beelze-
bub's command."

MY ERRATIC PAL

*He tries to explain to himself why he enlisted,
but what I think was the most cogent reason he
merely hints at in his mention of "his haunted
corner."*

"I've swopped the peace of Auckland,
The drowsy peace of Auckland,
The drowsy peace and comfort
Of the land I call my own
For the desert sand of Egypt ;
The sand and sun of Egypt,
The sand and sun and vermin,
Of the land God leaves alone.
I have left my Rangitoto,
My sun-kissed Rangitoto,
Cloud-capt, sea-girt, sun-kissed mountain
Whose three peaks touch the sky
For the pyramids of Gizeh,
The three pyramids of Gizeh,
The slave-built, blood-stained monuments
Of ancient tyranny ;
For I heard the cry of Belgium,
The wailing cry of Belgium,

MY ERRATIC PAL

The sobs of little children and the shrieks of
outraged life,

And peace and comfort pained me

And Humanity arraigned me

Till I left my haunted corner and entered
in the strife.

I can but do my duty,

My clear-cut daily duty,

Of camp and mess-inspection and reports
and daily states.

But till the game is ended,

The ghastly game is ended,

I'll keep that sense of humour which the
devil so much hates."

MY ERRATIC PAL

He lay in his tent at night and dreamed of what might have been had his Mate lived and of his lovingly prepared home with her, and in his fancy he plays with his first-born—a miniature replica of the girl he loved so well and loves still, I do not doubt. He has christened her Betty.

TO BETTY THE UNBORN

“ Dusky and curly and shotten with gold
Is your hair, and your eyes have the manifold
Tints of the Ocean in sunshine and storm,
And your pink cheeks are ever so soft and
warm.

Dear little limbs of you, round and brown !
Dear little feet and hands of your own !
In the rooms of my heart your footfall I hear,
And I love you ! I love you, Betty, my dear !

Betty, my dear, your shadowy place
Is safe from all slander and all disgrace ;
No vultures of gossip can touch you there,
No sorrow or shame or angry despair.

MY ERRATIC PAL

Betty, dear Betty, this life leaves stains
And ankles and wrists feel humanity's chains,
The cloak of convention is cramping to wear
And rough is the path that a soul must fare.

Betty, dear Betty, I love you too well
To wish you to live in this hypocrite's Hell
Where Dulness is Virtue and Lustfulness
Love,
And Right is the Wrong that the merchants
approve.

Betty, dear Betty, the dark draws on
And much of my punishment task is done,
I see you more clearly from day to day
And love you more dearly and hopefully.

So don't leave me, Betty, and don't forget
That you are for ever my amulet
Till the Future grows real and the Present
fades
And I join you, dear dream, in the land of
shades."

MY ERRATIC PAL

Watching the aeroplanes starting on their reconnaissance work he writes—apparently of Flanders :—

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ Cold blows the breeze of dawn across the sky,
Life is a pawn and Death a mystery.
You see the wasted fields and tortured farms
As through the spaces and the mists you go,
The rising sun before you and below
The Everlasting Arms.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

His outlook on all things seems now to have settled down to a steady cheerfulness. He can even write calmly to his Mate, but rather to a living, loving woman than to a dead one.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ You never died to me, dear Mate,
The Grave holds not one thought of you.
That hopeless morn I fought with Fate
I did not know what things were true.

But now I know that Love is all
A man can gain that is of worth,
That he may rise though he should fall
And Heaven is very near the earth.

Though hand-in-hand we might have trod
Through forty years of waning strength
Our short path led us both to God :
Why should I murmur at its length ? ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

*Surrounded by the scorched sand and buffeted
by the torrid Khamsin his thoughts go back to
the breezy uplands of his English home:—*

MY ERRATIC PAL

GIANT'S HILL FROM THE SAHARA

“ Brave yellow furze upon Giant's Hill
You grew there once ; do you grow there
still ?
Does the scent of your flowers still fill the
air ?
Are the moths and the bees still busy there ?
Is the grass beneath you still crisp and fine
And the air above you like sparkling wine ?
Do the larks still spring from the top to the
sky
And the white-tailed rabbits go scuttling by ?
Are the clouds as high and the sky as blue ?
Is your soul the same as the soul I knew,
In your noontide heat and your morning dew,
When I was a boy and the world was new ? ”

MY ERRATIC PAL

At Matarieh, near Cairo, there is a little Roman Catholic church and, although he did not belong to its communion, he often wandered through its open doors and sat in its cool quietness and beauty. One evening the kindly old Curé asked him to see his rose-garden. Together they strolled amongst the great beds of many-coloured beauties, and there it was, I think, that he learnt a lesson of tolerance and broad benevolence that had been rather wanting in his character.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ Oh Thou who dwellest in the rose
That I may find Thee there
As others find Thee in the Book
Or in some temple fair :

To some of Thine the Book is sealed,
The Temple door shut fast,
Yet they may find Thee in the field
Or bow the head at last

Where roses make at eventide
An Eden as of old,
And humble eyes, washed clear of pride
Thy very face behold.

Forgive the eyes that cannot see ;
Forgive the feet that stray,
And bring them all safe home to Thee
By their appointed way.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

A month later he was wounded at Katia and sent to Alexandria to hospital. He knew that my regiment was in Egypt at that time although we had no opportunity of meeting so he wired to me that he was in hospital, and as soon as I could get leave I went to visit him, but he had died a few hours before I reached him of septic pneumonia which followed upon the chest wound he had received. The sister in charge of the ward told me that he had been fairly well for a couple of days after admission and had been allowed to write one or two letters and some verses which he had left in the locker beside his bed. I took charge of his effects, and amongst his books and papers I found the verses which I have already given and those which follow and which were written within a few days of his death.

MY ERRATIC PAL

IN THE WARD

“ The gunshot wound
That pierced my breast
Smarts burning hot,
I cannot rest.
My breath is scant,
My lips are blue,
I lie awake
And think of you :
I close my eyes
A little space
And then I see
You face to face.
My pulses buzz
Within my ears,
My brain goes dull
And then it clears ;
One comrade snores,
Another groans
And turns in bed.
I hear the tones
Of the night nurse
Who makes her round,

MY ERRATIC PAL

And I could curse
Each racking sound.

Sweet heart ! how fair
Your face ! how deep
Your love ! I dare
At last to sleep
If you will stay
Within my dreams
Until the day.
Will you, please, dear ? ”

Finally, when he was worse next morning and forbidden to write, the dear chap had disobediently and surreptitiously scribbled on an old envelope his last lines, and the ward sister found them under his pillow after his death and gave them to me—not without emotion. They were his last mocking challenge to the King of Terrors, who, thank God, has lost his royal state and throne and is scorned and mocked at for the preposterous and over-pretentious humbug he has been proved.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ Well, Death, old man, how do you do ?
You've looked for me and I for you,
And now we meet at last.
I don't much like the face you wear,
But, as we've met, let's both play fair
And make a bargain fast :
I'll pay my life, and gladly pay
('Tis only fit to throw away—
The sorry sport of Fate)
If you, for your part, undertake
For kindness and sweet mercy's sake
To lead me to my Mate.”

MY ERRATIC PAL

So he died as I, who love him, would have had him die, but so clear is my memory of him, so vividly do his face and voice return to me as I write, that for me he lives as truly as in the heyday of his life.

R.I.P.

MY ERRATIC PAL

AS EPILOGUE I append some verses which have come to my hands since the book was in the press.

They were shown to me by a brother-officer who was much associated with John in Egypt, and who shared his tent.

His wife was causing him anxiety and unhappiness by her frivolity in his absence, and after confiding this to John (the Desert life, you know, conduces to intimate confidential talk), he tells me John gave him his views on the matter in the following very characteristic lines. I have permission to publish them, and take this opportunity to tender my thanks.

MY ERRATIC PAL

“ I hold you false, but love you none the less,
For Love is greater far than you or me,
It reckons naught of change or selfishness,
It is too fine for any jealousy.

You never loved me, so I would not touch
Your lips with mine, for fear that I should
wake
Love's brother Pity, who is overmuch
Concerned with alms and tears for me to
take.

Love is so proud it knows not how to beg,
It feels its royalty and rights divine,
It is no sycophant with supple leg
To crave a boon or condescending sign.

But this I know. When Death comes close
to you,
And your stark soul stands shivering and
perplexed,
'Twill turn to Love and me as sunflowers do
Towards the morning sun—and Heaven
comes next.

MY ERRATIC PAL

Then will be Time and Opportunity
To learn what Love is worth and what the
rest,
And if Time fails there's still Eternity
For you to learn Good, Better and the Best."

"Oh! let's try and be cheerful for a change."

MORNING POST.

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