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THE CAMP LAUREATE

A certain J.P.
Noted for verse
M.C., referee,
Merits a curse
Ye Gods
It's over the odds.
Two poems this week

From Colonels to cows
He is quite versatile
He write and he types
His odes by the mile
He has to record promotion
Award
In correct Army style
Should he lapse into verse
I fear for my file.

Robert Burns, Kipling,
And others of fame
Started as young
Though I would not name
Who knows? J.P.
Might do the same.
It's the poem that matters
What's in a name?

When he writes on the zephyrs,
The stars and the moon,
The stage is all set
He may start to croon.
Call Sydney at once
Fire hose and tin hat
Leave treatment to Syd
And that's that.

There may be a crowd
Controlled by one Hicks
Supported by Jonesie
Rationed with bricks
Horses, a cow and a goat
Will sure to be there,
All eager to have
Some locks of the poet's hair.

But leave it to Syd boys
He knows the drill,
Many a poor soldier
Remembers his skill;
A little cold water
Issued neat and with care
Has been known to cure "blindness"
Our Poet will get a good share.
—Pro Bono Publico.

The Colonel

The corporal who rose to be a colonel within a year. He is Lieut.-Col. Ernest Martin, 41, born in Russia, now in charge of a secret base there. Martin was called up in 1939, won D.C.M. at Dunkirk, was sent to Russia and promoted Lieut.-Colonel. Here is a description written for the "Daily Mirror" by a former colleague:—
May, 1940. Dark days of grim fighting, withdrawals. Pursued by dive bombers, Me 109's, every type of aircraft Jerry could put into the sky, the regiment falls back to Dunkirk. Batteries take up positions, the enemy in front, the sea at their backs. They stand with their guns and equipment—what is left of the troop commanded by the bloke everyone knows as Jim.

They have lost their officers killed and wounded; one gun is out of action, but still they stand with Jim Martin in charge.

The B.E.F. were being evacuated from Dunkirk, and the regiment was giving support with A.A. defence. All the ammunition that was left was stacked round the guns, and the boys just waited.

They didn't have long to wait. Over came Jerry, along the beaches they swept, machine-gunning, dive-bomb and high level bombing. All hell let loose.

"Let 'Em Have It."
"O.K., boys," came the shout from the command post, "let 'em have it." That was all that was needed, then up went the muzzles, into the breeches went round after round, rammed home by sweating, cursing gunners.

Nerves were strained to breaking-point, but all the time there was that

THE POET'S REPLY

Here's to the budding poet,
Who's name I do not know,
He prefers to remain anonymous,
Pro bono publico.

He says he fears for his personal file
Well that is his sad fate;
If his movements are anonymous
Can I keep it up to date?

Yes, I've written many poems,
As his second verse does show,
But I'm making no apologies
Pro bono publico.

My subjects have been varied,
But of Kipling I fall short,
His works are far beyond me,
But at least I am a sport.

I've written of our Cpl. James,
Ted Hicks and Fiddler Bill;
I've mentioned half of our Camp Staff
But with a friendly quill.

The Colonel he has had his share
Yet he never makes a fuss;
You see he knows who writes the prose
For I'm not anonymous.

And presumably for my poison pen
This is your antidote—
Cold water mixed with nice hard
bricks
And my hair chewed by a goat.

Well here's to anonymous,
And a word before I go,
I sign my name not just for fame
But pro bono publico.

—J.P.

bloke Jim Martin, with his tin hat cocked on one side of his head, cool, calm and collected, giving a hand here, orders there, gee-ing the blokes on when they wanted to drop, always ready to do any man's job when they were tired.

He was recommended for his D.C.M. by the Senior Naval Officer on the beach, but somehow he wasn't very interested, there was a job of work to be done. . . .

Everybody knows the story of Dunkirk, how we came back, but nobody had heard of Jim Martin.

In September, 1940, he was promoted B.S.M. and posted to my battery, and was the finest B.S.M. anyone could wish for. He worked hard, played hard, cut red tape right and left and got any job done. He was loved and respected by men who didn't know him from Adam.

On "Special Mission."

Soon afterwards Jim Martin was made a second lieutenant, and the men who had eaten with him, slept and fought by his side, knew him as Mr. Martin and were saluting the rank he held.

But here was a difference. It wasn't just a question of saluting the pips he wore. This was a man and we were doing what we, and the men in his old troop, would have wanted to do.

He was with us from that day until June, 1941, when a special order came through for him to report to H.Q.

The troop was called together by the troop commander; a few words spoken. Mr. Martin was leaving us on a special mission.

Some of us had an idea what it was, but the one thing that stood out was we were losing an officer, a gentleman, and the best friend we had ever had.

We knew later that he had gone to Russia, and often wondered how he was getting along, and what he was doing. Seeing his photograph in the papers brought it all back.

This is not a fairy story, or a biography of a man. It's just a little way of showing what Lieutenant-Colonel Martin meant to all the men who knew him and served with him.

We, the men of his old troop and battery, want to send this message: Good luck, good shooting, and stay on target Jim.

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