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**Rough Rhymes of
a Soldier**



PRICE 35 CENTS

BY
SERGEANT LEO T. BRINSON
119TH INF., 30TH DIVISION

Craven-Pamlico-Carteret
Regional Library

TO
THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE
THIRTIETH DIVISION

Living here and beyond the veil these
rhymes are dedicated by one who
is proud to have been their
comrade

SERGEANT L. T. BRINSON

**Craven-Pamlico-Carteret
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Sergeant Leo. T. Brinson volunteered for the service at the age of seventeen, in the year 1916; was wounded September 29, 1918, just after crossing the Hindenburg line. Wound resulted in amputation of right leg just above knee.

A SOLDIER FOR HIS MATE

There's a broken, battered village
Somewhere up behind the line;
There's a dugout and a bunk there
That I used to say were mine.

I remember how I reached them.
Dripping wet and all forlorn,
In the dim and dreary twilight
Of a weeping summer dawn.

All that week I'd buried brothers
In one bitter battle slain;
In one grave I laid two hundred,
God, what sorrow and what pain!

And that night I'd been in trenches,
Seeking out the sodden dead,
And just dropping them in shell holes,
With a service swiftly said.

For the bullets rattled 'round me,
But I couldn't leave them there,
Water-soaked in flooded shell holes,
Rift of common Christian prayer.

So I crawled 'round on my knees,
And I listened to the roar
Of the guns that hammered Ypres,
Like big breakers on the shore.

Then there spoke a dripping sergeant,
When the time was growing late:
"Would you please to bury this one,
'Cause he used to be my mate?"

So we groped our way in darkness
To a body lying there,
Just a blacker lump of blackness,
With a red blotch on his hair.

Though we turned him gently over,
Yet I still can hear the thud,
As the body fell face forward
And then settled in the mud.

We went down upon our faces,
And I said the service through,
From "I am the Resurrection"
To the last, the great "Adieu."

We stood up to give the blessings
And commend him to the Lord,
When a sudden light shot soaring,
Silver swift and like a sword.

At a stroke it slew the darkness,
Flashed its glory on the mud,
And I saw the sergeant staring
At a crimson clot of blood.

There are many kinds of sorrow
In this world of Love and Hate,
But there is no sterner sorrow
Than a soldier's for his mate.

THE SORROW OF GOD

A Sermon in a Billet

Yes, I used to believe in Jesus Christ,
And I used to go to church,
But since I left home and come to France
I've been clean knocked off my perch.

For it seemed all right at home, it did,
To believe in a God above,
And in Jesus Christ His Only Son,
Who died on the Cross through Love.

When I went for a walk on a Sunday morn,
On a nice fine day in the spring,
I could see the proof of the living God
In every living thing.

For how could the grass and the trees grow up
All alone of their blooming selves?
You might as well believe in the fairy tales
And think they were made by themselves.

But it ain't the same out here, you know,
It's as different as chalk from cheese,
For half of it's blood and the other half's mud,
And I am damned if I really see.

How the God who has made such a cruel world
Can have love in His heart for men,
And be deaf to the cries of the men who die
And never come home again.

Just look at that little corporal there,
Such a fine, upstanding lad,
With a will of his own and a way of his own,
And a smile of his own, he had.

An hour ago he were bustin' with life,
With his actin' and foolin' and fun;
He were simply the life of us all, he were;
Now look what the blighters have done.

Look at him lyin' there, all in a heap,
With the blood clotted over his head,
Like a beautiful picture spoiled by a fool,
A bundle of nothin'—dead!

And it ain't only him—there's a mother at home,
And he was the pride of her life,
For it's women as pays in a thousand ways
For the madness of this terrible strife.

And the lovin' God, He looks down on it all,
On the blood and the mud and the smell;
Oh God, if it's true, how I pity you,
For you must be living in 'ell.

You must be livin' in 'ell all day,
And livin' in 'ell all night;
I'd rather be dead with a hole through my head—
I would, by a dam long sight.

Than be livin' with you on your heavenly throne,
Lookin' down on yon bloody heap
That were once a boy full of life and joy,
And hearing his mother weep.

The sorrows of God must be hard to bear,
If He really has love in His heart;
And the hardest part in the world to play
Must surely be God's part.

And I wonder if that's what it really means—
That Figure that hangs on the Cross;
I remember I saw one the other day
As I stood with the captain's orderly.

I remember, think, thinks I to myself,
It's a long time since He died,
Yet the world don't seem much better today
Than when He were crucified.

It's always the same, as it seems to me—
The weakest of them go to the wall,
And whether he's right or whether he's wrong,
It don't seem to matter at all.

The better you are the harder it is,
The harder you have to fight;
It's a cruel, hard world for any guy
What does the thing as is right.

And that's how He come to be crucified,
For that's what He tried to do;
He were always a-tryin' to do His best
For the likes of me and you.

Well, what if He came to the earth today,
Came walkin' about this trench—
How His heart would bleed for the sights He'd see
In the mud and the blood and the stench.

And I guess it would finish Him up for good
When He came to this old sap end,
And He seed that bundle of nothin' there,
For He wept at the grave of His friend.

And they say he were just the image of God
I wonder if God sheds tears;
I wonder if God can be sorrowin' still,
And has been all these years.

I wonder if that's what it really means,
Not only that He once died;
Not only that He came once to the earth
And wept and were crucified?

Not just that He suffered once for all
To save us from our sins,
And then went up to His throne on high
To wait till His heaven begins.

But what if He came to the earth to show,
By the paths of pain that He trod,
The blistering flame of eternal shame
That burns in the heart of God?

O God, if that's how it really is,
Why bless you, I understands,
And I feel for you with your thorn-crowned head
And your ever pierced hands.

But why don't you bust the show to bits

And force us to do your will?

Why ever should God be suffering so,

And man be sinning still?

Why don't you make your voice ring out

And drown these cursed guns?

Why don't you stand with an outstretched hand,

Out there 'twixt us and the Huns?

Why don't you force us to end the war

And fix up a lasting peace?

Why don't you will that the world be still

And wars forever cease?

That's what I'd do if I was you

And had a lot of sons

What squabbled and fought and spoilt their homes,

Same as us boys and the Huns.

There's a sight of things what I thought strange,

As I'm just beginnin' to see;

Inasmuch as you did it to one of these

You have done it unto me.

So it isn't just only the crown of thorns

What has pierced and torn God's head;

He knows the feel of a bullet, too,

And He's had His touch of the lead.

And He's standing with me in this here sap,

And the corporal stands with Him,

And the eyes of the laddie is shining bright,

But the eyes of the Christ burn dim.

O, laddie, I thought as you had done for me

And broke my heart with your pain,

I thought as you had taught me that God were dead,

But you have brought Him to life again.

And yet you have taught me more of what God is

Than I ever thought to know,

For the love of the Lord as I hear it now,

Or that I could love Him so.

For the love of the Lord as I hear it now,

Is the voice of my pals what bled,

And the call of my country's God to me

Is the call of my country's dead.

WHAT'S THE GOOD?

Well, I've done my bit of scrappin',

And I 've done it quite a lot;

Nicked them neatly with my bayonet,

So I needn't waste a shot.

'Twas my duty, and I done it,

But I hopes the doctor's quick,

For I wish I hadn't done it;

God, it turns me shamed and sick.

There's a young Hun like my brother,

And I bashed his head in two;

And there's that old grey-haired greezer

Which I stuck his belly through.

God, you women, wives and mothers,

It's such waste of all your pain;

If you knowed what I've been doin',

Could you kiss me still, my Jane?

When I sets me down to tell her

What it means to scrap and fight,

Could I tell you true and honest,

Make you see this bleedin' sight.

No, I couldn't and I wouldn't,

It would turn your hair all grey;

Women suffers hell to bear us

And we suffers hell to slay.

I suppose some Fritz went courtin',

In the gloamin', same as we,

And the old world turned to heaven

When they kissed beneath a tree.

And each evening seemed more golden,

Till the day as they were wed,

And his bride stood shy and blushin',

Like a June rose, soft and red.

I remembers how it were, lass,
On that silver night in May,
When you hung your head and whispered
That you couldn't say me nay.

Then, when June brought in the roses
And you changed your maiden name,
How you stood there, shy and blushin',
When the call of evening came.

I remembers how I loved you,
How you asked me in your pride
How I'd like my Sunday dinner,
As you nestled at my side.

For between a thousand races
Lands may stretch and seas may foam,
But it makes no bloomin' difference,
Boch or Briton, home is home.

And we suffer, too—we suffer,
Like the damned as groans in hell,
And we haven't got no babies—
Only mud, and blood, and smell.

Tain't the suff'rin', as I grouse at,
I can stick my bit of pain,
But I keeps on always askin'
What's the good and who's to gain?

When you have got a plain objective,
You can fight your fight and grin,
But there ain't no damned objective,
And there ain't no prize to win.

We're just like a lot of bullocks
In a blasted china shop,
Bustin' all the world to blazes
'Cause we don't know how to stop.

Tramping years of work and wonder
Into dust beneath our feet,
And the one as does most damage
Swears that victory is sweet.

It's a sweet as turns to bitter,
Like the bitterness of gall,
And the winner knows he's losin'
If he stops to think at all.

I suppose this ain't the spirit
Of the patriotic man;
Hadn't ought to do no thinkin'—
Soldiers just kill all they can.

But we can't help thinkin' sometimes,
Though our business is to kill,
War has turned us into butchers,
But we're only human still.

God knows well I ain't no thinker,
And I never knew before,
But I know now why I'm fightin',
It's put an end to war.

Not to make my country richer,
Or to keep her flag unfurled
Over every other nation,
Tyrant mistress of the world.

Not to boast of America's glory,
Bought by bloodshed in her wars,
But that peace may shine about her,
As the sea shines 'round her shores.

If ole Fritz believes in fightin'
And obeys his War Lord's will,
Well, until he stops believin',
It's my job to fight and kill.

But the American ain't no butcher,
He's a peaceful dove at heart,
And it's only 'cause he has to
That he plays the butcher's part.

'Cause I have to—that's the reason
Why I done the likes of this!
You're an understanding woman,
And you won't refuse your kiss.

Women pity soldiers' sorrow,
That can bring no son to birth,
Only death and devastation
Darkness over all the earth.

We won't have no babe to cuddle,
Like a blessing to the breast,
We'll just have a bloody mem'ry
To disturb us when we rest.

But the kids will some day bless us,
When they grow up American men,
'Cause we tamed the Prussian tyrant
And brought peace to earth again.

PATIENCE

Sometimes I wish that I might do
Just one grand deed and die,
And by that one grand deed reach up
To meet God in the sky.

But such is not Thy way, O God,
Nor such is Thy decree,
But deed by deed and tear by tear,
Our souls must climb to Thee,
As climbed the only Son of God
From manger unto Cross,
Who learned, through tears and bloody sweat,
To count this world but loss.

Who left the Virgin Mother's arms
To seek those arms of shame,
Outstretched upon the lonely hill
To which the darkness came;
As deed by deed, and tear by tear,
He climbed up to the height,
Each deed a splendid deed, each tear
A jewel shining bright

So grant us, Lord, the patient heart,
To climb the upward way,
Until we stand upon the height,
And see the perfect day.

DIXIE LAND IN FRANCE

In among her golden cornfields,
Where the blood-red poppies dance,
In a thousand sunny valleys,
There is Dixie land in France.

What our Allies failed to conquer
By the weakness of the sword,
That we have and hold forever
By the power of the Lord.

All that endless ancient warfare
Was but bitter barren loss,
But the heart of France was conquered,
When we marked it with the Cross.

As the Holy Virgin Mother
Held the Christ Child to her breast,
So France hold these sunlit gardens
Where the Sons of Dixie rest.

Looking down with eyes of wonder
On that tiny pledge of peace,
Dreaming dreams of dawning splendor,
When the curse of war shall cease.

TWO WORLDS

In the valleys down below,
Where the fairest flowers blow,
And the brook runs babbling nonsense to the sea,
Underneath the shady trees,
We two sauntered at our ease,
Just a pleasant little world for you and me.

Then the summons of the Lord,
Like a sudden silver sword,
Came and cut our little pleasant world in two,
One fierce world of strife and hate,
One sad world where women wait,
And we wander far apart, dear, I and you.

And it may be, with this breath,
There will come the call of death,
And will put another world 'twixt you and me;
You will stand with God above,
I will stand 'twixt pride and love,
Looking out through mists of sorrow o'er the sea.

For the world in God is one,
And when all our strife is done,
There will dawn the perfect world for you and me.
When we two together stand,
Looking upward, hand in hand,
Where the fires of Love have burned up ev'ry sea.

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