

E.HORNUNG

THE BALLAD
OF ENSIGN JOY

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E.W. Hornung

The Ballad of Ensign Joy

THE BALLAD of ENSIGN JOY

IT is the story of
Ensign Joy
And the obsolete
rank withal
That I love for each gentle English
boy
Who jumped to his country's
call.
By their fire and fun, and the
deeds they've done,
I would gazette them Second to
none
Who faces a gun in Gaul!)

IT is also the story of Ermyntrode
A less appropriate name
For the dearest prig and the
prettiest prude!
But under it, all the same,
The usual consanguineous squad

Had made her an honest child
of God —
And left her to play the game.

IT was just when the grind of
the Special Reserves,
Employed upon Coast Defence,
Was getting on every Ensign's
nerves —
Sick-keen to be drafted
hence —
That they met and played tennis
and danced and sang,
The lad with the laugh and the
schoolboy slang,
The girl with the eyes intense.

YET it wasn't for him that she
languished and sighed,
But for all of our dear deemed
youth;
And it wasn't for her, but her
sex, that he cried,
If he could but have probed
the truth !
Did she? She would none of his
hot young heart;
As khaki escort he's tall and
smart,

As lover a shade uncouth.

HE went with his draft. She
returned to her craft.

He wrote in his merry vein:
She read him aloud, and the
Studio laughed!

Ermyntrude bore the strain.
He was full of gay bloodshed and
Old Man Fritz:

His flippancy sent her friends
into fits.

Ermyntrude frowned with
pain.

HIS tales of the Sergeant who
swore so hard

Left Ermyntrude cold and
prim;

The tactless truth of the picture
jarred,

And some of his jokes were
grim.

Yet, let him but skate upon
tender ice,

And he had to write to her twice
or thrice

Before she would answer him.

YET once she sent him a
fairy's box,
And her pocket felt the brunt
Of tinned contraptions and
books and socks —
Which he hailed as "a sporting
stunt!"
She slaved at his muffler none
the less,
And still took pleasure in mur-
muring, "Yes!
For a friend of mine at the
Front.")

ONE fine morning his name
appears —
Looking so pretty in print!
"Wounded!" she warbles in
tragedy tears —
And pictures the reddening
lint,
The drawn damp face and the
draggled hair.
But she found him blooming in
Grosvenor Square,
With a punctured shin in a
splint.

IT wasn't a haunt of Ermyn-

trude's,
That grandiose urban pile;
Like starlight in arctic altitudes
Was the stately Sister's smile.
It was just the reverse with
Ensign Joy —
In his golden greeting no least
alloy —
In his shining eyes no guile!

HE showed her the bullet that
did the trick —
He showed her the trick,
x-ray'd;
He showed her a table timed to
a tick,
And a map that an airman
made.
He spoke of a shell that caused grievous loss —
But he never mentioned a certain
cross
For his part in the escapade!

SHE saw it herself in a list next
day,
And it brought her back to his
bed,
With a number of beautiful
things to say,

Which were mostly over his
head.

Turned pink as his own pyjamas'
stripe,
To her mind he ceased to em-
body a type —
Sank into her heart instead.

I WONDER that all of you
didn't retire!"

"My blighters were not that
kind."

"But it says *you* 'advanced un-
der murderous fire,
Machine-gun and shell com-
bined —"

"Oh, that's the regular War
Office wheeze!"

"'Advanced' — with that leg! —
'on his hands and knees!'"

"I couldn't leave it behind."

HE was soon trick-driving an
invalid chair,
and dancing about on a crutch;
The *haute noblesse* of Grosvenor
Square
Felt bound to oblige as such;
They sent him for many a motor-

whirl —

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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