

PRISONERS OF WAR.

By "Q."

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You've heard tell, I dare say, about Landlord Cummings and Billy Bosistow, and the great misery there was between them. Not? Why, it got into the law courts!

Landlord Cummings—he that used to keep the Welcome Home—married a aunt of mine on my mother's side. The boys used to call him "Calves-in-Freedom," because his legs being put on in an unusual manner, which made him walk slow all his days. And Billy Bosistow was my father's father's stepson. You needn't take any trouble to get that clear in your mind, because our family never owned him after he came home from the French war prisons and took up with his drinking habits.

In the year '25 Landlord Cummings got himself elected mayor of the borough friend gave me that there coin. His heart's in the right place, which is more than can be said for his calves. Two-pennypiece worth of gin, please, your worship." And the end was that he'd be up before the mayor on Monday morning, charged with drunkenness. No use to fine him; he wouldn't pay it, but went to jail instead. "Ten years was I in prison," he'd say addressing the bench, "along with his worship there. I don't know what would appear to him who came back and got the Welcome Home, but I didn't and ten days don't fright me."

Now you'll be wanting to know what made these two men hate each other, for friends they had been, as two men ought to be who had been taken prisoners together and spent ten years in captivity to the French and came home aboard the same ship like brothers.

First of all, you must know, that up to the year '93 Abe Cummings and Bill Bosistow hadn't known what it was to quarrel or miss meeting each other every day. Abe, the elder by a year, was a bit slow and heavy on his pins, given to reading, too, though he seemed to take it for peace and quietness more than for any show he made of his learning. Bill was smarter altogether and better looking; a bit boastful, after the manner of young chaps. He could read, too, but never made much at it. You'd hardly have thought two young fellows so different in every way could hit it off together as they did. But these were like two figures in puzzle block; their very differences seemed to make them fit. These two held off sweethearts right along until Christmas of the year '93, when they came home from Pertheville to spend a fortnight at Ardevere and they both fell in love with Selina Johns.

Selina Johns wasn't but just husband high; turned 18, and her hair only put up a week before, she having begged her mother to twist it in plait for the Christmas courting. Abe and Billy each knew the other's secret almost before he knew his own.

And what they did was to have it out like good fellows, and agree to wait a couple of years, unless any third party should interfere, and then let the best man win! No bad blood afterward; they shook hands upon that. That January, being tired of the free trade, they shipped together on board a coaster for the Thames and reshipped for the voyage homeward on board the brig Hand in Glove of London, bound for Devonport.

By reason of delay the Hand in Glove started well astern of the convoying fleet and couldn't make up her distance. That evening a French lugger crept up on her, hove a grapple aboard and three twenty well-armed Johnnies into the old brig. The seven Englishmen, taken unprepared, were driven down below and shut down, while the Johnnies altered the brig's course and set away for France.

Early next morning the two vessels were close off Dieppe harbor, and there, when the tide suited, they were taken inside, and the prisoners put ashore at nightfall and lodged for three days in a filthy round tower, swarming with vermin. On April 1—Easter Sunday, I've heard it was—they were told to get ready for marching, and handed over, making twenty-five in all, with the crews of two other vessels, to a Lieutenant and a guard of foot soldiers. Not a man of them knew where they were bound. They set out through a main pretty country, where the wheat stood about knee-high, but the roads were heavy after the spring rains. Mostly they came to a town for their night's halt and as often as not the townsfolk drummed them to jail with what we call the "Rogue's March," but in France I believe it's "Honors of War" or something that sounds prettier than that. But there were times when they had to pull up at a farmhouse by the road and then the poor chaps slept on straw for a treat.

A well, on the last day of the fortnight they reached their journey's end—a great fortress on a rock standing right over the river, with a town lying around the foot of the rock, and a smaller town, reached by a bridge of boats, on the far side of the river. I can't call to mind the name of the river, but the towns were called Jivvy-Great and Little Jivvy." The prison stood at the very top of the rock, on the edge of a cliff that dropped a clean 300 feet to the river; not at all a pretty place to get clear of, and none so cheerful to live in on a day's allowance of one pound of brown bread, half a pound of bullock's fat, three halfpence in money (paid weekly), and the most of it deducted for prison repairs), and now and then a mug of pea soup for a treat.

It was during their confinement in the two months out that Abe took his downfall very quietly from the first. He had managed to keep a book in his pocket—a book of voyages it was—and carry it with him all the way from Dieppe, and it really didn't seem to matter to him that he was shut

up so long as he could sit in a corner and read about other folk traveling. In the second year of their captivity Abe would sit by the hour, with his roommates drunk and fighting round him, and copy out tables and work out sums. All his money went into pens and ink instead of liquor which the jailers smuggled in.

Billy Bosistow was a very different pair of shoes. Although no drinker by habit, he fretted and wore himself down at times to a lowness of spirits in which nothing seemed to serve him but drinking, and fierce drinking. On his better days he was everybody's favorite, but when the mood fell on him he grew teary and fit to set his right hand quarreling with his left. Then came the drinking fit and he'd wake out of that like a man dazed, sitting in a corner and brooding for days together.

He had two things to brood upon—escape and Selina. But confinement is the ruin of some natures and as year after year went by and his wits broke themselves on a stone wall, he grew into a very different



"PUT THAT D— FOOL IN THE STOCK." CRIED HIS WORSHIP.

man from the handy lad the Johnnies had taken prisoner. One thing he never gave up and that was his pluck, and he had plenty of use for it when, after seven years, his chance came.

His first contrivance was to change names with an old American in the depot. It so happened that the captain of a French privateer had applied to the prison for a crew of foreigners to man his ship, then lying at Moraix. The trick, by oiling the jailer's palm, was managed easily enough and away Bosistow was marched with twenty comrades of all nations. But at the first stage some recruiting officers stopped them, insisting that they were Irish and not Americans and must be enlisted to serve with Bonaparte's army in Spain. The prisoners to a man refused to hear of it and the end was that they were marched back to prison in disgrace and, to do everything, had their English allowance stopped on pretense that they had been in the French service.

This brought them to a second chance, for being described as Irishmen, he managed to get himself locked up with the Irish on the hantid side of the prison, and that same night broke out of a window with two other fellows, got over the prison wall and hid in the woods beyond. On the second day a party of wood rangers attacked them with guns and captured them and back they went and were condemned side above mischief.

On Mousehole quay these three stepped ashore, and the first man to shake hands with them was Captain Josiah Penny of the Penzance Royal Marine Ketch, who had them in his cabin for glasses 'round of rum.

The Penzance fellow went his way, but Billy and Cornish stayed and had more rum, and on the quay they found a crowd waiting for them, and many with questions as about absent friends, so that from Mousehole quay to Pentance it was a regular procession. And then they had to go to the hotel and tell the whole story over again. And all this meant more rum, of course.

It was 7 in the evening and day closing in before they took the road again. Billy had fallen into a boastful mood, and felt his heart so warm toward Cornish that nothing would do but they must tramp it together as far as Nancledreda, which was a goodish bit out of Cornish's road to Ludgvan. By the time they reached Nancledreda Billy was shedding tears and begging Cornish to come along to Ardevere. "I'll make a man of 'ee there," he promised: "I've full sure 'nough!" But Cornish weighed the offer and decided that his mother at Ludgvan would be going to bed before long. So he sent to a house with red blinds and lights within them determined to have a drink before parting.

In the taproom they found a dozen fellows or so drinking their beer and smoking solemn, and an upstanding woman in a black gown attending on them. "Hullo," says one of the men, looking up. "What's this? Gooey dancers?"

"I'll soon tell 'ee 'bout gooey dances," says Billy. "Here, missie, a pot of ale all 'round and let 'em drink to two Cornish boys home from festin' in French war prisons while they've a' been diggin' 'tates!" There was no resisting a sociable offer like this and in two 'o's, as you might say, Billy was boasting ahead for all he was worth and the company with their mouths open—all but the landlady, who was opening her eyes instead, and wider and wider.

"There isn't none present that remembers me, I daresay. My name's Bosistow—Billy Bosistow—from Ardevere parish. And back there I'm going this very night, and why? I ask. I ben't one of your 'taty-diggin' snowheads—I ben't. I've broke out of prison three times, and now—" He broke off and nodded at the company, whose faces by this time couldn't very well pick out of a head—do any of 'em know where there's been diggin' 'tates?"

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"And this is the way—" Billy stood up very dignified—"this is the way to welcome home a man who fled for his freedom! Is this the way to welcome a man who's spent ten of the best years of his life in slavery while you've been diggin' 'tates?" You can't see the hosing of them almost the light of a personal injury. He spat on the floor. "And as for you, madam, these here hoes of mine have tramped thousands of miles and I shake off their dust upon 'ee," he says.

"I wish you'd confine yourself to that, with your dirty habits!" the landlady answered up again, but Billy marched out with great dignity, which was only spoiled by his mistaking the shadow across the doorway for a raised step. He didn't forget to slam the door after him, but he did forget to take leave of Harry Cornish, who'd had walked so far out of his way in pure friendliness.

For the first mile or so, what with his anger and the fire in his eye, Billy had all he could do to keep his pins and fix his mind on the road. But, by and by, his brain cleared a bit and when he reached the hill over Ardevere and saw the lights of the town below him his mood changed and he sat down on the turf of the slope with tears in his eyes.

"There you be," said he, talking to the light, and here he is, and somewhere down amongst you is the dead old man I've come to marry. Not much welcome for me in Ardevere. I blaw, though I do like every one of her streets. But there's one there that doesn't forget me in these here rigs. I wish I'd seen Abe's face when I jumped aboard the boat. Poor old Abe—but all's fair in love and war. I reckon. He can't be here till tomorrow at earliest, so let's have a pipe o' baccy on it."

"Oh, suit 'em," says Abe: "that is, if your conscience allows it."

"I reckon I'll risk that," answered Billy, and no more passed.

To be short, it wasn't till the end of April that the news reached them that Bonaparte had gone scat, and they marched to the river opposite Bordeaux and were taken on to the Suffolk transport in charge of the British redcoats.

On Monday, May 9, at 2:30 in the afternoon, the Suffolk sighted land, making out St Michael's mount, and fetching up to Mousehole head, the cable hauled a mackerel boat and came alongside to take ashore some officers with dispatches.

Abe Cummings and Billy Bosistow were both on deck as may be sure, watching the boat as the fishermen brought her alongside. Not a word had been said between them on the matter that lay closest to their minds, but while they waited Billy fetched a look at the boat and another at Abe. "The best man wins," he said to himself, and edged away toward the ladder.

The breeze, as I said, was a fresh one, with a sea in the bay that kept the Suffolk rolling like a porpoise. A heavier lurch than ordinary sent her main channels grinding down on the mackerel boat's gunwale, smashing her upper strakes and springing her mizzenmast as she recovered herself.

"Be dashed," said one of the officers, "I trust myself in a boat that'll go down under us between this and land!" The rest seemed to be of his mind, too. But Billy, being quick as well, saw in a moment that the damaged strakes would be to windward on the reach into Mousehole, and out of harm's way, and also that her mizzenmast alone would be the job easy. So just as she fell off and her

fallen face, and chuckled; then he began to wonder if Abe would call it fair play. When he was in the sun was was strong. And somehow, though he had dropped to sleep in a puzzle of mind, he woke up with not a doubt to trouble him. He hunted out a crust from his knapsack and made his breakfast, and then he lit his pipe again and turned toward Penzance. He was going to play fair.

On he went in this frame of mind, feeling like a man almost too virtuous to go to church, until by-and-by he came in sight of Nancledreda and the inn he'd left in such a hurry over night. And who should be sitting in the porchway, and looking into the bottom of a pint pot, but Abe Cummings!

"Why, however on earth did you come here?" asked Billy.

"Cap'n landed us between 4 and 5 this mornin'," said Abe.

"Well," said Billy, "I'm right glad to meet you, anyway, for—tell 'ee the truth—you're the very man I was looking for."

"Really," says Abe, like one interested.

"You and me, I mean," said Abe.

"I've been through a fire of sorts."

"You know why I jumped into that boat; it vexed you a bit, I daresay. And strickly speakin', mind you—" Billy took his friend by the buttonholes—"strickly speakin', I'd be right on my side. 'Let the best man win,' was our argument. But you needn't to fret yourself; I ben't the man to take an advantage of an old friend, fair though it be. Man, I ha'n't been to Ardevere—I turned back. So finish your beer and come along with me, and we'll walk down to Selina Johns together and ask her which of us shall choose, fair and square."

Abe set down his mug and looked up, studying the signboard over the door.

"Well," says he, "it's a real relief to my mind to know you've played so fair. For man and boy, Bill, I always thought it of you."

"It's indeed," says Abe, "man and boy, it was always my motto, 'If you can't do well, do it well.'"

"But," says Abe, "you ain't such a woman." "You don't tell me she's dead?"

"No; it's her first husband that's dead. She's Selina Widlake now."

"How long have 'ee known that?"

"Maybe an hour, maybe only three-quarters. Her name's Selina Widlake, and she owns this here public. What's more, her name isn't going to be Selina Widlake, but Selina Cummings. We've fixed it up, and she's to leave Nancledreda and take the Welcome Home over to Ardevere."

Billy Bosistow took a turn across the road, and, coming back, stuck his hands in his pockets and stared up at the sign overhead.

"Well! And I that was too honorable—" he began.

"So you was," agreed Abe, pulling out his pipe. "You can't think what a comfort that is to me. But, as it turns out, 'wouldn't have made no difference. For she seed you last even,' and she was telling me just now that prison hadn't improved you. In fact, she didn't like either you or me."

"I've heard that you was just in time to pop inside and bolt the door after him. And now you know why Bill Bosistow and Abe Cummings could never bear the sight of each other from that day. But there! you can't be first and last, too, as the saying is."

"Givet, in the Ardennes. The river, of course, is the Meuse.—Q.—It is a fact, on March 1, 1812, this unhappy man reached the prison of Briancon in the Haute Alps, and was confined there for close on two years.

"Performers in a Christmas play."

PRATTLE OF THE YOUNGSTERS.

"No, Tommie, dear, you don't get any more jam. Next time, when you have been a very good child, you get some more." "Say, mother, do you think it will keep so long?"

Willie—Mamma, I dreamed last night that papa gave me a bicycle for my birthday and you gave me a watch. Mamma—But, Willie, you know dreams go by contraries. Willie—Then you will give me the bicycle and papa the watch?

When 2-year-old Jessie saw some negroes and mulattoes the first time she gravely remarked on her return home: "I saw some black people today and some that were just turning black."

The teacher of the juvenile class held up a triangle made of wood and asked what it was. "I know," said a bright little fellow, who had spent the summer on a farm; "it's the frame of a chicken coop."

One evening when the mosquitoes were very troublesome small Bobby cried out, "Oh, dear; if the mosquitoes don't stop biting me there will be nothing left of me!" "Yes, there will," rejoined his little sister, "the bites will swell up and make you bigger than ever."

In one of the private schools here in town, relates Youth's Companion, there is a small boy who is always cheerfully miles behind everybody else. He is not a dull boy, but learning does not appeal to him as being a thing especially to be desired. Recently the teacher told the class in composition that on the next day she would give each of them to be able to write a short anecdote. She explained with great care the meaning of the word anecdote, and on the next day when she called the class up to write, all but the laggard went at once to work.

"Why don't you write an anecdote, Rob?" asked the teacher.

"I forgot what an anecdote is," said Rob, undisturbed.

"I explained it yesterday, Rob, and you ought to remember," said the teacher, a bit out of patience. "An anecdote is a tale. Now write."

Rob bent over his slate and with much twisting of brow and writhing of lip ground out his task. When the slates were collected his was at the very top of the heap. The teacher picked it up and on this was what she read:

"Yesterday we had soup made from the anecdote of an ox."

BADEN-POWELL'S SWORD.

One of the finest presented to the Hero of Mafeking.

One of the finest swords ever made has recently been presented to General Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking, by the citizens of Cape Colony. The sword is of fine gold and is surmounted by the head of a lion. The hilt is also of fine gold and richly decorated and has the monogram "B.P." on the reverse. The scabbard is of scarlet velvet, highly polished, and is studded with the arms of Cape Colony. Engraved on the scabbard is the motto "Mafeking qui meruit ferat." The blade is of fine steel richly etched in elaborate style with scenes illustrating the life of the gallant general, and bears the following inscription:

"To the memory of General Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking, by the citizens of Cape Colony, 1900." Below the inscription is the motto "Patria meruit ferat." The blade is of fine steel richly etched in elaborate style with scenes illustrating the life of the gallant general, and bears the following inscription:

"To the memory of General Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking, by the citizens of Cape Colony, 1900." Below the inscription is the motto "Patria meruit ferat."

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Gives Good Digestion.

Taken regularly after meals, removes the sense of distress, oppression and "all gone" feeling of the stomach.

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