

# THE IDEAS OF ETHELBURT JELLYBACK, PRIVATE,

## XIX. On the Disaster That Befell Him at Guard Mount

My name is one of the best known in the company. It is, in fact, conspicuous. It is always being posted in the most prominent place, such as the Guard list.

Why is it, I asked the top sergeant, that whenever our company goes on guard I am among those selected for duty? It is a monotonous routine, two hours on and two hours off. The top sergeant replied that it was his private opinion I was "off" most of the time. He laughed when he said it, but why, I am at a loss to know.

I protested that I did not seek this sort of notoriety, that my family had no objection to the name of Jellyback appearing in the Social Register, but that when it came to guard duty and kitchen police and other unaristocratic functions, such publicity was not to our liking.

"Is this to be a formal guard mount?" I asked. Upon receiving an affirmative reply, the exact words of which were "Yep, what's it to you?" I replied that I preferred formal affairs to careless parties in which the social conventions are held in niggard respect.

"Then drag your shanks back to your tent and clean your gun."

### Getting Ready for Guard.

The top sergeant was crude in his choice of words, but I know that at the ceremony of Guard Mount it is necessary to have your appearance, from the tips of your shoes to the end of your rifle, as immaculate as if you were going to have your picture taken, even though the walking may be muddy and the rain pouring down in torrents.

Guard Mount precedes the placing of guards about the camp. I do not know why they call it "Guard Mount." It has no relation to a hill or other promontory.

Hastening to my tent, with but a short time to get ready for guard mount, I plunged into my preparations. I had an idea. It was this: the neatest looking soldier at guard mount selected for duty as an orderly; his task is far less irksome than that of the others who have to walk lonely posts all night long; the orderly's work is merely to do little things for the Major, and quite often one finds a Major who is able to do things for himself.

Therefore, I resolved to be chosen as orderly.

"I tossed my rifle to Jim Mugrums.

"I will be too occupied with the details of my uniform to be annoyed by cleaning my gun. Here, clean it for me. There's a dollar in it for you."

"Is that so?" grumbled Mugrums, "And there's mud and rust in it, too. Whadd'ya think I am? I gotta clean my own gun for guard."

detail is not correct. It is decidedly ragamuffin. Jim Mugrums looks positively untidy."

"Don't let me hear any demurrer, Mugs. Do as I say. Haven't I been paying you a princely salary to act as my orderly?"

Mugrums went on muttering, but he fell to work cleaning my gun for me, while I set about shining my made-to-order shoes, sent me by a well-known Fifth Avenue bootis, and putting on my tailored uniform, designed by my favorite drapers and fashioned out of a grade of whipcord finer than most officers wear. I spent so much time in making my appearance smart that I was the last one to leave the tent. Grabbing up my gun I ran out to the company street, confident that I was the finest looking soldier in the whole country that day. I dare say I was.

### He Marches Next to Mugsrums.

While marching over out to the parade ground I observed that I was next to Mugsrums and that my appearance was in striking contrast to his, for his uniform was wrinkled and dusty and his canvas leggings were badly in need of cleansing. Perhaps he had been too busy cleaning my gun for me to look after his own clothes, but that's not a valid excuse. He should have been more thorough. I was chagrined.

The commander of the detail of the guard lined us up on the parade ground in front of the sergeant major and after giving us "right . . . dress" and "front," saluted and reported.

Then the sergeant major gave us "open ranks . . . march" and "front" and reported:

"Sir, the detail is correct."

"No, sir," I shouted, interrupting him as I stepped forward out of the ranks. "The

This seemed to create a sensation. The commanding officer of the guard said: "Shut up and get back in ranks" and the adjutant looked perplexed. A little later the officer commanding guard said: "Prepare for inspection." This irritated me not a little.

"Sir," I announced, "I am prepared. I have prepared for this inspection as painstakingly as ever a soldier could."

### The Surprising Inspection.

The commander began his inspection, paying no attention to my words. I was astonished to note that he found no fault with Mugsrums. He looked into Mugsrums' rifle carefully, turned it over in his hand, and in giving it back, remarked: "That's the best looking gun I've seen today."

Then he stepped in front of me and I brought my rifle up to inspection arms. The commander grabbed it out of my hands in that rough manner so much in vogue at guard mounts, as if I had been clutching a treasure that was rightfully his.

But instead of looking at my gun at once, he stood with his eyes riveted on me.

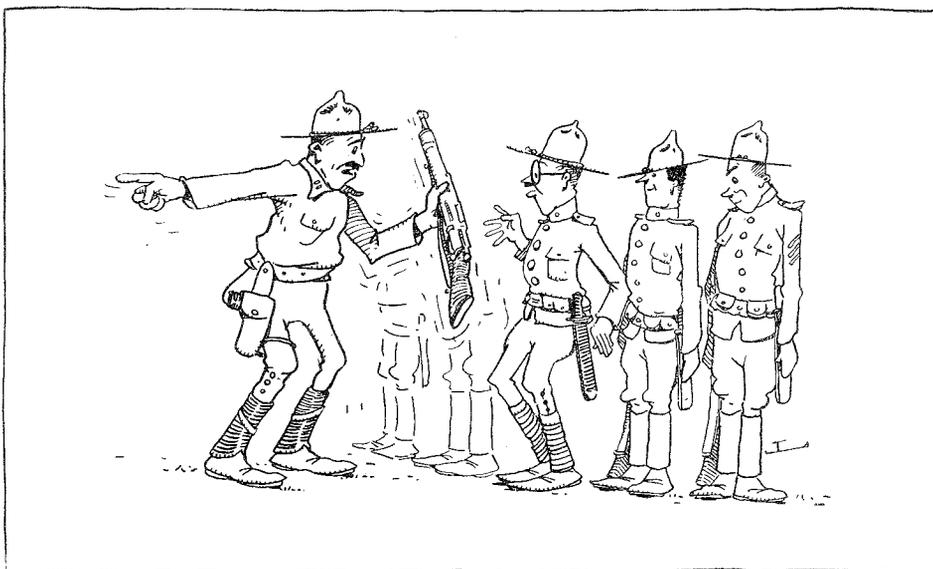
"Where'd you get that uniform?" he demanded.

"At Ferguson's, Fifth Avenue and Forty-third street."

"Don't you know it's against regulations? Who are you anyway, that you should wear better clothes than any other enlisted man? Don't you know that in outfitting a soldier the purpose is to make every enlisted man look uniform?"

"Yes, sir, uniformly wretched."

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Ethelburt at Inspection.