

The Spirit

When there ain't no gal to kiss you,
And the postman seems to miss you,
And the fags have skipped an issue,
Carry on.

When ye've got an empty belly,
And the bulley's rotten smelly,
And you're shivering like a jelly,
Carry on.

When the Boche has done your chum in,
And the sergeant's done the rum in,
And there ain't no rations comin',
Carry on.

When the world is red and reeking,
And the shrapnel shells are shrieking,
And your blood is slowly leaking,
Carry on.

When the broken battered trenches,
Are like the bloody butchers' benches,
And the air is thick with stenches,
Carry on.

Carry on,
Though your pals are pale and wan,
And the hope of life is gone,
Carry on.

For to do more than you can,
Is to be a British man,
Not a rotten 'also ran,'
Carry on..

'Woodbine Willy'

[*NSI*](#), pp. 47–8

The Secret

You were askin' 'ow we sticks it,
Sticks this blarsted rain and mud,
'Ow it is we keeps on smilin'
When the place runs red wi' blood.
Since you're askin' I can tell ye,
And I thinks I tells ye true,
But it ain't official, mind ye,
It's a tip twixt me and you.
For the General thinks it's tactics,
And the bloomin' plans 'e makes.
And the C.O. thinks it's trainin',
And the trouble as he takes.
Sergeant-Major says it's drillin',
And 'is straffin' on parade,
Doctor swears it's sanitation,
And some patent stinks 'e's made.
Padre tells us its religion,
And the Spirit of the Lord;
But I ain't got much religion,
And I sticks it still, by Gawd.

Quarters kids us it's the rations,
And the dinners as we gets.
But I knows what keeps us smilin'
It's the Woodbine Cigarettes.
For the daytime seems more dreary,
And the night-time seems to drag
To eternity of darkness,
When ye ave'nt got a fag.
Then the rain seems some'ow wetter,
And the cold cuts twice as keen,
And ye keeps on seein' Boches,
What the Sargint 'asn't seen.
If ole Fritz 'as been and got ye,
And ye 'ave to stick the pain,
If ye 'aven't got a fag on,
Why it 'urts as bad again.
When there ain't no fags to pull at,
Then there's terror in the ranks.
That's the secret - (yes, I'll 'ave one)
Just a fag - and many Tanks.

'Woodbine Willy'

Well?

Our Padre were a solemn bloke,
We called 'im dismal Jim.
It fairly gave ye t' bloomin' creeps,
To sit and 'ark at 'im,
When he were on wi' Judgment Day,
Abaht that great white Throne,
And 'ow each chap would 'ave to stand,
And answer on 'is own.
And if 'e tried to charnce 'is arm,
And 'ide a single sin,
There'd be the angel Gabriel,
Wi' books to do 'im in.
'E 'ad it all writ dahn, 'e said,
And nothin' could be 'id,
'E 'ad it all i' black and white,
And 'E would take no kid.
And every single idle word,
A soldier charnced to say,
'E'd 'ave it all thrown back at 'im,
I' court on Judgment Day.
Well I kep' mindin' Billy Briggs,
A pal o' mine what died.
'E went to 'elp our sergeant Smith,
But as 'e reached 'is side,
There came and bust atween 'is legs,
A big Boche 5.9 pill.
And I picked up 'is corpril's stripes,
That's all there was o' Bill.
I called to mind a stinkin' night
When we was carryin' tea.
We went round there by Limerick Lane,
And Bill was a'ead o' me.
'Twere rainin' 'eavens 'ard, ye know,
And t' boards were thick wi' muck,
And umpteen times we slithered dahn,
And got the dicksee stuck.
Well when we got there by the switch,
A loose board tipped right up,
And Bill, 'e turned a somersault,
And dahn 'e came, and whup!
I've 'eard men blind, I've 'eard 'em cuss
And I've 'eard 'em do it 'ard,
Well 'aven't I 'eard our R.S.M.,
Inspectin' special guard.

But t'other night I dreamed a dream,
And just twixt me and you,
I never dreamed like that afore,
I arf thinks it were true.
I dreamed as I were dead, ye see,
At least as I 'ad died,
For I were very much alive,
Out there on t'other side.
I couldn't see no judgment court,
Nor yet that great white throne,
I couldn't see no record books,
I seemed to stand alone.
I seemed to stand alone, beside
A solemn kind o' sea.
Its waves they got in my inside,
And touched my memory.
And day by day, and year by year,
My life came back to me.
I see'd just what I were, and what
I'd 'ad the charnce to be.
And all the good I might 'a' done,
An' 'adn't stopped to do.
I see'd I'd made an 'ash of it,
And Gawd! but it were true

A throng 'o faces came and went,
Afore me on that shore,
My wife, and Mother, kiddies, pals,
And the face of a London whore.
And some was sweet, and some was sad,
And some put me to shame,
For the dirty things I'd done to 'em,
When I 'adn't played the game.
Then in the silence someone stirred,
Like when a sick man groans,
And a kind o' shivering chill ran through
The marrer ov my bones.
And there before me someone stood,
Just lookin' dahn at me,
And still be'ind 'Im moaned and moaned
That everlasting sea.
I couldn't speak, I felt as though
'E 'ad me by the throat,
'Twere like a drownin' fellah feels,
Last moment 'e's afloat.
And 'E said nowt, 'E just stood still,

For I dunno 'ow long.
It seemed to me like years and years,
But time out there's all wrong.

What was 'E like? You're askin' now.
Can't word it anyway.
'E just were 'Im, that's all I knows.
There's things as words can't say.
It seemed to me as though 'Is face,
Were millions rolled in one.
It never changed yet always changed,
Like the sea beneath the sun.
'Twere all men's face yet no man's face,
And a face no man can see,
And it seemed to say in silent speech,
'Ye did 'em all to me.
'The dirty things ye did to them,
'The filth ye thought was fine,
'Ye did 'em all to me,' it said,
'For all their souls were mine.'
All eyes was in 'Is eyes, - all eyes,
My wife's and a million more.
And once I thought as those two eyes
Were the eyes of the London whore.
And they was sad, - My Gawd 'ow sad,
With tears that seemed to shine,
And quivering bright wi' the speech o' light,
They said, "Er soul was mine.'
And then at last 'E said one word,
'E just said one word 'Well?'
And I said in a funny voice,
'Please can I go to 'Ell?'
And 'E stood there and looked at me,
And 'E kind o' seemed to grow,
Till 'E shone like the sun above my ead,
And then 'E answered 'No
'You can't, that 'Ell is for the blind,
'And not for those that see.
'You know that you 'ave earned it, lad,
'So you must follow me.
'Follow me on by the paths o' pain,
'Seeking what you 'ave seen,
'Until at last you can build the "Is,"
'Wi' the bricks o' the "Might 'ave been."
That's what 'E said, as I'm alive,
And that there dream were true.

But what 'E meant, - I don't quite know,
Though I knows what I 'as to do.
I's got to follow what I's seen,
Till this old carcass dies.
For I daren't face the land o' grace,
The sorrow ov those eyes.
There ain't no throne, and there ain't no books,
It's 'Im you've got to see,
It's 'Im, just 'Im, that is the Judge
Of blokes like you and me.
And boys I'd sooner frizzle up,
I' the flames of a burning 'Ell,
Than stand and look into 'Is face,
And 'ear 'Is voice say - 'Well?'

'Woodbine Willy'

[NSI](#), pp. 120–123

War

There's a soul in the Eternal,
Standing stiff before the King.
There's a little English maiden
Sorrowing.
There's a proud and tearless woman,
Seeing pictures in the fire.
There's a broken battered body
On the wire.

'Woodbine Willy'

[NSL](#), p. 278