

Rum Jars

All over the Gallipoli battlefields there are still fragments of the large pottery jars which were used to give soldiers their 'tot of rum' before going into battle.

The pictures show soldiers using rum jars, and a jar in the Imperial War Museum. On the next page is a poem called 'Rum' by A. P. Herbert who wrote a book of poems when he was at Gallipoli, called 'Half-hours at Helles'.



Rum

THERE is a nectar, not distilled
Where England's gods and princes come,
Rather by men of meaner build
In needy streets is sometimes swilled
At no excessive sum ;
But here I deem it no disgrace,
When Sol sits down in Samothrace
And Father Achi hides his face,
To fill my flask with rum.

In this hushed hour the peasant Turk,
The other side of yonder steep,
Walks home, I ween, from vineyard work
Through rock-strewn scrub where lizards lurk
And snakes are going cheap,
To where in some deep-delvéd cell
His best Falernian goat-skins dwell,
And does himself extremely well
And settles down to sleep.

But it is now, when peasants play,
That soldiers' toils in truth begin ;
We may do nothing all the day
But feebly wave the flies away
And let the best fly win ;

(11)

RUM

But with the dark arrive our rigours,
The bags, the bombs, the ceaseless diggers,
While foemen madly work their triggers—
And that's where rum comes in.

It cheers me when the night is chill,
Or things particularly grave,
When only one lone sentry still
Is wakeful and prepared to kill
If Moslems misbehave ;
Or, while I crawl where no trench is
And spiteful missiles round me whizz
From someone in those cypresses,
It makes me almost brave.

And when I wake from some brief doze
To hear the great Red-Hats have writ
That they have reason to suppose
This is the night our frantic foes
Intend to do their bit ;
And we sad souls till dawn must act
Like men about to be attacked,
And not a thing occurs, in fact—
I shall be glad of it.

(12)

RUM

Deliberate now my tot I raise
And take it gingerly, like snuff,
Not with the wild convivial ways,
The deep long draughts of Oxford days ;
It is not good enough ;
For, though in kindly terms I touch
On this rich stimulant, as such,
I cannot say I like it much,
Indeed I hate the stuff.

(13)