

Arthur Boggis. Act 1 Scene 3

ARTHUR. God go with you Sarah.

BERTHA. Are you taking that pigeon Mr Boggis?

ARTHUR. Oh. I couldn't leave this one.

ANNIE. The others have gone to his brother Bert. I'd have clucked and stuffed them and put them in pies else.

ARTHUR. England's Glory. I call her that because she's a match for any bird. Now before we go I should like us all to stand for a moment in prayer.

ANNIE. Not in the street.

ARTHUR. It's God's street.

RALPH G o o n. I've shut my eyes.

ARTHUR. Well God. Here we are in your town, in your kingdom, in the midst of your creation, which, despite these shadows come upon us, despite the prison walls of life that surround us, looks lovely yet. You smile, I know. For we are men without craft or guile called to do your work in far off places. Bless the women who stay, your handmaidens, for it is they who tend our homes and loved ones now. Keep us in their thoughts as they in ours and our feet to the paths of righteousness, amen.

ALL. Amen.

Each has reacted in his or her own way, TOM most embarrassed, torn between his unbelief and his natural politeness.

RALPH. You should preach at the Ebenezer.

ANNIE. And would have if he wasn't such a muggins as to be a Primitive.

RALPH. Let's get the train. Shut the stall.

MAY. No. Leave it.

RALPH. You're coming aren't you?

MAY. You go Eva. I'll see to things here.

RALPH. But you've got to come.

MAY. Got to?

RALPH. Can't you ever stop - One hour! Tom!

TOM. Not if she doesn't want to.

An uncomfortable moment.

BERTHA. My father'll wonder where on earth I am.

ANNIE. Arthur!

ARTHUR. Goodbye May. His ways are mysterious. He makes a worker of you and a soldier of me. His will be done.

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Arthur Boggis. Act 1 Scene 7

ARTHUR is revealed to one side of the stage. He is in uniform. His pigeon basket containing England's glory is at his side. He speaks a letter he has written home.

ARTHUR. To Jack Burmdred, 14 Waterloo Streer, Accrington, Lancs. Dear brother in Christ, as you will have read in the local the Pals have moved on from Penkrigde to the cathedral city of Ripon. I regret the change. It is a move from God's cathedral of green fields and trees to the cathedral of the Bishops. However, Ripon is a splendid garden city and lit by the new wonder of electric street lighting. Surely when we make progress like this shall we not ask: where is the progress we should be making towards the new Jerusalem? The Pals were inspected by Lieutenant Colonel Sir Archibald J. Murraray KCB DSO who said it was the finest Kitchener battalion he had ever seen . . . and he has inspected not thousands . . . but tens of thousands. Thank you for asking after England's Glory who is in fine fettle and makes our feathered friends in the battalion signals loft look a moth-eaten set by comparison. Thank you also for the news from the works. I was indignant to hear how the masters were still behaving, but God sees them, how they have sinned in the unacceptable manipulation of piece work rates in the finishing shop. There is not a quarter of a farthing wrongfully withheld from working men that He does nor see. You ask how I can bring myself to take up arms. I say how can I not when my fellows do? We have failed to build Jerusalem and this is God's answer. It is his second flood, though now by steel instead of water. Who has been perfect in God? Not me, for one. Sometimes I think the Vale of Sorrow I have known in the circumstances of my life tempted me away. Please ask Ethel to visit Annie and do what she can for the little ones and poor Reggie. Well, God has called me to the lists and if I fall let my death help to cleanse the world of its weakness. I will close with the words of his purest handmaiden, Joanna Southcott:

'And now if foes increase, I'll tell you here ,  
That every sorrow they shall fast increase,

The wars their tumults they shall never cease  
Until the hearts of men will turn to me.'  
Yours in the sight of the Lord, Arthur Boggis.  
Lights fade on ARTHUR and fade up on the fruit stall