

1918

## UA3/1/4 Lost Sheep in the Army

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## LOST SHEEP IN THE ARMY

When their country called they answered. They plunged headlong down the stony path of glory, but in their haste they stumbled over every stone. And when they did that they put us all out of our stride, so crowded was the path. Were they promoted? They promptly celebrated the fact in a fashion that secured their immediate reduction. Were they reduced to the ranks? Then they were in hot water from early morn to dowy ever, and such was their irrepressible charm that hot water lost its terror. To be a defaulter in such merry company was a privilege rather than a disgrace. So in despair we promoted them again, hoping that by giving them a little responsibility we should enlist them on the side of good order and discipline. Vain hopes! Then at last we got out "We were confronted with death, danger, death and then they came to their own. We could no longer compete with them. We stolid respectable folkd were not in our element. We knew it. We felt it. We were determined to go through with it. We succeeded but it was not without much internal wrestling, much self conscious effort. Yet they who had formerly been our despair were now our glory. Their spirite effervesced their wits sparkled. Hunger and thirst could not depress them. Rain could not dampen them. Cold could not chill them. Every hardship became a joke. They did not endure hardship they derided it. And somehow it seemed at the moment as if derision was all that hardship existed for. Never was such a triumph of spirit over matter. As for death, it was in a way the greatest joke of all. In a way, for if it

was another fellow who was hit it was an occasion for tenderness and grief. But if one of them was hit, Oh death where is thy sting? Oh grave where is thy victory? Portentious solemn death, you looked a fool when you tackled one of them. Life? They did not value life. They had never been able to make much of a fist of it. But is they lived aniss they died gloriously with a smile for the pain and the dread of it. What else had they been born for? It was their chance With a gay heart they gave their greatest gift and with a smile to think that after all they had anything to give which was of value. One by one death challenged them. One by one they smiled at his grim visage and refused to be dismayed. They had been lost but they had found the way that lead them home, and when at last they laid their lives at the feet of the Good Shepherd, what could they do but smile!