

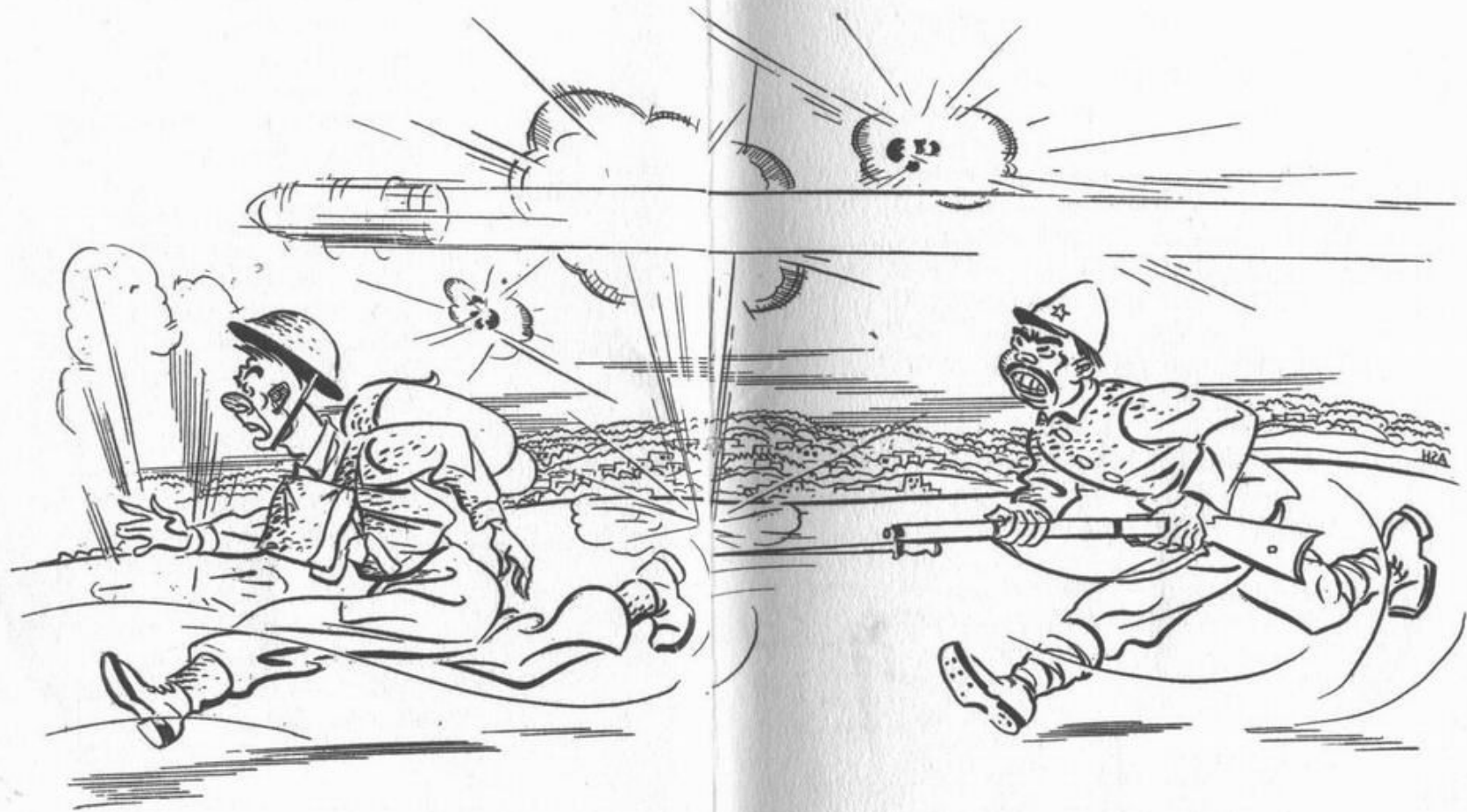
ORIENTAL DYSSEY



 **VERSE BY
VARCOE**

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DEDICATION

It may be that this is the wrong song
To offer to comrades who fell,
But here's to the heroes of Hong Kong,
And here's to the cowards, as well!
Impartially, gallant and craven
Repose beyond eulogy's reach:
And Death, in his limitless haven,
Grants slumber to each.

I offer this brief dedication
To all whom death chose to disband:
The men of the South China Station
Who sleep in this alien land.
For us are the streets of the city,
The wail of a home-coming train;
A sound full of infinite pity
For these, who remain.

We'll posture in garments of glory;
Who'd tear up his ticket to fame?
And print the incredible story
Of those dead to honor or shame?
That story may never be written,
But over our glasses of ale,
There's many a name will be smitten
In telling the tale.

SID VARCOE

THE GALLOPING GRENADIERS

We are the Winnipeg Grenadiers,
You hear so much about;
The women keep their daughters in
Whenever we go out!
They all steer clear of a Grenadier,
We're always in a jam—
The Company is half C.B.,
The rest don't give a damn!

Our underwear is trailing;
I guess "Right dress" for us was never made!
Limping and wailing,
The Galloping Grenadiers are "On Parade!"

WHATEVER IT TAKES, WE'VE GOT IT

or

Whatever it took, we've had it!

(A marching song to the tune of W.S.C.'s March!)

Winnipeg's best, the pride of the West,
We are the Grenadiers!
Tojo's in tears, as the reckoning nears,
He hears the Grenadiers are after his ears . . .
We'll still drink beer and march down the years,
Long after Tojo's dead and gone . . .
Forget your fears; The gay Grenadiers
Will carry on!

FAUX PAS

Premier King sent us out from Vancouver;
F.D.R. said: "It's just a manoeuver."
But the Japanese struck;
Now they're passing the buck—
But they can't pin *this* lash-up on Hoover!

NUTTIN' BUT MUTTON

The "C" Force Brigade was a tough one to beat;
We knew how to fight, and we knew how to eat,
With a natural love of Canadian meat,
And a hearty abhorrence of mutton!

Vancouver to Hong Kong, the voyage was stark,
That ship, Awatea, held secrets so dark,
Three species of beast filled this sleek Noah's ark—
There was Grenadiers, Rifles, and mutton!

We scrambled aboard her, poor innocent draft,
None knew the provisions contained on this craft;
The Aussies had packed her, til forward and aft,
The portholes were juttin' with mutton!

Many brave sheep are asleep on the deep;
They died of old age—and cold storage is cheap;
We'd eat it all day, and then weep in our sleep—
The sheep that we counted were mutton!

Rank, rotten, and ripe was the redolent smell,
As gaseous and nauseous as vapors from hell—
We thought of Fifth Columnists ringing a bell,
Or pressing a button for mutton!

A mutton-chop breakfast we managed to munch—
They followed this up with boiled mutton for lunch;
Stewed mutton for supper soon strengthened our hunch
Our meals would be nuttin' but mutton!

Sheep boiled, broiled and roasted, stewed, fricasseed, fried;
Our look became "sheepish", our patience was tried,
Poor "C" Force was wilting, 'cause Canada's pride
Just couldn't keep struttin' on mutton!

A Grenadier swears, (Tho' perhaps he was drunk!)
That smell hung so thick in the air by his bunk,
That he took out his clasp-knife and carved out a chunk,
And lay there, just cuttin' up mutton!

Oh, bitter the ache for Canadian hams,
We boarded like lions, and landed like lambs;
Australia knows what she can do with her rams;
Our cook-house we're shuttin' to mutton!

'Twas thus our demoralization began;
Complete in defeat in the war with Japan.
We acted like sheep, and a few of us ran . . .
We'd lost all our guttin' on mutton!

So search through the ranks of the "C" Force Brigade
For a lover of mutton. I am not afraid
To bet all the wages I've never been paid,
You won't find a glutton for mutton!

THE FIRST THREE WEEKS

November 17th, we all recall,
The year, (of course!) was 1941—
We came to Hong Kong thinking it was all
In fun!

The daily papers cheered and dished the "prop"
"There'll be no change in Asiatic maps!"
God help them if it's up to US to stop
The Japs!

They call this effort "calling Nippon's bluff",
And while the Japs prepared to cut our throats,
They wasted precious time exchanging stuff-
Y notes!

Farewell to hammocks, heat and mutton stew,
We left the Awatea with our curse,
And marched three miles to find that Shamshuipo
Was worse!

The Island welcomed us with open arms,
The shabby barracks came as quite a shock
There's better barns on Manitoba farms
For stock!

The meals would earn a hummingbird's contempt;
A dab of food, forlorn and desolate,
Surrounded by a vast expanse of empt-
Y plate!

So wild-eyed Hunger stalked the dining hall,
And wild-eyed bed-bugs stalked our bunks unfed;
That iron trap they have the guts to call
A bed!

And though they knew our training must be brief,
They gave us useless drill from morn til night;
Saluting by the numbers was their chief
Delight!

The boys explored the "Hot Spots" right away,
And in the "Sun Sun" fooled and fed and fought;
And learned that Chinese dames aren't built the way
They thought!

They wrecked that joint one night, though God knows why:
The British M.P.'s found to their regret,
A drunk Canuck is not a shrinking vi-
Olet!

We wallowed deep in Bourbon, Scotch and Rye;
A three-week binge played hell with the supply;
But for the war we might have drunk the I-
Sland dry!

Poor food, no sleep, with women, wine and song;
The Japs were pleased to see us training thus.
It won't be long til Hong Kong won't belong
To us!



PRELUDE TO WAR

December the 7th, a Sunday, at noon,
We packed battle-kit in our camp at Kowloon;
While cursing manoeuvres, as all soldiers will,
The garrison throbs with expectancy's thrill.
Intangible tension pervades the still air—
And every Canuck is alert and aware;
While, back to the border, behind the gray town,
The brown hills of China glare balefully down.

Kowloon's on the mainland, as all of you know;
The ferry to Hong Kong seems painfully slow.
We disembark quickly, and swing down the street;
A sense of hot urgency hastens our feet;
We climb up to Wanchai, with never a stop,
And man battle stations on reaching the top,
Where, facing the border, the heavy guns frown
On the brown hills of China behind the gray town.

The Colony hums like an over-turned hive,
For Hong Kong's defenders are "looking alive"
The gun-pits we dig are the product, intact,
Of the Headquarter heads that were "vacuum-packed"!
And oft, as we labor, in silent surmise,
We glance to the mainland with questioning eyes;
Where, over the border, the sun settles down
'Neath the brown hills of China behind the gray town.

"Strike tents!" is the order—we quickly comply,
And slumber uneasily under the sky;
The stars shine serenely as ever before,
And wink their denials of rumors of war;
The frontier is quiet, no strident alarms,
Then why do we fear for our comrades-in-arms?
Who guard, on the border, the lands of the Crown,
And the brown hills of China behind the gray town.

Waken, Canucks! Ere the thunder of war
Rolls through those hills, looming blackly ashore;
Waken to drink, with a courage that's meet,
Canada's share of the gall of defeat.
Fate on the morrow will hand you the cup;
At five in the morning the curtain goes up!
Bursting the border, the foe will pour down
Through the brown hills of China behind the gray town.

THE PLOW AND THE SWORD

Do you recall the black "appeasement" years,
When oil and iron went to Nippon's hordes?
While China got our sympathy and tears,
The Japs were turning plowshares into swords.

Their price was good, and paid in ready cash;
And Manitoba shipped a goodly share;
If we could sell our useless, metal trash,
What mattered conscience, if the price was fair?

Then Nippon launched her treacherous attack,
We writhed within our own relentless trap;
The junk we sold them screamed and whistled back;
We got our share of Manitoba scrap!

Dark are the Destinies to which we bow—
A farmer lad went down in battle's spate,
Killed by a fragment of his father's plow—
A victim of the "irony" of fate!

THE ROYAL AIR "FARCE"

Hong Kong, Gibraltar of the East,
Secure (By reputation!)
Impregnable, to say the least,
A reassuring station!

This island fort was guaranteed
Secure with just a bare force;
They proved to us we didn't need
A Navy or an Air Force!

Those planes were in a sorry state,
The set-up here was screwy;
Three antique crates that must out-date
The Spirit of St. Louis!

Brave R.A.F., none understands
How you survived the weather;
The termites in the wings joined hands
To hold the things together!

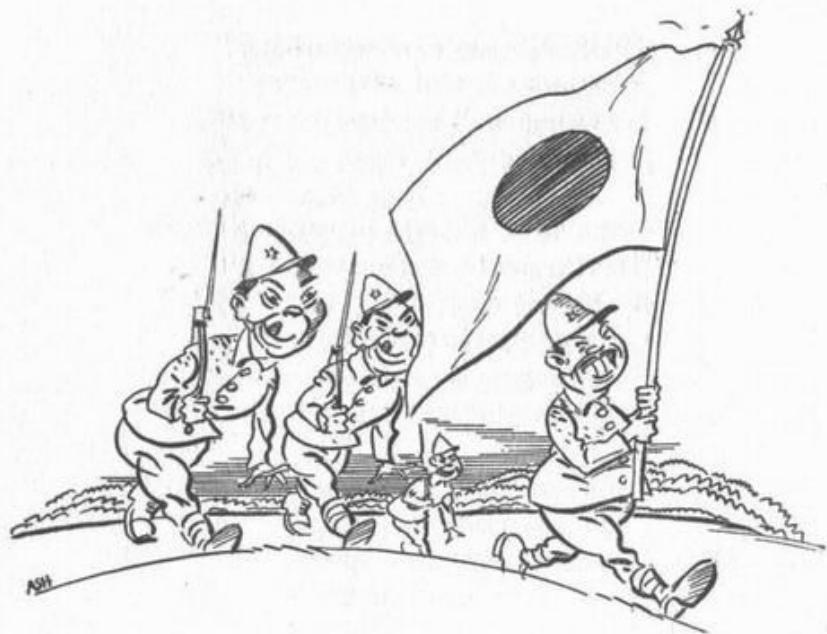
Planes filled the sky in groups of three,
And bombed our debonair force;
We doped it out that this must be
Somebody's else's air force!

Our Ack-Ack crews shot wild and high;
It's strange the way that rare force
Could shoot so much at so much sky
And miss the Nippon air force!

They sent some Japs to Kingdom Come,
But we discovered after;
A few Jap airmen did succumb,
But they just died of laughter!

The R.A.F., on land employed,
At fighting proved a fair force;
It's just as well the Japs destroyed
Our antiquated air force.

Cheer up! Though Nippon has in tow
This Prisonnier de Guerre force,
By 1946, or so,
Our side may have an air force!



THE FRIED EGG FLAG

Our GHQ adjured us
 To give 'em blow for blow;
 Communiques assured us
 We had 'em on the go—
 Their fancies fled, romancing,
 To Chiang-Kai-Chek advancing,
 Upon a white horse prancing,
 And sweeping back the foe!
 (Chiang's nag was far too slow!)

This fairy-tale inspired
 Our dogged, bitter fight;
 Cold, sleepy, wet and tired,
 With empty bellies tight.
 Fresh hordes of Japs would slide up
 Their tempting flag would glide up—
 A fried egg, sunny side up
 Upon a field of white.
 (My God! We'd like a bite!)

Jap bombers, unrestricted,
 Wrought havoc, having fun;
 Insignia depicted
 What might have been a sun—
 But when we got acquainted,
 We oft from hunger fainted
 To see each wing-tip painted
 With one fried egg, well-done;
 Fried on all sides but one!

Those Japs were seldom halted
 Behind that "strange device"
 It "egged" 'em on, exalted,
 They followed it with spice;
 Their slant eyes on it rested,
 They mentally digested
 Heraldic hen-fruit crested,
 Couchant, on field of rice;
 And gladly paid the price!

We're now incarcerated
 Japan's our frugal host
 With appetites unsated,
 We see the constant ghost
 Of all the ways we've tried egg,
 But mostly golden fried egg,
 A done-on-just-one-side-egg
 Rampant, on buttered toast;
 And that's what haunts us most!

Tho' this resolve seems hasty,
 Let's strike the Jack, say I;
 Run up a flag more tasty,
 More pleasing to the eye.
 We'd never take a lickin'—
 Behind the flag I'm pickin'—
 May I suggest fried chicken
 Volant, on toasted rye?
 (For which we'd gladly die!)