

# The Good Soldier

## Švejk:

*the first assorted short sketches*



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## INTRODUCTION

*It was in May 1911 that Hašek first hit on the idea of creating the character which made him famous throughout the world, the Good Soldier Švejk.*

*Hašek's son, Richard, who is still alive, recalls being told by his mother, Jarmila, how his father first came to invent the Good Soldier. This is how she remembered the event:*

*"One evening in May Hašek returned home very exhausted. But he still had enough strength and will at that hour to set down in a few words an idea which was continually haunting him. Hardly had he woken up next morning, however, than he started searching for a small scrap of paper, on which, as he maintained, he had noted down a brilliant idea, which to his horror he had forgotten by the morning. In the meantime I had thrown that scrap of paper onto the rubbish heap. Hašek rushed to look for it and was enormously happy when he found the crumpled paper at last. He picked it up, carefully read its contents, crumpled it up again, and threw it away. I rescued it once more and preserved it in safe-keeping. On it was clearly written and underlined the headline of a story: 'The Idiot in the Company'. Underneath came a sentence which was just legible: 'He had himself examined to prove that he was capable of serving as a regular soldier.' There then followed some further words which were illegible." Obviously any Czech who tried to prove that he was fit to serve in the Austrian army must have been an idiot!*

*In that same month Hašek wrote his first five stories about Švejk and published them in Caricatures, a weekly,*

*edited by the cartoonist Lada who was later to contribute the illustrations for the final book, The Good Soldier Švejk. The first of his stories was called "Švejk Stands Against Italy". It was followed by four others.*

## Švejk stands against Italy

ŠVEJK JOINED UP WITH A HAPPY HEART. HIS OBJECT WAS TO HAVE fun in the army and he succeeded in astonishing the whole garrison in Trient including the garrison commander himself. Švejk always had a smile on his lips, was amiable in his behaviour, and perhaps for that reason found himself continually in gaol.

And when he was let out of gaol he answered every question with a smile. And with complete equanimity he let himself be gaoled again, inwardly happy at the thought that all the officers of the whole garrison in Trient were frightened of him — not because of his rudeness, oh no, but because of his polite answers, his polite behaviour, and his amiable and friendly smile, all of which anguished them.

An inspecting officer came into the men's quarters. A smiling Švejk, sitting on his camp bed, greeted him politely: "Humbly report, praise be to Jesus Christ."

Lieutenant Walk ground his teeth at the sight of Švejk's sincere, friendly smile and would have relished knocking Švejk's cap straight on his head to make it conform with regulations. But Švejk's warm and fervent look restrained him from any such display.

Major Teller came into the room. Lieutenant Walk sternly

eyed the men, who stood at their camp beds, and said, "You, Švejk, bring your *kver* \* here!"

Švejk carried out the order conscientiously and, instead of bringing his rifle, brought him his pack. Major Teller looked furiously at his charming innocent countenance and flew at him in Czech: "You do not know what is *kver*?"

"Humbly report, I don't." And so they took him straight away to the office. They brought in a rifle and stuck it under his nose: "What's this? What's it called?" "Humbly report, I don't know." "It's a *kver*." "Humbly report, I don't believe it."

He was put in gaol and the prison warder considered it his duty to tell him that he was an ass. The rank and file marched out for heavy exercises in the mountains, but Švejk sat behind bars smiling placidly.

As they could do nothing whatsoever with him, they appointed him orderly to the one-year volunteers. He served at lunch and dinner in the officers' club.

He laid the knives and forks, brought in the food, beer, and wine, sat down modestly by the door, and uttered from time to time: "Humbly report, gentlemen, Lieutenant Walk is a nice gentleman, yes, a very nice gentleman indeed." And he smiled and blew his cigarette smoke into the air.

Another day there was an inspection at the officers' club. Švejk was standing modestly by the door and a new officer was unlucky enough to ask him which company he belonged to.

"Humbly report, if you please, I don't know." "Hell's bells, which regiment is stationed here?" "Humbly report, if you please, I don't know." "For Christ's sake, man, what's the name of the garrison town here?" "Humbly report, if you please, I don't know."

"Then, man, how on earth did you get here?"

With an amiable smile and looking at the officer in a sweet

\* The Lieutenant and the Major both speak a kind of pidgin Czech. "Kver" ("Gewehr") is not a Czech word and Švejk is fully justified in not understanding it.

and extremely pleasant manner, Švejk said, "Humbly report, I was born, and after that I went to school. Later I learned to be a master joiner. After that they brought me to an inn, and there I had to strip naked. A few months later the gendarmes came for me and took me off to the barracks. At the barracks they examined me and said, 'Man, you're three weeks late in beginning your military service. We're going to put you in gaol.' I asked why, when I didn't want to join the army and didn't even know what a soldier was. All the same they clapped me in gaol, then put me on a train and took me all over the place until we reached here. I didn't ask anyone what regiment, company, or town it was, so as not to offend anyone, but immediately during my first drill they gaoled me because I lit a cigarette in the ranks, although I don't know why. Then they put me in gaol whenever I appeared, first because I lost my bayonet, then because I nearly shot the Colonel at the rifle butts, until finally I'm serving the one-year volunteer gentlemen."

The good soldier Švejk fixed the officer with the radiant look of a child and the latter did not know whether to laugh or get angry.

Christmas Eve was approaching. The one-year volunteers had decorated a Christmas tree in the club and after dinner the Colonel gave a moving address, saying that Christ was born, as all of them knew, and that he was delighted in having good soldiers and that every good soldier should be delighted with himself. . . .

And at that moment, in the midst of this solemn address, a fervent voice could be heard: "Oh yes, indeed! That's so."

It came from the good soldier Švejk, who stood with a beaming face, unobserved among the one-year volunteers.

"You, volunteers," roared the Colonel, "who was it who shouted that?" Švejk stepped forward from the ranks of the one-year volunteers and looked smilingly at the Colonel: "Humbly report, sir, I serve the one-year volunteer gentlemen here and I was very happy to hear what you kindly said just now. You've got your heart and soul in your job."

When the bells in Trient rang for the midnight Mass the good soldier Švejk had been sitting in clink for more than an hour.

On that occasion he was locked up for a pretty long time. Later they hung a bayonet on him and assigned him to a machine-gun section.

There were grand manoeuvres on the Italian frontier and the good soldier Švejk marched after the army.

Before the expedition he had listened to a cadet's speech: "Imagine that Italy has declared war on us and we are marching against the Italians."

"Good, then, forward march!" Švejk exclaimed, for which he got six days.

After having served this punishment he was sent after his machine-gun section together with three other prisoners and a corporal. First they marched along a valley, then they went on horse-back up to the mountains, and as could have been expected, Švejk got lost in the dense forest on the Italian frontier. He squeezed his way through the undergrowth, searching vainly for his companions until he safely crossed the Italian frontier in full equipment.

And it was there that the good soldier Švejk distinguished himself. A machine-gun section from Milan had just had manoeuvres on the Austrian frontier and a mule with a machine-gun and eight men got up onto the plateau, on which the good soldier Švejk was making his reconnaissance.

The Italian soldiers, feeling confidently secure, had crawled quietly into a thicket and gone to sleep. The mule with the machine-gun was busily pasturing and straying further and further away from its detachment, until finally it came to the spot where the good soldier Švejk was smilingly looking at the enemy.

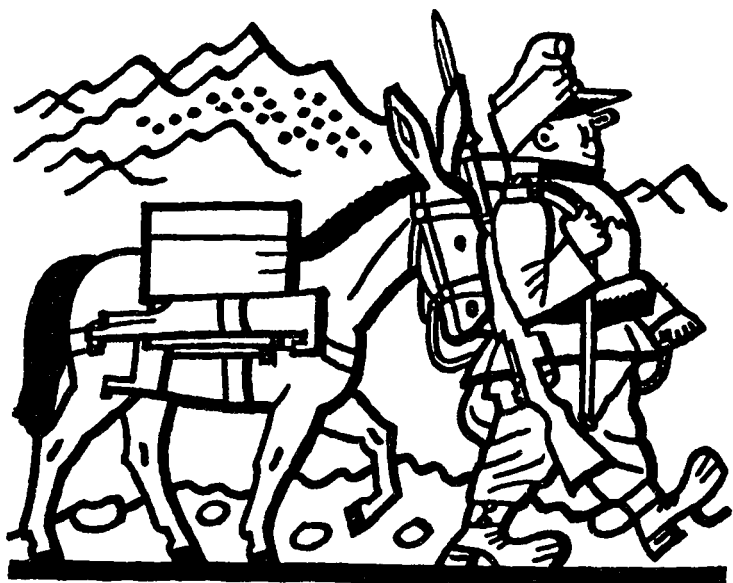
The good soldier Švejk took the mule by the bridle and went back to Austria together with the Italian machine-gun on the back of the Italian mule.

From the mountain slopes he got down again into the valley from which he had climbed up, wandered about with the mule in a forest for the whole day, until at last in the evening he caught sight of the Austrian camp.

The guard did not want to let him in, because he did not

know the password. An officer ran up and Švejk smilingly assumed a military posture and saluted: "Humbly report, sir, I've captured a mule and a machine-gun from the Italians."

And so they led off the good soldier Švejk to the garrison gaol, but we now know what the latest Italian machine-gun type looks like.





# The good soldier Švejk provides wine for the mass

THE ARMY VICAR APOSTOLIC, KOLOMAN BELOPOTCZKY, BISHOP of Trical, appointed Augustin Kleinschrodt chaplain of the garrison in Trient. There is a great difference between an ordinary cleric, that is to say a civilian priest, and an army chaplain. The latter perfectly combines religion with soldiering so that two utterly distinct castes are compounded together in him and the difference between the two types of clergy is as great as that between a lieutenant in the dragoons who instructs at a military riding academy and the owner of a riding school.

An army chaplain is paid by the State. He is a military official with a certain rank and has the right to carry a sabre and to fight duels. It is true that the civilian priest also gets pay from the State but he has to try to get money out of the faithful as well so as to live in comfort.

A soldier need not salute an ordinary priest, but must pay an army chaplain the appropriate honours, otherwise he will be sent to gaol. And so God has two representatives here, one civilian and the other military.

The civilian priests must look after political agitation whereas the military chaplains have to confess the soldiers and send them to gaol, which certainly is what the Lord had in mind when He first created this sinful world and later Augustin Kleinschrodt too.

When this reverend gentleman rolled about the streets of Trient, he looked from the distance like a comet which a wrathful god was resolved to visit upon this unfortunate town. He was awful in his majesty, and rumour had it that in Hungary he had already fought three duels, in which he had cut off the noses of his adversaries from the officers' club, who had been too lukewarm in their faith.

After having so voluminously reduced unbelief he was transferred to Trient just at the time when the good soldier Švejk had left the garrison gaol and returned to his company, to continue the defence of his fatherland.

At this time the spiritual father of the garrison in Trient was looking for a new servant and personally went to choose one from among the men of the garrison.

No wonder that, when he walked through the rooms, his gaze fell on the good-natured face of the soldier Švejk and he patted him on the shoulder and said, "You will come with me!" The good soldier Švejk began to make excuses, saying that he had done nothing wrong, but the corporal gave him a push and led him away to the office.

In the office, after prolonged excuses, the NCO told the chaplain that the good soldier Švejk was a "dirty beast" but the Reverend Kleinschrodt interrupted him: "A dirty beast can have a good heart all the same." To this the good soldier Švejk meekly nodded his head. His smiling rounded face with its honest eyes beamed from the corner of the room and the army spiritual pastor, after seeing this good-natured head, refused even to look at the good soldier Švejk's punishment book.

From that moment Švejk began to lead a life of bliss. He secretly drank the wine for the mass and cleaned his superior's horses so beautifully that once the Reverend Kleinschrodt praised him for it.

"Humbly report," the good soldier Švejk put in, "I do everything possible to make him just as fine as you, sir."

Then came the great days when the garrison lay in camp at Castelnuovo, and a drumhead mass was to be served there.

For church purposes Augustin Kleinschrodt never used anything else but wine from Vöslau in Lower Austria. He could not stand Italian wine, and so it transpired that, when supplies ran out, he called the good soldier Švejk to him and said, "Tomorrow morning you will go to the town for wine from Vöslau in Lower Austria. You'll get money in the office and you'll bring me an eight-litre cask. Come back at once! Now, remember, from Vöslau in Lower Austria. Dismiss!"

The next day Švejk received twenty crowns, and to forestall the sentry stopping him from entering the camp on his return a permit was made out for him: "On Official Duty for Wine."

The good soldier Švejk went off to the town, conscientiously repeating to himself throughout the whole length of the journey "Vöslau, Lower Austria". He said the words out loud at the station too, and in three-quarters of an hour he was travelling contentedly in the train to Lower Austria.

That day the dignity of the drumhead mass was only marred by the bitterness of the Italian wine in the jug.

By the evening Augustin Kleinschrodt had convinced himself that the good soldier Švejk was a scoundrel, who had forgotten his military obligations.

The frightful oaths of the chaplain could be heard all over the camp and were carried up to the giant Alps and merged into the valley of the Adige in the direction of Merano, where a few hours previously the good soldier Švejk had been travelling on his way with a smile of contentment and in the blissful knowledge that he was honestly performing his duty.

He sped along the valley, passed through tunnels, and at every station asked impassively, "Vöslau, Lower Austria?"

At last the station at Vöslau received its first sight of the good-natured face, and the good soldier Švejk presented to a man in an official cap his official military permit: "On Official Duty for Wine."

Smiling sweetly, he asked where the barracks were.

The man in the cap asked him for his itinerary. The good soldier Švejk averred that he did not know what an itinerary was.

And then two more men in caps came and they started to explain to him that the nearest barracks were in Korneuburg.

And so the good soldier Švejk bought a ticket to Korneuburg and travelled on further.

In Korneuburg there was a railway regiment and at the barracks they were very astonished when the good soldier Švejk appeared at night at the gates and showed the sentry his permit: "On Official Duty for Wine."

"Let's leave that until the morning," said the sentry. "The inspecting officer has just gone to sleep."

In the happy knowledge that he was doing what he could for the State the good soldier Švejk lay down on a bunk and fell contentedly asleep.

In the morning they took him to the office stores. There he showed the quartermaster NCO his permit: "On Official Duty for Wine", a pass with the official stamp: "Camp — Castelnuovo Rgt. 102, Bat. 3", and the signature of the orderly officer of the day.

The NCO, his eyes agape, took him to the regimental office where he was subjected to cross-examination by the colonel.

"Humbly report," said the good soldier Švejk, "I have come from Trient on the orders of the Reverend Chaplain Augustin Kleinschrodt. I am to bring back an eight-litre cask of wine for mass from Vöslau."

A great council followed. His good-natured, simple face, his frank military bearing, and his permit "On Official Duty for Wine", with its properly verified stamp and signature, all made a most favourable impression and rendered the whole affair even more confused.

A major debate took place and the opinion was expressed that the Reverend Chaplain Augustin Kleinschrodt had probably gone mad and there was nothing to be done but send the good soldier Švejk back with an itinerary.

And so the NCO prepared an itinerary for him. He was a decent man and did not worry about a kilometre or two, so he drew up a journey for him via Vienna, Graz, Zábřeh, Triest, and Trient. His journey was reckoned to last two days. They gave him 1

crown 60. The NCO bought him a ticket and out of fellow feeling the cook put three loaves of army bread into his hand.

Meanwhile in Castelnuovo the chaplain was walking up and down the camp, grinding his teeth and saying nothing except "Seize him, bind him and shoot him!"

The good soldier Švejk had been entered in the records as a deserter, and imagine the surprise when on the fourth day at night he appeared at the entrance to the camp and with a smile handed over to the sentry his itinerary from Korneuburg and his permit from the camp, "On Official Duty for Wine".

They immediately took hold of him and to his utter astonishment put him in irons and led him off to a hut, where they locked him up. In the morning they took him off to the barracks in the town.

At the same time there came a communication from the railway regiment at Korneuburg, in which the colonel enquired why the Reverend Chaplain Augustin Kleinschrodt had sent the soldier Švejk to Korneuburg for wine from Vöslau.



After the soldier Švejk had been cross-examined and had frankly and with a happy smile told how everything happened, there was a long consultation, and the Reverend Chaplain Augustin Kleinschrodt went to visit the good soldier Švejk in gaol.

“The best thing you can do Švejk, you idiot, would be to have yourself ‘superarbitrated’ so that we have no more trouble with you.”

And then the good soldier Švejk looked with great sincerity at the chaplain and said, “Humbly report, sir, I shall serve His Imperial Majesty the Emperor to my last breath.

## The good soldier Švejk and the “superarbitration” procedure

IN EVERY ARMY THERE ARE SCOUNDRELS, WHO DO NOT WANT TO serve. They are only too happy if they can become common or garden civilian oafs. Cunning fellows like them complain, for instance, of having weak hearts, although as is revealed afterwards by the autopsy, they probably have nothing more than appendicitis. In this and similar ways they try to get out of their military duty. But woe betide them! There still exists the “superarbitration” procedure, which will damned well put a stop to their tricks. Some bastard complains he has flat feet. The army doctor prescribes him Glauber’s salt and an enema and, flat feet or no flat feet, he runs as though he were on fire, and the next morning they lock him up in gaol.

Another rogue complains that he has cancer of the stomach. They lay him on the operating table and say to him, “We’ll open up your stomach without an anaesthetic.” Hardly have they said that, when his cancer is all done with and he marches off to clink miraculously cured.

The “superarbitration” procedure is a real blessing for the army. Without it every recruit would feel ill and incapable of carrying his pack. “Superarbitration” is a word of Latin origin. “*Super*” means “over” or “beyond”, “*arbitrare*” means “investigate, observe”. So “superarbitration” means “overinvestigation”.

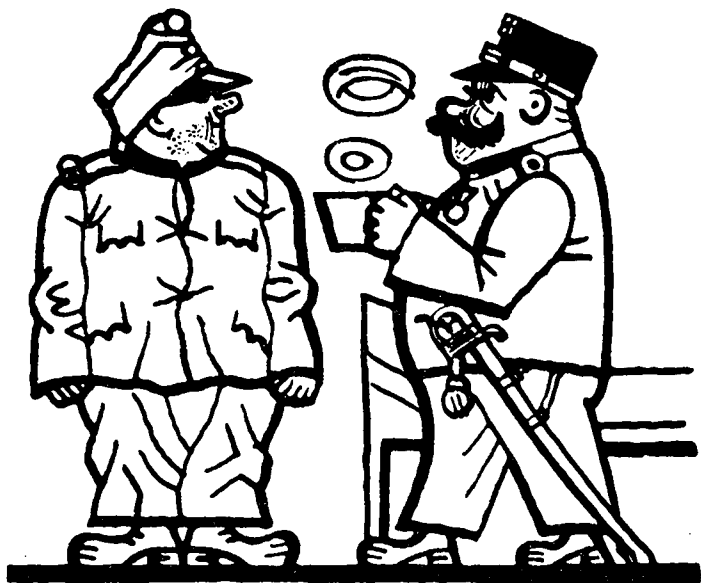
A staff doctor put it very neatly. "Whenever I examine a man, who has reported sick," he said, "I do so in the conviction that it is not a question of *superarbitrare* ('overinvestigation') but rather of *superdubitare* ('beyond doubt'): it's beyond all doubt that he's as hale and hearty as an ox. It is on this principle that I work. I prescribe quinine and a strict diet. After three days he begs me in God's name to discharge him from the hospital. And if a malingerer like that dies in the meantime, then you can be sure he does it on purpose just to annoy us and avoid going to gaol for his fraud. All right, then, *superdubitare* and not *superarbitrare*."

Doubt everyone until his very last breath.

And so, when they wanted to "superarbitrate" the good soldier Švejk, all the companies envied him.

When the prison warder brought him his lunch in his cell, he said to him, "You're in luck, you bastard. You'll go home and be 'superarbitrated' like greased lightning."

But the good soldier Švejk said to him exactly what he had told the Reverend Chaplain Augustin Kleinschrodt: "Humbly report, if you please, sir, that won't do. I'm as fit as a fiddle and





want to serve His Majesty the Emperor to my last breath." With a blissful smile he lay down on the bunk. The warder reported this remark of Švejk's to the officer on duty, Müller.

Müller ground his teeth and shouted, "We'll teach that bastard not to think he can stay in the army. He'll have to get spotted typhus at the very least, even if it drives him round the bend."

Meanwhile the good soldier Švejk explained to his fellow-prisoner from the company: "I'm going to serve His Imperial Majesty to my very last breath. Here I am and here I stay. When I'm a soldier, I must serve His Imperial Majesty and no one can chuck me out of the army, not even if the general himself came, kicked me in the backside and threw me out of the barracks. I should only come back to him and say: 'Humbly report, sir, I want to serve His Imperial Majesty to my very last breath and I am returning to the company.' And if they don't want to have me here, I'll go to the navy so that I can at least serve His Imperial Majesty at sea. And if they don't want me there either and His Lordship, the Admiral, gives me a kick in the backside there too, then I'll serve His Imperial Majesty in the air."

However, the candid opinion prevailing throughout the whole barracks was that the good soldier Švejk would be thrown out of the army. On June 3rd they came for him in the prison with a stretcher, bound him to it with straps in spite of his furious resistance, and bore him off to the garrison hospital. Wherever they carried him, there rang out from the stretcher his patriotic battle-cry: "Soldiers, don't let them take me! I want to go on serving His Imperial Majesty."

They put him in the section for gravely ill patients and Staff Doctor Jansa gave him a cursory examination: "You have a swollen liver and fatty degeneration of the heart, Švejk. You're finished. We'll have to discharge you from the army."

"Humbly report, sir," Švejk put in, "I'm as fit as a fiddle. What would the army do without me, humbly report, sir? I want to go back to my company, humbly report, sir, and go on serving His Imperial Majesty loyally and honourably, as befits a proper soldier."

They prescribed him an enema, and when the Ukrainian

medical orderly, Bochkovsky, was administering it to him, the good soldier Švejk said with dignity in this delicate situation, "Brother, don't spare me. If I was not afraid of the Italians, I shan't be afraid of your enema either. A soldier must not fear anything and must serve. Remember that!"

Then they took him outside and in the latrine he was guarded by a soldier with a loaded rifle.

Then they put him back on to the bed, and the medical orderly Bochkovsky walked round him and sighed. "You stinking hound, you, have you any parents?"

"Yes, I have."

"Don't imagine you'll ever get out of here, you malingerer."

The good soldier Švejk gave him one across the jaw.

"Me a malingerer! I'm completely fit and want to serve His Imperial Majesty to my very last breath."

They put him on ice. For three days he was wrapped up in ice compresses, and when the staff doctor came round and said to him, "Very well then, Švejk, you can go home from the army all the same," Švejk declared, "Humbly report, sir, I have been fit all the time and I want to go on serving."

They put him back on ice and the "superarbitration" commission, which would discharge him from his military duties for ever, was due to meet in two days' time.

However, the day before the meeting, when his discharge papers were already made out, the good soldier Švejk deserted from the barracks.

To be able to go on serving His Imperial Majesty he had had to run away and for a fortnight there was no trace of him.

But imagine everyone's amazement when, after a fortnight, the good soldier Švejk appeared at the gates of the barracks in the middle of the night and, with his honest smile on his round, contented face, reported to the sentry: "Humbly report, I've come to be locked up in gaol, because I dissented so as to be able to go on serving His Imperial Majesty until my very last breath."

His wish was granted. He was gaoled for half a year, and when he still wanted to go on serving, they transferred him to the arsenal, to load torpedoes with gun cotton.

# The good soldier Švejk learns how to handle gun cotton

AND IT WAS JUST AS THE REVEREND CHAPLAIN TOLD HIM: "Švejk, you bastard, if you really want to serve, then you're going to serve right in the middle of the gun cotton. Perhaps that will do you good there."

And so the good soldier Švejk began to learn how to handle gun cotton at the arsenal. He charged torpedoes with it. Service of this kind is no joke because when you're doing it you've always got one foot in the air and the other in the grave.

But the good soldier Švejk was not afraid. Like the honest soldier he was, he lived quite happily in the midst of the dynamite, ecrasite, and gun cotton. And from the hut, where he was charging the torpedoes with the dreadful explosive material, his song could be heard:

Piedmont, Piedmont, rataplan!  
Behind you have fallen the gates of Milan,  
The gates of Milan and bridges four.  
Stronger defences you'll need and more.  
Build more advance posts. Yours are too few.  
A regiment of lancers I raised against you.  
But you drove it beyond the gates of Milan.  
Rataplan, rataplan, rataplan.

After this beautiful song, which made a lion of the good soldier Švejk, there followed other moving songs about dumplings as big as cartwheels, which the good soldier Švejk used to swallow with indescribable delight.

And so he lived happily in the midst of the gun cotton, all by himself in one of the huts in the arsenal.

And then one day there was an inspection. The inspectors went from hut to hut to check that everything was in order.

When they came to the hut where the good soldier Švejk was learning how to handle gun cotton, they saw — from the cloud of tobacco smoke which rose up from his pipe — that he was a very intrepid warrior.

Švejk, seeing the military gentlemen, stood up and, in accordance with regulations, took the pipe out of his mouth. But to keep it handy, he set it down in the nearest possible place, which happened to be an open steel barrel containing gun cotton. As he did so he declared, saluting, "Humbly report, sirs, there's nothing new and everything is in order."



There are moments in human life when presence of mind plays a crucial role.

The cleverest man in the whole group was the colonel. Rings of tobacco smoke rose from the gun cotton, so he said, "Švejk, carry on smoking!"

Those were wise words; a lighted pipe is definitely better in someone's mouth than in gun cotton. Švejk saluted and said, "Humbly report, sir, I shall carry on smoking."

He was an obedient soldier.

"And now, Švejk, come to the guardroom!"

"Humbly report, sir, I cannot, because according to regulations I have to remain here until six o'clock, when they will come to relieve me. There must always be someone by the gun cotton to prevent an accident."

The inspectors vanished. They trotted off to the guardhouse, where they gave orders for a patrol to go and fetch Švejk.

The patrol went off reluctantly, but they went none the less.

When they arrived in front of the hut where the good soldier Švejk with his lighted pipe was serving His Imperial Majesty in the midst of the gun cotton, the lance-corporal called out, "Švejk, you bastard, throw your pipe out of the window and come out yourself."

"Not a chance! The colonel gave orders that I should carry on smoking, so I must carry on smoking until there isn't a bone left in my body."

"Come out, you bloody fool!"

"But, humbly report, I can't, please. It's only four o'clock and I can't be relieved until six. Until six o'clock I've got to be by the gun cotton, so that there shouldn't be an accident. I'm being very care. . . ."

He never succeeded in saying "ful". Perhaps you've read of that terrible catastrophe in the arsenal. Hut after hut went up into the air as the whole of it exploded in three-quarters of a second.

It began in the hut where the good soldier Švejk was learning how to handle gun cotton, and planks, battens, and iron constructions, flying in from all sides, formed a tomb over it, to pay the last honours to the brave Švejk, who was not afraid of gun cotton.

For three days the sappers worked on the ruins and fitted together heads, trunks, arms, and legs, so that the good Lord on the day of the Last Judgement would have less trouble in distinguishing between the various ranks and in rewarding them accordingly. It was really like trying to solve a jig-saw puzzle. They were three days clearing away the planks and iron constructions from Švejk's tomb as well and on the night of the third day when they penetrated to the centre of that heap of rubble they heard a pleasant voice singing:

The gates of Milan and bridges four.  
Stronger defences you'll need and more.  
Build more advance posts. Yours are too few.

By the light of torches they dug in the direction of the voice:

A regiment of lancers I raised against you.  
But you drove it beyond the gates of Milan.  
Rataplan, rataplan, rataplan.

In the glare of the torches they saw a kind of cave, made out of iron constructions and piled-up planks, and there in a corner they saw the good soldier Švejk. He took his pipe out of his mouth, saluted and said, "Humbly report, sirs, there's nothing to report and everything is in order."

They pulled him out of that ruined inferno, and the good soldier Švejk, when he was in the presence of the officer, repeated once more, "Humbly report, sir, everything is in order and may I please be relieved, because it's long past six o'clock and could I also have my mess allowance for the time when it all fell on me?"

The valiant soldier was the only one in the entire arsenal who survived the catastrophe.

That evening a little ceremony was arranged in his honour by the military, in the officers' club in the town. Surrounded by officers, the good soldier Švejk drank like a fish, and his round good-natured face beamed with joy.

The next day he got his mess allowance for three days, just as though he had been in the war, and three weeks later he was promoted to corporal in his company and awarded the Great War Medal. Decorated with this and his corporal's stars, he marched into his barracks in Trient, where he met the officer Knobloch, who started to tremble when he saw the much-feared, good-humoured face of the good soldier Švejk.

"You've certainly done it this time, you bastard," he said to him.

Švejk answered with a smile, "Humbly report, sir, I've learned how to handle gun cotton." And in an exalted frame of mind he went into the yard to look for his company.

That same day the orderly officer of the day read to the men an announcement from the Ministry of Defence about the setting up of an aeroplane section in the army and inviting anyone who liked to volunteer.

The good soldier Švejk stepped forward and reporting to the officer said, "Humbly report, sir, I've already been in the air and I know it, and now I want to serve His Imperial Majesty up there."

And so a week later the good soldier Švejk made a pilgrimage to the aeronautical section where he behaved just as circumspectly as he had done in the arsenal, as you will see later.

# The good soldier Švejk operates in aeroplanes

AUSTRIA HAS THREE DIRIGIBLE AIRSHIPS, EIGHTEEN NON-dirigible (because they cannot be driven at all), and five aeroplanes. This is the sum total of the might of Austria in the air. They seconded the good soldier Švejk to the Aeroplane Division so that he could serve to the honour and adornment of this new detachment of the army. At first he towed the planes out to the hangars on the military aerodrome and cleaned their metal parts with turpentine and French chalk.

This shows that he started serving with the aeroplanes from the very bottom. And just as he had carefully cleaned the Reverend Chaplain's horse in Trient, so he worked here too on the planes with the same relish, brushing their surfaces exactly as if he were grooming the horse, and, as a ranking corporal, he led the patrols which guarded the hangars, and instructed them as follows: "We've got to fly and so, if anyone tries to steal a plane, just shoot him."

After about a fortnight he was carrying out the duties of a passenger, which was perhaps a very dangerous promotion. He used to provide weight for the plane and fly with the officers. But the good soldier Švejk was not afraid. With a smile he flew into the air, looking meekly and deferentially at the officer who was piloting the plane, and saluting when he saw below him anyone of higher rank moving slowly over the aerodrome.



And when they sometimes crashed and smashed the plane, the first to crawl out of the wreckage was always the good soldier Švejk himself. Helping the officer to get on his legs, he would say, "Humbly report, sir, we've crashed but we're alive and well."

He was a pleasant companion. One day he flew up with an officer called Herzig, and when they found themselves at a height of 826 metres, the engines suddenly stopped.

"Humbly report, sir, we're out of petrol." It was Švejk's pleasant voice coming from the back seat. "Humbly report, sir, I forgot to fill the tank." And a moment later, "Humbly report, sir, we're falling into the Danube."

And when after a while their heads bobbed up out of the rippled, greenish waters of the Danube, the good soldier Švejk, swimming behind the officer towards the bank, said, "Humbly report, sir, today we've set an altitude record."

It was just before the grand military air flights at the aerodrome at Wiener Neustadt.

They examined the planes, tested their engines, and completed the last preparatory work for the flights.

Lieutenant Herzig had decided to fly up with Švejk in a Wright biplane, to which a Morrison instrument had been fitted. With the help of this device it was possible to fly up without a take-off.

Military representatives of foreign powers were present.

Herzig's plane was of great interest to the Romanian major, Gregorescu, who took a seat inside it and had a look at its controls.

At the lieutenant's order the good soldier Švejk started the engine. The propeller began to revolve and Švejk, sitting by the side of the inquisitive Romanian major, found it very interesting to operate the wire cable connecting the rear elevator. He conducted himself with such circumspection that he knocked the major's cap off his head.

Lieutenant Herzig lost his temper: "Švejk, you donkey, you fly off to hell!"

"Order obeyed, sir," Švejk called out and seized the gear elevator and the lever of the Morrison instrument. As the plane

rose from the ground, the regular firings of its excellent engine were audible a long way off.

They flew 20, 100, 300, 450 metres up in a south-westerly direction towards the white Alps at a speed of 150 kilometres per hour.

The unfortunate Romanian major came to himself above a glacier, over which they were flying at a height which made it possible for him to distinguish clearly the beauties of nature beneath, snow-covered fields and chasms gaping sternly and menacingly up at him.

"What's happening?" he asked, stammering with fright.

"We're flying according to orders, please, sir," the good soldier Švejk answered deferentially. "The Lieutenant gave the order 'Fly off to hell' and so we're flying there, please, sir."

"And where are we going to come down?" the inquisitive Major Gregorescu asked, his teeth chattering.

"Please, sir, I don't know where we shall fall. I fly according to orders and I only know how to fly up. I don't know how to come down. We never needed that with the Lieutenant. When we were high up, we just fell down of our own accord."

The altitude meter registered 1,860 metres. The Major gripped the joy-stick convulsively and screamed in Romanian, "Deu! Deu! God! God!" and the good soldier Švejk, deftly operating the elevator, sang above the Alps, which they happened to be flying over:

I'll never wear that ring you gave me.  
Lor' lummy, why ever not?  
When I get back to my regiment  
I'll load it in my gun.

The Major was praying out loud in Romanian and swearing horribly, while through the clear frosty air there rang out once more the clear voice of the good soldier Švejk:

I'll never wear that kerchief you gave me,  
Lor' lummy, why ever not?  
When I get back to my regiment,  
I'll clean my rifle with it.  
Lor' lummy, why ever not?

Beneath them there was lightning flash after lightning flash and a storm raged.

The Major, his eyes wild with horror, stared blankly in front of him and asked in a hoarse voice, "For God's sake, when is this going to end?"

"It will end without any shadow of doubt," the good soldier Švejk smilingly replied. "The Lieutenant and I always fell down somewhere."

They were somewhere above Switzerland and were flying south. "Only have patience, please, sir," said the good soldier Švejk. "When our petrol runs out, we must fall down."

"Where are we?"

"Over water, please, sir. There's a lot of it. Probably we shall fall into the sea."

Major Gregorescu fainted, wedging his fat belly into the joy-stick, so that he was firmly ensconced in the metal construction.

And above the Mediterranean the good soldier Švejk sang:

Who wants to be something,  
Must eat some dumpling.  
Ein, zwei.  
In the army they won't kill him,  
Ein, zwei,  
Because he ate dumpling,  
Army dumpling,  
Big as a soldier's head.  
Ein, zwei.

And the good soldier Švejk went on singing above those vast expanses of sea at the height of a thousand metres.

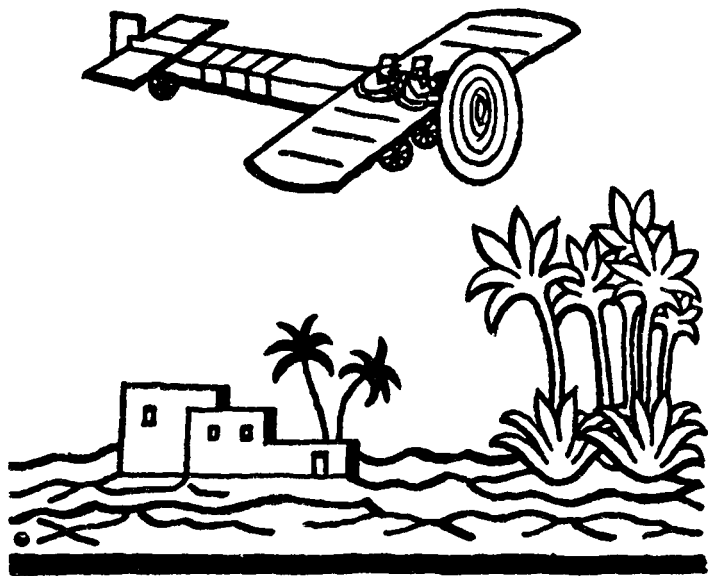
Greneville is marching  
Strolling through the Powder Tower. . . .

The sea air roused the major from his faint. He looked down at those frightful depths and seeing the sea, shouted, "Deu, Deu," and fainted again.

They flew into the night and flew on and on. Suddenly the good soldier Švejk shook the Major and said good-naturedly, "Humbly report, sir, we are flying down and somehow we're free-wheeling."

In a gliding flight the plane, which had run out of petrol, alighted in a palm grove in Tripoli in Africa.

And the good soldier Švejk, helping the Major out of the plane, saluted and said, "Humbly report, sir, everything is in order."



The good soldier Švejk had registered a world record when he flew over the Alps, Southern Europe, and the Mediterranean Sea and alighted in Africa.

The Major, seeing palms around him, gave Švejk two clouts over the head, which he accepted with a smile, for he had only done his duty when Lieutenant Herzig said to him, "Fly to hell!"

It is difficult to relate what happened afterwards, because it would be very disagreeable for the Ministry of War. They would certainly deny that an Austrian plane had fallen down in Tripoli, for it would confront us with a major international complication.