

THREE CHEVRONS

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Three chevrons by H. F. Bidder

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H. F. BIDDER

**THREE
CHEVRONS**

On Active Service Series.

THREE CHEVRONS

THREE CHEVRONS
BY "OREX"

(MAJOR H. F. BIDDER, D.S.O.)

LONDON: JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY MCMXIX

DEDICATED TO
THE YOUNG MEN WHO HAVE FALLEN
IN THE WAR

TWENTY-TWO

Twenty-two

*At the end of the week, if he'd seen it through,
We left his grave in the curé's hands :
I met him as I was coming away,
A white-haired man in cassock and bands,
And I showed him where it lay.*

"Twenty-two—

*Yet he's older than you or I, m'sien.
And the riddle of Time for him is read,
Yes, I will see the grave kept trim,
And after the prayers for our own are said
I will add a prayer for him."*

Twenty-two—

*Some one will bitterly weep for you,
Yet she'll lift her head with a wonderful pride.
"He was my son, and his life he gave,
Shall I grudge such a gift, though my heart has died ?
He was brave : I must be brave."*

Twenty-two—

*Ah, for the dreams that will never come true !
All that the world should have held in store,
You were willing to die, though you hated to live,
We must be ready to follow, the more
That we're many years less to give.*

FOREWORD

PUBLISHERS, as a rule, look askance at letters; for they know, by experience, how rare it is to come across private correspondence that has either value or interest for any other circle than that of the correspondents' own immediate acquaintance.

Written to relatives or friends, who read them with the eye of affection and the insight of a common understanding, such private letters may be intensely engrossing to their recipients. But take them out of their particular setting: expose them, in the cold light of print, to the eye of a public that reads only the written lines, not having the clues for reading between them—in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred all the interest goes, all the charm evaporates. Their private virtues become, so to speak, public vices. The very qualities that made them so delightful as intimate communica-

tions is fatal to them when collected into a printed book.

In the hundredth case, however, one is fortunate enough to run up against the blessed exception and to find a correspondent whose private letters to his friends have that intrinsic and independent value which can face the searching test of the printed page.

It is so (unless the writer of this foreword is deceived) with the collection of letters contained in the present volume. They were written originally by an officer of the British Army to relatives or friends, describing and commenting on his experiences as they occurred, without any thought of his remarks ever going beyond the family circle. But copies of the letters had been kept for him as interesting memoranda for his future reference; and, quite by chance, he showed some of them one day to the writer of this foreword. The latter, expecting to be rather bored by the perusal of the gallant officer's correspondence with other people, had the agreeable surprise of finding himself a good deal interested and entertained instead. And the outcome of it was that he per-

suaded the officer to let him submit the letters to Mr. John Lane, who, on his reader's report, at once accepted them.

It was the officer's express stipulation that his letters, if published, should be issued exactly as they stood (subject to certain necessary excisions), and not in any way written up for the sake of effect. Not that he supposed them incapable of improvement in that direction, but he felt it would hardly be playing the game. It only remains to say that this stipulation has been strictly observed.

R. M. F.

