

**'D' COMPANY AND
BLACK
'ELL: TWO PLAYS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649763207

'D' company and Black 'ell: two plays by Miles Malleson

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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MILES MALLESON

**'D' COMPANY AND
BLACK
'ELL: TWO PLAYS**

‘D’ Company
and Black ‘Ell
Two Plays by
Miles Malleon

LONDON : HENDERSONS
66 CHARING CROSS ROAD

Preface

'D' COMPANY was written towards the close of 1914, while I was a private in a Territorial battalion at Malta.

It is, in one sense, real: there is scarcely a sentence in it that I did not hear, or an episode I did not witness.

It is, in another sense, unreal: it is impossible, even for the purposes of realism, to set down here in print the actual language of my barrack-room. The three or four unpleasant words that occurred extraordinarily often and in the queerest series of combinations and connections, not only created a certain atmosphere of ugliness that would be necessary for any really true picture of life then, but also supplied a sort of lilt to the conversation that cannot be reproduced without them.

I should like to add here that while those months were, I think, the unhappiest I have lived through, I have the very liveliest memories of much from my companions and friends of 'D' Company, for which I feel I can never be sufficiently grateful.

Some slight foot trouble was responsible for my

being invalided home and out of the Army. That was in January, 1915.

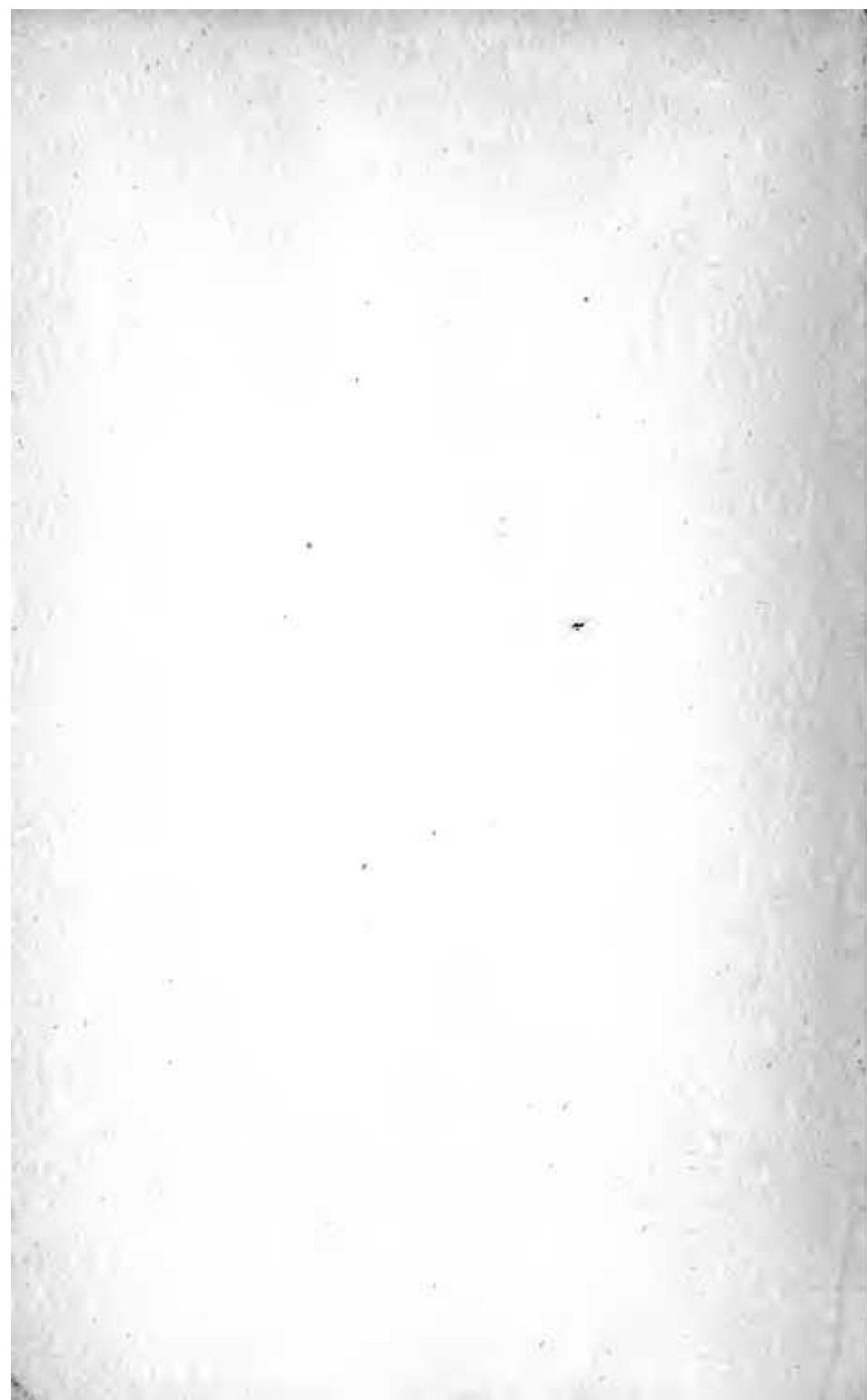
Since then my view of this colossal catastrophe of the war has changed.

'Black 'Ell' has been just recently written.

M. M.

London, September, 1916.

'D' Company



'D' COMPANY

CHARACTERS

PRIVATE ALF TIBBUTT.

PRIVATE TILLEY.

PRIVATE JIM PENLEY.

PRIVATE DENNIS GARSIDE.

CORPORAL CHARLES JOYNER.

AN ORDERLY CORPORAL.

All of 'D' Company in a Territorial Battalion.

SCENE: *A Barrack Room.*

TIME: *October 1914.*

The scene is a men's mess-room in barracks at Malta, in which is stationed an English Territorial regiment, mobilised now and proud of being on the same terms as the regulars; but, having only been soldiers in grim earnest for a short while (the Great War is now in its third month), they are all very much English civilians under their khaki uniforms.

Directly facing the audience are five small folding iron bedsteads, with mattresses, rugs, and coarse white sheets neatly and uniformly folded upon them. Over the beds are

racks upon which the men keep their 'equipment' (belt and shoulder-straps, bayonet-carrier, haversack, water-bottle, mess-tin, entrenching-tool, overcoat, and ammunition pouches—quite a good load on a march), and behind each bed a wooden rest for the rifle. Immediately in front of each bed is a black wooden box in which each man keeps his personal belongings.

About the middle of the stage is a wooden table and two forms at which the men feed. Big windows are in the wall behind the beds—i.e., the wall facing the audience—and the door is in this wall. A wooden cupboard is on one of the side walls.

When the curtain rises, PRIVATE TILLEY is already in bed—a little, round, stubby man with a stubby moustache. Two months ago he delivered coals. Now his mouth is open and he snores.

On the bed next to him sits ALF—a thorough young blackguard; perhaps twenty-two, but he is under-grown and doesn't look it. A van-boy somewhere in the City. Cockney from top to toe. He is cleaning his rifle.

A bugle in the distance sounds the 'Last Post.'

THE ORDERLY CORPORAL passes the window outside and puts his head in.

THE ORDERLY CORPORAL'S HEAD. Where's the Corporal in charge of this room?

ALF. [*Shortly.*] Ain't in yet.

O. C.'S HEAD. Where is 'e?

ALF. Dunno. The Company's on a route march. I'm mess orderly terday.

[*That as an explanation of his presence in the room; the ORDERLY CORPORAL'S eye lights on the snoring TILLEY.*]