

THE SOLDIER'S PRAYER BOOK

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60th Foot Regiment, was taken into
custody for using cards in church during
Divine Service.



THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS

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The following story, which is strictly true, teaches the important lesson that we may make good use of almost every object we see and also that cards may be employed for other, and for better purposes than gambling.

The regiment was on the march from one part of the kingdom to another and, having arrived in the city where this circumstance occurred, on the Saturday, attended Divine Service there on Sunday.

The sergeant had commanded his party to church, the clergyman had ended his prayers and taken his text. All those who had bibles pulled them out to find the text, but Richard Middleton who was as attentive and devout as any of them, but who unfortunately had neither bible nor prayer book, put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a pack of cards, which he spread out before him during the sermon, first looking at one and then at the other. The sergeant of the company, seeing what he was doing, came to him and said, "Richard, put up your cards, this is no place for them." "Never mind," said the soldier, "you have no business with me here." When the sermon was over and the service concluded the soldiers repaired to the church yard and were ordered by the commanding officer to fall in, which they accordingly did. A constable of the city then came and took the soldier into custody. "Man, you are my prisoner," said he. "What have I done that I am to be your prisoner," said the soldier. "You have played a game of cards in church." "No," said the soldier, "I have not played a game, for I have only looked at the pack." "No matter," said the constable, "You are my prisoner." "Well, where do you intend to take me," said the soldier. "You must go before the mayor." said the constable.

So, before the mayor they went, but when they came to his

house they found that he was at dinner. After waiting a while the mayor came to them and said, "Well constable, what is your business with me," "Please, your Worship," said the constable, "I have brought a soldier before you for playing cards in church." "Indeed," said the mayor, "Now soldier what have you to say to this charge?" "Much sir, I hope." said Richard Middleton, "It will be well if you have," said the mayor, "for if you cannot clear yourself, depend on it, you will be punished most severely."

"Your worship," said the soldier, "I have been five weeks upon the march and have but little to subsist upon, and am without bible, prayer book or almanac. My pack of cards serves for the purpose of all three. I hope to satisfy your worship with the purity of my intention."

Then the soldier pulled out of his pocket the pack of cards which he spread out before the mayor. Beginning with ace. "When I see the ace," said he, "it puts me in mind that there is one God only. When I see the deuce it reminds me of the father and the son; and the three puts me in mind of the father, son and Holy Ghost. When I see the four, I think of the four evangelists who wrote the gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the five brings to my recollection the five wise virgins who trimmed their lamps - there were ten but five were foolish and were shut out. When I see the six, I remember that in six days the Lord made Heaven and earth and then the seven reminds me that on the seventh day God rested from all the works which he had created and made, wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. The eight puts me in mind of the eight righteous persons who were saved when God drowned the world - Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives. When I see the nine I am reminded of the nine lepers who were cleansed by our Saviour, there were ten but nine never returned thanks. When I see the ten it puts me in mind of the ten commandments that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai on the two tablets of stone. He then took the knave and laid it aside. When I see the queen it puts me in mind of my duty to pray for Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. I also remember the Queen of Sheba, who came from

the furthest part of the world to hear the wisdom of King Solomon. And when I see the king, I at once remember the great King of Heaven and Earth who is God Almighty. Thus, your worship, there is not a card in the pack but recalls some useful or instructive lesson.” “Well,” said the mayor, “you have given a good description of all the cards but one, which is lacking.” “Which is that sir?” said Richard. “The knave,” said the mayor. “Oh, I can give your worship a good description of that too if you will not be angry.” “No,” said the mayor ... “I will not if you do not make me the knave.” The soldier replied; “The greatest knave that I know of is the constable that brought me here.” “I do not know,” said the mayor, “that he is the greatest knave but I am sure that he is the greatest fool.” “I shall now,” continued the soldier, “show your worship how I use the cards as an almanac.”

“You certainly are a clever fellow,” said the mayor, “but I think you will have a hard matter to make that appear.”

“When I count how many spots there are in a pack of cards I find there are three hundred and sixty-five. There are just so many days in a year.”

“Stop,” said the mayor, “that is a mistake.”

“I grant it,” said the soldier, “but I have never yet seen an almanac that was thoroughly correct in all points, it would have been impossible for me to make one exact without a mistake.” “Your observations are very correct,” said the mayor, “go on.” “When I count how many cards there are in a pack I find there are 52. There are just so many weeks in a year. When I count how many tricks there are in a card pack I find there are 13, the exact number of lunar months in a year. You see Sir, that the pack of cards is a Bible, prayer book and almanac and pack of cards to me.” The mayor then ordered the soldier a plentiful meal of bread and meat with a foaming tankard of ale and when he had finished he gave him half a crown and sent him about his business, saying he was the cleverest man he had ever seen, and so Richard Middleton and the constable parted company.