

*Classy verse from Global Village*

## **Alan Brownjohn**

### **Class Incident from Graves**

Wednesdays were guest night in the mess, when the colonel expected the married officers, who usually dined at home, to attend. The band played Gilbert and Sullivan music behind a curtain ... Afterwards the bandmaster was invited to the senior officers' table for his complimentary glass of Light or Vintage.

*(Good-bye to All That)*

At the officers' table, for half an hour afterwards, port,  
The bandmaster. He accepts, one drink long,  
All the courtesy of the gentlemen. They are suave, and equal.  
'I expect with your job ... Do you find ... Oh well ...'  
The bandmaster edges the shining inch of port along the grain of  
the table,  
Precisely covering one knot with the transparent  
Base of the glass. He crouches forward over the polished wood  
Towards the officers, not comfortably convivial,  
Eyes always going to the face speaking next,  
Deferential, very pleased.  
The band put away their instruments out at the back, having  
Drunk their beers, standing.  
The detachable pieces of brass lie down  
In the felt grooves of the cases, just as they should.  
Nine-thirty strikes.  
There is laughter of men together, coming from inside.  
'Mitchell's still in there, hob-nobbing with the officers.'