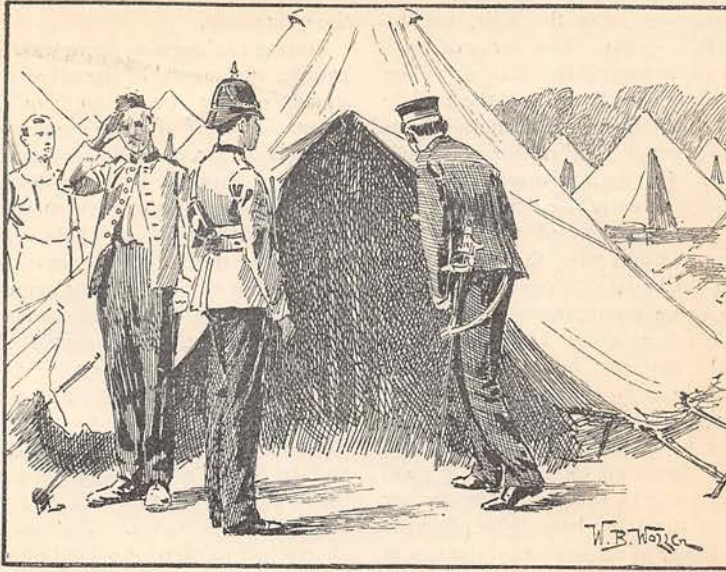


A WEEK IN A CAMP.



THE ORDERLY OFFICER OF THE DAY INSPECTING THE TENT.



THE summer term was over. A cloud of examinations had come and gone, and the only speck upon the horizon was the prospect of a *vivâ voce*. Oxford was looking its best, and ready to face the ordeal of Commemoration. Preparations for numerous amusements were in progress, and the quadrangles in the colleges were decked with flowers of every hue. The city was thronged with fair visitors, the streets were gay with parti-coloured dresses, while the shady banks of the river

Cherwell formed a charming background of green to the visions of beauty which passed along in punts, canoes, and dingheys.

Such was the scene of fascination which one hundred undergraduate volunteers—myself among the number—found the heart to quit, in order to spend a week under the canvas in her Majesty's service. Our camp had been pitched on the top of Headington Hill, a slight eminence within a couple of miles of Oxford. All personal luggage having been transported earlier in the day, on falling in at headquarters we were drawn up in companies, and marched four abreast to the top of the hill. After arrival, the first step was to appropriate a tent. The War Office had been kind enough to reduce the minimum of occupants to three for each tent; so after piling arms within our own lines, several of us

made for a tent, and took possession. The next thing was to secure our sleeping apparatus. Each man was allowed to have a waterproof sheet, a pair of blankets, and a mattress and pillow, which had to be filled with straw from a neighbouring stable. To every tent a lantern was served out, with a pail and bucket. Having secured these necessities, we set to work to arrange the tent. The beds were laid out, the lantern was swung from the cross-bar of the pole, and the rifles fixed to a second bar, with the butts upon the ground and our belts hung round them.

When all these preparations had been completed, we found it was time for mess. Falling in by companies in the "High Street"—an open space running between a couple of the lines—we filed into the marquee, where all meals were served. The officers had a table to themselves, and the men sat at their company's quarters. Each table furnished two orderlies, who had to wait on the rest, and be content with a colder meal. It is needless to add that all were in uniform.

Later in the evening I strolled round the encampment before turning in. Close to the marquee was the orderly tent, distinguishable by its flag. Here the commandant for the day left his directions; here letters were posted and received; here did the officers at times congregate to meditate on the advisability of a court-martial. By the side of the marquee stood another tent of some size. This was the canteen, where anything in the way of cigars, cigarettes, and cyder, liqueurs, lager, and lemonade, strawberries and cream could be obtained for cash. The proprietor did a roaring trade, and was assisted at

times in his laborious task of serving by an energetic volunteer. Beyond the canteen came the reading tent, where various newspapers and periodicals were tossed about upon the tables and the grass. The colonel's sleeping apartment was the next, but he did not spend the night in camp. This array of tents presented quite a picturesque appearance. The regularity of the lines was only broken by the middle street, and the snow-white canvas was in marked contrast to the variegated green of the shrubberies behind.

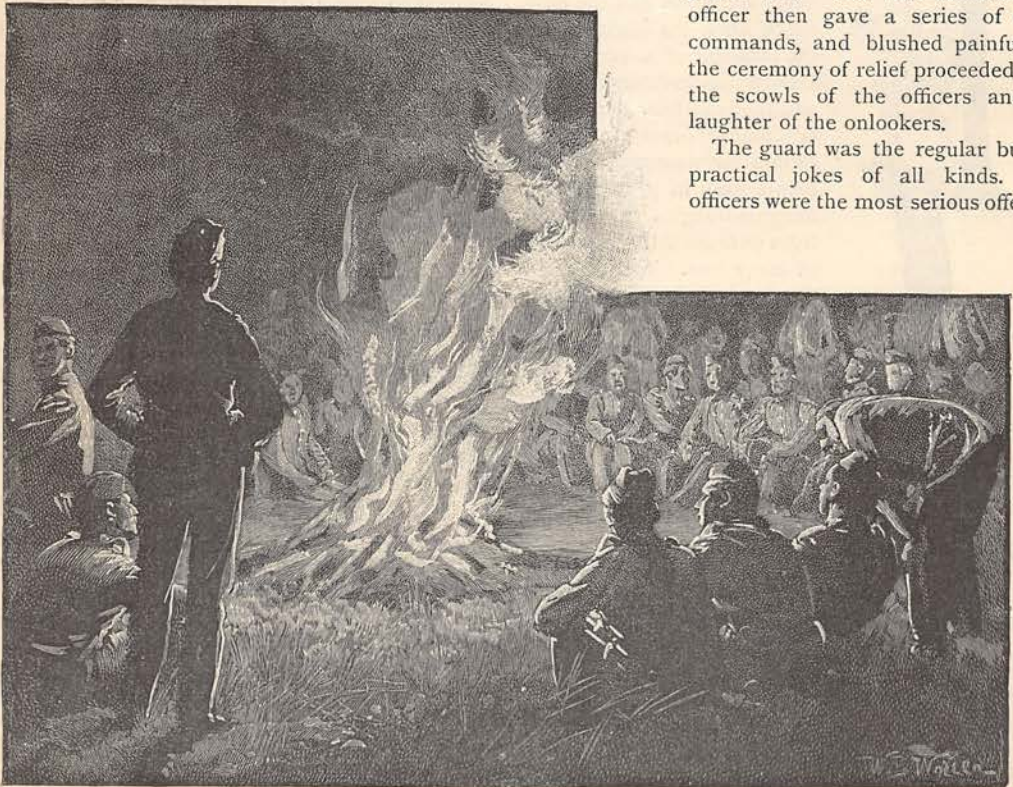
Reveillé! Reveillé! On such a morning as the first no one could grudge an early rise, for the sun was shining gloriously. The problem of ablution now faced the volunteer, and various were the methods of solution. Fetching a bucketful of water from a pump behind the marquee, some attempted a bath in the government tub, while others more wisely were content with a wash; the majority, however, adjourned to the shrubberies, where a dozen larger vessels had been placed, and negotiated with some difficulty a complete bath. Back to the tent, uniform is donned, boots put on, and all hurry off to parade. A good hour's drill, and everyone is sure to be ready for breakfast. Afterwards the tents have to be prepared for inspection. The fringe of canvas round the foot is loosened and reefed up. Paliasses and blankets are rolled and folded, helmet and belt cleaned and polished, and all miscellaneous articles concealed from sight. The inspecting officer comes bustling round,

and detects a blanket folded wrongly, a blank cartridge on the ground, with a box of biscuits and a newspaper protruding from a heap of towels. But a dignified expostulation and a still more dignified salute is the only result.

During the morning there was, as a rule, a battalion parade, and several of the officers were willing to take squads of any size for an hour's drill. One or two companies could often be seen practising physical drill in the High Street. The cyclists also from time to time would go through their wonderful evolutions. After lunch, the programme was somewhat similar. The men were free to wander anywhere within the precincts of the camp, but it was necessary to get leave to be absent from any of the statutory drills. The grounds in which the camp was pitched were of considerable size and beauty, and a couple of tennis-courts were once or twice in requisition.

The guard tent was the scene of some excitement and much amusement. Four men were on watch for a period of twelve hours at a time, three being privates and the fourth a non-commissioned officer. Each of the former had a couple of spells of sentry duty, which lasted for two hours. The corporal or sergeant in charge had to exercise a kind of general control, send in a report to the officer for the day, and see that the sentries were kept at their duty and properly relieved. The relieving of the guard was a more complicated matter. Twice every twenty-four hours the new guard fell in, and was marched up to the guard tent. The non-commissioned officer then gave a series of wrong commands, and blushed painfully as the ceremony of relief proceeded, amid the scowls of the officers and the laughter of the onlookers.

The guard was the regular butt for practical jokes of all kinds. The officers were the most serious offenders

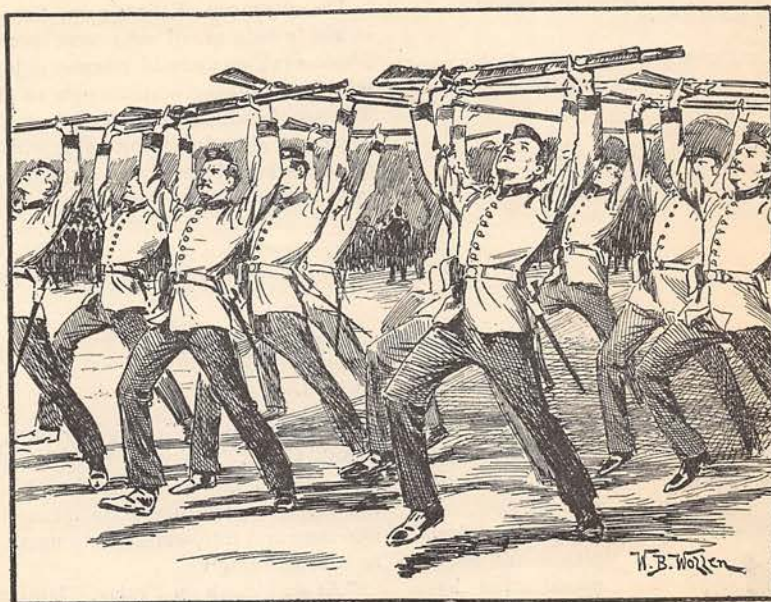


THE CAMP FIRE.

in this respect. They would induce men to attempt to elude the sentry, or to try to pass without a swagger-stick. On one occasion four officers actually leapt into the tent with drawn swords, and captured the entire guard. But there were other methods of rousing the watch. It was easy to fabricate some kind of alarm, and till the very end the guard seemed

marched back in triumph, and found that our only casualties were one officer, who had been raked by a volley from his own men, and one private, who had bashed his head on the butt of his own rifle.

One of the afternoons was devoted to athletic sports. There were some dozen events on the programme, including a three-legged, a sack, and an obstacle race,



PHYSICAL DRILL.

incapable of drawing a distinction between what was true and false. One night it was induced to turn out by the shouts of two men who thought it only fitting that a guest, whom they were escorting to the gate, should be saluted with honours. The guard, however, thought otherwise, and started in pursuit; but a prolonged chase ended in the complete discomfiture of the pursuers. A shot or two fired from a neighbouring shrubbery on another occasion caused it great perplexity. In fact, the whole camp turned out, and did not realise for some time that the attack was that of a single individual.

We had, however, one genuine night attack. The cyclists had slipped away unperceived, and the order "Lights out" had just been given, when intermittent shots were heard about a quarter of a mile away, followed by a small volley. In a moment all was confusion. Some of us had not yet undressed, and were thus able to form part of the advance guard. Twenty rounds of ammunition were served out, and we doubled out to pour a volley into the obnoxious bushes. Two more companies came up to the relief, and in extended order we gradually drove the enemy back. The firing died away; it seemed that the foe had fled. But a volley on the right rear showed us we were mistaken. It was only, however, a parting salute, and a few shots from our rifles produced a deathly silence. We

a cyclist display, a physical drill competition, and a tug-of-war. The earlier part of the afternoon was gloriously fine, and a large number of visitors came up from Oxford to see the sight. The proprietor of the grounds, who was also the colonel of the corps, held a large garden party, and the medical officer was seen walking about in uniform. A capital band also appeared, and remained to discourse popular music during mess. Several of the events caused great amusement, especially the sack and obstacle races. The manœuvring of the cyclists was extremely pretty, though they attempted to occupy attention for too long a time. The physical drill, however, seemed the favourite with the spectators; four companies entered, and the swinging of their rifles and the stamping of their feet were performed in excellent time.

But perhaps the most characteristic feature of the week was the camp fire. When mess was over, one would stroll into the canteen, light a cigarette, and walk across to see the guard relieved. One had hardly returned to one's tent to see that all was ready for the night, when a bright glare appeared at the end of the camp, and the whole of the corps was quickly gathered round it. A shallow ditch had been dug in a square of about fifty feet, and within this the fire was lit, while the ridge which had been piled up outside formed a capacious seat. A fatigue party went

off to fetch the piano from the marquee, while any superfluous energy found an outlet in throwing fuel on the fire. The tongues of flame cast a ruddy light upon the whole circle; and as the evening wore on, shouts arose for various songs, and seldom did the challenged dare to deny the call. For an hour or more the place resounded with the shouts of the chorus. Many an old friend was heard again—again, and again, and again,

"For when I was single my money did jingle;
I long to be single again."

Scotland and Ireland contributed some of the most popular ditties; and on several occasions we heard that

"Phairshon swore a feud
Against ta claan McTavish,
Mairched into ta laand
Ta murrder an' ta raavish."

And we were told that

"Some taalk o Boneyparrry,
An' some about aicarrrty,
Or ainy ither parrry
An' commong vou portay vou."

Other favourite songs were "The Tarpaulin Jacket," "The Costermonger," "John Peel," and many more; and the entertainment closed with the National Anthem.

The memories of these camp fires will long be fresh in the minds of all who were present. In fact, the whole week was one of intense enjoyment. Rain did fall, but nothing was enough to damp our spirits. The way in which we trudged back on the last day in overcoats and drenching rain, whistling and singing till we reached the town, would have cheered the eyes and ears of any patriot.

ERIC.

THE MYSTERIOUS PAINTING.

BY C. N. BARHAM.



IS no secret that I am, unhappily, one of the world's unfortunates.

Undeserved suspicion and misrepresentation have

dogged my footsteps through life. Since my wife—the only being whom I ever really loved—deserted me thirteen years ago, because, being over-persuaded by my brothers, who unfeelingly declined to supply my modest requirements, she believed that I was mad, I have known no peace. Those who were once my friends now

shun me as if I were a leper, and declare that I am a base perverter of the truth; while the vicar considers that I am a rogue, if not a vagabond.

Why is this?

Simply because I have been permitted to penetrate within a veil behind which others cannot pass, and to see and hear things which they are unable to receive. The mystery of the ages is clear to me, the secret of the past is an open vision, and I commune with shadowy forms when and where I will. My superiority to others is the head and front of my offending. It is as great a hardship to be born before one's time as behind it.

On my way to Ludgate Hill, shortly before ten o'clock one Wednesday morning early in May, I met

Cecil Saunders, the rising barrister, at the corner of Foxall Court. We were both brimful of intellectual conversation, but had no time to discharge ourselves: the demands of business are inexorable; for the City, like time and tide, waits for no man. As we separated he said meaningly—

"At six o'clock on Friday. Until that day and hour, adieu."

It was the day for our annual gathering.

Time sped on as if upon wheels in which other wheels had been cunningly secreted, and we assembled punctually at the hour appointed.

There were thirteen of us: men who were comparatively young in years, but matured in wisdom. It was an ill-omened number for a dinner-party, more especially for one which was to be held upon the most unlucky day of the week. It was even more singular and ominous that we actually included among us representatives of no fewer than thirteen distinct callings. At the risk of being wearisome, I will enumerate these. They were the Church, the army, the navy, the bar, the medical profession, the banking interest, and the Nonconformist ministry; the others who were present were a country gentleman, a public schoolmaster, a traveller, a solicitor, an actor, and a musician.

Yet we met after the manner of men of the world, not one of us turning pale or feeling afraid when we realised the grotesque gruesomeness of the situation.

The unreasoning tyranny of days and numbers possesses no terrors for those who, having outgrown and discarded the childish garments of Western superstition, love to bathe in the pellucid waves of Eastern light. As disciples of one whose bodily presence was at Lha Ssa, but whose astral form was frequently in our city, who felt within ourselves the controlling and compelling influences of previous incarnations, we gladly yielded to the will of a master mind. Did not that