

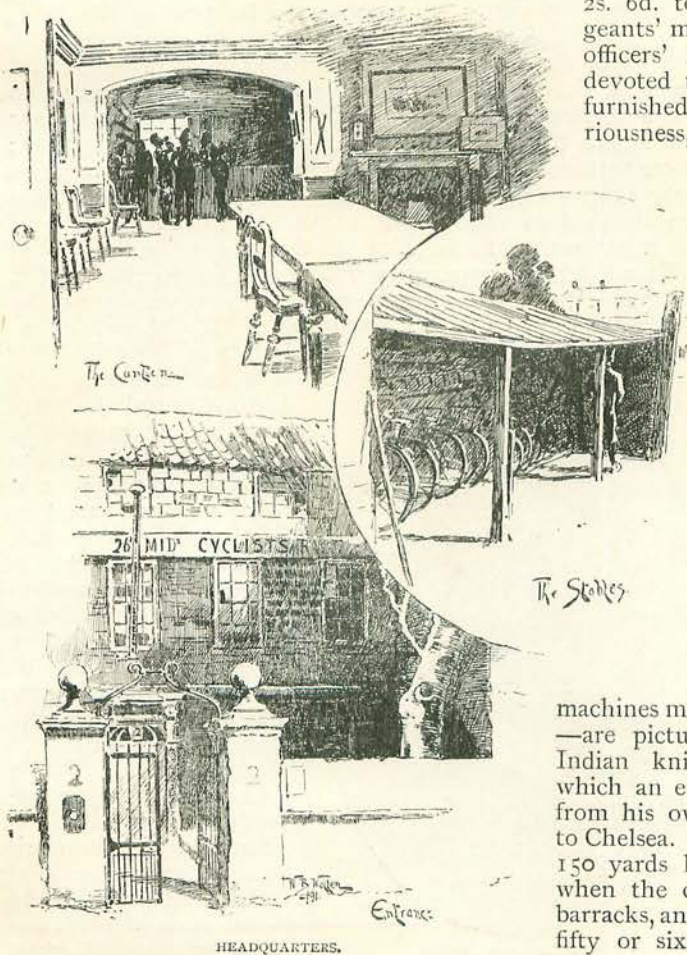
A Regiment on Wheels.



HERE is a house in the Queen's-road, Chelsea, which is not without its history. It stands exactly opposite Chelsea Hospital, and there was a time when gay cavaliers of Charles II.'s reign frequented it, for in those merry days its first bricks were laid. On the top floor a small apartment is still to be seen, in the door of which is a small sliding opening capable of admitting the entrance and exit of a head. Not for decapitation, for tradition says that here stood the fashionable hairdresser, whilst handsome lords and fair ladies placed their heads through the aperture to have their wigs powdered and prevent the spoiling of

their silks and velvets. Here, too, cells with iron gratings in the doors may be found. In 1820 the house was converted into a school of discipline, and so it remained until March of last year, when our regiment on wheels brought with them their iron steeds and transformed it into their "head-quarters." Its solid mahogany doors and ornamented marble mantelpieces remain as they were in the days of old—its gateway is intact, and probably the same fine trees are flourishing, but outside in unmistakable capitals is written, "Headquarters, 26th Midx. Cyclists," with a substantial flag-staff visible. Its fifteen or sixteen rooms now comprise an armoury, with its repairing bench, arm stands, and innumerable lockers, which are leased at a yearly rental of 2s. 6d. to the members. The sergeants' mess is a cosy abode, and the officers' room—to which a corner devoted to smoking is attached—is furnished in a style approaching luxuriousness, with basket and velvet pile chairs. There is an excellent lecture-room, various offices, and the all-important canteen, the speciality of which are its pork pies and sausage rolls, dear to the heart and soothing to the appetite of all average cyclists. Round its walls are many a fine military picture—"Floreast Etona" and "The Last Eleven at Maiwand," "General Roberts" and "Lord Wolseley," the "Queen" and the "Prince of Wales." There, too—possibly as a reminder to cyclists of the distant climes to which their

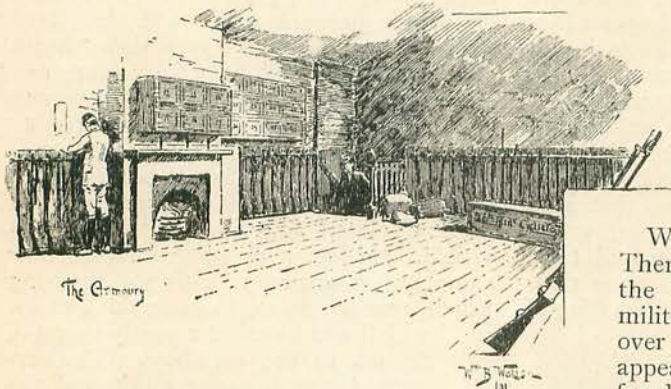
machines may yet travel on active service—are picturesquely arranged assegais, Indian knives, and Burmese drums, which an enthusiastic cyclist took down from his own bedroom and transported to Chelsea. Look into the garden, some 150 yards long, where drills are held when the corps is not at the Guards' barracks, and peep in at the stable, where fifty or sixty machines may be easily



HEADQUARTERS.

accommodated. Such are the headquarters of the only volunteer regiment on wheels in the country—the pioneer corps amongst all volunteers.

We are not unmindful of the useful work of our cyclists amongst the regulars. They are a goodly body, and at Aldershot a re-



markable multicycle called a "Victoria" may be seen, capable of carrying a dozen riders, and conveying provisions and ammunition, &c. Neither do we forget that to-day amongst all the volunteer battalions throughout the kingdom nearly every one of them has a cyclist section attached to it, amounting in all to some 5,100 men, credit going to "The Artists" for holding the riding record. Twelve "artistic" cyclists, under command of Sergeant Dixon, last year rode a distance of 102 miles in 16 hours 55 minutes, fully armed, and out of this time they were forced to halt for five hours owing to an accident, making the actual riding time a trifle over the twelve hours.

But, seeing that Sir Evelyn Wood has expressed the opinion that Parliament could not make a mistake in sanctioning the raising of at least 20,000 volunteer cyclists, and Lord Wolseley has shown himself so strongly in favour of them—to quote his speech, he said: "There are very few countries in the world where you cannot use cycles. During the whole

time I was in India during the Mutiny, I do not remember—except when actually in the hills for three or four days' fighting—I do not remember one day's march, or any one fight in which we took part, where cyclists could not have been used with the greatest possible advantage"—we are inclined to single out this

regiment on wheels—the 26th Middlesex—who started with a handful of men as recently as April 1, 1888, and whose work cannot but prove highly interesting to the 800,000 cyclists throughout Great Britain.

Who suggested military cycling? There can be very little doubt that the idea of utilising wheels for military purposes has been brought over from the Continent. Italy appears to be first in the field; for, during the manœuvres of 1875,

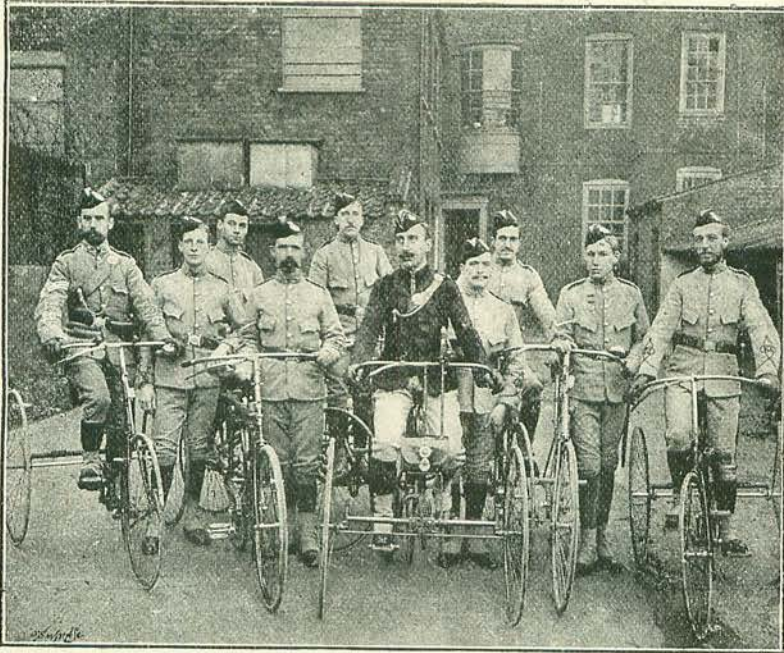
a service of cyclists at Somma were called into requisition for carrying messages to and fro. Both Germany and Austria have also found work for the military cyclists; and, during the French autumn manœuvres of 1886, their skill as letter carriers was again put to the test. The honour of introducing the fighting cyclist in England apparently belongs to Colonel Tamplin, who employed them as scouts during the Easter manœuvres of 1885, though attention

was drawn to this now important subject by Lieut.-General J. Sprot four years previously. Colonel Stracey, of the Scots Guards, has also taken a great interest in this matter. We shall probably be correct in saying that no one has done more to popularise the movement than Lieut.-Colonel A. R. Savile, who is the commanding officer of the regiment on wheels.

Lieut.-Colonel Savile is himself a thorough soldier, and is generally considered to be a thorough tactician, and an excellent cyclist. He joined the Royal Irish in 1863, soldiered up to 1888, when



LIEUT.-COLONEL SAVILE.



From a Photo, by]

PRIZE WINNERS: DRILL COMPETITION.

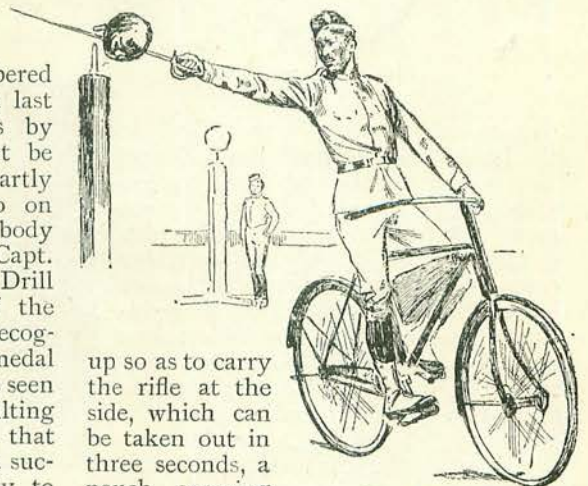
[J. W. Thomas, Cheapside.

he retired, but before six weeks were up, owing to his love of soldiering and cycling, he found himself a member of the 26th Middlesex, which regiment he now commands.

The full strength of the 26th Middlesex Cyclists Corps is a hundred and twenty—there being two companies, one in the South of London, the other in the West—and already they contemplate starting a fresh corps in the North of London. Many people are, no doubt, sceptical as to what this very formidable body are capable of in the way of useful work. Possibly it may be remembered that, at the Military Exhibition held last year, they showed their capabilities by performing a number of what might be termed fancy feats on the cycle, as smartly and successfully as our regulars do on horseback. We give a picture of the body of men who, under the command of Capt. Phillips, gained the first prize in the Drill Competition, whilst the abilities of the members composing the team were recognised by the presentation of a silver medal to each one of them. Those who have seen the lemon-cutting, tent-pegging, and tilting at the ring may be interested to know that the cyclist, in order to bring about a successful operation, found it necessary to

ride his machine at the rate of sixteen miles an hour. The lemon was suspended by a single wire, and, on approaching it, the cyclist, whilst going at this high rate of speed, had to guide his machine with the left hand, whilst he slashed out at the fruit with his right.

A word about the machines used. All sorts and conditions of safety bicycles are called into requisition. The ordinary bicycle is never used. They are fitted



HEAD AND POST.

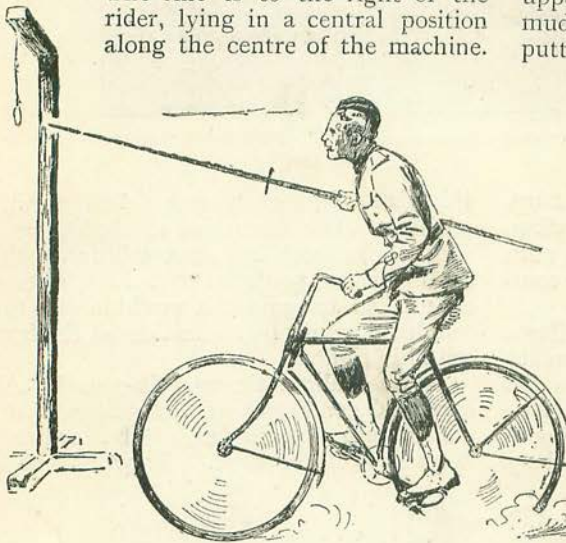
up so as to carry the rifle at the side, which can be taken out in three seconds, a pouch carrying

one hundred rounds of ball cartridge, signalling flag, &c., the whole weight of which is something under 70 lbs., including machine. When in full marching order, they can get along at the rate of ten miles an hour, and often faster.

We hear the latest invention in the way of military cycles is one by Mr. W. J. Cocks, of Ealing. This cycle has received the approval of some of the military authorities and below we give a sketch of the same. It shows at a glance all the weapons of warfare carried by the cyclist.

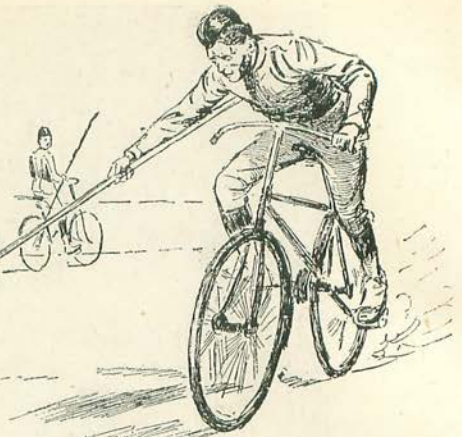
The signalling flag is carried in a semi-perpendicular position down the front fork.

The rifle is to the right of the rider, lying in a central position along the centre of the machine.



TILTING AT THE RING.

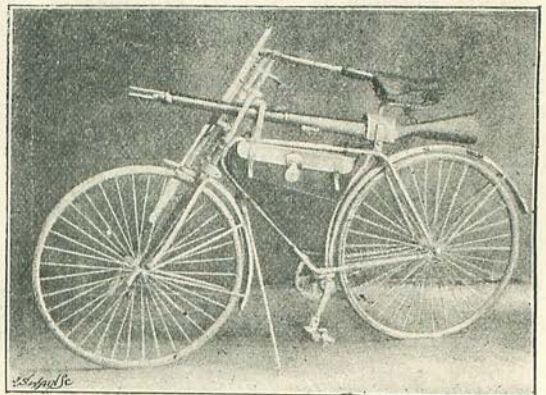
Not an inch of spare space is lost, as all the distance between the back and front wheel is taken up by a leather valise, which is divided into various parts, the upper portion of which carries a good supply of cartridge cases, and there is plenty of room below for the various travelling instruments required in case of accident to the cycle, and for all other necessities. The whole thing weighs something like 56 lbs. including the rifle. The standing gear is a very important item in the construction of this machine. A single prop or leg is



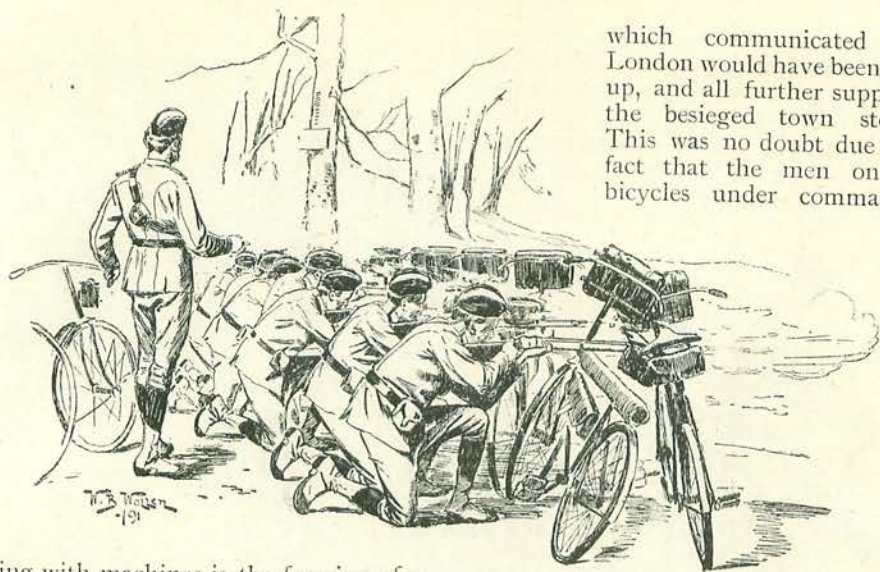
TENT-PEGGING.

removed by the feet from a spring clip, the upper portion of which engages with the mud guard, passing through the same and putting a break on the wheel, thus preventing the machine moving forward or the wheel turning to an angle, the cycle leaning on the side prop still out of the vertical. Fixed to the handle bar is a valise, in which can be carried the kit. It seems probable that in time of action the mounted cyclist will be able to get within an easy distance of the field, dismount and detach his rifle in a couple of seconds, put his machine in a place of safety, and be on the scene of action quicker than he could by any other means.

Amongst the smartest things which our fighting cyclists are capable



THE MILITARY BICYCLE.

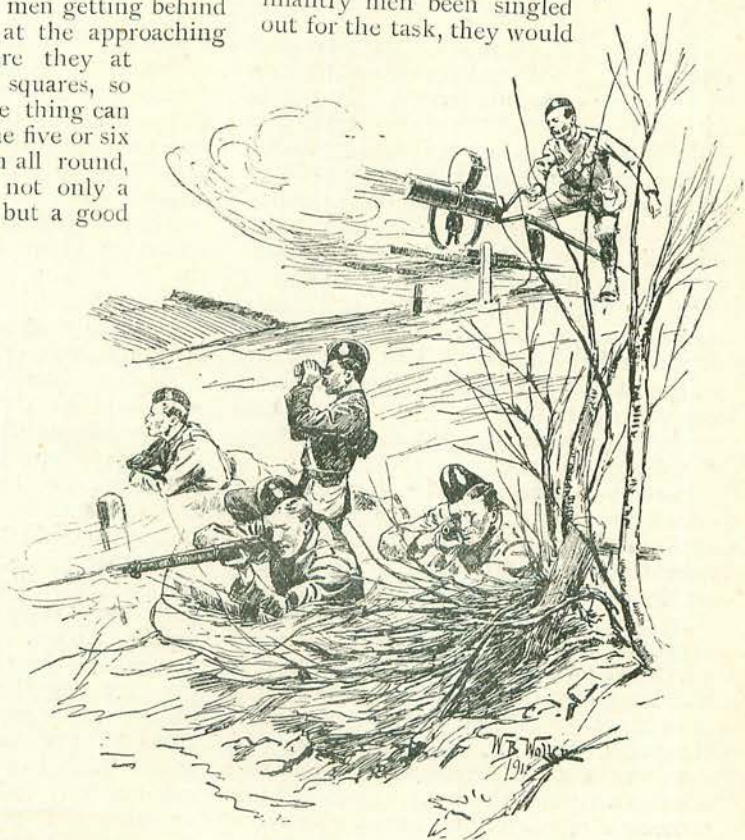


which communicated with London would have been blown up, and all further supplies to the besieged town stopped. This was no doubt due to the fact that the men on their bicycles under command of

of doing with machines is the forming of a zereba for the defence of a road, as shown in our illustration. This is for the purpose of resisting cavalry, and is formed by some twenty or thirty machines, which are stacked on to one another; the men getting behind the cycles and firing at the approaching enemy. So clever are they at forming these cycling squares, so to speak, that the whole thing can be accomplished in some five or six seconds. Indeed, taken all round, the military cyclist is not only a very ingenious fellow, but a good way ahead of the ordinary infantry men; in fact, he is really an infantry man on temporary wheels; for, when engaged in fighting, he dismounts from his machine, places his cycle on the ground, or hides it in a hedge, and combats on foot. We have spoken of the ingenuity of the cyclist. The writer of this article went to Dover last Easter for the purpose of following this regiment on wheels, in order to see what practical use they would be in time of warfare. Had it not been for the cyclists, the bridge over the railway at Lydden

A movable Zereba. FIRE!!

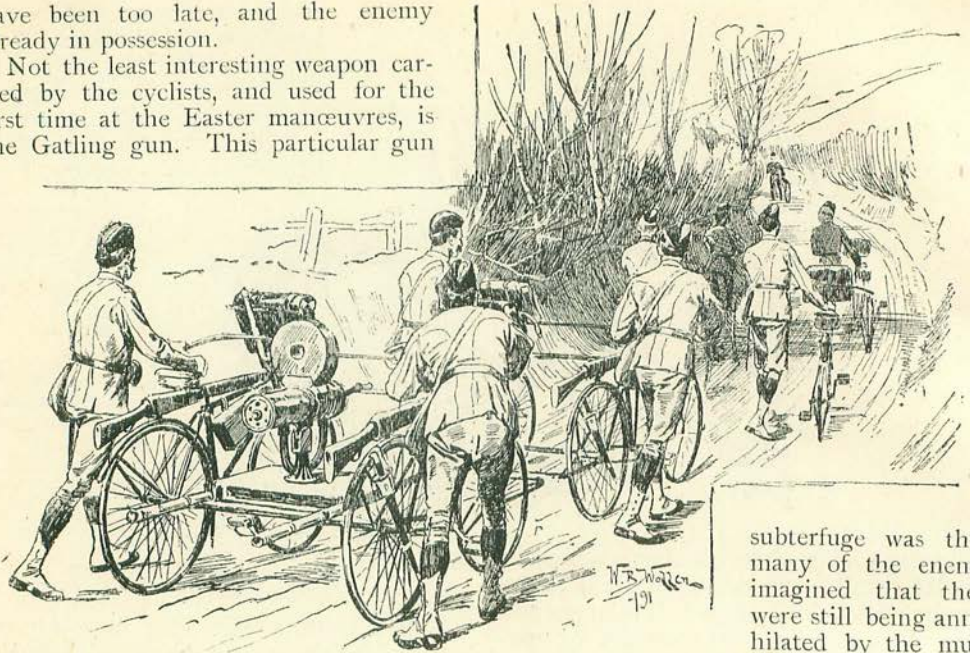
Captain Holmes were able to reach the spot which the enemy desired, whereas had infantry men been singled out for the task, they would



THE GATLING IN ACTION.

have been too late, and the enemy already in possession.

Not the least interesting weapon carried by the cyclists, and used for the first time at the Easter manœuvres, is the Gatling gun. This particular gun



UP-HILL.

subterfuge was that many of the enemy imagined that they were still being annihilated by the murderous weapon.

The Duke of Cam

used is capable of discharging shot at a distance of one thousand yards at the rate of six shots a second easily. It weighs 97 lbs., the ammunition being carried in cases for the purpose. It is transported to and fro on a gun-carriage composed of four safety machines coupled to one another, and ridden by four men. Not only is this quartette of cycles useful for this purpose, but an ambulance may also be carried with it. With this weighty load, over a smooth road, it can be ridden at the rate of nine miles an hour. This idea of the best means of getting a Gatling to and fro belongs to Sergeant Watkins, and with this weapon he did some deadly work (imaginary, of course) at Dover.

A somewhat amusing incident was witnessed by the writer, who stood by the side of the Gatling on the hill some few miles from Kearsney, near Dover. The gallant sergeant found his ammunition exhausted; there was no more to be had. It suddenly occurred to the officer in charge of the men, who had now left the machines on which it had been carried, and were lying on the ground ready to let go at the enemy with their rifles, that the impression might be conveyed that the Gatling gun was still blazing away by the men firing in quick succession one after the other. This was done, and the result of this ingenious

bridge, who is a strong adherent of military cycling, singled out this regiment on wheels for his special approval at the late Easter manœuvres. When he saw the Gatling gun on its carriage, he gave the command that the gun should at once be put into action. The men sprang from their machines, dismounted the gun, placed it ready for firing, took up their positions, the whole thing being accomplished in twenty seconds. The Duke encouraged the men by saying most heartily, "Very creditable, very creditable."

A story, however, may be told which will show that there was a time when our Commander-in-Chief had his doubts of the efficacy of cycles being adapted for military purposes: this happened in 1887, the first appearance of military wheelmen at Dover. Some two or three miles from the seaport town there is a picturesque little village called Kearsney, and amongst its sights is a particularly steep hill leading to St. Radigund's Abbey. The Duke chanced to pass where the military cyclists were congregated together, and approaching the officer in command, good-humouredly looking up at the hill, his Royal Highness said, "Well, I've no doubt your men are a capable body, but I question whether any cyclist could possibly mount that hill." Now it so happened that there was a very

fast rider present, an exceptionally powerful man on wheels, Mr. M. D. Rucker. This little fact the commanding officer knew, and asked the Duke for permission to put his remarks to the test; this was readily granted, and away Mr. Rucker went on his machine, the Duke himself watching him for a considerable distance until at last he rode away himself. Some time passed by, when again the cyclist body found itself near to the Duke: once more riding up, he asked, "Is that man back yet?" when our smart cyclist immediately stepped up with a salute, and said, "Yes, sir, here I am." We are probably right in saying that this was the foundation of the Duke's faith in utilising cyclists for military purposes, as having sent a horseman with him, at the first six-barred gate, which was locked, the cyclist lifted his machine over, leaving the unfortunate "galloper" behind, his horse refusing to "take" the gate.

The important question now arises as to what advantage the propeller of the iron steed has over the ordinary rider on horseback. In the first place, we cannot do better than quote the estimate of the cost of a mount of cavalry in proportion to that of cyclist infantry as compared by Captain Eustace Balfour, of the London Scottish, in a paper he contributed to *The United Service Magazine* twelve months ago. His estimates are as follow:—

CYCLIST INFANTRY.

Cost of cycle per man, £12.

Life of cycle (say six years), therefore cost per annum, £2.

Repairs, oil &c., say £1.

Total cost per annum, £3.

CAVALRY.

Cost of horse, £35.

Useful life (say seven years), therefore cost per annum, £5.

Maintenance, £40.

Total cost per annum, £45.

It will at once be seen that the cyclist is by a long way the cheaper of the two.

Again, the machines are more easily conveyed by rail, as many could be stacked in the space occupied by a single horse. On the score of staying power, it is calculated that a man could ride a cycle thirty miles and be just as fit for marching as an infantryman would be, fresh to the task, without having had the benefit of the thirty miles' start. Machines, too, are noiseless; but what strikes us as the greatest advantage of all is the fact that cyclists are able to ride along roads unseen, whereas a cavalryman traversing the same path would be immediately spotted, on account of the dust his horse's hoofs would raise on a dry day. A man on his machine, by bending over the handles somewhat, is really able to make himself shorter than the ordinary foot soldier; he still keeps on his way, being covered by the hedges, and the chances are that he will arrive at his destination with a far greater amount of certainty than the man on horseback.

The principal duties which the cyclists have to perform are those of carrying despatches, skirmishing, and reconnoitring. Owing to the long distance which they are able to cover in a short space of time, they are likely to prove very successful in the way of making sketches of the surrounding country, reporting on the probability of provisions, the state of the roads, railways, rivers, and canals, the situation of fortified places, indeed, all the thousand and



The Ambulance.

W. B. WILSON
-191.

one items of observation which constitute reconnoitring duties. As patrols they are unquestionably useful, and a capital example is that afforded by the ingenuity of a number of cyclists who cleverly managed to get through the enemy's lines and gain the required information as to what was their strength. This force was told off to get through the lines at any cost. Our heroes of the wheel, seeing a waggon filled with straw passing along the road, induced the driver for a consideration to let them take shelter with their machines underneath the straw; this he agreed to do, and by this means they got through the outpost line, did their spying, and returned in perfect safety the same way that they went.

It is needless to say that the cyclists have to put up with a fair share of good-humoured chaff from

their rival, the cavalryman, but the horseman is beginning to recognise the fact that his brother rider is becoming a substantial acquisition in matters military, and almost regards him with respect. Our regiment on wheels seems to be wanting in only one thing—a band. Many suggestions of a decidedly humorous nature have already been made, the most likely of which is the idea of a member of the corps for a huge musical box, to be ridden in a similar style to that of the Gatling gun on four machines. He is of opinion that

in this age of invention it should be possible to construct a musical machine

in such a way that as the riders work the treadles so should the "bandbox" give forth martial strains to cheer the cyclist on as he went forth to meet the foe.



A STERN CHASE.