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[W. Shaw, Camberley.

FRONT VIEW OF THE ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE, SHOWING ENTIRE LENGTH.

SOLDIERING AT SANDHURST:

A VISIT TO THE ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE.

BY ERNEST W. LOW.



RUN of a little over an hour from Waterloo brings you to the quiet little Surrey village of Camberley, from which a short walk through typical English scenery brings you to the Royal Military College.

Very delightful to a lover of nature are its surroundings. Turning to the right, off the High Street, the road lies between tall pines and straggling gorse, so characteristic of the most beautiful of the home counties. On the left between the trees one catches from time to time a glimpse of the lake, which presently widens out into fuller amplitude. A little farther on the woods are left behind, and one emerges upon the wide lawn-like stretches of turf on the other side of which are the college buildings—the only blot on the otherwise charming landscape.

It is in truth an atrociously ugly piece of architecture, resembling a barracks of the most antiquated and gloomy type. But even the philistine obtrusiveness of the building avails little to destroy the pleasurable sensation experienced when viewing the prospect from its front. The green turf stretching away right and left and bounded on all sides by the darker background of pine woods, goes to make up a picture very different from that usually associated with Government property, and perhaps all the more to be appreciated on that account.

The country was looking its best when, on

a fine mild morning, I journeyed down to take advantage of the invitation extended me by the courtesy of Colonel Wynyard, the assistant commandant.

It was not my first visit to the college, for I had been present just before Christmas at the function which, during the period of office of the late commander-in-chief, was known as the Duke's Day, but which, since Lord Wolseley has succeeded to that position, is somewhat irreverently dubbed "Lord's Day," when the whole of the cadets are inspected by the commander-in-chief. But that occasion—pleasant enough from a spectacular point of view—was not a very favourable one for seeing the college under its ordinary working conditions. And so, after witnessing the spectacle of the cadets in full dress on parade under the eye of Lord Wolseley, I made up my mind to pay another visit in order to see the everyday life at the college.

On reaching the main entrance I was met by Major A. F. Gatliff, one of the instructors of fortification, who had kindly constituted himself my cicerone, and to whose untiring assiduity I am indebted for such insight as I possess into the methods of instruction and life at the college.

"Just in time to see our professor give a lecture and practical object-lesson on the work of demolition," was his greeting.

So off we set alongside Major Gatliff's company for the part of the grounds where the senior cadets are shown the destructive

effects of gun-cotton and other explosives which play so important a part in our modern system of warfare.

Arrived there we found the students at the staff college already on the ground, the gorgeous and in some cases rather bizarre uniforms of some of the officers of the Indian Army provoking a good deal of quiet comment among the cadets.

"Who's that chap with the burnisher on

Not only do they witness the carrying out of field work of almost every kind, but they have to pull off their coats and take a hand themselves at digging trenches, throwing up earthworks, building bridges, and in everything in which they may be called upon to superintend their men in the days to come. For obvious reasons, however, it is desirable that work in connection with explosives should be left to men specially trained to



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PONTOON BRIDGING.

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his shoulders?" was the naïve question asked by one in reference to the steel scales worn by an officer of the Bengal Lancers. Chaff and small talk soon ceased however, for Major Chippindall had commenced his lecture.

The key-note to the system of instruction in vogue at the college is this—that as far as possible the cadets are given practical demonstrations of all matters which are dealt with by the instructors in the class-rooms.

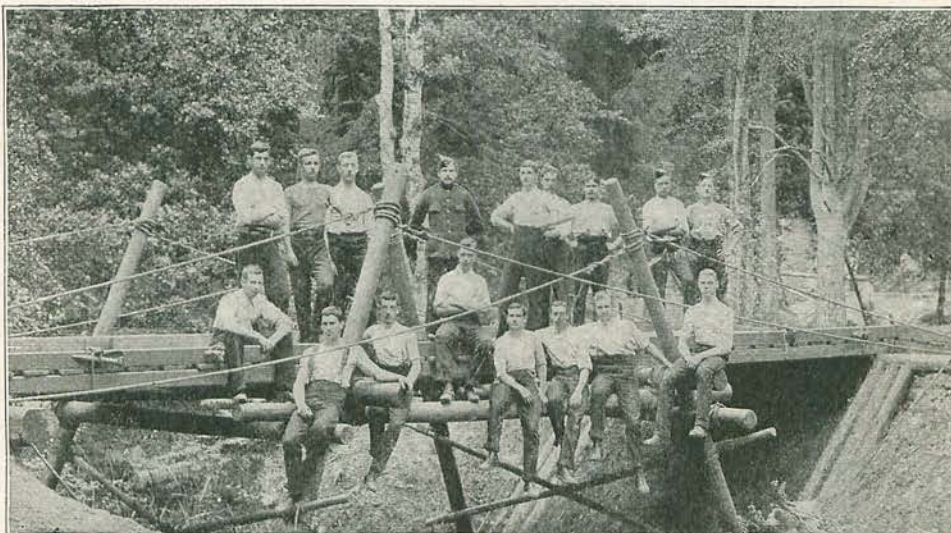
their handling, so that where this branch of the education of an officer is concerned the cadets have to resign themselves to being spectators, the actual work being carried out by the engineer working party which is maintained for the purpose; of course all under the watchful eye of the professor.

Eminently clear, soldier-like, and straight to the point were the professor's utterances. A few words of explanation, a reminder of what had already been demonstrated in the

"hall of study" (for by such a name is the familiar school-room dignified), and then the experiment to drive the matter home. Commencing at the very beginning with a description of the different sort of fuzes—slow and instantaneous—the professor went on to explain the methods in use for blowing down trees. Previous to the object-lesson on this part of the subject we judged it advisable to retire a few yards as the professor prepared to try the effects of gun-cotton on two fine young pines standing some 40 ft. high and having a girth of about 14 inches.

The first method was by boring an auger hole through the trunk, in which the gun-cotton was placed; the effect of the explosive in this confined space is very powerful and

scene of the final act of destruction—the making a breach in a strong stockade, for which purpose 20 lbs. of gun-cotton were used. The spot chosen for the purpose forms a sort of natural theatre, the stockade being in the position of the stage while the gentle gorse-covered slope opposite forms a tier of stalls from which the spectators are enabled to watch the proceedings enacted down below in safety. No hitch occurred to mar the effect of this demonstration. The peculiar nature of gun-cotton, its viability, and at the same time the local nature of its effects, was well exemplified. The logs touching the slabs of gun-cotton rose bodily in the air leaving a breach of about 4 feet wide, while the adjacent ones were left standing almost intact.



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CONSTRUCTING A DOUBLE-LOCK BRIDGE.

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therefore only a very small quantity is required. The alternative mode is known as the "necklace" method; in this case a ring or necklace of the explosive being made outside the trunk—a very much larger amount being of course necessary. In both instances the experiment was altogether successful. The gun-cotton was ignited by means of a long fuze, a period of suspense, just long enough to be pleasantly exhilarating, followed; then, with a loud report the charge exploded and the fir, cut clean through about a couple of feet from the ground, came crashing down among the undergrowth on the hill-side.

Following a brief inspection of the effects of the gun-cotton we made our way to the

At the suggestion of Major Chippindall I accompanied him for a long walk round the portion of the ground devoted to field work, which is carried out under his supervision.

Certainly the cadets go through a sufficiently thorough course in the art of fortification and all appertaining thereto. I was rather astonished to hear that their brother cadets at the Woolwich Academy—which is devoted to the "scientific" branches of the service—do not enjoy similar advantages, for one thing owing to the lack of space at that establishment. Here I saw specimens of roads laid down over boggy and treacherous ground, rifle pits and an infantry fort, for the most part the work of the cadets themselves. This is only one



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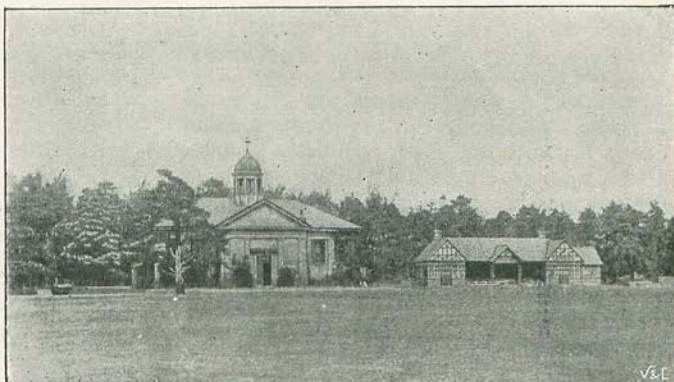
A WOODLAND WALK.

of the three branches into which their military education is divided, the others being tactics and topography. Of the former I had necessarily little opportunity of making any personal observation, but the sketches of the surrounding country which were to be seen displayed on the day of the inspection conveyed a very satisfactory conclusion as to the scope of the work undertaken in this direction. Many technical details which, to use a hackneyed phrase, would be "caviare to the general public" were explained to me by the professor, and the impression uppermost on my mind when leaving him at the main entrance, where I had arranged to rejoin Major Gatliff, was that certainly, so far as his department was concerned, the instruction bore the hall-mark of

thoroughness, and this impression was more than confirmed by my subsequent investigations.

After lunch in the mess-room of B company, the table of which was resplendent with trophies, telling a tale of athletic prowess, Major Gatliff suggested that we should go and witness a company football match which was taking place in the afternoon, and concerning which there was no small amount of friendly rivalry. But I was anxious to learn something about the internal life at the college, so, recognising his responsibilities as a host, he waived his own inclinations and took me off to his quarters where the inner workings of the establishment, its many good features, and the few which are not so good, were laid open to me.

The organisation of the college is of course on a military basis. The heir to a title and broad acres has to obey the same code of discipline as the son of a country parson who, by dint of years of saving, has just managed to scrape together the funds to pay for his son's education. To maintain discipline at such an establishment is by no means an easy task, for, as the standing orders say, "officers have to remember that authority is given them more as a means of maintaining discipline and checking ungentlemanlike and improper behaviour than for the purpose of endeavouring to enforce good conduct by the infliction of punishment." It is not like commanding a company of "Tommys," where, as long as



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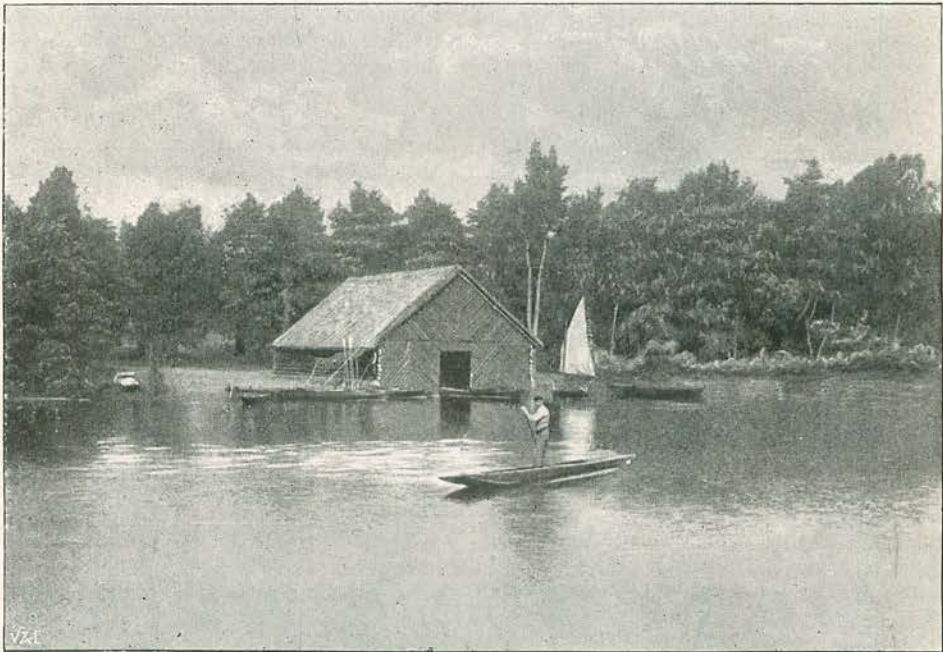
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THE GYMNASIUM AND CRICKET PAVILION.

they do not actually commit themselves, an officer need not trouble much about the moral tone of his men. The duty involved in having charge of a company of cadets is one that above all things requires a great amount of tact.

There are about 370 cadets at the college, divided into six companies. A company commander at the R.M.C., while he has to be a strict disciplinarian, must always bear in mind that those under him are gentlemen and are designed for a career the primary duty of which is to lead men. The power of inflicting punishment he possesses must be sparingly used, and he must endeavour by

under-officer is much sought after, not only on account of the accession of dignity which the position bestows, but also by reason of the privileges which the cadet obtaining it enjoys. Each under-officer receives fifty marks towards his aggregate in passing out of the college, and the most deserving at the final examination each term is awarded a sword. This, the most sought after and highly valued distinction that can be obtained, is not necessarily bestowed upon the cadet who distinguishes himself most in the examination, but rather to him who has been recommended by reason of his good conduct and high intelligence; the recipient of the



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THE LAKE AND BOAT-HOUSE.

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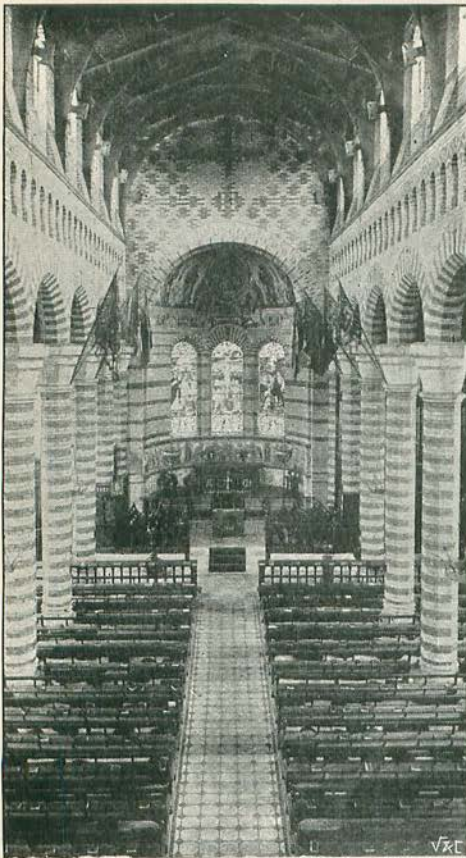
his own behaviour whilst amongst them to gain the esteem and respect of the cadets by appealing to their better instincts.

To further the feeling of self-reliance, and to take some of the routine work off the shoulders of the officers (who are also instructors in one of the three branches included in the college curriculum), there are various chances of promotion afforded to the cadets. In each company there are four corporals, two senior corporals and one under-officer. The latter acts as a subaltern to his company officer, and assists him in no small degree in maintaining the general tone of the company. The position of

sword *may* be a man of intellect—he *must* be a man of character.

The course of instruction at the college extends over eighteen months, which period is divided into three terms, corresponding to which are three divisions—senior, intermediate and junior. At the end of each term there is an examination, and no cadet failing in two of these is allowed, barring exceptional circumstances, to remain at the college.

The examinations embrace all the subjects in which instruction is given, including drill, riding and gymnastics, but only the senior division are tested in these accomplishments



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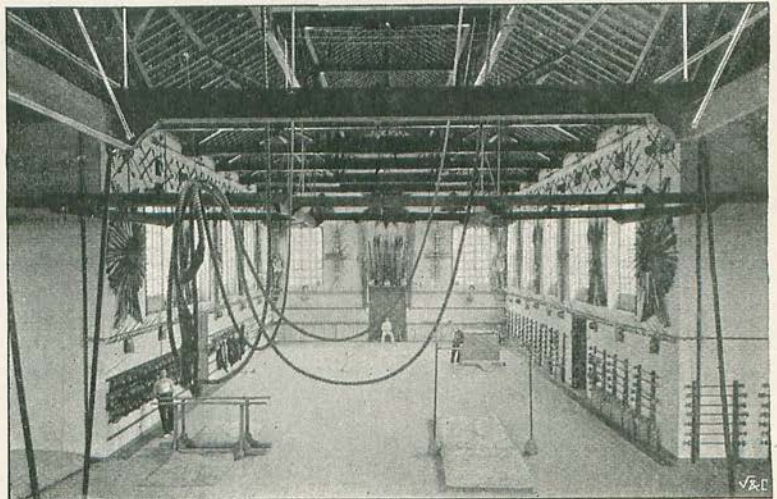
THE ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE CHAPEL.

at the final examination prior to receiving commissions in the army. The riding-school is a very prominent feature of the establishment. The gentlemen cadets (or G.C.'s as they call themselves) now go through a very thorough course of equitation, which, if not quite such an ordeal as that undergone by the cavalry recruit, is amply sufficient for all practical purposes.

Whilst every sort of healthy sport and recreation is encouraged, and to a certain extent enforced, anything in the shape of gam-

bling or extravagance is sternly discountenanced. *Some of the regulations touching upon these matters might at first sight strike the civilian as somewhat namby-pamby, but the extreme difficulty of the task of controlling some hundreds of high-spirited young fellows at an age when the ardour of boyhood is in many cases not yet tempered by manhood's discretion renders it advisable to err, if at all, on the side of stringency. It is certainly a highly satisfactory step that the authorities have taken in endeavouring to put a stop to the dissemination of money-lenders' and racing-tipsters' circulars among the lads—a practice which a few years back was all too prevalent, and which was fraught occasionally with very serious consequences to the too easily beguiled recipient. Now any cadet receiving such circulars is under strict injunctions to communicate the fact to the assistant commandant who takes the necessary measures to procure for the tempter the punishment he deserves.

It is only of comparatively recent years too that measures have been taken to check the extravagance which at one time was all too prevalent among such of the cadets as were well endowed with worldly goods. At one time the wealthy cadet could indulge in almost any pleasures that his money could afford him, until finally the unchecked licence grew into a serious abuse. Apart from the effect on the morals of the wealthy lad himself and the bad impression produced upon outsiders, it was felt that something ought to be done, in justice to the poorer cadets, to prevent the inequalities in position



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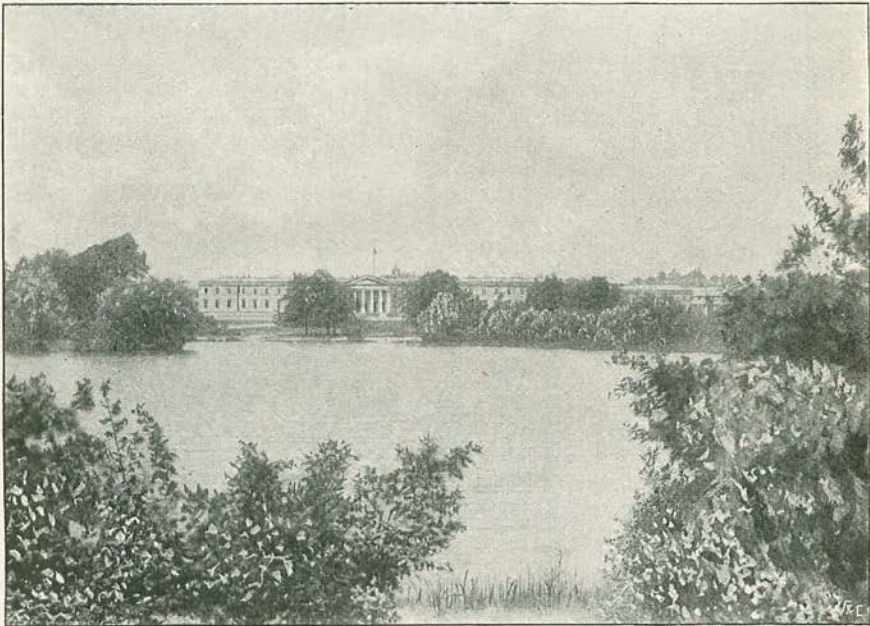
THE GYMNASIUM.

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becoming so glaringly apparent, that is, of course, as far as the jurisdiction of the college extends, and the effect of the regulations framed with this object in view has been that at present, whether rich or poor, all the cadets are very much on an equal footing. Expenditure in the college itself has to be kept within a fixed maximum. Over and above the ordinary mess charges, amounting to about three shillings a day, no cadet is allowed to run up a messing bill of over three pounds a month—including beer and wine, on which he may not spend more than the very moderate amount of one shilling per diem—without the sanction of his company officer, and this is only given

becoming mere book-worms, and went on to say that they should cultivate all manly exercises, laying particular stress on following the hounds and cross-country riding as sports bringing out all the qualities which contribute to the making of a good officer.

After our long chat Major Gatliff took me round to have a look at the cadets' rooms. The juniors live three in a large room, which is partitioned off into cubicles, but the seniors enjoy the privilege of a room to themselves. Very cosy looking are some of these. The owners are, within reason, allowed to furnish and decorate them as their fancy and purse permits—a permission which naturally leads to much variety in their appearance. They



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THE COLLEGE, LOOKING ACROSS THE LAKE.

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on special occasions, such as for the purpose of entertaining a guest.

No cadet can in future hope to emulate the doings of one very lively young gentleman who, at the age of nineteen, used to tool his own coach and four to the admiration of the surrounding natives, for they are not allowed now to keep horses, ponies or dogs, nor to ride at race meetings, play polo, or hunt the game on the estate.

Apropos of this, no little amusement was caused by Lord Wolsley's remarks on the subject at a recent inspection. The commander-in-chief, when addressing the cadets, warned them that, although they should pay attention to their studies, they should avoid

are not allowed to invite one another to breakfast or dinner, but two or three often hob-nob together for afternoon tea. Nothing in the shape of liquor is permitted in the cadets' rooms, and all lights have to be out by 10.30 p.m., except on Saturdays and Sundays, when the time is extended to 11 p.m. Under-officers, however, enjoy the privilege of having lights in their rooms for another hour.

Finishing my tour of the building, I paid a visit to the church and was shown the marble tablets, extending all round the walls, erected in memory of the quondam students at the college who have been killed in action.