

# TOMMY ATKINS ON HIS AUTUMN CAMPAIGN.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED  
BY S. E. WALLER



Chalk dust  
reveals the enemy—

“YOU had better take a free hand about those Autumn Manœuvres,” wrote the kindly editor. I have taken a free hand. This is the interesting and valuable result.

Up at six. Hurried breakfast. Two miles on foot to the railway station; then to Salisbury, Andover, and Ludgershall. The camp was reached by a short walk, a little over a mile, before ten o'clock. The road—a ready-made one—led over the fields, through gateways where the gates were thrown down, and hedges trampled flat to the soil.

The camp itself was delightfully situated, and struck me as looking like a gigantic picnic. Rows of tents, mathematically exact as to position, extended in every direction, and at each corner of the rectangle of space occupied by a regiment was planted a flag—a small one—bearing either the name of the battalion or its coat-of-arms; numbers, it seems, are obsolete.

All the troops were out. No men were in camp save those on camp duty, a few men in hospital, and a numerous body strongly in evidence doing duty as cooks, in readiness for the hungry army which was expected, ravenous, at half-past three.

Six thousand infantry, a few batteries of artillery, and a detachment of cavalry made up the force quartered here, I was told.

I first of all spent an hour or two sauntering through the long lines of tents, all much the same for accommodation of general, officer, or private, save that the privates sleep sixteen in a tent, the general in solitary glory. One man remarked, on waking in the morning, “Our heads is right enough, but I’m blowed if one can tell who the legs belongs to.” They evidently lie like spokes in a wheel, the thirty-two feet forming the hub.

I blundered next into the lines of some Lancers. The effect was very pretty and suggestive, so much so that I made a drawing of it, which is at your service on page 615. The two lines of horses stood between two lines of tents, each line of horses tethered to a rope pegged down to the ground. The near hind foot was also fastened to a peg by a strap round the fetlock joint. Hay was before them in bundles. Behind each horse was its impedimenta, and at intervals all down this street of white canvas stood groups of lances stuck in the ground.

We then heard firing, but at a great distance, and after a fruitless effort to locate it, we set off on speculation, which resulted in a long walk of some miles, and nothing tangible at the end of it. Coming back, we fortunately managed to intercept a long



column of men—between three and four thousand, I should guess. They were marching in easy order, white with chalk, and looking as if they had had quite enough of it. We followed the column into camp, when, as the men broke off, they put aside their burdens, glad to lie down. One of the first duties of the footsore men was to show their feet, and at the cry of "Doctor!" a primitive and very undress parade was carried out.

Many eyes were now wandering towards the cooks' fires, and in a short time Tommy Atkins was beginning to enjoy himself.

We had eaten our lunch and fallen asleep, for early rising and fresh air conduce to such results, when we were awakened by vociferous shouts. They, the soldiers, were playing football—actually playing football with a large and as yet undigested dinner concealed about their persons, after all those weary hours of soldiering in the dust and heat. We then joined the watering parties. These were very interesting. From all parts of the camp came different strings of horses,

mounted by every description of man in every description of dress.

Most of the parties rode away quite out of our ken, but one or two came to some shallow pools at the bottom of the downs. Here, one horse, ridden barebacked, for reasons known only to himself, became fractious, and after a battle royal with his rider, threw him and went away up the fields in a series of buck-jumps, and finally disappeared in triumph and a cloud of chalk dust.

I had an interesting conversation with a corporal. "Will you tell me," said I, "why a lot of men go down into the little town in stable jackets, filthy trousers, smothered in sweat and chalk dust, and a few others, notably those two Highlanders in white undress jackets, are turned out smart as a new pin?"

"Well," said the corporal reflectively, "different men has different motives. Some goes into town to see their wives and sweet-hearts, and some goes in for beer. But you may conclude, if you meets me in the High



"You may take a horse to water—but—"



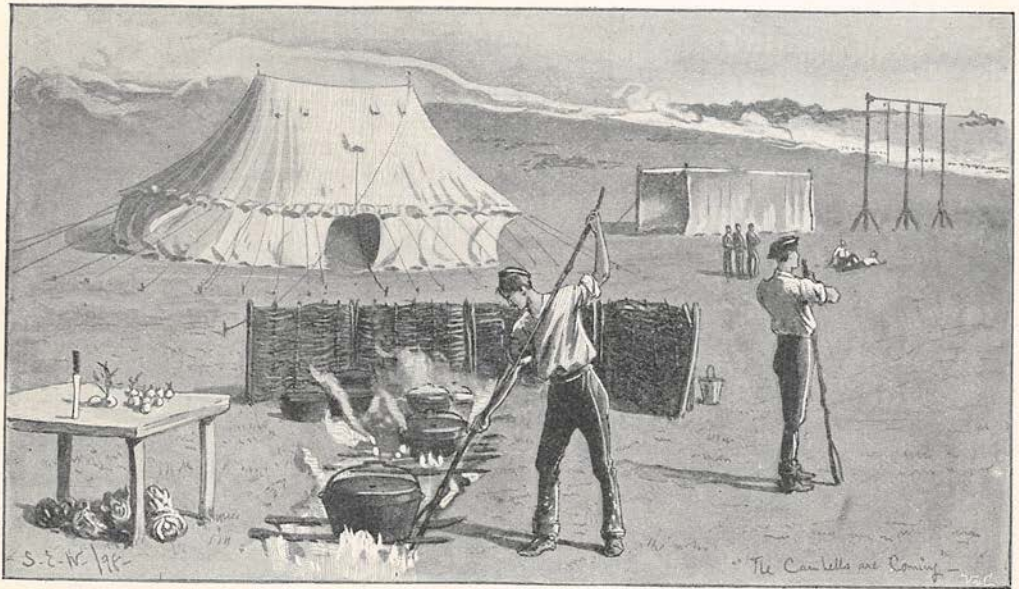
Street of an evening, looking smart, it certainly wouldn't be for beer."

Another day in another camp brought many fresh facts to light, and few more gratifying ones than the kindly feeling existing between officer and private soldier. As the wearied soldiers marched in after a heavy field day, time and again did I see a stalwart young officer take a boy soldier's rifle from him, and in more than one instance the knapsack too, and, moreover, walk by his side to cheer him up. I saw one private accept his officer's arm gratefully, but refuse to give up his rifle.

My experience of Atkins in camp and in manœuvres had been so interesting that I

carried out in very rough fashion, but in all good humour. Porton was our destination, and in company with hundreds of others we started off across the downs to Boscombe Down.

We were in good time, and just as I was settling myself on the ground Lord Wolseley rode past within a few yards; I looked at my watch—it was one minute to eleven as he passed the cordon of police on to the review ground; a case of time to the minute. Nearing the close of matters we witnessed an exciting charge. A hare was put up. She ran along in front of us for some distance, but, shying at some cavalry, deliberately turned and tore down the hill, where the greater



"The Campbells are coming."

looked forward to the climax on the 8th of August with great interest. Fifty-three thousand men were present at the march past.

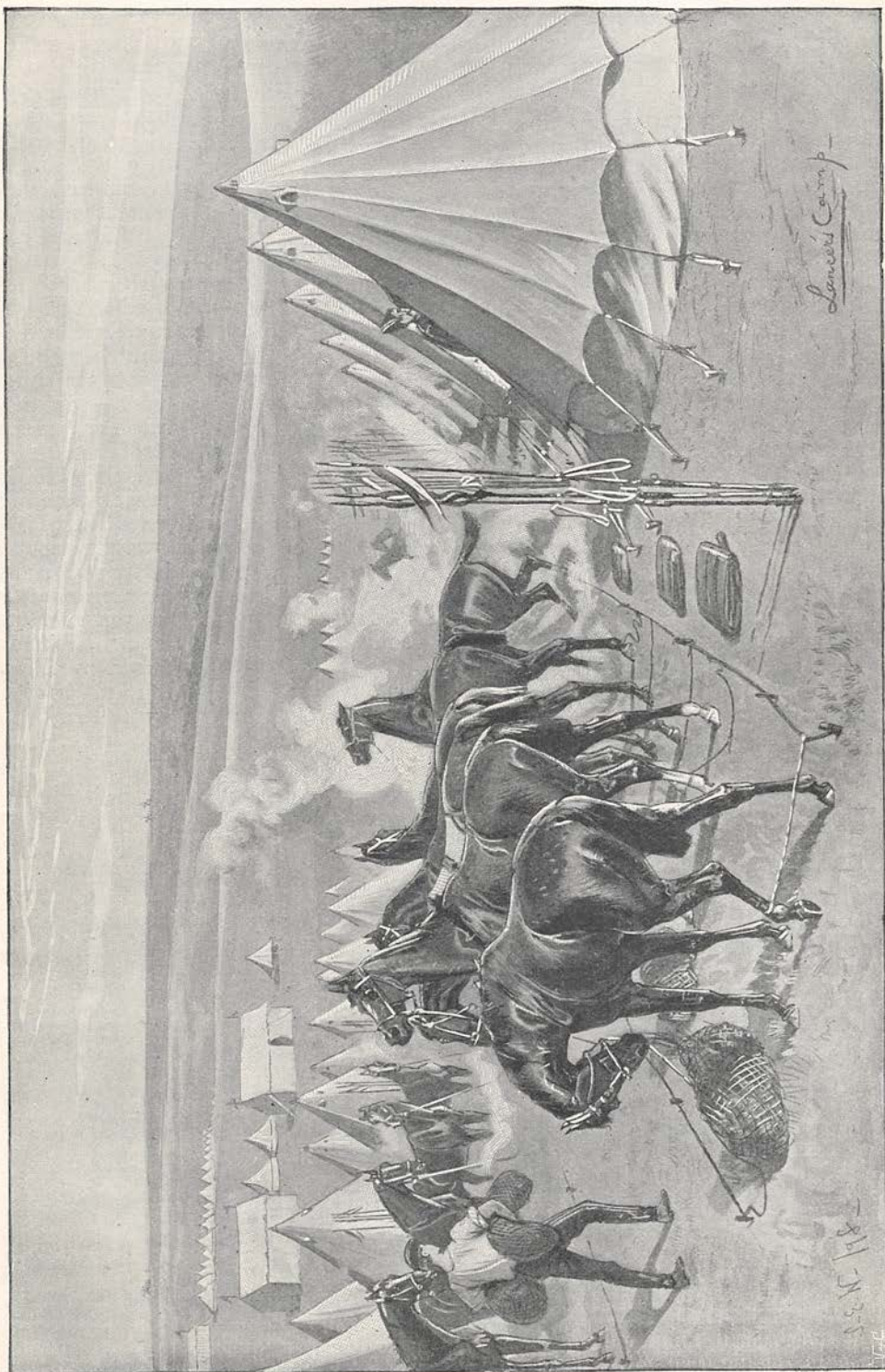
The excitement was immense in the little village of Redlynch, where I had pitched my tent, but I wished that the enthusiasm had not blossomed quite so early—the first batch of sightseers went through the village at 1.10 a.m. on the 8th.

My friends and myself left at a quarter to seven and walked a mile and a half to the station. The train was nearly an hour late and was practically full when it did arrive. Two hundred and fifty people were waiting on the platform—this I verified from the station-master. The result was a fearful struggle,

part of the infantry were stationed. She dodged in and out of the regiments in surprising fashion, and was last seen emerging on the further hill, safe and sound.

Now for the story of "the rick that failed." At 10.30 that morning I saw two enterprising people astride this rick, accompanied by a stoutish lady and gentleman, holding to the ridge and lying flat on the thatch. From this altitude they got a capital view of the ground. An hour later that rick was black with spectators. But—it had sunk at least six feet, with a proportionate increase of circumference. My last view was of a straw ruin, from which struggling atoms were in vain trying to extricate themselves.





Lancers' Camp -

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THE LANCERS' CAMP.

One episode to close these notes. There was a delightful colour-sergeant who had given me much information in a certain camp. He had noticed me handling my sketch-book, and had observed that I drew in some things carefully, and left others out altogether. In answer to a query I said, "There is much in Nature that would be obtrusive in Art."

The sergeant mused over this observation, and took time to digest it.

At that moment I saw an excellent subject in an adjacent harvest-field—some rough flirtations, of a perfectly innocent character, carried on between the gleaners and some embryo field-marshals.

"No, sir," said the sergeant, "don't put that in. You see, if it came out in your paper, the public would say what a wild lot we are!"

At this moment a pretty young country-woman carrying a basket came up the hill and kissed the sergeant before the horrified eyes of the scandalised public.

"Well, sergeant," said I, "what a wild lot we are!"

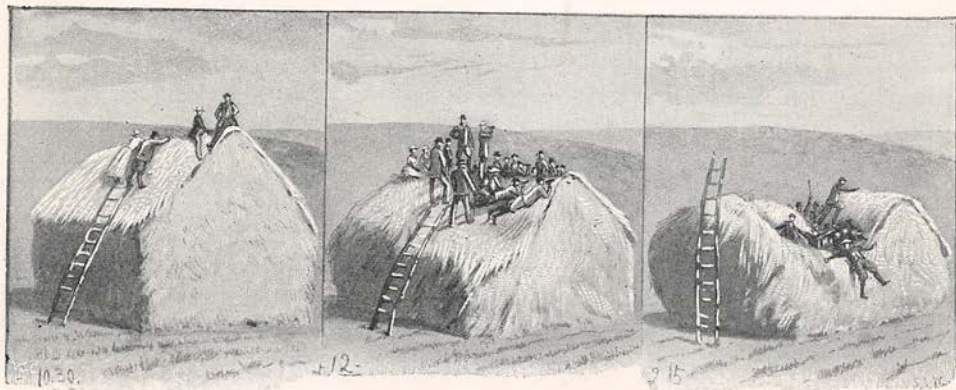
"Not in this case, I think, sir—God bless you. How's the young one?—my wife, sir," in explanation.

"I must make a sketch of this little episode, sergeant," said I.

"Better not, sir, better not," replied the sergeant, "for, as you said just now, 'There's some things in Nature as would be obtrusive in Art.'"



THE HARE THAT CHARGED AN ARMY.



THE RICK THAT FAILED.