

THE DUKE'S INSPECTION ON REVIEW DAY.

FIREMEN IN CAMP.

BY HENRY H. BATES.

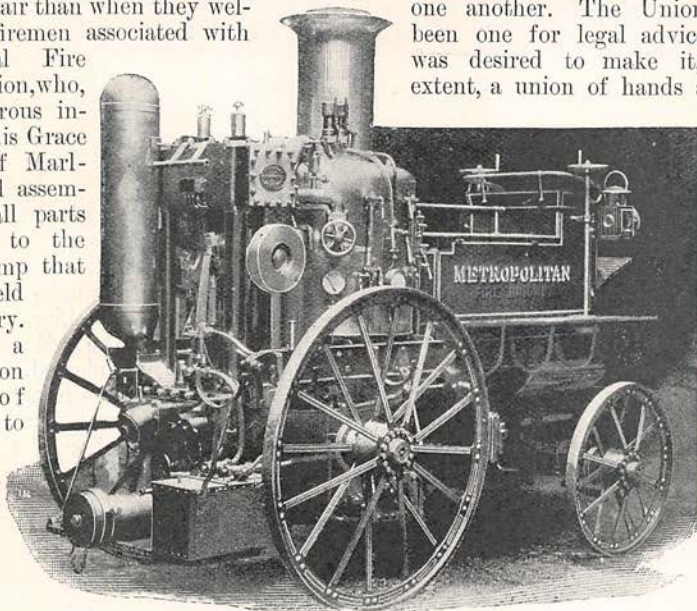
Illustrated from Photographs by GILLMAN AND Co., Oxford.

NEVER since the victorious days of the fighting Duke of Marlborough won Woodstock and Blenheim worn a more festive air than when they welcomed the firemen associated with the National Fire Brigades' Union, who, at the generous invitation of his Grace the Duke of Marlborough, had assembled from all parts of England to the first Fire Camp that has been held in this country.

It was a capital idea on the part of the Union to arrange a gathering at which the various brigades belonging to the Union might meet, go

through a course of competitive drills, see the latest improvements in firemen's armaments, and become better acquainted with one another. The Union had hitherto been one for legal advice and help. It was desired to make it, to a greater extent, a union of hands and hearts.

Blenheim Park was admirable for such a gathering, a more lovely spot in which to spend three or four days could not be imagined. On either side of the roadway from the principal entrance gate to the park, close to Woodstock Station, were arranged the white tents of



MESSRS. SHAND, MASON AND CO.'S 600-GALLON STEAMER.

the firemen and their officers. A splendid piece of turf for exhibition and competition purposes lay a little farther up on the right of the noble avenue of elms.

Water pipes were laid all over the camp. The commissariat arrangements were excellent; in fact, no detail for the comfort and enjoyment of the men had been omitted. Great praise is due to the Camp working committee, and especially to the genial chief officer of the Woodstock Brigade, Captain Banbury, for the careful thought and labour devoted to the preliminaries.

By four o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday contingents from the various brigades began to arrive. Of course it was impossible to leave towns entirely unprotected, and consequently the number from one district at camp did not represent that

the blankets and the size of the tent was pathetic. "Eight can never sleep in that tent!" remarked one, ruefully surveying a tent that was the official size for the accommodation of sixteen. In the laying of mattresses some would try to arrange them on the square, others crosswise. How they managed to sleep at all the first night it is hard to imagine. Up to a very late hour brigades kept arriving, shouting directions to one another, and tent-pegging—an awful noise to one unaccustomed to such nocturnal music. Some, out of pure pleasure, pursued their tent-pegging as a sort of gay dissipation till the morning; for order was slack the first night, and the men—a good many respectable tradesmen belonging to the volunteer brigades—felt like schoolboys just out of school, and acted accordingly.

Five o'clock the next morning saw everyone astir, however, and the men preparing themselves for their first day in camp. That was a sight to have moved the hardest heart; men unaccustomed to such early rising, and missing their matutinal cup of tea, slunk off to the mess-tent, where, for twopence, they obtained an excellent cup of pre-breakfast coffee.



THE ST. JOHN'S AMBULANCE CORPS IN ATTENDANCE.

brigade's total strength. In some cases only two or three firemen represented a brigade, others had sent a dozen or sixteen; altogether some 800 officers and men were on the spot. One brigade had come right from Newcastle, another from Bournemouth, and a Welsh brigade, with its Pompier ladders, hailed from Ruthin, in Denbighshire. Honorary foreign members of the Union had been invited, and quite a number of French and Belgian officers were present.

As each contingent marched into camp its commanding officer would report the arrival and receive tickets for his men's blankets and meals.

To many it was an entirely fresh experience to bivouac soldier-fashion, and much fun and amusement was caused by those who were novices in bed-making. The anxiety some of them evinced as to the dryness of

At eleven came the grand parade in full-dress uniform for an open-air church service. The men were formed up on three sides of a square, in the shadow of some mighty elms. After the singing of special hymns, a short address was given by the vicar of Woodstock on the appropriate words, "How great a matter a little fire kindleth." Dinner followed, and for the rest of the day the men did as they pleased. An open-air sacred concert had been arranged for the evening, but a severe thunderstorm drove the men to the shelter of their tents and effectually damped the ardour of the performers.

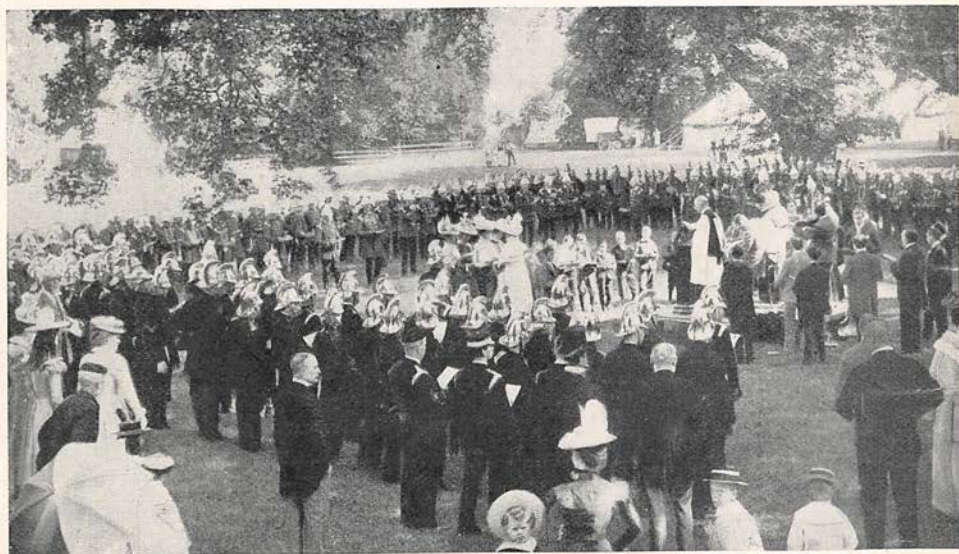
Two days were then devoted to the competition drills. Although they started as early as seven in the morning, so numerous were the competitors that it was late on the second day before all had gone through



THE FIREMEN AT DINNER.

their performances. Nobly did the competing teams vie with one another to be adjudged the smartest in the steamer, the manual, the escape, or the hose-cart drill. The excitement at times was very intense, especially over the manual wet drill. General satisfaction was evinced when the Bournemouth Brigade came off winner of the Challenge Shield. So close were several of the competitions run that the judges had to decide between seconds and fifths of seconds, no easy task to settle in a good many cases. Yet, despite the large number of would-be winners, there was but little grumbling, the men being content to leave

the decision in the hands of the impartial judges. The "one man manual drill" for championship of the Union proved immensely popular. There were over seventy entries. From six paces at the rear of the engine, the fireman in full uniform, at the word of command, had to run to his engine, lay out two fifty feet lengths of hose (which were coiled), affixing branch, take out pole and sway bars, take out and fix two lengths of suction, throw over and lock levers and beat block. The whole of this task, which placed the engine in proper working order, was triumphantly accomplished by a member of the Lydd Brigade in the record time of



THE FIREMEN AT CHURCH PARADE.

1 minute 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ seconds. The wet steamer drill is always an attractive one for spectators, and as there was a good deal of friendly rivalry among the competing teams for the National Shield, this particular competition was awaited with interest. Nor were the spectators disappointed. The Leyton and Leytonstone team added another to the day's records, their time being 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ seconds.

Away go the horses drawing the steamer at full gallop, the men shout as they would at a fire, the sparks begin to fly from the funnel, and all are eagerly looking toward their goal, when suddenly in the midst of a full gallop the engine stops dead. Off come the men and driver; in a twinkling the horses are led away, the hose run out, suction placed in dam, engineer blows the steam whistle, and

the firemen are called upon in real earnest to risk their lives in aid of their fellow men and in the saving of valuable property.

One of the most striking and at the same time suggestive objects of attention and interest in the Camp was the St. John's ambulance tent, ambulance van, and corps of nurses. This highly important adjunct of a fully equipped brigade was reinforced by some firemen trained in the use of "first aid." Several firemen carried on their arms the badge of the St. John's Association, showing that they had passed examinations and were capable of rendering timely help to sufferers until a doctor could be summoned.

A grand torchlight procession was formed which paraded the Camp and town of Wood-



THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH WITH THE OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL FIRE BRIGADES' UNION, AND FOREIGN DELEGATES, ON THE STEPS OF BLENHEIM PALACE.

we hear the pit-a-pat of the water beating the target.

Another popular feature was the escape drill. A "house on fire" had been built, and to this the escape was run, fixed, and lengthened sufficiently to reach the top window, where a poor fellow, supposed to be in a precarious position, looked beseechingly down as the escape was pitched. Up ran a fireman, and before the audience could repeat the usual "Jack Robinson" the rescued man was being safely brought to the ground.

On this occasion the Duke of Marlborough was among the rescued, being brought safely down by one of the Pompier escape men of the plucky Welsh brigade.

At Blenheim this was only play, but almost every day in their respective towns

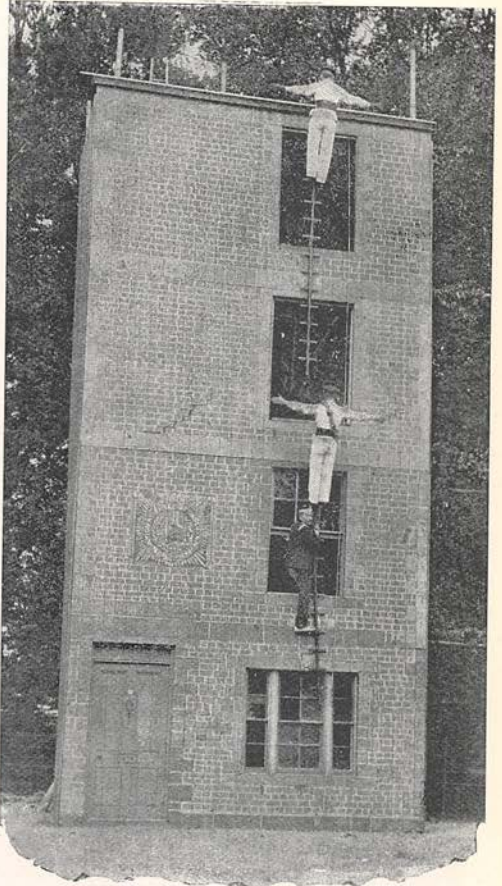
stock, and marched on to the lawn in front of the palace, where the men were formed up, making an immense "M," the initial of "Marlborough," a compliment to the Duke and Duchess.

At the grand review, exhibition drills were given by winning teams. A large number of spectators—some thousands from Woodstock, Oxford, and surrounding places—lined the ropes and heartily cheered the winners as they went up to receive their prizes from the Duchess. Among the exhibits was a powerful high-pressure "double vertical" engine constructed by Shand, Mason and Co., and shown at Blenheim preparatory to its being forwarded to its ultimate destination, Sydney, N.S.W. It had been built with a view to use at large

fires, and for dealing with outbreaks in tall buildings, which are on the increase in Sydney. The order stipulated that the engine should deliver 600 gallons per minute, throw a jet through a 1½-inch nozzle to a height of 200 feet, and with a steam pressure of 125 lb. deliver the water at a pressure of 200 lb. to the square inch. Our illustration will, to some extent, give an idea of the size and strength of the fireman's "100-ton gun."

Most camps have their joke; the Fire Camp was no exception. A brigade—we will not name it—came into camp on the Saturday night, and, as it happened, soon after they arrived one of the men was missing. This particular man's father, little thinking, we trust, what mental suffering it would entail on his offspring, inquired for

"Amos." His fellow-firemen took up the strain, and soon in loud and beseeching tones they were imploring the lost Amos to show himself, asking from



THE HOUSE ON FIRE, WITH POMPIER LADDER.



FIRE ESCAPE DRILL.

tent to tent, "Have you seen Amos?" Amos was found, where or how it matters not; it was evident he was too good a joke to be permanently lost. "Have you seen Amos?" passed into a byword. Men, instead of exchanging a "Good-day" as they met, said, "Have you seen Amos?" The unfortunate minor prophet, who evidently had no honour in his own country, was in evidence at breakfast, at dinner, and at tea; and far on into the night might still be heard some deep voice imploring with touching pathos, "Have you seen Amos?"

Perhaps it may be asked what good will be the outcome

of this Fire Camp. It can be emphatically said that every hope of the N.F.B.U. was more than fulfilled. The men showed an intelligent appreciation of the exhibits of the three large manufacturing firms who had tents on the ground (Messrs. Merryweather and Sons, Messrs Shand, Mason and Co., and Messrs. Rose and Co.). They saw there many fresh improvements which they might introduce into their own equipments with advantage. They had gone through a splendid course of training to fit them for the competitions; they found out what their brethren in other towns were like; a friendly spirit was kindled between them, and they all had an excellent holiday, which will be looked back upon as one of the most pleasant in their lives.

If there were any drawbacks, as there were bound to be, since this was the first Fire Camp, any improvement in detail or management that a fault suggested was taken note of by the officers in command, Lieut.-Col. Seabroke and his energetic lieutenants, Captain Dyson of the Windsor Brigade, and Mr. H. S. Folker, the general honorary secretary of the Union, and will be certainly remedied on future like occasions.

A Fire Camp is a new feature in fire brigade work. Firemen are always popular with the public, and it is to be hoped that the success of last year's Camp may lead to other similar musters of our heroes of peace.



JET OF WATER THROWN BY STEAMER AT WORK.