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THE FIRST RANK IN THE ARMY.

It is an ensign who carries a flag.
Pictorial Alphabet.

Little does the unsuspecting victim of 'scarlat fever' and misplaced confidence know what a preliminary purgatory he has to go through before he enters the paradise of his imagination, and bursts out in all the glory of a full-blown ensign. On joining his regiment, he is handed over by an unfeeling adjutant to the tender mercies of a remorseless sergeant-major, a kind of military Grand Inquisitor, who, assisted by familiars in the guise of drill-sergeants and corporals, forthwith subjects the unhappy youth to a series of cruel tortures, that would extort pity from the heart even of a Madras collector! He is barbarously roused out of his warm bed at six in the morning, and turned, shivering in a thin shell-jacket, on to a cold damp parade ground. He is herded with a batch of lately caught ploughboys, called a squad, and his body placed in all sorts of uncomfortable positions by a rigid non-commissioned officer, who has the drill-book off by heart, but is painfully deficient on points of grammar.

He is instructed by this ramrod in regimentals, that to occupy the position of a soldier, he is not to stand 'bolt hupright like a aystack,' but to 'lean well forward,' with his 'ed hup, shoulders square, stomach lin, palm of the fist to the front; little finger touching the seam of the trouser, feet at a hangle of forty-five degrees, eels together, and the weight of the body on the flat of the fust.' Wishing to conciliate his fierce-looking preceptor, the trembling novice too eagerly attempts to comply with this exasperating formula, and tumbles on his nose. 'That's not the position of a soldier,' says Corporal Poker triumphantly, picking up his unfortunate pupil. 'If you ad battended to my instructions, sir, you would not ave soiled your pantaloons.'

With a view of opening his chest, and giving him that graceful hollow in the back so essential to a perfect military carriage, the ensign is put through a course of gymnastic evolutions that would prostrate the most muscular street-acrobat that ever converted himself into a human frog by tying his legs

in a knot round his neck. In the course of these callisthenic exercises, he is made to clap his hands insanely before his nose, with his arms extended like a sign-post, and then to force them violently behind his back till his shoulder-blades crack again. He has next to become an animated wind-mill, and whirl his clenched fists frantically round his head, till his arms are loose in their sockets; and, finally, if of a stout habit of body, he is brought to the very verge of apoplexy, by vainly attempting, at the command of his tormentor, to perform the impossible feat of touching his toes with his finger without bending his knees. Panting with this exertion, which has fractured his dress in a most inconvenient manner in several places, he is permitted to 'stand at ease' for a short time and look about him; but before he has recovered his breath, he is nearly lifted off his legs by the word 'attention,' barked sharply out and pronounced 'shun' by the Ramrod, and forthwith put through his 'facings.' He is told that at the word 'right about face,' he is not to 'face,' but merely to 'place the ball of the right toe against the eel of the left fust, and remain stiddy.' At the word 'to' he is to 'face about,' and at the word 'three' bring his 'eels together with a tell.' Poker insists upon the 'tell,' and if the dozen pair of Bluchers in his squad don't come together at exactly the same moment, and with a noise like thunder, he savagely gives the word 'has you were,' and begins again.

Having been twisted round to all the points of the compass, till he is quite giddy, and his intellect completely muddled with the intricacies of 'left about three-quarters,' 'right half,' and 'vice versa,' the bewildered candidate for a 'peerage or Westminster Abbey,' is next initiated into the mysteries of the 'goose step'—a ridiculous performance, which consists in his standing for an indefinite period on one leg, with the other poised in the air, and waving the suspended limb gracefully backwards and forwards with depressed 'eel' and 'pinted' to' to the words 'front' and 'rare' of the ungrammatical Poker.

Should the victim's attention wander for a moment during this absurd exhibition, the lynx-eyed sergeant-major is heard shouting from one end of the parade in stentorian tones: 'No. 13's not looking to his front!' and if, in his agitation at this unlooked-for check, the nervous recruit should unconsciously get the strap of his forage-cap into his mouth, the adjutant, equally sharp-sighted, screams, in piercing accents, from the other end: 'You needn't devour your chin-strap in that ravenous way, Mr. Green; you'll get your breakfast presently.' Total-

ly upset, both mentally and bodily, by this double-barrelled attack, the wretched tyro loses his presence of mind, totters, both feet come to the ground, and he is ignominiously packed off to the 'awkward squad,' a collection of all the impracticable muffs and incorrigible 'bad bargains' in the regiment.

Three times a day for weeks and months has the future Wellington to undergo this process of slow torture, which constitutes his military education, during which time he gets over hundreds of miles of gravel, and wears out dozens of pairs of boots, in his attempts to master the difficulties of marching, counter marching, wheeling, doubling, charging, and forming square. His knuckles are barked in the 'manual and platoon,' his knees are excoriated in 'resisting cavalry,' and he is beaten black and blue in the sword-exercise. When at length, he can stop the regulated pace, in the legitimate time, without varying the hundredth part of an inch in the thousandth part of a second—when he can handle a heavy rifle as easily as he would a popgun—when he has overcome his natural propensity to look round if his curiosity is excited, to rub any part of his person afflicted with temporary irritation, to laugh when he is amused, and cry oh! when he is hurt—when, in fact, he has learned to become a mere automaton without will or motion, except at the command of his drill instructor, he is reported fit for duty, and his persecution ceases. On the recommendation of the adjutant, a board of fat majors is appointed to sit upon him; and if he goes through his various performances to their satisfaction, he is dismissed drill. A tip of a sovereign assuages the grief of the grim Poker at parting with his disciple; and the emancipated novice, throwing away his leading strings, is permitted for the first time to join the general parade, and share in all the privileges and immunities of an officer holding the 'first rank in the army!'

He then becomes a tremendous fellow! Stalwart grenadiers fly at his bidding; the great sergeant major himself is obedient to his nod, and in a moment of unparalleled audacity he has even been known to 'chaff' the adjutant! His military career has fairly commenced; and the fortunate ensign, after serving in all parts of the globe, and expending some three or four thousands in purchasing his promotion, may look forward to, 'coming, in about thirty years, a broken-down old general officer on a pound a day, with perhaps an extra 5s. for distinguished service—provided always he manages, in the meantime, to escape cholera at Calcutta, yellow Jack at Jamaica, frostbites in Canada, asseigns at the Cape—mutilation, amputation, starvation, and all the other ills