

With the Kilties from Camp to Hammock

HISTORY records the fact and anthropologists verify the statement that King Solomon, in the zenith of his glory, was sufficiently wise to manage seven hundred women, yet he himself admitted that even with divine guidance there were the ways of four things that he could not understand, and if he were living to-day I have no hesitancy in predicting that he would make it five; the fifth being the ways of the Canadian Militia Department regarding the movement or rather, in this case, the non-movement of troops.

During the month of April, A.D. 1917, there were at least seventeen separate and distinct dates (more or less) set apart and "ear-marked" for the departure of the "Kilties" from Camp McGregor at Windsor, Ont., where for the past eight months they had found all the comforts of a happy home in one of the most perfectly appointed military camps in Canada. A baker's dozen of times the word had gone out that the Battalion would leave at sunset, daybreak, or 8, 9, 10, or some other hour, A.M. or P.M., on a given day, and consequently loving friends were kept in a state of nervous anxiety regarding the fate of the "Highlanders."

On April the 9th the good ladies of Leamington practically used up all of the vacant space in that good old patriotic town, in supplying holes for the several barrels of doughnuts they sent up for the boys to take along with them for luncheon on the train. The ladies of Windsor baked cookies by the thousand, and still the "Kilties" remained anchored in their camp on McDougall avenue.

The officers impartially supplied encouragement to optimist and pessimist alike. The optimists were those who declared their faith in the ultimate get-a-way of the 241st Battalion. The pessimists refused to concede that there was the remotest possibility of the unit ever getting any farther toward the firing line than "Petite Cote" or the "River Rouge." On the whole, from the 9th to the 24th, were field days for the pessimists. Everything went their way. Instead of one installment of sniffs and sobs and one hard shower of tears—one volley of gulps and chokes—we had encores and extra numbers over and over again. The battalion would no more be rid of the melancholy squad than the date of departure would be cancelled and the friends beckoned to return another day and exchange the gloomy forebodings that the regiment would in all probability be sent to the Mexican border, to linger among the Cacti and be caressed by Tarantulas, or possibly contract fever and ague and find a last resting place on the summit of the Montezumas, and escaping that dire fate we were to be employed on garrison duty in the Bahamas or Bermudas or Pelce Island lighthouse.

However, the gayety of these oft-repeated occasions were somewhat enhanced by a quartette of jovial singers "rendering" "God be with you until we meet again." The way they did it was strongly suggestive of the lack of confidence on the part of the singers regarding the outcome of the trust. For pure and unadulterated lugubriousness nothing to equal it was ever pulled off, except a merry chant that the writer once heard at a temperance convocation and which was entitled "The wine bibber's grave." (It must be understood that this "Sob Squad" were composed almost exclusively of those who were "in love." The "married folks" acted with true Spartan stoicism and displayed will power so much admired in wives and mothers-in-law.) But "back to the Cactus." On Monday, April 23rd, final and complete orders (with name of the A.A.G. "blown-in-the-bottle" without which none are genuine) were received to prepare to take a long ride on Tuesday, which day we all know is a "close season for doughnuts," Monday being "wash-day." Consequently there was "narry a nut" much to the discomfiture of the lovers of this gastronomic delight.