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ON BEING OBLIGED TO GO TO CHURCH BY PRIVATE WILLY NILLY.

T may or may not be deplorable, but it is a fact, that of all the parades in which a soldier has to take part, the one most hated by the majority is the Sunday morning Church Parade.

Those good people who almost suggest that the soldier spends his weekdays counting the minutes until the next Church Parade comes round, have no intimate knowledge of real life in the army. After five years' soldiering, the writer can declare, without exaggeration, that he has heard more hard swearing over this weekly event than any other.

A soldier in training in England puts in a considerable amount of hard (and often unaccustomed) physical work from Monday to Saturday. By the time Sunday arrives he is in real need of a rest-particularly if he is one of the older men (who have joined in their thousands during the last two years), and has passed that time of life when the training would have been a pleasure to him.

Many of this class are married and have led a regular, peaceful life for some years, and in addition have, for the most part, formed definite opinions on religion and the value of church services. Also, the conviction that by every law of nature and justice Sunday is their own day, to do what they like with, is rooted firmly in their brains. But once in the army these men are faced with a twofold injustice. Not only are they robbed of a large slice of their precious "day off," but in addition they are forced to "go to church."

selves. Then let them calculate what percentage of these men freed from army discipline would be seen inside a church on Sunday morning. At the utmost, is it likely to exceed ten? That being so, why on earth should 100 per cent. of them be expected to enjoy going to church when in the army?

The military authorities, however, regard Church Parade as a highly necessary and disciplinary measure. It is one of those institutions, like saluting, without which, they will tell you, the British Army would go to pieces.

There is certainly more discipline than divinity about a Church Parade. The men have to turn out shaved and spotless-with gleaming buttons, polished boots, belts and badges. All this means work. They then have to fall in a good half-hour or three-quarters before the service begins, to be inspected-first by their platoon commanders, then by their company commanders, and lastly by the commanding officer or his adjutant. As a rule this is not got through without a good deal of cursing on the part of the sergeants and more than one "ticking .off" by one or other of the officers.

This is the prelude to "Divine" service. When all these disciplinary measures have been carried out, the men are marched to church, where they are, more often than not, preached "at," or talked to in a way that would be an insult to the intelligence of an Eskimo.

These are a few of the reasons for the soldier's dislike for Church Parade. The soldier's religion ! Ah, that





Let those who think this an overstatement, picture a regiment of soldiers as civilians able to please them-

is a different matter entirely : a matter with which his attitude towards Church Parade has nothing whatever to do.



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