



HOW VICTORIA WAS GUARDED UNDER THE OLD REGIME.
Street Parade of Jack Tars on the King's Birthday in 1901, when Esquimalt had a Royal Naval Squadron.

The Eyes of Esquimalt

By N. De B. L.

WITHIN the memory of the present generation Esquimalt has never until now been symbolical of war. Rather has it stood to us as emblematical of romance. Romances begun when H. M. Ships sailed through the Straits of Juan de Fuca from distant ports, and pretty Victoria girls watched them gliding in towards Esquimalt harbour; romances carried on in the old sail loft, made over for the occasions with flags and bunting, and crossed swords and other nautical paraphernalia into a ball-room, or on the bright green lawns of the naval yards at cricket or tennis matches, or on the decks of the war ships themselves converted for the nonce into dancing pavilions and delightful cosy corners; romances culminating in quiet or brilliant ceremonies at the little garrison church, which has stood ever since Esquimalt was founded, and upon whose walls many a tablet is placed sacred to the memory of the hundreds of brave sailors who have found unknown graves somewhere on the vast Pacific; romances that knit the old world to the new as nothing else could do, and helped to make Victoria so much a part of the mother land that she has been described as "a little bit of England."

Those were gay days, when the British ships were stationed in Esquimalt harbour and the Admiral and his lady gave a high social standing to the community, when the little shops and inns and taverns did a thriving business, and the many tiny cottages were trim and neat, their gardens gay with flowers, and the more pretentious quarters of the officers and were charmingly inviting and there was always some social function or another taking place to attract Victorians old and young.

Then, years ago, there came a change. The Canadian Government took over the naval station and the British ships, the British sailors and the men of the garrison went away; the barracks, the officers' houses, and all buildings were dismantled. Victorians recall the morning we said "good-bye" to the sailor men. We can see them now as they marched to the boats in Victoria harbour, some of them smiling, some of them sad; we can see the weeping women on the wharf, holding up their laughing babies, it would not be a long separation, but it was the breaking of the home ties that hurt; we can hear the squeal of the fifes and the rattle of the drums, calling a long "good-bye" and writing "finis" on one chapter of British Columbia's history.

AFTER they had gone Esquimalt went to sleep. No more gymkhanas on bright summer afternoons, with the ships in the harbour gay with banners and dozens of small boats coming and going, manned by spick and span sailors, and conveying smiling crowds of visitors; no more games on the

green in the navy yards, watched by fashionably dressed throngs of men and women; no more balls in the barracks or the old sail loft. The little shops,



The Old Garrison Church at Esquimalt.

the inns and taverns strove bravely to exist for a little while, and then with a final gasp under the auctioneer's hammer went into oblivion. All along the short and narrow streets, every one of which leads to the water, either to the right or left, empty cottages with broken windows, and gardens overgrown, died a slow death under the picturesque hand of Time. And of all places in the world there was not one more silent, more lonely, than the little naval village asleep and dreaming of its former glories.

But there came, swift as the flash of a swallow's wing, a message overseas. England was at war with Germany. In a moment all was changed once more. Esquimalt awoke from sleep, and that which had seemed dead, lived again. The old Spirit—not that Romance of her later days—but the Spirit that hovered over her in the days of her foundation, when fighting Britain sent her ships and men into the uncharted waters, and set up lights and beacons and docks and wharves and forts, returned once more to house old forces and new forces into activity, to inspire to deeds of dauntless courage, high hopes and gallant endeavour. The old forts are manned again with men as brave as those who fought in distant

British battlefields two generations ago, and the sailors afloat or ashore are the kind that keep alive the heroic traditions of their fathers. France and England are fighting again side by side for a common cause, as they did in the village's young days during the Crimean war.

Day by day the grim, grey ships, sureties of the nations' safety, guardians of the nations' freedom, keep stern watch in Esquimalt waters. By night their great search lights are thrown across the sea from Brochy Ledge to Race Rocks, and day and night they are manned and ready for any call. Now and then they ship anchor and slip away, beyond the Straits to the ocean, undertaking some hazardous mission or another, which no one, save those in the Admiralty's secrets knows; and just as quietly they slip back again, silent and unheralded, their mission accomplished. There are times when those in Esquimalt village hear the noise of mighty cheering, and looking out of windows or over gates, they see the countless sailors of the cruisers in port, lining up on deck, waving their caps and giving some home-coming vessel a rousing welcome. And then they know that some deed requiring skill and fortitude has been done by the men who have just returned; and the villagers look at one another and smile and nod in a matter-of-fact way, as if they would say: "Of course they have won. A British sailor always wins or dies trying."

The Real Joffre

GEN. BOULANGER'S career is still a factor in the military life of France. Since his time there has existed a Republican prejudice against the notoriety of Generals. To that is due the fact that few photographs have appeared of Gen. Joffre, the present Commander-in-Chief of the French army. Gen. Joffre's order of the day giving praise to Gen. de Castelnau was suppressed by the censor, apparently because it was considered against the interest of the Republic that a general should become a popular hero. To-day it is a war of silence and anonymity which accords best with the genius of Joffre, a war of fatigue and resistance—a "scientific" war, as opposed to an "artistic" war of Napoleon. Joffre has become a master of the new system, which he did not invent.

Gen. Joffre spends a part of each day in a long, low, rapid motor-car visiting the lines. It is impossible to visit all the points—much must be left to the corps commander after the general plan is settled; this robs a generalissimo of personal contact with his troops; he is more or less unknown to them, and Joffre probably has to show papers to his sentries. He wears out two chauffeurs a day in his rush from point to point.

His chief characteristic is calmness. He is as calm in war as in peace. And that quality has bred confidence. He has confidence in himself, and has given confidence to others. His staff never for a moment doubts his capacity to win, and that conviction has percolated through to the masses of the troops. It has made him popular, though he has done nothing to engender that; on the contrary, he eschews popularity. He lives apart from Press "reclame"; he does not seek it and he dislikes it. He knows how to combine the best in his own and other people's projects. He is modest as he is unassuming. His readiness to accept suggestion has fostered the belief that he is an adapter and organizer rather than strategist. He is both. His campaigns show the soldier as well as the engineer and organizer. But his great maxim is that in war nothing can be improvised. Every detail must be thought out; that marks his superiority over other modern commanders.

HIS achievement is the formation of the General Staff. He has brought together the best military brains in France and co-ordinated and controlled their efforts. He has exercised politics, that bane of the French Army. It is the more to his credit, for his own political opinions are opposed to those of his chief coadjutors. A Republican and Freemason, he is surrounded by men who are Catholic and disposed to cavil at the present Constitution; but it makes no difference to his appreciation of them. His chief confidence is given to Generals Pau and de Castelnau, neither of whom belongs to his school of politics. When it was necessary to break the careers of five Generals who had shown weakness in manoeuvres, he did not hesitate. In the war of 1870 he distinguished himself as second lieutenant, and then work on fortifications. He managed those of Paris so well that MacMahon made him captain at 22. He became such an expert in constructing defences in various parts of the world that he feared to be doing that and nothing else for the rest of his life.

Few of his pupils at Fontainebleau, where he became Professor of Military Construction, thought of him as the future Commander-in-Chief. He has no parade, no pose, and is not at all the type of "beau cavalier" dear to the hearts of romantic French demiselles. He is just a plain soldier, modern and scientific. He is a savant without the faults of a savant. His mass of theory is leavened by a high sense of the practical.