

KITCHENER'S MOB



By JAS. NORMAN HALL.

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd.)

Plenty of hard work in the open air brought great and welcome changes. The men talked of their food, anticipated it with a zest which came from realizing, for the first time, the joy of being genuine hungrers. They watched their muscles harden with the satisfaction known to every normal man when he is becoming physically efficient. Food, exercise, and rest, taken in wholesome quantities and at regular intervals, were having the usual excellent results. For my own part, I had never before been in such splendid health. I wished that it might at all times be possible for democracies to exercise a beneficent paternalism over the lives of their citizenry, at least in matters of health. It seems a great pity that the principle of personal freedom should be responsible for so many ill-shaped and ill-sorted physical incompetents. My fellow Tommies were living, really living, for the first time. They had never before known what it means to be radiantly healthy.

There were, as well, more profound and subtle changes in thoughts and habits. The restraints of discipline and the very exacting character of military life and training gave them self-control, mental alertness. At the beginning, they were individuals, no more cohesive than so many grains of wet sand. After nine months of training they acted as a unit, obeying orders with that instinctive promptness of action which is so essential on the field of battle when men think scarcely at all. But it is true that what was their gain as soldiers was, to a certain extent, their loss as individuals. When we went on active service I noted that men who were excellent followers were not in frequent loss when called upon for independent action. They had not been trained to take the initiative, and had become so accustomed to having their thinking done for them that they often became confused and excited when they had to do it for themselves.

Discipline was an all-important factor in the daily grind. At the beginning of their training, the men of the new armies were gently dealt with. Allowances were made for civilian frailties and shortcomings. But as they adapted themselves to changed conditions, restrictions became increasingly severe. Old privileges disappeared one by one. Individual liberty became a thing of the past. The men resented this bitterly for a time. Fierce hatreds of officers and N.C.O.s were engendered and there was much talk of revenge when we should get to the front. Used to look forward with misgiving to the day. It seemed probable that one night in the trenches would suffice for a wholesale slaughtering of officers. Old scores were to be paid off, old grudges wiped out with our first shot of ball ammunition. Many a list-banged board at the wet canteen gave proof of Tommy's earnestness.

"Shoot 'em?" he would say, rattling the beer glasses of the whole length of the table with a mighty blow of his fist. "Blimey! Wit! That's all you got to do! Just wit! Wit! We get on the other side!"

But all these threats were forgotten months before the time came for carrying them out. Once Tommy understood the reasonableness of severe discipline, he took his punishment for his offenses without complaint. He realized, too, the futility of kicking against the pricks. In the army he belonged to the Government body and soul. He might resent its treatment of him. He might behave like a sulky schoolboy, disobey orders, or kick and break rule after rule. In that case he found himself checked at every turn. Punishment became more and more severe. No one was at all concerned about his grievances. He might become an habitual offender from sheer stupidity, but in doing so, he injured no one but himself.

A few of these incorrigibles were discharged in disgrace. A few followed the lead of the British. After many threats which we despised of his ever carrying out, he finally "greased off." He was immediately posted as a deserter, but to our great joy was never captured. With the disappearance of the malcontented incorrigibles the battalion soon reached a high grade of efficiency. The physical incompetents were likewise ruthlessly weeded out. All of us had passed a fairly thorough examination at the recruiting office; but many had physical defects which were discovered only by the test of actual training. In the early days of the war, requirements were much more severe than later, when England learned how great would be the need for men. Many, who later re-enlisted in other regiments, were discharged as "physically unfit for further military service."

If the standard of conduct in my battalion is any criterion, then I can say truthfully that there is very little crime in Lord Kitchener's armies either in England or abroad. The "jankers" or defaulters' squad was always rather large; but the "jankers men" were offenders against minor points in discipline. Their crimes were untidy appearance on parade, intention in the ranks, tardiness at roll-call, and others of the sort, all within the jurisdiction of a company officer. The punishment meted out varied according to the seriousness of the offense, and the past conduct record of the offender. It usually consisted of from one to ten days, "C.B."—confined to barracks. During the period of his sentence the offender was forbidden to leave camp after the parade for the day was ended. And in order that he might have no opportunity to do so, he was compelled to answer his name at the guard-room whenever it should be sounded.

Only twice in England did we have a general court-martial, the offense

in each case being assault by a private upon an N.C.O., and the penalty awarded, three months in the military prison at Aldershot. Tommy was chief culprit being due to an exaggerated estimate of his capacity for beer. In France, his conduct, in so far as my observation goes, has been splendid throughout. During six months in the trenches I saw but two instances of drunkenness. Although I witnessed nearly everything which took place in my own battalion, and heard the general gossip of many others, never did I see or hear of a soldier behaving otherwise than courteously. Neither did I see or hear of any instances of looting or petty pilfering from the civilian inhabitants. It is true that the men had fewer opportunities for misconduct, and that they were fighting in a friendly country. Even so, active service as we found it was by no means free from temptations. The admirable restraint of most of the men in the face of them was a fine thing to see.

Frequent changes were made in methods of training in England, to correspond with changing conditions of modern warfare as exemplified in the trenches. Textbooks on military tactics and strategy, which were the inspired gospel of the last generation of soldiers, became obsolete overnight. Experience gained in Indian Mutiny wars or the veldt in South Africa was of little value in the trenches in Flanders. The emphasis shifted from open fighting to trench warfare, and the textbook which our officers studied was a typewritten serial issued semi-weekly by the War Office, and which was based on the daily book of experience of officers at the front.

We spent many a starry night on the hills above Folkestone digging trenches and building dug-outs according to take the Staff instructions, and many a rainy one we came home, covered with mud, but happy in the thought that we were approximating, as nearly as could be, the experience of the boys at the front. Bomb-throwing squads were formed, and the best shots in the battalion, the men who had made marksmen's scores on the rifle ranges, were given daily instruction in the important business of sniping. More generous provision for the training of machine-gun teams was made, but so great was the lack in England of these important weapons, that for many weeks we drilled with wooden substitutes gaining such knowledge of machine gunnery as we could from the study of our M.G. manuals.

These new duties, coming as an addition to the work, meant an increased period of training. We were impatient to be at the front, but we realized by this time that Lord Kitchener was serious in his demand that the men of the new armies be efficiently trained. Therefore we worked with a will, and at last, after nine months of monotonous toil, the order came. We were to proceed on active service.

CHAPTER IV.

Abroad.

One Sunday morning in May we assembled on the barracks square at Aldershot for the last time. Every man was in full marching order. His rifle was the "Short Lee Enfield, Mark IV," his bayonet, the long single-edged blade in general use throughout the British Army. In addition to his arms he carried 120 rounds of ".303" caliber ammunition, an trenching tool, water-bottle, haversack, containing both emergency and the day's ration, and his pack, strapped to shoulder, carried such such as a tin of condensed milk, a tin of bully, and a tin of condensed milk. His pack contained the following articles: A greatcoat, a woolen shirt, two or three pairs of socks, a change of underclothing, "housewife," the soldiers' sewing-kit—a towel, a cake of soap, and a "hold-all," in which were a knife, fork, spoon, razor, shaving brush, toothbrush, and comb. All of these were useful and sometimes essential articles, particularly the "housewife," which Tommy regarded as the best little instrument for cleaning the mechanism of a rifle ever invented. Strapped on top of the pack was the blanket roll wrapped in a waterproof ground sheet, and hanging beneath it, the canteen in its khaki-cloth cover. Each man wore an identification disk on a cord about his neck. It was stamped with his name, regimental number, regiment, and religion. A first-aid field dressing, consisting of an antiseptic gauze pad and bandage and a small vial of iodine, sewn in the lining of his tunic, completed the equipment.

Physically, the men were "in the pink," as Tommy says. They were clear-eyed, vigorous, alert, and as hard as nails. With their caps on, they looked the well-trained soldiers which they were; but with caps removed, they resembled so many untrained convicts less the prison puller. "Over-sea haircuts" were the last tonsorial cry, and for several days previous to our departure, the army hairdressers had been busily wielding the close-cutting clippers.

Each of us had received a copy of Lord Kitchener's letter to the troops ordered abroad, a brief, soldierlike statement of the standard of conduct which England expected of her fighting men. You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common enemy. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honor of the British Army depends upon your individual conduct. It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire, but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in this struggle. The operations in which

you are engaged will, for the most part, take place in a friendly country, and you can do your own country no better service than in showing yourself, in France and Belgium, in the true character of a British soldier.

Be invariably courteous, considerate, and kind. Never do anything likely to injure or destroy property, and always look upon looting as a disgraceful act. You are sure to meet with a welcome and to be trusted; and your conduct must justify that welcome and that trust. Your duty cannot be done unless your health is sound. So keep constantly on your guard against any excess. In this new experience you may find temptations both in men and women. You must entirely resist both temptations, and while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy.

Do your duty bravely.
Fear God.
Honor the King.

KITCHENER.

It was an effective appeal and a constant reminder of the glorious traditions of the British Army. In the months that followed, I had opportunity to learn how deep and lasting was the impression made upon them by Lord Kitchener's letter, and I believe his only letter to his soldiers.

The machinery for moving troops in England works without the slightest friction. The men, transport, horses, commissariat, medical stores, and supplies of a battalion are contained in less than half an hour. Everything is timed to the minute. Battalion after battalion and train after train, we moved out of Aldershot at half-hour intervals. Each train arrived at the port of embarkation on schedule time and pulled up on the docks by the side of a troop transport, great slate-colored liners taken out of the merchant service. Not a moment was lost. The last man to board the last wagon on the crane swinging over the ship's side as the next train came in.

Ship by ship we moved down the harbor in the twilight, the boys crowding the rail on both sides, taking their last farewell look at England. Home! It was the last word for many of them, but there was no martial music, no waving of flags, no tearful good-byes. Our farewell was as prosaic as our long period of training had been. Bomb-throwing squads were formed, and the best shots in the battalion, the men who had made marksmen's scores on the rifle ranges, were given daily instruction in the important business of sniping. More generous provision for the training of machine-gun teams was made, but so great was the lack in England of these important weapons, that for many weeks we drilled with wooden substitutes gaining such knowledge of machine gunnery as we could from the study of our M.G. manuals.

There was not so much as a wave of the hand from the wharf; for there was no one on the wharf to wave, with the exception of a few dock laborers, and they had seen too many soldiers off to the front to be sentimental about it. It was a tense moment for the men, but trust Tommy to relieve a tense situation. As we steamed away from the landing slip, we passed a barge, loaded to the water's edge with coal. Tommy has a song put to this occasion. He enjoys above all things, giving a ludicrous twist to a "wee-wee" ballad. When we were with in hailing distance of the coal barge, he began singing one of this variety: "Keep the Home Fires Burning." To those smutty-faced barge hands, every one joined in heartily, forgetting all about the solemnity of the leave-taking.

Tommy is a prosaic chap. This was never more apparent to me than when that pleasant evening in May when we said good-bye to England. Every one of home were twinkling their farewells far in the distance. Every moment brought us nearer to the great adventure. We were "off to the wars," to take out places in the far-flung battle line. Here was the romance lavishly offering gifts dearest to the hearts of Youth, offering them to clerks, barbers, tradesmen, drapers' assistants, men who had never known an adventure more thrilling than a holiday excursion to the lake. They were offered heroic proportions to every one but themselves.

French soldiers are conscious of the romantic possibilities offered them by the so-called "divine accident of war." They go forth to England lavishly offering gifts dearest to the hearts of Youth, offering them to clerks, barbers, tradesmen, drapers' assistants, men who had never known an adventure more thrilling than a holiday excursion to the lake. They were offered heroic proportions to every one but themselves.

There was, however, one burst of enthusiasm, as we started on our journey, which struck me as being spontaneous, and splendid, and thoroughly English. Outside the harbor we were met by our guard, a fleet of destroyers which was to give us safe convoy across the Channel. The moment they saw them the men broke forth into prolonged cheering, and there were glad shouts of "There they are, me lads! There's some of the little old watch dogs wot's keepin' 'em bottled up!"

"Good old navy! That's wot we've got 'em by the throat!"

"Let's give 'em 'Sons of the Sea!'"

And they did. They sang with a spirit of exaltation which Englishmen rarely betray, and which convinced me how nearly the sea and England's position as Mistress of the Seas touch the Englishman's heart of hearts.

"Sons of the sea, All British born, Sailing the ocean, Laughing foes to scorn. They may build their ships, my lads, And think they know the game; But they can't beat the boys of the bulldog breed Who made old England's name!"

It was a confession of faith. On the sea England can't be beaten. Tommy believes that with his whole soul, and on this occasion he sang with all the warmth of religious conviction.

Our Channel voyage was uneventful. Each transport was guarded by two destroyers, one on either side, the three vessels keeping abreast and about fifty yards apart during the entire journey. The submarine menace was then at its height, and we were prepared for an emergency. The boats were swung ready for immediate launching, and the possibility of danger was provided with life-preservers. But England had been transporting troops and supplies to the firing-line for so many months without accident that none of us were at all concerned about the possibility of danger. Furthermore, the men were too busy studying "Tommy Atkins's French Manual" to think about submarines. They were putting the final polish on their accent in preparation for to-morrow's landing.

"Alf, 'ow's this? 'Madamasselly, avay vus dee pang?' " "Wot do you say for 'Gimme a tupenny packet of 'Nosegay'?" That ain't so dusty, Freddie, wot?" "Let's try that Marcelase again. You start it, 'Arry." "Let Nobby. 'E knows the sounds better'n wot I do." We gotta learn that so we can sing it on the march." "Wite till I find it in me book. All right now—

"Allons enfants de la Patrie, La Joor de glory is arrivay."

Such bits of conversation may be of little interest, but they have the merit of being genuine. All of them were jotted down in my notebook at the times when I heard them.

The following day we crowded into the typical French army troop train, eight chevaux or forty horses to a car, and taking on a leisurely journey to the firing-line. We travelled all day at eight or ten miles an hour, through Normandy. We passed through pleasant towns and villages lying silent in the afternoon sunshine, and seemingly almost deserted, and through the open country fringed with the scent of apple blossoms. Now and then children waved to us from a cottage window, and in the fields old men and women and girls looked on with curiosity at their rakes and watched us pass. Occasionally an old reservist, guarding the railway line, would lift his cap and shout, "Vive l'Anglais!" But more often he would lean on his rifle and smile, nodding his head courteously but silent to our salutations. Tommy, for all his stolid, dogged cheeriness, sensed the tragedy of France. It was a land swept bare of all its fine young manhood. There was no more stir and bustle of civilian life. Those who were left went about their work silently and joylessly. When we asked of the men, we received, always, the same quiet, courteous reply: "A la guerre, comme à la guerre." The boys soon learned the meaning of the phrase, "à la guerre." It was a war-cry, a slogan. It was shouted back and forth from car to car and from train to train. You can imagine how their hearts were weaned from their homes, whenever the train stopped, for the sound of the guns. But not until the following morning, when we reached the little village at the end of our railway journey, did we hear them, a low muttering like the sound of thunder behind the horizon. How we cheered at the first faint sound which was to become so deafening, so terrible to us later. It was the first sound that we were like the others who had gone that way. We knew nothing of war. We thought it must be something adventurous and fine. Something to make the blood leap and the heart throb. They were figures of heroic proportions to every one but themselves.

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A COURSE IN HOUSEHOLD SCIENCE COMPLETE IN TWENTY-FIVE LESSONS.

Lesson XXV. Sueting Meats.

Sueting of meat is cooking meat in a small amount of fat. It is virtually impossible, when cooking meat in this manner, to prevent the meat from absorbing the fat, thus making it difficult to digest. This is particularly true during the warm weather and therefore this method should be eliminated.

Butter should not be used for cooking. By this method, owing to its low-boiling point, the fat particles burn and decompose, when subjected to high temperature. Sueting meat has nothing to recommend it to the housewife. Pan broiling will produce a better tasting food and eliminate the digestive disturbances.

Pan broiling is also a much easier method of cooking. You simply heat a frying pan and place in the meat, turn and sear the other side. Repeat this every two minutes until meat is cooked, using same test as in broiling. It is also necessary that all fat melting from meat during process of pan broiling be drained off. When necessary to cook meat in a fat, it should be protected by a coating such as egg and breadcrumbs, or by dipping in flour and then placed in very hot fat to brown. The meat can afterward be cooked at a lower temperature to finish it. This method prevents the meat from absorbing the grease.

Do not use a fork to turn the meat during process of cooking; the prongs of the fork puncture it, allowing the juices to escape, thus lessening its food value. The escaping juices do not remain in the pan; the heat causes them to evaporate.

Follow these points when buying meat:

Shortly after the meat is cut it should be a bright red color.

It should be firm when touched and have a pleasant meaty odor. Do not purchase meat with a strong disagreeable smell.

A layer of fat should cover the overlying muscles. The fat should be creamy white and of firm texture.

WAR AND FOOD SERIES. No. II. SUGAR.

Urgent, the people of Canada will be assisting the Sugar Commission, the Allied countries and themselves in obtaining supplies for spring and summer at lower prices than would otherwise be possible.

New SASKATCHEWAN HOSPITAL Governor-General Opens Building For Convalescent Soldiers.

His Excellency the Governor-General, the Duke of Devonshire, expressing great admiration for the accommodation supplied by the Military Hospitals Commission in the wing added to the Ross Park Military Hospital for convalescent soldiers, when he formally opened that institution on his recent visit to Moose Jaw.

The main building was originally a school, but renovated by the construction experts of the Hospitals Commission its conversion for hospital purposes is now most complete. Supplemented by a new wing of the standard plan for military convalescent hospitals it offers splendid facilities.

Following an inspection of the buildings in which the Duke, accompanied by his staff, was conducted over the institution by Major Ashton, D.S.O., the O.C. of "H" Unit, His Excellency said: "The facilities for taking hold of the noble fellows who have done such good work in France and placing them in position to resume civil life are all that could be desired, and with such facilities, I am convinced that you will be able to make just as good citizens of them as they were soldiers."

Major Ashton, who preceded the Governor-General on the programme, outlined the work which had been done by the Commission in Saskatchewan. He laid great stress on the vocational work and stated that it was the desire of the M.H.C. to give the returned men a training which would enable them to re-enter civil life on equal terms with the rest of the community.

If you wish to buy fish economically choose that which is caught in home waters.

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AMERICAN PLAN

JOHN J. HERNAN, Manager

FROM OLD SCOTLAND

NOTES OF INTEREST FROM HER BANKS AND BRAES.

What is Going On in the Highlands and Lowlands of Auld Scotia.

A sale of gifts and donations held at Jedburgh realized £200 in support of the local War Hospital Supply Depot.

The late William Hardy, Ravenslow, Alnwick, of the firm of Hardy Brothers, left an estate valued at £120,000.

Lieut. H. M. P. Ferreira, Kefso, has been appointed captain and flight commander in the Royal Flying Corps. Mr. and Mrs. John Torries, who live at Selkirk, have given eight sons to the army, two of whom have been killed.

A goodly sum of money was realized at a concert given at Rogart in aid of the fund for comforts for soldiers.

Miss M. F. Findlater, a sister of Piper Findlater, V.C., has taken up duties in a Manchester military hospital.

Lord Granville, the British plenipotentiary to the King of the Hellenes, is a brother of Lady Morrison, of Islay.

The Military Medal has been awarded to Corporal James MacKenzie, son of William MacKenzie, of Nairn.

The death took place recently at Galsfoot House of Francis Scott, manager of the Galsfoot Gas Company.

Sister Annie Saunders, of Bankhead, Blairgowrie, has been decorated by the Serbian Government with the Order of St. Sava.

Capt. J. Stewart, Blackwater, son of ex-Provost Stewart, of Chelwood, has been awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

A direct descendant of the MacDonald of Glencoe has just passed away in the person of Mrs. Mackintosh, of Lydney.

Lieut. Spencer Fowle, Seaforths, formerly a teacher in the West End school, Elgin, has been awarded the Military Cross.

David Edgar, R.F.A., who has been awarded the Military Medal, has been presented with a gold watch by the people of Thurnelbank.

The Scottish Secretary has issued an order extending for one year the term of President Poincaré as Recitor of Glasgow University.

At a "Heather Day" held in North Berwick over £80 was realized for the war charities.

The estate of Dumfries, seven miles east of Sterling, was recently sold for £50,000.

A bring-and-buy sale for the purpose of providing funds for teas for convalescent soldiers and sailors, held in the Christian Institute, Glasgow, realized £277.

The sum of £58 was realized on a flag day held at Kirkcaldy in aid of the Y.M.C.A. but funds.

Charles Cleberg, Rheinstetten, Dumfries, has purchased the 800-acre farm of Breconside, near Dumfries.

WAR AMONG THE ANTS.

A Savage Fight With No Quarter Asked and None Given.

On entering my grain house on August 20, 1917, writes a contributor, I discovered the threshold floor inside the door covered with hundreds of dead and mutilated bodies of large black ants. A terrible battle had evidently taken place during the preceding night. Heads, whole bodies, parts of bodies, legs, covered the battle ground. Shot and shell and mine and bomb could not have wrought greater destruction to life. Ants still alive, with legs bitten off close to the body or severed between the joints, were making ineffectual efforts to get away on the remaining stumps. Some of the victors had lost one or two legs, but were still busy. No hospital for them! They were helping to finish the wounded foe.

The most striking sight was a number of live ants dragging round with them one or two bodies of dead ants. A close examination revealed that each dead ant had caught the leg of a foe in a death grip that never relaxed even after death. In several instances three or four ants were locked together in that death grip, all dead. The victors were cleaning up the field. They were carrying dead bodies to the edge of the threshold and dropping them outside. Wounded and crippled ants still fought savagely when the victors approached; no quarter was asked and none was given.

What was the cause of such a terrible conflict we can never know. Perhaps it was food, or a desire for conquest, or some offense that one colony had committed against another. The incident reminds us of other battlefields where human beings are the actors, and the question arises, Who among them has been least removed, by modern civilization, from the barbarism of crude nature?

A wheel chair has been patented that can be folded compactly for storage when idle.

"Either the stay-at-homes must save so that the soldiers may get their vital needs, or the soldiers must go short so that the stay-at-homes may fatten. You can not have it both ways and must make your choice," says Lord Northcliffe.