

ONE CANVAS VILLAGE AT NIAGARA CAMP AS SEEN FROM THE HELIO PLATFORM.

All bell tents look alike in that huge military picnic ground; but what is inside may be as different as Hongkong from Halifax.

A DAY IN CAMP AT NIAGARA

Once it was Scarlet and Cocked Hats on Parade; But it's All Changed Now

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

SOME time last week about 5,000 men were eating, sleeping, drilling, marching, doing Swedish gymnastics, and otherwise enjoying life to the full at Niagara Camp. A day or two after that some of them struck camp. Who and how many—not for publication. The Niagara Camp is no longer an international picnic ground. To get inside the lines you must pass the pickets; either produce a passport from the headquarters' staff or some explanation that if you really are the guest of some officer you know precisely where to find his tent; and that is about as easy as picking out one tree in a patch of woods. All bell tents look alike. What is inside may be as different as Hongkong from Halifax.



The Camp Clock.

This is the assemblage of all the units formerly concentrated in winter quarters at Exhibition Camp, Toronto. The units are drawn from all over No. 2 Division, which extends from Sault Ste. Marie down to Oshawa, Ont.

It's the same old camp ground that for more than a century has been a military precinct; much the same old town, at the foot of the Niagara River and the edge of the lake; streets wide enough for ten car tracks, great historic trees, old ducal-looking mansions tucked away among them, peach groves, fat gardens, mediaeval docks with the same old pine-hewn freight shed as stood there a hundred years ago, and the names of the old schooners still over the doors—St. George, William IV., Com. Barrie, Cobourg and United Kingdom. Niagara is as old as the bugle and the drum. And at the present day it is limbering up its old joints to the music of the big camp behind on the flats, to the clink of soldiers' coin—spent since Monday last week for anything but hard liquor. One old stager of a house on the road to camp bears the epitaph 1792. The old town hall, with the cupola, must be at least a century old. And every year of the old town's age spells something to do with patriotism in the Empire, which never was so picturesquely big as it is now with that city of mushrooms about the great dandelioned, buttercupped meadow crisscrossed by dusty roads and foot-trails beaten hard by the sentry-go.

OLD residents and young girls prefer the peace camps of other days, when the old town was painted many colours by regimental uniforms. The only dash of red now is the flag and the capbands of the H. Q. staff. Everything else is fawn-green and white. Somewhere on the sunlit field bugles stutter any time of day, much to the melody of "Hail, hail, the gang's all here." Almost any hour of day you may hear some band—it may be the good scratch band of the 36th, camped near the entrance—drooning out anything that seems cheerful.

Last week at the camp entrance were the tents of the Eaton Battery, 250 strong, the grey cars nowhere to be seen, but the men furbishing and strolling and sometimes drilling; wondering when to strike camp. Next to them the 36th; then an old wooden church and the chaplain's tent and the Brotherhood of St. Andrew. Across a commons past another trail-tramping picket, with his sword bayonet gleaming like sudden death, came the lines of the 37th; then the reinforcement contingent; further again the base hospital over on the river bank, a small town of white tents, fitting nurses and blue-trousered men; then the 35th; next to them the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles, 700 strong, with a few hundred horses that never will see either France or Flanders; then round past a grove on the opposite side of the campus the Officers' Training Corps. Across the main camp road from that you come to the Headquarters offices, in an old one-storey building with huge chimneys

and historic fireplaces, set off by the Engineers' camp, the ordnance buildings, the detention camp, fenced with barb wire, the heliograph station on a high platform; and then over near the entrance completing the circuit you come to the Headquarters Compound, another mediaeval house among old trees with a ring of tents and its pacing sentry with the right turn; and by this time you have pretty nearly worn out



This kitchen outfit of the Eaton Battery Officers' Mess turned out meals fit for an epicure.

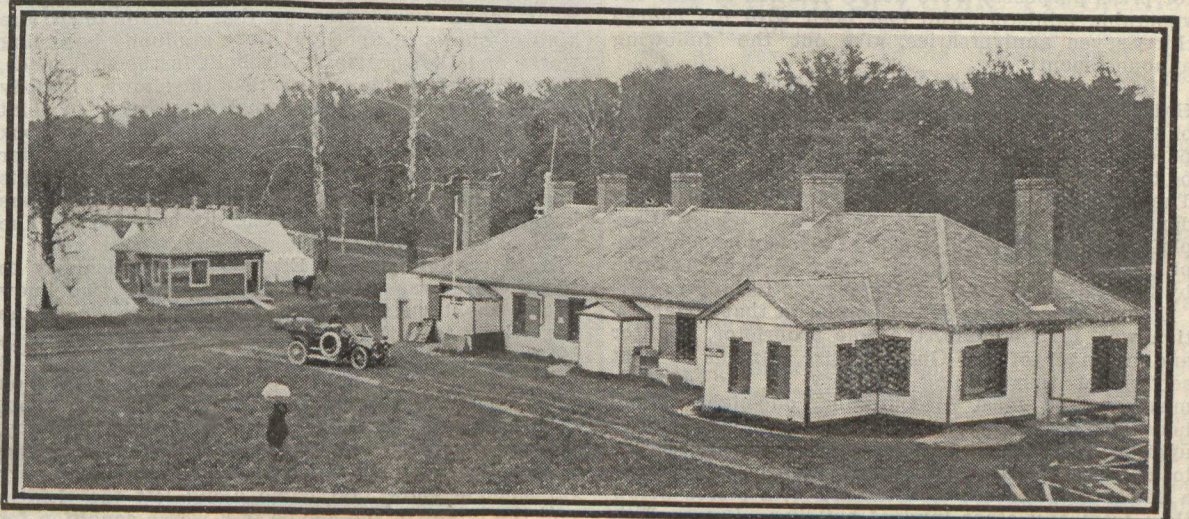
the typewritten pass signed by a staff officer, entitling you to the rights and privileges of the camp from the time you first produce it until midnight.

THAT'S the topographical outline; or it was last week. This week it is changed—no matter how. To-day the news goes that a certain unit is to strike camp to-morrow—perhaps two; come back to H. Q. in an hour and you find that the date of departure has been shifted ahead one, and for all you or anybody else knows may be shifted again, back to midnight if need be. There is always that delightful lack of positive information that makes the men smile as they swear a bit, and the hovering bevy of young girls on the camp edge conjure up further visions of ice-cream junkets downtown, garden parties and dances. Niagara without its girls, and its

sororities with their house parties would be sometimes dull and always too masculine. And Niagara has plenty of pretty girls, as the officers know. Sometimes they get inside the lines, but not far. Getting inside the lines at Niagara is about as serious a business as doing it in France or Flanders. If you are an accredited grocery waggon, meat van, crude-oil sprinkler, cook-waggon, water-tank or officers' automobile, the trip is easy. Go on foot in civilian clothes and you must show cause.

ON an average about fifty things at once in that camp. Keeping thousands of men more or less busy in the name of the King is a serious matter. No factory concern in Canada has such a population to keep busy. And no factory staff ever did so many things that look like the fog end of mystery to the uninitiated. A squad of soldiers lying flat-back on the grass looking like sardines in a tin, or squatting like toads, or trying to grab invisible butterflies out of the air—that's physical drill; and it's more or less intelligible because muscles are universal and don't depend on red tape. Over in the Officers' Training Corps camp, two platoons are hustling their boots over the buttercups and the long grass under the shouting direction of a sergeant instructor. These captains and lieutenants are field officers in making, and have to learn "Right Dress" and "Right Wheel" and "By the Left," just the same as the privates whom some day they expect to command. They are a heterogeneous democracy; a giant six-foot-three alongside a pigmy five-foot-five; the son of a premier in front of a clerk; the man from the far west hobnobbing with the easterner; for these are supposed to be university men hailing from anywhere, many of them young men who quit college long ago for business, and finding business dull, take the course with or without enlisting. They are a bundle of miscellaneous brains that have to be licked into physical and military shape in courses of a few weeks each before they are able to stand in front of a company of privates and shout the orders they learned themselves last moon to men that may have been shuffling by the right when they were learning algebra at college.

HALF a mile yonder in the broad of the sun a few hundred men are at quick march, double quick on the run, wheeling and forming fours. This is the least part of their programme. After dinner they may be doing bayonet drill, or physical culture, or field manoeuvres, or route marching miles across country to work up an appetite already bigger than many of them could afford to indulge around home. Before you get to their lines, they are shot off in some other direction and you stop to look at the heliograph squad on the platform at the H. Q. offices. On sunny days this and the various helio stations in the camp



Headquarter Offices at Niagara embody a system as rigid as a great factory—but they are a great deal more humanly interesting.