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## Inspired Impressions: Inculcating Imperial Ideas making Engineer Efficiency Extraordinary

### TRAINING MINING MEN FOR WAR

By J. C. Murray

So foreign was the idea of military service to most of the members of the Canadian Mining Institute, that during the first stages of the war many joined units that gave them no opportunity whatever of putting to use their previous experience. Partly for the purpose of correcting this waste, the Engineers Training Depot, St. Johns, P.Q., was organized. It has now been in existence for about two years. The difficulties to be overcome in creating a military and technical training organization in the most exigent of circumstances will be touched upon in a succeeding article. Suffice it to say that they were by no means light.

It is the intention here merely to outline the writer's impressions of the Depot (sadly mishandled word!), after a few weeks of training. No doubt some of these impressions are wrong, and all will be modified by the future. Yet it is hoped that they will enlighten the civilian darkness of those members of the Institute who will have the good fortune to follow us here.

The newly-arrived subaltern, though welcomed (discreetly or otherwise) by his fellows, remains for the first few days a dismal derelict, a military maverick. He is painfully conscious of being neither fish, flesh nor good red herring. This engenders a temporary loss of self-respect. Also, however, it brings an ardent resolution to make oneself like unto

other men. Of course much of this suffering is due to causes purely subjective. The neophyte is his harshest critic. And, painful though this may be, these preliminary pangs are necessary. They presage the birth of the spirit of military discipline, and, also, the development of hitherto unsuspected muscles. Both processes, the process spiritual and the process physical, are of inestimable value.

The change wrought by a fortnight's training is not merely visible—it is startling. Re-adjustment to strange conditions may be rapid or slow. This is primarily a function of temperament and, possibly, of age. But it is inevitable. This does not imply that there is a levelling or standardizing of the human units. It means, simply, that all must acquire a certain proficiency in things military, and must also conform, in matters of usage and etiquette, to certain irrefragable rules.

Mining men need be told nothing of the ethics of the game. Loyalty to one's official superiors, telling no tales out of school, helping a friend or acquaintance, or a friend's friend, and avoiding that habit of speech to which the name of a natural pastoral fertilizer has been applied, are cardinal ethical principles in mining as much as in the Army.

Military engineering methods may be described fairly as field expedients. The engineer is taught how to tie knots and lashings, how to devise and erect bridges, derricks, trestles, etc., etc.; how best to utilize available material; how

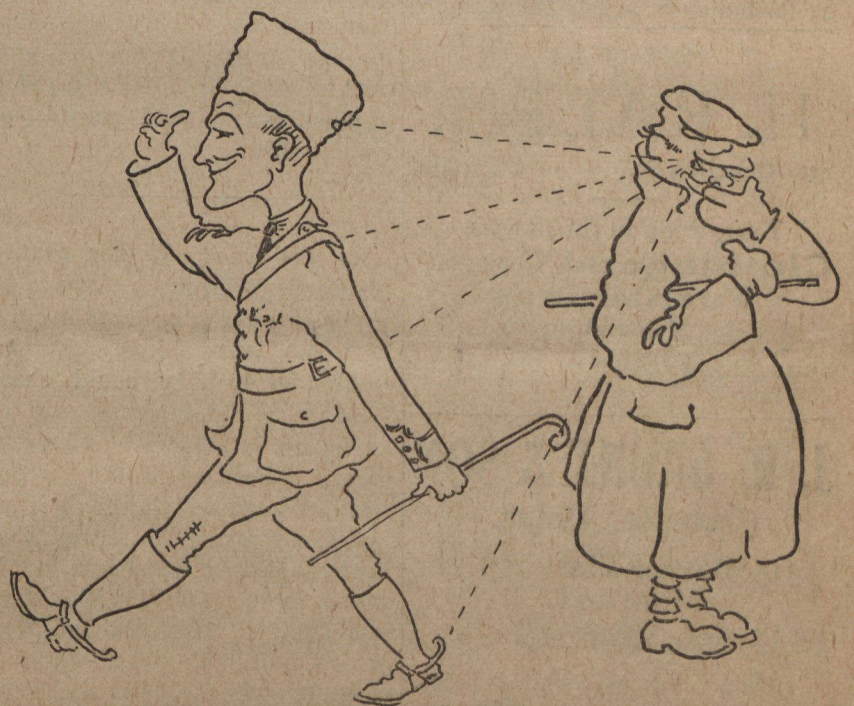
to construct trenches, and how to do a thousand and one other things necessary in the field. The need of speed is impressed on him from first to last. Military engineering has its own peculiar terminology, sometimes extremely confusing to the lay mind. In general the methods chosen are the shortest and most effective means to the desired end. In addition to engineering, the course includes sufficient doses of infantry training, physical training, military law, musketry, equitation (the standard joke is to call this class 'aviation'), and other miscellaneous subjects.

During the winter months the

morning parade comes on at 8.30 a.m. From then on the day is a continuous round of varied work.

Since the training is preponderatingly practical, and since it overlaps and often duplicates actual experience in the remoter mining regions, it seems particularly appropriate that the Canadian Engineers should be the branch of the service chosen by the majority of mining men. Both in the ranks and amongst the commissioned officers there are at St. John's mining men from every quarter of the globe.

Indeed the cosmopolitan character of the officers' classes is



— E. Carol Jackson — 1918 —

Songs We Know:—"When I first put this uniform on."