

## LIFE IN A CANADIAN BARRACK.

By Sergeant White: His Name

The men and the horses: Victor's sons. KITHING.

CONTINUED FROM LAST ISSUE

"Pay-day is a very happy (?) occasion for Tommy, but he has a rooted objection to keeping money long about him, and before evening a great deal of what is paid out in the orderly-room finds its way into the hands of the tavernkeepers "down town." The evening of that day sees many an unsoldierly form seeking admittance at the barrack gate and hears references, in uncertain utterance, to "more things in heaven and earth" than should be contained even in a soldier's "philosophy."

Most of the men go in for sport in some form or other, and generally hold a tournament once a year, for which there is great practising beforehand at heads and posts, tilting at ring, tent-pegging, wrestling on horseback, etc. And who that has ever seen it can forget the "musical ride"? With well-trained horses, it is one of the most beautiful sights invented by man, and the culminating charge and cheer thrills one with the idea that the life of a cavalry soldier must be a very fascinating existence. A week probably convinces a recruit that all the glitter is not gold.

Football is a favorite recreation, and quoits, putting the shot, and boxing are very generally indulged in. When there is enough snow in winter, the whole regiment has a tramp out on snowshoes, looking very picturesque, with gay sashes worn over the uniform and moccasined feet, which have to step out very briskly in the frosted air to the music of the bugles and drums. Many of the men have some particular accomplishment, which they are fond of exhibiting to their comrades and any onlookers who may happen to be around. I remember one big fellow who was the admiration of the barracks for his club-swinging. He practised every evening in the square, and was usually surrounded by an enthusiastic group of spectators. Among 70 or 80 men there are always some good voices, and in the evening, through the open canteen window, may be heard all the catchy songs of the hour, with a hearty and oft-repeated chorus. The banjo and concertina are the soldier's pet musical instruments, and he often evokes very sweet harmony when, in the warm dusk of a summer evening, the whole troop collect in every variety of undress uniform and ease of posture to tell stories of one place and another over their pipes, and sometimes to vary the recital with a jolly round of the light fantastic cake walk.

In any Canadian regiment are to be found men who have been in several lands and witnessed many interesting sights. It would be a curious inquiry to trace out from how many diverse sources the stream of their destinies has cast them upon the military shore, and, though they may be drifted away again, nothing can ever entirely obliterate a certain imprint of the parade-ground which the instructor has put upon them.

It is odd and characteristic to notice how a born Englishman will give advice to a whole regiment on every subject under the sun, and descant on English institutions, especially the army, even if his knowledge of it be confined to having once seen a march past of the Guards. He is usually told to "shut his mouth," "cork up his confounded blow," or reduced to silence by some equally repressive and more emphatic remark, but still his "home" birth gives him a certain status, and if he does not too often preface his criticism with "Now, in England, we," etc., he will find himself appealed to on many a disputed point, and his dictum accepted

quite willingly. The sergeants, too, who are sent for courses of instruction to England, can always command an attentive audience at any moment they appear out of doors for weeks after their return. Few of their hearers have seen the Mother Land, but the idea of the unity of all branches of the Queen's fighting men has taken strong hold upon them, and they feel that, some day, they may be called upon to beat "the war-drum, whose notes roll with day round the world." Hence, they take a lively interest in the work of soldiers of the Empire in other lands, and a man who has "been there," under fire, is an object of respectful curiosity if he happens to come their way. Nowhere was the tidings of Darghai and Omdurman heard with greater enthusiasm than among our little body of regulars in "this Canada of ours." Soldiers discuss every subject in the calendar, and, as a rule, the British-Canadians who enlist have contrived to pick up a good deal of education, so that their opinions, whether on the latest political speech, the sermon in church, or their view of modern history, are always interesting and often original.

Of punishments, the most frequent is "seven days' cells," which is inflicted for a variety of offences. Serious military sins, such as striking a non-com, insubordination, or desertion, are punished much more severely, and the prisoner may be sentenced to from six months to two years in the ordinary gaol of the district, and thereafter "be dismissed from Her Majesty's service with disgrace." One part of our military system, if it can be called such, which I think is badly in need of reform, is the practice of sending soldiers to the common gaol for other than a civil offence. They are often mere boys, of a better class, and their association with actual criminals, and the disgrace of being a convict cannot possibly produce any good effect; in fact, it is almost absolutely certain that the man will come out worse than he went in. I could relate more than one sad story of harsh sentences and consequent results painful to think of, but it is not within the scope of this sketch. Let those in authority, who have sat on courts martial, and know that public opinion never has a chance to pronounce its verdict in cases of a military nature, find a remedy for the pernicious custom as it appears to me.

For inattention to duty, being late on parade, or carelessness about uniform, or other accoutrements, etc., a number of days "C. B." (confinement to barracks), extra "sentry-go," or double fatigue is awarded, and the canteen is closed to the delinquent during his punishment. "Pack-drill" is another form of discipline which the men particularly detest. The soldier parades at guard mounting in full marching order, carrying his sword or carbine, and under one arm the various articles of his kit rolled up tightly to form a substantial and heavy "pack." In this array, he is made to "quick-march" up and down and around the barrack square for an hour, in charge of a corporal, who, in a monotonous voice, issues the commands "Right about—turn," "Left about—turn," when the culprit reaches the limits of his enforced "beat." Drunkenness is rarely punished unless the man cannot get to his room unaided, or makes any disturbance. It has always been a puzzle to me and others why a corporal or sergeant must be so much more intoxicated than a private before he is put under arrest. It is of rare occurrence that a non-com is censured, and it can scarcely be said that their conduct is so far removed above the level of the average soldier's plane of action. To the uninitiated, it would seem as though the conduct of a man should be more free from blame as he rises in the ranks. The powers that be, in five cases out of ten, visit the iniquities of the non-coms upon the troopers, and make it very discouraging for the latter, who cannot help feeling that