

KITCHENER'S MOB

By Jas. NORMAN HALL.

CHAPTER IV.—(Cont'd.)

During all the journey from the coast, we had seen, on every side, evidences of that wonderfully organized branch of the British military system, the Army Service Corps. From the village at which we detrained, everything was English. Long lines of motor transport lorries were parked along the sides of the roads. There were great ammunition bases, commissariat supply depots, motor repair shops, wheelwright and blacksmith shops, where one saw none but khaki-clad soldiers engaged in all the non-combatant business essential to the maintenance of large armies. There were long lines of transport wagons loaded with supplies, traveling field-kitchens, with chimneys smoking and kettles steaming as they bumped over the cobbled roads, water carts, Red Cross carts, motor ambulances, batteries of artillery, London omnibuses, painted slate gray, filled with troops, seemingly endless columns of infantry on foot, all moving with us, along parallel roads, toward the firing-line. And most of these troops and supply columns belonged to my own division, one small cog in the British fighting machine.

We advanced toward the war zone in easy stages. It was intensely hot, and the rough, cobbled roads greatly increased the difficulty of marching. In England we had frequently tramped from fifteen to twenty-five miles in a day without fatigue. But the roads there were excellent, and the climate moist and cool. Upon our first day's march in France, a journey of only nine miles, scores of men were overcome by the heat, and several died. The suffering of the men was so great, in fact, that a halt was made earlier than had been planned, and we bivouacked for the night in the fields.

Life with a battalion on the march proceeds with the same orderly routine as when in barracks. Every man has his own particular employment. Within a few moments, the level pasture land was converted into a busy community of a thousand inhabitants. We made serviceable little dwellings by lacing together two or three waterproof ground-sheets and erecting them on sticks or tying them to the wires of the fences. Latrines and refuse pits were dug under the supervision of the battalion medical officer. The sick were cared for and justice dispensed with the same thoroughness as in England. The day's offenders against discipline were punished with what seemed to us unusual severity. But we were now on active service,

and offenses which were trivial in England were looked upon, for this reason, in the light of serious crimes.

Daily we approached a little nearer to our goal, sleeping, at night, in the open fields or in the lofts of great rambling farm-buildings. Most of these places had been used for soldiers' billets scores of times before. The walls were covered with the names of men and regiments, and there were many penciled suggestions as to the best place to go for a basin of "coffey oh lay," as Tommy called it. Every roadside cottage was, in fact, Tommy's tavern. The thrifty French peasant women kept open house for soldiers. They served us with delicious coffee and thick slices of French bread, for the very reasonable sum of twopenny. They were always friendly and hospitable, and the men, in turn, treated them with courteous and kindly respect. Tommy was a great favorite with the French children. They climbed on his lap and rifled his pockets; and they delighted him by talking in his own vernacular, for they were quick to pick up English words and phrases. They sang "Tipperary" and "Rule Britannia," and "God Save the King," so quaintly and prettily that the men kept them at it for hours at a time.

And so, during a week of stifling heat, we moved slowly forward. The sound of the guns grew in intensity, from a faint rumbling to a subdued roar, until one evening, sitting in the open windows of a stable loft, we saw the far-off lightnings of bursting shells, and the trench rockets soaring skyward; and we heard bursts of rifle and machine-gun fire, very faintly, like the sound of chestnuts popping in an oven.

CHAPTER V.

The Parapet-etic School.

"We're going in to-night."

The word was given out by the orderly sergeants at four in the afternoon. At 4.03 every one in camp had heard the news. Scores of miniature hand laundries, which were doing a thriving business down by the duck pond, immediately shut up shop. Damp and doubtfully clean ration bags, towels, and shirts which were draped along the fences, were hastily gathered together and thrust into the capacious depths of pack-sacks. Members of the battalion's sporting contingent broke up their games of tuppenny brag without waiting for "just one more hand," an unprecedented

thing. The makers of war ballads, who were shouting choruses to the merry music of the mouthorgan band, stopped in the midst of their latest composition, and rushed off to get their marching order together. At 4.10 every one, with the exception of the officers' servants, was ready to move off. This, too, was unprecedented. Never before had we made haste more gladly or less needfully, but never before had there been such an incentive to haste. We were going into the trenches for the first time.

The officers' servants, commonly called "batmen," were unfortunate rangers who, in moments of weakness, had sold themselves into slavery for half a crown per week. The batman's duty is to make tea for his officer, wash his boots, wash his clothes, tuck him into bed at night, and make himself useful generally. The real test of a good batman, however, is his carrying capacity. In addition to his own heavy burden he must carry various articles belonging to his officer: enameled wash-basins, rubber boots, bottles of Apollinaris water, service editions of the modern English poets and novelists, spirit lamps, packages of food, boxes of cigars and cigarettes, and in fact, all of his personal luggage which is in excess of the allotted thirty-five pounds which is carried on the battalion transport wagons.

On this epoch-making day, even the officers' servants were punctual. When the order, "Packs on! Fall in!" was given, not a man was missing. Every one was in harness, standing silently, expectantly, in his place.

"Charge magazines!" The bolts clicked open with the sound of one as we loaded our rifles with hot ammunition. Five long shiny cartridges were slipped down the charger guide into the magazine, and the cut-off closed.

"Move off in column of route, 'A' company leading!"

We swung into the country road in the gathering twilight, and turned sharply to our left at the crossroad where the signboard read, "To the Firing-Line. For the Use of the Military Only."

Coming into the trenches for the first time on a deadlock along the western front had become seemingly unbreakable, we reaped the benefit of the experience of the gallant little remnant of the first British Expeditionary Force. After the retreat from Mons, they had dug themselves in and were holding tenaciously on, awaiting the long-heralded arrival of Kitchener's Mob. As the units of the new armies arrived in France, they were sent into the trenches for twenty-four hours' instruction in trench warfare, with a battalion of regulars. This one-day course in trench fighting is preliminary to fitting new troops into their own particular sectors along the front. The facetious subalterns called it "The Parapet-etic School." Months later, we ourselves became members of the faculty, but on this first occasion we were marching up as the meekest of undergraduates.

It was quite dark when we entered the desolate belt of country known as the "fire zone." Pipes and cigarettes were put out and talking ceased. We extended to groups of platoons in fours, at one hundred paces interval, each platoon keeping in touch with the one in front by means of connecting files. We passed rows of ruined cottages where only the scent of the roses in neglected little front gardens reminded one of the home-loving people who had lived there in happier days. Dim lights streamed through chinks and crannies in the walls. Now and then blanket coverings that had been windows or doors, and we would see bright fires blazing in the middle of brick kitchen floors, and groups of men sitting about them luxuriously sipping tea from steaming canteens. They were laughing and talking and singing songs in loud, boisterous voices which contrasted strangely with our timid noiselessness. I was marching with one of the trench guides who had been sent back to pilot us to our position. I asked him if the Tommies in the houses were not in danger of being heard by the enemy. He laughed uproariously at this, whereupon one of our officers, a little second lieutenant, turned and hissed in melodramatic undertones, "Silence in the ranks there! Where do you think you are!" Officers and men, we were new to the game then, and we held rather exaggerated notions as to the amount of care to be observed in moving up to the trenches.

"Blimy, son!" whispered the trench guide, "you might think we was only a couple of 'unner yards away from Fritz's trenches! We're a good two an' a half miles back 'ere. All right to be careful arter you gets closer up; but they's no use wisperin' w'en you ain't even in rifle range."

With lights, of course, it was a different matter altogether. Can't be too careful about giving the enemy artillery an aiming mark. This was the reason all the doors and windows of the ruined cottages were so carefully blanketed.

"Let old Fritz see a light, 'Eillo!" he says, 'blokes in billets!' an' over comes a 'arf-dozen shells knockin' you all to blazes."

(To be continued.)

Dog's Funeral Costly.
So drastic has the curb been placed upon useless automobile driving in England that a taxicab driver in London was recently fined \$250 for driving from the city to Molesworth with the coffin of a dog in his car. Sir Maurice and Lady Anderson hired him to give their dog what they considered a fitting burial and saw to it that the obsequies were elaborate. The driver was fined under the motor spirit restriction act, which makes it punishable for any person to use petrol for unnecessary purposes. The petrol is needed badly for use in motor vehicles at the front, and England as evidence in the hugeness of the driver, John McCarty's fine, means to enforce it.

Horses that do not get exercise at least five days of the week should be kept in loose boxes.

Food Control Corner

To The Canadian Farmer.

Practical farmers know more than most classes of workers the necessity for planning well ahead. Success in the fields no less than in the field may depend on taking "the long view." Canadian farmers, therefore, more than anyone else may profit by weighing earnestly the words of an English economist that, even if war were to cease to-morrow, normal crop conditions could not be restored in the world for from three to six years. The stored-up supplies of food have been heavily drawn upon and in some cases have been actually exhausted. This means, as no one better than the farmer will comprehend, that there will be an acute demand, as compared with pre-war years, for food grain crops and food animals. Should warfare be suspended, of which there is no sign at present, the demobilisation would take months and in the reconstruction period the restocking of farms in Belgium, France, Italy and Great Britain must inevitably be done from this side of the Atlantic.

Only by the "long view" can the Canadian farmer prepare for this. It is in this season of comparative quietness in farm life that he will have most time to think out the means at his disposal. He will see that there is both good business and good patriotism in the advice of the Food Controller and of the Department of Agriculture to produce more pork; he will do what he can to add to the grain area of 1918.

Owing to lack of fertilizers, so necessary for the intensive systems of farming in the older lands, and to the consequent impoverishment of the soils especially of France and Italy, next year's crops in Europe may be smaller than even those recently harvested, which fell far below the average. Shipping is not available to carry fertilizing supplies, and labor is extremely scarce, so that the diminution of crops for 1918 will be exceedingly serious. A consideration of these things should give the Canadian farmer matter for thought as to what he will do to meet the shortage overseas and to derive a legitimate benefit from his remarkably favored economic position.

Trust in the Future.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And so beside the Silent sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fringed palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

—J. G. Whittier.

Swill the sink thoroughly well down
with boiling water daily. A whole
kettleful isn't a drop too much to use,
and you must take care to have it boiling.



WAR AND FOOD SERIES—ARTICLE No. III.—CORN.

As in the old Biblical days when it was symbolic of the fruits of the earth, corn is again likely to be a power in the land. The magnitude of the crop in the United States is tending to focus attention on this grain which may to some extent take the place of wheat. The yield in the United States is estimated at more than three billion bushels. This far surpasses any previous crop and is curiously opportune, coming, as it does, at a time when the crops on the North American continent are of paramount importance. The greatest corn crop in the United States previous to this one fell considerably short of the present yield.

Corn is an ancient and honorable crop in the United States, and it was the early colonists on this continent who first learned its uses. As civilization became more complex it gave way to other things but now, with every nerve being strained to make the most of the natural resources of the country, the time is ripe for it to reappear on the family table and to come into more general use. Corn is an economical food material

at all times. It contains from 4 to 5% of fat and where the whole grain is ground, the fat percentage still remains so high that it is the most fattening of all cereals. It is made up of seven-tenths starch, one-tenth protein, one-tenth water and the other tenth half fat and half crude fibre and mineral substances. Despite the fact that such large quantities of corn are available and that it is so rich in nutriment, only 2% of their corn supply is used as foodstuff by the American people. From this it is apparent that there are vast possibilities in the corn crop and that it may yet figure largely as a satisfactory substitute for wheat.

The Canadian housewife should welcome the more general use of corn, for the cereal is one which is versatile in its properties and can be extensively used in the preparation of whole-some dishes. Cornmeal puddings, griddle cakes and waffles, cornmeal fritters and cornmeal pancakes—to mention but a few—are favorites on the American table and might well become a permanent feature of the menu in Canada where the use of corn means the saving of wheat.

AN INSULT TO ASK ANYONE TO PLAY YOUR PIANO IF THE KEYS ARE UNCLEAN.

There is something peculiar about the fact that many housekeepers, who are otherwise most careful about their house, will neglect the piano keys. This is more likely to happen where the mistress, herself, is not a player and her piano is only used when she has visitors. If the work of dusting is relegated to a maid, she may use the same cloth with which she already cleaned the furniture. After absorbing all the dust and oil from the furniture polish, she may run the very same rag over the keys and the result is worse than not cleaning them at all. It is an insult to anyone to ask them to play on an unclean keyboard, just as it would be to invite them to sit down at dinner to use dirty knives and forks, and a soiled tablecloth. "Not long ago I was asked to play on a grand piano," comments a music teacher on this same subject, "in a home where the housewife herself is immaculate and who prides herself on her faultless housekeeping. The outside of the instrument was shining and dustless. But the keys were sticky and my fingers, could make no headway at all. I was annoyed. This lady knows no music, and never bothers with the keys, that being left to the help."

This is really an important matter for piano owners. Only the children use the piano in many homes; they practice daily with unclean hands, the mother is busy, the keys go without any attention whatever until perhaps some musical friend or the children's teacher drops in. They are asked to play either on the keys as they are, or in some cases the mother with profuse apologies will give them a rub with her apron—a lick and a promise as some people say, but the promise remains unfulfilled. Clean cloths, soap and water is recommended by one competent housewife for use on the keys. This person says "give them a wiping with a clean, damp weekly wash with soap and water an occasional wash with perfume water the latter to prevent the keys from turning yellow." In the latter connection she advises that the piano be left open a good deal of the time.

Britain's Air Giants.

The new Handley-Page biplane which England is constructing numbers are mammoth affairs, capable of carrying a pilot, six passengers and 700 pounds of luggage. Such machines fly from London to Paris in two hours without unusual effort. Some of these machines are constructed to carry 8,000 pounds of explosives, enough to give Berlin a thorough taste of war horrors. English experts say that they could make the flight from London to New York in twenty hours.

The necessary work of transplanting the snow around young fruit trees as to keep mice away from them began early this Winter, that was not overlooked.

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