

## The Trials and Observations of a Hut Orderly.

### COMPETITIONS.

Most everyone at some time in his life has been induced to enter into a competition of some kind. Since time immemorial it has been the ambition of normal humans, to be top-dog in some line of endeavour. This tendency inherent in us was undoubtedly the cause of the introduction of competitions in umpteen years B.C. for the sole purpose of finding out who's who and why. Now, there are competitions and competitions, spectacular, as a rule, but in some cases, nauseating as in a beer-drinking contest. It is not my intention to tire my gentle reader with a treatise on the relative values of these nerve-racking ordeals, but to relate as correctly as I can, how Hut 22 won the cleanest hut competition.

Hut 22 stands in one of the finest residential districts of the North Camp. Being just two doors removed from the Tunnelling Company's Headquarters, and placed on the brow of the hill as it is, a commanding view can be obtained, both down the hill, and a good tract of the main road also. An ideal spot for parade-dodgers, etc. I think it is safe to say there has never been one caught while I have been Hut Orderly of said Hut. Where do I get my pull to get the job, did you ask? Ha! that's the point, but you can have it if you like—the job I mean.

When I took charge (sounds good, don't it) of this particular rampasture, I was elated, fair bursting with pride, the job being given me in consideration of my meritorious conduct during the campaign. But unhappy lies the head that wields the broom; sad times were in store for me, and, in my innocence, I couldn't see it. Now, I'm not partial to secrets, but, when the Orderly Sergt. came to interview me at my house-warming, entering most dramatically, in approved conspirators' style, with index finger raised in a beckoning attitude, reminding me somewhat of a cross-eyed kid looking at a half-sucked sugarstick, he managed to hypnotize me into one corner of the hut, and whispered this astounding information into my far too susceptible ear. Says he, "I'm not supposed to say a word, but I want to tell you that a prize has been decided on for the cleanest hut in the Lines for a week, and I would like to see you get it, as I have inside information that the prize to be given is 10s. and a pass." This was interesting. Would I try for it. Oh joy! I smacked my lips in the ecstasy of expectation, and with tears of gratitude dimming my eyes I wrung the hand of my benefactor, thanking him most effusively for his timely and kindly hint.

The ball was set rolling, and the beginning of the most agonising week I have ever experienced was opened up to me. The coaxing, the threats, and execrations delivered by me to the astonished inmates, in the effort to get them to leave their belongings *just so*, left me nearly prostrate.

Say, did you ever try driving a hog into a pen, and see him go any way but the way you wanted him to go? Then you will have a kind of an inkling of the job I had in hand. Is it any wonder a hut orderly wears that worried look peculiar to his kind. Would I succeed? Would Hut 22 carry off the honours? The suspense of that week was terrible. Far into the night I would lay awake in my little corner bunk, thinking and planning of the things I would do on the morrow, the

different types of men I should have to lick into shape, in order to rake in the mazuma, and always with that slip of a pass dancing before my eyes.

The pride I should feel within my manly bosom when at the appointed time I should be paraded in front of the entire Company, and after a speech full of heartfelt thankfulness by the O.C., be proclaimed the winner, and amid the resounding applause of my compatriot ground-hogs, be presented with my justly earned reward. From this point my thoughts would wander to the time I would have on leave, the girls I'd kiss, and the ones I wouldn't, and those who wouldn't let me get within a mile of them, however much I wanted to.

Ruminating this way, I would begin to slumber about two or three o'clock in the morning. Is it any wonder I'm a physical wreck? A whole week of this, and then Saturday, thou day of disillusionment, shall I ever forget thee? No! not though the heavens fall, or the troops get real butter in the place of margarine.

Reveille sounded at last on that eventful day. I can't remember when I've heard our bugler play such clear steady notes as he did that morning. I'm afraid I can't say as much for his efforts at "Lights out" that evening, but that is quite excusable, for none of us can be expected to be at our best on a Saturday night, though we may be feeling a bit all right.

But to get on with my story. I know you are anxious to know just how the competition came out, but not nearly as anxious as I was to know what would be the final result. Everything hung on the verdict of the Orderly Officer of the day. Would he consider my hut the cleanest, most bestest hut he had ever clapped eyes on; or would I have to take a back seat in the van of glory? That was the ever-present question uppermost in my befuddled thoughts. How it all came out you shall hear.

At the first note of the bugle I bestirred myself (a very unusual thing for me to do, I might add) and not wishing to hog all the joys of the "great red dawn" to myself, I proceeded to invite everyone else to rise and share it with me, being rewarded with very little thanks for my pains. I'll say one thing, though, when I did get those boys standing on their normal end, there was a generous response to my entreaties, and at the time of going on parade, everything was in its correct place, as old Hindenburg is fond of saying, all according to plan.

I was as conceited as a father of triplets, though not half so much worried. So when the Orderly Officer walked in, wearing an approving grin, I tried to remain as cool and unconcerned as possible, implying thereby that it was quite a usual thing for Hut 22 to be in such a state of perfection.

A sight for sore eyes it was, though "his nibs" never made any encouraging remarks to that effect; in fact, he hardly said a word, quite an unusual thing for an Orderly Officer, so deep down in my heart I knew I had won the day, and that fame and fortune were within my grasp. It was no surprise, then, to me when the hut was warned to parade in the lecture room after dinner, and, believe me, I lost no time in getting round there, arriving as I did, full of anticipation and Army mulligan.

What a sight met my gaze. A table with the customary blanket spread over it, draping itself neatly on the floor on one side, and with only about three inches hanging over the other, a tantalizing thing, it always makes me feel as if I would like to finish the job and help the other side over. But what is that lying on the table? You'll hardly believe it, but there was more real money spread on that little old table than I

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