

# SOCIAL LIFE

## IN THE BRITISH ARMY





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**Social life in the British army.**



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A PRIVATE VIEW OF HIS KIT



SOCIAL LIFE IN THE  
BRITISH ARMY. *By*  
"A British Officer." *Illustrated*  
*By* R. CATON WOODVILLE



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SOCIAL LIFE  
IN THE BRITISH ARMY



# SOCIAL LIFE

## IN THE BRITISH ARMY

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### CHAPTER I

WHEN one considers that the British army finds its recruits among every class of citizens, it becomes rather a matter for astonishment that the inner life of the officer or soldier is, as it undoubtedly is to a great extent, a sealed book to the great bulk of the people. When the young man leaves the family circle to wear the red or the blue coat, whether in the ranks or in a higher grade, he enters a mysterious region, echoes from which do indeed reach the outer world, but which remains, in spite of the efforts of novelists of both sexes, to all intents and purposes a *terra incognita*. If the life of the British soldier offers so many mysteries to

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his compatriots, it is hardly to be wondered at that the descriptions of it which are placed before foreign readers are as a rule more picturesque than accurate.

A Russian military paper not long ago informed its readers that the life of the officer in the British army was one of the utmost ease and luxury; every officer, even the humblest subaltern, owned his yacht, his race-horses, and his box at the opera—when quartered, that is to say, where such a luxury could be obtained (the yacht and the racing stud were everywhere); while the more wealthy possessed their grouse-moors, their deer-forests, etc., the majority playing cards every night for enormous stakes, and spending large sums on presents to actresses and in other follies. No doubt this highly colored picture went down to a certain extent among its simpler readers, who must have wondered what sort of men these Britons could be who, in spite of the enervating effects of all this luxury, endured the winter climate of the Crimea as well as the native Russians, and are even now not back-



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ward in the struggle for territory which is going on among all European nations.

The French, who ought to know better, having soldiered by our side in the Crimea and in China, get almost equally at sea when endeavoring to describe military life in Great Britain. Our peculiarly insular institution of a regimental mess, which is now, however, finding its way into other armies, offers many puzzles to the Frenchman, who lets himself go in glowing descriptions of the luxurious fittings of the mess, of the sumptuous meals placed before its inmates, and of the magnificent display of *gold* and silver plate under which the sideboards groan.

Some of these ridiculous tales find currency among the civilian classes of our own population, who ought to be better informed, and hardly a year passes without some *pater-familias* writing to *The Times* to inveigh against the senseless and excessive extravagance of a military mess—the fact probably being that some young hopeful has blamed the regulations of the mess for the results of his own extravagance. I do not deny that in

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many corps and on many occasions money is spent on entertainments, and even on the current expenses of a mess, which might quite well have remained in the pockets of its owners; but I do deny most emphatically that foolish extravagance is a prominent feature of the management of a mess—the fact usually being, in those cases where expenditure passes the bounds of reason, that the result is more probably due to either ignorance or carelessness on the part of the officer intrusted with the duties of mess president than to malice prepense on the part of any member of the mess.

If tales such as I have alluded to have obtained currency in reference to the “marching regiments” of the line, it is hardly a matter for wonder that the descriptions of life in the *corps d'élite*, such as the Guards and the crack cavalry regiments, stray equally far from the truth.

Over life in the Guards especially a species of glamour has been thrown by the facile pens of some of our most prominent lady novelists, who have revelled in descriptions

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of the luxurious boudoirs which the curled and perfumed dandies of her Majesty's Household Brigade were good enough to inhabit without a murmur. To these ladies it is undoubtedly due that it is very generally assumed that life in the Guards offers a minimum of military duty with a maximum of social display, and that the officers are in very truth sybarites and "gilded popinjays" as represented by a well-known labor leader.

If we consider the class from which these "curled darlings" of society are recruited, we feel inclined to wonder what sort of training the young man joining the Guards is put through to alter in such a radical fashion all his previous tastes and ideals. The lads for whom commissions in the Guards are as a rule reserved have spent their boyhood in the playing-fields of Eton, or Harrow, or one of the other well-known English public schools, where prominence in athletic exercises is the surest road to pre-eminence, and where the captain of the boats or of the cricket team is more regarded and looked up to than the son of the peer or wealthy com-

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moner who has no other claim to distinction. At the universities the same rule holds good, though to a slightly less extent, as here the claims of intellect are listened to with a certain deference which is hardly yet conceded to them at the public school. But in all these assemblages of boys or young men the sybarite is emphatically an "outsider." His room is preferable to his company, and this sentiment is given free play on the few occasions when symptoms of the disease are observed in a member of one of these institutions: little leanings after luxury in the prominent athlete may be condoned in consequence of his other good qualities, but in any individual with less strong claims to consideration all tendencies of this kind are promptly suppressed. Every one will agree that this is an excellent state of public feeling, and it is earnestly to be hoped that it will long continue.

To the young fellow wishing to obtain a commission in the Household troops there are two ways of successfully gratifying his ambition, it being taken for granted that no ob-

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stacle presents itself in his social status, and that the necessary nomination has been obtained. The desired goal can be reached either through the portals of the Royal Military College at Sandhurst or by entrance from the commissioned ranks of the militia. This latter method used to be termed the back door ; and, indeed, ignorant people call it by that name still ; but the examination to be passed nowadays by the militia candidate is every bit as severe as that which confronts the lad entering Sandhurst. If Sandhurst be the chosen path, the successful candidate is required to spend a couple of years there studying the art of war before he is permitted to go up for the final examination, the passing of which will entitle him to his commission as Second Lieutenant in one of the regiments of Household Cavalry or Foot-Guards. At this point a short account of the life at Sandhurst may not be considered out of place. The expense of maintaining a lad at the Military College is somewhere about £200 a year, a portion of which is returned to the cadet in the form of pay, which pay, however,

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is all, or nearly all, expended in the necessary daily expenses of the cadet. The course of instruction through which the students are put is in the main confined to subjects which will be useful to them in their military career. Military history, fortification, tactics, military administration and military law, and the art of military topography go to make up a fairly comprehensive curriculum. To these are added instruction in drill, sword exercise, riding, and gymnastics, so that the cadet has his hands pretty full, and is not given much time for getting into mischief. The instructors are, in the majority of cases, officers of the army on full pay, who are detached from their regiments for a term of five years, and the cadets are organized into companies on the model of a line battalion. The mess is run on simple and economical lines; certainly no taste for luxury can be charged against the style of living practised at Sandhurst; but the food, though plain, is amply sufficient, and strict limits are placed on the consumption of intoxicating liquors. The spare time of the

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cadets is chiefly employed in active out-door games, as is fitting among young men destined for service in the army—cricket in the summer and football in the winter holding the places of honor. A few years ago polo was played by some of the wealthier among the cadets, but it was feared that this might encourage extravagant habits, so the game is now forbidden, and the superabundant energies of the cadets have to find vent in the more legitimate channels of cricket, rackets, and football. Altogether the life at the Royal Military College is a very healthy one, both morally and physically, and if the work is not very hard, yet care is taken that the time of the cadets is fairly well occupied. It is not possible to say so much for the training given to the lads who enter the service through the militia. The actual military training which they receive is limited to a very few months, a militia regiment only drilling for twenty-seven days every year; and the great bulk of the knowledge of military subjects which the aspirant for military honors has to acquire in order to satisfy the

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examiners is picked up at the establishment of one of the numerous military "crammers," a race which has multiplied and prospered exceedingly in recent years. The life at one of these establishments is full of temptation to the young man with a good allowance, especially in the case of those crammers who live in London ; but if the examination is to be passed with credit, excess must be avoided, which probably accounts for the fact that a large majority of the lads who have graduated at the crammers' are rather the better than the worse for the trials they have successfully passed through. However, we will suppose that all the obstacles in the path of the would-be Guardsman have been successfully overcome, and that the time has come when the youngster sees his name for the first time in the London *Gazette* as appointed to a Second-Lieutenancy in one of the regiments of Household Cavalry or of Foot-Guards. I will take the case of the cavalry subaltern first.

On his appointment he will be granted a month's leave, which will be fully occupied



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in providing himself with horses and with the trappings and appointments of his new profession. In the case of the Household Cavalry, and indeed in almost every case, this is a matter of very great importance. Almost every article of his equipment, from his helmet to his spurs, is made by a specialist, and the youngster will make a fatally false start if he go by any chance to the wrong artist for the right article. Being a young man of discretion, and probably having friends or relatives, certainly old school-fellows, in the regiment of his choice, he will put himself in communication with his corps, will probably be asked to dine, and will be treated with a kindness and consideration which will make him rapidly feel himself at home, and will be put in the right way without loss of time. The matter of chargers will be one of great importance. The young officer will be required to provide himself with two chargers, of which the first must be an animal of breeding and substance, able to carry with dignity the twenty stone or so which our young friend, when fully accou-

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tred, will impose upon his aristocratic back ; free from blemish must he be, noble in appearance, full of fire, yet equable in temper, and last, but not least, of a jet-black color. When this paragon is eventually found, after much expenditure in railway fares and cab hire, he must be passed by the Colonel before his purchase can be completed. The second charger can be found with less difficulty : the superlative qualities of the first charger are not expected from him, and a well-bred, useful horse, up to weight and sound, will satisfy the most exacting of colonels, provided that he is the right color, which for the Household Cavalry is black.

If, however, our embryo Guardsman prefer the infantry of the Household Brigade, he will find that though his outfit will cost him very much less, yet that it is quite as essential to find out who are the only tradesmen to whom he can intrust the making of his kit. He will not be troubled with the matter of horseflesh, but will have to exercise equal care with the cut of his tunic and the shape of the bear-skin cap which forms



EXAMINING A NEW SUBALTERN CHARGER



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the imposing head-dress of the Foot-Guards.

The leave on appointment having expired, the young officer now joins his regiment, and whether a horse soldier or an infantryman, will find the first year or two of his service so much occupied with drill and the mastering of his professional duties that very little spare time will be on his hands. There appears to be a general impression among civilians not well acquainted with her Majesty's Guards that their military duties are light and chiefly ornamental. This is very far from being the case. It is doubtful if keener soldiers are to be found in any branch of the service; in the minutiae of drill the greatest accuracy is insisted on, and the study of the higher branches of the profession of arms is encouraged in every possible manner. For study of this nature the young Guardsman has unequalled opportunities; at his hand is the splendid professional library of the Royal United Service Institution, the library of the Guards' Club holds numerous valuable military works, and in London are to be found

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the best military tutors in the world. Aldershot, the great training-school of the British army, is within an hour's rail, and it is by no means difficult for him to cross the Channel and be a spectator of the grand manoeuvres of the French and German armies. So much for his opportunities for study. On the other hand, his temptations to idleness are even greater. After the first two years the young Guardsman will find that he has a good deal of spare time on his hands, and the manner of employing it will, as might be supposed, depend in a great measure on his tastes and companions. The actual surroundings of his daily life are simple enough. If quartered in London, unless at the Tower, he will live at the Guards' Club, as the mess at the Tower is the only one maintained by the Foot-Guards in London ; and his expenses at the club will compare favorably with the expenses of any other club in town. If the battalion to which he belongs is quartered at Chelsea barracks, he may very possibly have a room in the barracks ; if his people live in town, as is often the case, he may live at

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home, or he may prefer the freedom of a couple of rooms in the neighborhood of Jermyn Street or St. James's. The entrance-fee to the Guards' Club is thirty guineas, and he will have to pay an annual subscription of £11; a fair average of the living expenses of the club may be taken as some £20 a month, though, if of extravagant tastes, it may be much higher, and the rent of his rooms will depend almost entirely on what he chooses to pay; so that it is clear that the necessary expenses of life in the Foot-Guards are not nearly as prohibitory as is generally supposed. The Guardsman receives the same pay as officers of corresponding rank in the line, with the addition of £70 a year Guard's pay, so that it is possible for a youngster of an economical turn to live in the Guards on an allowance of £300 a year in addition to his pay. As I have just shown, it is *possible*, but I must admit that it is not often done. The young Guardsman is very seldom contented with one club, or even with two, and the brigade will be found to be fairly strongly represented at the "Bachelors'," "White's,"

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and the best service clubs. The lovers of cricket and tennis proper are mostly *habitués* of "Prince's," and the majority belong to the principal racing clubs, such as Sandown Park, and the horsy, or rather "pony," clubs of Hurlingham and the newer Ranelagh.

As I have already explained, the greatest exactness of dress in uniform is insisted on in the brigade, as might only be expected in the personal guard of the sovereign, but it is not generally known that equally strict sumptuary laws are enforced in the matter of mufti. The aim, doubtless, originally was to make the members of the brigade conspicuous for the richness and neatness of their dress when off duty, in contradistinction to the gay apparel of the macaronies of the period; and though richness of attire in men is now happily a thing of the past, great neatness is still insisted on in the Guardsman, and the iniquity of gaudy ties and waistcoats, curly brimmed hats in the extreme of fashion, and startling garments generally is strictly tabooed. In mufti, when in town, in the morning, a black tie is "the



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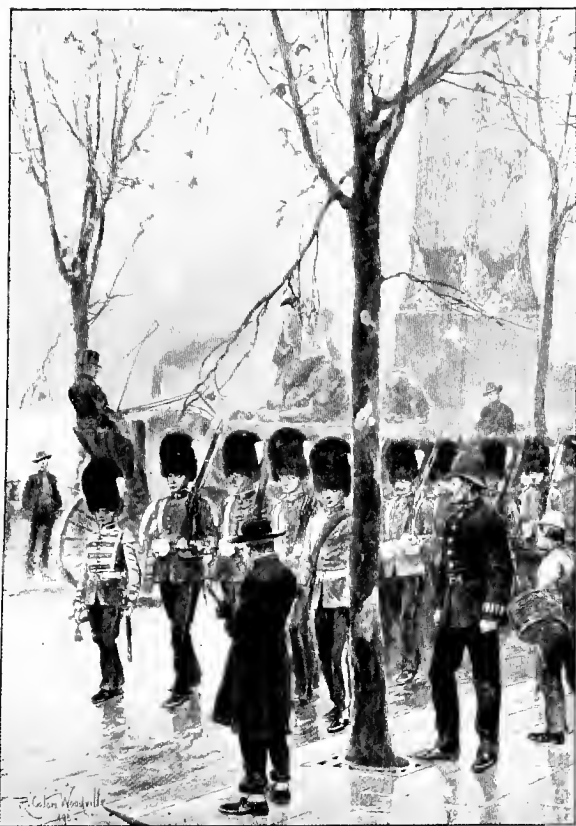
only wear," the hat must be of a certain shape and not in the extreme of fashion, and patent-leather boots are only worn in the evening. In the country the usual tweeds of the English gentleman are worn, with a tie and hat ribbon of the well-known colors of the brigade.

In London the guard duties fall very heavily on the rank and file, but there are now only two guards which are commanded by officers; one of these is the guard at St. James's Palace, which is commanded by a captain with two subalterns; the other is the guard at the Bank of England, which is commanded by a subaltern. At the dinners of both these guards the presence of guests is sanctioned. For the Bank guard dinner, a bottle of wine apiece is provided free for two guests. The directors of the Bank used to give the officer of the Bank guard a sovereign nightly, but this custom has now been abandoned, and the dinners of his guests—and very good dinners too—are now furnished instead. At St. James's the officers of the guard are provided with dinner, and

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are joined by the officers of the Household Cavalry from the guard at the Horse-Guards—from which guard are furnished those mounted sentries who are the admiration of the passer-by in Whitehall. In addition to these officers of the two guards, dinner is also provided for the colonels and adjutants of the regiments of Guards, and for the field-officer of the day; but the colonels and adjutants rarely turn up, and there is usually room for several guests, the expenses of whose dinners are naturally defrayed by their hosts. As at the Bank, the dinner at St. James's is excellent of its kind; the service and the wines are also of the highest class, and many gourmets affirm that the dinner of the Queen's guard is equal to any dinner in London. Pleasant as this dinner may be, late hours are not encouraged, and by the stroke of eleven all guests must have departed for the night.

Thus the life of the young man in the Guards who is blessed with good private means is pleasant enough; his mornings, and occasionally the greater part of his day,



NIGHT GUARD FOR THE BANK OF ENGLAND PASSING  
DOWN THE EMBANKMENT



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are taken up with the drills and routine duties of his profession, which are no great tax on his intelligence or on his physique, and his spare time is devoted to those amusements common to young men of his class and education. If a polo-player, and it is rather remarkable how few really good polo-players are turned out by the Household troops, the greater part of his leisure during the season will be spent at Hurlingham or Ranelagh; the summer will probably find him with his regiment getting through musketry and field-training at Pirbright, a healthy spot not far from Aldershot, where the London battalions of Guards are placed under canvas every summer; or else going through the army manoeuvres with the Aldershot division. As summer goes on and the 12th of August draws near, the shooting man will begin to fidget about his leave for Scotland or Yorkshire, and ere the all-important date arrives there will be an exodus from the battalion of all who can by hook or by crook get the leave they desire. In this matter of leave the Guardsman is fortunate above his breth-

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ren in the cavalry and infantry of the line ; the subaltern of the Guards rarely finds any difficulty in getting away for four months out of the twelve, and his captain is even more fortunate, as he can generally count on six months' leave in the year. One result of the freedom with which leave is given in the Guards is that a large number of the brigade are great travellers. We have all read *My Ride to Khiva*, the author of which, the gallant Burnaby, was a Guardsman ; and there are now numbers of men equally enterprising, though less familiar to the multitude. In fact, it would hardly be too much to say that wherever the British pioneer has penetrated, some member of the brigade has ventured also at no considerable interval. The north pole itself appears to be the only virgin soil to some of the bolder spirits of the brigade. Many people think that for the Guards, serving only at home, opportunities of seeing active service are few and far between ; this is by no means the case. Everybody knows that the brigade furnished a large contingent at Tel-el-Kebir, and also to

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the camel corps, and the charge of the Household Cavalry at Kassassin has provided a subject both for the artist and the poet; but in addition to these services, which are, as I have already said, well known, the British army has hardly been engaged on a campaign or expedition during the last century on which the Guards have not been represented, if not by their men, by their officers, in a strength quite out of proportion to their numbers. As soon as a rumor spreads that a new expedition, affording some chance of seeing service, is to be entered upon, so soon will the portals of the War Office be blocked by Guardsmen trying by every means in their power to get employment in the expeditionary force. If this employment be denied to them, the chances are ten to one that if it can possibly be managed the aspirants after military glory will turn up at the front in the guise of tourists, newspaper correspondents, or what not, necessitating usually their being ordered home in the most peremptory fashion by the general officer in command, though billets as or-

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derly officers and extra aides-de-camp are occasionally found for the more irrepresible ones. Returning to the social side of life in the Household brigade — a subject from which I have frequently wandered — the curious will find that the habit of gambling for high stakes, which has been popularly supposed to be one of the curses of modern fashionable life in London, is not nearly as prevalent among the young Guardsmen as among the gilded youth of the civilian population. There are, of course, as there always will be, foolish and dissipated young men who will sit down nightly to play for sums much larger than they can afford to lose, and everybody remembers one or two tragedies which have been nine days' wonders in London in consequence; but this love for card-playing for high stakes is fortunately confined to a limited number, and is discountenanced as much as possible by the senior officers of the brigade, who, however, owing to the peculiarities of the regimental life in London, are not as well placed for putting a stop to these practices,



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or indeed for hearing of them at all till it is too late, as they would be if quartered in Dublin or at Windsor, where the regimental mess is in full swing. However, young Englishmen are fond of a gamble, and I cannot deny that though the votaries of the board of green cloth are comparatively few, a good deal of money is lost every year by the students of "public form," or the believers in private "tips" on the turf. Your average young Guardsman is a great race-goer; at Ascot, of course, he is present, as it were, almost officially, and welcomes all his friends to lunch in the marquees flying the well-known colors of the brigade; but Ascot is only one out of very many meetings, and a very large number of the officers, both senior and junior, of her Majesty's Guards are regular *habitués* at Newmarket, Goodwood, Liverpool, Manchester, and all the suburban meetings, such as Sandown and Kempton. Just now I alluded to the lunch given by the brigade at Ascot, and this reminds me that this race luncheon is the only regimental hospitality expected of the Guards

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during the year. Unlike his brother in the line, the young Guardsman is not mulcted in heavy subscriptions for entertainments; the individual charge for the Ascot lunch is covered by a very few shillings, being in the hands of the most skilful of caterers, so that there are some compensations for the heavy expenses to which life in the brigade subjects its members in other respects. In addition to patronizing very largely race-meetings all over the country, the Household troops have a meeting of their own, usually held at Hawthorn Hill, where, besides a number of steeple-chases and hurdle-races confined to members of the Household troops, there are always some races open to the whole of the army, and a race for the farmers. In this meeting the greatest interest is taken; a considerable number are fair performers between the flags; in fact, a couple of the best military jockeys are to be found in the ranks of the brigade, and those who are not themselves riding are usually anxious to back the chances of their friends. This meeting is generally held in April, and

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is limited to two days, and a very pleasant two days they usually are. Earlier in the year, usually in March, the grand military meeting is held at Sandown; and though the races here are open to the whole army, the brigade generally has a cut in at a good number of them. Fox-hunting also has its devotees among the Guardsmen, and is probably the sport the most universally followed, certainly by the younger men, a large number of whom keep studs of horses at the different hunting centres in the Midlands, from which town is easily reached in case of need. Of late Gibraltar has been added to the stations which are occupied by the Guards in time of peace, which had hitherto been limited to London, Windsor, and Dublin, and I have no doubt that the most ardent followers of the Calpe hounds will be recruited largely from the ranks of the battalion lying at that fortress. What I have written above with reference to the mode of life of the officer in the Grenadier, Coldstream, or Scots guards will in the main apply equally well to their brother officers in

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the Household Cavalry, with the exception that these officers are most fortunate in being able to live in their own mess, at Knightsbridge, Albany Street, and Windsor, and are not quartered anywhere but at those places. Life in these crack cavalry corps is also considerably more expensive than in the Foot-Guards; the mess, though well and economically managed, is undeniably dearer; and, owing to the fact that the officers of these regiments are all, or nearly all, wealthy men, the whole style of living is very much more costly than in the corps I have hitherto been considering. But even in these expensive regiments the style of living does not approach the magnificence with which it is credited in the imagination of the foreign journalist. Practically every one hunts and plays polo, both of which amusements require a good deal of expenditure; but the yacht, the grouse-moor, and the opera-box are, as a rule, conspicuous by their absence, though one or two of the officers are keen on Corinthian racing, and there are several who are fortunate enough to possess the



R. W.  
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ADJUTANT OF THE GRENADIER GUARDS—UNDRESS  
UNIFORM



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best of grouse, partridge, and cover shooting.

Leaving the Household troops and turning to the cavalry of the line, we will find a wide difference in the expense and the mode of life of different corps. Opinions differ very much, even in the service itself, as to which regiment can lay claim to be the "smartest" cavalry regiment in the army, though the palm is usually awarded to the 10th Hussars, of which regiment the Prince of Wales is Colonel, and which included among its officers the late Duke of Clarence. Admission to the commissioned ranks of the 10th is, as might be imagined, more difficult than to those of any other regiment, the social position of the candidate being a matter of much importance, while considerable private means are also an essential. Officers have lived in the 10th with an allowance of only £500 a year in addition to their pay, but they have rarely lasted long, and the average income of the officers is very much higher. In some other regiments which do not hold the high social position accorded prac-

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tically unanimously to the officers of the 10th, the necessity for considerable private means is equally strong, but these regiments are in many cases recruited rather from the aristocracy of wealth than from that of hereditary distinction. Since agricultural depression has made itself felt, thus making serious reductions in the incomes of the land-owning classes, many men of high social position have been unable to afford the expense of maintaining a son in a crack cavalry corps, and in consequence a number of these corps are now mainly recruited, so far as their commissioned ranks are concerned, from the sons of men who have made fortunes in trade. However, to return to my subject: the youngster whose parents can afford to maintain him in a good cavalry regiment has the prospect, even in these days, of a very pleasant life before him. As in the case of the Household troops, the lad about to join will probably have friends or school-fellows in the regiment to which he has been posted, the great public schools still furnishing the largest proportion of cavalry officers. As



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every corps is exceedingly jealous of its own social standing, it is needless to say that as soon as the name of the new subaltern appears in the *Gazette*, the most anxious inquiries are made in the regiment as to whether he is a "good sort," and likely to do the regiment credit. The lad who joins with a school reputation of being a fine cricketer or racket-player is assured of a welcome which would possibly be denied to the lad who had passed at top of the list into the service. As in the Guards, each regiment of cavalry has its own tailor, and the young officer joining will find it essential to ascertain the names of the artists in tunics and breeches who happen to possess the confidence of his new corps. These tradesmen will be found to be most accommodating in every way; but civility of this high order is occasionally an expensive luxury, and it may be taken as a rough estimate that it will not be an easy matter to get a complete cavalry outfit, exclusive of horses, under, at the least, £300. However, people who put their sons into the cavalry must be prepared for this sort of thing;

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the money will, without doubt, be forthcoming, and on the expiration of his leave the youngster will join his regiment like a young bear with all his troubles before him. At first the greater part of his days will be taken up with his initiation in the mysteries of foot-drill, riding-school, fencing, and gymnastics, while his spare time will be at the disposal of his junior brother officers, who will conscientiously endeavor to find out for themselves the limits of the new-comer's good temper and physical strength. If the neophyte be an easy-tempered and well-plucked youngster, his trials will soon be over, and he will before long find himself on a footing of the most perfect equality, off parade, with his brother officers, and a member of a large family who may have their little private differences, but who present an unbroken front to the outside world. This regimental family is, as a rule, by no means an Eveless Eden; several of the officers will probably be married men, and the ladies of the regiment are usually quite recognized as members of the regimental family, and are quite as keen as



AN OFFICER OF THE GUARD ON HIS ROUNDS



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their husbands to maintain in every way the honor and credit of the corps. The regiment likewise feels that the married ladies belong to it quite as much as do their husbands; and outsiders are occasionally made to repent an action, possibly unintentional, which has been construed into a social slight on one of these ladies. In some regiments the ladies all dine at mess with their husbands' brother officers on Christmas night; in others, other little friendly customs exist, identifying them with the corps; and in the case of all regimental entertainments, the wife of the senior officer will, as a matter of course, receive the guests. In view of what I have said above, the reader must not run away with the idea that matrimony is at all encouraged in the cavalry; very far from it. It is recognized that human frailty is such that some allowance must be made for senior officers, but the married subaltern is not likely to find himself popular, and, unless a very good chap, may receive a strong hint to remove himself and his bride to some other regiment. The feeling about matrimony may

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be summed up as follows: the Colonel should be married—a bachelor Colonel in the mess is not always a joy forever; Majors, especially if grumpy and livery in the mornings, may be married; Captains should not be married; and subalterns *must* be bachelors—though, sad to say, they often prove quite as susceptible as their seniors. The chief reason for this feeling against matrimony is that it is bad for the mess. Married officers only pay half the usual mess subscriptions through their agents, and as they seldom dine in the mess, the cost of maintaining a proper establishment, being divisible into fewer parts, falls more heavily on the bachelor members. Also, the sociability of the mess suffers; and, though this is strictly between ourselves, the addition of a new lady to the married roll of a regiment is not always found to increase the harmony of its regimental life. In some corps would-be benedicts have to pay a fine of £100 to the funds of the mess as a compensation for their intended desertion.

## CHAPTER II

**T**HE daily life of the cavalry officer when he has got through the training in the elementary part of his profession I have not yet described, and I will now endeavor to repair this omission. In some respects my task is not an easy one, as the daily life of the officer naturally varies with his surroundings, which, in their turn, depend to a considerable extent on the station in which he happens for the time being to be quartered, and also to a certain extent on the regiment to which he happens to belong. Some of the home stations of our cavalry are unfortunately large towns, such as Dublin and Leeds, and in these places the opportunities for indulging in field sports are very limited, and the sporting tastes of the majority of the officers can only be gratified at considerable expense. However,

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whatever difficulties are in the way, hunting during the winter months will be found to take up the greater part of the spare time of the younger men, at any rate, while nearly all shooting parties in the neighborhood will be usually largely recruited from the nearest cavalry barracks; and in the summer it is possible at most stations to get a certain amount of polo, though the time devoted to this game will depend in great measure on the importance attached to it in the regiment. Some regiments, notably the 10th Hussars, the 13th Hussars, and the 9th Lancers, are great polo regiments, usually hotly contesting the last stages of the inter-regimental tournament; and the amount of time and trouble devoted to the practice of the game in these corps, to say nothing of the very large sums spent on the purchase of ponies, would be almost incredible to many civilians. Polo is, under any circumstances, an expensive game, but when the goal in view is the winning of the above-mentioned tournament, it is of the greatest importance to secure the best possible mounts, almost regardless of



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cost. In a good polo pony certain qualities difficult to find in combination are of very great importance. To commence with, he must not be more than 14.2 hands in height ; he must be very fast, and moreover be able to jump off at full speed at the shortest notice ; this great pace will rarely be found in any but practically thoroughbred ponies, and animals of this class are usually head-strong and impetuous ; but the polo pony must be temperate and handy, though full of courage, and must be able to carry from twelve to fourteen stone, or even more. It is obvious that the man who desires to possess a number of ponies combining all these good qualities must own a well-filled purse, as he will often have to give two or three hundred guineas for the animal he covets ; and excellent training in pluck and horsemanship as the game affords to the cavalry soldier, it is a question whether the extravagance entailed thereby, and the consequent loss to the service of many promising young officers, is not almost too heavy a price to pay for the incomparable seat and dashing horsemanship

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with which the "king of games" rewards its votaries.

Leaving those regiments in which polo furnishes the chief topic of conversation and the most engrossing subject of interest to all ranks during the summer months, we shall find that the game is played in every cavalry regiment to a greater or less extent, the cost of the game being kept within bounds by the adoption of the "club" system. By this system the funds for the purchase and maintenance of ponies are provided by subscription among all the officers, whether they play the game or not, and during the winter months any officer wanting a pony for a hack or a trapper can have one from the club simply by paying the cost of its keep. The funds of the club are managed by a committee of the officers, to one or two of whom is intrusted the replacing of ponies cast for various reasons. Of course regiments depending on the club system are hardly likely to pay the enormous sums necessary to get hold of the speediest and highest-class ponies, and hence are seriously handicapped

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in an attempt to win the inter-regimental cup; but in spite of this drawback the game is just as useful as the faster tournament game in teaching "hands" and horsemanship, and the young soldier who has graduated in the polo-field will rarely come off second best in a contest for supremacy with an unruly horse. Moreover, even in regiments where the club system is adopted, good management often provides the very best ponies. The raw material is cheaply purchased, and where the agent of the corps possesses patience and good judgment, care in training develops the necessary qualities. Besides polo, cricket and rackets take a leading place among the summer amusements of the cavalry officer; in fact, the "pair" sent up by that well-known cavalry regiment, the 12th Lancers, are the present holders of the Rackets Challenge Cup, open to the whole army.

But other amusements, less innocent in some respects than the games I have been discussing, offer very powerful attractions to a large proportion of officers. The turf is a

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great English institution, and has its adherents among every class of society in the three kingdoms, so it is hardly to be wondered at that men who live in a society in which horseflesh furnishes one of the principal topics of conversation should feel themselves irresistibly drawn into the vortex of racing. The majority content themselves with the rôle of spectators, but some cannot thus satisfy their love of sport and their craving for excitement, and soon set up studs of their own, and in many cases devote themselves conscientiously to an endeavor to emulate the prowess in the pigskin of the best professional jockeys. In the pursuit of this aim some, but not many, have had notable success; in fact, it is only a couple of years since the winner of the Grand National was ridden by a cavalry subaltern on full pay. In some societies feats of this kind would be regarded with an attitude of mild condemnation, or of doubtful approbation at the best; but those who know the courage, readiness of resource, self-denial, and continuous hard work necessary before a success of this kind



A CANNON AT POLO



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can be hoped for, are little likely to undervalue the steeple-chase course as a training-school for the young soldier. The gallant Roddy Owen, who, by-the-bye, was an infantry officer, proved that the coolness and courage which had gained him such high honors on the race-course, making his name in very deed a household word, were equally available when the opportunity came for employing them in the service of his country, and eminent soldiers and statesmen soon recognized a kindred spirit in the hero of Aintree and Sandown. On active service, in the moment of imminent danger and great and sudden emergency, the self-reliance and quickness of resolution which are indispensable to the successful steeple-chase rider cannot fail to be of the utmost value to the soldier; consequently I hope that the day is far distant when the amateur jock will be looked upon with disfavor by his military superiors. For the mere spectators the case is different; many of these go racing for many years without coming to grief; but others, less cool-headed, succumb to the fascination of the

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betting-ring, which, alas, every year claims a toll—though, happily, yearly a decreasing one—from the ranks of our cavalry. As is the case in the regiments composing the Household Brigade, annual “point-to-point” and steeple-chase meetings are held by each cavalry regiment, at the latter function the events usually consisting of the Regimental Challenge Cup, the Subalterns’ Cup, and probably a race for some other trophy, the meeting concluding with a race for the farmers or the members of the local hunt. At these meetings the latent talent of the embryo jockey is probably first discovered, and a lad who is found to be the happy possessor of nerve, dash, and judgment, in addition to a good seat and hands, will not be long without offers of mounts from his brother officers, which will soon make his name familiar to the racing world.

Turning from racing and other amusements to what may be termed the interior economy of the mess, the visitor to the institution will probably be struck in the first place by the cleverness with which all the



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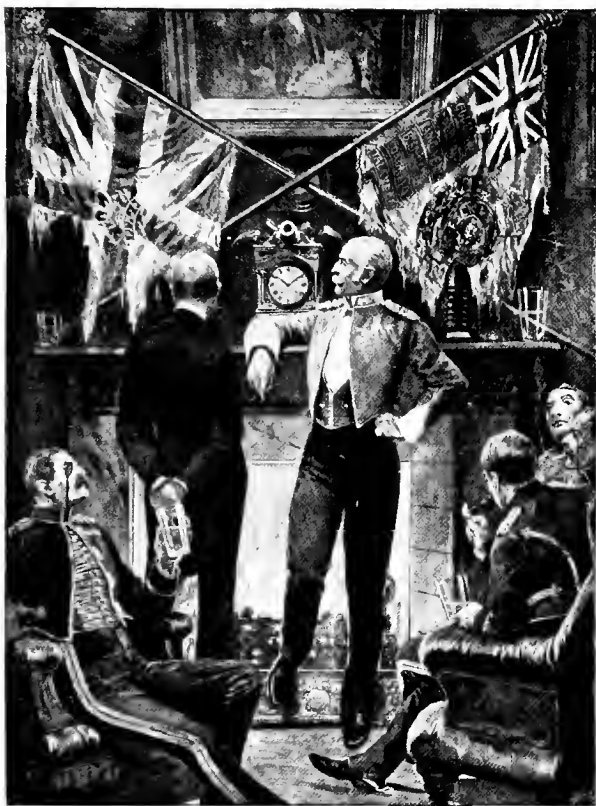
furniture is designed with a view to portability as well as comfort. The necessity for this is obvious, when one reflects that a regiment is rarely left longer than a year, or two at the outside, in the same station, and that the furniture supplied by a paternal government consists only of a number of Windsor chairs and a dining-table and sideboard of Spartan simplicity. Carpets, curtains, mirrors, easy-chairs, sofas, occasional tables, bookcases, pictures, etc., all have to be moved about from one station to another at the expense of the corps, which also has to provide the whole of the glass, cutlery, table-linen, etc., required by its members, in addition to the silver mess plate, which is generally exceedingly handsome, and, as a rule, contains many trophies won on the turf or on the rifle-range, as well as the fine pieces of plate presented at different times by individual officers, or purchased out of the funds of the corps.

The care and cleaning of this plate, often of the value of over a thousand pounds, are in themselves sufficient responsibility for one

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man—as a general rule a private belonging to the regiment, who performs practically no military duty, but devotes his time to the care of the silver committed to him. The whole of this silver is packed in cases specially made to fit each article when the regiment is on the move, and when in quarters is stored in a room in the mess buildings, in which room is placed the bed of the “silver-man” responsible for its safe custody.

Among social functions the weekly guest-night holds a leading place, and it may be of interest if I shortly describe one of these festive occasions. To commence with, it is *de rigueur* in every well-ordered regiment that every officer, whether married or single, present with the regiment should dine at mess on guest-nights, and the party is swollen both by the private friends of the officers and by a sprinkling of the local notabilities asked as guests of the mess. On their arrival the guests are received by their own private hosts and by the commanding officer of the regiment in the anteroom, from which a move is made to the mess-room when



DISPLAYING OLD COLORS—GUEST NIGHT AT MESS



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dinner is announced, the company in many regiments moving to their seats to the air of "The Roast Beef of Old England," discoursed by the band of the corps posted in a gallery or out-building adjoining the dining-room. On the dining-table and the side-board the mess plate is displayed in all its gleaming splendor, the historical associations connected with many of the principal pieces possibly calling forth a flow of reminiscence from the senior officers and any old members of the regiment who may happen to be present, which cannot fail to have a peculiar fascination for the interested civilian guest. In a conspicuous place, if dining at an infantry mess, will be seen displayed the colors of the battalion, in many cases the silk sadly defaced and tattered by the storms of many continents, the honored emblems bearing on their folds the record of many gallant deeds, well calculated to fire the blood of youth or to quicken the slackening pulse of the old.

A selection of music is played during dinner by the band of the regiment, the programme concluding with the regimental

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march blending into "God Save the Queen," or, in some regiments, "Rule Britannia." After the dessert has been placed on the table, the wine is circulated, and, all glasses being filled, the officer sitting as president rises from his chair, and, raising his glass, calls out, "Mr. Vice-President, the Queen"; on this all rise, glasses in hand; the young officer sitting as vice-president gives the toast, "Gentlemen, the Queen"; the band, which has been on the lookout for a signal from the mess sergeant, crashes out the national anthem, and the health of the sovereign, drunk with enthusiasm, ends the brief ceremony, the flow of chaff, laughter, and conversation, momentarily interrupted, bursting forth afresh. Till the wine has been once round the table after dinner no officer is permitted to leave the room, except by permission of the president—a permission rarely granted on guest-nights except to the orderly officer, who has to collect reports at tattoo and see lights out in barracks. The innocent breach of this rule by newly joined officers is usually punished by a fine, the offender hav-



“ ‘GENTLEMEN, THE QUEEN’ ”





## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

ing to stand champagne to all the mess. Fines of this nature are rather an institution in the service, the acts leading to their infliction differing in different regiments, but in all cases the youngster must walk warily at first, or he will find himself with a very swollen wine bill at the end of the month. Fines are usually inflicted for such causes as the following: the drawing of a sword in the premises of the mess, parting company with one's horse on parade or in the school, dropping one's cap under similar circumstances, wearing the belt for the first time as orderly officer, etc.; while other incidents, such as promotion, or the winning of a race, are regarded as legitimate reasons for standing champagne. Before the stage of coffee and cigars is reached, to return to our guest-night dinner, the band-master is invited into the room to join the officers in a glass of wine, a place being laid for him on the right hand of the president; and this little ceremony over, an adjournment is soon made to the ante-room or billiard-room, and tables are usually made up for whist or less serious games, till

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the departure of the guests and seniors is a signal for a certain amount of horse-play and "ruxing," which, it must be admitted, is occasionally carried rather to an excess. Sometimes a mock court-martial is assembled for the trial of a subaltern for some imaginary crime, a trial conducted with all the form and ceremony of the real article, with the exception that the finding is invariably "guilty," and that there is a certain monotony about the sentences, which usually end in the immersing of the culprit, uniform and all, in the nearest horse-trough. Woe betide any unfortunate youth who is unwary enough to go to bed early when one of these orgies is in progress. When his absence is detected, an escort of subalterns will be warned, the delinquent will be fetched unceremoniously into the mess, and will be lucky to escape with a fine of a dozen of champagne. The frequency of the occasions on which this horse-play goes on will be found to vary very much with regiments. In some corps the high spirits of the subalterns lead to a good deal of noise almost every night, while in

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others it is only on some special occasions, such as the recurrence of some anniversary specially honored in the regiment, that the juniors break out in the fashion above described. Needless to say, regiments of the latter type are the more comfortable to live in, and also the less likely to acquire a brief but unenviable notoriety in consequence of overstepping the bounds of decorum in an unfortunate direction during one of these saturnalia.

I will now endeavor to describe the *ménage* maintained by the mess of a cavalry or infantry regiment serving at home. The cook is naturally a person of the first importance, and is usually a man, often a Frenchman, in receipt of wages varying from £60 to £100 a year; occasionally, especially in Ireland, where regiments are often split up into several detachments, a woman cook is employed from motives of economy, but in any case every effort is made to obtain the services of an artist in his or her profession. To assist the cook in the "fatigue" duties of the kitchen, two men are generally provided from

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the ranks of the regiment—one, the “kitchen-man,” corresponds to the kitchen-maid of civilian life, and the other, the “delft-man,” takes the place of the scullery-maid. In the up-stairs department the chief place is filled by the mess sergeant, who performs the same duties as fall to a confidential butler in civil life, in addition to other duties which are chiefly concerned with arranging, in concert with the mess president, the daily *menu* of the dinner. Under the sergeant the ordinary duties of waiters are carried out by two or three soldiers under a corporal, who are dressed in livery, often clean-shaved in defiance of regulations, and who, though at first probably rather uncouth and clumsy, yet, being selected for their smartness, soon pick up the ways of the professional footman, and make excellent servants. The above-mentioned staff are obviously unequal to the task of waiting on a large number at dinner, consequently a roster is kept by the mess sergeant of the officers’ soldier-servants, and the number required are warned for duty by the mess corporal, usually for a week at a time.

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All these servants are provided with the livery of the corps by their masters, and naturally wear it at mess ; but their skill as waiters is rarely equal to the smartness of their appearance, and very amusing are the tales of their blunders to be heard in every regiment.

The general management of the mess is intrusted to a committee of the officers, as a rule consisting of a major, or captain, and two subalterns, each of the latter being made responsible for some special department, such as the wine or the catering, while the president exercises a general supervision. In a catering mess—that is to say, in a mess where the officers provide their own food, and do not hand everything over to a contractor—the office of mess president is no sinecure, and the comfort and mode of life of the officers as a body are very much in his hands. By Queen's Regulations the daily expenses of living in a mess (for food alone) are not supposed to exceed four shillings, and if the mess president is a good one, and the number of dining members considerable, this sum

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usually suffices. If not, there are numerous ways of keeping within the letter of the law while breaking it in spirit, which do not require to be divulged.

But the expense of the actual messing is only a small fraction of the expenses to which the members of a mess are liable; subscriptions to the polo team, the regimental coach, the regimental hounds—in cases where hounds are kept—the race fund, added to the expenses of maintaining the mess itself, providing servants' liveries, newspapers, stationery, repairs to glass and china, etc., swell the total very often into quite a large sum. Officers above the rank of lieutenant have, in addition, to pay for the maintenance of the regimental band, towards which the government only subscribes a certain number of trumpets and bugles and a contribution to the salary of the band-master, leaving the cost of the purchase and repair of instruments, the payment of extra bandsmen, etc., to be borne entirely by the officers of the corps. The expense of the entertainments which are expected from the officers of her

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Majesty's regiments, both horse and foot, by the civilian population among whom they are quartered forms in many cases a heavy additional tax on the purses of the officers, especially of the seniors, as these are subscribed for according to rank—the major, whose dancing days are possibly over, having to pay about three times the amount contributed by the subaltern, at whose instigation the ball may have been given, and who dances conscientiously through every item on the programme. One consequence of this perhaps salutary regulation is that the seniors are more inclined to check than to encourage extravagant entertainments. In some corps an "entertainment fund" is maintained, to which all officers subscribe a day's pay, or some similar sum, monthly: the object of this fund is to avoid heavy calls on the purses of the officers, and it is no doubt a very useful institution.

It would be impossible to quit the subject of the social life of the British officer without alluding to the peculiarities of the soldier-servant, in whose hands the comfort of his

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master lies to a very considerable extent. In the days of long service little or no difficulty was experienced in obtaining and retaining the services of a well-trained and experienced servant, who usually identified himself with the fortunes of his master to an extent rarely met with in civil life, adding also to the usual qualifications of the valet such valuable accomplishments as the power of being able to send up a very fair dinner if called on to cook in an emergency, and sufficient skill as an armorer to repair and keep in order his master's fowling-pieces, while he very frequently was expert enough as a tailor to be able to keep his master's wardrobe in order, sewing on his buttons, and mending his shirts with all the neatness of an accomplished seamstress. Alas! the soldier-servant of this type has vanished, never, I fear, to return. His place has been taken by a very inferior article. The foreign draft annually strips the regiment of all its most seasoned men, thus restricting the officer's choice to the young soldiers who have completed their drills and are not de-



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sirous of promotion to the non-commissioned ranks. For many years this state of things has existed in the infantry of the line; a recent order is responsible for the introduction of the evils of the annual foreign draft into the cavalry. The young soldier-servant, therefore, who very probably has never entered a gentleman's room before, has to be taught the very rudiments of his new vocation, with the result that the domestic experiences of his master are likely for some little time to contain more of the unexpected than is either comfortable or desirable. His clothes are folded in the weird manner taught in the barrack-room; his boots are varnished according to the light of nature; his hunting-breeches are balled with such zeal that their wearer is enveloped in clouds of white dust whenever he moves; and his tops, when they have left the hands of this artist, resemble a *chef-d'œuvre* by a painter of the impressionist school. Time and patience will overcome all these difficulties; but the man will hardly have got into his master's ways before the temptations of deferred pay allure him to

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the reserve, and the task of teaching his successor has to be commenced *de novo*. Yes, I am solemnly convinced that the soldier-servant as a type of the skilled and faithful retainer is a fraud, which is due not to any degeneration in the individual, but to the entire disappearance of the conditions which called his prototype into existence.

What I have written above with reference to the life of the cavalry officer will apply in a great measure to that of the officer of infantry as well, with the exception that, owing to his means being usually considerably more limited, the latter is unable to take part as freely as he would like in the sports of hunting and racing, and the costly game of polo, which come as a matter of course to his more richly endowed brother officer. The sporting foot-soldier, having no point-to-point to win in his own regiment, consoles himself by having a cut in at the races of the local hunt, and, if a light weight and keen on polo, will manage to see a good deal of hunting from the backs of the game little ponies he has played all the summer. He



BUYING ARAB HORSES



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must console himself with the reflection that every lot has its compensations, and if he cannot break himself by owning race-horses, he is quite at liberty to lose his money in backing the horses belonging to wealthier men. Taking the soldier all round, the sporting blood flows hotly through his veins, and the man who cannot afford to gratify his tastes to the full at home, will find little difficulty in getting transferred to a battalion in India, the poor sportsman's paradise.

In India the life of the young officer is very different from that to which he has been used at home. In the first place, he cannot fail to realize that in India he is the representative of a conquering race, which holds by the sword the possessions which the sword has won. The moral aspect of this situation cannot but have a strong effect in moulding the character of the young soldier, even if in the humblest grade, and doubtless contributes largely to acquiring the habit of command and the air of authority which so soon become part of the nature of the British soldier in the East. The trooper

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will hardly have been brought to an anchor before she will be invaded by swarms of natives in their picturesque dresses, armed with "chits," or letters of recommendation from previous masters, all anxious to enter the service of the new-comer. If well advised, the novice will be exceedingly chary of engaging one of these gentry, who are quite likely to desert him on his journey up country at the first favorable opportunity, taking with them as much as they can conveniently carry away of their new master's effects. If the young soldier is on his way to join a British or Queen's regiment, so called in contradistinction to the native regiments in the Indian army, his future brother officers will probably have sent a reliable man to meet him and conduct him to his new corps, and under the protection of this individual his journey up country, whether by "dâk" or rail, will probably be made with the greatest comfort possible under the circumstances. The ordinary life in India, and the peculiarities of travel in that country, have been already made so familiar to the

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world at large that it is not my intention to allude to anything with which the ordinary reader or traveller is likely to be already familiar. Into the *vie intime* of the soldier the enterprising globe-trotter has not yet succeeded in penetrating, and it is with peculiarities in which it differs from the life of the civilian that I now propose to deal.

In his regiment at home the officer is accustomed to living in government quarters, to being waited on by a soldier-servant, and to being dependent for the comforts of his existence on a mess occupying a portion of the barracks built solely for that purpose. In India he will find these conditions, as a rule, non-existent. In very few places are there officers' quarters owned by government; the rule is to find the officers of a regiment occupying bungalows, rented from a private individual, in the neighborhood of the lines of the regiment, while the mess buildings will, as a rule, be similarly rented by the mess as a whole. In most cases the officers will go shares in bungalows, two or more officers to each house, and the younger ones

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will often have many of their servants in common, though each will, of course, keep a bearer or butler, the title varying with the presidency in which he is serving, exclusively for his own service. In Bengal, in addition, it is usual for each officer to keep a khitmutgar, whose duty it is to wait on his master, and on his master alone, at mess and when dining out. The service of a dinner by these well-trained and silent servitors, moving noiselessly in their bare feet, is as good as can be met with anywhere in the world, and is apt to spoil the man accustomed to it for the rougher ministrations of the home-grown mess waiter.

Life in most parts of India may be roughly divided into the life of the cold weather and the struggle for existence during the grilling days and almost hotter nights of the rest of the year, when in many places existence is only possible by the continued use of punkas and thermantidotes, and other appliances indigenous to the country. Needless to say, in the hot weather a determined effort is made to get away to the delights of



## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

the nearest hill station, life at which elysiums has been made familiar to all by the graphic pen of Rudyard Kipling, who has also brought vividly before the most unimaginative of mortals the miseries of the lot of the unfortunates condemned to swelter through the arid summer months in the plains. During this trying time military duties are naturally reduced to a minimum, though musketry drill goes on in many places, and the professional zeal of the keenest soldier is generally easily satisfied with the one parade a day (Thursday, the general military holiday throughout India, excepted), which parade is held in the early morning before the sun has had time to acquire his full power, being usually over by eight o'clock.

Orderly-room and breakfast have now to be attended to, and when this is over the rest of the day is given up to an endeavor to get cool, to sleep, and to pass away the time till it is possible to venture forth for the game of rackets, polo, or tennis, which is required to provide the exercise necessary for health.

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This over, the club will be visited for a "peg," *Anglicè* drink, and a game of pool or billiards before dinner, and the evening may be brought to a conclusion with more billiards or a rubber of whist. The hot weather will also afford the sportsman an opportunity of putting in for leave to visit Cashmere, or to make an excursion into the Terai in quest of tiger. Leave is given with a free hand in India. In times of peace within our borders any officer can count on his two, three, or even four months' leave in the year, which compares favorably with the two and a half months' obtainable in the winter at home. But the leave season is brought to a conclusion with the arrival of the cold weather, when the military training of the troops is taken seriously in hand, and when camps of exercise, involving much hard work on all ranks, are annually formed at the principal military centres.

Besides this revival of activity in purely military directions, the cold weather will also witness a great quickening of social activity in nearly every station, the fair occupants

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of the numerous bungalows in the larger cantonments returning from the hills, where they have been dancing, picnicking, and flirting away the summer months, to enter with a renewed zest on the same occupations with fresh fields to conquer and fresh game to subdue.

In some places fox-hounds, imported from England, which have been sent to the hills during the hot weather, are brought back to their kennels, and the ardent horseman abandons the fascinations of pig-sticking for the tamer pursuit of the jackal, which is in some instances carried on with all the pomp and circumstance of fox-hunting at home. At many places cricket is now in full swing, and race-meetings and the great polo tournaments give a zest to existence which had been sadly wanting in the torrid months, now almost forgotten. The British officer in India is as keen on racing as his brother at home; and if he wants to gamble, facilities for doing so are supplied by the selling lotteries, which take the place of the accommodating book-maker. Horseflesh is cheap in India,

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though high-class polo and racing ponies certainly command fancy prices, the latter, miniature race-horses of 13.2 and under, taking the place of the thoroughbred in England; but every subaltern can possess his "tat," and the "sport of kings" can be indulged in by men who would find it impossible to be more than spectators at home. For this reason, and for the facilities that exist for the pursuit of every sport at a moderate expense, India is indeed a paradise for the average Briton—that is to say, if he can retain his health, a condition which is more easy to fulfil in these days of improved sanitary knowledge than it was in the past.

Unfortunately, owing to the falling rupee, the poor man is becoming daily at a greater disadvantage in India, but even now the young soldier of a hardy stock, of scanty means, and keen on gratifying the sporting instinct, which forms such a strong characteristic of his race, can do worse than throw in his lot with the British army in the "Gorgeous East."

### CHAPTER III

I HAVE endeavored to bring before my readers the nature of the life led by the British officer in time of peace. It will now be my task to set forth the mode of life, amusements, etc., of the men of the rank and file, and of their wives and families. Perhaps the best way to begin will be to imagine ourselves arriving at a military station as the bugles ring forth reveille at the hour of half-past five in the morning. As we reach the barrack gates they have just been opened for the day, the last notes of the bugle blown by the sleepy-looking bugler of the barrack guard echoing shrilly from the walls of the gloomy buildings surrounding the expanse of drill-ground. The sentry is pacing briskly to and fro on his limited beat, and the soldiers of the

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guard, having just been inspected by their commander, are stamping about under the veranda to keep themselves warm, while one of their number is endeavoring to blow up a fire in the dusty grate in order to heat some coffee or cocoa for his comrades. No notice is taken of us as we pass through, the garment of invisibility being sufficient passport, so we direct our steps unchallenged to a door in the gloomy buildings above mentioned, in order to have a look at a barrack-room before it has been tidied up for inspection. On the door of the room we enter we notice a card setting forth that the room is occupied by men of "G," or Captain Jones's, company, and that the non-commissioned officer in charge is a Corporal Woods. Above the door is a legend to the effect that the room has accommodation for sixteen men, and that it is entitled to so many units of coal weekly, but the latter announcement only refers to the allowance which can be drawn in the winter months. There is a good deal of noise in the room as we enter; a gentleman, presumably Corporal Woods,



ORDERLY-MEN RECEIVING MEAT RATIONS







REVEILLE



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though his rank is not to be guessed at from his light attire, is energetically endeavoring to rouse the sleepier members of his squad, some of whom are already sitting blinking on the edges of their iron bed-cots. Two or three men, who are for fatigue, are struggling into their clothing as rapidly as possible, another man is throwing open the windows, while a couple of older soldiers, who appear to be chartered libertines, are calmly lying in their beds, puffing with a great air of complacency and enjoyment at their freshly lighted pipes, occasionally making sarcastic remarks at the expense of some of the sleepier recruits.

It is now nearly six o'clock, and as breakfast will not be ready till eight, we shall have time to take a turn round the barrack and see what is going on outside. Under the clock we see assembling a party of men carrying large flat tin dishes, while other men run hurriedly to join them, swinging their dishes in one hand and buttoning up their coats with the other as they run. This is the early ration party. The party being

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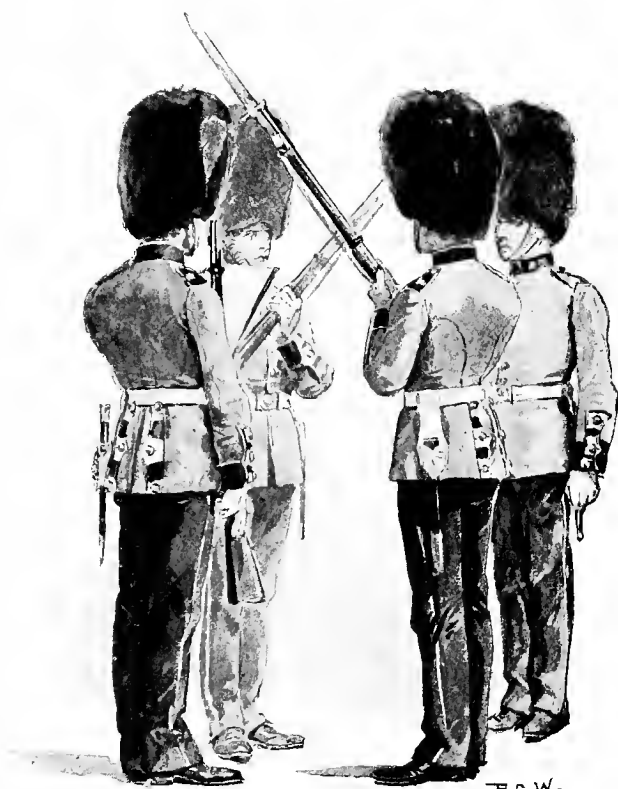
complete, an unintelligible bark from the sergeant sets them in motion, and with great clattering of tins and scuffling of feet they wheel round a corner in the direction of the ration-stand. In hot summer weather meat will not keep for long, so it is issued on the same day as it is to be cooked, and the men we have just seen parading have gone to draw the allowance for their messes. Government gives each man three-quarters of a pound of meat daily, weighed with bone, and one pound of bread, in addition to which it has recently been decided to credit each man with threepence a day to pay for his groceries, vegetables, etc., for which a stoppage has hitherto been made. When breakfast-time comes we shall see what sort of a meal the soldier gets for his threepence. As we stroll across the square we meet a straggling contingent in exceedingly disreputable fatigue dress, who are making a great show of energy in sweeping up the straws and papers and other flotsam and jetsam ornamenting the gutter. A recruit, who has escaped the eye of the corporal in charge, is

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

assiduously practising with his broom the "present" from the "shoulder," probably his chief stumbling-block on parade, a critical comrade sitting on a wheelbarrow exhorting him to "cut away his 'ands more smarter"; a manœuvre which leads to the dropping of the broom with a clatter, and the interruption of the practice by the sudden awakening of the corporal to the dereliction of duty going on in his command. Certainly these gentlemen appear to take life easily, and we are rather astonished to hear that they are "defaulters," or men undergoing punishment, who, for their sins, are being employed on "pioneer fatigue." Now the morning parade is falling in, and we can profitably pass the time till eight o'clock in watching the manœuvres, which terminate by the whole strength on parade running round the barrack square for what seems to us an interminable time. However, when they pull up the men do not appear to be much winded, owing, probably, to the fact that they are working in the now usual summer kit of shirt sleeves, and

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

also to being regularly drilled in running. The parade is dismissed at a quarter to eight, and the square is hardly clear of men before the bugler on duty emerges from the guard-room and wakens the echoes with the ever-welcome "cook-house" bugle, which is the signal for the orderlies of squads to hasten to the cook-houses to draw the tea and anything else that may have been cooked for their breakfasts. It is quite time that we returned to our barrack-room: as we enter we notice a marked change for the better both in the atmosphere, which had been decidedly close before, and in the general appearance, the mattresses being now neatly rolled, the bedding, brown blankets on top, secured by a strap, and the bed-cots folded up; while the table is covered with delft plates and basins, and the men, now properly dressed and fresh from their visit to the "ablution-rooms," are waiting anxiously for their morning meal. They are not kept waiting long; scarcely have we entered than the orderly-man clatters in at the door with a steaming can of tea, from



READING ORDERS OF THE DAY TO CHANGE OF GUARD





## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

which he rapidly fills the basins, the milk and sugar having been already added before the tea left the cook-house. No allowance is made in barracks for men of fastidious tastes; if a man prefers his tea unsweetened, he can go elsewhere; the taste of the majority is alone consulted. The tea having been served out, the orderly-man now proceeds to divide the bread into chunks, one for each man, and announces that the "extra" that morning is butter; this announcement is a welcome one, and the butter being produced in its wrapper of blue canteen paper, is speedily divided into equal portions, one for each member of the mess. Should any comrade be so unfortunate as to be languishing in the guard-room, awaiting disposal by the commanding officer, the orderly-man has now to take his allowance to him, the tea being poured into a tin canteen, and the bread and butter wrapped in paper and stowed in a haversack.

But it may be asked: "Surely we have been told that soldiers enjoy more variety than plain bread and butter at their break-

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

fasts. Have we not heard of savory kippers, of porridge—yes, even of eggs and bacon?" True, such are the dishes encouraged by generals and colonels who like to earn a reputation for looking after the welfare of their men; but these fancy relishes are not much encouraged by Tommy Atkins, for the simple reason that his funds will not allow of his receiving more than an infinitesimal portion of the kipper or whatever may be the favorite breakfast dainty of his commanding officer. All that the corporal in charge of the grocery-book has to spend daily is threepence per man in mess, or under four dollars for a company with the average strength of sixty men in mess. When it is realized that with this money tea, salt, pepper, vegetables for dinner, flour, if a "duff" is to ornament the dinner-table, and all the groceries which the soldier needs to eke out the rations of bread and meat already described have to be provided, it will be understood that the question of providing extras for breakfast and tea is a difficult one to solve, and that the corporal naturally pre-

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

fers something like butter, which all appreciate, to some other dainty which may not appeal to the tastes of his constituency. However, men with a penny or two to spare need not want some savory addition to their *menu*, for here is a hawker, himself an old soldier, timidly pushing open the door and drawing the attention of the men to his basket of bloaters and salted haddocks. In every barrack will be found a certain number of hawkers, usually old soldiers, who hold passes authorizing them to sell various odds and ends to the men, and there will be generally an old apple-woman with a large *clientèle* among the drummers and band-boys. Breakfast being over, the tables are lifted off their iron legs and carried down-stairs to be scrubbed, all hands turning to with a will to get the room cleared up before the bugle sounds to call men away to their various duties or parades. The orderly-man is busy, as usual, washing up the plates and basins and arranging them on their shelves; pipes are lighted, tongues are loosened, and the barrack hums with noise

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

and life. For the next few hours we shall not be able to see much of the men, who will be scattered all over the garrison, some at the gymnasium, some at drill, some at musketry or signalling, and others in attendance at the various garrison or regimental offices where they are employed as orderlies or clerks. Under these circumstances this will afford a favorable opportunity for taking a look at the cook-houses, workshops, and, last but not least, the married quarters, where Mrs. Tommy Atkins, good easy soul, leads her bustling, gossiping, hard-working life. But first to the cook-house, where we find the sergeant master-cook and his assistants busy cutting up the meat and potatoes for the different messes. Barrack cookery does not present many refinements; soup, of course, can be made in the big coppers, and is usually in great request on route-marching days; but apart from soup, the cooking arrangements will only allow of Tommy being given his choice between a bake and a steam. A steam resembles what we have been taught to call Irish stew, and very



THE QUEEN'S SENIOR STATE DRUMMER,  
GRENADIER GUARDS



## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

good and savory it smells when the grocery-book is sufficiently in credit to allow of a liberal addition of vegetables, onions for choice, to the government ration. Sometimes the bake is covered in with a massive-looking crust, and a Brobdingnagian pie is prepared for the lucky mess, but more usually the meat is served in the open baking-dish, with the baked potatoes bobbing beside it in the sometimes rather greasy-looking gravy. The resources of the cook-house will not allow of the whole battalion having either bakes or steams on the same day, and companies take it in turn day about, so that every one is eventually satisfied. On the whole, the soldiers' food is cooked well and economically: the serjeant cook has been through a course of training at the Aldershot school of army cookery, and probably, in addition to his permanent assistant, some of the company cooks have a natural gift for the work of the kitchen. These company cooks receive no extra pay, but are excused all but a very few parades and musketry; while as an additional inducement

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for good men to take the billet, the cook is allowed his extra messing free at the expense of the rest of the company. Leaving the cook-house, the steady swishing sound which betrays the carpenter at work with his plane guides us to the pioneers' shop, where we find the pioneer-sergeant and his pioneers hard at work on some joinery for the officers' mess. The pioneer-sergeant is an expert "tradesman," holding a certificate of competency from the Engineering School at Chatham, and his assistants are all good workmen, who probably have worked at a trade before enlistment. These men earn often very fair wages in addition to their pay, as do the shoemakers, whom we find busy at their work in their rather evil-smelling shop next door. Query, why do shoemakers' shops always have that unwholesome smell? Unlike the pioneer-sergeant, the master-shoemaker holds no certificate of competency from Aldershot or anywhere else, it being apparently only necessary for him to satisfy the quartermaster that he is competent to undertake the repairs which



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form the greater part of his work. Before manœuvres and during the route-marching seasons the shoemakers' shop is very full of work, "ammunition" boots in every stage of decrepitude being sent there in the hope that they may be made fit for a further term of service, and so save their owners from being ordered to provide themselves with new boots. But enough of the shoemakers. A little farther on we find the armorer-sergeant and his men busy with minor repairs to arms, the new and rather intricate Lee-Metford rifles appearing to give him quite enough to do. His assistants, too, earn a welcome addition to their pay as soldiers. If we go down here at the back of the gymnasium, from which we hear the stamp of feet and words of command, indicating that a squad is under instruction, we shall come to the cheerful-looking, terracelike row in which are housed the wives of the non-commissioned officers and men who are married with leave and recognized as officially on the strength of the battalion. This question of permission to marry is a burning

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

one in the barrack-room. Only a limited number of men are allowed to marry, the strength of the roll varying with the establishment of the corps: sergeants are given permission to marry as a matter of course, if there is a vacancy in the establishment, but no soldier is allowed to enter the blessed state unless he has seven years' service, £5 in the savings-bank, and two good-conduct badges. I have heard it said that there is such a thing as borrowing the £5 till the necessary permission has been obtained, but there is no getting over the other two conditions. The married quarters seem comfortable enough; what strikes us most is the enormous number of babies and quite young children who swarm round the door of every quarter, occasional yells leading to the hasty arrival of a flushed and heated-looking matron to restore order in a summary fashion. The allowance of space does not strike one as particularly liberal, soldiers with small families being given only one room with the minutest possible scullery, the fathers of larger families rejoicing in an

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

extra room. Sergeants, as a rule, have two rooms, but otherwise have no pull over their comrades of lower rank. The wives of the private soldiers add largely to the scanty pay of their husbands by doing washing for the men of their husbands' company, and twice blessed is the woman whose good man belongs to a company having few married soldiers. In this case she will be able to get more to do than her less fortunate sisters. Some of the women who have a reputation as washer-women earn plenty of money by washing for the officers of the regiment. The soldier's wife seems to drift naturally into being a washer-woman; whatever her calling may have been previously, she soon recognizes the fact that it is as a laundress that she is best able to increase the family income. In every barrack there is a well-fitted wash-house, kept in order by a steady old soldier; and, if rumor does not lie, this building is occasionally the scene of Homeric combats, and also the incubator in whose warm, steamy atmosphere are hatched all the gossip and scandal of the barrack. For we

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

must remember that the barrack is a world in itself; the doings of the dwellers outside the gates have no interest for these soldiers' wives, but the whisper of a difference of opinion between Mrs. Private Smith and Mrs. Corporal Brown soon furnishes a topic for heated discussion at many tea-tables and at *al fresco* meetings on the drying-ground. A little conversation with the ladies is a liberal education in *esprit de corps*; each woman thoroughly identifies herself with the regiment to which her husband belongs; and even in these days of short service it is not difficult to find women whose fathers and grandfathers have soldiered in bygone days under the tattered colors now hanging in the sacred precincts of the officers' mess. The ladies of the regiment, as a rule, take great interest in the welfare of their humbler sisters, frequently visiting them in their quarters, and giving more than their sympathy at one of those crises which occur so frequently in the married block, and generally lead ultimately to the object of their solicitude applying for extra accommodation, owing to



PACK DRILL



## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

an unauthorized addition to the strength of the battalion.

There is an air of subdued excitement about the married quarters to-day, and on inquiry we find that the reason is that to-morrow the annual outing of the soldiers' families is to come off, and the whole party is to be conveyed in brakes to some picturesque ruins a few miles off, where there will be all sorts of games for the younger members and a substantial tea for the matrons. The whole entertainment is managed by the ladies of the regiment, presided over by the Colonel's wife, assisted by some of the married officers and one or two of the more docile young bachelors. The funds are provided partly from the canteen and partly by subscription among the officers, and the festival is looked forward to from year to year with the greatest interest by the children of the battalion. Christmas also is a time of festivity; the annual regimental tree, followed or preceded by the inevitable tea, is an event of great importance. In one respect this event may be said to fix in some

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manner the social standing of the occupants of the married block, the women of highest standing being generally taken into consultation by the Colonel's wife, and permitted to assist at the arranging of the presents for the children and of the usual seasonable gifts for their parents. This matter of Christmas presents is a ticklish one, as the whole system of regimental society would be convulsed if the newly married wife of Corporal Jones were made more of than the spouse of Private Higgins, a warrior with innumerable "badges," whose helpmate has laid down the law in the married quarters under many generations of commanding officers. However, Mrs. Quartermaster knows what importance should be attached to all these little points, and if the Colonel's wife will only consult with her and Mrs. Sergeant-Major, who, as the wife of a warrant-officer, occupies a position of isolated grandeur, no harm is likely to be done. Mothers' meetings form another opportunity of social intercourse, but here I am afraid of getting out of my depth, never having assisted at



## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

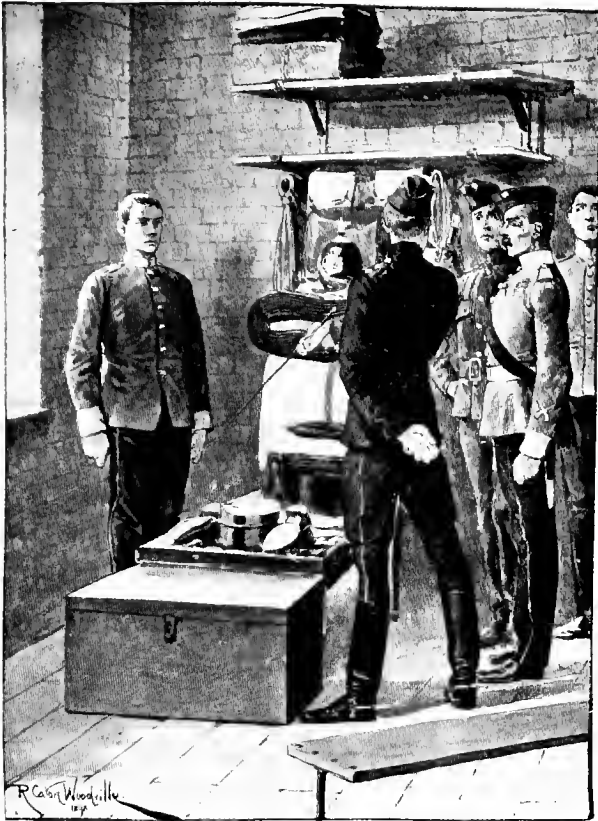
one of these exciting entertainments. If we go to the sergeants' quadrille party this evening, we shall have an opportunity of seeing all these ladies arrayed for conquest, and displaying, in some of the intricate dances which still find an honored place in the programme of these entertainments, that serious attention to business and accurate memory for detail which distinguish their gallant husbands' conduct on parade.

If we get into conversation with some of the more travelled women, we shall find that there is a universal agreement that there is no place to "soldier" in like India: the getting there has its drawbacks, and few can speak without a shudder of the stifling nights in the Red Sea, or of the acute discomforts caused by a breeze in the Bay in the women's quarters of the trooper, crowded with women in every stage of wretchedness and seasickness, close and ill-ventilated, with children wailing, men stamping overhead, the ship plunging and groaning, and through all the unceasing tremble of the screws. Yes, getting to India is no joke;

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

but once established there, everything is rose-colored. Government rations for the women and children, for whom no allowance is made at home; no company washing to wear one to skin and bone; natives to do all the menial work of the quarters; very possibly, if the husband has a good billet, a pony for the wife to drive; plenty of money and plenty of amusement—theatricals, dances, picnics, etc.—who would not envy the soldier's wife under the paternal care of the Indian government?

But there is the second dinner-bugle; we had better be off and see how the men are going to put in their time this fine afternoon. As we cross the square we see the subaltern of the day, with his sword clattering behind him, following the battalion orderly corporal on his tour round the dinners, the pair moving with great strides, as if bent on establishing a record for the distance. Coming to a barrack-room, we find that the men have not lost much time over their meal, dinner being already practically finished in the course of some ten or fifteen minutes. The mess we



KIT INSPECTION



## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

visit has luxuriated in a bake to-day, but no "duff" has followed it, as the balance in the grocery-book is being nursed to allow of a "spread" on Sunday. This is consequently a *jour maigre*; but no one grumbles, though the British soldier is supposed to possess special powers in that line; and even the hungriest recruit appears to be satisfied for the time being. The same ceremony of cleaning up that we witnessed this morning is about to commence as we enter the room, so we may as well have a look at the regimental institution before strolling down to look on for a few minutes at the cricket-match between "A" and "C" companies, about which some loud arguments reach our ears as we enter the canteen. This is a large building, and is, in fact, the regimental liquor-shop. No wine or spirits are sold here, only beer and porter; great pains are taken to insure the liquor being of the best quality, and it is sold at prices that defy the competition of the publicans in the town. A number of men with tin pots before them are talking and arguing as we enter; though

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their voices are raised, as Tommy likes to raise his voice whenever airing his opinions, yet there is no disorder, any tendency to which would be soon suppressed by the smart corporal on canteen duty, who is pacing up and down, occasionally offering a remark on the subject under discussion. The reason that we see so many men here just now is that they are not allowed to take beer to the barrack-room, and in consequence a visit has to be paid to the canteen for the wherewithal to wash down their dinners. In the old days there used undoubtedly to be a great deal of drinking in the army, and though even yet there are a certain number of men the worse for wear on pay-nights, yet there is not the systematic drinking of old, when every item in the soldier's life was reduced to the common denominator of beer. Next to the canteen is the grocery-bar, where, in a well-managed regiment, every conceivable thing that can come under the head of groceries, from garden seeds to black-lead and pipe-clay, can be bought at more reasonable prices than in

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

the shops in the town; in fact, a number of the articles in chief demand are sold at a loss, the loss being covered by the profit from the sale of the beer, so the drinkers pay for the luxuries of their more sober comrades.

But we have not yet visited the regimental institution, an omission that we must repair if we want to see anything of the social life of the private soldier. It is housed in that smart-looking, red-brick building we see beyond the canteen; and, passing through the swing-doors, we find ourselves in a large, well-ventilated room, one end of which is taken up by a full-sized billiard table, round which an interested crowd are watching a game, which bids fair to be a long-drawn-out one, between two players who make up in strength what they lack in science. Some other men are starting a game of bagatelle at an adjoining table, the stakes, from the scraps of conversation we overhear, being apparently pots of beer, to be discussed with much solemnity and many arguments by-and-by in the canteen. The rest of the room

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

is occupied by large green-baize-covered tables, on which are strewn a varied assortment of newspapers and magazines, which, judging from their well-thumbed appearance, are in constant request; while the walls are decorated with a number of prints, chiefly of military subjects, De Neuville evidently being a favorite artist. At one end of the room a painted drop-scene hints at the presence of a stage where entertainments are periodically given by the regimental dramatic troupe, a society abounding in talent, chiefly of the melodramatic order. The glass door you see in that corner leads into the coffee-bar, where excellent suppers are served from six o'clock until nine, at the modest price of one penny and upwards; for a penny a man can get a bowl of soup and a chunk of bread, or a bowl of porridge, or a plate of sweetened rice—a favorite dish; and cups of steaming coffee and bread and butter can also be bought for the same sum. As Tommy's last official meal is his tea, served at the early hour of four o'clock, it is eminently desirable that he should be able



## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

to get something to keep him going till his breakfast at eight o'clock next morning. In the old days the hiatus was filled up by unlimited beer, but now we have changed all that. Before we leave for the cricket-match, to which we see a number of men already strolling down, we ought to have a look in at the sergeants' mess, which we shall find at the other side of the square. This mess is used only by the sergeants of the battalion—the corporals messing in the barrack-room with the men—and I think you will agree with me that the sergeants seem to do themselves fairly well. Their comfort depends to a considerable extent on the ability of their caterer, a sergeant, who usually holds the office for three months at a time; but on the whole they have little to complain of, and live very well for a very moderate expenditure. The furniture and the fine billiard table belong to government, but the plate, china, glass, and cutlery, and the pictures ornamenting the walls, are the property of the mess, and give it a very comfortable and homelike appearance. There is

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

a liquor-bar at one end of the room, so no sergeant has to go to the canteen for a glass of beer; in fact, such an action would lead to trouble, as great stress is laid on the regulation forbidding non-commissioned officers to associate with private soldiers. With this object a separate room in the canteen for the use of corporals is now usual, and it is obvious that this must facilitate the maintenance of discipline.

Well, it is time we went down to the cricket-ground, so we leave the sergeants, who press us to look at their mess through the bottom of a tumbler, and cross the square towards the barrack gate. The square is unoccupied save for a little party in complete marching order, who, with fixed bayonets and rifles at the slope, only reach the end of the square, to be turned about by the command of that tall corporal, and retrace their steps with an air of patient resignation, which has no effect in softening the heart of their guardian. These are the defaulters again whom we saw on fatigue this morning, and they are now undergoing punish-

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

ment drill, a process which does not seem congenial. Up and down, up and down, for every minute of a weary hour. How they must loathe the barrack square at the end of it; and how they must resolve to steer clear of trouble for the future!

It is not far to the cricket-ground, but I must warn you that you are not likely to witness much scientific play at an inter-company match, for though the British soldier is fond enough of the batting, and even of the bowling, part of cricket, his fielding is apt to be erratic, and he is not at all inclined to treat the game seriously. As we come on to the ground loud applause greets the downfall of the Captain of "A" company, who, though not a cricketer, thinks it his duty to play in order to encourage the men, and beyond a doubt causes more amusement by the vigor of his play than would an expert in the ordinary sense. There is a marquee pitched, where tea is provided from the mess for any ladies of the regiment or their friends who may come; and some of the younger officers are lying on the grass

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

in front of it, enjoying the ludicrous side of the game to its utmost, and now engaged in unmercifully chaffing the fallen hero, who, as he takes off his pads, is seriously thinking that he must be getting too old for cricket. The men of the rival companies, with the exception of the men actually in the field, are sprawling in picturesque groups under the trees which fringe one side of the ground, and are not chary of remarks and criticisms in the freest possible manner at every incident of the game. At a good stroke there are yells of applause, as there are when a fielder "muffs" a catch, or when a ball straighter than usual scatters wickets and bails in one rattling downfall. The dress of the players is eccentric. The only wearers of the orthodox flannels are the officers playing and a couple of men who are members of the regimental team, and who play with a condescending air, as if only putting in the time with a little practice.

Football is the soldier's game, after all; it gives more scope for strength and activity, and does not demand the continual practice

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

and the quick eye necessary to success in cricket. At all times of the year the soldier will play football; if we were to go back to the barracks now, the odds are that we should find a number of men on the square kicking the ball about and practising little niceties of dribbling and of head-play, which afford much amusement to the clusters of men at every corner, in every style of military undress. Even after a hard day's route-march you will see the usual number kicking football on the square, and on manoeuvres it is extraordinary the celerity with which the ball, which has reached the camp in some mysterious manner, makes its appearance after the work of the day is over. In barracks the ball-alley is also a favorite resort with the men, and all the afternoon it is pretty sure to be occupied, weather permitting.

On the whole, taking everything into consideration, Tommy Atkins has a very good time in barracks; so much so, in fact, that it is not an uncommon thing to find men who rarely leave barracks, except on duty, from

## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

the time they arrive at a station till the "route" comes for a move elsewhere.

But we must not forget that we have to look in at the quadrille party to which the warrant-officers, staff-sergeants, and sergeants of the Royal Mudfordshire Regiment have invited us. The winter months are the great time for dances; at Christmas-time the corporals, and even the private soldiers, break out into these dissipations; but even the summer furnishes occasions, such as some regimental anniversary, which can only be fittingly celebrated by a dance. As we reach the gymnasium, the scene of the festivities, at nine o'clock, the hour for which we are invited, we find the building brilliantly lighted, and a group of men in fatigue dress hanging round the doors watching with interest the arrivals.

Entering the door, we are met by a sergeant, brushed, combed, pomatumed, and perfumed to the last degree, already perspiring from his exertions, who directs us to the cloak-room, and when we have relieved ourselves of our cloaks, conducts us



AT THE SERGEANTS' QUADRILLE  
PARTY—DRESSED TO KILL.





## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BRITISH ARMY

to the ball-room and introduces us to the sergeant-major; this warrior, in the tightest of tunics, with his mustache waxed out till it resembles nothing so much as a pair of fixed bayonets, welcomes us heartily, and hands us over to a color-sergeant, who is intrusted with the duty of providing us with partners. At one of these dances no shirking is allowed, and if you are not accepting some sergeant's hospitality at the well-provided buffet, you are expected to be footing it to the music discoursed by some members of the fine band of the regiment, who are posted in ambush behind a screen of gay bunting. Another color-sergeant is master of the ceremonies, and in a stentorian voice orders the company generally to take partners for the D'Alberts (pronounced Dee-Alberts). A few minutes sees us fatally involved in a maze of intricate figures, through which our partners steer us with mingled affability and condescension. Emerging in safety, breathless and bewildered, at the conclusion of the dance, it is etiquette to conduct your partner to her seat, and to betake

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yourself anew to the buffet to seek liquid consolation for your unusual exertions.

And so the dance goes gayly on. Some of the officers turn up with their wives, and the sergeant-major, with much solemnity, conducts the senior officer's wife through the mazes of a quadrille, in which he is evidently perfectly at home. As time goes on, things liven up a bit; the clusters round the buffet get thicker and more energetic; in one of the galleries a round game of cards is proceeding with much noise and merriment, and it is quite plain that every one means to thoroughly enjoy himself or herself, as the case may be.

This finishes our day in barracks, which you will admit is not such a dreary wilderness as it looks from the outside, and in which large numbers of men and women spend some of the happiest years of their lives.

The health of the soldier in India and in the colonies, where he spends such a considerable portion of his service, can be preserved by taking the most ordinary precautions;

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and he can have an even better time on foreign service than he can at home.

The great attraction of Indian service is that there are no "fatigues"; useful natives do all that for Tommy, who, when his drills are over for the day, can find plenty of amusement in cantonments. Men of sporting tastes have plenty of opportunities of gratifying them at most Indian stations, as in each company two old-pattern rifles are kept, bored out so as to be used as shot-guns, with which the "jheel" can be searched for snipe or duck, or even a shot fired for practice at the humble "paddy-bird." At some stations there are facilities for boating, boats being provided by government, and, in fact, wherever the soldier goes he will find everything done by the authorities and his officers to keep him in health and amusement. In the army it is fully recognized that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

THE END









