

Buzzard's-eye View of McAllen and Outlying Camps

THE INFANTRY

"All Hail, the Infantry—the Queen of Battle."

Which, although borrowed from the editorial sanctum, is my idea of a "snappy" beginning to the learned treatise on the greatest arm of the service, which I am about to write.

There is distinction and class to that pithy phrase. Perhaps you recall the issue in which the editorial appeared wherein the Infantry was hailed and hailed again. It was the special Cavalry number of The Rattler.

But this is The Infantry number and you can take my word for it, there is no article printed in this issue lauding the Cavalry, unless it be that first-page story of their memorable Brownsville hike (performed on horses, dear reader) and was written by a Cavalryman, Mister, or rather Private, Edward Streter than whom there is no more mirth-provoking contributor. I still chuckle as I think of his droll description of Cavalry life in Texas, featured in that special issue. Cavalrymen are always funny, but Streter is the funniest one I have met. But I must return to my muttons, the Infantrymen. As I stated at the outset, this is to be an erudite dissertation on the Infantry. Yes, indeed.

I am an Infantryman—therefore, I can write with a certain assumption of knowledge concerning my subject. When I praise the Infantry, you may be certain that they are entirely deserving of it. Now that we fully understand each other, I will proceed. I joined the Infantry for two reasons. The first was that a horse is a mysterious creature whose inner workings are far beyond my ken. He is an unreasoning creature over whom logical and forceful arguments have no avail. I have tried sitting on top of a horse and politely asking him to take me somewhere, but my pertinent and gentle request was invariably misunderstood by the cursed animal, for I was always transported to some distant point where I had neither expressed a desire to go nor given him the slightest

pedal extremities that the Infantry stands and hikes.

In considering this branch of the army you must know first of all that an Infantry regiment is always "famous," or "fighting," or "gallant." This can never be said of artillery or cavalry organizations. Why it is I do not know nor do I make any pretense at explaining the surprising fact. The Infantry modestly attribute these laudable and laudatory adjectives to themselves—to have and to hold until the end of this present active enlistment period.

The regiment I belong to is "the best in the service." Every regiment proudly claims the same uncertain honor, from the Colonel down to the meanest rookie, and sometimes they're pretty mean. Which makes it very convenient in writing histories and obituaries.

The Infantry possess a remarkable fund of knowledge and armory. Perhaps it is because they are right on the ground—all the time. Never did I have such familiar association with Mother Earth.

As a small child I remember that my feet often amused me. I would lie in my cradle and wiggle my toes for my own intimate satisfaction and amusement, the while I laughed and cooed delightedly as I looked at my two little pink feet.

Yes, sir. They were little and pink, and there were two of them. And I portled with glee as I wiggled them both. "Perhaps I do not remember all this, but I know that I must have done so for I have watched babies many a time, and wondered at their childishness and general ineptitude to execute some self-appointed task with any degree of accuracy or despatch." And I was much like other babies, although my mother avows the contrary. But I know that once my feet amused me mightily. Not this summer, however.

Night after night I have examined those feet of mine, the same feet that amused me in the rock-a-bye days, yet

my personal tastes and inclinations have not been consulted in this matter.

Four months' of Border duty convince me that the Infantry deserve the accolades of all the historians from Irvin Cobb up.

Again I quote that famous editorial which furnished the inspiration for this literary masterpiece. "All the New York Division respect the hiking, sweating, non-drinking, non-swearing, straight-shooting Infantry." Which was very nice of the editor. But I know it all to be true. The Infantry certainly hike and sweat—there is little doubt about that. And they apparently do not drink which may or may not prove that a wave of prohibition is sweeping over the country. At least the New York Division is temperate. Such is my own feeling on the subject that I find it hard to even look at a bottle of beer—Very hard, and very hazardous. The non-swearing Infantry! Hm! The editor must have visited our camp on Sunday afternoon when the rougher element were off in the Mexican village, trying to browbeat the "Greasers" into selling them Mexican drawn work at double the lace value. He must have passed through the company street when only myself and a few well-chosen companions were playing cribbage or tick-tack-toe. He never dropped in on regimental detail day or just before an inspection. But of course the absence of horse-flesh makes for temperate speech. However, the Infantry can shoot, and perhaps a day may come when our "safe an' lait" completed neighbors will find it out to their relatives' sorrow.

We have waited so long for the emergency to emerge that a desire to shoot something or somebody is surging within us. If we ever start moving in either direction we just naturally will keep on going until we arrive at some destination that doesn't even remotely resemble the town of McAllen, New York or Mexico City would both be hailed with appreciative cheers. But the emergency coyly remains in hiding. Honestly, I thought it must have expired many weeks ago, but only the other day I was assured it "still exists." Perhaps, like the curly bear, it is going to hibernate for the winter and then rush fiercely forth in the verdant, balmy spring to frighten us all into signing over to the gentlemen at the rosewood desks along Pennsylvania avenue another three years' lease and three years' option on our precious young destinies. For myself, I will say that it will take an awful lot of frightening. I am loath to sign my name even on a requisition slip or a payroll, and I always regard the latter with justifiable suspicion.

I started out to demonstrate that the Infantry is strong, courageous, efficient and reliable. I trust I have proved the point to your satisfaction if not to my own. Coming to Texas has been a wonderful experience to all Infantrymen—but not staying here. We passed out of the experimental stage long before the cots and five dollar gold pieces were issued. In many respects, life in Texas has been a trial, and from the latest reports, containing specifications for heating the shower baths and flooring the tents, the verdict seems to be "guilty." Some philological jugglers search for the longest sentence in the English language. We have found it. It is "three years, active, and three years reserve." Thanksgiving day draws nigh. I will be thankful that I am an Infantryman and not a Cavalryman, an Artilleryman or an Engineer. I will be thankful that I am here in Texas and not in Hades, for now I know what the latter Summer Resort must be like. And I will pray that if the bandits must cross the river they will cross into the jolly little town of McAllen—and that I shall read all about it in the New York Tribune.

"All Hail, the Infantry—the Queen of Battle."
—H. I. Y.

12TH INFANTRY.

Fire trenches, parapet trenches, paradose trenches, revetments, visibility, ranging, target designation, sectors, line of resistance, cossack posts, outguards, orientation, traverses, military crest.

On these and many other terms, the men of this regiment are joyfully feeding, two companies at a time, in the Granjeno Ranch sector along the Rio Grande. In Division General Order 37, their work is described as that of detached Posts, and for the rest of our lives that expression will always make us feel happy, in recollection of the good times we had while on such duty. So far, six companies have completed their tours, each set of two companies remaining there four days.

It is the most interesting work that has been assigned to the regiment since that furnace-like day of July 5th when we arrived on the plains of McAllen. It calls for good eyesight, good hearing, presence of mind, a lot of common sense, and above all good health, a vigorous physique and almost unlimited capacity for hard work.

It is probably on account of these last requirements that we did not have such work before. Now we are beginning to understand the scheme of our training, and to realize how difficult it is to become a good infantryman, and how long it must take.

This "Infantry Number" of the Rio Grande Rattler appears, therefore, at just the right time, when we doughboys can look back over this quarter-year. And we of the Twelfth Infantry can look back not only with a clear conscience, but with pride in our record in our progress, in our spirit, in the way we stood the tests one after the

other.

One of the reasons is that we are not so much the Twelfth regiment as the Twelfth Infantry. Verbum Sapient!

Let us begin with the present and retrace the course of our progress. The work down at Granjeno consists mostly of night operations by patrols of not less than five men moving from each support of outguard at different hours of the night, moving by different routes both out and in. It is especially valuable for city-bred men. Many of us who laughed at the farmer who is so terrified by the noises of traffic he hears during his first night in New York have changed places with him, and are kept jumping at the nocturnal sounds of the woods along the Rio. After a short period, sometimes after the very first night, you get to like the work. One of the men just returned was relating his experiences, and he ended by asserting that he would like to stay on patrol work for months. He said he never felt better in his life, had a fine appetite, enjoyed everything that came along, saw humor or interest and excitement in every new situation, and so forth. Casually, he mentioned that his route was two miles out and two and a half miles in. "How many times a day did you have to make it?" he was asked.

"Five times."

"Do you mean to tell me you walked twenty-three miles a day and enjoyed it?"

"Why, not one of us ever thought of the distance," he answered.

How many of us would have spoken that way when we got here last July? And there is not one of us that does not now believe that fighting the heat, fighting the rain, fighting the mud, fighting the insects and fighting our own disinclination to do hard work has all made us better fitted to fight our country's enemies. If we had not got used to hard work, we would not have been fit for the detached post now going on, which involves much manual labor.

There is nothing like the real thing. We could have become good riflemen up North; we could have learned minor tactics at Plattsburgh; we could have become a well-drilled regiment in close order without leaving our old armory; we could have studied Spanish in the New York night-schools; we could have become good map readers through books and an occasional Sunday in Van Cortlandt Park; we might have learned a little about marching with full pack.

But for all that, we could not have become really good Infantrymen; and the principal reason, perhaps, is that we would have thought we were good Infantrymen because we could do these things. This belief would have spoiled us.

Fortunately, we have suffered a little, and we have worked hard. Now it is safe to say that the 12th Infantry has found itself, through hard work, more than through anything else. Yes, it was fortunate for us that our camp site happened to be a "valley" between the Seventh and the Seventy-First, so that we were flooded out by the rainstorms and had to spend some weeks grading our streets and digging a system of drainage ditches, working all day with pick and shovel at times in mud almost up to our knees. It was lucky for us that our camp site was so hard to clear. It was especially providential that we had to do this work ourselves instead of hiring gangs of Mexicans—that we did it unquestionably because most of us come from the class which is the backbone of the nation—the class that do their own housework and odd jobs.

We have gone on long, hot marches and carried our packs; and now we know we can carry them. We used to be afraid of the sun, but hard work under its rays has banished that fear. We have learned road discipline, keeping the road clear—one of the essential military qualities of a good regiment. We have acquired camp discipline: when camp has to be made or broken, we stand by and pitch in, instead of doing the disappearing stunt.

Above all, we have acquired pride of marching and fear of falling out. This has been illustrated by many instances of men hanging on who should have been in the ambulance. There's where obscurity is a benefit, and where other kinds of pride would have been harmful, because wealth or fame may disdain—and do often scorn, pride of marching, as unnecessary to a reputation already established. Most of the few men who fell out from our ranks, did so only because they fainted.

Colonel Johnston issued the following statement for the "Infantry Number" of the Rio Grande Rattler:

"The things that a soldier is required to carry on his back are absolutely necessary to his welfare and efficiency. It is the minimum load which will serve to maintain his health, preserve his strength, prevent sickness and supply him with the tools of his trade—his arms, ammunition and trenching tools. These articles are such a vital and essential part of a soldier's equipment that I do not believe they should be entrusted to motor trucks, which many reasons might prevent from arriving when or where these articles are required, or to wagon train, which in time of war will be filled to utmost capacity with arms and food. For these reasons I believe that the spirit of the regiment now recognizes these principles. They have come to learn that the pack is an essential part of an efficient soldier, and are willing and cheerfully performing this duty, as they have performed many others which are hard and to which they are unaccustomed, but which they have learned are required of them nor more load put on them than is es-

sential to the performance of the duties of a good soldier."

And before the big hike, before the battalion hikes, in those first few weeks here in July and early August, we had what we then thought useless suffering, but what we now realize were conditions that a soldier must get used to.

We have few, if any, of typical Border discontents. The average one is of a class that is little represented in our outfit—the kind of man who had formed his own ideas about soldiering—definite ideas, but all wrong. As a rule he did have a little military training before coming here. You know the training that is meant: close order drill, theoretical problems in the various branches of the service, the nice part of cavalry work, and so forth. When he got down here, he lost no time in telling everybody it was all wrong, that the officers, from his own Second Lieutenant to Funston, were making a mess of things, and above all, that the manual labor he was required to do was a cruel imposition, revised for the purpose of brutalizing such clear thinkers as he, and making mere automatons out of them. As a rule, he was not effeminate; on the contrary he has a strong will and a good brain. But he is headstrong and refuses to change his preconceptions. That is the typical Border Discontent, and the worst kind. We have none in the Twelfth.

And so, as we look back, we can enjoy the satisfaction of having so far done all that our Uncle Sam expects of us—training ourselves, which is perhaps the greatest thing a citizen can do for the United States just now, for what this country needs most now is

score of thorns or spines in the softer and more unprotected portions of our anatomy. We have been trained, like the camels, to hike eight days on two cups of water, and several dishes of wild oat-meal. We have been trained to live eight weeks on fifteen dollars and not bite the jovial pay master when he visits camp.

Many sports have claimed the men of the 74th in their spare hours of camp life. Baseball games and track meets have flourished. The Buffalo Boys have proven their prowess in all forms of sport. They point with pride to John Bolten's band. But the record made by Lieut. Cadotte, Sergt Sulger and the other members of our organization who shot at Jacksonville on the New York State Rifle Team has been an especial source of pride to us—the straight shooting boys of the 74th. "The 74th Infantry Captures Many Honors," was the headline with which The Rattler announced the victories of the N. Y. Team.

"The Famous 74th" will continue to capture honors and will never cease to be a loyal and efficient regiment—a unit upon which our commanders may depend in time of need.

23RD INFANTRY.

Isn't it funny? You can't go anywhere with the famous 23rd without running into Bedford avenue. Not even Texas, by gosh, and the Lord knows that the very name of Bedford is too good for such a place as Texas. The romancers may roam—may roam through pages and pages of ink concerning the beauties of the Lone Star State, and the historians may glorify



Making History in Texas.

trained men. The Twelfth has spent these last four months training itself for the Real Thing.—M. F. B.

74TH INFANTRY.

"A history of the Border Service of the 74th." That was the way The Rattler's editor expressed it when he instructed your correspondent to contribute a regimental article to this special Infantry number.

His words set us musing. "The history of Border Service." What a phrase for thought, and life in Texas, especially existence, is conducive to deep thinking. How differently the history might have been written. Instead of the now familiar stories of hikes and sham battles it might have been the thrilling recital of many engagements won and the march of the Starry Flag across the plains and mountains of Mexico. And then on the page of history would be written the stirring tales of the Buffalo regiment in action, the victories of the brave 74th, the—

But it is no such thing. The 74th, while not having exactly a prosaic and humdrum time of it, are nevertheless thrilled by nothing more than close baseball games on the regimental diamond, or the sting of cactus spine in the calf of a leg.

Our Border History begins with July 10, 1916, for on that date we pitched camp at Pharr, which of course was to be our home for just a few days, long enough for us to polish up our guns and bayonets for the inevitable Mexican campaign.

We of the 74th, as an Infantry regiment, have learned a great deal since we arrived in Texas. It has indeed been a period of instruction for all of us. We have been trained and trained thoroughly. For instance, we can stick a bayonet on the end of a gun, and dash madly through a large field of cactus without collecting more than a

if they will, and the movie men may hurt your eyes and sicken your stomach with reels and reels of startling tales of wild and woolly Texas,—but all this and lots more will never make it worthy to bear a name such as Bedford.

And when you think of the real Bedford avenue, and let your eyes wander down the dusty rough-cut road we have named after it, never thinking such a place would be our camping ground for so long, it is never without a thought of the joyous scene which some day we will again see—a long, long vista of tall stately brick buildings, stores, stables, clubs, the Y. M. C. A., the great white apartments, the Fulton street L, that never-to-be-forgotten bronze in the square before that beautiful building which was once the Union League Club. We will see that statute as we march up the real Bedford avenue, perhaps, but we will not reach it that day because there will come an order just a little before—

"Column, ri-right—March!"

And into that massive stone structure we love so well, will file the brown, brown ranks of the Famous Twenty-Third. It will be a dirtier brown, yes, and the uniforms will not shine new as they did when we went out. They will shine with wear and soap and scrubbing, perhaps. But there is one thing that will go back into that army just as it came out, as strong, as bright, as fresh. That is the B. C. G. spirit.

That spirit has never faded since the regiment marched out from the armory to the present day. From the arrival at Pharr on July 11 up to the present moment there has been not one blemish upon the name of Brooklyn's proud regiment, and there is none other in the valley that can do more than march with it in drill, hike, or loyalty to the service the New York Guard has under and there were two of them. And I



Why the Doughboy Shouts, "Pretty Soft."

intimation that the locality itself would be acceptable or congenial to my tastes. Nevertheless, there he went. After we abruptly parted company, I instructed him just where to go. I hope for once in his equine existence he obeyed orders. Of that, however, I have no intimate knowledge as our paths never crossed again. Never!

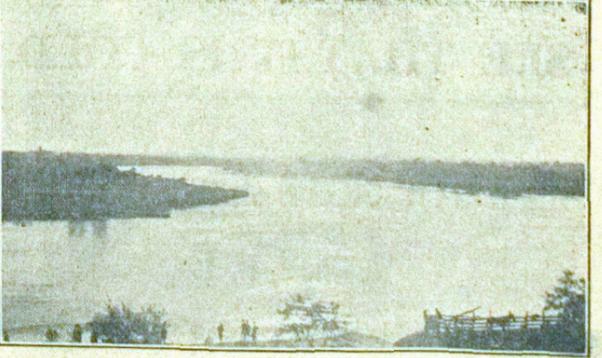
Possibly I have met three or four horses during my wandering young life and I know from disillusioning experience they are not to be trusted. Every horse with whom I have been on speaking or cursing terms has been a great disappointment to me. "Horse-sense" is an attribute certainly not possessed by horses. However, I may have met only the failures and am therefore not competent to give a judicial and unprejudiced opinion on the whole species. Possibly they didn't like me any more than I fancied them, but at the moment of painful contact it was not of their feelings I thought.

No, sir, I wouldn't join the Cavalry—net on a large bet.

The second reason I connected myself with the Infantry was that I didn't know any better. However, here I am, and I'm supposed to be writing this about that famous arm—or rather foot of the service for it is upon their



The Hiking, Sweating Infantry.



The Rio Grande—River of Doubt.