

**A VOLUNTEER BRIGADE:
NOTES OF A WEEK'S FIELD
TRAINING IN THE VOLUNTEER
CAMP AT CONWAY**

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A Volunteer Brigade: Notes of a Week's Field Training in the Volunteer Camp at Conway by
Filson Young

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FILSON YOUNG

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To
THE BRIGADIER.



This slight account of a week's service given to the country by a Volunteer Brigade was so kindly welcomed when it appeared in the columns of the "Manchester Guardian," that I have felt justified in consenting to its republication. But for the courtesy and good nature shown to me in the field and camp these notes could hardly have been written at all; and for permission to reprint them and the accompanying map I am indebted to Mr. C. P. Scott, M.P.

F. Y.

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I. THE CAMP AT CONWAY.

SCARLET coats and a background of grey walls gave the colouring of war to Conway. During one summer week Conway is a military town, occupied by an infantry brigade, an element taken into account in all the Commandant's schemes for manœuvres and marches. This force is threatening Conway; that force must at all costs defend it. Conway is the objective of this rapidly moving column, while it counts for protection upon that line of defences. Conway nestles up against the big hills and smiles acquiescently at it all; its inhabitants hear without concern the news that they have been attacked or are being threatened. It is all one to them so long as the camp on the marsh is occupied; and, indeed, I think that the volunteers make a very handsome return for the hospitality shown them. Quite apart from certain pecuniary benefits which the Conway people reap, they have music and colour added to their landscape; they hear bugles calling and bands blowing all day long, and thousands of scarlet patches twinkle between them and the bright sea.

The first day in camp is always trying, and some heavy showers made this first day no more comfortable than usual. Nevertheless, a good deal of work

was done. There were nearly three thousand men at Conway, for the force was composed of the Bury, Rochdale, and Salford battalions of the Lancashire Fusiliers, under Colonels Wike, Schwabe, and Haworth respectively, and the 1st and 2nd Volunteer Battalions of the South Lancashire Regiment, under Colonel Pilkington. Colonel Leith Ross, commanding the 20th Regimental District, was the brigadier. The primary object of such a camp is not recreation but instruction, and it is astonishing to see how much of it can be packed into a week, considering how much of the men's time is necessarily taken up with the mere details of living in camp. During the six days of its stay at Conway the brigade was instructed in scouting and reconnaissance, advance and rearguards, outposts and patrols, skirmishing, attack and defence, escorts, field-firing in battalions, and minor tactical schemes in general.

On the first day I watched several of the battalions practising the attack. It would not be fair to criticise too minutely the first day's drill, for it is to a great extent the mere polishing off of rust; everyone seemed to be working honestly; but even so, there seemed to be here and there evidence that officers did not quite realise the tremendous importance of applying common sense to the instructions of the Drill-book. The men extended in a kind of way, it is true; but they would still have afforded a fairly solid target to the enemy. They hung together in clumps and balls, and *they did not*