

THE BRITISH ARMY FROM WITHIN

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The British Army from Within by E. Charles Vivian

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E. CHARLES VIVIAN

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FROM WITHIN**

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BY

E. CHARLES VIVIAN

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"PASSION FRUIT," "DIVIDED WAYS," ETC.

UNIV OF
CALIFORNIA

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CHAPTER I

"UBIQUE": THE ARMY AS A WHOLE

ON the badges of the corps of Engineers, and also on those of the Royal Artillery, will be found the word "Ubique," but it is a word that might just as well be used with regard to the whole of the British Army, which serves everywhere, does everything, undergoes every kind of climate, and gains contact with every class of people. In this respect, the British soldier enjoys a distinct advantage over the soldiers of continental armies; he has a chance of seeing the world. India, Africa, Egypt, the West Indies, Mauritius, and the Mediterranean stations are open to him, and by the time he leaves the service he has at least had the opportunity of becoming cosmopolitan in his tastes and ways—of becoming a man of larger ideas and better grasp on the problems of life than were his at the time when he took the oath and passed the doctor. Of that phase, more anon.

It is of little use, in the present state of the British Army, to attempt to define its extent or

composition; for it is in such a state of flux that the numbers of battalions, regiments, and batteries of a year ago are as obsolete as the Snider rifle. There used to be 157 battalions of infantry, 81 regiments of cavalry, and about 180 batteries of horse and field artillery, together with about 100 companies and 9 mountain batteries of Royal Garrison Artillery, forming the principal strength of the British Army. To these must be added the Royal Engineers, the Army Service Corps, the Royal Ordnance Department, the R.A.M.C., the Army Pay Corps, and other non-combatant units necessary to the domestic and general internal working of an army. To-day these various forces are increased to such an extent that no man outside the War Office can tell the strength of infantry, cavalry, and artillery; no man, either, can tell what will be the permanent strength of the Army on a peace footing, when the present urgent need for men no longer exists, and there is only to be considered the maintenance of a force sufficient for the garrisoning of colonial and foreign stations and for ordinary defensive needs at home.

Generally speaking, the soldier at home, no matter to what arm or branch of the service he belongs, undergoes a continuous training. It takes three years to make an infantryman fully

efficient, five years to make a cavalryman thoroughly conversant with his many duties, and five years or more to teach a gunner his business. The raw material from which the Army is recruited is mixed and sometimes uneducated stuff, and, in addition to this, recruits are enlisted at an age when they must be taught everything—they are past the age of the schoolboy who absorbs tuition readily and with little trouble to his instructors, and they have not attained to such an age as will permit them to take their work really seriously. This, of course, does not apply to a time of great national emergency, when the men coming to the colours are actuated by the highest possible motives, eager to fit themselves for the work in hand, and bent on getting fit for active service in the shortest possible time. In times of peace, recruits join the colours from many motives—pure patriotism is not a common one—and, in consequence, the hard realities of soldiering in peace time disillusion them to such an extent that they are difficult to teach, and thus need the full term of training for full efficiency. Half the work of their instructors consists in getting them into the proper frame of mind and giving them that *esprit de corps* which is essential to the war fitness of a voluntary army.