

"We can't quite undersatnd what went wrong with the potted plant in the billiards room the other night, Mr Combes. And the Mess Waiter told me what a lot of glasses of whisky he found behind the curtains. But don't worry, I won't let the cat out of the bag. It serves those young devils right and I don't think they will try that trick on anyone else in a hurry."

This litt~~le~~ episode did nothing to mar the relationship Father had with the Officers' Messes in the camp - if anything - it enhanced his reputation as a good sport and a generous host. Certainly, ^{he}~~he~~ and Mother made very many good friends, who, when they went overseas, used to reply to the letters she ~~sent~~ sent to them. ~~She~~ These letters said how much they appreciated hearing from her.

It was a sad time for my parents, who, in the unusual circumstances of civilians living in the middle of an army camp, had so many friends in the firing line. They perused the Casualty Lists in the national press every day, which all too often contained the names of men who had so recently undergone their training at Fovant Camp.

Living as ~~we~~ did in such prox~~im~~imity to the soldiers, we were very much in touch with what was going on. Early on, men from the 7th City of London Rifles (The Shiny Seventh) decided to cut out a large copy of their regimental badge in the chalk hillaide. Others regiments followed their example until the hillside showed a very fair picture of what units had been stationed there.

The steep hills~~ide~~ was in the direct line of fire from the rifle ranges, which were in constant use from eaily morning till dusk. So a lot of work on the badges was carried out by ~~volunteers~~ volunteers who rose at four o'clock in the morning and worked till seven, when firing on the ~~ranges~~ ^{ranges} commenced. We would hear the men ~~match~~ marching to the down at daybreak and see them returning to their barracks past the farmhouse while we were waiting for breakfast.