

forced to appear in pantaloons unrecognisable from any other khakied member of H.M. Forces.

The C.O., who more than anyone else epitomized the spirit of the Regiment, realised that, while continuing to fight for the retention of the kilt, thought must be given to preserving the individuality and pride of every Cameron should he be forced to wear battle dress. The C.O.'s first idea was, at least, to have on show the 79th's tartan, and so it came about that as battle dress jackets were issued, spare balmoral tartan patches were drawn up and sewn on to the sleeves just above the elbow. This was not enough for Lieut.-Col. Wimberley, as he wanted a Cameron in battle dress to be recognisable as a Cameron from a distance. He wanted no chance of his Camerons being mistaken for any other Scottish soldier in a balmoral. The C.O., therefore, thought that a hackle worn in the balmoral would provide a distinctive emblem for the Regiment. Ideas for the hackle were based on the white one worn by the Regiment in the feather bonnet and in the pagri of their pith helmets when serving in the East. However, the days when C.O.'s clothed their Regiments to suit their fancy were over, and though the wearing of a tartan flash might pass unquestioned, the sudden sprouting of a hackle would need to be authorised, and on active service it would be almost impossible to keep a white hackle clean.

About this time (end of November/beginning of December, 1939) we were told that the B.E.F. was to be visited by a very V.I.P. The majority of the Regiments were to be drawn up and the V.I.P. would drive past them. In our case the V.I.P. was to dismount and inspect our ranks on foot—it could only be our late Colonel-in-Chief, H.M. King George VI. This was Lieut.-Col. Wimberley's opportunity to put his idea of a distinctive emblem to the Colonel-in-Chief and hope to gain his approval. The day of the inspection, 5th December, 1939, came and the whole Battalion was drawn up along the straight French pave road, which skirted the Belgian border through the Camerons position at Planard. No efforts had been spared to have the Battalion smart and clean. The majority of the men lived in unavoidable squalor in barns and out-houses, and worked by day digging the

thick glutinous soil of Northern France. It was no easy matter, therefore, to suddenly turn out for a Monarch's inspection. This, however, was a regular Battalion, who knew all the answers when either fighting or "bull" was required. The Battalion was still in service dress and the kilt. It had been hoped that the Battalion could parade without coats and show the full glory of the tartan. The weather, unfortunately, was too bad and the wearing of greatcoats had to be planned. The Q.M., James McLaurin, issued out the new greatcoats held as the anti-gas reserve, and the G.S. buttons were taken off and replaced by Cameron buttons. Everyone was spotless for the parade and many a man spent most of the night before ensuring that his turnout should be up to the 79th standard!

Eric Baume, an Australian War Correspondent, wrote of the parade in his book: "The King's tour gave me a chance to see what I had never seen before—the Brigade of Guards marching by it's Sovereign in it's war kit, and the Cameron Highlanders, led by their pipes, still swinging in the kilts, replaced now by battle dress, being reviewed by their Royal Colonel-in-Chief. They were magnificent. I remember saying in a Press despatch that by the size of them and the width of them I would back one Cameron against two Guardsmen. It is not difficult to appreciate where the Dominions and the Colonies obtained their initial physical strength." Such then was the all regular 1st Battalion Q.O. Cameron Highlanders on parade in December, 1939. In more sober language, the Corps Commander sent congratulations to the Battalion on being the best turned out Unit in the whole of the Army Corps.

The C.O.'s task of putting his question to the King was not as easy as might be supposed. Never has an inspecting officer been followed by such a company of British and French Generals, staff officers, police, Press, etc. As one of the Platoon Commanders on parade, the writer thought the stand at ease would never come, as the procession of red tabs flowed endlessly past his fixed gaze. The C.O. was not called "Big Tam" for nothing, however, and with giant strides he led our Colonel-in-Chief off down the ranks leaving the entourage panting far behind. His chance to put