

The Girl Question in the Camps

How Romance and Efficiency Go Hand in Hand Through the Splendid Work of Raymond Fosdick and His Camp Activities Commission



Raymond B. Fosdick, Chairman of the Commission on Training Camp Activities.

BY EDWARD FRANK ALLEN,

Author of "Keeping Our Fighters Fit." THE girl he left behind him is one of the ideals for which the American soldier is fighting. He wears the souvenir of her devotion as the knight of old wore his lady fair's token into the jousting tourney. The American girl of today is a modern Goddess of Liberty, holding aloft a beacon to light his way into battle—and back again.

In the average training camp there are 40,000 men, a large proportion unmarried and between the age of 21 and 31, the courting age, if you will. They are men who, in civil life, have been in the habit of enjoying the society of women. They would come home from business and after dinner put on a clean collar and take the One Girl to the movies, or perhaps a dance. Many of them would don their evening clothes, order the family limousine, and take her to a box at the opera. But no matter what their stratum of society, they looked upon feminine companionship as an important part of life, one of the most readily accepted normalities of everyday living.

The camp is abnormal in this respect, as in some others: It is a good-sized city without any women, and even the most confirmed woman-hater, if he stops to consider, will have to agree that in this situation there is a problem. It brings to mind what Kipling said about single men in barracks not developing into plaster saints.

"A Contented Army."

The reply to any fault-finding among the soldiers in France is, "C'est la guerre"—it is war. That is well enough provided the condition cannot be remedied, but it is not the attitude taken by the Government at present. They are going on the principle enunciated by Napoleon when he said, "A contented army is a fighting army." They are trying to provide just as many of the wholesome things that the men have been used to before they became soldiers as military training and discipline will allow. The commissions on training camp activities in Washington were appointed by Secretary Baker for the War Department and by Secretary Daniels for the Navy Department, for the purpose of looking out for the well-being of the fighting men, and Raymond B. Fosdick, a man broad in his vision as well as experience, was made chairman of them both.

Women in large numbers visit the camps to see their sweethearts, brothers or husbands and Mr. Fosdick foresaw the need for providing a place where they could make their headquarters and meet the men under comfortable conditions. The Young Women's Christian Association was invited to take charge of the matter and this organization began to erect buildings which they called Hostess Houses, big

In the Camp of the "Fighting Sixty-Ninth."

one-story bungalow affairs, stained brown, and with a distinctly homelike appearance both outside and in. They presented a striking contrast to the unpainted military buildings.

At first the grizzled old warriors of the regular Army expressed themselves in no uncertain terms as to the invasion of camp by such a "flossy" institution. It was unprecedented. They didn't want feminine influence brought into the military environment. Don't people know we are at war? C'est la guerre!

In certain of the camps where a Hostess House has not yet been erected these same officers are now complaining because they think their camp has been discriminated against. They have had a complete change of heart, or judgment, on hearing of the success of the institution where it has been tried out.

When the Best Girl Comes.

Nothing gives the soldier quite the thrill that comes from having his best girl come down to camp to see him in the midst of his new environment. He knows that, in case he cannot meet her at the train, there will be a woman there whose duty it is to direct her to the Hostess House, and he knows, too, that at the Hostess House she will be made comfortable while he is being sent for. When he arrives he may greet her with whatever degree of ardor their friendship may warrant, for the hostesses are used to seeing meetings of all temperatures of enthusiasm and they will find a secluded corner where they can plan what they will do when the war is over—or possibly before. Some of the Hostess Houses have gone so far as to provide especially planned cozy corners, where, screened from the casual curiosity of the rest of the big room, engaged or nearly engaged couples may discuss the strategy at the western front.

But what of the soldiers in camp who are too far away from home for their women folk to visit them? In a city of 40,000 men it is easy to understand that a fellow who has been used to home life gets to wishing very hard that he might just see and talk with somebody's mother or sister. Military procedure takes but little cognizance of the domestic side of a soldier's makeup, but putting a man in uniform and teaching him how to bayonet Huns does not change his attitude toward women. So many of these soldiers frequently go over to the Hostess House just to see the people. They can always talk with the hostesses, too, and that helps a lot. A Southern boy said to one of them not long ago: "You-all don't know how much you are doing for us. I reckon you've kept a good many of us out of the guardhouse."

The Weekly Dance.

They have weekly dances in some of the camps. At the Marine Barracks in Quantico, Va., there is a big recreation building that holds 3500 people comfortably, and every Friday evening from 7 until 10 o'clock it is the scene of a party that cannot be matched anywhere. Any girl who attends one of these affairs and fails to dance as much as she wishes is hopeless. There are two marine bands, and when one stops playing the other begins; and the girls, of course, are in the minority. Chaperonage is provided by the Y. W. C. A. hostesses, and a committee of enlisted men act as floor managers. In the hostess-room, which occupies a corner of this big building, light refreshments are served, and there also a marine may sit out a dance with his fair partner.

Isn't all this a bit sentimental, a little too refined, for men who are going to France for the express purpose of killing? Shouldn't their minds be kept

on fighting? Why mix up society stuff with the stern business of war?

People of no imagination have asked me such questions. They have never heard Napoleon's maxim. They have never paused to consider that our draft Army is a cross-section of American society, and that the "soldier type" is simply the average young American, and in no way different from themselves except as he is better off by reason of his training. He needs diversion, and he needs to come in contact with the right kind of women; and the fact that the Government is helping to supply those needs through an especially appointed commission shows that we, as a people, have made

HOUSEBOAT ON THE STYX

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trouble with my poem, if any? That's what I want to know."

"It lacks climax," said Raleigh. "A true poem should work up to something forceful and—"

"Redolent," said Jonah. "Like Kalamazoo."

"An the bigger that something is," continued Raleigh, ignoring the interloper. "The finer the poem. Even a linerick must have a point—a sort of a sting at the end—"

"Like a bee," put in Jonah. "Precisely," said Byron.

"Well, I've got it," said Kidd, triumphantly. "I've got a grand finally that's a knockout. Listen here while I read it:

And finally,
O hegemonic Sea,
I'd like to take thee in a pail,
Stirred by the wrath of some heretofore
gale
Of dark and lowering mien.
And pour thee on black Kaiser Billum's bilious
beast;
And sweep him from his throne high in the
air.

Ten billion scullion leagues from Every-
where,
Where he may rest upon an Exile's shelf
And contemplate himself,
And hiss
With flaming shame to think he's what he
is!

"That," said Byron, "is what I should call the Apostrophe Magnificent."

"So fine, indeed," said Raleigh, "that if I were you, Captain, I should be content to rest upon my laurels, and never write another line so long as the world shall last."

Whereupon Kidd nearly swooned with joy, and Cassius with envy, while Jonah called the waiter and ordered four Welsh-rabbits, and five cans of pickled lobsters.

"Great Heavens, Jones," said Raleigh, "are you trying to commit suicide?"

"No," said Jonah. "I'm going to write an Ode to my Whale, and I'm just laying the foundation for the attack."

"Gosh, George," said Raleigh, turning to Byron. "Can it be that these pikers have at last discovered the sources of our inspiration?"

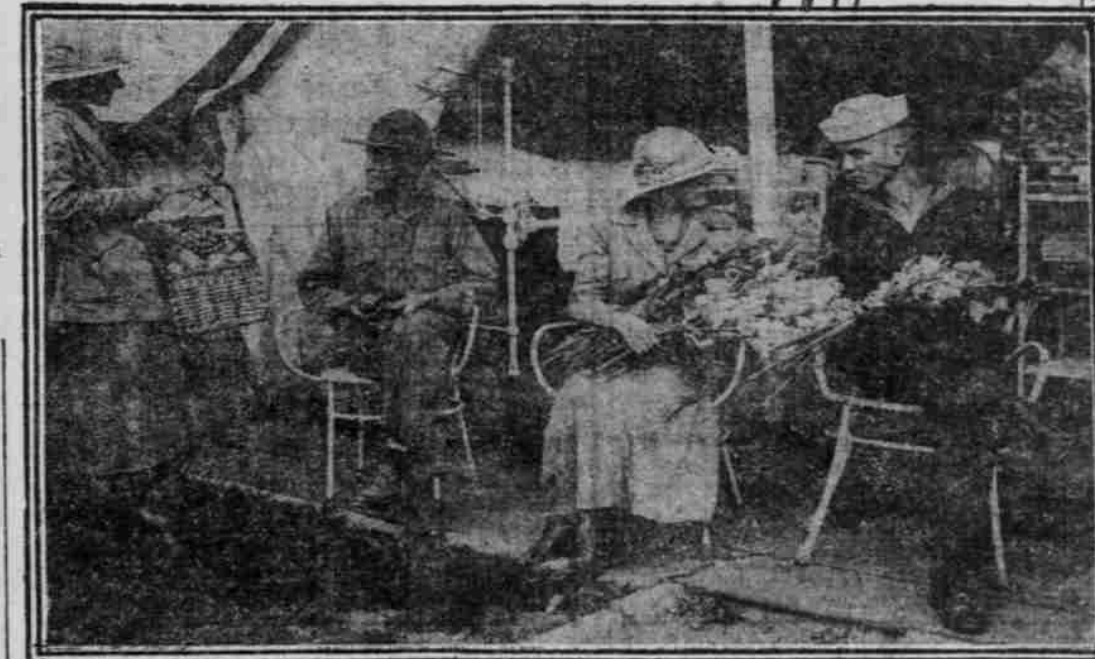
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Two Arms of the Service.

a stand for the consecration of ideals as well as the promotion of military efficiency.

Garde Republicaine, which was headed at the St. Louis Exposition and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, has arrived in America. The Band, which has come under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. to visit the American camps and cantonments, will open with a concert in Carnegie Hall Thursday evening, June 6. Immediately upon its arrival it contributed its services to the Red Cross and marched in the great parade. It was also heard upon several occasions in connection with Red Cross and other patriotic work.

All the members of the organization have been in service at the front and many have been wounded or otherwise disabled for immediate military service.

There are 60 men in the band, many of whom have won prizes in the Paris Conservatory. To pay a highly appreciated courtesy to this country, the band landed "Somewhere in America" playing "The Star Spangled Banner."

While in this country the band is under the supervision of Captain Andre Tardieu, High Commissioner of France.

Praise of Open Fires.

To many of us plain bread-and-butter persons, praise of open fires sometimes seems a little too warm and comfortable—too snugly contemplative. We like open fires. We would have them

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A Pleasant Little Social Event at a Hostess House.

in every room in the house except the kitchen and bathroom—and perhaps in the bathroom, where we could hang our towels from the mantel-piece (as gallant practical gentlemen, now some centuries dead, named it by hanging up their wet mantels), and let them warm while we are taking our baths. We go as far as any in regarding the open fire as a welcoming host in the hall, an undisturbing companion in the library, an encourager of digestion in the din-

ing-room, an enlivener of hospitality in the guest-chamber. But we cannot follow the essayist who speaks contemptuously of hot water pipes. "From the security of ambush," says he, "they merely heat, and heat whose source is invisible is not to be coveted at all."

Oh, merely heat!

Teaching Is Greatest Art.

Atlantic. It seems to me that teaching is the

greatest of the arts, and that every one of us, no matter what his walk of life may be, is engaged willy-nilly for a good part of his time in teaching. Surely every father and mother is engaged in it; and I am persuaded that the vast majority of children address themselves to the problem of teaching their parents that the life of their day is wholly incompatible with the methods of a generation past. The master who learns how to handle men is taught

by the men he handles. The Senator and Congressman in the throes of their eloquence are endeavoring to teach their honorable colleagues what they take to be wisdom, and their constituents they endeavor to tell of their impassioned patriotism. Whenever we endeavor to persuade any one to do as we want him to do, we try to teach him. Teaching is the universal art, and the greatest of them all.



"Mothering" a Soldier.