

MUTTERINGS OF AN OLD-TIMER

By H. B.

(Editor's Note: Readers will agree that "Snarl" is the wrong word for the line of this-and-that which the Old Timer hands out. He doesn't snarl. He merely mutters, from week to week, in his harmless way. So we've changed the head.)

It was a soldier, General Sherman, who said, "War is hell." It was our own War Dept. which recently put out a pamphlet saying that "the use of force, historically the means of settling disputes, must be made less and less feasible on earth, until it finally becomes impossible."

In fact the case against war is so strong, in our country, that I, volunteer in a second world conflict, can say with some truth that Americans go to war because they hate war. They hate it as a means of getting something and they fight because they know of no other practical way of dealing with a nation that picks on other nations.

Yet even the visionaries who will have nothing to do with war, insisting that they "don't believe in war," (whatever that means), admit that certain virtues are fostered during a military struggle. Although Ralph Waldo Emerson, most American of philosophers, wrote long ago that "war is on its last legs," and that "war to sane men at the present day begins to look like an epidemic insanity," he still recognized the martial virtues. In an essay entitled "War" he wrote:

"War educates the senses, calls into action the will—perfects the physical constitution, brings men into such swift and close collision in critical moments that man measures man."

If that be true, I say let's make the most of it. We are at war. We may be at war for a long, long time. We may as well take the long-term view and think of "the duration" as a sizeable slice of our lives. If we get a break, and the other side collapses, that will be fine. Otherwise, well, if we expect the war to go right on then we won't be so disappointed when it does.

Now the particular virtue, or wholesome characteristic, that I'm thinking of today, as something developed in war, is not courage, or willingness to sacrifice, or anything like that. My mind is on the march, the "forward march" of troops to the battle front, and on the ability to march long and march far and like it.

Probably you're tired of hearing that the automobile has turned us into a non-walking people. All right, then I won't say it. But it surely is true that we're going to do a great deal of marching around here and that many of you soldiers will have to learn to walk as you never walked before and I say it will be good for you.

With the exception of a few men who really have something wrong with their feet, or for some other physical reason shouldn't have to do much walking, most men can stand more than they think they can, because the human body is made that way. It thrives on its own use. As an example, take Julius Caesar, who is said to have been a pretty good soldier. If you read "Plutarch's Lives" you'll find that he was subject to violent headaches and epileptic fits and that he "sought in war a remedy for his infirmities, endeavoring to strengthen his constitution by long marches, by simple diet, by seldom coming under covert." And he won battles by the unexpected speed of his marching legions. He got there "fastest with the mostest," as the saying goes.

"By the swiftness of his march," says Plutarch, "he showed the barbarians that his troops could neither

be conquered nor resisted. For where a courier could scarce have been supposed to come in many days, Caesar was seen with his whole army, ravaging the country, destroying the castles, storming the cities."

One winter I lived in a shanty on Monte Mario, outside of Rome. It was right on the Triumphal Way over which Caesar's Legions marched and just at the point where they caught their first glimpse of the Eternal City, on returning victorious from those marvellous campaigns in Gaul. I used to wonder at their endurance and to try to account for the stamina of all of the olden armies, marching down the corridors of time from the days of Sesostris in ancient Egypt.

Somehow, without rails or motors, his 600,000 foot soldiers subdued Ethiopia, and got to Tartary, Thrace, Arabia, Lybia, and as far as the Ganges. Later the vast armies of Cyrus the Great ranged widely and after that forces of Alexander the Great triumphed in such distant places that he sighed because there were no more worlds to conquer. And all of that conquering was done on the feet of horses and of men.

Nowadays it's different, but we must not exaggerate the difference. Although we think of elephants when the exploit of Hannibal crossing the Alps is mentioned, most of his forces marched on foot and so it is today, when we hear much of planes over sea and desert and tanks crashing through the battlefields. As the war progresses, and great armies come to grips, the chances are that the infantry will have to do the job again, and in any case earth-bound soldiers must rely more and more on their legs in getting to the spot where they are needed.

We who were among the earliest arrivals at Camp Adair have all noticed, and with pleasure, how quickly stretches of loose stones are evolving into smooth, firm roads. Before long columns of soldiers will be marching over them by day and by night, going to drill fields and the ranges, and hiking through the hills and over them, with rifle and pack.

At first these hikes will be short and easy, and still soldiers may grumble, if they are not used to walking. Gradually pace and distance will increase and there will be packs to carry, but there will be less grumbling, for more and more men will learn the joy of comradeship on the march.

This marching comradeship is like nothing else. The outfit that I belong to had a taste of it the other night. It was announced as a 10-mile hike, partly with gas masks, but it wasn't more than half of that and almost everybody enjoyed it. Some agreed with me that it was more fun than anything we've done, as a unit, so far. Can't say exactly why, except that after awhile a happy feeling of unity and harmony spreads through a column of marching men and they are brothers.

During a rest period several of the livelier lads tried to slip up on a young heifer in a field and the healthy laughter of soldier spectators would have delighted any officer responsible for morale. Hearty laughter over an incident that's only moderately amusing is a sure sign of good health, in mind and body.

To close with the more serious aspect of the march and the hike, as part of our training, I'm told that the Japanese march three and one-miles an hour against two and one-half miles an hour for our troops, by day, on good roads. And Brigadier General Kramer, assist-

ant division commander of the 104th division here, who was a student observer in troops and field exercises of the German army, says that "at the end of the first year of training the German soldier is toughened to endure unprecedented marches," and that he marches 35 miles with light pack and gas mask.

With our superior food and care we should be able to beat whatever they can do, if we care enough and try. It happens that my work is such that I may not have to do much marching, but I like it and am open to invitations from outfits other than my own. So right now I'm crawling way out on the end of a limb in saying that if there are any good hikes coming I want to go along.

Pseudo Naturalists Stop at Nothing to Beautify Landscape

Post Hdq. Co., alias DEML, ricocheted to the front this week as an organization of landscape artists without peer in the camp. An expedition of naturalists sent out by 1st Sgt. Atkins returned with specimens so rare that nobody could name them and few were willing to plant them.

Picked details, picked on the "you and you and you" basis, soon attended to that and now the Hdq. Co. headquarters building is so nearly surrounded by a young grove that you can't even see it unless you open your eyes.

Robert Scovell, who is a botanist and explorer (as far as Vancouver), besides being an Indian chief of the Tillamooks, identifies the trees outside headquarters as Christmas trees. They were so close to the steps that they will break your fall if you get pushed out of the door.

Red and blue balls will hang from the branches of those trees during the last week of December, Scovell says, if anybody has the energy to put them there.

In the space between the first and second barracks, known as Iverson's Swamp, doodlebushes are growing. On the way to the kitchens you pass specimens of the spreading juniper and jumping Jupiter. Here and there specimens of the whooping willow and galloping horse chestnut are sprouting from earth where grass soon will be growing all around, all around, if it ever comes up.

A border of nasturtiums is planned, in memory of Sgt. Robert Nastre, who soon will be off to the gas house. And Sgt. Atkins, as herbaceous and cryptogamous as a first sergeant ever gets, has his heart set on a bed of syringes. But when you ask him where all of the wonderful plants came from he murmurs something about military secrets and points vaguely to the western hills and the general direction of the nursery near the old CCC camp.

P.X.—The place a soldier can get FOOD after eating in the mess hall.

Soldiers' Loving Wives Have One Loevely Time

Enlisted men who have their loving wives nearby had themselves a whale of a time at a gathering held Tuesday evening in the Newman club of Corvallis. Bang up entertainment was m.c'd by Sgt. Bob Sieving and featured Sgt. Spence Shoemaker and Cpl. Bob Holzbauer. A loving wife, Maybeth Jeffries, furnished a domestic note at the piano. After the entertainment the men and their wives strutted their stuff on the dance floor.

A committee of loving wives who arranged the gala affair was headed up by Dorothy Dreffer—who had the help of Mesdames La Pearl Petsch, Helen Ochtel and Dorothy Sieving. As special guests the Mrs. Jeffries, McAllister, Stevenson and Gault of Corvallis did a handsome job in handling the intro's and laying out the welcome mat at Newman hall.

Browning Carnival in West Salem This Week

Browning Bros. carnival, which played Albany last week, is playing this week in West Salem.

This show is native Oregonian, the home office being in Salem.

MESS—An appropriate name for the place we eat. (See Chow).

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