

What A Woman Saw And Heard In An American Training Camp

(This is the second and concluding instalment of a descriptive story about the camp. Keary written especially for TRENCH AND CAMP by a clever and observant woman writer. The first instalment was printed last week.)

By RUTH DURKEE

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I wanted to borrow an ambulance which to go out to the remount depot and the hospital, but we couldn't have the Ford. I really should have it much safer in the ambulance, as the editor had never before driven a Ford. But the ambulance was held in reserve. Finally we got the Thing started, nearly running through a ditch instead of reversing.

My most vivid impression of the remount depot is of being stalled in a ditch on a steep 'dobe hill, with hundreds of mules rudely looking on from surrounding corrals. Being stuck on the hillside might have been funny, but everywhere I went there were mules' eyes staring at me. I've ridden horses ever since I was a kid, but mules— We left. Then we breezed out to the base hospital, the sight of which revolutionized my idea of hospitals. About a dozen bungalows and hundreds of tents had been set up some distance from camp. Some of the buildings were on hills.

The Puzzling Fence

Two of the hospital buildings were lined in with barbed wire like New England pastures. Was it to keep the Germans out or the germs in? Twenty rookies at the recruit camp were lined up to get their shots in their arm. Aside from these twenty a place seemed like a deserted mining camp. The bunch waved a salute as we dismounted. Poor things! They hadn't seen a girl for so long that I—even I—was worth looking at. Every one looked home-ward. Five were isolated in a tent out on the road because a comrade had been so inconsiderate as to get the wrong horse. With nothing to do except to sleep, they crabbled because they would be ignorant of drill when their tour was over.

That evening as we ate dinner at the Hostess House I watched the boys in. It was worth living just to see their sturdy, straight figures and the air of good comradeship. The mess told me the crowd wasn't so unusual, because it was just before pay-day and every one was broke. The fellow pulled out his purse and showed me proudly that he was still fifty cents to the good. I was glad I didn't have to pay for my dinner. We went to an entertainment in a hall. The hall was overflowing with officers, yelling and whooping like a bunch of cowboys or a crowd at a baseball rally. They told me this particular crowd had a reputation for being the toughest of the camp. It may be so, but I never saw a more responsive audience at any grand opera than the crowd of Mexicans, Slavs, Russians—Americans. Two enlisted men were on the program—both with loud voices. Old songs were most popular. As they sang there wasn't a man in the room without that far-away look in his eyes. Yes, they remembered—too well.

At another building the movies were "on." The girl and the hero were cast upon a desert isle. The plot was quite original. The girl wore one of those filmy, flimsy back-to-front costumes that are always in fashion, while the hero wore a coat—kept it on while the night breezes red o'er the isle. "Why don't you give her your coat?" called a deep voice. "He's a German," came from the other side of the room, followed by a roar of laughter. Through it all the fellows talked to the screen characters.

Inspection Fascinating—Perhaps I missed reveille the next morning. "M. P. 'loot" wasn't in when we needed about a pass to visit the trenches. Two hours later he had arrived. Why not go without a pass? We did. Out on the parade ground two companies of infantry were being inspected for a long hike. Everything they possessed was set out that the hawk-eyed captain in criticism and swear at the meek, submissive private. We watched the section until I knew what kind of tricks the boys used, and until I could see the captain's favorite hand-slip attitude and what-the-ell-are-doing-here stare so well that I led to inspect the company myself.

We trudged along some way further without meeting any guards. In a field we saw some soldiers digging up stones and throwing them as far as they could. Suddenly, they

all ran back and put on their gas masks, and then threw some bombs that exploded and gave forth a white smoke. I was getting real excited and was going to root for them when a tall officer in British uniform, who was standing on a little knoll, called out:

"Will you people please move back ten yards from this fortress?"

I didn't see any fortress, and thought that an undisciplined way to speak to the men. But it was all just as real to him as a snow fight when you're ten. It wasn't long before one soldier detached himself from the mass and marched toward us. No passes? Sorry, but no civilians allowed. Good morning.

On the way from the "fortress" we saw some bayonet practice which made me shudder. If those dummies had not been painted with such ridiculous faces it would have seemed like practice in the art of murder. But when I thought of the Germans I wanted to yell, "Go to it!"

Compensations of Youth

Then we went over to call on the general in command and his chief-of-staff. The chief-of-staff was not in to issue me a pass, so I sat down and gave the general, another general friend of his and all the colonels and majors the "once over." They certainly were a fine-looking crowd. I think I like lieutenants and captains better than colonels and majors, though. For one thing, they are younger.

We rode into the back country, where some of the infantry and artillery had gone to live under field conditions. I believe they say they are going on a hike.

We turned off the main road and bumped along a muddy trail.

"Look at that field," said the driver.

I looked, but saw nothing different from the fields that we had passed all along the way. A fairly level stretch, with here and there a rise of ground—all rough country, much sagebrush. No, nothing unusual, I decided. We passed one succession of knolls and stopped.

"Now look," he said. The backs of the knolls were similar to the backs of movie sets. The stage had been set to bring up the guns.

"Camouflage," said I, Columbus-like, elated at my discovery. He nodded assent.

They certainly used a lot of chicken wire, I thought, and then to cover it all with weeds! Well, it would fool the Germans, all right, until they got within range, and then—God have mercy on them, the guns would not.

On the opposite hillside the doughboys came rushing over the top of the trenches. "Over the top!" That was what it meant. Then, after investigating the temporary camp until we met a guard, we went back to camp and visited the stockade. The sign, "Not Wanted," was hung out here also, and the sentry in the little tower sent us away before we had time to peep through the fence.

What It's All About

Here is what the casual visitor sees in your camp. Practical out-of-door work. Best of training in physical and mental alertness. The sanest life in the world. Advancement according to ability. Men learning to stand straight, to obey authority, to work hard and to play harder. To earn little (that's unfortunate), and to spend little (that isn't). To take things as they come—nobody knows what fate or the Government will hand out, so why worry? Adventure, strange lands, strange faces—excitement, glory, honor—all these he looks forward to.

So what more could the soldier want? Just this: Home.

Home and all it means to a man—freedom to come and go at will; mother, sweetheart, wife, child. A man may be wanderlust incarnate, may love nothing better than a good fight—occasionally. But what is the good fight for? To come back home and tell about.

When the soldier has gone through the sort of fighting the German makes us go through—the twisted, unnatural, distorted fight, where anything goes and victory is to the crafty; where one uses unnatural weapons, gas, fire, poison, against an unnatural enemy—the thing that will make it worth while is just the thing that camp and army life lacks—home.

To keep the home is what this war is for. It's the biggest job, the best job, men ever had to do.

SNAPPY OVERSEAS CAP WINS PERMANENT PLACE

The jaunty little overseas cap has won a permanent place in the equipment of the American troops. It is now a part of the uniform of officers and men. Models of the approved design are now deposited with the Chief Quartermaster, American Expeditionary Forces, in France.

For enlisted men the design calls for a cap of 20-ounce olive drab cloth, or heavier. There is no show of color on the cap and the stiffening of the flap is of the same color as the cap itself. When soldiers have been provided with the cap their field service hats will be taken up by the nearest quartermaster depots.

The officers' cap is of the same model as the enlisted men's, but the material is the same as that of the officers' uniform. Officers up to general officers will wear stiffening at the edge of the flap that corresponds to the color of the service to which they are assigned. This stiffening will be so arranged as to resemble piping when the cap is worn with the flap up.

General officers will wear stiffening of the same color as the cap itself, except that they will have a strip of gold braid one-eighth to one-quarter inch from the outside of the flap, one-quarter inch from the edge. Officers' caps will be sold by the Quartermaster Corps.

The overseas caps will be worn at all times by officers commanding troops except when the orders prescribe helmets. At all other times officers may wear the overseas cap or the service cap.

TODAY—

Is the best day on which to send Trench and Camp home to mother and your other relatives. A one-cent stamp will do the trick. Why not?

AMERICAN NON-COMS TO HAVE NEW CHEVRONS

Regulations regarding the wearing of chevrons are to be changed. The Quartermaster Corps and the Adjutant General's Department are now engaged in codifying the changes.

The revision was found to be necessary because of the confusion as to what was required.

In the code of changes it is understood that all sergeants will wear the same type of chevron and that no corps insignia will be worn. This will eliminate the caduceus of the Medical Corps and the flaming shell of the Ordnance Department, except in the case of sergeants below the grade of those attached to the non-commissioned staff.

Also it is proposed that post non-commissioned officers and the senior non-commissioned officers will wear a wreath in place of the three chevrons and within the wreath will be the insignia of the corps.

Senior non-commissioned officers will wear a star embroidered above the corps insignia.

A new design is being prepared for first-class privates. Chevrons indicating their special duties will be worn by chauffeurs and specially qualified men in the mechanical units. Stable sergeants, too, are to have a new type of chevron.

The marksmanship medal is doomed to go from the service uniform. Chevrons will be substituted. These chevrons will be worn also by officers who had won special distinction in marksmanship.

The designs will indicate the branch of marksmanship in which recognition has been won. Efficiency in pistol shooting will be indicated by chevrons with crossed pistols; in rifle shooting by crossed rifles; in machine gun fire by a special design showing a section of the cartridge belt used in machine gun service.



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