

and rarely is he other than light of heart, for his sins they are not heavy.

So let all men be vagabond some time in their lives, and all women, too, if it be possible. Let them leave for a while their toy illusions and stupid nightmares. Let them seek life and taste her; let them know weariness and the beautiful secret of rest; let them face fear and conquer her with courage; let them some time be utterly alone with their own souls that they may learn peace.

There are the hills and the wild, bare places; there are valleys and flowers, flickering leaves and winding streams. There are the branches of the trees in winter, frosted cobwebs, and the falling snow, calling.

There is comradeship out there in the wilds, sturdy in the untamed freedom. There are people along the roads waiting to be passed.

To-day

## IN A CANADIAN CANTEEN

BY MAY QUINLAN

WORK was in full swing in the Canadian Canteen. The clatter of cups and saucers came faintly through the buzz of voices.

'Chucks!' said a lanky seafaring man as he bent earnestly over the counter.

'Reckon it's hard for a guy to take out a young lady when 'e on'y gets two pound a month.'

I agreed. The demand was greater than the supply. That was the worst of hospital pay.

'O' course,' he continued in his slow Yankee drawl, 'guess the young lady'd pay her own whack, come to that. But I reckon if a guy takes out a young lady an' 'e lets 'er pay, why he kind o' feels like a pea-hen with its tail feathers pulled off.' And by a deft

movement of the tongue he shifted the gum to the other cheek.

There were many men to serve in that first morning rush. Some were in khaki, but most were in blue, and they came and went all day, so the canteen workers were kept busy, for when one was not serving out tea and coffee, one was handing out stamps or stationery, or selling sticks of shaving soap, or counting out bootlaces, or booking up the daily entries for the billiard table; and while so engaged one had to throw back impromptu replies to the quick fire of wit and humor, in French and English, that came like so many bullets across the counter.

Meanwhile the men continued to come on in waves, and the seafaring man, by a gentle but irresistible pressure, found himself on the outer edge of the crowd, where, so to speak, he still tried to keep his head above water. There was something about that seafaring man that always suggested the Old Man of the Sea. When you thought he was gone and his spirit laid, it was then he reappeared, looming up from nowhere.

'Say, Sister!' a nasal drawl broke over three rows of khaki heads. 'Reckon I'll be wantin' you to write that theer letter fur me.'

'Can you come back later?' I said from behind the coffee urn.

'Shure!' And the loose-limbed figure swung out from the edge of the crowd, and so disappeared.

Farther down the counter a pretty French worker was saying to a wounded Tommy:

'I am sorry. It will take — but three minutes quite. Do you mind to wait?'

'Guess I don't,' said the damaged warrior, 'if you'll just go on talkin' to me.'

A ripple of laughter went up from the counter. But the Tommy never

smiled: he merely looked at her — and beyond.

A khaki figure elbowed his way through the crowd and stood panting at the busy end of the counter.

'Say! but it's mortal dry in the pay office. Can you give me a drink right away?'

'Yes,' I said. 'What do you want?'

'Anything, I reckon, so long as it's wet.'

I turned to a fellow worker.

'What shall I give him?' I asked.

'Try him with a "stone ginger,"' she said. 'It never fails.'

She was quite right. He finished it in one breath, and, as he laid the twopence on the counter, he said dramatically, 'Guess you've saved my life.' And, being wise in his generation, he was off like a streak, for there were penalties attaching to being A.W.L. from the pay office in working hours.

That was why staff men and cripples were always served first in our canteen: the cripples because they should not be kept waiting, and the staff men because they should not want to — but they often did.

'Are you in a hurry?' I asked one of those regimentally employed.

'In a hurry! Bet your sweet life I'm not. No, sir! not on a dollar ten a day.' At which the other men laughed in agreement, and also at my sex being again mistaken.

It often happened that a man would be relating something, and, carried away by the recital, he'd say, addressing me, 'And boy, oh boy! but you would have laughed.' A roar of laughter would interrupt him, and the narrator would push back his cap and say apologetically: 'Beg your pardon, Sister, but — danged if I can remember.' Whereupon there would be another laugh. 'Shut up, you guys!' (this in an audible aside). 'Guess she understands all right.'

'That so, Sister?' and he turned to me.

'Quite,' I laughed; the fact being that since I went to that wonderful camp I was never sure myself which I was.

Just then an officer, arrayed in a disreputable-looking trench coat, blew in. The coat had obviously seen service, and on his head was a khaki cap, pulled slightly over one eye. To look at him you would have guessed some time before you guessed right. He was the Canadian R.C. chaplain.

'All correct, Sister?' he asked as he strolled behind the counter.

Hastily gathering together my knowledge of the Canadian tongue, I answered demurely:

'I guess, Major, we're *jakerloo!*'

'Reckon you're getting on fine with the language,' he said. 'You shure are.'

'I've been taking lessons,' I said in explanation, while I went on serving a man at the other side of the counter.

The khaki figure passed along, taking no further notice of me or of anyone else.

That was the best of the padre. He never did take much notice of anybody. And he was entirely unconscious of effects. If the spirit moved him to do a thing, he did it, and you could think what you liked. He never explained his actions; on the contrary, his actions explained him.

Just now the spirit was apparently moving him, for I became aware that he was whistling softly with an air of abstraction, and as he whistled he did a little step-dance, all to himself, behind the counter.

Then, looking up, he suddenly espied some particular figure who had just come in, and immediately his interest crystallized in that one man.

'Say, artilleryman!' (The man addressed wheeled round). 'Have n't I

seen you before?’ A quick pause, in which he concentrated his mind. ‘Yes. Reckon you were with the —th battalion at —. Gee! but it was a God-forsaken hole!’

‘I guess that’s right,’ said the wounded man.

‘Remember that corner house all knocked to pieces? And the rats!’

‘Gee whizz! reckon I do,’ said the other.

‘Will you ever forget that day in March — just before we went over? The Heines were flinging over any old thing, from the kitchen range to a cricket ball. Heavens to Betsey! but I guess it was a picnic all right!’

And the major and the private became absorbed in war talk; both were back in the trenches.

Presently more men drifted up and joined the circle. And now and again a man would appear from nowhere and grip the padre’s hand.

‘Say, Major, but I guess it’s good to see you again. It shure is!’ And the hand-grip would not relax.

Then the major would look at him and say: ‘Guess the last time I saw you was the night before Vimy Ridge. Gee, boys; will you ever forget?’ And again the group would become immersed in talk, exchanging notes or relating some grim joke from the trenches; and always that M.C. major was the live wire in the group.

There was a boy standing near me who had been watching that group in silence, and as he put down his cup he said quietly: ‘I’m not an R.C. myself, but I reckon’ (and with a gesture he indicated the padre) ‘that there’s a man the boys would die for.’

I was still serving out coffee full steam ahead when the corporal in charge of the kitchen stood beside me. ‘Beg pardon, Sister. O.C. on inspection.’ Then lowering his voice, he said unofficially: ‘And a big bunch with

him: adjutant, quartermaster — the whole outfit, I reckon.’

Whereupon my heart sank, for at that moment I could see various cigarette wrappings on the floor, and dead matches here and there, and cake frills strewn about — things that the inspection party always looked for, and generally found — things for which I, as head of the hut, was held responsible.

It was quite true. The inspection party were there in massed formation, a brace of sergeants acting as supports in the rear. They were six to one, and it did not seem to give that one a sporting chance. However, putting a brave face on it, I advanced to meet the invaders, whereupon I was greeted with six salutes and four good-mornings (front rank only).

Overtopping the other men stood the O.C. He had a firm-set jaw, and a moustache with waxed ends that turned up stiffly and looked somehow as if they were standing at attention. He had heavy level brows that made you feel a little afraid, and a pair of eyes that nothing escaped. It was a stern face — the face of a disciplinarian. And it was only when the corners of his mouth twitched into a smile that a twinkle dawned in his eye, and you found yourself thanking heaven that, whatever this man’s defects, he had the saving sense of humor. For, in spite of his chin, the O.C. was a sport. As for the other officers who were with him —. But I have no time for them, as at this moment the O.C. could be heard saying in his most businesslike voice: ‘Any complaints?’

Before replying I looked along the counter, where my fellow workers were working as busily as bees (and I thought how nice they looked, too, in their white veils and pale blue overalls).

‘Do we look as if we had any?’ I asked gently.

‘I reckon you look all right,’ ad-

mitted the O.C., 'but things are not always what they seem.'

'They are here,' I said. 'No complaints at this side of the counter.' And I looked hard at that O.C.

'Got home,' murmured the quartermaster. 'Reckon that's one to you, sir.' And they all laughed.

'Have you all the help you want?' went on the O.C. 'Fatigues come regularly? If you want more, you've only to say so, and I reckon the adjutant——'

'Sure,' said the tall adjutant, with that characteristic smile of his. 'All you've got to do is to send along an orderly with a chit——'

Here the quartermaster broke in, afraid of being left out of the competition. The quartermaster always looked sardonic, but was rather a wag in disguise.

'And, of course,' he said, with a whimsical wave of his hand, 'the quartermaster's stores are entirely at your disposal.' And the insincerity of the man was so patent that he had the grace to laugh with us.

The inspection party were about to take their leave when fate plucked at the colonel's sleeve. It was only then he saw the untidy floor.

'Guess it's strange,' he said musingly, as he reviewed the offending bits, 'strange that when the boys have a nice place like this they would not take a pride in keeping it tidy.'

There was a horrid pause, during which I tried to make up my mind as to the best line of defense.

'Well, Colonel,' I said, hastily deciding that any defense was better than none, 'this is the way I look at it. You can't have everything. If those boys were always picking up their cigarette ends and keeping the daily papers neatly folded they'd make excellent housemaids, but poor soldiers.'

Then said the O.C. grimly: 'I

reckon these boys must be damn fine soldiers!' And laughing heartily, the party saluted again and went their way.

Meanwhile the work of the hut never slackened: the clatter of cups and saucers still resounded, and the click of ivory balls came from the billiard room, while the piano rang out relentlessly. The sound of army boots tapping on the floor suggested that a 'buck and wing' dance was in progress. Over the heads of the crowd a khaki cap bobbed up and down, and under it was a black face. An American coon was giving an exhibition to a select but wrapt audience.

So the work went on. It was all very kaleidoscopic; men coming and going, groups forming and reforming, orderlies hurrying to and fro, and over it all the low murmur of men's voices. It was curious how quiet those hundreds of soldiers were. No voice was ever unduly raised. They might have been in their own homes.

And it was a cosmopolitan crowd, so many nationalities being enrolled under the banner of the Maple Leaf.

Here was a dinky from the West Indies, very shiny and nicely blacked. A Jap or two sat at the next table. There were a handful of half-breeds further along, and several quiet-eyed Red Indians, whose khaki caps seemed a poor substitute for their native feathers. There was a Mohammedan from Syria, and a brace of coons from the states. There was a handsome Greek from the Archipelago, and a Czecho-Slovak (from Winnipeg). There were Russians, who laughed when their English proved inadequate, and clear-eyed Danes, whose forbears sailed the seas when Vikings commanded the galleys. There were Swedes and Roumanians and swarthy Italians. There was a Spaniard from Spain and another from the Argentine, and French-

men from France, who consorted but ill with their French-Canadian second cousins.

Close to the counter there stood a fierce-looking Sicilian brigand, who, just then, was explaining to the padre about the altercation he had had with a Britisher, and how the devil was urging him to kill the Britisher; and in his endeavor to ward off the wiles of the Evil One he crossed himself continually. And lo! while he was making the sign for the tenth time, the Britisher had knocked him down.

The brigand even now was indignant; but whether his indignation was inspired by the crass British ignorance which failed to grasp the lofty motive for his passivity, or whether he resented the scurvy trick that Heaven had played him, I do not know. Anyway, he had a black eye, and he spoke excitedly, flinging all his fingers in the air.

Apart from these, there were Americans by the score, men from North and South: some who wanted you to know that they were Yankees, others who blazed if you thought they were.

And in addition to these types there were Britishers from every nook and corner of the four kingdoms.

Lastly came the Canadians proper, men from East and West, genuine sons of Our Lady of the Snows. Of these there were trappers from the Hudson River territory, and men of the North-west Police. There were lumberjacks from Labrador way, and daredevils from the western camps. There were diggers from Alaska and the Yukon; and backwoodsmen from New Brunswick. There were ice peddlers from the city and cow-punchers from the ranch. There were business men, C.P.R. chefs, medical students, university professors, philanthropists, actors, lawyers, ministers of religion, and I know not who else — men of all creeds and

classes and nationalities — and together they stood shoulder to shoulder in the ranks of the Canadian Army.

And it was these men, each either sick or wounded, who frequented the K. of C. hut and made it what it was — a work of absorbing human interest: a place of laughter and tears.

The Tablet

## SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AND HIS SPOOKS

BY E. T. RAYMOND

It is related of Congreve that in his later years he affected a disdain for his own works, and expressed annoyance when they were praised. Voltaire, visiting England, began in his innocence to congratulate the old dandy on being the only English comedy writer who could touch the skirts of Molière. Congreve replied that *The Way of the World* and *Love for Love* were only the diversions of an idle youth, and begged his visitor to think of him only as a private gentleman. The retort was prompt. 'I could have met a gentleman,' said Voltaire, 'without leaving France.'

This precise form of foppery is no longer met with, but many clever men are still afflicted with the weakness of which it was one manifestation. They are contemptuous of their strong sides, and ludicrously proud of qualities which, at the best, they share with a crowd. Born songsters pride themselves on their economics; good romancers talk bad politics; popular preachers slop about in the morasses of Higher Criticism; men with illimitable fairy tales in them argue on Socialism or the price of coal; budding Romneys deviate into all the various lunacies which end in 'ism' — and (one hopes) in bankruptcy.

But perhaps the most remarkable