

WITH THE YANKS EN PERM AT AIX-LES-BAINS

The American soldier at leisure has proved himself about as much of a success as the American soldier at the front.

Since the first American leave center was established and opened at Aix-les-Bains, on the edge of the French Alps, along last February, just one man of the thousands who have come, had their stay, and gone, has committed a breach of department regulations serious enough to warrant his being returned to his company.

And this man (an ambulance driver) after returning, abandoned his ambulance in No Man's Land, walked back to headquarters and announced that he was a fish, and is now under observation that his mental condition may be determined. So he, probably, shouldn't be counted.

The behavior of the men who have spent their leaves at Aix has been the most remarkable feature of the rather remarkable plan the American Army decided upon by which to provide rest places. For nearly half a year how the average run of the American Army has been passing through Aix—largely men fresh from strenuous weeks of hardship and mental strain at the front—and they not only have kept out of punishment, but they have joined the more or less exclusive circles of civilian guests on a basis of equality.

It is not because the whereof isn't present. The title at Aix is as inviting as a little more so—than the cafes in most other parts of France. They keep open a little later, and they are well patronized by visitors, including soldiers, but it hasn't resulted in a wave of drunkenness. The Y.M.C.A. has taken over the famous Aix Casino, and among other activities, it sells lemonade at the entrance. Lemonade and beer are obtainable with equal facility, and the sales of lemonade average 3,000 glasses a day, something over one per man. Statistics on the beer and light wine consumption aren't available.

They are telling a story at Aix of two gentlemen who arrived a few weeks ago. They were there, they explained, to investigate social conditions. They had a series of blanks for recording statistics on the social shortcomings of the soldiers. They left with one entry—one drunk, believed insane.

Every soldier arrives at Aix with a grudge. Psychologists might supply a scientific explanation, but it seems to lay its hand on the all-night train ride which precedes arrival, a general suspicion that there must be a joker somewhere in the leave scheme, and the fact that Aix does not make its best impression from the depot.

Incumbent soldiers are marched from the depot to the A.M. office, where they pass through a line, present their orders and receive their assignment to a hotel. The room assignment business renews the suspicion. The fact is that it is deemed necessary to avoid confusion, and there isn't supposed to be any difference in the rooms anyhow.

After that the soldiers are expected to get the same treatment at the hotels as the guests. They get three meals a day (French breakfast—eggs extra), and eat 'em right off a china plate. By the morning of the second day in Aix the grudge disappears and doesn't return.

To a man just from the field, a bed with sheets and an "up to your ears" French mattress is sometimes a thing not to be adapted to suddenly.

One scandalized lady entered a soldier-guest's room one morning and found him sleeping on the floor wrapped up in the window curtain. It is doubtful if she comprehends his explanation yet.

Another soldier woke up, saw the sun coming in the window, dressed in two minutes, shaved in one, and rushed downstairs so as not to miss his breakfast. It was 4 p.m.

A third was discovered about the same time of day propped up in bed smoking a pipe and reading a book.

"Why the flowery beds of ease—or are you sick?" he was asked.

"I'm not getting up today," he said. "I had breakfast and dinner in bed and I gave the gargon a franc to bring up my supper. I wish the top could see me now."

Ordinarily a soldier doesn't appear at the leave center with any more baggage than the law allows. One man arrived with a pair of extra socks and a rifle. Why the rifle? This was his explanation.

"It's a souvenir. Oh, it still shoots all right, and I'm going to use it for the rest of the war, and after that—well, this is one rifle no supply sergeant is ever going to get a hold of."

He exhibited the stock. There was a nick in the deep at the top.

"Machine gun near Soissons. Shows how near a bullet can come without getting you."

Private Shap was in the train, starting back to his unit. The train was running beside the River Rhone, broad, placid and beautiful.

"I know how to end this war quick," he said to his buddy. "Charge the o in Rhone to an I, and get out and capture it."

"Oh, piffle!" said Buddy. "I've got a better idea than that. Go back to the States, capture Berlin, Coma, hang the stationmaster, and call the war off."

The regimental band of the Infantry (colored) arrived at Aix for a week's stay a couple of months ago, and was such a success that, on petition of the Y.M.C.A., the townspeople and the commandant of the leave area, their stay was continued a fortnight. The musicians gave concerts in the Plaza on Sunday and other afternoons, sang coon songs in the Casino in the evenings, played for dances, and split into jazz orchestras for all kinds of functions at all sorts of places.

It was about as big a social sensation



"They go wild, simply wild over me"

as Aix had seen since the beginning of the war, and when, one dismal day, they finally left, there was a delegation of several hundred at the depot to see them off. Civilian guests at the resort presented the band leader with a loving cup and other admirers were in attendance with other presents.

Just before the train started one dusky trombonist was seen in great mental distress. Openly and unabashed, he wept.

"You know," he said. "All've been cryin' since 6 o'clock this mornin'. Ah don't cher want to leave here. Ah want to remain and do dis Christian Endeavor work."

Dances are held in the Casino every Saturday and Monday evenings. The male guests are soldiers and the female guests are made up of the Y.M.C.A. girls and women living in or visiting the town, who, to comply with Y.M.C.A. rules, put on Y.M.C.A. brassards and become, in effect, Y.M.C.A. workers for the evening. Introductions are considered superfluous.

Among the female dancers, during the last few weeks, have been many titled women—duchesses, countesses, and at least two princesses.

Many a doughboy the last few months has tripped the light fantastic (usually, on account of hobbled trench shoes, more fantastic than light) with a princess—and didn't know it.

By the way, here's an Aix breakfast

problem: When you come down in the morning and are served by a waiter in a full dress suit, do you call him a gargon or monsieur?

The new pay system which provides a paybook for every soldier is looked upon as the remedy which will solve most of the financial problems at Aix. The fractional pay feature will make it possible for a soldier to collect pay to date as soon as he arrives. It means, at the discretion of the leave area C.O., a payday for each incoming group, if need be.

Early in the history of Americans in Aix permissionnaires got into difficulties, and they borrowed money from a fund raised by Mrs. J. T. Anderson, of the Y.M.C.A., and wealthy American residents. This fund is exhausted now, and the treasurer asks that a gentle hint be passed to the borrowers that the quicker they make repayment the sooner will the touch fund be able to do business again.

At Aix, incidentally, the Government pays all hotel bills, including an allowance for tips. All a soldier has to spend money for is for extra—bicycle hire, a trip up Mount Revard, boat across the lake, a black necktie (houses aren't being worn), etc. Fifty francs will do it all for a moderately conservative spender.

The baths at Aix are, of course, its greatest feature. The bathhouse is a big impressive building which offers more ways of taking a bath than there are of cooking sium. The waters, with the proper rubs, massages, and other things, are (according to the guide books) capable of curing more diseases than Dr. Wa Hoo's Sarsaparilla Compound.

The rubbers and masseurs are all old timers who learned the business from their fathers, who learned the business from their fathers and so on back to the beginning. They have kept the business in the family.

The busy times around the baths are in the mornings. Those there for the cure who are able to walk to the baths, and those who are not able are carried by two attendants in a sort of sedan chair, as secret and romantic as the conveyance of an oriental princess.

One husky doughboy spotted the sedan chairs. It was his idea of style. He went to his hotel and sent word that Monsieur James Moneybags Mugwumps, millionaire américain, had arrived in town with a list of ailments too long to mention and wanted the whole show, beginning with the sedan chair feature. Then he set into his pajamas and waited. Two attendants arrived, carried him tenderly to the chair and thence to the baths.

At the baths they put him in a tub which looks like the electric chair at Sing Sing and turned a hose on him. Then they put him into a steam room, into a cold room, back into the steam

room, rubbed his back with a curry comb, tickled his feet with a whisk broom, hit him on the back with a fly swatter and finally wheeled him into a room filled with an appalling lot of strange machinery.

The doughboy quit. He got up and started an argument. He turned a hand-spring to show that he was all right. So far as Monsieur J. Moneybags Mugwumps was concerned, he intimidated, he was completely cured and willing to write any kind of a laudatory testimonial the management might dictate.

"They may not kill you in that emporium of panaceas," explained the adventurer when he finally got out, "but they would scare you to death if you stayed with them long enough. It took 30 francs and 40 minutes of French to make a getaway."

"French!" said his friend. "How did you ever talk French?"

"Hell!" said the doughboy. "I had to talk French!"

The Casino at Aix is undoubtedly the finest Y.M.C.A. in France. It is large, ornate and comfortable. It sits in grounds which beat it—lawn, gravel walks, hedges, trees, and a grotto. It used to be a gambling hall, comparable to Monte Carlo. Billiards is the most blooded game offered now.

Many of the civilians—French, English, and American—who spent the summer in Aix in previous years are there this season, and although the American soldier predominates, he is by no means the whole show, not even at the Casino.

There are beautiful girls around the grounds, some of whom speak English—"a very leet" (but seem to do it better with somebody else on the veranda the next day), children and old folks of unquestionably exclusive social station. But they have all taken up the Americans. Some say Americans are a tad, others that they have come to defend France and must be entertained, but one old French gentleman says it's just because Americans are good fellows—and he is probably right.

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MARSHAL GREET YANKS ON LEAVE

Y.M. Man and Sergeant Lead Party of 60 Per-missionnaires

For all of the stories of the unexpected and unusual which this war has produced, there haven't been many more unique military episodes than the one which took place in the Savoie leave area a few days ago.

Sixty American soldiers were quartered in the hotels of the little town of Challes-les-Eaux not concerned in anything more strenuous than chasing shade spots around during the day when General Joffre, Marshal of France, arrived there for a rest.

What the etiquette of the situation required was doubtful. None of the soldiers had ever seen the general, and all were extremely anxious to, and all were keenly desirous of paying the homage that they, and the rest of the American Army, feel for the Marshal of France. Even the Army old timers couldn't quote a precedent in Philippine campaigns or on the Mexican border. A series of hasty conferences were held which disclosed these facts:

There wasn't a commissioned officer in the town.

Not one of the 60 spoke French.

The Y.M.C.A. man did.

Marshal Would Be Pleased

Would the Y.M.C.A. man help them out? He would. He brushed his hair, shifted his glasses, and called on the Marshal. He came back half an hour later. Marshal Joffre would be extremely pleased to review the American troops in front of his hotel.

A sergeant was chosen as C.O. The 60—and they were from every branch of the service—fell in, adjusted themselves according to height, counted off, did squads right for 15 minutes to get back into form and, headed by the sergeant and the Y.M.C.A. man-interpreter, presented themselves.

Marshal Joffre expressed a genuine pleasure at meeting them, spoke of the gratitude of France and the exploits of the American soldiers. At the conclusion he gave the Y.M.C.A. man 40 autographed briar pipes which were subsequently distributed as prizes at O.D. amateur nights in the Casino.

HOME FOR LOST BAGGAGE

The Q.M.O. has established a home for unclaimed baggage. Members of the A.E.F. who have lost baggage should make inquiry of the Depot, Quarters, or the Salvage Division, Glévres, giving an accurate description and pertinent facts.

A central storage depot has been established at Glévres. Private property of officers and men which cannot accompany its owners to the field is to be packed and labeled with name, rank and organization and turned over to the division salvage squad for shipment to Glévres.

Personal property of officers and men who are absent in hospital more than two weeks also will be sent to Glévres, under Bulletin 18, Hq. S.O.S.

The order also directs that barracks bags and other Government property which cannot be delivered by the Transportation Department will be sent to Salvage Depot Intermediaire No. 8, St. Pierre des Corps, near Tours.

"DON'T FORGET ME," ELSIE'S ORDERS

Doughgirl Hints at Return and Mother Sends Love

She's gone away, but not very far, and she's coming back. Here's her letter:—

"My dear boys—Each and every one, Hello! and an au revoir for the present. I'm in London about to make some money. You all know how difficult it is to find over there, and I have not found any for seven months. I shall be thinking about you and pulling for you.

"To those that I have met and had the honor of singing for I say, keep the pep that you had when I saw you. To those I did not see I say, I'm sorry, but I will get you yet.

"Don't forget me. Good luck to you all. Get a Hun for me, and if you want anything that I can get for you, write to me, Palace Theater, London. You see, I shall not be very far away from you all and the big show.

"Always your friend,
"ELSIE JANIS.

"P.S.—Love from Mother."

ADDRESS CARDS TO SPEED UP MAIL

A.P.O.'s Will Forward Information to Central Records Office

If you are going to be transferred from your present unit to another, or have a leave, casual, remember to go to the post office and have your address changed.

No matter what post office you happen to be near, just walk in and ask for a change-of-address card, fill it out as it is prescribed on the card, hand it back to the postmaster and your job is done. The card will then be sent to the Central Post Office at Tours and your letters will not go astray.

This card will be available at any American post office and at base and camp hospitals. It will be filled out by the soldier transferred from company to company, or from one unit to another. However, or where it is impracticable for the soldier to fill out a card, it will be made out by unit mail orderlies or other suitable authority.

PARIS TAXI FARES UP

If you are in Paris and, as all Americans do, take a taxi rather than try out your French on a gentrime to ask the direction, don't get sore if the driver charges you 25 centimes more than shows up on the meter. The fare of all taxis in the city has been shoved up, but the meters haven't been marked up to correspond.

Memorandum 66 from Headquarters, District of Paris, says that the 25 centimes is a just charge and must in all cases be met.

However, the extra 5 sous is the most that the taxi-proprietor has a right to charge you over and above the stated price. If he tries to stick you 10 francs for a two block ride don't pay it.

SUNDAY, JR., IN SERVICE

A son of the man who said that the Kaiser is so low he would have to make an altitude flight in an airplane to reach hell is now in the A.E.F. service in London.

"Billy" Sunday said the mouthful. His boy, 1st Lieut. George Sunday, S.C., is in the purchasing department of the Signal Corps at the London S.O.S. base section.

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From the Minute Man of '76 to the Minute Men of 1918 in France

COMRADES: "No doubt you will be surprised to hear from me," is, I believe, the proper way for a man who has never written to a soldier before to begin his letter to him.

I know you will be surprised to hear from me but I am going to take the privilege of the old soldier and talk to the young ones. I am not going to give any advice though, and I am not going to tell you how much more stormy were the times of '76 than are the times of 1918. In the first place because you wouldn't agree with me, and in the second place, because you might be right after all.

So I will tell you a story of something that happened nearly one hundred and ten years ago, that may be kind of interesting to you.

In those days there weren't many newspapers and there weren't any railroads and it took a long time to make a trip and it took a long time for news to get from one place to another.

Along about the first of the year 1809, a man who lived in Boston, decided he would visit his brother who had gone to Kentucky many years before as a pioneer. It took him many weeks to make the trip by stage coach and horseback, and he arrived on his brother's farm, near Hodgenville, Kentucky, about the end of the second week in February.

Naturally a man who had come all the way from Boston was a very interesting visitor to this little backwoods place, and they asked him a great many questions about what was going on in the world. "Well," he says, "about all the talk we hear back home is about a man named Napoleon who seems to be musing things up pretty bad over in Europe. This fellow Napoleon appears to be about the most important person in the world just now, and nobody talks about much of anything else. What's the news in your little town?"

"Oh," the natives told him, "nothing, such ever happens around here worth speaking of." Mrs. Tom Lincoln had a baby boy born yesterday. They are thinking of calling it Abraham, but that don't amount to nothing. Let's talk about this fellow Napoleon."

I don't know whether there is any moral to this story or not; unless it is that in the kind of democracy you boys are fighting for, the baby born in the backwoods cabin has the chance to grow into the greatest man in the world if he's got the stuff in him.

There's no telling how many of you who read this may some day be addressed as General. There's a mighty good chance that one of the boys who reads this will some day live in the White House; and maybe more of the boys than one. It's a great country, boys, and it gives man a chance to be great. I salute you.

THE MINUTE MAN OF '76

