

A Camp Soldier's Home.

Work in a soldiers' home, in the centre of a large camp, is so entirely different from anything of nursing or hospital life, that possibly for that reason a short account of it may be interesting.

We do not go there as nurses. Tommy Atkins is so aggressively well and hearty, that it is sometimes a little disappointing to anyone who loves nursing; but we go to try by our presence and daily efforts to make the camp home so cosy and attractive that the soldiers will spend their spare time there instead of in the canteen.

Picture, then, a large and cheerful coffee-bar, presided over by willing and obliging barmen, where many non-intoxicating drinks and many seductive varieties of cakes, etc., may be had for a merely nominal price; and, further on, a reading room, well-stocked with magazines and papers, while various games, dear to the heart of Tommy, are to be found in different directions.

By day the home is full or empty according to what the men are doing. By night—i.e., from 6 to 10 p.m.—it is simply packed, and the ladies are hard at work trying to respond to the various demands.

"Could you teach me to play chess, miss?" "May I have pen and paper to write home?" "We're waiting to sing, miss, if you'll play for us." "Can I have a little talk with you, miss?" "Have you time to read my girl's last letter? I brought it on purpose to show you." And so on.

Reading love letters and giving matrimonial advice, we should explain, is a very important part of our work. "Ilka laddie has his lassie," and we have yet to meet the soldier who hasn't at least one girl—three or four being the average.

"I've three girls," says a young soldier, complacently, "one at home, one in the last station we were at, and one near this; and, miss, they all three keep pressing me to name the day, but I've no notion of marrying yet, not I!" Another Tommy, coming in with a rather rueful face, begs us to read a letter "from his girl in Scotland." It is a pious and sentimental epistle, telling of her loneliness in his absence, and expressing a hope that they might soon both be dead, "as then they would be reunited for ever and ever more."

"A nice letter—so affectionate," we say, tentatively. Tommy, however, still looks rueful, and finally blurts out: "But you see, miss, it isn't with her that I'd like to live for ever and ever, but with another girl that I like much better!"

Another man, having succeeded in button-holing a worker, pours out his love story with the usual zest. "It was all along of a seidlitz powder that Mary and I got thick. Some folks calls it 'falling in love,' but we calls it 'getting thick.' It was before I enlisted, and Mary she was 'ousemaid at the 'otel where I was boots, and one day Mary she got a 'eadache, and lay down too sick to move. So I went for a seidlitz powder and put it in a glass of water and stirred it with a spoon, miss, with a spoon, and, says I, 'Drink it up, Mary,' and she drank it up, and from that moment we got thick."

(Why he laid such emphasis on the spoon, we failed to understand, unless love potions are usually stirred with the fingers.)

Singing is their great delight, and it is really inspiring to hear the volume of sound that goes up, as "Hold the Fort" or "Pull for the Shore" is being sung. "Where is My Wandering Boy?" is a special favourite, but we have positively refused to have it, since one summer evening, when a soldier was singing it as a solo, and as he passionately demanded, "Oh, where is my boy to-night?" a voice replied through the open window: "Try in a corned meat tin!"

Soldiers are wonderfully loyal to one another, and often see no harm in lying, if thereby they can help a comrade. On one occasion, two lads whom we knew well, were romping together, when one accidentally gave the other a severe cut on the head, which had to be stitched. Seeing the victim decorated with a bandage, and, dreading punishment for the aggressor, we said, anxiously, "But you needn't say who did it, need you?" And with a most self-righteous air, he replied, "Oh, no, miss, when the doctor asked me how it happened, I just told him I fell on the steps and cut it myself!" It was a little embarrassing to perceive that one was evidently expected to applaud.

These, however, are the lighter touches. The true work of the homes is too sacred to write of, but we believe that Up Yonder is recorded the history of many a man, once a drunkard and blasphemer, who, under the softening influence of the soldiers' Homes, has been led to see himself a lost sinner, and to come to the feet of the Christ Who died for him. And, when we think on these things, we thank God, and take courage.

PRIMROSE.

PRESENTATION OF GOLD BADGES.

At the Annual Meeting of the Royal Victorian-Trained Nurses' Association, held in Melbourne, the President said that he had a very pleasant announcement to make. Members of the Association desired to express their appreciation of the invaluable services of the first Honorary Secretaries and of the first Editor of *Una* by conferring upon them the highest honour in their power, viz., the Gold Badge of Membership.

Mrs. Deakin presented Miss Glover, Dr. W. A. Wood, and Dr. Meyer, with the gold badges of the Association, suitably inscribed. The recipients expressed their thanks and appreciation of the honour done them.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS.

The sincere thanks of the members of the International Council of Nurses is due to Dr. Anna Hamilton, Directrice of the Maison de Santé Protestante at Bordeaux, and Hon. Vice-President of the Council in France, for the generous gift of the journal, *La Garde-Malade Hospitalière* from the first issue in July, 1906, to the International Nursing Library which is being collected in London.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)