

## C. A. H. Notes.

Before "Pat's Post" appears the Catholic Hut should be open. And I'm wondering who will be more pleased—the boys in the Camp or the workers in the Hut. For if the boys have felt the loss of the Hut, so, by all accounts, have the workers. They say they're spoiling for want of a job.

During the last few weeks, while the new sectional Hut was being erected, the Canteen work was necessarily suspended. The C.A.H. Office was the only rallying point. This is exactly 8 feet by ten, and in this space the piano found a temporary home, and here the *Parakeets* used to assemble, to practice over their songs, or to try out their patter.

The official shack contained but five chairs and a piano stool: and with a Parakeet on each chair, and perhaps two perched on the piano stool, the official quarters used to become somewhat congested.

We were seriously thinking of having "The Aviary" printed over the door. But instead of this, someone dubbed it "The Coop," because of the various fowl to be found there.

"Umph!" said a Sergeant one day, with a gloomy shake of his head, "but you do gather together some queer birds in this hut of yours."

"You're not speaking of Parakeets, I hope?"

"Well, no," he responded, "I was thinking of some clinkites and others."

"As for that," I said, "I never know whether those boys are my friends because they get into clink, or whether they get into the clink because they are my friends. Anyway, I don't know a better bunch of boys than you'll find in that clink. All that is wrong with them is misdirected energy."

Business hours in the shack were never dull. Sometimes it was a new man trying to find a cup of tea, somewhere or anywhere. With pen poised in mid-air I would say—"No tea, nothing but a cigarette." And provided I could find a match, too, all was well. If not, off he'd dart, or hobble, as the case might be—borrow a light, and come back for a chat.

One day a man came into the shack with something on his mind. We didn't get on to it for some time. Then he started in about his girl and the difficulty of taking a girl out to the pictures on £2 a month. "And so yer lets the girl pay—wall! I guess yer feels like a peahen with its tail feathers pulled off."

Well, from that, we got on by slow stages to letter-writing. He then asked me if I'd write a letter for him to his girl.

"All right," I said, taking up my pen. "Just tell me what you want to say." At that, he paused.

"I was figurin'—as maybe yer'd know," he said, tentatively.

"Well, after all, she's *your* girl," I objected.

"She sure is," he answered with spirit, "but happens," he drawled slowly, "I'm not much

good at making up a story."

"Neither am I," said I, "no good at all at fiction."

But he sat there undisturbed at the deadlock, chewing tobacco and expectorating thoughtfully from time to time. The responsibility of thinking it out was left to me. After some minutes I broke the silence. "How about getting down to business," I asked. "I guess we'd better," he agreed, "for the boys'll be lining up presently for supper," which showed that if that Yank was madly in love, he still retained this mental balance on essentials.

"She writes good," he said, fragmentarily, handing me a few of his love letters, "and she is good, too, and that's a cinch, for I've tempted her every ways I have, and that's straight talk."

"Need you have done that," I asked.

"Bet yer life," said he, "fur if I hadn't tried her out, I might 'a took a wrong 'un' "Yes," he said, with finality, "when it comes to marryin' you wants 'er to be good for sure."

"All the same," I said, with equal firmness, "I don't think you need patent your method."

It took some time to write that letter, but eventually it was completed, and he carried it off to the post.

I haven't seen him since, but I hear that he's in hospital—at Eastbourne, where his girl is. Now what I want to know is, whether he's really ill? And if not, what was his particular method of "swinging the lead?" For if he was such a poor hand at making up a story to tell the girl, how did he hand out such a successful story to the M.O.? Verily the ways of men are strange, and hard to be understood of the people (or at least of that section that wears skirts). Anyway if that seafaring man was no scholar, neither was he a fool, for he had to make Eastbourne, and he did, "sure."

Other times another boy in blue would blow in, and, sitting down, would smoke in silence while I grappled with measurements for linoleum.

"Well!" I'd say over my shoulder, "anything doing?"

"Yep! up for orderly room this morning."

"What have you done?" I'd ask. Then he'd tell me. Perhaps it wasn't much—knocking down an N.C.O. or something like that.

"Any extenuating circumstances?" I'd demand, quite impartially. He'd mention it.

"Think you'll get away with it?" I'd say, anxiously.

"Sure!" was the firm reply, given with entire conviction.

"Of course, you might," I'd say, hopefully, "because the C.O. is awfully sensible like that."

After studying his watch again, he'd get up. "Guess I'd better beat it." Then, as he moved off, "I'll look in again this afternoon—to let you know." But when the afternoon came, and he didn't, I'd know the inevitable had happened, and the clink had again swallowed up a friend.

And so they drifted in and out of the Coop—electricians and engineers, builders and fuel con-