

ESTAMINETS.

ON being asked by the Editor of the REVIEW to contribute an article on the above-mentioned well-known land-marks of this fair land, we were a little dubious as to whether he had come to the right people for it or not. We are quite sure that we are not the most experienced hands in the Unit when it comes to being habitual visitors of these estaminets, but we will admit that we have knocked around them a little, so will try to elucidate to the readers of this young paper some of our experiences in connection with some of these well-known places.

These estaminets line the main roads from the danger zone back, although one will occasionally be found isolated, standing back from the main lines of communication, and very often in the middle of the owner's farm, who has given up the less profitable tilling of the soil for the more profitable dispensing of alcoholic beverages to the thirsty members of the B.E.F.

The estaminets vary as to size, appearance, etc., according to their location and the private means of the proprietor. Some of the better ones, besides having the main room with its tables and chairs (where most of the *clientele* gather to allay their thirst), very often have one or two ante-rooms, where the privileged patrons occasionally can secure a drink after hours. The estaminets are only open four hours a day—two at noon and two at night—so you can imagine what a privilege it is to belong to this class, and thus be able to secure a "pick-me-up" any time of the day or night, providing there are no gendarmes or M.P.s hanging around.

The other class of estaminet only has the main room, and besides being used as a café it serves as a living-room of the residing family. These individuals, when the estaminet is open, sit around their urn-shaped stoves, and although they appear to be ignorant of what is going on around them or what is being said, generally are very attentive when the men of the various units there start telling one another where they are located or when and where they are likely to be moved to. In these estaminets, owing to lack of room, the privileged class does not exist, and hence one can only get an eye-opener when the place is open for business.

As a general rule the name of the estaminet is painted in big letters across its front, such as "In den Waghackerij," "A la Yser," "Au cheval blanc," etc. To the customers of the various estaminets, however, these mean nothing, and very rarely are they used to designate one. They are known by the first name of the prettiest barmaid the place employs, such as "Alice's," "Jenny's," "Maria's" (which, by the way, are very popular ones with the boys), "Madeline's" etc. Very often they are known by a nick-name that the place has received, such as "Dirty Dick's" (Fritz seems to be after this one, as he very often "plants" a few around here), "Rum-Jar's," and "Gun-Cotton's."

It is good business on the part of the proprietor to employ a good-looking barmaid, and as a result one never sees a good-looking dame, or rarely so, outside of the various estaminets. These young ladies speak very good English, everything considered, and are out tooth and nail for all the spare coin they can get; consequently this region, anyway, is more prosperous than before the War.

Naturally enough, one must say a few words about the beverages these young ladies hand out. Invariably they all stock the old stand-bys—beer and stout—and for a couple of days after pay-days, champagne. That is about the extent of their stock, with the possible exception of a couple of bottles each of red and white wine. The patrons of the B.E.F. don't favour the latter very much, as it doesn't give much "response," and is rather hard to get down.

Regarding the beer—their most stable and saleable article—we have very little to say. It is hardly worth mentioning. Has no "kick" at all, and one could drink a large quantity without feeling any effect. It is no doubt partly due to this that our Unit has such a very good standing as far as sobriety is concerned, and that drunkenness is practically unknown. Player's cigarettes, Flags, and some other brands of cigarettes which are impossible to smoke are generally stocked too.

One can readily see why there are so many estaminets on these roads. Very little capital is required to start one, and the chief feature in the host's eye is the large return for the money expended.

At night, as we have said, the estaminets are open for two hours only—from six to eight—and it is during this period that the greater amount of business is done. The boys have finished their day's work, and besides the pretty barmaid, there is some-entertainment of some sort—chiefly music—arranged for every evening as an additional drawing-card, and for a change they flock to the nearest estaminet (in our case generally Jenny's, sometimes Maria's). As the evening performance is practically the same in all estaminets, it is really immaterial which one you go to, as they all offer you a good time. Every one of the better class boasts of a piano, and often, if the proprietor is a hustler, a paid pianist too. If not, then anyone who can play is entirely welcome to sit down and give the gathered assemblage a display of his talent. In return for this the barmaid keeps him refreshed gratis, and more than once it has been our regret that we were unable to play, more especially when our finances were strained.

Occasionally a chap drifts in who thinks he can sing, and without much coaxing waxes strong over such songs as "Because," "Good-Bye," etc., and which, needless to say, are out of place and very often not suited for the singer's voice. It is awful sometimes what we have to go through while having our evening tonic. On the other hand, "Rags" are sung by fellows who can really sing them, and everyone present enjoys these far better than the above classic pieces.

This is how we spend a profitable evening, until the hammer falls on the bar, the pretty maid says, "Time, gentlemen," and with a heavy heart we depart for less comfortable quarters. As we have said, these little evenings are the only break from the monotony of this Army life, so it is no wonder the estaminets are so well patronised.

HANKAM.

THIS AND THAT.

1.—A conversation overheard in a barber's shop went like this:—

Barber: "Good morning, sir."

Customer: "Bon jour, monsieur. Say, did you ever shave a monkey?"

Barber: "No, sir, but I'll have a try."

The peculiarity of this is that the customer belonged to the 3rd Can. C.C.S.

* * *

2.—Noiseless kisses are really the only dangerous kind.

* * *

3.—It is a sin to believe evil of others, but it is seldom a mistake.

* * *

4.—There is but one fault to find with discretion—there is always a tendency to carry it too far.

* * *

5.—When a woman tells a man she loves him, she always has a reason. It may be that a bill will arrive the next day, it may be a new hat she wants, it may be another man.

* * *

6.—When a woman is sure a man loves her, she tests his love in every imaginable way. When a man is sure a woman loves him, he looks around for an exit.

* * *

7.—Have you seen a cat play with a mouse? That is the way a woman plays with a man who loves her, with this difference: the mouse sometimes escapes.

* * *

8.—True love starts at a temperature of 110 and ends in a cold sweat.

* * *

9.—Favouritism: Where a husband shows a preference for his wife.

* * *

10.—The first time a woman cries, it is a catastrophe. The second time it is a calamity. The third time it is unfortunate; and after that it is simply a nuisance.

* * *

11.—Politician: A fellow who aids in making laws and then laughs at those who keep them.

* * *

12.—I've heard some people say they were the guys that put the salt in the ocean, but if lies were waves, they would be the Pacific.

IN THE DINING HALL.

1: "We should get better food, and more of it."

2: "I wish the Orderly Officer would come round."

3: "He would like the taste of it."

4: "If he had my share, he'd have no taste at all."

5: "Three together might do for a taste."

Orderly Sergeant: "Shun! Orderly Officer."

Orderly Officer: "Any complaints?"

1: "No, sir."