



# ENTERTAINING THE WOUNDED

**W**E owe them a debt of gratitude we never can repay—we stay-at-homes! But we are so used to seeing them now—the maimed and the lame and the sick—that we consider their presence a matter of course. In fact, we are sometimes a little impatient with the one-legged men on crutches who parade the main streets and delay our progress. The war has waged so long and their heroic sacrifices were made so far away. "Besides, the government is looking after them," we say, "it's none of our business!"

Some of the returned men have been behaving badly lately. There have been raids conducted in an unheroic manner when hundreds of soldiers invaded the premises of law-abiding citizens with the object of capturing three or four alien employees. But are we not somewhat to blame? There is a proverb that starts: "Give a dog a bad name . . ." and it is equally true that if you treat a man like a gentleman he will act like one.

I have heard people complaining of the strain on their sympathies. It depresses them to see so many maimed—as if their feelings mattered! But the cripple is equally sensitive to those who stare and to those who ostensibly refrain from looking in his direction. There are at Roehampton, England, many men who are both armless and legless, and Miss Constance Collier invited them to see a play in which she was taking part. Unfortunately, the audience was taken by surprise, and when these men were carried down the aisle one woman fainted and another cried out in horror:

"Oh, my God!"

The poor wreck of a soldier near her said, sweetly: "Pardon, madam!"

Is it not we who should apologize daily for being so strong and well when they have done all this for us? There is one man—husband, son, friend or brother (I think each of us must know at least one) who has gone overseas. Perhaps he may never come back, but if he had! . . . Perhaps he is fighting now and we are wondering if he will come out alive, and if he does! Nothing will be too good for him, no indeed! Then can't we feel just a little bit the same for all the rest?

**A** BEAUTIFUL touring-car rolling slowly through the park one hot summer day passed a maimed man in khaki very hot, very tired, very grimy.

"I say, can you give a fellow a lift?" he called out. The driver of the car half stopped, but a lady with her pet dog reclining in the back seat motioned him to go on.

"He's horribly hot and dusty!" she murmured.

Of course this is an exception. Dozens of motors call every day at the Convalescent Homes to take patients for an airing. One lady makes a practice of sending her chauffeur (himself a returned soldier) with her car at least one fine afternoon a week. Sometimes she goes, too, and the boys who have met her always hope she will be there. Last time there were five, all under twenty-one, all with only one leg. One had lost an arm and an eye as well.

"Bill hogged it," said the others, "he took a whole shell all to himself."

"They are quite the cheerfulest men I know," this lady said; "it does me worlds of good to be with

them, and I enjoy the outing quite as much as they do."

Another woman who owns a country house by the lake just outside of Toronto has fitted up her coach-house as a club house for returned soldiers, with a canteen attached. There they may stay all day long and behave just as they would in their own homes. And there is no obligation, no R.S.V.P. attached to her invitation. It is open to all of them to come when they can.

**S**OMETIMES moving picture shows come to the hospitals, more often the convalescents go to them, and managers of local theatres are usually willing to give spare seats to a body of convalescents, if they are approached in the right way. Very often private street cars can be obtained for their transportation, at other times motors are lent, but the soldier who is able to go to the theatre is usually capable of travelling about by himself. He dislikes being collected and chaperoned as if for a Sunday-school treat. He takes a pride in clambering into street-cars unassisted.

Many of them are too weak to go about, too nervous for motoring, but they like to see visitors occasionally, cheerful souls who will take their minds off the dreadful visions of the battle-field and of the long, hopeless years before them. If you really enjoy visiting them, be very sure they will like to have you, but unless you establish personal interests between yourself and the patient and are fairly constant in your attendance, it is useless to begin. Several of our hospitals have placed each ward in charge of one society—sometimes a church organization, or a chapter of the Daughters of the Empire—and the members of this society pledge themselves to look after the ward in providing the little delicacies that the authorities permit, brightening the place with flags or blooming plants and visiting them with discretion and regularity. They always begin with enthusiasm, the officer in command of one of the hospitals tells me, but sometimes their interest wanes, the plants die and the patients are neglected. This visiting should not be undertaken by people who have no other interest in life. If you can't bring outside interests into their lives, stay at home, or help them as unobtrusively as possible in sending to their libraries the kind of books and magazines you know they will like, or the home-made delicacies that are sanctioned by the physician in charge. They don't like having people come to stare at them, murmuring,

"Poor boy! And so young!"

They don't want to talk about their wounds and where they got them, but they respond to real human kindness and are quick to detect the difference between pity and sympathy.

In fact, soldiers, like all the rest of us, prefer doing deeds of kindness to having deeds of kindness practised on them. The blind convalescent basking in the sun is happy telling thrilling tales of battle to the little waifs who have gathered eagerly around him, but he is apt to become morose when a lady visitor whom he has never seen before tries to extract these same stories. The scant success of her benevolent efforts is admirably depicted in "Punch."

At one time a dear old lady is asking a crippled and much-banded warrior if he has been to the front, and he replies:

"No'm. I was cleaning the bird cage and the darn thing flew out and bit me!"

Two other much damaged warriors asked the same question replied:

"Bless you, no, mum; we've just 'ad a bit of a scrap together, to keep fit."

**E**VEN the concerts held in the hospitals should be arranged systematically, and in most convalescent homes certain days are set apart when they may be held. Many people thoughtlessly engage the busy commanding officers in charge in lengthy telephone conversations, under the impression that they are conferring a favour in arranging concerts. Perhaps they are offering the very best musical talent of the city, but that is not what the average soldier likes most. He usually prefers to have someone sit down at the piano and play the brightest and newest songs, and sing catchy airs in which he may join in the chorus, and a recitation by one of his mates will bring forth greater applause than readings by a professional of long standing.

When he is invited to parties he likes to know "just what he's in for." Invitations that come to the convalescent homes asking a certain number of the boys to tea, or supper, are posted on a notice board and the men wanting to go are asked to sign their names, but there is no great rush of applicants unless the hostess has gained an enviable reputation amongst the boys.

Sometimes the ladies auxiliary of a church will invite fifty men for supper on a certain evening. They prepare a bountiful feast, to be followed by prayer and a concert by the choir. But the soldiers hear that the ladies of the church will be there in a body to wait on them and they one and all begin to make excuses. They prefer the seclusion of their own hospital, with its cheery reading and writing-rooms—often it has a billiard-room as well. They prefer their little friendly games of cards to the hymn-singing and home-cooking of the Ladies' Aid, and only as a result of a special appeal from the O. C., who realizes the disappointment of the kind ladies who have prepared the banquet do twenty men promise to attend, and of these eight put in a reluctant appearance.

**D**ON'T give all your sympathy to the man in khaki.

There is always a little halo about his head, in some people's eyes. One young girl who is a constant visitor in the hospitals says that it is a shame that the soldiers should be given such makeshift quarters. She believes that all the beautifully-equipped civic hospitals should be turned over to the military authorities and the sick civilians housed "anywhere at all." She sometimes makes sarcastic remarks in street cars about never getting a seat now that all the gallant men are overseas. Once she was overheard by a young man who was gazing out of the window and when he turned around a face of ashen pallor and tried to clamber to his feet, she saw on the lapel of his coat a service badge!

It is often after he reverts to "civies" and takes up his work again that the returned soldier most

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