

# Yachting With Our Invalided Soldiers

Comedies and Tragedies Revealed on a Day's Outing Up the Sound With One Hundred Fighting Men Convalescent at Hospital Number One in the Bronx



CONVALESCING SOLDIERS ABOUT TO START ON A TRIP UP THE HUDSON ON THE YACHT SURF AND MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S MOTOR CORPS WHO BROUGHT THEM FROM THE BASE HOSPITAL TO THE PIER IN AUTOMOBILE AMBULANCES

It was barely 9 o'clock, but the heels of the Fourth Estate dug the asphalt like dough. Over the rails and cinders at the foot of West Seventy-ninth street the wet air rippled and danced. Seen through it, the harlequin freighters at anchor were monsters of delirium, so that a boy convalescent from a fever must have groaned in the thought of a relapse. But the white yacht, the Surf, was real.

The boys, a hundred of them, were put down on the pier by automobiles of the Motor Corps of America. The Major commanding the corps checked them off and the uniformed girl drivers, managing somehow to look fresh in spite of worsteds and leather leggins, helped those whose hurts required it up the gangplank. On board, in a cooler uniform, a canteen unit of the Mayor's committee of women was ready, with Dr. Harris, to make the guests at home.

The guests looked their parts. They might have been straight from France. As a matter of fact, they were merely down for the day from "Number One," hospital cases from the cantonments, including hopeful specimens of the physically imperfect raw rookie whom Uncle Sam's surgeons tinker a bit and turn out sounder than new.

These last would go over some day, as would most of the others. A few would have to be honorably discharged, and they were the ones who stayed sober sided and wistful the holiday through.

#### Looked Like Movie Battle Heroes.

But the hundred would have pleased a movie director filming casualties. Bandaged heads (after mastoid operations) represented shrapnel; hobblers with canes did duty for Blighty wounds in the leg; there were three or four lint bound hands and arms, and several boys abstained from dancing and even from the games around the tables, preferring to rest quietly against a cushion in a steamer chair.

"Got a tube in m' back," explained one of them. "Did have half a dozen," he added proudly, "and one was ten inches long."

"Good Lord, what hit you?"

"Empyæma." He made it rhyme with idea. The Fourth Estate had forgotten what it was.

"In civilian life," said the convalescent, with lofty condescension, "I think y' call it congestion of the lungs."

The Surf dropped downstream to the Battery, ascended the East River, always daintily picking her way among those nightmares of camouflage at anchor, put the broiling city behind her via Hell Gate and made for a few favored leagues of the otherwise dead and glassy Sound, which had the only cooling breeze there was.

The piers and the rocks of Manhattan's East River front were all scrambled and spidered over with small boys, who had got right down to first principles for swimming, and a private from Iowa, seeing the town he had read about, wanted to know if that was not the Bowery. Which drew

yells from his neighbors, who had done New York before, and broke what social was defying the heat.

There was a Tommy on board, on his long way around to the front after service in China. Gail stones had interrupted him, but he said the American surgeons did one well. He would have said his host and hostesses did one likewise—a bit of all right, in fact. Such was the uproarious opinion of his Yankee brothers in arms and momentary tribulation.

Good cigarettes, wafted by sweet smiles (a ripping lot those canteen girls, Mr. Atkins would have put it), went the rounds about every ten minutes; flowing bowls flowed lemonade all day long; at tea time tea appeared, piping hot, and it was surprising how many besides Mr. Atkins preferred it to lemonade. With it came a pound cake and a nut cake that man Hoover had had no say about, and trays of such fruits as only sick and wounded soldiers see these days.

#### No Tea Fight Trifles, These.

Luncheon began with beef tea and went on to ice cream, by way of chicken salad and sandwiches—none of your tea fight trifles, either, but good solid structures of ham or cheese that a fellow could set his teeth in.

Victrolas were kept busy fore and aft. A talented corporal had a ukulele which provoked a little close harmony from time to time. The mild and sedate game of dominoes took a boom when pretty canteen workers introduced it; and checkers were pressed into service along with cards for another game, stag exclusively, which involved tactical operations called opening, seeing and staying.

Some of the boys itched to dance. All were bashful. But it was fun to watch the technic of a couple of young scapegraces who sidled, ever so accidentally, into conversation with the prettiest girls and brought up, ever so casually, the topic they had in mind. Dancing started in the course of nature by spontaneous combustion.

One invalid buck private was the biggest buck Indian alive; three his size could hold a sector against the Prussian guard. Another was of the race and hue of that terrible Corporal Johnson, who is sporting the Croix de Guerre somewhere in France, having wiped up No Man's Land with a Hun patrol. Yaphank Bennie's friend, Private Abie Einstein, was there in high good humor, which was not marred a bit when a former reporter from Norfolk—invalided, he said, because "my heart's too small"—stood up and spoke a comic piece about Rosenthal going to war. Others were needlessly embarrassed on Abie's behalf.

A shockheaded doughboy obliged with a song about P. T. Barnum, sung or rather declaimed so much in the George M. Cohan style that the Fourth Estate bore up on learning later that he had worked for George in civilian life. The Doctor sang a solo. The Doctor, so far as the guests could see, was everywhere

at once and the guests never knew, thanks to courtesy, how patiently he and the yacht's officers were watching, watching the canvas of the awnings, on the chance of a live cigarette stub carelessly thrown away.

The medical shepherd of the flock was a captain of the Reserve Corps, distinguished by white hair and the fine rosy face of a Roman prelate. He sat it out with the jacket of his uniform duly buttoned to the throat, and the Fourth Estate privately wondered how much further This Man's Army will have to go in This Man's War before the cut of the hot weather jacket will be mercifully changed.

It was noticeable that the talkative preferred talking their former civilian shop to their present one. Khaki is a grab bag; you never know what the next buck private will turn out to have been. In one case, for instance, he turned out to have been a vampire maker, a conspirator in the rise of Theda Bara!

A quiet, washed out little fellow wore his eyes half way back through his head and when he spoke you had to bend close to hear. There was no need of his telling that he had been sick as a dog. But his explanation was startling. A woman, probably a German agent, had doped him with a cigarette.

He believed it, too.

"Yes, sir; I and my partner was on a street car up in Springfield, 'n' she got on, 'n' she offered us cigarettes. My partner didn't smoke his. I lit mine when we got off, 'n' keeled right over. Come down with pneumonia. Pretty near died. My partner he put his cigarette in the stove, along with a good one. The good one burned. The one she give him wouldn't. That proved it, didn't it? That one wouldn't burn."

He told it over and over, the sunken eyes lighting. He has had pneumonia, certainly.

#### College Boy Mannefisms Ruled.

One youth's history no uniform could mask; the college boy, of a familiar sort, by every word and move of him. He danced extra well, in that way. And the betting is overwhelmingly good that he was raw new to camp when taken sick.

"Pleasant people," he observed to the Fourth Estate, as one man of the world to another. "Just what are they, here in New York—the aristocracy or the middle class?"

The day was too hot for sudden mental shocks. The Fourth Estate took the count and came up groggy. It sparred for wind.

"Who are the New York aristocracy?" Class Feeling in Khaki persisted.

"At present, men in uniform," replied the Fourth Estate. C. F. in K. smiled kindly.

"New York's too cosmopolitan," he said, "for me."

This pleased him. "You're from Massachusetts?"

He nodded.

"Don't you—er—don't you find the

army rather—er—cosmopolitan—in spots?"

"Oh, yes," said Sophomore Class Feeling. "Everything and everybody in it. But they all seem to get on pretty well together."

We were dying to ask him how he, in particular, got on with his drill sergeant, but refrained. He was a good boy, with a good clear eye; he will go back to camp, and further acquaintance with his drill sergeant will accomplish wonders in him. Besides, he was from hospital, and the never-sufficiently-to-be-mentioned heat was—hot. Cooler than shore, though. Cooler than a hospital ward, for instance. And it was good to see the weakest, the most wilted of the cases revived and replenished with ginger and interest in life by the kindly breeze.

A young sergeant with blue eyes and a nice, wide grin that would serve him as passport anywhere seemed a little disposed, unnaturally for his type, to flock by himself. The grin was only in evidence at long intervals; it appeared when he was acknowledging attentions, but quickly vanished. Yes, he danced sometimes—he liked to dance. But he didn't think he would begin just yet. Let some of the others start it.

#### Two Fingers Lost From Left Hand.

This was unaccountable at first. He appeared to be sound and active enough when he did move about at all. Then he held up his left hand, from which the two smallest fingers were gone; the middle finger resembled a broken ram's horn as much as anything. Even that shouldn't have resulted in such depression.

Gradually, rather shyly, his story came out of him.

When the automobile had knocked him under the street car he had been on the eve of getting his commission, had completed the aviator's training, and was flying his plane with the best. The commission was promised; he as good as had it; he'd bought his uniform.

Seven sound fingers and an eighth pretty good one are enough for flying. Not enough, however, for repairing your plane when brought down by engine trouble—beside which, Uncle Sam requires ten in the regulations. The officers had been nice about it, he said. They had offered to help him to a place in the non-combatant branches of the service. But as far as fighting the Hun was concerned this young sergeant was through in advance.

It wasn't the lost digits he regretted. "If I had to lose 'em, of course, I'd rather have lost 'em properly, over there." It was the commission he had earned, and most of all the chance to go and fight; on that his whole heart had been set.

At present he had the option, non-combatant service or honorable discharge forthwith. He didn't want the honorable discharge, he could not understand the spirit of an envious neighbor in the ward,

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