

The two sides of Army life : a talk to men about their welfare and their sex problems / by a company commander.

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THE TWO SIDES OF ARMY LIFE

A TALK TO MEN ABOUT
THEIR WELFARE AND THEIR
SEX PROBLEMS

by

A COMPANY COMMANDER

FOREWORD

I have read this pamphlet with very great interest.

It deals frankly and humanly with one of the most difficult and important problems which soldiers have to solve in time of war, and gives wise advice on the subject.

I strongly recommend it to the attention of both officers and men.

R. F. Adam

Adjutant-General to the Forces.

THE WAR OFFICE,
March, 1943.

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THE TWO SIDES OF ARMY LIFE

A TALK TO MEN ABOUT THEIR WELFARE AND THEIR SEX PROBLEMS, BY A COMPANY COMMANDER

THIS talk is about your own happiness and welfare in the Army. There is no reason why you should not be happy and improve your own welfare in the Army, but the matter rests with yourselves largely. Officers and N.C.Os. can do a lot to help a man, but in the end it rests with himself what happiness he gets, and whether he gains or loses from his time in the Army.

The wise man, then, is the man who says, "I know that I did not want to join the Army or go to war, and that it has upset all my plans, taken me away from home, and all that, but there it is : it can't be helped now. Here I am in the Army ; it's no good looking back. I am going to do my best as a soldier, and I am also going to get all I can out of the Army life, so that when I go back to Civil I'll have gained, not lost, from my experience."

Now, that "going back to Civil" is an important point. Be quite clear in your mind all the time—not only now, but whatever happens later on—that you are going back to Civil ; it may be in a few months, or maybe a few years, but you *are* going back. Often many get killed, of course, but not you ! Don't on any account allow yourself to get into that kind of mood which says, "Oh, well, what does it matter what I do ? I've only a few months here and then I'll be dead. Better have a good time now." That sounds very dashing, I know, but actually it's a kind of silly boasting that fellows often use as an excuse for doing what they know quite well to be wrong.

In actual fact the minority only get killed, and the great majority return to civil life. Keep in your mind, then, the thought that this war is only a short interlude in your life, that many years of civil life lie ahead of you, and that, therefore, it's only the fool who lets his time in the Army spoil the rest of his life.

After all, it's a bit stupid if, in fighting the war, we lose some of the good things we are fighting for ; it'll be a sad thing for this country if our men return to their homes worse men than they left them. No ! Make up your minds *now* that you are going back to your homes at the end of the war a better and not a worse citizen !

Now, if you are going to get the best out of the Army life, as I hope you will, the sooner you know where to find the good things the better.

We'll talk about the good things first. Some of you have, I expect, already found some for yourselves, and are beginning to appreciate them ; but there may be others who are still so busy regretting the fact that they are in the Army that they are missing quite a lot by wasting their time in vain regrets. Anyhow, if I tell you what the good things of Army life are, it'll only be your own fault after this if you don't realise them till you are back in civil life—quite a common mistake, I assure you, in the case of the regular soldier in peace-time.

Well, first on the list I would put *good health* : the opportunity that Army life gives you of getting fit and toughening up your bodies. The value of a strong, healthy body is fairly obvious, I think, to any working man, whatever his job in Civil may be. It is, unfortunately, true that the majority of men in

industry today do not get a fair chance to develop their bodies when young, or to keep them fit as they grow older. Offices, mines, shops, iron foundries, factories, etc., are not the ideal places for health, and are not built with health as the main idea. Now, in the Army it is different : it is true to say that one of the main objects of the Army life and training is to turn out healthy, strong soldiers. Whatever you may think of the barracks square, I don't think you will complain that it is not a bracing, breezy spot !

Take advantage, then, of this great opportunity : of the good food and the regular meals, of the open-air life, of the sports, etc., and in a few months you will find you'll be able to do physical things like marching long distances without fatigue, sleeping out in the wet without harm, that would have been quite impossible for you to do in Civil. When you go home on leave your friends won't know you, nor will your wife or girl. And, last word on this point, do nothing foolish to spoil this fit body of yours. Both you and your country have need of it—now and after the war.

Second on my list of good things I would put the *new ideas and interests* that Army life in war-time cannot fail to bring to every man. War takes you away from your home town or village—Burnley, Wigan, Penrith, Liverpool, or wherever it may be—shows you new places and makes you meet with all kinds of different people with different jobs and different ideas to what you have yourselves. I dare say the war will also take you before it's finished into many parts of the world that you never dreamt of seeing a few months ago. Well, that's all to the good really. It's a good thing for men to mix up together and hear different points of view : the Southerners to meet the Northerners, the Lancashire men to meet Yorkshiremen, and for you to meet men of all races, and to learn in doing so that foreigners, after all, are quite human, not particularly funny, and much like ourselves in many ways. And keep your eyes open to compare the various ways of life, working conditions, and so on, of other peoples, so that when you return you will be able to see more clearly both what is valuable and what is bad in this country of ours.

The next few years or months are going to be full of interest to you men, and I'm sure you will never regret these new experiences. They are going to broaden and colour your lives for you, and in years to come, when you have got your grandchildren round your knees, you will be telling them with pride of all the wonderful things that you did and saw—many of them imaginary, no doubt, but they won't know that—at these barracks, in France, Timbuctoo, or wherever else the war may take you.

Make the most, then, of this opportunity to broaden your mind. Keep your eyes open to all the new interests around you, so that when you go back to civil life you will go back a wiser citizen than when you joined the Army.

Thirdly comes, I think, *comradeship*, perhaps the best thing that Army life has to offer a man. Nearly all men appreciate the friendship of a good mate, and Army life offers many more opportunities than civil life for real comradeship. There's something wrong with a man who can't make and keep a few good friends in the Army, and you will certainly need these friends before you have finished your war service.

When things are going wrong, when you are fighting in a tough place, perhaps, or when you are feeling fed up and depressed, it is a great thing to have a good friend to help. So make the most of this opportunity ; wherever you go, find and make good friends, remembering that friendship means unselfishness. Stick by them as they will stick to you, whatever happens. And in years to come I am quite sure that the memory of these friendships will be one of the good things that the war gave you.

Last on our list of good things I put *security of employment*. That may seem funny to some men who have never had to worry about the question of unemployment, but I am quite sure that many of you will know what I mean. It is no small thing to be freed—for as long as the war lasts, anyhow—of that "Friday evening" uncertainty, that fear of getting discharged that has made the lives of so many men insecure and miserable during the last ten years or so, especially in the North. You can be quite sure that the Army wants you and has no intention of sacking you, unless you behave very badly, until you have done your job and finished Hitler and his crowd!

So much, then, for the good side of Army life—Health, New Interests and Adventure, Good Comradeship, and Security of Employment. Make the most of these things whilst you have them, remembering how few jobs in civil life can offer them to you, and how you will miss them when you return to civil life.

And now for the bad side of Army life, because, of course, there is a bad side of it, and the man who has made up his mind, as I hope you all have, to return to civil life a better—not a worse—man for his time in the Army must be aware of it in order to be on his guard against it. I am quite sure that the great majority of men and women want to do right, and that many do wrong, often more or less unconsciously, because they just follow someone else and don't think much about what they are doing.

Well, the bad side of Army life about which I am going to speak to you is the lowered attitude of men towards women and sex matters, and it is due to two main reasons.

First, because you are all taken, for the first time in your lives in many cases, right away from all the influences to which you have been accustomed—away from the eyes of your wife or girl, your parents, your neighbours, and so on. I wonder if you realise how many of us behave well just because others who know us are watching what we do. Well, when you are in the Army you are right away from all that, on your own for the first time, with no one to stop you, and no one, except, perhaps, your friend, to mind much what you do.

Now, that's a big challenge to many men, and not all men come out of that challenge too well. There are always a few who think it is great to be away from all restraint and to do just what they like and have what they call a "really good time."

The second reason for this lowered attitude towards sex matters and women is because soldiers are all herded together in barracks and camps and away from all female influence. That's a bad thing in many ways; when men live together, whether in a barrack room or mess, it almost always happens that their talk gets coarser than it would be otherwise; dirty jokes, smutty stories, etc., get passed round, and almost unconsciously everyone suffers. Even those who don't take part can't help getting coarsened a bit by the general atmosphere. If the war goes on any length of time, unless you are on your guard against this danger and do your best to keep your minds and conversation clean, you will inevitably go back to civil life with a poorer attitude towards women than when you joined. Now, if that happens it will be a real tragedy, and what I am going to say from now onwards may help to stop that tragedy happening, if you fellows think that what I am going to say is sensible and worth following.

I don't want to preach to you; I want to give you a straight talk about the sex problems that you will come up against in your Army life. The decision of how you will meet these problems lies with you. It is a decision every man has to make for himself. But have no doubt that make it you must in war-time; if you don't, you will certainly fall some time to the many temptations that surround soldiers in times of war.

Have no doubt, either, that the decision is a vitally important one for you, and for those who love you now, or will do so in the future. It is no exaggeration to say that on how you decide now depends your future happiness and that of others dear to you. I believe everyone here will admit that the best thing for a man—the thing nearly all men in their hearts really want, whatever they may say—is a happy married life. Well, a happy married life has got to be earned. A good wife is not just a bit of good fortune ; it is the man who deserves her who gets her and keeps her.

Now, as I said before, I am certain that the great majority of men and women, however differently they may talk and boast, as nearly all men do about their conquests, really want to lead decent lives and not to spoil the lives of others to satisfy their own pleasure or lust. It has also been my experience that many men go wrong through ignorance or thoughtlessness, and one of the objects of this talk is to save men from that, and to make it impossible for them to say afterwards, " Well, if only I had known, or if someone had only told me in time." Don't forget that in sex matters it is often impossible to cancel what you've done, and that many men do make an awful muck of their lives by a single act.

Firstly, then, a word about sex and physical love. It ought to be a decent, clean, fine thing. Physical love was meant to be a thing to be enjoyed between husband and wife—a thing that a man and a girl looked forward to enjoying as part of their married happiness, something that a man keeps for the woman he loves ; and it was never meant to be a cheap, dirty thing, a matter for barrack-room jokes and stories, something to be had with anybody who can be got hold of, in some field or brothel, or to be enjoyed as a bit of fun with some temporary friend. If a man allows himself to have that kind of low idea about physical love, he is going to spoil what should be one of the best things in his life. If he is married he is going to spoil his wife, or hurt her ; and if he is single he will either spoil his girl by pulling her down to his level, or he will get what he deserves—a dirty-minded girl for his wife, and he will be miserable with her as a result.

I think this is no exaggeration, and if you will look round the men and women you know in your home town you are almost certain to find that the unhappy homes are those in which the man or woman, or both, are unfaithful and have low morals. Remember, too, that unhappy homes mean unhappy children always, and not one of you men, I know, really wants to be the cause of that.

So much for your attitude towards sex generally. Aim to keep it as high and as clean as you can—which is going to be far from easy.

You are going to meet, inevitably, wherever you go, with three kinds of women and girls, and I want to say a few words now about these three different kinds whom you will meet.

Firstly, there are the prostitutes, harlots, whores—call them what you will—whom you will meet round every barracks and camp in war-time and in the brothels of foreign towns.

I will deal with the first type first—i.e., prostitutes who are not in brothels (brothels, I am glad to say, we don't have in this country). Now, they are women who will go with any man and will have intercourse, usually for payment of some sort.

You will meet people who will say, " Well, there is no harm in going with them. It's their job ; they like it, and they get paid for it ; and if I don't someone else will." I think there are three good answers to that way of reasoning.

Firstly, a man owes it to his wife or his girl to keep his body clean for her. A man who respects himself, or his wife or his girl, should be ashamed of giving his body to a prostitute.

My second reason is that these women are often diseased ; it is obviously impossible for a woman who is going with men constantly to remain free from disease very long, and when she has it she will pass it on to you, as you know.

My third reason is that if men did not make use of these women they would not exist. It's our demand for them that is responsible for them being what they are. You may despise them as much as you like, but the facts remain that they are human beings just as you and I, that it was almost certainly a man who started them on the wrong track—although they may be equally responsible, of course—and that their lives are a hopeless tragedy. The one thing they nearly all want—a decent husband and family—they will never get, and they will be very lucky if they do not end their lives diseased and despised by everybody. Well, it's not a pleasant thought, is it? to think that men contribute to that tragedy by their selfish actions.

Now I want to say a special word about brothels ; these are licensed houses where women ply their trade for hire under supervision. You will find these houses in many continental towns and ports. It is more than probable that you will meet people who will advise you to use them. I think, therefore, you should know three things about them.

Firstly, all my remarks about the tragedy of the lives of prostitutes in this country apply more strongly to the women in these houses.

Secondly, the whole brothel business is a big racket on which many men wax prosperous and fat. It has been fought against for years, and was getting put under, but there is a danger of these racketeers seizing the opportunity that war gives them to start their ghastly business again. It would be a pity if British soldiers were to help them in their foul trade.

Thirdly, it is quite untrue to say that all the women go into these houses of their own free will. Usually they are trapped in many clever ways, or got hold of just because they are without other means of living. At the moment, I understand, the trade is doing very well, because the refugees are very cheap and easily got hold of.

And fourthly, don't think that because a woman in a brothel is inspected daily, as they usually are, that you are therefore safe from getting venereal disease. Far from it ; if anything, the danger in a brothel is greater than elsewhere. It is quite common, in war-time especially, for a woman to take thirty or forty men in one evening, and it is obvious that she cannot clean herself between each intercourse, so the danger of one of those thirty or forty men having a disease and passing it to the men who follow—and to the woman herself—must always be very great.

Well, those are the arguments against going with prostitutes, and I hope you will agree with me that they are very strong ones.

Before I go further I want to say a few words about venereal diseases. I don't want to make this a V.D. talk, as in any case you will be having a further talk on this subject from the Medical Officer, but I do want to say a few words about the disease here.

Venereal disease, of which there are two kinds—gonorrhœa and syphilis, usually called "clap" and "pox"—is a dirty, painful disease, and may be a very serious one—serious for the man who gets it and more serious still for the woman to whom he is married, or will marry, and their future children. Often, of course, and thank God for it, the effects may not be serious, as the

disease can be, and very often is now, completely cured. Nevertheless, the fact remains, as I have said, it is always a dirty and painful business and may be dangerous. It is also true to say that whenever a man has intercourse outside marriage he takes the risk of getting the disease, and it is for you to ask yourself whether for half an hour or a night of selfish pleasure it can possibly be worth while risking the health of yourself and of those you love.

Now, of course, you will meet men who will say, "Well, what the Captain says is all bunk; I've been again and again with women and I've never had V.D. If you take the right precautions you will be all right; it's perfectly safe." Well, what they say just isn't true; they may have been again and again, and been lucky; no precautions in the world—and, of course, if you are going to have intercourse you must take them—will guarantee you against getting the disease. But often the old hands get off and the fellow who, in his own stupid words, "tries his luck" gets the disease. The risk is always there; is it worth it?

And, again, you will meet men who will say, "Oh, what's a dose of clap? I've had it, and I'm quite all right again; he's only trying to frighten you." Don't believe them either; they may have had it and they may be all right, or perhaps think they are, but will feel the effects later on. The worst effects of venereal disease, if it isn't properly cured, don't usually appear until years afterwards. Anyhow, the fact that they have got off light does not mean that you will.

Let me repeat again, as I don't want to frighten you falsely or give you wrong impressions, that V.D. *can* be cured completely if a man reports sick at once. Unfortunately, although men should go sick on the least suspicion, and for goodness' sake do, if you have any reason to think that you have got it—many men do hang on for a few fatal days, because they don't like to admit that they have got the disease, and those few days make all the difference to the cure.

Are you quite sure that if this happened to you, as let us hope it won't, you would be any wiser than those men; and if you aren't sure, aren't you foolish to take the risk?

And now for the second kind of girl whom you may meet—in fact, I dare say that some of you have met them already. These are the girls, and you can find them everywhere, who like sex adventures, seeing no harm in occasional intercourse with a man, providing that he attracts them physically. They will probably tell him, of course, that he is the only one, and they are doing it because they are very fond of him. They are the ones who think of physical love outside marriage as "having a bit of fun," and who say, "Well, why shouldn't I? I like it and so does he; and it doesn't do us any harm, so why not?"

I think those girls are probably far more dangerous to most men than the ordinary prostitute. I don't want you to think that I am suggesting that it is always the girl who gives the lead: it certainly isn't; but I do honestly believe that more often than not it is the girls, especially the very young ones, rather than the men, who are definitely out for sex adventure and sexual intercourse. The main argument in defence of this kind of intercourse is that it does no harm; but if that statement is untrue, as I am going to show you that it is, the whole excuse for this conduct falls to the ground.

Intercourse outside marriage does harm, or may do it, to those who indulge in it in the following ways:

As I have already said to you, it tarnishes the joy of physical love in marriage; whether it is the married man being unfaithful to his wife, or the single man

unfaithful to his girl, the result is always the same. Women are quick to find out and to suspect, as men are poor deceivers; suspicion, resentment and bitterness soon spring up, and very quickly the old happiness is gone for ever. There really cannot be a happy marriage where one of the partners is unfaithful, and it is nearly always true that the unmarried man or woman who has had many sex experiences before marriage makes a poor wife or husband.

This sort of intercourse may do harm in another sort of way too. Girls who think of intercourse as "a bit of fun" may, and often do, suddenly find that they have been playing with something that is actually the strongest emotion in a woman's nature. It is important, by the way, that you men should realise that the sex instinct has a deeper meaning for women than for men. It is connected for them with child-bearing and maternity, things of which a man understands practically nothing.

And so these girls suddenly find one of two things has happened to them. Either they are really in love with the man with whom they have been playing about, or the need for sexual intercourse has become a thing they can't do without; sometimes both things happen to the same girl, but either way it is a tragedy. In one instance the man leaves her, as, of course, he doesn't feel the same way about it, and if she loves him she is miserable and unhappy; and in the other instance, if she can't do without intercourse, she starts having other men, and becomes, quite likely, a prostitute or, at any rate, a woman whom no decent man wants to marry. Quite a lot of possibility of harm there, is there not?

And then there is the old danger of venereal disease. Girls of this sort, whom everyone thinks respectable, don't, as a rule, like going to the doctor and telling him, and they may go on for months, as is common knowledge they often do, infecting men without knowing they are doing so.

And, lastly, there is the possibility of a child being born. Despite the modern knowledge of preventatives, etc., it still often happens that people aren't so clever as they think and unwanted children are born. I am perfectly certain that not one of you wishes either to have to marry a girl you don't love or to be responsible for bringing an unwanted child into the world.

The third type of girl you'll meet—and thank goodness there are plenty of them—is the decent girl. It is natural and human, for some men particularly, to want female companionship, and there is no reason why men who are unattached should not make friends with girls in any town to which they may go. In fact, many fellows may be the happier for such friendships. They will do well to realise, all the same, that temporary friendships are apt to be dangerous for both parties, particularly in war-time, just because they are temporary; and also to remember that in war-time women find their sex instincts hard to control. Rightly or wrongly, they regard you as heroes, and are prepared to do things to please you that they would not dream of doing in peace-time, and will certainly regret later. Only the mean men will take advantage of their weakness.

For the married man, and the man with a girl at home, the position is naturally different, and it is useless and dishonourable for them to pretend that it is not. They should do nothing that would cause their wives or their girls to be jealous and unhappy, if they should get to know of it. And the usual excuses, "There's no harm in it," or, "What does it matter if she doesn't know?" are pretty feeble really, aren't they?

Such friendships can't be quite harmless if they would cause pain to those who love you; the fact that they don't know about them does not make any difference really, and in any case women usually do get to know of these things somehow in the end.

Married men should also realise that if they go about with some woman they will be harming that woman's good name as well as their own, because people know that such friendships are very rarely innocent, no matter how good the first intention. After all, the old rule about "Do unto others . . ." is a very sound one, and if you would not care for your wife or girl to get friendly with another man, are you justified, however lonely you may feel, in doing yourself what is really the same thing? The old saying about "playing with fire" is also a good one to keep in mind.

No! You men who are lucky enough to have good wives and girls at home must make up your minds that in war-time you will have largely to do without the pleasure of female companionship if you want to play the game by those at home. By doing so, there will be a few more girls for the unattached men, so your self-denial will be appreciated!

You will see from what I've said that I'm suggesting to you all that the only sound line of sex conduct, whether in war or in peace, is the avoidance of intercourse outside marriage.

Easy advice to give, I dare say some of you are thinking, but difficult to follow. I agree with you, it *is* difficult for some men much more than for others—but not, I believe, impossible advice to any man who tries his hardest.

I want to say a word here to counter the old arguments that you are sure to hear: that regular sexual intercourse is good for a man's health, that self-control is bad for him, etc. Well, it's quite true that intercourse between man and wife is a good healthy thing, and that marriage without it would, for most couples, lose much of its joy; but it is their love, not just the physical act, that makes it fine and healthy. Without that love it is almost certainly better for a man's general health—which, remember, depends as much on the state of his mind and spirit as on his body—that he should do without. Most medical opinion agrees that it does not harm men to be continent; some men are so all their lives, either by choice, like Roman Catholic priests, or by force of circumstances, and yet often as not they are physically fit men, leading fine and useful lives. Nature sees to it that chastity does not harm a man's body. There is no need to "have a woman" regularly, as some men think, or like to think.

As for self-control, it's just the fact that a man can use it that makes him different from an animal. A dog sees a bitch on the other side of the barrack square, and you know what happens. Off across the square he goes, following his instinct; no reasoning about whether she is a good bitch or a clean bitch, ought he or ought he not, etc. No! He acts by his instinct, over which he has no control. But what is it that makes you and me different from the animals? The fact that we *can* control our instincts. We can say, "Yes, I'd like to have intercourse—I want to badly; that's human nature. But I know it's wrong, and so I am not going to." We've got the power to reason, we've got a moral sense of what is right and wrong; many of us, too, follow religious teaching in the matter. If we don't use that reasoning power and moral sense we are no better than animals. Well, personally—and I am sure you agree with me—the man I respect is the fellow who can, and does, use self-control, and the man I rather despise is the one who acts like an animal, following his lusts and instincts wherever they may take him.

To conclude this talk I would like to say a few words of advice to help those of you who are going to try hard to keep yourselves free from irregular intercourse during your time in the Army.

Keep your minds and conversation clean. Sex control is largely a victory of mind over body. It's dirty talk and impure thoughts that often start us wanting.

Lead active, busy lives wherever you are. Fill your spare time with interests, games, books, hobbies, whatever you can; *DON'T BE IDLE*. The busy man has less time to be troubled about sex; it is the man who hangs about in his spare time and gets fed up and bored who too often finds the sex urge beyond his control, or thinks he must have a woman to relieve his boredom, for something to do.

Then, those of you who have a few drinks or a "cheerful evening" occasionally, just remember that that is the time to be particularly on your guard. Come straight home from the pub or estaminet with your mate; don't go round on your own looking at the moon! It's after we have had a few drinks, isn't it? that we feel a little more amorous and adventurous than usual—a little more dashing, perhaps, and a bit more like sheikhs! Really, of course, although we don't realise it till next morning, we are in a foolish state, and just ready to be caught. The girls who are out to catch men are well aware of that, and you'll always find a few hanging around outside pubs and estaminets ready to catch whom they can. *DON'T GET CAUGHT*. It's stupid to make good resolutions and then to break them all because you've had a drop too much to drink. And let those men, if there are any here, who think there is no real risk of getting venereal disease if they take the right precautions remember that more than half the V.D. cases are incurred through men having intercourse when they are too drunk, or too careless as a result of drink, to take proper care.

And, lastly, a word to those who are courting girls, here or at home. If you honestly intend, as I hope you do, to do without intercourse until you are married, then you must use restraint and common sense in your courting. Particularly is this necessary in war-time, when passions are more quickly roused, and it is so easy to do something you never really meant or wanted to do, and will regret afterwards. Don't go too far in your petting and kissing, don't tempt yourself too much. Remember, none of us are really strong-willed when our passions are roused. The wise and decent chap takes care not to rouse it, either in himself or in his girl. . . . Hayfield and summer evenings are delightful: they are also, unfortunately, dangerous too!

Well, that's been a long talk, but I am sure the subject deserves half an hour, even in all the hurry of war training. You won't remember lots of it, I know, but if just these two points remain in your mind through all the temptations of war-time I shan't think I have spoken in vain. They are: God meant married love to be a fine, clean thing, so don't go and spoil it. . . . And you are, in all probability, going back to civil life, so resolve to go back a better and not a worse man as a result of your Army service.

