

The Army Canteen

The restoration of the army canteen to the United States army is again a subject of debate. The bill of Congressman Richard Bartholdt of Missouri seeking to authorize the restoration, is now before congress. Writing in *The Editorial Review* for June, Dr. Louis Livingston Seaman, formerly major-surgeon, United States Volunteer Engineers, presents an argument for the restoration of the canteen as "a moral and sanitary necessity."

As "an effort to improve the environment and elevate the character of the enlisted men" the canteen came into full operation in 1891. It kept men from the "degrading influence" of dives outside the army posts to which men had recourse formerly. It is claimed that "improvement in the morale and health of the men" was noticed "as soon as this new feature was fully established." The admissions to hospitals for alcoholism was greatly reduced.

"But in the year 1900 a wave of sentimentality," says Dr. Seaman, "in favor of absolute prohibition, spread over the country, unquestionably inspired by good motives. The movement was aided by the Christian church and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and one of its results was the passage by congress of an act abolishing the canteen." Now, after ten years' trial, the writer expresses his opinion in respect to the canteen that "today the rum sellers and the W. C. T. U. are almost its only supporters." He declares that advocates of the canteen "frankly admit that the total abolition of intoxicants in the army is a desideratum devoutly to be wished. Personally, almost a total abstainer myself, and after having passed ten years of my life as chief of the medical staff at Blackwell's and Ward's Islands, where I saw its frightful results in forms no modern Hogarth could adequately depict, I would gladly have alcohol eliminated as a product from the face of the earth. Personally, too, I would abolish wars, and therefore armies, and the necessities for canteens; but, unfortunately, this is not a personal matter."

The subject is presented as a practical matter and the operation of the canteen is supported by the favorable endorsement of army officers, medical men and by experience expressed in statistical form. Not only does the canteen keep the army men from the kinds of saloons that cluster about army posts, but it also keeps them from the dangers of venereal diseases. It is contended that there is an increase of these since the abolition of the canteen. In the interests of sanitation and health, as well as moral

Dr. Seaman argues for the restoration of the canteen.

In putting in words the point of view of the man in the ranks and his feeling regarding the abolition of the canteen, the writer says:

"In the army, the canteen led the hard drinker to less indulgence and removed the temptation which always clings to forbidden fruit. It fostered moderation, and its abolition angered the men. They felt it as an insult to their manhood and a deprivation of their natural rights. They will drink if they wish, and they resent the attempt to prevent them. A glass or two of beer is not injurious and they know it, and they sneeringly criticize congressmen, the paid servants of the government, who retain their well-patronized

cloakroom with its 'private stock' of good whisky, but who rob the soldier—other paid servants of the same government—of the right to take a glass of beer on their camp grounds in their well-disciplined and orderly canteen."

ENSIGN TO ADDRESS MEETINGS.

Ensign Annack will have charge of the services of the Salvation Army this evening and tomorrow that will be held in the army hall on North Church street. The meetings are as follows: Tonight, "Free and Easy meeting;" Sunday, 11 a. m., Holiness meeting; 3 p. m., praise service; 8 p. m., memorial service for the late Louis Van Wyck. All are invited to attend the several meetings.