

CONDITIONS AT TAMPA.

The conditions at Tampa have not been exaggerated by Poultney Bigelow. A woman reporter in Town Topics says:

Tampa certainly does smell to Heaven! Our soldiers come down here from the north, where there is God's pure air and civilized drainage, and they find a putrid hell. I know of no other way to express it.

Poultney Bigelow did not exaggerate, and neither did he tell the half. When you add this eternal punishment of heat to the other existing things the horror of it as it is, and as it will be, cannot be pictured by pen. The Poultney Bigelow article kicked up such an unmerciful row down here that at first I hesitated about wading into the matter in detail. But, why not? They can, perhaps, take my passports from me; if they do, it will not be because I did not tell the truth. Somebody has blundered terribly, and it is not the military heads. Political heads are short-lived, anyway, so why not tell the truth? Even political ambitions would be willingly sacrificed, I am sure, in this war against "inhumanity" if political heads could but see and know the seriousness of the crimes which they are committing. My passports can be recalled, but my understanding and brain and pen cannot be "muzzled."

Our soldiers have suffered, are suffering and will suffer—a great deal of it quite unnecessarily. They went out gloriously at the call of the country, for the country; through politics or ignorant, goosehead management of men in political positions they have been pushed into such horrible straits that manhood and courage are being crushed out of them before they have fired a bullet for "inhumanity." All because we have in this country two political factions and an ignorant public to ask why we do not thrash at once a few unruly Spaniards and end the war. An ignorant public, worked up to this medalling pitch in the face of the coming fall elections, are asking that 150,000 well-trained and well-seasoned Spanish soldiers be annihilated by an undisciplined army of raw recruits, and we are trying to do what they ask, because next November we must answer politically. War for inhumanity! We could have furnished food in a number of ways through the summer to the starving reconcentrados, and have been prepared for war by fall.

It was criminal to send our men into these southern mobilizing camps. They should have been equipped, drilled and made ready before coming. They should have been prepared at camps and army posts where there was an opportunity for thorough and systematic work. The country and its facilities here at Tampa were swamped completely by the avalanche of men to be taken care of and no one to do it.

The regular army in its original numbers, established as it had been for years, was in a way ready for war. For the expansion of 25,000 men—or whatever was the exact number of our regular army—into 60,000 there was no preparation and the regular army recruits have had to suffer with the rest, barring the great advantage of being in the care of experienced officers. General Miles and his staff, General Shafter and his staff, General Coppinger and his staff and every military man of experience, if they would but talk, would tell you of the slaughter it must mean to our army to send it into Cuba at this time of the year, even if they were well equipped and well drilled. Think what it means to send against Spanish fighters men who cannot properly hold a gun and know less about firing them; men dressed in any old thing, who do not understand military tactics as well as any chorus girl understands the Amazon march. Yet men like this are to fight for humanity and America's honor. In

the larding of our transports in Cuba we have simply added to inhumanity. We are as brutal in our way as the Spaniards are in theirs. Every military man will tell you that to make successful this war of ours from the military standpoint, equipment and drilling should have been done before the moving of this great army. Even our best generals have not been used to handling such large bodies of men since the civil war, and there were not, at a moment's notice, facilities for it, even though in their military attainment and education our generals do not need the practical experience.

What have politics done? Tumbled raw recruits, seige trains, provision trains, regular army, volunteer army and supplies into this God-forsaken little sand point at the tail end of America. The railroad track for fifty miles back was loaded up with provisions and the rest of it, with no numbers, no invoices, no head to unload or to find anything.

What could be the result with thousands of men needing those supplies? The result was this: Our soldiers, our grand American men, our sons of this wealthy country, when under the protection of the country, had to beg, actually beg for food to keep body and soul together. You can talk about not furnishing cologne, Turkish baths, ice cream and charlotte russe for war rations, but those boys were awfully hungry. And some of them are yet.

Why, men of the political cabinet, it was your sons, my sons, your fathers, my father, your brothers, my brothers, who have had to do this begging. Can you imagine your proud boy asking me for ten cents with which to buy food? He did it. To be sure, you sent him money, but he did not get it. Our postoffices, too, were swamped in the avalanche. If it was not, literary, your boy and my boy who was hungry it was somebody's boy.

On the bridge that crosses the river I one day met a great manly, brawny fellow. He wore the soldier blue. I love it. I looked at him I suppose with the kindness I felt in my heart showing in my face. He half stopped, wholly stopped, and then turned pale to the lips with some kind of a mental struggle. I waited. He said finally:

"Would you—would you—loan—give me—ten cents?"

As the words were finally out of his mouth the red blood came surging over his face. He realized that he had actually begged. My tears came, and as I opened my pocketbook I, too, blushed. It was so embarrassing. He acted as if now that it had all escaped him he preferred to run away and not take it. I tried to laugh it off as if I were sentimentally giving him a flower for a mascot. He said:

"It is not that, but I am sick for the want of food. For various reasons I am out of money. I cannot swallow the greasy pork any more. To have to live on hard tack and pork, meal after meal, means after a time starvation by another name. This morning my stomach revolted. The thought of it sickens me now—" and he grew pale again.

I gave him some money, of course, more than he asked for—how he hated to take it! When I insisted upon it and then refused to give him my name so that he might return it, his own lip quivered and he said:

"If it were not that I don't want my mother to know I would write to her about you. I will take it and hunt up some of the other boys and divide it with them; they are sick, too." Then he asked wistfully, "Do you think we will get used to it all?"

I would not ask him his name nor his regiment. I did not want to know. I might want to write of it, and I, too, did not want his mother to know that her boy, under the protection of Uncle Sam, had been reduced to such distress. This

is only one instance. I have been asked several times for ten or fifteen cents with which to buy food, and I am not the kind of woman to allow sentiment to blind or to run away with sense.

Our boys have been hungry, and have lived for weeks and are still living on field rations. The women of Tampa have kept open house and fed our soldiers whenever they have been asked, which has been constantly. Field rations, pork and beans, pork without beans, hard tack and black coffee three times a day in this hot climate, seasoned with Tampa odors, are not the things with which to go into training to build up muscle and strength. The heat alone is enervating and devitalizing. Our men are exhausted before getting a taste of actual warfare. How much worse is it going to be in Cuba at this time of year? And yet we expect to win in this war for inhumanity! I thought so, too, at first. I am beginning to fear results. Sick soldiers cannot fight.

In living here at the end of ten days with every luxury the town affords, I find myself listless, limp and forcing myself into simple duties. The soldiers almost to a man—the 27,000 who left on transports, and the 19,000 who are still here—are still sweltering in flannel shirts and winter clothing, with only promises of duck suits to keep them cooler. True, they do not become prostrated with sunstrokes, but they gradually weaken into illness. The flies and mosquitoes sail around in black clouds.

Think how much worse it is in Cuba! Battles must be fought. As our wounded fall some correspondent writes: "They are carried back the allotted ten feet—laid down in the blazing sun"—and there they are left to the blistering heat and the flies as the battle goes on. The bullet that kills instantly will be the most merciful.

The people of the United States should rise in a body and demand that the invasion of Cuba be deferred until later. To go now is criminal. Havana will not be fortified more strongly than it is already. There can be no doubt about the climate with its yellow fever and other diseases, mauling and unholy slaughter to our grand, good men. It is gradually showing itself in Tampa. Our soldiers are fast getting into condition to take yellow fever and every other climatic disease. Our officers all know it, and yet military discipline forbids the admitting or even the discussion of it—when it will do no good.

I stood yesterday at a side-tracked train over in Ybor City, where I was waiting to go through the Pullman cars which were sent down here—thirteen of them—to take the sick soldiers to northern hospitals. As one after another of the soldiers was carried aboard, I heard an army officer, a surgeon, say to a couple of local newspaper men: "There are no serious cases—there is very little illness."

This train, which left last night, was the first trip of the army hospital train. It will make trips every week, taking soldiers from the division hospitals and camps further north, where the air is different and conveniences exist, I went through some of the cars and found in nearly every instance that the boys were regulars. I call them "boys"—they all seemed so like boys, needing the care of mother and home. Once in awhile I came to the delicate face of the volunteer. It was so easy to distinguish it. It was such a comfort, too, to see these sick soldiers being so well cared for by our regular army medical corps. They know how to take care of the soldiers. Major Richards and his assistant, Captain Stiles, who were in charge of the train, said in a few weeks they would have the tourist cars and every medical convenience. They take on board no contagious cases. On this train were thirteen cases of typhoid fever, five cases

of dysentery, one case of malarial fever, one of consumption, many cases of rheumatism, and ordinary diseases. Fifty-three cases were sent to the train from General Coppinger's division hospital—others were taken from the camps, about a hundred in all. They all looked—those I saw—comfortable in clean linen, clean night shirts, with attendants to fan them. Some of the typhoid cases were very serious, but this time they are all breathing a purer air than this. This train load went to Fort McPherson, Ga. Others will go to Fort Thomas, Ky., to Fort Myer, Va., and to the Leiter Hospital at Chickamauga.

BY THE WAY, HOW ABOUT THAT SUMMER TRIP?

Which way are you going this year? We want a word with you on the subject. You know its our business to help you out in plans for a railroad or steamship trip and we are always glad to do so. But we need your assurance to start with. Just tell us where you want to go and we will furnish you with plans and specifications in the shape of routes, rates, time schedules, luxury of equipment, etc., etc.

Remember that this year we are more in the passenger business than ever. If you doubt this statement please go to the corner of Ninth and S street and view our superb new passenger station, finely appointed and designed for the convenience and comfort of Elkhorn-Northwestern line passengers, and then when ready to go north, east, south or west, call on

A. S. FIELDING,

City Ticket Agent, 117 So. Tenth St.

She had just returned from a trip abroad, and was showing her friend the different curios she had brought back with her.

"Now, here is a little thing I got to remember one place by," she said; "it is very pretty, isn't it?"

"Charming," replied her friend admiringly. "What place was it?"

"Oh, I've forgotten now, we went to so many places, you know."

Kate—I haven't seen Madge of late—susy, perhaps.

Nannette—Busy, whew! She is buried in work.

Kate—What kind?

Nannette—Hectographing syndicate letters. She has twenty-one fiances in thirteen different regiments.

He wanted a rhyme to Sarsaparilla,
He got it when Dewey took Manila,
He wanted a rhyme to smoky Chicago,
He got it, of course, in Santiago!

"Why not take this parrot, ma'am?" asked the dealer. "It talks."

"I want a parrot to talk to and not to talk back," replied Miss Elder.

"How on earth does Brown live now that he has to pay all his income out in alimony?"

"His wife allows him a discount for cash."

Dominie—Doesn't your drinking cost a deal of money?

Jaggs—Well—er—I believe it must come hard on my friends once in a while.

"How did Gudgeon get out of that suit for breach of promise?"

"He put his wife on the stand and she swore that the other woman was in luck when she lost him."

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