

Stars and Stripes on Many English Homes

What the "American Invasion of Britain" Has Done in the Way of Making the Two Nations Friendlier than Ever Before

By FRANK DILNOT

AMERICA has conquered England in a more effective sense than she can ever conquer Germany, for while her great armies will play a large part in the military defeat of the enemy, her spirit and her personality have secured the respect and admiration, and are daily gaining more and more of the affection, of the people in the old country. It is inevitable that for generations to come America will have a hold on the feelings of British men and women, outwardly unemotional, but of all peoples the most tenacious in kindly regard or active dislike.

One of the incidentals of the war is the fact that great masses of American troops pass through England or are temporarily stationed there. Thus the towns and villages and countryside places have had two great experiences, reacting on each other, the first being the inspiring and exhilarating knowledge that America had come into the war with her vast forces on behalf of civilization; the second, personal contact with the American soldiers, with all the homely knowledge of them that is bound to arise from a friendly curiosity. These two influences have had and are still having enormous effect. The English are not demonstrative. There is little or no ringing of bells or waving of flags to signal various battle successes. There has been an instinctive avoidance of arrogance or jubilation at public meetings. But nevertheless on one occasion this year, namely, on July 4, the British people let themselves go. A distinguished French journalist recently arrived in this country, who has spent some years in London, tells me he has seen no enthusiasm during the war comparable with that he witnessed in London on that day. "At the meeting in Central Hall there were fervid scenes which deeply impressed all foreigners who know how the Britishers have to be intensely stirred before they demonstrate at all. No one could have been in the streets or at that meeting without realizing how the heart of Britain was moved. I am a Frenchman and was able, therefore, to form an impartial judgment. It



British Tommies Taking Their First Lesson in the American Game of Baseball.

was impossible not to feel the deep sincerity of these people of all classes, people who as a rule cover up their feelings. It was wonderful."

An English officer in France wrote to me a month ago with great frankness: "I was a little doubtful what the Americans were going to be like. One has heard a great deal about American bluff and bluster, and, to tell the truth, I was rather nervous, and wondered whether I should like them or not. I have now met several bunches of them. Latterly three young officers have been living with us. It has been a delight to meet them, (of course it is the officers I have been at close quarters with.) They are as modest as they are keen.

They are fine fellows personally—gentlemen all. We think no end of them."

A young English gunner who has been fighting two years in France and Flanders wrote me about the same time: "Last week we came in touch with some of the American boys, the first we have seen. They are a fine, upstanding lot of chaps, and we are on chummy terms with several of them. What we like specially is that they have no bounce. There is ginger in them. They are taller and thinner than our crowd. They naturally have a good deal to pick up, but those I have met are both quick and clever. We like them because they are nice fellows."

London is not a city which beflays

itself easily. There is scant display of Union Jacks even in wartime, and there was a good deal of significance in the hoisting of the Stars and Stripes over the Houses of Parliament and other public buildings. But emphasis was given to the display of the American colors in another direction. I learn that in the suburbs where are the homes of the poor and the middling well-to-do the Stars and Stripes are hung out of the windows of houses in thousands of cases. One letter from a typical middle class home—very English and with no American affiliations—gives an example: "We are going to keep our old Union Jack to the end of the war and put it out then, but we have put up the Stars and Stripes, one from an upstairs window, one from a tree in the garden. Out of the twelve houses in our road three are showing the Stars and Stripes."

The character and behavior of the American troops in England is a substantial factor. A race like the English is bound to be impressed by the fine physique and martial bearing of the sinewy Americans, but more potent even than this has been the personality of the soldiers from overseas. The impression they seem to have made is that of highly intelligent, slow speaking, quick witted young men. Their sobriety is commented on. They are deeply interested in all they see and hear. They are high grade in both intelligence and manners. "Gentlemanly" is the English way of summing them up. The hospitality with which they have been received has taken large numbers of them into British homes and many lasting friendships have been formed. Something more than friendship is likely to be reached in many cases. I have just heard of an American private who has become engaged to the daughter of an influential London lawyer. There must be hundreds of love matches in the making, for the clear-cut American boy is just the one to appeal to a girl with a touch of romance in her.

There can be no doubt that the Americans' invasion of England is approaching completion. It will probably be beneficent for both countries.