

THE BELLES OF SAN ANTONIO

IN San Antonio, Texas, the other week, were several thousand soldiers of the American Third Army waiting around for the furloughs due them after manoeuvres, reports *Time*. Delay had its compensations. No need had they to pose the questions: Madam, have you a daughter fair? Ready to see that the boys had a fine time were 1,000 Texas maidens.

The girls who turned out to entertain the boys were San Antonio's Liberty Belles, who have volunteered to bolster morale by acting as "dates" for lonesome draftees. The Liberty Belles are organised along semi-military lines; four girls take orders from a corporal, three corporals from a sergeant, five sergeants from a lieutenant. On the ground that few enlisted men, however lonely, would

enjoy stepping out with a lieutenant, that rank is limited to older Belles who mobilise the girls at San Antonio's Municipal Auditorium, whence they are despatched by bus to the scene of operations: the Army Y.M.C.A., Fort Sam Houston, Brooks and Randolph Fields, etc. If a Belle is absent on duty nights she is likely to lose her red-white-and-blue merit badge, and be drummed out of the ranks.

The Liberty Belle brigade got under way last June, when the reluctance of San Antonio's young ladies to meet the Army so scandalised an energetic matron named Mrs. Norma M. Hancock, that she soon had San Antonio by the ears. Business houses, clubs, churches and politicians earnestly persuaded girls to join up. To get a name for the corps, a

city-wide contest was held. Pretty Agnes MacTaggart, who won it, was denied membership in the Liberty Belles because she was only 16 (age limits: 17-25).

The Liberty Belles are very serious about their work. Besides dancing with soldiers, the Belles listen sympathetically to their troubles, play cards, ping-pong, or just sit, if that's wanted. The girls are warned against allowing one "date" to monopolise their evening, against giving out telephone numbers carelessly.



SHAKESPEARE'S WOMEN

SCENES from Shakespeare in which the characters of his heroines are best portrayed, are to be presented, with costumes and settings, by some Wellington players, students of Maria Dronke, and their guests. The outlook of those who are taking part, and the sensitive



MARIA DRONKE, as Portia.

approach which they are making to their work suggests that the performances will be something for Wellington people to look forward to and for people outside Wellington to covet.

The programme sets out some of the aims: "In every Shakespearean production, we want to give the word its supreme position. . . . The actor . . . must not lose himself in the aesthetic delight of recitation nor allow himself to be swept away by the impassioned movement of the words."

Settings are intended to "support the action" and "take an active part in the play"; to stimulate the actor's imagination, not to distract him (or the on-lookers). Curtains "which never mar the imagination" and steps "which stress the tension by their upward and downward movement" are therefore the favourite requirements.

Thirteen plays will be represented by excerpts, and there are 23 persons in the entire cast. Maria Dronke (the producer) will take some of the leading parts, alternating with Edith Hannah. The presentations will be given in the Concert Chamber of the Wellington Town Hall on March 12, 13 and 14, and the proceeds will go to the New Zealand Red Cross.

PATRICIA

(Continued from previous page)

And Patricia was very much upset. But Jim explained that if they lived in the shelter all the time they were bound to Be Prepared in the event of an Emergency. And Patricia thought that was a very good idea so she moved in too.

AFTER they'd been living in the shelter for two months they decided that perhaps the house would be better prepared for an Emergency if there were somebody living in it, so they let it furnished for £3/10/- a week. And what with all the tinned stuff they were able to live quite comfortably on that and Jim didn't have to go to work any more but was able to spend all his time doing crossword puzzles. And they were both very happy.

When the end of the war came and they didn't think there'd be any more Emergencies they thought they'd better shift back into the house. But meanwhile Jim and Patricia had adopted a tame earthworm called Eric, or Little by Little, whom they were really rather fond of and they didn't know whether he'd take kindly to wallboards and wooden flooring. And Jim hadn't finished Book III. of the crossword puzzles (they were very complicated ones) and they still had a whole wall stacked with tinned food still unopened, so they thought that what with one thing and another they might just as well stay where they were.

Anyway, as Patricia said, there was always the possibility that there just might be another war, and she believed in always Being Prepared.

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