A LITTLE GRAY HOME IN FRANCE

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DAVENPORT
GIBBONS

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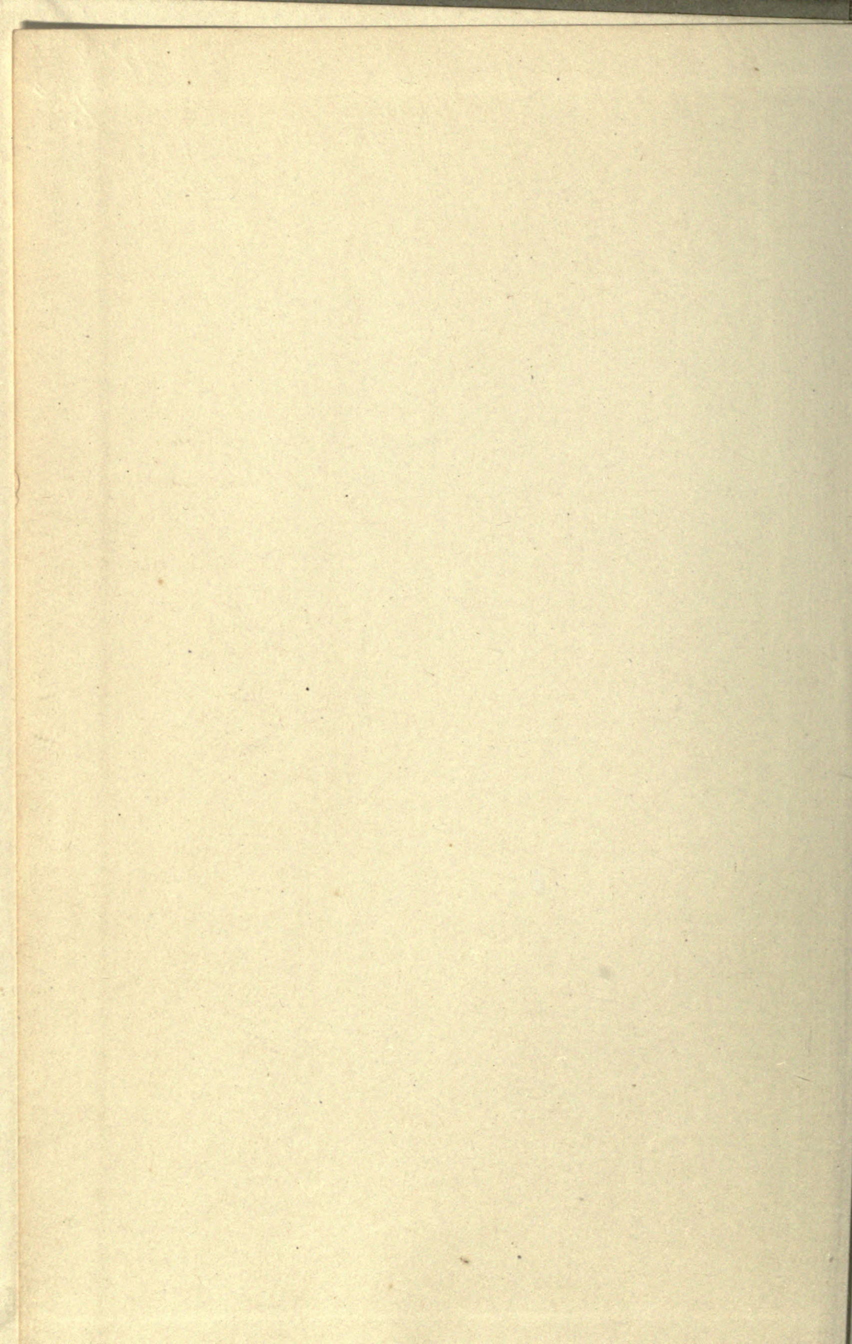

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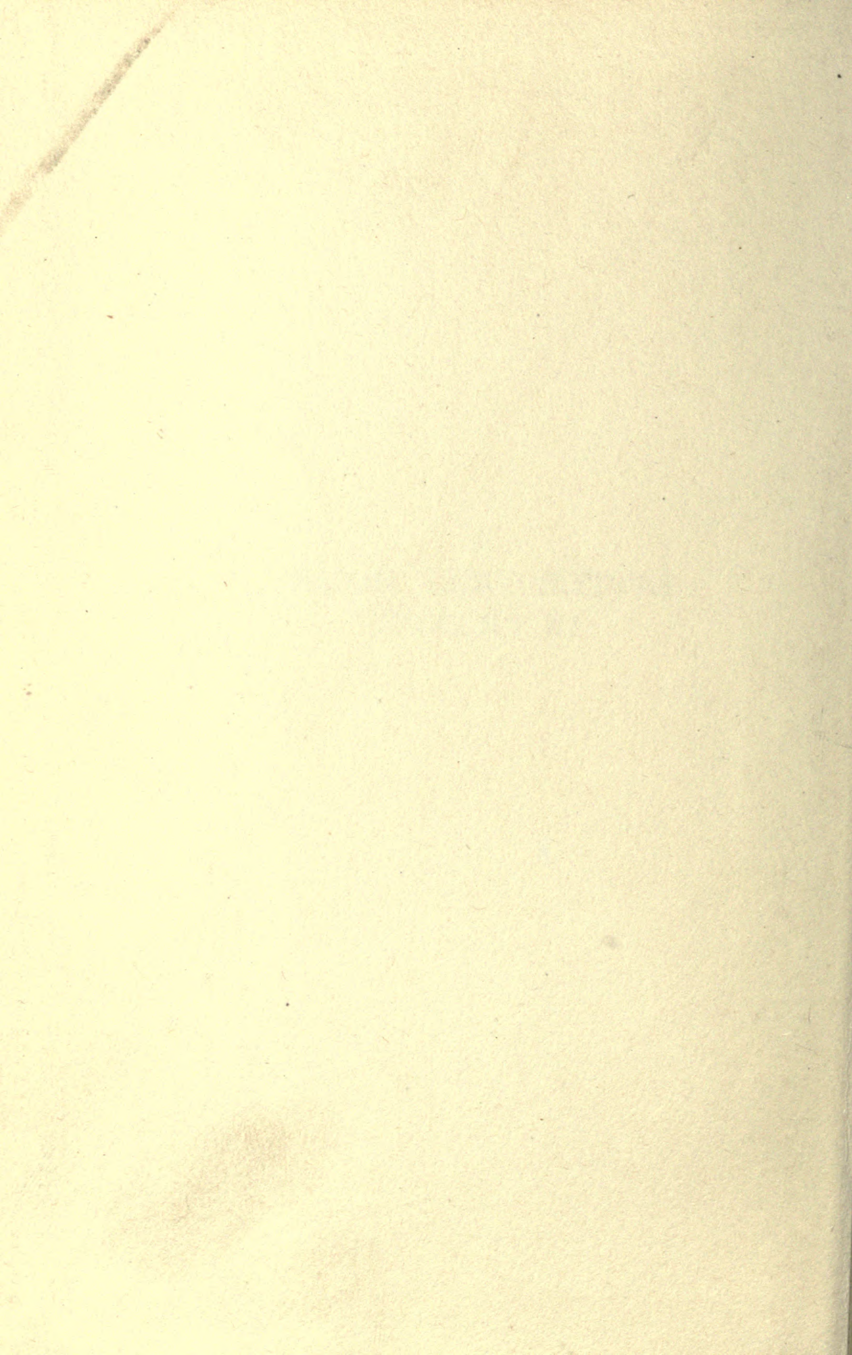

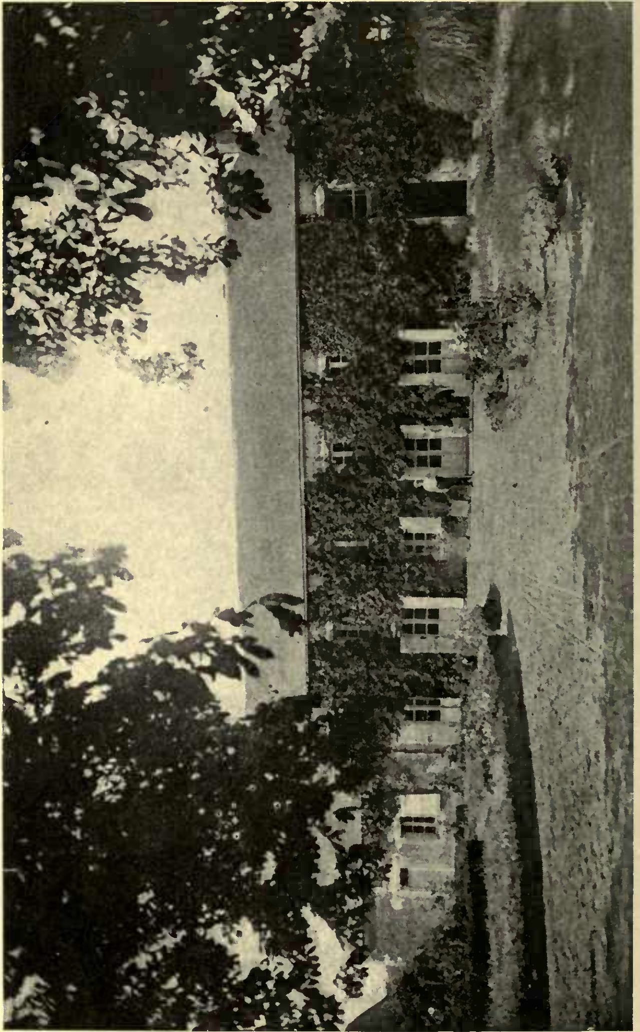

A LITTLE GRAY HOME IN FRANCE

BY

HELEN DAVENPORT GIBBONS
Author of "The Red Rugs of Tarsus"

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TO

RODMAN WANAMAKER

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FOREWORD

A comfortable Turk, sitting on a dusty cushion making a rug, has eternity before him. He can stop when he likes to pull on the mouth-piece of his nargileh and dream. He dreams about the pattern he is weaving.

We are weaving to-day. The force that moves our shuttle is war. Ours is no simple frame like that of the Turkish weaver. And the pattern? So complicated that a plain body like me cannot make it out. My work is to tie up the loose strands I can see and prevent dropped stitches.

The boys know they are caught in the working of a vast machine. Some take things as they come and sing, "I don't care what becomes of me." Some think about what they see and wish they could understand. And some know that yesterday has slipped back of us as a tug drops away from a mighty battle-cruiser. They realize that the human mind

can forget, and burn with longing to capture impressions as they fly through the days. But their work draws out from them all the energy there is. The pages of the note-book remain white.

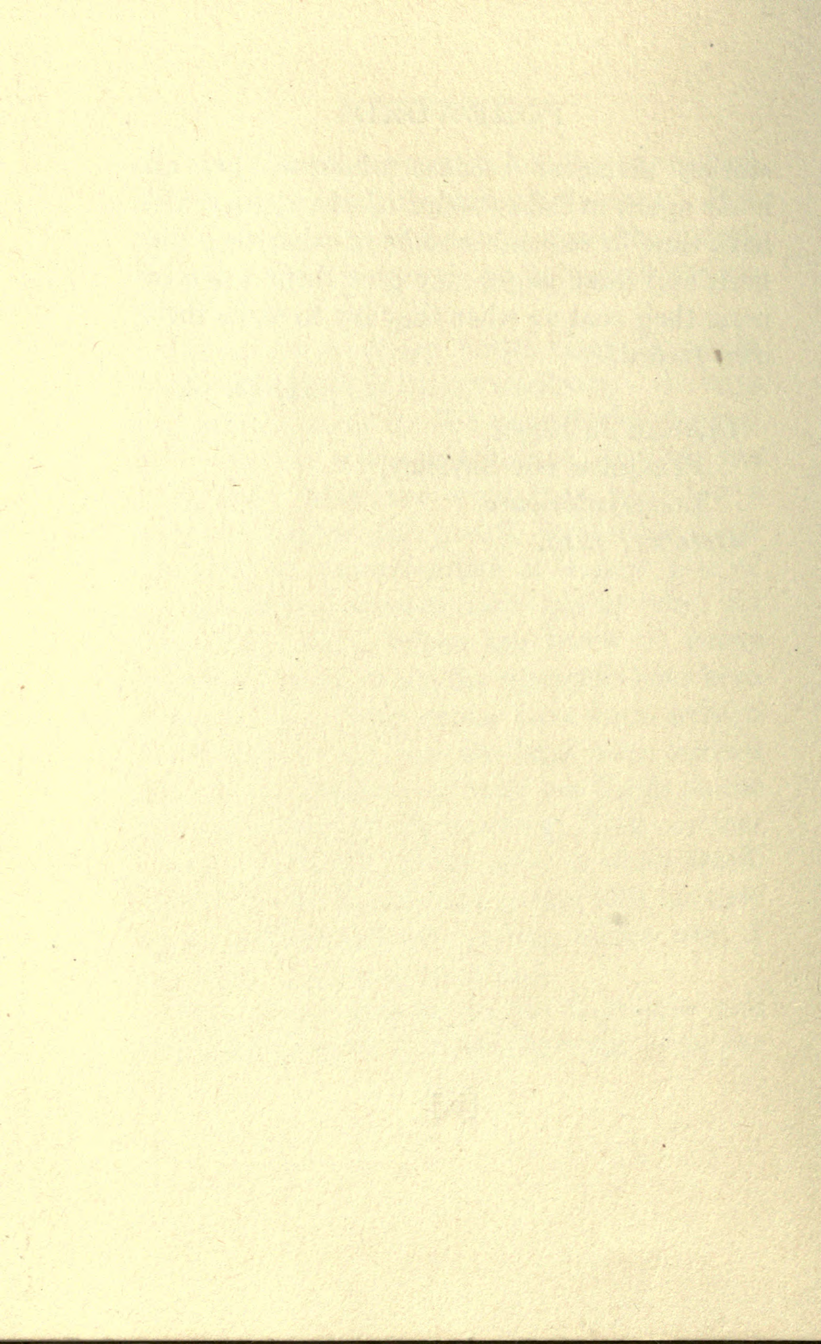
In the study of my Little Gray Home in France is an old Brittany wardrobe. As boys toast their toes at the fire-place beside it when they stop for a breathing space, they tell me what they think and what they see. On a shelf are paper and pencil, and when I go there to get out chocolate or a new pair of woolen socks I scratch down hastily what my boys have said. When the bowls of coffee have been drunk, when the cigarettes have been smoked, when their names have been written in the guest-book and the boys have hurried out into the night to put their two hands on the steering wheel of the trucks, I light another candle, and write out the notes in more detail. Before the initial slow chug-chug tells me they have cranked and are getting under way, I have tied another loose strand.

This record belongs to the boys now and hereafter, now because they have given me the

stories, hereafter because when we are all home again in the sunshine of peace, they will have time to remember some of what they did here, and these pages may give them a peg to hang their coat on when they try to make their own record.

H. D. G.

Château du Loyer,
Prinquiau par Savenay,
Loire-Inférieure,
October, 1918.



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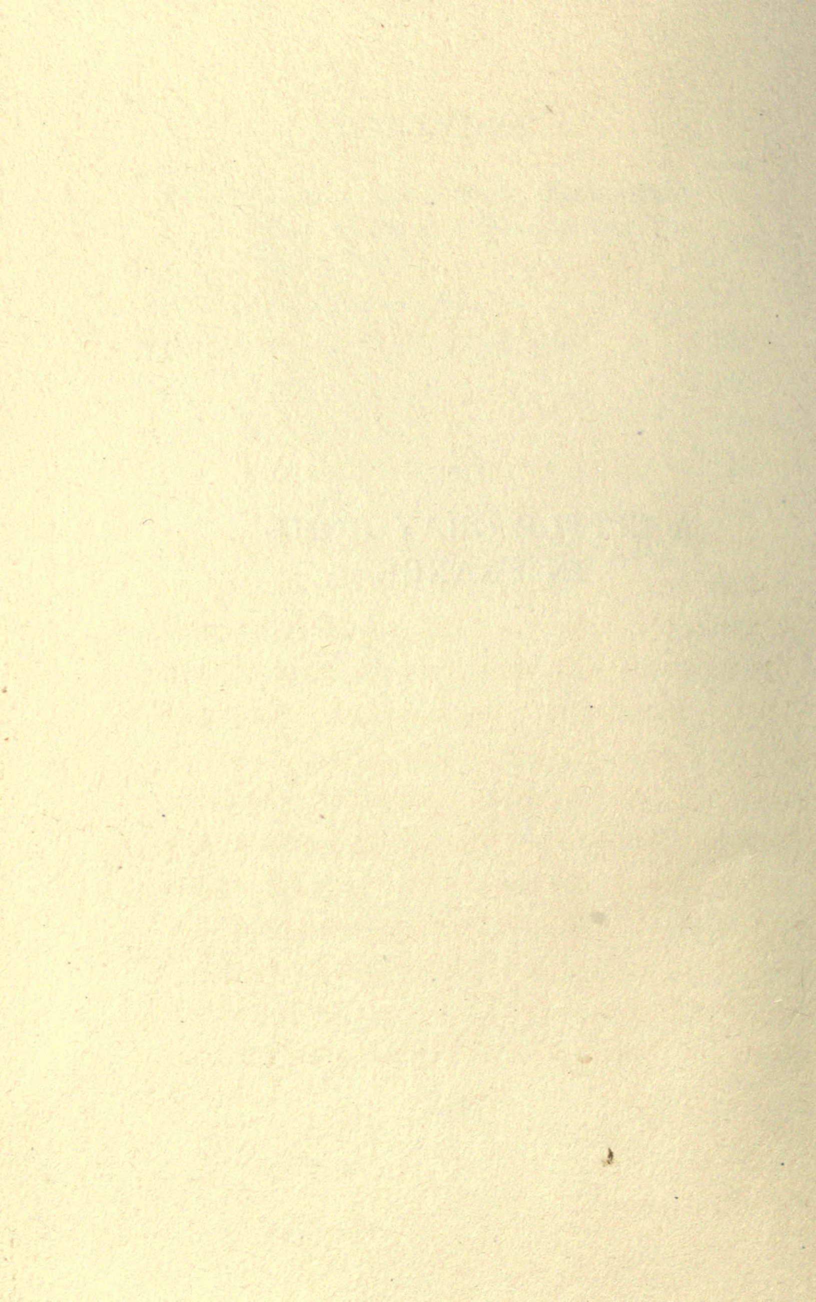


A LITTLE GRAY HOME IN FRANCE

CHAPTER I

THE LITTLE GRAY HOME

Twelve houses straggle back through the wheat fields to form the village of Loyer. Mine is the largest. That is why it is called the Château, although it is no more than a "little gray home," the name the American soldiers have given it. The other houses of Loyer are all hitched to each other. Starting with that of the most prosperous peasant, they taper down, telescope-wise. At the place where you would look for a caboose on a railway train you see a cuddling thatch.

The Château de Loyer is set far back from the road, behind tall trees, in the midst of

a tangled garden. The house is of gray stone, like the druid altar in my neighbor's meadow. I have looked for years in France for what I have found here, a bungalow without having to build it. There are two stories, and the rooms *choo-choo* straight along one after the other like children's blocks across the nursery floor. The house is one room deep, and the windows look out down the slope of hills on both sides. Because of many front doors opening straight into the garden, the house has a "room-for-everybody, come-in" air. This is confirmed when the boys see the two enormous guest-rooms beyond the drawing-room. The walls are whitewashed. Above the mantelpieces are smoked places, tawny-brown camel color. Half a dozen walnut beds, smoothed by years of waxing, take up very little space. The spreads are the coarse blue linen made by the people around here.

On the table are the things a boy needs for writing a letter to mother or bride or sweet-

heart at home. One boy talked yesterday, as he wrote, of somebody's birthday. I shall get the present he wants for her, and attend to the shipment of it. I leave the cupboard doors open, an unspoken invitation to tobacco and chocolate and comfort bags on the shelves. The hearths are the glory of "The Little Gray Home." My bedroom fireplace is high enough for three-year-old Hope to walk into and look up at the sky. I can burn big logs there. Each guest-room has its hearth. Logs and a bundle of fagots are always ready to light on a rainy day or a cool night. A summer in the country in France knows no scorching heat waves. Sitting by the fire when it is storming, I get comfort from hearing raindrops come down with a hiss on a bed of glowing embers. I am always glad of an excuse to have an open fire. You can keep your tea hot. More boys come on rainy days and cold nights, and before the fire they become expansive, and I am never bored.

A toothless granny with towering starched *coiffe* hitched to sparse, braided hair, and with quilted petticoat doubled up around her, scrubs every day my floors of well-fitted boards with such vigor that the glow in her cheeks makes you forget she is wrinkled as a winter apple. Madame Criaud, like the rest of my neighbors, thinks I am an American heiress, and wonders at the curious whim which brings one who could go elsewhere with her children to a remote country place away from her kind. Madame Criaud differs from the others only because she holds that my being an American —*ergo,* careless of money—is no reason why I should be cheated.

I did not realize how many windows and doors with glass panes I had until I came to buy curtain material at 1918 prices. Perhaps economy led me to tack the headings of the creamy scrim curtains one pane below the top of the window frame. But I can argue it was a desire to keep always visible the line of wind-

mills of the Dutch type that run along the shoulder of the hill until they disappear. The last one lies so low that its arms curve and dip like porpoises. But if there were no windmills, the checker-board of little grain fields, interspersed with meadows where grass is Irish green, would justify not excluding the outlook from any window. When it has been raining, and women and boys toss hay in the sunshine, you smell clover and wet air.

At the other end of the house from the ground-floor guest-rooms is a fat old kitchen, which has its own flight of stairs leading to the upper floor. The artist, dressed in khaki, and with a war correspondent's *brassard* on his arm, dropped in unexpectedly on a sketching trip through Base One. I took him around the house, for I wanted to know if I was right in my idea that the place was artistic. He did n't stop to put in a guest-room the khaki school-bag slung over his shoulder with a strap. The artist's baggage is mostly a

thick wad of sketching paper. When we came to the kitchen, he stood beaming, with head thrown back and eyes half closed. His fingers began to unfasten the strap of the kit, and he sat down on my fireless cooker to sketch the black-from-smoke stairway in the corner, with Madame Criaud leaning over a table picking a chicken. "But, Lester, have you lunched?" I asked. He answered: "This is great stuff, Helen, great stuff."

The wood pile outside the kitchen door is nearly as high as the house, and protects chicken-run and rabbit-warren from the sea wind. Servants sleep in a lodge by the gate. The floor of the summer house is high enough from the ground for the children to see over the garden wall. When autos are heard coming up the hill, Christine and Lloyd and Mimi rush out and shout. Baby Hope waddles after them, waving her fat hands and piping, *"Les Américains, les Américains!"*

"Hello! Come in and see our mother," shouted the other three.

And so we make our friends.

CHAPTER II

TREATING SOLDIERS SPECIAL

I said, "Where is the ball?"

Lloyd patted my shoulder to attract attention. I put my coffee cup back on the saucer and guessed that the ball might still be behind the cushions of a steamer-chair in the garden where he had hidden it yesterday when Baby wanted it. Mother is supposed to know where things are. Grandma says that when grandpa used to ask for his Sunday trousers she would answer that the last time she wore them she hung them in the bedroom cupboard.

Boys are alike, wherever you find them. Girls' hair is pulled in Siberia and South Africa. Jam is hunted in Denmark and Argentina. Prisoner's base is played as belliger-

ently in the Hague as in Berlin. A piece of gingerbread produces the same reaction on Turkish and American boys.

If grandpa, when he saw his son's sons, was still boy enough to ask the whereabouts of his Sunday trousers, is n't that proof that our men folk never grow up?

Soldiers are boys. I see, behind sunburned foreheads, surprise and hurt when some one has treated them impersonally. Though a necessary phrase, "You are in the army now," is none the less a hard phrase. Military discipline and uniform dress are leveling forces, essential to the machine. But there are moments when our boys are not on duty or parade.

When the ball is lost, my little son expects me to find it. Whatever he wants, it is for mother to give it to him quickly. Soldiers do not like to have to ask for a glass of cider or a cigarette. If the comfort bags are put where a soldier is free to pick out things to replace what somebody stole from his kit at the bar-

racks, he will feel at home. Nothing is more appreciated than to give a fellow a chance, without studying to make it, to sit down and tell how he and his girl waited instead of rushing into a war wedding.

After the Germans had been throwing shells into our quarter of Paris for twelve days, some of which landed in my children's only playground, the Luxembourg Gardens, I felt that it was time to get them away. It was only Easter, so we went to Aix-les-Bains for the month of April. I did not want to return to my villa on the sea at Houlgate this summer. Contact with American soldiers in the camps, when I was lecturing for the Y. M. C. A., and in the Savoy leave area, had made me want to work out my own ideas about treating soldiers special. The Little Gray Home was chosen because it lies at the middle point along a seventeen-kilometer stretch of country highway where the soldier, bound inland from the Holy City, finds only a chilly *buvette*. The

woman who dispenses drinks there knows that she does n't have to go out and chase the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow—her fortune rolls in on motor trucks. Heavy motor traffic from the Holy City to points all over France passes us constantly, and the largest hospital center of the American Expeditionary Forces is four miles from the Little Gray Home.

A truck passes every morning when we are at breakfast. The boys throw out newspapers. Several motor cycles aim to go by at lunch time. A steam-tractor crew sends in a man to ask for permission to get water from our well for the boiler. Before the tractor starts toiling again northward, the soldiers have mended the windlass so that the pail does not fall into the water and have to be fished out patiently every time by my cook, Rosalie.

Soldiers from many camps hire bicycles for a ride on Sunday morning. As they wheel by our gate, Mimi wants to know if they like France. The surprise of hearing a kid speak

English in this out-of-way spot jolts the soldiers off their bicycles. They come in for cookies and coffee, while I mend a rent in a flannel shirt. To be able to strut around in my husband's light-blue dressing-gown for half an hour is such a relief from khaki uniform that I am told it is as good a vacation as a week's fishing trip. A motor, new and stiff, gets cranky in front of our house. After it has been coaxed into action again, so much time has been lost that there is still enough to eat waffles and maple syrup. I tell the boys I don't wish anybody bad luck, but if they must break down, for goodness' sake do it near us.

Truck-trains in command of convoy pilots—usually second lieutenants—generally leave the Holy City in the late afternoon. They aim only to get clear of the park and test their new motors before the first night's stop. Last night a convoy slowed down here. I ran along until I reached the Cadillac at the head of the

line. When the tall lieutenant stepped out of his car, I greeted him:

"I 'm glad to see you. How do you do!"

"You—you—speak English?"

"Of course. I was born in Philadelphia."

"Good Lord!" allowed the lieutenant, "and I in Chester."

I found that he was just going to look for a field where he and his men could camp. I told him I had guest-rooms with enough beds for him and the other officers, and that I could put up all the men around my place somewhere. There was the room over the kitchen, the woodshed, the carriage house, and a very large barn-loft.

While the officers and sergeants were making arrangements for the night, I discovered six lads who had missed out on the mess deal before the convoy left the Holy City. When Rosalie was giving them something to eat, I asked if they, too, were surprised to find that I was an American.

"No," said a young Southerner. "No Frenchwoman can run like you."

Some of the men gathered around the summer house, where they had carried pails of water to indulge in a moonlight scrub. Others were spreading out their bedding-rolls in the barn. Mademoiselle Alice, my children's governess, cannot speak English, but she found a corporal who knew German. He helped her carry the iron tripod and the caldron from the kitchen and found a safe place for them in the garden. They were chattering away in the enemy's lingo as they broke up a bundle of fagots and piled them under the caldron ready to start a fire quickly in the morning.

Half a dozen boys who had parked their trucks had come into the house to my study fire. I asked them, "What are you, boys, aviators?"

"No, ma'am, only when we get refused a pass. Then we do go up in the air."

After they had seen to everything, the offi-

cers had their supper with us. The way you recognize a good officer is by the care he gives his men. The dining-room all ready for the lieutenants: drawn-work runner on the table, yellow candlesticks, blue Brittany bowls filled with hot chocolate to warm them up after a tough day's work. Soft-boiled eggs and tiny gold-bowled spoons to eat them with. Camembert cheese and toast. How I wished it were possible to have a dainty meal for every one in the crowd!

When I lighted the officers to bed, one of them observed: "It is only fair for me to tell you before I go into your guest-room that I am full of cooties."

"That may be—and it is equally true that other boys have come here like that too."

"Does n't that shock you? Does n't me either. It is not their board bill I mind—it is their traveling expenses."

At five o'clock next morning every mother's son had a pint of hot coffee. One hundred

marched through my rose garden in the early sunshine and filed by the range where I ladled out the coffee. The only trouble with the aluminum cups in the mess-kits is that they get so hot you burn your mouth on them. Luckily, the mess sergeant gave me some tins of ground coffee to add to mine, and the drink was nice and strong. On a table near by I had put roses and doilies and milk and sugar. The sergeant had added tins of baked beans. I shivered when I saw the beans were going to be eaten cold. But the soldiers told me they were used to that. The boys came on through the dining-room where some one was cutting bread. They were invited to sit down in hall and drawing-room. There were too many of them for all to sit down at one time, but the process of getting served was slow enough to make room for those that were actually eating. When they finished, they signed their names in my guest book and got a cigarette. Then they went to the well to wash mess-kits

and fill canteens. Several boys had hung little mirrors on trees and were comfortably shaving.

"Gee—it 's nice to get into somebody's home," said one.

"Do you know, this is the first time I have eaten food I did not have to pay for—outside of our own mess—since we left Hoboken."

"Hey, can-opener, you got a match? We call the guy that handles the rations on these convoys can-opener."

"I was just looking for you, Mrs. Gibbons," said Mr. Can-Opener. "Found a good knife in your kitchen. Would you be good enough to swap it for these?" "These" were four loaves of bread. He put them on my desk, and patted the pocket out of which stuck my knife. A soldier came up to me and inquired: "Say, lady, where do you pay for this here?"

"Can you read?"

"Course I can read."

"Did you happen to see the sign on my gate?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What does it say?"

"A Little Gray Home in France."

"Did you see that the biggest word on that sign is HOME?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then don't talk to me about paying, boy."

The children were put into an ancient rolling-chair found in the barn, and dragged to the head of the line. I followed with the lieutenants.

The top sergeant blew a whistle. Motors began to *chug-chug*. The line moved slowly. Shouts. Cheering. A Philadelphia boy took the insignia off his collar and fired them at my feet as he passed. One truck-load of boys sang, "There 's a Long, Long Trail a-Winding into No-Man's Land." Some one stood up and waved his hat. He called "Good-by,—" (a pause)—"Mother!"

CHAPTER III

THE HOLY CITY

In the Little Gray Home I was marooned. I tried to rent a pony and cart. Then I let it be known among the peasants that I was in the market for the purchase of a horse. Military people, congressmen on joy rides, and endless bands of folks inspecting seem to be the only ones that move about quickly and easily.

In what category am I? Convoys do not always have provisions. To be able to offer a good meal at any time means giving aid and comfort to the soldier. Food I must have, and there is only one way to get it—buy it from Uncle Sam. The colonel says he is going to make me a mess sergeant. Until ra-

tions are sent to me, I must forage. Yes, I am military.

When the meat truck from the hospital passed, I hailed the driver.

"Coming along with you, Tony, this morning!" said I, climbing up to the seat and sitting down beside him.

"Sure you are!" Tony profited by the stop to light a cigarette. "Off for the Holy City," he said, putting his overcoat on my lap; "that 's the nearest we 'll get to home for God knows when!"

As we bumped over a grade crossing, an M. P. stepped out. Holding up his stick, he shouted,

"Girls ain't allowed to ride on motor-trucks!"

Tony looked at me.

"Thinks you 're a French mademoiselle," whispered Tony. "Gosh! Mrs. Gibbons, you 'll have to get me out of this!"

I leaned over and smiled at the M. P.

"Come here, boy," I said. "Put your hand in mine."

He did it, slowly and wonderingly.

"If there 's ever anything I can do for you, I want you to tell me," I said. "I 'm thirty-five years old. No one has called me 'girl' for years. I 'm flattered and touched!"

The M. P. put his stick back of him. He backed. "Y-y-yes, ma'am," said he.

Since then no M. P. has stopped me. Word has gone up and down the line, "Better not touch that woman, she 's loaded."

We were approaching the Holy City.

"I 'm proud to be an American when I look at the work our men have done here. I have been doing this route for a year now. Every time I go through this town it looks more like Jersey City."

"It did n't look like Jersey City when the first Americans landed, Tony. That was the month before you came over. The censorship thought the great event could be concealed.

No mention in the newspapers of this or any other port. But we all knew about it beforehand—*concierge* as soon as cabinet minister. Of course I jumped on a train with my husband, and we came to greet the boys. Dear me, how homesick that first bunch was inside of twenty-four hours! The Holy City was n't any holier then than it is now. But it was very strange and foreign. Those two adjectives, you know, are the same in French. The end of June, 1917! Scarcely a year ago. And to follow this long road for miles to-day, flanked on both sides with American camps and depots and endless railroad tracks, where there were only cat-tails last year, to see these ships with the American flag,—more American ships than I 've seen together at one time in all my life before, and I know East and West rivers well,—it makes me feel that Aladdin's lamp has been rubbed. Aladdin's lamp *has* been rubbed by Uncle Sam, and if he 's done all this, it 's because not one genius appeared,

but millions. You fellows are the genii, Tony."

"I don't know what that may be, Mrs. Gibbons, but we 're it all right, if you say so."

A Cadillac passed us quickly in the other direction. Shouts. Arms waving.

"Again?" said Tony, dejected. "They 're stopping."

A long-legged fellow with a black mustache was running back toward us.

"They want us," said Tony. "It 's a captain. You ought to get the chief M. P. to make you out a pass and stamp it proper."

"Here you are!" said the captain. "I 've been looking all over France for you! Did you ever get letters from me?"

"I certainly did, Whit, and answered them, too."

"What are you doing here, Helen?"

"Spending the summer."

"Far from here?"

"Not very. Just came from there this morning. How long have we been, Tony?"

"An hour," said Tony.

"An hour by motor truck," said Whit. "I can make it in half an hour. I 'll come up to see you Sunday, if you 'll be there."

"Come for the week-end, Whit," said I, "and make friends with my children."

"I 'll do that if you don't make them call me Uncle, and if you let me bring Johnny along."

"Be there Saturday afternoon then with Johnny, whoever he is!"

"Johnny is a pal of mine, prince of a fellow, if he did go to Princeton. You 'll like Johnny."

"I certainly shall, but I am surprised at you, fifteen years out of Yale! You 're still the kid I used to know—with that Princeton stuff."

"Strange, is n't it, that I should have said that. But over here we older fellows, living

with the youngsters, get right back where we were in 1900."

"Come, Tony," I said, "the waiting line at the commissary will be getting too long."

"Wait," said Whit, "why don't you lunch with me to-day? Meet me at Marie's restaurant at twelve-thirty. I 'll arrange my work so we can show you the shops this afternoon."

"Shops? What kind of shops?"

"Railroad shops, of course," said he.

"Of course," I answered. "Whitfield, you are one of the few people I know that knew what they were going to be from the beginning. You have stuck to your *choo-choo* cars since you wore knee-caps and hated to get your ears washed."

"Ain't it funny," said Tony, when we started on, "how we find old friends over here. I 'm doin' that all the time."

"Yes, Tony," I answered. "I 've called that captain's mother Aunt Louise ever since I can remember."

"You sure must go with him to see the shops. I got an early start this morning. I 'll wait at the commissary till you buy your stuff, and I can take it out and leave it at the Little Gray Home as easy as not. And it 'll save you the trouble."

"All right, Tony," I answered. "I do hope the Captain has his children's pictures in his pocket. I 've never seen them."

At luncheon in the restaurant at the table sitting next to us were two ensigns and three second lieutenants. The restaurant girl said,

"Quel vin désirez-vous, blanc ou rouge?"

"Pas de vin."

Marie brings carafes of water and, laughing as she puts them on the table, she says, "Du vin Américain, alors!"

Before the American invasion, if people lunching there had refused to buy wine, Marie would have been mystified or angry. Now she receives with equanimity the "Pas de vin."

When Whitfield paid for the lunch, he gave

Marie a hundred-franc note. While we were waiting for the change, he said,

"My hundred-franc notes are not money to me—they look more like bills of lading."

"Choo-choo cars again."

When the captain's motor drew up in front of the shops we saw a colored fellow riding a mule. He was directing a detail of negro soldiers unloading heavy triangular steel frames for bridge building. The negro corporal jumped down off the mule and saluted the captain.

The mule was restless.

"Halt!" the corporal commanded. The mule stopped. He walked around the mule, and cried, "At ease!"

"Did you get that?" said the captain. "Negro troops are an endless source of amusement to me. Nigs love paraphernalia. They take military stuff theatrically."

"Yes," I said, "their tools are stage business."

"But they play their rôle well," said the captain.

The negroes were carrying one of the steel frames now.

"Git yo' shouldahs agin dat," commanded the corporal. "You-all done tole Uncle Sam you would. Push now, you-all Yanks!"

"We ain't Yanks," protested one. "We 's f'om Virginia!"

"Easy now! Mind yo' co'ns," said the corporal.

The burden slipped into place on top of a pile, and the negroes slouched along singing,

"Gawd don't have no coward soldiers in His band,
Ah 'm goin' to climb up Jacob's ladder some dese
    days,
Every round goes higher en higher,
Gawd don't hev no coward soldiers in His band."

"That 's one of their working songs," said the captain. "Heavy work, moving steel, but they do relax between times."

We went in the office to pick up Johnny,

and met the colonel in charge of the stevedores.

"Been watching your black soldiers working," said I. "Listening to their talk makes me homesick!"

"Great boys," said the colonel. "The other night I was n't feeling very well. Dog-tired after a hard day. Had my boy wash my feet and give me a rub-down. A nigger makes the best orderly in the world. There is something of the old mammy left in many of them. I 've seen my boy come back after he had settled me for the night and ask, 'You sick?' and when I 'd ask him why, he would reply, "Don't know—'pears to me you is oneasy and too quiet.' I was lying there and he was rubbing my back when he broke out with:

" 'C'n'l—is dere eny chance fo' me to go to de front?'

" 'What do you want to go to the front for, Nelson?'

" 'When Ah jined, Ah thought Ah 'd be daid befoh dis en Ah jes well go now.'

" 'Nelson, I 've read in the paper to-night that the Germans cut off the ears of all colored troops captured.'

" 'You doan' say, sir!'

"Then after a silence, quite a little interval:

" 'C'n'l, Ah wants to go anyway, dey cain't cut um off'n all ob us.' "

Johnny was not to be found. We left a note for him to join us later.

In the shop a locomotive body, held high in the grip of a mighty crane, was lowered slowly and put into place on waiting wheels. The captain was delivering a lecture on *choo-choos.*

"Got to know the laws of physics to understand the load she will pull," said he, finally.

"When do you put on the stack?" I asked.

"About the last thing—smallest part. But I suppose the most obvious to a layman."

The captain and a soldier mechanic walked up the tracks with me to a completed engine. A girl in grimy overalls and with a heavy ham-

mer in her hand passed us. The soldier glanced around, then lagged behind to talk to the girl.

Running to catch up with us again, the soldier said,

"Captain, guess folks back home would n't believe me if I told them I was in love with the village blacksmith."

The mechanic jumped on to the engine.

"Fired up, is n't she?" asked the captain. "2047 was put together yesterday. We 'll test her now if you like. You may start her. Pull this hard."

I pulled hard. 2047 glided slowly out of the shop along the river track.

"Speed her up! Fred," said the captain.

2047 carried us swiftly out into the country.

The captain and Fred pulled levers, made calculations, kept their eyes on the gage. "You can ring the bell at the grade crossing," said the captain. "Pull this string."

The test was finished.

"Take it easy going back to the shop," said the captain.

"I 'm told American soldiers call French locomotives teapots," said I.

"No," replied Fred, "peanut roasters!"

"There are fewer accidents on French railroads," I suggested.

"That may be, but look at their mail service. We oil up an engine and put her in the pink of condition, then run her like the devil to save four hours on a mail run. Hard on the engine, I grant you—but what 's wearing out an engine if you can beat a record? Competition 's fierce in the U. S. A. No; the French save the engine and lose the contract."

"Let us off at the lower road, Fred," said the captain. "I want to take Mrs. Gibbons over to the mess to get some tea. Mind the yard is clear for out-going engines at seventeen-thirty."

"I see you use the French time-schedule," I remarked.

"Got to hand it to them when it comes to their way of telling time—that and the metric system."

The soldiers' barracks in this camp are the oldest American barracks in France. Before one I saw a little dooryard. The path was picked out with smooth cobble-stones painted white. A soldier was sitting on the bench by the door. We stopped a moment to speak to him. "Why did you paint your house black?" I asked.

"Locomotive color," answered the boy.

"Are you responsible for this pretty dooryard?" I asked.

"Well—some," he said. "These here morning glories are camouflage—they 're to make us think we got a garden."

We found Johnny in the officers' dining-room.

"Don't let 's have tea here," he said. "Let 's

run the car over to the hospital. I know a nurse there—"

"Who will give us tea?" said Whitfield.

"Sure," answered Johnny.

We waited in the garden of the hospital for Miss Smith to come down. We had tea at a little table under a tree. Convalescent soldiers were sitting about smoking and talking. Some strolled about sunning ugly wounds.

After tea, Whit and Johnny went back to the shops. Miss Smith was going to a hospital-train that had arrived at the railroad station with men invalided home.

"Let 's walk over," suggested the nurse. "One has to wait so long sometimes to get a chance at an ambulance."

"What do you do when these trains come in?" I asked.

"I go down when I can. There is always something one can do, if it is only to light a cigarette."

"How do the boys feel about being sent home?" I asked.

"I see only those at our own hospital and those on the trains that are directed to the dock. When they first arrive at our hospital, there is talk about going home. It is in the air: men are sad or surly about it. Some are bitterly opposed. When they have had the medical examination and the decision is made, the blow has fallen. Then comes a period of adjustment, and when the findings of our examining committee are accepted, men go over their little possessions. They are wondering how much of their junk, as they call it, they will be allowed to take along."

"What on earth do they pick out to take?"

"Souvenirs and dogs," she answered, smiling. "One boy set great store by a setter he called Liberty. He had actually brought that dog with him from America. When he was told he was to go to the States after his stump

healed,—his leg was amputated,—he buried his face in Liberty's neck and I heard him say, 'When you and I left Chicago we had a round-trip ticket and did n't know it.' "

We mounted the hospital train, and seated ourselves on the edge of a bunk. Two orderlies were making up bunks at the other end of the car. Stretcher cases were being carried out tenderly and placed on the platform to wait their turn. Ambulances were plying to and fro between the station and the docks.

A Y. M. C. A. entertainer with a lovely contralto voice was singing. A soldier was singing with her. The loss of his right arm had not changed the quality of his tenor voice. Experience had worked hope.

"You see how they are," said the nurse, drawing her blue cape about her, "once they know their bit is done, they sing. If a man is booked to leave with a certain transport, and at the last minute his sailing has to be delayed a week, his heart is broken. We had to post a

sign on the door to the office where the lists are made up:

> "If you want to wait two weeks longer to go home —come in and ask us if your name is on the list for to-morrow's boat."

I stepped into the next coach where men were waiting for the stretcher bearers.

"I had a pal," said one. "We used to go to dances together in Denver. He 'll never dance again, that bird. Right leg shot off—was with the Marines up the line. He sailed with the last bunch."

"Was he glad to go home?" I put in.

"Was he glad! Better than staying here in France, planted in the ground and wearing a wooden kimono!"

"I ain't glad," said another. "I'd rather go and bump off a few more Dutchmen than go home now."

"Won't you be glad when there 's no more corn-willy?" said I.

"Corn-willy won't kill a soldier," laughed the boy, "but listen, we fed some to a dog. He went over, planked down, and *fini!*"

"Corn-willy has n't been popular in your outfit since then?"

"No, ma'am! We all felt catchy after that, I 'll tell the world."

Two streams meet at the Holy City. The incoming stream, thousands of troops debarking every week, brings victory. When our boys arrive, they look so young. I have become accustomed in France, during four long years, to fresh faces with the light of youth in their eyes, but yet with the indelible traces of suffering. The smile of the new-comers gives me courage sorely needed. To see them is more than a sparkling vision of home. It is the assurance that the future is good.

Does not the outgoing stream carry back to America also victory? There are scars, regrets for pals, but a new vision of life. No man that goes down into the shadow of the

valley of death is the same afterwards. Broken bodies, wrecked nerves, you say?—Ah!—but tempered souls. The message they bear in their bodies is a message of triumph. They, who have paid the price, are the vanguard of the returning victors. Vanguard of the victorious A. E. F.—in both directions!

CHAPTER IV

A STEAM ROLLER

It was a rainy day, so the children could not play in the garden. They settled themselves in my study. We had been reading Dotty Dimple stories since lunch. The wind blew the door open.

"Close it quickly, Christine," I cried, "before mother's papers fly everywhere."

"Oh, Mama," said she, "there 's a soldier looking in our gate."

"Get an umbrella, dear, and run out to see if he wants something."

In a few minutes she returned, leading a huge, tall fellow by the hand.

"Hello!" said I, and shook hands with him. "Come right over and put your name in my

guest-book. It bothers me to get well started making friends with people and then find I don't know their names. First your name on this line, please, with your rank and army post-office address. Then on the next line the name of some woman: mother, sister, wife, or sweetheart. Some day soon I 'll write her a letter, saying you are well and cheerful, and send your love."

"Lady, I did n't want to bother nobody," he said slowly. "I was lookin' for a drink. This ain't no café." He was putting on his hat again.

"I—I did n't want to bother nobody."

"But you 're not bothering me, my dear boy. I can give you a drink. What will you have? Some cider? Maybe you 'd rather take a cup of hot coffee."

"It blowed the breath clean out of me when this little miss came out there and told me to come in and see her mama. I wondered if I was dreaming and had-a got back home

some way. The little girl spoke good American."

"I did n't hear a truck—are you traveling on foot?" I asked.

"No, ma'am, we 're a crew of three runnin' a steam roller. We 're headed for the hospital at Savenay. Goin' to do road building with the Blank Teenth Engineers."

"Where are the others?"

"They 're bringin' the roller. It 's goin' slow up the hill. I came on ahead. We been lookin' for some boovette where we could hawl up a while and get a drink to wash down our lunch."

"My soul, it 's after one and you have n't had lunch!" I exclaimed.

"No, ma'am. Say, come on out with me, lady, and give my pals apoplexy like you did me."

Patrick waved to the boys on the steam roller. They had just got to the top of the hill and could come a little faster now. The en-

gine stopped coughing with one final hiccough. The big wheels buried themselves comfortably in the mud.

"Sandy, my boy," cried Patrick, "ye 'll never believe what I 'm goin' to tell ye now. This lady is an American."

"Just as American as you are," said I. "How-do-you-do." I shook hands with Sandy.

"Are you Irish, too, like Patrick and me?" I asked the engineer, who was closing the furnace door. He lifted his grimy head and looked at me solemnly.

"No, put I vish I vas!"

"Aw, go-awn, Heiny," said Sandy, patting the engineer's shoulder. "You 're as good an American as Uncle Sammy ever slapped into uniform."

"Patrick tells me you have had no lunch," I began.

"And I told ye, too, I did n't want to bother nobody, mind that!" cried Patrick.

"What were you going to have for lunch?" I enquired.

"A tin of goldfish, a couple of onions, and some bread," said Heiny.

"Leave the goldfish and onions where they are. Bring the bread along—I 'm short of that," said I.

We left the steam roller and walked across the road. Sandy opened the gate and let me pass through first.

"I know'd you was an American," said he, beaming.

"Yes," said Patrick, "and she 's got a bunch of kids in there that when you look at them, you don't know whether to laugh or to cry. Gits a fellow on his soft side," he went on; "that baby is a humdinger."

Four little faces were flattened against the window-pane and laughing eyes peered out through wet waving ivy.

"How does this country strike you?" I asked.

"I 'm like the 'shine'—stevedore he was—who said: 'Ef I owned dis country I 'd give it to the Kaiser and 'pologise fo' de condition it 's in,' " said Sandy.

"I like it fine," protested Patrick. "These French ain't ugly—they 're real friendly, real fried easy goin'. They 're Frogs, see?"

"If you gentlemen would like to wash off some of that coal dust—"

"Vell, I vas chust vorryin' about dot some. I vos sayin' to m'self how are ve a-goin' to git avay mit dem dirty faces. Ve ain't in your class."

"That 's nothing, how can you work around a steam roller and not get black?" I brought them hot water from the kitchen and showed them the comfort bags. It was just a fancy of mine that gave me the keenest possible pleasure to put my best center-piece and napkins for these boys. It was the cook's day off, and when the boys reappeared, I had put together a good little luncheon.

"The dining-room is this way," I said.

"Aw, don't put us in the dining-room," remonstrated Patrick. "We belong in the kitchen."

I turned on him. "If the Germans were invading this valley," I said, "you would n't let them catch me and my children if you could help it, would you?"

"There 'd be three more dead Yanks first!" said Patrick.

"Pet y'r poots der vood!" corroborated Heiny.

"Then hush your fuss and sit down. Nothing 's too good for you boys!"

CHAPTER V

A CORPORAL

"Any mail?" The corporal shut the juice off his machine, swung a long leg around the saddle, and stood smiling at my gate.

"Come in till I write the address on the envelope," I answered.

The corporal stops every morning. The letters I give him get a twenty-four hours' start on the French *facteur,* who travels on foot.

"Saw a Ford car in a ditch below here. Couple of Frogs in it. Lucky they did n't get hurt. They got theirs for coming on our road. That 's funny, too. Queer how a fellow gets to thinking this place belongs to us. Gee! ain't we going to have a bee-utiful mix-up

when we have to straighten up whose is which. For instance, that there reclaimed land between here and the sea—whose is it? American soldiers have already won territory without seein' a living bullet. All them boys had to fight was plain water. One thing sure these French never would of used that land till Kingdom Come. Whose is it, I say? Answer me that, Mrs. Gibbons! Why, it belongs to Uncle Sam. The Blank Teenth Engineers got it for the old boy."

"What I don't see," commented Christine, "is why Uncle Sam sends all his boys over here and never comes himself. Do you ever use your pistol?" she went on, as the despatch rider put his coat on a study chair.

"Ever use that?" he exclaimed. "Guess I did! And gosh darn fast. Killed plenty of Germans up at Shato-Theery, but I was no despatch rider then. Where are your cigarettes?"

"Here in the basket," I answered, as I pulled

the steamer chair around to the fireplace. "Sit down and have your smoke. The other day you had got to the place where you heard you were to go to the front."

"We was in the trenches at Montdidier when that word came. That was on the fourteenth of July. We rolled our packs and waited till the fellows came up to relieve us. They come about nine o'clock and we shifted reliefs. We went out of them trenches back to a little town where they inspected our equipment. Gave us two more boxes of hardtack and an extra can of corn-willy. Also an extra pair of shoes. We piled on trucks. They took us close to the third line. We left the trucks and started to hike. Marched till daylight. And we were then where we could see German observation balloons. We rested that day and stayed under cover. As soon as it got dark, we started again. Marched all night, passing tanks—French tanks—and machine-gun battalions. At five minutes to four we came to a little town.

We were told that we was to give Fritz a whippin' that morning. We were close behind our first lines. Everything was quiet. It was raining.

"Two large guns opened on each end and one small one in the middle. The earth started tremblin', and it became light as day. Five minutes after the barrage was on, we went over the top. Just as I was going, the cap. told me I was now a corporal. The German outposts threw up their hands, and we took them prisoners. We passed them and went on where we could see the German first lines. Found the Germans standing on top of the parapets with their hands up in the air. We took them prisoners and got their second line. The Germans opened fire on us from machine-guns put up in trees. The tanks came and shot 'em out. Gee! Them Germans dropped like squirrels. I walked along with a machine-gun. When we reached their third line, they were tryin' to

get out. 'T ain't no good taking prisoners and splitting grub with them. We put a machine-gun at the end of a trench and began shootin' 'em down—pilin' 'em up—till the lieutenant came over and told us to take prisoners.

"Behind that third line the Germans had their stores. I crawled in a window—they was all packin' in there—and I got two pair of socks, two pair of shoes, a belt, and two pistols. Our officers chased us out, so we started looking around to see what else we could find. Went down into a dug-out—German officers' dug-out—where we found a chest with a padlock on it. We kicked the lock off. In there were two cases of beer and two jugs of rum."

"Good beer?"

"You bet—lager beer. Could n't be beat. We each drank a bottle of beer. Tapped the jugs of rum, filled two canteens, and drank the remainder.

"Feelin' pretty good, we went out after

more Dutchmen. Ducked down into a dug-out to get away from German barrage—and let our barrage go on over. Saw a German lieutenant laying below on a cot with a hole in his leg. I went down the stairs, and when I come to the door he had a pistol pulled on me. He snapped it, but it did not go off. Afraid he 'd try again. So I took my forty-five and tapped him real gently on the head. I did n't aim to hit him so hard, but I put him over the Big Divide. I took his watch, his pistol, his ring with his name on it, and two hundred and seventy Dutch marks which I still have in my possession, also the shell he snapped at me.

"It was beginning to get dark then. We advanced to a swamp close to a little town held by the Germans. We took some hand-grenades after dark to scare Fritz in the town. We were in bunches of very small numbers. Whenever we found any Germans, we handed them a hand-grenade and run back to our fellows.

"We stood at alert—that 's standing with your pack on your back ready for action—can't go to sleep. I was n't thinkin' much of sleep up there any time. That was till daylight on the nineteenth. My automatic rifle was shot in two. The barrel was shot off while I was carryin' the thing, by a piece of high explosive. Got a bit rammed into my thumb, and another over my eye. By this time we had their artillery. American gunners were using it on the Dutchmen. Our artillery was moved up too."

"How does our artillery compare with theirs?"

"We can shoot ten to their one. Oh, you mean the French? About the same, only we're a little faster.

"Went down the road towards the first-aid station. Heard a shell coming, and I laid down on the road. Hit eight feet from me. Had a time-fuse on. Buried itself in the ground. I felt myself a-going. When I

come to, I was in a wheat field fifty feet from the road."

"How did you feel?"

"Pretty dizzy. I crawled to where the wounded were being evacuated by the aid of the Dutch prisoners. Oh, gee, they was all shot up! But yet cheerful, wishing they had n't 'a' got hurt, so they could have went on further.

"I took my forty-five in my hand and called two Dutchmen over to help me. My back and legs was sore from hitting the ground. Before reaching the aid station we came to a valley where we could see gas hanging over the grain. We could smell it—like mustard, it was—or rather mustard and horse-radish. When we got into the gas a ways, it began to burn my throat. My mask had three bullet-holes through it. I kept it over my eyes, but my throat and lungs felt burning and I could hardly talk.

"They kept sending me further and further

back, and finally I came to this base hospital. Feeling pretty good through the day. That gas seems to take your breath worse at night. I went to the garage and got a job. Now I 'm riding despatch service on an Indian motor-cycle. Expect to return to my company soon and thank Fritz for his compliments. I have a real lot of love for him. Wanted to send me back to the States—but I won't go till the other fellows do."

"There was another time, was n't there? You got gassed or something?"

"Yes—gas. Got that dose in May when we was standing to in the trenches. Eyes swelled shut and burnt like fire. They wanted me to help at the field hospital—tinker around digging one thing and another. I beat it—you can do more in the trenches."

"How did you get back?"

"Ambulance going up the line—got on. Found my outfit just as they were fixing to go over the top. Put in a hitch of twenty-two

days till we were relieved. 'It 's a great life if you don't weaken.' Heavy on that 'weaken' part. I would n't give up my experience for one thousand dollars—and I would n't give two cents to go through it again."

CHAPTER VI

THEY COME

"Are you a college woman?"

The night train from Paris had brought me to Brest. I was having my breakfast with the Y. M. C. A. secretary.

"Why?"

"I was wondering if you could do stunts with traveling rings?"

"Yes, I am a college woman," I answered, "and I did gym like everybody else, but it was a long time ago."

"It 's not as bad as that," laughed the secretary. "There 's a transport coming in, and I had a hunch that I 'd like to take you out to meet it. Put you up in the rigging and have you speak to the soldiers. American woman

giving them a glad howdy! Eh what, come on!"

"Great!" I exclaimed.

We slid down hill in a Ford and were soon flying out to the roadstead beyond the fort. Our launch reached the *Pastoris* just after her anchor went overboard. Blue-clad sailors were shouting, and winding ropes in wet coils.

"Look at the khaki swarming all over that boat," said the secretary. "So many that you wonder why a bunch of landlubbers like that would n't fall into the water, half of 'em."

"Oh, look!" said I. "They 're sending down a ladder!"

"Yes, but red tape and paper work will be going on, and there won't be a soldier putting his foot on dry land to-day. My, soul! get on to the fellows looking at you through opera glasses!"

"Hello, boys!" I cried, when I reached the gangway.

"She 's American!" said a soldier, who was straddling the bow of a lifeboat.

The transport gave a mighty cheer. The secretary hurried me forward. The boys crowded onto the deck, but fell back to make way for us. One touched my sleeve. Another wanted to shake hands. On the bridge the captain greeted me.

"First person to board our ship in this foreign land. God bless you!"

The deck below was solid khaki. Faces all turned our way.

"Now—" said the secretary, "traveling rings!" Below a break in the bridge-rail hung a rope ladder. "Catch your heels in this round. Steady now!"

"Sing, boys!" I cried, " 'Keep the Home Fires Burning.' "

They did a verse, and the chorus twice.

I began to speak.

"When I make a sea voyage and landing day

comes, my mind flies back to the sailing day. You have just sung, 'Though your boys are far away they dream of home.' You are thinking of the loved ones you left. We cannot replace them. But you are not alone in this strange land. You have friends. The French people have been waiting a long time for you. In Paris and everywhere are Americans. Our homes are yours. You won't go anywhere without seeing us. And the French—" I went on to tell them how France had suffered and kept at it against all odds, and what the coming of the Americans means to the French.

When it was over, I went aft and repeated the greeting to the boys on the deck there.

I settled myself in a lifeboat to chat and hand out cigarettes and chocolate.

"Our food has n't been so bad," said one soldier. "Third day out they started serving coffee and sandwiches to the guards."

"Was it good?" I inquired.

"Good? You bet! I 'd have given all the money I had and half my clothes for a loaf of that bread. After that everybody on the ship was the guard."

Another boy wanted cigarettes.

"Did you get seasick?" I asked.

"No, ma'am. Occasionally got a little dizzy. My first duty on the water was in the crow's-nest. Spent my birthday up there. The lieutenant with me got seasick, though. Could n't sit up. Two sailors had to come and tie a rope around him and carry him right down."

A petty officer helped me undo bundles.

"Americans have changed from tourists into crusaders," said I.

"The one result they may not have thought about," responded the Jackie, "is the change that is going to come over them. New scenes and new experiences; why, travel is an education."

"Yes, indeed," I answered; "a year of sol-

diering abroad will be worth a year of schooling to them."

"I 'll never forget my first cruise," said the Jackie. "That was to the Near East."

"I 've been in Turkey," said I. "We were in Mersina during the massacres of 1909. Battleships in the harbor—two of them were American—used to play their searchlights along the sea-wall and it was funny when searchlights would focus on a group of Turks. They would disperse in terror—thought it was the Evil Eye."

"That beats all!" exclaimed the Jackie. "I was the man behind the searchlight on the *North Carolina!*"

The soldiers were landed in launches, and formed in line on the dock. When a couple of thousand Americans started up the hill, the secretary and I accompanied them in the Ford. They had improvised an orchestra to lead off. Banjos played "Hail, Hail, the Gang's all Here." One soldier, who looked like a pro-

fessor, was mopping the perspiration off his forehead with one hand and with the other was holding three books. Comfort bags, made of gay-colored cretonne, were strung up to Sam Brown belts. A whisk-broom lashed to a pack was bobbing along. One youngster had two toothbrushes in his hatband.

We had picked up a boy en route who was n't feeling well, and had brought him with us in our motor. At the railroad station I found the French *poste de secours* and asked the poilus in there to look after their new comrade. They spread his bedding-roll on the bench, and he gave them cigarettes.

A train of cattle-cars was waiting for the regiment.

"Say," said a doughboy, "do you think the French sentinel would let me look at his gun?"

"Surely," I answered; "just go and ask him. He 'll be tickled to death to show you."

I left the two, each chattering away in his own tongue, over the way the gun worked.

One soldier,—he was at least six feet, six inches tall,—helped me carry a basket of apples over to the train. I gave the first apple, a rosy-cheeked one, to the officer who was directing the embarkment.

"This man is helping me," I said to the officer; "is n't he a dear?"

"Yes," said he, "when Bill gets his growth, he will be such a help to his colonel."

"That officer is the most successful in the crowd," said Bill as we moved on to the next car, " 'cause he can say a thing like that."

The engine whistle was blowing. The men hurried to find places in the train.

"Good-by, good-by," I cried.

"Don't say good-by," said one. "We 're coming back again. Say 'Good luck!' "

From the last car negro soldiers sang back at me:

"Good morning, Mr. Kaiser, Uncle Sammie 's on de
firin' line,
Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust,

Ef de French mens cain' drive yu de 'Mericans must,
So good morning, Mr. Kaiser, Uncle Sammie 's on de
firin',
Uncle Sammie 's on de firin', Uncle Sammie 's on de
firin' line!"

When the train disappeared, the M. P. at the station and I had coffee together at the *buvette.* The M. P. insisted on paying for both.

"How about her?" he said, pointing to the pretty French girl who served us. "I give her a quarter,"—he held out his hand full of coppers,—"and she gives me back a fistful of baggage-checks."

CHAPTER VII

DECORATION DAY

In Paris this spring the telephone rang one morning. An aviator from Philadelphia, A—— W——, was speaking. I asked him to lunch. At noon, when the children heard the elevator climbing to our floor, they ran to open the door. They fell upon their new soldier and dragged him into the drawing-room to see mother. When he could get his arm free from Lloyd's friendly grasp, he held out flowers to me and started to introduce himself. But his eye lit on the Steinway. Formal greeting stopped right there. His overcoat slipped off on the bench as he wriggled arms out of the sleeves. He began to play, and I could sense the problems of adjustment to the new life, longing for home, the thrill of

the first flight. The children had dropped to the floor, where they sat under the spell of the new friend's music. Not until he remembered letters sent in our care did the aviator come down out of the clouds. He excused himself. There was no piano in the camp—and that had been his whole life before he entered the army. He just could not resist.

A fortnight later, A—— W—— followed many of his friends who

> Passed like the Archangels,
> Trailing robes of flame.

The meaning of Decoration Day had become remote to Americans of my generation. But in 1918 it is born anew in us with the fulness our fathers and mothers experienced, and flags and flowers on soldiers' graves are once more a poignant and tender duty.

Decoration Day—until now a strange phrase that brought nothing to minds of my children. During the past year they have been finding

out vitally what it means to be Americans. This lesson had to be added to others.

An ambulance came for us. When wc reached the little Brittany village, our soldiers were drawn up in marching order before the main entrance of the *lycée,* which is the kernel of the great hospital city to be built here. The band, imported from a camp fifty kilometers away, was taking its place at the head of the line. Silver instruments flashed back the sunshine of a day more like crisp October than the heat of a May thirtieth at home. The officers swung in after the band. Lloyd whispered, "My, what a lot of majors!"

Muffled strains of Chopin's funeral march. The procession moved forward—not too rapidly for little feet.

A meadow has been set aside for the American cemetery. As we found places near the flag-draped platform, I heard the sweet call of the cuckoo. Gentle hills and rich farm lands, dotted with thatched cottages and windmills,

stretched to where the horizon meets the ocean. Then I saw the rows of white wooden crosses newly painted. At the foot of each grave were bunches of poppies, flaming symbols of sleep, nodding in the soft May breeze as if wafting a message of comfort down to the shore of the ocean and across the waves to America.

The older children were looking toward the platform, Lloyd with rapt eyes and a little hand bravely held to the temple in correct salute, Christine placid and expectant. Mimi sat on the colonel's overcoat, beside a French playmate. Colette decapitated daisies and piled them on Mimi's lap. This is America's day.

The speeches began. The French general in command of the region told how blue and khaki were marching together to battle. The Consul-General from the City of the Edict read the President's proclamation in French and English. The American Protestant chaplain said that he had known these dear boys

beside whose graves we stood. They died as they had lived—courageous, steadfast, willing to make the sacrifice. The American Catholic chaplain, born in France of French parents, prayed in the language of his childhood. As five hundred years ago, he said, Joan, the Maid of France, who should have known only peace, followed the vision which led to the salvation of France, to-day Young America had left the pursuits of peace to save France. The mayor's speech was a message to the mothers of fallen American heroes. The soil of his native Brittany would be to these precious earthly remains as a mother cradling her children.

The band played "Nearer, my God, to Thee." There surged up in my heart the words of the homesick psalmist, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

The nurses broke ranks slowly. They came across the grass, their arms filled with buttercups and daisies and wild roses.

"Jesus, Lover of my soul." . . . "Lead, kindly light." . . . We must sing these songs for you, mothers of the soldier boys that have died in France. The line of khaki took position beside the graves. I could not see more. Taps sounded. The salute was fired.

This evening I made a blaze of fagots in my bedroom chimney. The little folk gathered around me to talk over the events of the day while they undressed.

"Was n't it good of them to ask us to come to the base hospital to see Decoration Day?" observed Christine.

"Yes," said Lloyd, "and did n't our ambulance go fast?"

"You and all those nurses did cry, Mama," declared Mimi, "but I did n't. I liked the band and the soldiers and the daisies."

CHAPTER VIII

HOW I TRAVEL

I had been visiting my brother, who 's a shavetail in the artillery school at Angers. Sunday morning I went to the police station to get my paper stamped for the return trip. I poked it through the arch-shaped hole in the chicken-wire grating that fenced off a slice of the room.

"What is this thing?" asked the police officer, from his leather-cushioned chair back of the chicken-wire.

"My *sauf conduit,*" I answered. "I got it in my village below Savenay."

"What village?"

"Prinquiau."

"Is that in Loire-Inférieure?"

"Yes."

He picked up a little book with grubby curves for corners, and with a horny thumb-nail pushed back the paper till he got to the Pr's.

"Prinquiau," he grunted. "You have a *permis de séjour,* madame?"

"Yes."

"Well, it has blanks to be filled in and stamped when you want to make a journey."

"They were all used up with visas and signatures permitting other journeys," I replied. "I travel a lot. Here it is. You can see for yourself."

"Why did n't the *maire* take sticky paper and add an annex sheet?"

"He told me he had no annex sheets."

"This *sauf conduit* is n't worth the paper it 's printed on," shouted the policeman, rising from his chair and stamping up and down.

Another officer sitting on another leather-backed chair behind an arched hole in the

chicken-wire was reading a newspaper. He noticed us.

"What is the matter, Jacques?" he said.

Jacques had the *sauf conduit* in one hand; he slapped it with the back of the other. "This is no good!" he cried.

Turning to me, he continued, "This paper ought to have had the stamp of our military police and the American police. How did you buy your ticket at Savenay?"

"They do not ask me for papers at Savenay. They know me there. The paper 's no good, of course, if you say so," I agreed with him.

"You 've no right to go back at all!" shouted Jacques. "What do you want to go to Savenay for, any way; tell me that?"

"I 've rented a château near there for the summer," I answered. "My four babies are there."

"Madame has other papers?" asked the second policeman.

I opened my handbag and got out the other papers and put them through the hole.

"Can I go home on any of these?"

Jacques and the second policeman looked them over one by one.

"This paper is from a committee, you see, that represents the army and the navy of the United States." I pointed to the letter-head.

"Ah, but your *sauf conduit* was a mistake," cried Jacques, walking up and down again. "We don't issue this kind any more. The *maire* of your village ought to have known that!"

"Sure, he ought," I replied. "But, Monsieur, there are not enough first-class fellows like you to handle big places like Angers and villages like Prinquiau, too—"

The second policeman shot me a look. I thought his eye twinkled.

I had my cigarette case in my hand. I had taken it out when I got the papers. Opening

it, I slid my arm through the arched hole in the chicken-wire.

"Do these gentlemen smoke?" I asked.

They helped themselves. I took back my cigarette case, crossing it with a box of matches. Matches and cigarettes—both luxuries these days and not to be found in Angers. Jacques and the second policeman lighted up. "This paper—" began Jacques.

"Yes, the paper," said I. "How can we make it take me home to my babies?"

Jacques took a long puff at his cigarette, cleared his throat, and spat.

"Madame," said he, "you 're deaf, are n't you?"

"Yes, I 'm deaf."

"And I am blind?"

"Yes, Monsieur Jacques, you are blind."

"What we are going to do now," said he, "did n't happen."

"Did n't happen," I agreed.

"There is no pen on my desk and no ink in

the stand, but Madame will take this paper and underneath where it says '*permit* to go to Angers,' she will write" (a pause and his pen scratched), "the words I have written as a model on this paper."

The words were: *"Et retour*—and return." I wrote them, and handed the *sauf conduit* back to Jacques. He closed his thumb down on the two new words and blurred them, nodding his head approvingly. Then he affixed the precious stamp, without which I could not have bought my railroad ticket.

CHAPTER IX

A NEW POILU NEXT DOOR

I had been dining at the engineers' mess. The chief nurse, the chaplain and one of the doctors climbed into the motor with me and came out to the Little Gray Home for the ride. A hospital train arrived yesterday morning, and the day had been twenty-five hours long.

The colonel's chauffeur left small head and tail lights burning on the Packard and came into the house with the others. We got candles, and were about to sit down in the drawing-room when the governess beckoned to me from the hall.

"Madame Benoistel's mother sent over for you. The baby is coming."

The doctor hurried over with me to my

neighbor's cottage. The chauffeur took the others back to the hospital. As we parted from them at the gate the doctor told the chauffeur to bring out his emergency kit.

The cottage has two doors. One takes you from the road into the bedroom. The Doctor had to duck his head to go through the other door into the dark kitchen. Grandmother shouted to us to come in. She laughed hysterically when I stepped on the cat in the half light, then wiped away the tears with a yellow plaid handkerchief. She slipped out of her wooden sabots, and paddled around in stocking feet.

"My slippers, oh, my slippers, Yvonne, Yvonne," she called crossly. Then, smiling again, she shook hands with the doctor and me. "Oh, dear Madame," she went on, "I am an old peasant woman! I 'm a simple old thing! In French we say, '*Vieille bonne femme.*' A widow these twenty-seven years, killed with work on this farm," waving her hands. She

dug into a pasteboard box on the window-sill, hurriedly sorting papers. "I did right by my children," she went on. "Joseph is my son. I made a priest of him. There 's his picture and his *Croix de Guerre.* He is in a hospital at Marseilles. He must walk with crutches all his life. Ah! *Monsieur le Major,* this is his last letter. You may read it." She passed over to *monsieur le major* a paper ruled in little squares and covered with fine writing in purple ink.

"Yvonne, my daughter, Yvonne!" she shouted.

Grandmother was standing again now. She lifted the copper kettle off the tripod, poured in more water, and put it back.

"Yvonne is the youngest," she said. "I made a midwife of her. It cost me two hundred and fifty francs a month besides her clothes. The hospital gave her food. Ah! the misery of being left with children, a widow on a farm."

From the next room there was heard the sound of some one patting a pillow. Grandmother started and listened. "The poor little thing," she murmured. The bedroom door opened and Yvonne appeared. "Yvonne, my daughter, thou must remember that thy mother is old and stiff. My slippers, my slippers, quick!"

Yvonne shook hands with us quietly. "Mother," she said, "you 've been talking so fast you have not yet thanked madame for coming, and you should tell *monsieur le major* that we are thankful." She straightened Grandmother's white cap.

"I 'm an old *bonne femme* that could not have the education she gave her children. The friends will forgive."

Yvonne, young and slender, found the slippers and put them on her mother. She took my coat and hat and laid them on one of the two high, closely curtained beds that had their squat feet set heavily on the black mud floor.

"My poor Emilie, I 've always spoiled her. She has the best education of all. She is a schoolmistress at Nantes. She has never done a stroke of work on the farm. I let her get away from me to the city. Yvonne is the only one that helps me, the only one that can work. We have been getting in the hay to-day—and now this—"

"We must take madame and the doctor to Emilie now," Yvonne said gently.

The bedroom was whitewashed. A wooden dough-tray, with a coarse linen cloth doubled in it, stood on two chairs. On a table were medicines and baby clothes. Mademoiselle Yvonne opened the doors of the black wardrobe. Inside were piles of linen. We devoted ourselves to Emilie. At midnight grandmother, who had been dozing, stirred and went to the kitchen. In a few minutes she shouted for madame to bring the major, who must be hungry. We slipped on to the waxed benches on either side of the long table. The copper

kettle had been lifted off the tripod. Above the level of our heads the overhanging hood of the fireplace swallowed into its sooty throat the steam from the caldron. The stone platform on which the fire lay was wider than I am tall. On the tripod, a smaller kettle simmered over a sleepy fire. Granny and Yvonne were putting bowls on the table and pouring steaming chocolate into them.

"Ah! this is good," said Grandmother.

Over a copper ladle she held the mouth of a bottle. "Ask the major," she requested, "how much rum he likes in his chocolate."

"Break it to her gently that American doctors don't drink rum when they are on a case."

Grandmother put on her specs and looked at me and then at the doctor. "Impossible, impossible!" she cried.

Yvonne saw that we were not joking. "Mother, thou must not press them. It is not polite." Grandmother was offended.

"Come, *Grand'mère,*" said I, "I will take a

little to please you if you put away that ladle and get a teaspoon."

Yvonne gave us homespun napkins. Mine felt cold and damp on my lap, and I was glad to drink the chocolate. Grandmother cut slices of bread. She held the loaf under her left arm, which was just long enough to reach around it. She drew her knife toward her through the loaf. We watched her, marveling at the steady, accustomed stroke that peeled off half a yard of bread in long elliptical slices. On a plate near the candle was butter. It had been pressed down firmly into a dish and then turned out, a tempting little mountain. Crescent-shaped markings, like stripes of calico or chicken tracks in sand, had been made across it with the end of a fork.

"In America, do you have butter and farmhouses of stone and *maires* in the villages and stories about the Hebrew children eating manna or Joan of Arc leading troops—like us?"

"Oh, yes," answered the doctor. "And windmills and hospitals and railroad trains and babies—just like you," he added kindly.

The doctor has an exclusive practice in New York where he mends the digestion of wealthy ladies and gifted authoresses. He sat polishing his shell-rimmed spectacles with a fine linen handkerchief while he diverted grandmother by describing New York and skyscrapers. I rose to go back to Emilie.

"Can you beat her face? She does n't believe half I 'm telling her. Is n't she trying hard?"

The doctor's university French and the practised patience that comes from long years of treating the whims of people who are not ill had communicated to grandmother the sense of leisure. She folded her arms and sat there, satisfied that her Emilie was having the best of care.

The baby, a bonny boy, came at eleven. I gave him a bath in the dough-tray. Sympathy

and hope for future reform made me yield to agitated relatives. I swaddled him in a *maillot.* Granny had been wringing her hands and wailing that Emilie was going to die. She calmed down now and handed me the *chemise, brassière,* and *lange,* one after another. I took the baby to his mother to ask his name. For a few minutes all she could say was, "How ugly he is!"

"Sell him to me, then," I cried. "Come on now. Tell me his name!"

Emilie pondered. Then she spoke slowly: "Georges, because I like it. Yves for his father. Hélène for you, Madame. What is the first name of *monsieur le major?"*

"Edmond," said *monsieur le major.*

"Edmond," repeated Emilie, "and Marie for the blessed Virgin."

Georges Yves Helene Edmond Marie was baptised next day in the Prinquiau church. When the curate came to my name he scratched his old head. Courtesy would not allow him

to bar it out. Hélène appears in the Saints' Calendar and is therefore a decent name; and then, had not the husband of la *dame du château* given him fifty francs for the village poor? The curate settled it by lopping the final "e" off. "Helen," he said, "is the masculine form."

Grandmother came over that evening with the pink bags of almond candy that French people give to their friends on the baptismal day, and chickens, two for me and two for *monsieur le major*.

CHAPTER X

HE LEARNED HIS FRENCH FROM A LAUNDRESS

When I entered the office of the shop where motor ambulances are assembled, the sergeant and the lieutenant were checking up material.

"May I see the work here?" I asked.

"Oh, good!" cried the lieutenant, "and come up to the mess to lunch afterward. There is just time."

The sergeant was a master of arts with a serious mouth. Back of his glasses was a twinkle.

Said he: "Here 's a pencil and paper. To fix this right I 'm going to let you hear what the boys really say. Come on."

He hurried me past the time-clock, where

the soldiers stick peg-nails in holes to mark themselves In or Out as in a factory back home. Knocked-down motor parts lay on the floor. Shiny metal tracks made long lines the length of the building. There was steady hammering everywhere. For the boys obey their slogan posted on the wall: "Don't kill the Kaiser with your tongue. Use your tools." The Sergeant laid his hand on the shoulder of a private who had a hammer in one hand and a board in the other.

"This lady is a French journalist. She 's come to visit the shop. Got to get busy here and give her the right impression."

I gasped.

"She wants to know if she can get a box to sit down."

While the box was being found, the sergeant asked the boy with the hammer how long he had been on the Border.

"Try your Spanish on her," said he.

"Can't get away with it," replied the ham-

merer through two or three nails he had in his mouth. Another boy was picking his way across to us.

"I have the character for you now," whispered the sergeant. "The man coming is called Watson—thinks he can speak French, and he can't."

A soldier went by carrying an electric drill. Above a sound unpleasantly reminiscent of the dentist, the sergeant murmured: "Get down his French as fast as you can;" and in a louder voice, as he bowed politely, *"Madame—monsieur l'interprète."*

"Oh, go on, Sergeant. Watcha get me into this for!"

"Go to it, boy," commanded the sergeant. "I 'll help you."

The private gave a deep sigh, and for the first time glanced at me. We moved toward an ambulance body nearly set up.

"Moi trayvay," putting his forefinger to his eye, *"regarder ici. Ce soldat arranger ici.*

Apràs fini . . . je regarder. Peut-être bon, peut-être non bon. Moi inspector. See?"

Watson tried the door of the little cupboard in the ambulance. "*Ici* emergency—supplies." (Elaborate gestures to illustrate bandaging.) "*Medecin*—medicine. Which word means the doctor and which is the stuff the doctor gives you?" The latch on the cupboard did not work. He shook his head gravely: then beckoned to me to come to the back of the ambulance.

"*Austres soldats ici dedans.*" Putting his hand on the leather cushion of the seat, he went on: "Bed. *Leet pour blessés.*"

"*Combien de blessés?*" I asked.

"Oh, let's see—*Oon, deux, trey, quatre,*" he answered, telling out the numbers on successive fingers.

He jiggled the tailboard. Something seemed to be loose.

"*Ici pas bon. Ici soldats trayvay pas bon* —couple of screws missing."

We were standing now at the side of the ambulance body. My interpreter was opening a boxlike affair above the front wheel.

"How the devil do you say trimmings?" murmured Watson. *"Ici petit, petit*—no, no, no,—*ici marteau,* tools. See? *Ici*—what 's the word for occupants, Sergeant?"

He gave that up, and moved on to the next ambulance body which a soldier was varnishing.

"Après fini là-bas, c'est ici pour—paint. What 's the word for paint?" he asked himself. Turning to me with a beaming smile, he said convincingly: *"Couleur."*

Private Watson pried open a freshly painted green door, and explained, while he wiped the paint off his penknife: *"Pour ventilation. Troy petit portes—von, oon, oon.* Americans beaucoup fresh air." He inhaled and exhaled with vigor so I should not miss the lesson. "Here heat—" pointing to a little grating. Then recollecting—*"pour chaud. Peut-être froid* at the front."

I was examining a tin drum-like affair under the front seat.

"Un reservoir pour de l'eau?" I asked.

"Oui, oui. Tell her the big one above is for gasoline, Sergeant. She 'll think it 's for water, too."

Watson walked swiftly ahead of us, glancing at ambulance after ambulance as he went.

"Sergeant, you are a rascal!" said I. "Are you sure these boys don't know me? I lectured a while ago at the Y. M. C. A. hut, you remember."

"Fixed that, too, Mrs. Gibbons. Oh, Lord this is real stuff. Only one man in the shop has seen you before, and he promised to keep his mouth shut. Fire some more questions at him—"

The Sergeant covered his face with his handkerchief and his giggles with a thorough nose-blow, as Watson plucked my coat-sleeve gently and pointed to a finished ambulance at the end of the line.

"Here Croix Rouge et U. S. medical insignia. *Dernière chose. Ambulance fini, fini maintenant.* Say, Sergeant, tell her these ambulances are for wounded, but they are also the wagons that take you out and don't bring you back. You stay there by request. Tell her we work like the devil in this shop. If any man slows down, we ask him if he is working for Uncle Sam or the Kaiser."

"Combien de temps faut-il pour faire une ambulance, Monsieur Watson?" I demanded. *"C'est à dire, une fois les pneus bien placés et la peinture terminée, je comprends que—"*

"Don't get you. Gosh!" cried my interpreter, with startled eyes.

"It 's all right, Watson," said the sergeant. "She wants the real dope on our output. One ambulance every four hours—um, um, more than that."

Then followed a discussion between the private and the sergeant which revealed to me

much about the spirit of the outfit and the quantity of work produced.

"Be sure she gets that dope straight," called a soldier as he ducked behind an ambulance. He was laughing.

The sergeant shoo'd the private and me quickly into a little room, where Watson said: "*Ici peinture*—you said that was the word for paint, Sergeant?"

For answer he patted Watson on the back and said: "Look here, boy, we have been putting over a dirty trick on you. This lady is not a French journalist. She is Mrs. Gibbons, the mother of the Little Gray Home in France."

Watson's blue eyes gave me a long look. With his right fist he pushed his campaign hat away back on his head, and groaned.

"It 's a shame," said I, "to have treated you like this." I slipped my cigarette-case out of my pocket, and asked, "Will you show me you

forgive me by smoking one of my cigarettes?"

Watson took the cigarette and burst out laughing. "Gee, I 'm a donkey," he cried; "that sure is a good one on me!"

"I suppose you are thinking about the guying you will get," I said. "But listen to me. I have the answer for you. I 'll tell you right now the impression I should have got, had I really been a French journalist. If what I say tallies with the truth, that 's all you 'll need. You know I 've never been in this shop before to-day."

As I talked, the private smiled more and more, and when I finished, his pleased comment was. "To think I got away with that, and I learned my French from a laundress."

CHAPTER XI

OUR CRUSADERS ON "THE FOURTH" I ALSACE

A child climbed on my bed. Half awake, I thought I was at home. "Lloyd wants to get warmed up," I said to myself, and made room beside me. But no bare legs and arms cuddled to me. I opened my eyes.

Perched up on the eiderdown was a wee girl with china-blue eyes. A halo of spun gold hair was topped with drooping bows of wide black ribbon. A white bodice peeped through the lacings of a velvet girdle that held in place a saucy petticoat of Yale blue. Her white-stockinged legs were crossed. One hand toyed with a silver buckle on her slipper. In the other she held a red, white and blue bouquet tied with Stars-and-Stripes ribbon. The lit-

tle fairy kissed me. Thrusting the flowers into my hands, she cried,

"For America to-day!"

"You blessed child! America thanks you! You look like a Guy Arnoux poster. The window makes your frame."

"I made a circle around 'four' with my red crayon," she continued, "for independence. Mother wants me to ask if you like coffee in your room or with us downstairs. How long are you going to stay?"

"As long as I can, Bunny, but it will never be long enough to see Alsace."

"Have you any children?"

"A son and three little girls, some bigger than you and some smaller. They go to the Ecole Alsacienne in Paris."

"Do they sing 'Un Matin du Printemps Dernier'?"

"Indeed they do," I answered. "My babies are alarm clocks, I get up early. I must see if your sisters look as sweet as you do."

I hugged her, a lovely armful, and jumped out of bed. She perched among the pillows and watched me dress.

"Sing 'Un Matin du Printemps' for me. I will tell my children you did it."

She sprang to the floor, clasped dimpled hands, and swaying a little to mark time, she sang,

> Un matin du printemps dernier,
> Dans une bourgade lointaine
> Un petit oiseau printanier
> Vint monter son aile d'ébène.
> Un enfant aux jolis yeux bleus
> Aperçut la brune hirondelle,
> Et connaissant l'oiseau fidèle,
> Le salua d'un air joyeux
>
> Les cœurs palpitaient d'espérance
> Et l'enfant disait au soldat:
> Sentinelle, ne tirez pas!
> Sentinelle, ne tirez pas!
> C'est un oiseau qui vient de France.

"The American soldiers will let all our birdies dare to sing in French," she said gravely,

when she had finished. "They give me red and white mint sticks, and I like them."

At the breakfast table with Madame Lauth and her daughters was a Strasbourg business man. "I suppose," said I, "you are looking forward eagerly to the happy day."

"I go in with the French and American troops," he answered promptly.

The man from Strasbourg took out his wallet, and hunted for a photograph. "This is all I have from home in four years," he said. "It was taken from an aëroplane by my nephew. Look, you can see my house and factory plainly. They are intact. But I would n't mind having them destroyed, if that is necessary in order to secure the liberation of my country. All our lives long we have lived in slavery and humiliation. Were you ever in Alsace under the German occupation?"

"Only as a tourist," I answered.

"Ah, then, you did not see, you could not understand! Think of me, an Alsatian, who

had to wear the German helmet as a young man. All the men of my generation, who could not leave Alsace, had to submit to the badge of slavery. France was not powerful enough alone to rescue us. This war has been a fearful calamity. But, *Madame,* can you realize what it means to me to see the American soldiers in Alsace? We have waited nearly half a century for the world—the civilized world—to come to our aid."

"To tourists it looked like prosperity and contentment in Alsace," said Madame Lauth. "They had no way of knowing. Our men had to do business with the Germans. Most of our boys were forced to serve in the German army. But we women kept alive the love for France in our homes. We were more fortunate than the men in that we did not have to come into contact with the invaders. And we suffered in silence. I was born under the German yoke, but what I learned from my mother I passed on to my three girls. During

my lifetime no German has ever got farther in this house than the vestibule. And my three girls do not know a word of German. From the time I first began to receive ideas, it was impressed upon me by my mother that we Alsatians were a subject race, looking for deliverance, and hating the Germans. I have never spoken to a German except in a shop or in a government or railway position. I have never given my hand to one. I have never touched the garments of one if I could help it. When my children came into the world, I taught them what I had learned from my mother. Acceptance of our fate? No. Reconciliation with the conquerors? No and no and no!"

Little Suzanne came in from the drawing-room, where she had been watching from the window what was happening on the square.

"An American band beside the platform. They are tuning up. Hear them?" she cried.

We left the table to see the preparation for

the fête. Crowds were pouring into the square of Masevaux from every street. Women in mourning led other Alsatian dolls like Suzanne. Poilus and "Sammies" were mingled with them. Almost every American had a boy by the hand. French soldiers were finishing the task of tacking bunting on the platform that had been erected under the trees at one side of the square.

We hurried out of doors. The lieutenant who had brought me from Belfort was waiting to greet me. "Come to your place on the platform," he said, "before the crowd gets too big. I do not need to ask if you were comfortable at the Lauths'. Your husband has been their guest more than once, and I knew you would want to be with them. And you have three little girls yourself."

The platform and steps were carpeted. The front row was of red velvet chairs, with immense *fauteuils* in the middle for the French and American generals. "You are to sit on

the second row," said the lieutenant, "with the Siamese general and his two aides-de-camp. They speak French."

Three thin little gentlemen, as yellow as their uniforms, were presented to me. They saluted gravely, bowed low over their swords, and smiled. With us were seated the lawyer from Paris, the American professor, the French professor (an Alsatian refugee), the American woman journalist, the American Red Cross representative, American army officers and Y. M. C. A. men, French officers, and local personages in dress-suits, holding tall silk hats in their hands. When the American band struck up "I want to go back to Michigan," the quadruple ring of Alsatian girls around the fountain rose and clapped their hands and cheered. After the last flourish of the band leader's stick, they broke the bouquets in their hands and threw the flowers on the band. Then appeared the French and American regiments, and the girls must have regretted that

they had been so prodigal. The troops marched past the stand, and drew up on two sides of the square. Sentimental old thing that I am, I had in my sleeve the little American flag which I have carried through four wars. When the speeches were over, and the band played "The Star-Spangled Banner," I took it out to wave, and added another precious memory. America had come to aid France to recover her Lost Provinces.

After the "Marseillaise" and the marching off of the soldiers, I rejoined my hostess on the steps of her home. There were tears in her eyes, and she grasped my hand. "It is as it should be that France and America have the same colors. I have always dreamed of the French flag in Masevaux—how it would look in this square. It has been here for three years now, and I knew that if it had to leave once more, this time all Masevaux would go with it. I never doubted the victory of the Allies, but the lack of definite assurance to

Alsace-Lorraine, that they would support the claims of France at the Peace Conference—ah! that has worried us. We had no certainty until we saw the American soldiers arrive in Alsace. Madame Gibbons, there is black instead of blue in the German flag. Changing that black stripe, getting rid of the darkness—you understand?"

After the celebration on the square, a Te Deum in commemoration of American independence was sung at the church. The organ of Masevaux is one of the treasures of Alsace. It was playing as we entered and slipped into places in the dim light among the kneeling French and American soldiers. The curé made a short address, assuring the Americans that they had come to Alsace as crusaders to fight for the same cause that first had brought French and Americans together as comrades in arms a hundred and forty years ago.

Gray army motors, with poilu chauffeurs,

were drawn up outside of the church, waiting for us. We were to lunch at Wesserling, but were to go by different roads so that Alsatian villagers and American soldiers could receive Independence Day greetings at all the smaller places en route. I was handed out of the car several times, and presented to quickly gathered groups of peasants and doughboys to whom I spoke in French and English. I shook hands with the Alsatians and Americans, and admired and kissed the babies. Oh! if everywhere in France they had families of the size of those the Alsatians consider as the ordinary thing! Children of all ages and everywhere make soldiering delightful for our boys in Alsace, who are never seen off duty without their favorite youngsters around them.

At Wesserling, after lunch, we went through the linen factories which have worked without interruption under the German bombardments ever since the French occupation of the valley of the Thur. Then there was a

short and solemn reception at the *mairie,* where we shook hands with the veterans of 1870 and admired the flags they had kept hidden during forty-four years of German occupation. Champagne, in tall, thin glasses, was served after the speeches. There is always champagne at official French receptions—but always after the speeches. If only they would start with the drinks, one would appreciate the speeches more. In the Y. M. C. A. hut, school children sang the "Star Spangled Banner" in lisping French, led by a bald-headed, nervous little abbé who beat time furiously with a horny hand. The clergy of this country do their full share of manual labor in the villages. American and French comedians did alternate stunts on the stage. An American soldier sketched lightning-change portraits of the Kaiser, Hindenburg, the Clown-Prince, and other notorious characters, with charcoal on white sheets of paper tacked to a blackboard. He then shifted to more popular sub-

jects, ending in a crescendo with Wilson and Clémenceau—Wilson spectacled and stern, Clémenceau with the familiar slouch felt hat, and wearing his *"Je fais la guerre"* expression. A Frenchman in civilian clothes swallowed twelve needles, and pulled them slowly out of his mouth each neatly threaded. Later, as I was leaving the hut, he met me at the door dressed in poilu horizon-blue, and filled my arms with flowers shaken from his sleeves.

We were fifteen at dinner. The commandant called on me for a speech. I had to get to my feet. It was no time for anything sentimental or high-sounding, and I could not have filled the bill anyway. The key-note of a festival dinner should always be fun, and we were still under the spell of the Y. M. C. A. stunts. On purpose I hesitated and fumbled for words. I spoke slowly to heighten the impression of being ill at ease. I could see that the commandant was bothered, and sorry for me, sorry that he had asked me to speak.

"I want to talk about our enemy," I said, "and French pronunciation is beyond me. I do not know whether I ought to say *les allemands,* without pronouncing the s, or *lezzz-allemands.*"

The commandant jerked in his chair. *"Lezzzz-allemands,"* he said tolerantly.

Then I flashed on him. *"Ah, Monsieur le Commandant, pardon, vous avez bien tort. Il n'y a plus de liaison avec ces gens-là!"* ("Major, excuse me, you are wrong. We no longer have any *liaison* with those people!")

The commandant hunched down in his chair, hung his head, and whispered solemnly, "A trap! She laid a trap, and I fell into it!"

One of my particular boys was at the dinner, a young captain in the American Intelligence Section. He had brought a car from Chaumont, and offered to take me back to Masevaux. So we slipped away, and had a glorious ride over the hills, skirting Thann, which was being bombarded, and following the

new road on the Alsatian side of the Vosges, built by the French engineers and named after Marshal Joffre. We passed camp after camp of Americans, and saw our boys going down for guard-duty in the front line trenches. At one place we could see the long, silent line go through a field and disappear into the *boyau.* The moon was up, but they were protected from the enemy by a clump of trees, and one of our balloons watched overhead. Shells were exploding in Old Thann, and an occasional flare would light up the ruined houses and factories under the shoulder of the hill that rose to Hartmannswillerkopf.

"Just think, Sanford," I sighed. "Last year and all the years before the 'Fourth' meant firecrackers to those boys, and now it is this. Listen to the rat-tat-tat of the machine-guns."

"But next year it will be firecrackers again, and all the 'Fourths' after that!" said my young captain, emphatically.

CHAPTER XII

TOMMY AND SAMMY

Early in July the silver lining of the cloud which hung heavily over France at the end of the fourth year of the war was the magic appearance of the American army everywhere along the battle-line from Switzerland to the North Sea. Everywhere—and I had the opportunity to realize the meaning of the figures that had just been published in Secretary Baker's letter to President Wilson. I spent the "Fourth" with our boys in reconquered Alsace, and then passed two days in trains along railway lines encumbered with troops and *matériel* going from Belfort to Boulogne. At places, my train made long and tiresome detours in order to avoid the points still under the cannon of the invader. But we were still near

enough to hear the thunder of the battle. Faces were strained. The forward push of the Germans was not yet stopped. They were on the Marne and preparing to cross. They threatened Amiens. If there was confidence and reasonable hope, it was because nowhere could you stick your head out of the window without seeing American uniforms.

Was a French or British front-line division depleted? American battalions and regiments were thrown in. Were the reserves at any point giving Marshal Foch anxiety? He had *carte blanche* to bring up the new divisions from across the sea as fast as they landed. Was it necessary to withdraw the Portuguese? Plenty of Americans to take their place. Did the Italians near Rheims ask for reinforcements? Uncle Sam could give all the help they wanted. I don't know anything about military affairs. But I have n't been out of France one single day since August 1, 1914, and I do know how the French have felt all

through these terrible years. Never was the situation more critical than when the American Expeditionary Forces grew almost over night, in so far as the public was aware of its size, from thousands to a million.

Could we swing the deal? Blind faith had always made me say, "Yes!" But after I had ridden from Belfort to Boulogne, and had watched Maine and Mississippi, Maryland and Minnesota, Massachusetts and Michigan—and all our States which do not begin with "M"—going up to the front, I could just see the German lines (which we had come here in France to consider impregnable) bending back and cracking.

So I was prepared to make my first public speech in French to the people of Boulogne-sur-Mer, and tell them that it would n't be long until they could bring up from their cellars the lamps and chairs put there for the nights of raids, and not worry about the thickness of the curtains on their windows.

The week away from the Little Gray Home would not have been complete without a glimpse of our boys with the British. There were Americans in Boulogne, as everywhere else, but I wanted to get out to see them in the field. Tommy alone and Tommy with the French and Colonials was a familiar sight, but Tommy shoulder to shoulder with Sammy—well, it would take seeing to efface the inborn prejudice nourished by the unconscious jingoism of the history we learned at school.

My husband joined me at Boulogne. He had a personal pass "good to all American camps by train or auto." A French friend had an auto and a pass for himself and his chauffeur. I just went along. I knew I could smile properly at the French gendarmes. British military police were a harder nut to crack, but if I tried for a British pass I knew I would be turned down.

We left Boulogne early in the morning, and where we went I shall not say. For, precisely

because I had no trouble, I do not want to make trouble for any one else. The second week of July was a good week for Americans on the British front. Our troops were being hurried into Flanders and Belgium, and they were so ubiquitous that an "American camp" meant anywhere, and so welcome that no M. P. was disposed to be ungracious to an American woman.

A favorite topic of conversation in the Little Gray Home was what name our boys in France wanted to go by. Memories are still vivid to some Southerners, and "Yanks" mean Sherman marching to the sea. Even with the Northerners and Westerners and Americans of the post-Civil War vintage, there is a prejudice against "Yanks." From the first days of the A. E. F., "Sammy" had not been kindly received. There is as much difficulty in deciding upon a nickname for us as upon a name. We have no name distinctly our own property. There are countless other Americans, and

Brazil is also a United States in America! On the British front, however, Sammy is the natural corollary of Tommy. Sammy we are to Tommy, and that settles it.

If there is no more to this chapter, put it down to the fact that a panic about the censorship has suddenly struck me. I cannot write about the British front without dealing with the British censorship. And I had no right to be up there anyway

CHAPTER XIII

HOMESICKNESS

The early morning train pulled out from the Paris station. I was going back to the Little Gray Home after a visit to the front. The morning was chilly, and a hurried bite before six o'clock was not enough. I was hungry again by eight. My thermos bottle was filled with *café-au-lait,* and held a good deal. When I had all I wanted, I reflected that it was a pity somebody could n't enjoy the rest of my coffee. I went exploring along the corridor. In the next compartment were six soldiers. I poked my head in the door,

"Time for breakfast."

"That 's just what we 're thinking," answered one of the men. "But the diner won't

be put on until eleven o'clock. We 're out of luck."

"No, you 're not out of luck," said I. "Wait a minute."

Soon the soldiers were breakfasting. I noticed that one of them had got up to make room for me and was standing in the corridor.

"Will you have a cup?" I called to him.

"No, thank you."

"Who is he?" I inquired.

"Some guy who seems to have a grouch," said one of the soldiers. "We found him in the compartment here. He 's not with us."

I went back to my place, and settled down to reading.

When I went into the diner at noon-time, the number on my ticket indicated a place at a small table for two. The table was a let-down shelf, so that my companion, whoever he might be, would sit beside me, both of us facing the wall dividing the dining-room from the kitchen.

It was the "guy with the grouch" who came to sit by me. We tackled *hors-d'œuvres,* radishes, and vegetable salad with a scant layer of mayonnaise dressing on top, the same *hors-d'œuvre* they serve in restaurant cars from end to end of France.

The officer kept quiet. So did I. He ordered butter and had difficulty making the waitress understand. I interpreted. He shared his butter with me. After that we talked.

"Are you on leave?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "I 've been here eleven months without leave."

"It seems to me too bad that our system slips up occasionally, and men who need rest don't get it."

"I could not let up," said the officer. "If I did I 'd lose my grip. I inspect camps and before I finish one assignment I apply for another on purpose to keep going. Work till I

drop into my bed at night more dead than alive."

He spoke hurriedly in a low voice, without looking at me.

"But you must not keep that up," I objected. "I 've seen other men in the army overwork. My own husband does it, and if I did n't interrupt him he would never stop. What 's the matter?"

The man had his head turned clear away from me now.

"Nobody to interrupt me." The words seemed to come from the window-pane and were more like an echo than a voice.

The officer suddenly turned half around in his chair and faced me.

"I 'm going to tell you about it. When I enlisted, I was engaged to be married. I was sent to a Southern camp, at a port, before I had a chance to say good-by. I wired her to go to New York. A sickening rumor made me fear

for days that we would sail from where we were and not from New York at all. For a week I was in suspense. It was hell. Then came orders to move, we knew not where. My consolation was that they loaded us on trains and not on a ship. Oh, the days and nights of travel without knowing our destination! Then, thank God, we arrived in New York."

"Was she there?"

"Yes, waiting for me."

"Were you married?"

"Yes," he answered. "I left a bride of four days."

The head waiter came along and made out our checks and put them beside the plates. My left elbow was resting on the table. I slipped my right hand under and took the officer's check.

"Are you a millionaire?" I asked.

"No, indeed."

"It would n't matter if you were," said I.

"I 'm going to pay for your lunch. Then you will have been my boy for an hour."

The officer leaned forward and put his head in his hands. When he looked up again, there were tears in his eyes.

"You 're the only person in France that I 've told, and I won't forget you."

There was a crowd at the Savenay station, and by the time I could get through the exit all the ambulances were away. A Knight of Columbus whom I had never seen before noticed my plight. He took me to the Little Gray Home in his car, and stayed to dinner. When we got to dessert he rose.

"I must hurry on," he said.

"I 'm afraid I 've delayed you."

"Not a bit of it," said he. "But I must reach St. Nazaire before it gets too dark."

"Don't go without writing your name in my visitors' book."

As he finished writing his wife's address on the line beneath his own, he said, "I 'm going

to ask you to do something for me. Come."

He led the way back to the dining-room. "Sit down," said he. "I 've been away from my wife for one year." He shook hands with me. "There is a word," he went on, "that I 've not heard in all that time. You sit still, and I will go out through the dining-room door into the garden. You will call after me, 'Good-by, dear.' He walked slowly out, then turned and looked back.

"Say it!"

"Good-by, dear," I called.

The man turned and bolted. I never saw him again.

CHAPTER XIV

SOMEWHERE IN THE MUD

An American soldier passed me in the corridor of the train from Brest. He turned and looked, hesitated, and came back. Saluting, he inquired, "Say, ain't you an American woman?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Have some Wrigley's!" Drawing the chewing-gum from his pocket and cracking the shiny pink paper with his thumb nail, he went on, "Where do you belong?"

"Well, I 've had half a dozen homes in Europe since I was married, but I am originally from Philadelphia."

"Some traveler— I 've been going some myself since I joined this man's army. I am a real-estate agent from California, but here

what do you suppose I am? A baker. Stationed at Dijon. If you come down there I 'll give you some white bread."

"My, that will be a treat. I 'll remember when I go down there for the Y. M. C. A."

I kept the card of the boy who gave me the Wrigley's. On my last evening in Dijon a muddy "Lizzie" pushed me to the outskirts of the town, bumped bravely alongside railroad tracks, and stopped beside open freight cars. I thought something had happened to "Lizzie's" legs, till, through the darkness, I made out German prisoners. Bossed by boys in khaki, they were carrying wood. Such quantities of fuel could be needed only by a bakery.

A soldier shoved a long flat log into the wettest part of the space between me and the hut. In a corner of the hut a pile of sweepings was half hidden by the business end of a wide American broom. The secretary said I was the first woman to come out to the bakery camp

in months, and cleaning had to be done before I got there. In fact, I was the second "show" since this camp was made! The boys are finding out what work means. Every hour in an army bakery, they say, is seventy minutes long.

The Y man took me to the canteen counter where I faced men elbowing their way toward cigarettes and chocolate. The sign, the back of a pasteboard box-lid nailed against the woodwork, read: "Female concert." The words had been written with the other end of a penholder dipped unhesitatingly into an ink-pot.

The secretary lifted a section of the counter and walked through. Opposite the canteen end of the hut was the platform. I walked down the aisle. Men that had been around the counter followed me and crowded into the front row chairs.

I faced a mixed bunch, all of them tired. They were like Lloyd when he comes home

from school at noon and sees the lunch on the table. He won't eat, no; not he—lunch ought to have been there before! The bakers would be damned if anybody could entertain them —I ought to have come long ago. Homesick, hungry eyes looking my way—I felt their antagonism. Something had to be done. There was an army camp-stool beside the table on the platform. I sat down, opened my blue silk beaded bag, and took out a wee mirror and a powder-box with a pink ribbon rose on its top. Leaning over the mirror on the table, I powdered my nose. I took my time, too. When the handkerchief had dabbed off extra powder, I looked again into the faces before me. I confess I smiled hopefully, although down deep I wondered. Applause and more applause. Laughter. Some one shouted, "Do that again!"

Pent-up feelings had spilled over. The boys were now ready to listen. I had them with me while I talked of certain qualities of

French character. I did not dare let long-windedness break the spell. Half an hour was enough.

While Anne was getting the first song started, I went to the back of the hut. Men were sitting on writing-tables. I asked if there were room for me. The man I spoke to was an Italian. He jumped down and moved away in the crowd. I called him back and made a place for him beside me. I had heard rightly. His was the tenor voice I was trying to locate. I persuaded the Italian to come with me to the platform. There he sang us a solo, "Darling I-yam Growing Old."

After the show was finished, the sergeant who had given me the stick of Wrigley's took me to see bread made. On the way over he said, "I wish, Mrs. Gibbons, you could tell the Entertainers' Bureau at the Y. M. C. A. headquarters that they ought to tip off any-body going to a bakery. I was detailed to Nevers for a while. Singers and others com-

ing to the bakery there used to make the same mistake you did to-night. You think all the men around a bakery knead bread. 'Tis n't true. Detachments of infantry are here doing guard."

"I see," said I. "I never thought of that."

"Yes," he went on, "we have a wagon company, and a big bunch of chauffeurs with the motor-trucks. Making bread is a complicated affair."

"I never dreamed it took so many kinds of people for an army bakery."

"We are used to that idea," he laughed. "Besides bakers by trade, we have timbermen from the West, lawyers, traveling salesmen, a brakeman on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railway. My buddy is a tinsmith. When he finds you are from the Quaker City, he will want to shake hands with you. He worked on the grain elevator at North Philadelphia."

"Don't you get a certain amount of satis-

faction doing something so constructive as making bread?" I asked.

"You bet you! Beside us are men whose whole energy is put into destruction—munitions, see?—and here we are fighting to give men the staff of life."

We were entering a building now. A candle was stuck in some dough on a board. I made out giant dough-trays. They were the shape of the one my grandmother used to have on her farm in Pennsylvania. Sloping sides, as the bottom was smaller than the top. They were set around the outside walls and down the center of the building. Frames made of iron uprights, with woven wire sides and shelves, hold the bread that is put to rise. The frames had canvas curtains, adjusted according to the temperature. The men were dressed in white trousers and short-sleeved undershirts. Most of them had their heads covered with white caps made from XXX Minneapolis flour bags.

"I used to make caps like the one you have on when I lived in Constantinople," I observed to a boy who was bending over a dough-tray.

"Who for?" he demanded.

"Turkish soldiers. Their religion won't let them go bareheaded, and when they get into our Red Cross hospital we would n't let them wear their dirty fezzes. You are the real thing in a doughboy, are n't you?"

"You bet we 're doughboys!" he laughed. "Look at this wad I 've got—it weighs a hundred pounds."

Others were working small wads into loaves. If your back was turned, you could tell the loafmakers by the snappy sound dough makes when it is kneaded enough.

"See, Mrs. Gibbons, we make two kinds of loaf—garrison and field. The crust has to be harder and denser in the field bread. That means longer baking and it does n't get stale so soon."

"Breathing so much flour all the time—does n't that hurt men!"

"It is bad. It gives them asthma and even consumption."

"Why don't you wear gas masks?" I asked.

At a tray near by a boy straightened up and said: "I was sent to a French army bakery when I first came over to learn their ways. The French have flour masks in some bakeries. They have worked out a way of breathing by blowing with the mouth toward the side and taking in air with the nose. Like breathing exercises. Pretty good, protects the eyes. Our fellows have n't the patience to do it."

It was possible to talk to the breadbakers because the different squads try to keep together in the various processes. Sometimes one bunch has to wait for another to catch up. This is in order to make the production uniform in amount.

"Were you boys here last Christmas?"

"Yes," answered the sergeant.

"What kind of a time did you have?"

"Not bad," sang out one. "Some society sent sixty comfort bags. There are over three hundred of us. We made as many cards as there were men—then drew. Some got a blank, some did n't. Everybody had something. There 's lots of things in a comfort bag, and the guys that drew a card marked 'Present' opened up and passed round knives and pipes and toilet articles."

With my hands full of dough from good-by handshakes, I stepped out into the night to brighter light than there had been inside. Paralleling the building was a row of outdoor ovens.

"Why are the ovens not closer to the building, sergeant?" I asked. "I should think they could be equipped in some way so their heat could be utilized for raising the bread."

"It *is* a queer thing," said the sergeant. "This is a system worked out by a master baker

at home. Guess he is a major now. He got better results from using two sets of stoves: those cone stoves you saw back in the building that look like tiny wigwams for raising the bread—and then the baking-ovens out-of-doors."

At the end of the line of ovens, when I could tear myself away from the fascination of the glowing trench that ran back of them, I heard a voice from a tent:

"Did I hear you coughing, Mrs. Gibbons? Just come in here, please."

It was the bakers' doctor, eager to show me his medicines and a fine new table that made his tent look like an office.

"I have mostly burns to treat here," said he.

"Where is your ambrine?"

"Don't use it," said the Doctor.

I scolded him a bit less than I wanted to because he gave me a box of cough lozenges.

Beyond the Doctor's tent was a high structure I could have found with my eyes shut from

the nut flavor of stored-up bread. Inside were great racks piled high with thousands of loaves. It is forbidden for me to remember the number of loaves the bakery produced in a day. That is unknown even to the censor. The sergeant gave me a couple of loaves to take home to Paris.

My children have been eating dark war bread for so long that when they saw Uncle Sam's white bread they thought it was cake. The unsweet taste brought disillusion.

"It is n't good cake," said Christine, "and it is n't good bread." She pushed it aside, and reached for another piece of the French bread we are being pitied for eating.

CHAPTER XV

"TAKES A LONG, TALL, BROWN-SKIN MAN TO MAKE A GERMAN LAY HIS RIFLE DOWN"

One morning, when the children and I were eating our porridge, I heard men's voices and the sound of tools on the road. We went to the gate to look out. Negro soldiers were tumbling a pile of picks off a truck. When this was finished, two white sergeants jumped down from where they had been directing operations. The sergeants came over to greet us. One of them took Christine and Lloyd to explain to them how roads are mended. The other stayed with me.

"Just look at those boys over there," said he. "Niggers can loaf more comfortably than any other kind of people, and they can do it any-

where." A negro corporal overheard this, and went over to and bawled the loafers out.

One of them straightened up and retorted, "What 's de mattah wid yo', niggah? De war ain't gwine be ovah dis week!"

The boys were scattered along the road in groups, attacking the holes of a year of heavy traffic. Uncle Sam's trucks have done the damage. Uncle Sam's soldiers are making the repairs.

The group directly in front of the gate began to sing,

"Honey, wat 's yo' trouble?
(Bang went the picks.)
Ain't got none. (Bang.) Won't be long.
(Whistle.)
Ah 'm gwine to tell yo',
(Bang!)
How Ah make it,
(Bang!)
An' it won't be long.
(Bang!)"

"Can these boys fight as well as they can dig?" I asked.

"They sure can," answered the sergeant. "The only thing they are afraid of is a graveyard. When they get up to the front, they don't need guns and ammunition. A little rum and a razor and go to it!"

"General Pershing will need you boys further up the line before long," I said. "You know the other day, when we heard he was inspecting Base One, the children took the flag down from the pole and put it right on the wall here with little stones on the top to keep the wind from blowing it away. They wanted to be sure their hero would see it. I wish you could have been here to share the children's delight when he did go by. They will never forget that their big general rose right up in his motor car—and saluted their flag."

Despite sergeant and a corporal, the sol-

diers would rest frequently on their picks, and they kept up a continuous conversation.

"Oh, boy,—dis heah goin' ovah de top!" exclaimed one, mopping his forehead with a bandanna. "Dat was one fine speech young Pershing made to de boys. He said dat ebery one back heah is goin' to git his chance soonah o' latah. Ah jes knows how it 's goin' to be. Ah kin see it!"

"How come you knows anything 'bout it, niggah?"

"Oh, boy! Can't you see it lak Ah do? You git yo' gun an' you counts yo' am'nition and you makes yo' bay'net all shiny. When de cap'n hollahs, 'Go!'—you jes' clammahs out o' dat trench an' you keep on shootin' Germans an' a-slashin' 'em wid dat dere bay'net-razah ob yourn tell the ain't no mo' Germans. Nen you comes on back tell de nex' time."

"Um-um,—dat ain't it," remonstrated the

other. "Goin' obah de top is good mawnin', Jesus."

"What is your name?" I put in, addressing the graphic describer of trench assaults.

"Ah am George Darcy, ma'm."

"Darcy! Why, that 's a French name."

"Ah dunno, ma'm."

"Where are you from, Darcy?"

"From Geo'gia. Yes, ma'm, some day—glory be—Ah 'll quit saying *from*— Ah 'll be *in* Geo'gia!"

"Can't you boys sing for me?" I asked.

"Yes um! We got a leadah, name 's Paul Brown. Mistah Paul Brown from Pennsylvania—Gettysbu'g. Paw-ul! Oh, Paw-ul!" he called.

Paul comes along, dragging his pick.

"Paul is a good singer, but he 's no engineer," said the sergeant. "Last week an aviator flew over to our camp. He offered to take Paul up for a little spin. No, sir, Paul

proved that day he was no engineer—he refused to go up. Afraid that when he got up there somebody would shoot him for a damn blackbird."

"I don't care what you think about aëroplanes, Paul," I laughed. "If you will get these boys to sing for me, I 'll give you all some cider, and you may come in and eat your lunch under my trees."

Paul eyed me. Then he giggled.

"Dese heah boys is sufferin' mostly wid thote trouble. 'Pears to me dat ef we give 'em cidah to slick em thotes down good firs'—"

"You tell it, boy!" laughed one of my chorus, encouragingly.

They got their cider "firs'."

"Some of you will have to drink out of the same bowls. I have n't enough to go around. Do you mind?"

"No, ma'am, lady."

"No seconds to-day," shouts one. In the rear of the group around the cider barrel (I

had taken them to the source of supply), another tells his neighbor, "Ah used to wuk fo' white-folks dat has a house somethin' lak dis. Li'l mo' style to it—but dey did n't give niggahs no cidah, uhm-uhm—!"

After the morning had been devoted to a *few* holes and ruts, the men sat under the trees in my garden, talking as they finished their lunch. A couple of them picked up the papers in which the sandwiches had been wrapped, and took empty salmon cans back to the kitchen. Darcy found the rope I keep in my barn in case some motor breaks down and has to be towed. He laced it up and down through limbs of trees so that every kid of mine could have a swing.

The sergeants smoked with me over coffee. "When negro troops first came to St. Nazaire they told the French that they were American Indians," said Preston.

"Their keen ear and extraordinary sense of rhythm made it fairly easy for them to pick

up a little French, too," added Smith. "But they don't all take advantage of it. At our camp a Y. M. C. A. secretary was talking to one of the men in my squad the other night about education. Put it straight to the fellow. 'Joe, there is no use letting this chance slip by. You say you did n't finish your studies. This is the time to learn something. Your work brings you in touch with the French civilian laborers. Mighty good way to get a promotion is to study French. Can I count on you to come around Thursday night for the first meeting of our class in beginners' French?' Joe, who had kept quiet all this time spoke slowly: 'Uhm-uhm—dey don't speak French in Berlin.' "

"There was another good one I heard the other day," said Preston. "Nigger had a misery. He went to the infirmary. Doctor said,

" 'Where is it? In your back?'

" 'No.'

" 'In your chest?'

" 'No.'

" 'In your head?'

" 'No.'

" 'How long have you been in the service?'

" 'About three months.'

" 'Have you been taught how to address officers?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Why don't you address me that way?'

" 'Good Gawd! Is doctahs officahs, too?' "

"Were you in camp, Smith, last week when those new bunches of troops came in fresh from the States?"

"The day the lieutenant lined the boys up and asked if there were a first-class bugler among them? That 's a good one. Tell Mrs. Gibbons."

"The lieutenant lined them up, as Smith says, and asked:

" 'How long have you been blowing a bugle, my boy?'

" 'I can't blow no bugle, suh. Lawd no! I thought you said burglar, suh.' "

"Oh, they 're a great set of boys," said Preston. "I 've soldiered with niggers ever since the beginning and I would n't change for anything. You can't help liking them. In the first place they get their fun out of their work. And then they 'll do anything on earth for the officer they like. That is the way with them. There is n't any sergeant in our particular bunch that they hate, but they know which one they like best. If they get put with some one else, it 's just like you hit them in the head with a rock."

"I issue stuff to the boys," said Smith. "Mrs. Gibbons, I have the same amount of safety razors to issue as the straight kind. I 'll bet I have n't had five men want to take safety razors! A fight occurred in one of our barracks not long ago. One side did not know what to expect from the other because it was

known Sam had a safety razor. One of my men told me about it afterwards:

" 'We done found out when de fight come off dat Sam may have had a safety razah fo' to do his face—but he had another in his boots fo' social purposes.' "

"I pay the boys," said Preston. "They get their money changed into these French two-cent pieces with a hole punched in the middle and string it around their necks. Dear me!" he exclaimed. "It 's time to go back to work."

"Let me have just a few minutes more," I begged. "I want your crowd to sign their name here in my visitors' book."

The boys came in grinning. One of them pushed his fists away down in the pockets of his overall, and hunched his powerful shoulders.

"Ah'd be tickled to death to hab mah name in dat swell book o' yourn," he said, "ef you would jes' please write it fo' me. Hit 's so

long since Ah lef' school Ah done got plum out o' practice."

"Mis' Gibbons," said another, "Ah 's honah'd to be in dis heah Li'l Gray Home— Ah ben readin' 'bout it fo' yeahs."

"Been here some time?" I asked him.

"Yes, um," he answered. "We done all land at de Po't ob Bres'."

"Did you have a pretty good crossing?"

"Dey say it was purty fair, but you know dey have me cookin' down to our camp and Ah can't bear to look at ma big box of salt— makes me think of dat ole ocean."

"Back to work, boys," commanded the sergeant.

As the grown-up children moved out of my door I heard one chuckle, "Who says rocks can't move now?"

CHAPTER XVI

A QUARRY AND A BUS

"Have you forgotten?"

The question was asked by a stout soldier rather older than most.

"Forgotten that your lieutenant has asked the entire Gibbons family to have supper at the quarry to-night? If I forgot it myself, the children would remind me!" said I.

"Come on, then," said Bob. "We want the whole crowd, you and the children and Mademoiselle Alice and Rosalie. We are all for Rosalie," he continued. "Every Sunday since the lieutenant discovered you, she has cooked for some of our fellows."

"We 'll come right along."

"All right. I 'll just go out and crank up

the bus. Jim 's with me—came along for the ride."

"Sure you have room for everybody?"

"Better bring an old steamer-rug," said Bob. "They can put it on the floor to sit on."

We piled in.

"This bus is our maid-of-all-work," said Bob, as we bounced over a thank-you-ma'am in the road.

"Aw, that 's all right, Mr. Shofer," broke in Jim. "Guess the missus can stand as much as what any of us can. She 's a war-horse."

"The bus has earned her supper, all right," continued Bob. "We 've had her southeast wheel jacked up all day with a belt hitched to it, pumping water."

The quarry lies five miles down our road. All you see of it in the road is the tent and two barracks buildings. The lieutenant was waiting for us.

"The boys are just ready to go to supper," he said. "We shall put the Gibbons family at the head of the mess line."

The mess kits were given to us when we got to the head of the line by the kitchen door. Caldrons rested on low packing-cases. Behind each caldron stood a soldier with ladle and fork. We had stewed tomatoes, baked hash, pudding, and coffee. The cook stepped out into the messroom from the kitchen. He was wiping his eyes with a khaki-colored handkerchief.

"Great Cæsar!" he exclaimed. "My fire has taken to smoking. We need gas masks!"

After the Gibbons family was helped, the soldiers moved rapidly by the caldrons. It took no more time to serve a hundred men than to attend to us. We are not used to mess-kits, and little hands are wobbly. As I sat down, I reflected that neatness and precision in preparing and serving food belong not to women alone.

"This dinner 's remarkably good," I said to the lieutenant.

"Think so myself," he answered. "The man that made it was a cook on a dining-car."

We formed in line again and went along with the men to a spot outdoors where a double receptacle contained hot water. It was propped up with stones over a fire. We dipped our forks and things into one side where there was water with washing soda in it, then into the other side to rinse them.

The soldiers went from dishwashing into the tent where there were benches. I had cigarettes and chocolate. This isolated camp is not big enough to have a Y. M. C. A. hut. While the children were handing the cigarettes and chocolate around, I told the boys stories. In small camps men would rather talk than be talked at. I led them around to talking by telling them I was ready to answer questions. This always changes a formal lecture into a conversation. The first question was one I

invariably get in audiences of men who have not yet been to the front.

"Were you in Paris during an air raid?"

"Yes."

"How do you feel? The other night we was blastin'. A corner of the barracks roof blowed off. You 'd a thought it was an air raid the way them brave soldiers ran."

By this time the men were smoking comfortably, for I had told them the old saying that "a woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke."

The children handed song books around.

"Say," inquired a soldier, "you ain't goin' to give us any of this here smile smile business, are you?"

"Certainly not."

"We don't always feel like smiling, you know," he went on.

"If you feel that way, let 's begin with the saddest song in the book. How about, 'Massa 's in de cold, cold ground'?"

They wailed through the song with perfect application and imperfect harmony.

"Now we 've got that off our chest," I suggested, "is 'Kentucky Home' too cheerful? Let 's get together better on this one. When we come to the chorus the boys on my right-hand side of the aisle are to whistle."

It was a hit. Somebody in the back of the tent stood up and proposed another.

"How about 'Dixie'!"

As the soldiers say, it was "goin' good" now.

We finished the singing with "I Went to the Animal Fair." In the end the boys were laughing so much they got mixed up. They could n't decide who should sing the verse and who should shout, "Monkey, monkey, monkey."

The meeting broke up with more questions, this time of a personal nature that involved digging photographs of mothers and sweethearts and babies out of pockets, or running

over to the barracks to get them from the other coat.

"Could you come with me to the quarry?" said the lieutenant. "My night shift is down there breaking stone. Unless you are tired, I 'd like you to say something to them."

I left the children sitting on laps. Rosalie was inspecting the kitchen. Alice had found a soldier who said he could speak French.

"Speak French? Yes, ma'am—I thought I did some," he said. "I have been here a year in this base. I was sent to Paris for a month. They told me there I spoke Breton and not French at all!"

It was dark and Lieutenant Greig had to use his pocket flashlight to show me the way. He asked the soldiers to stop their work and come over near the acetylene lamp that threw light where they were breaking stone.

When we finished the songs, I asked these boys if they had best girls back home.

"My best girl is my mother," said one.

"The other kind sort o' loses out when you get so far away unless you were engaged or married before you left!"

When we got back to the tent there was apple pie. I sat down to eat mine with a little group of soldiers.

"We are going to leave our happy home, Mrs. Gibbons," said Bob. "I guess when we get up to the front, there will be many times we 'll regret the old quarry. Men in this outfit come from forty-two different States, but Lieutenant Greig is a real leader, and we are a united crowd."

"We 'll miss you, too," said Jim. "You 're the only person that has paid any attention to us in France. It has been good to be able to drop in at the Little Gray Home. You don't know what it means to talk to an American woman over here. Different with the French. Got to talk broken to them and it mostly ends in *'no compree?'* "

"I 'm glad to go," said Albert. "I 'm funny

that way." (Albert put emphasis on "that" and slurred "way." He comes from Columbia, Pennsylvania.) "I want to be on the move. To a railroad man there 's no sound like wheels rolling."

Jim shook his head. "No," said he, "I 'm glad to go to the front and do my part and all that, but after the war the States will hold me. I won't budge farther from home than the length of my wife's apron strings. 'T ain't the movin' about that bothers me. If they shoot my leg or my block off, clean like, there 'd be the end of it. See? What I don't want is funny business with nerves. I was on a job once where I had to climb up a crane. One day I fell thirty feet. Spent two months in a hospital. Now I can't bear to get off the ground, not even into a tree. If I do, either the tree shakes or I shake. See what I mean? A man's memory is bound to work on what happens to him at the front. It 's them kind of things that I dread, not gettin' shot up."

"I know exactly what you mean," said I. "There are two things I cannot bear. One is to hear bugling."

"Why?"

"Because in Tarsus the Turks bugled to call the crowd together to begin the massacres."

"Sure," said Jim, placing his hand on his stomach and drawing his breath quickly. "Get 's you here. Cold feeling. What is the other thing you don't like?"

"Last Saturday I went to Angers to see my brother. We were sitting at a table on the pavement in front of a café. A civilian motor whizzed past, blowing a siren horn. I tightened my two fists and kept quiet. My brother said, 'I know how you feel. To me that means a moonlight night back of the lines.' "

"How many air raids have you been in?" said Jim.

"Twenty-seven."

"Say! What are you going to do after this war? Goin' back to America?"

"Yes!"

"Goin' to put your traveling shoes under the stove and let 'em stay there!"

CHAPTER XVII

A LITTLE DUTCH CLEANSER

I do not know whether I belong in A, B, C, or D Class. Conducting officers are tipped off from Headquarters about writers to whom passes are granted. What you may see is down in black and white according to how important they think you are and how far they feel they can trust you. When the conducting lieutenant came to the Little Gray Home to fetch me this morning, he kept well the secret of my rating. After a comprehensive trip over the base, I asked to see an American heavy cannon mounted on a train of its own. The lieutenant did not say no.

The automobile followed the main road for a bit and then went across country. Finally

we were bumping over fields, and occasionally sinking into them.

We came to railroad tracks. The cannon train was before me, on its immense trucks. Poking its barrel proudly aloft, it was like a giant menacing forefinger calling upon avenging gods of justice. A guard was swinging his legs off the edge of a truck.

"How-do-you-do," I greeted him. "Will you let us take a look at your cannon?"

He jumped down and saluted.

"We never open it on account of the dust," said he. "The inside works are greased, and if dust should settle on them—" He paused for words to express how great would be the calamity.

"What I don't see," I continued, "is why the thing does n't rip itself right off the tracks when you fire it."

The lieutenant took papers from his wallet and handed them to the guard.

"Come on," said he, "this way."

We walked along the platform.

"There 's more to it than just a cannon," said he. "There 's a crew, upwards of sixty men. They 've got their quarters and the officers have theirs. There are containers for the ammunition and a couple of cars for supplies."

"Another train identical with this," put in the conducting lieutenant, "went out yesterday. The boys called it the *Berlin Express.*"

"Ours is the *Little Dutch Cleanser,*" said the guard, smiling proudly. "We 're pulling out to-morrow."

We stopped before one of the coaches.

"This here is a messroom for the men. Can you take a high step, lady?"

We climbed on the train and found ourselves in the kitchen. A soldier was preparing luncheon. I sniffed.

"My! That coffee smells good!"

"Want some?" said the guard. "Our coffee is no good, I never drink it myself. Give her a cup, Charlie."

Charlie poured a mug and added cream from a tin can.

"Why, it 's wonderful coffee!" I protested.

Everybody laughed.

"Oh!" said the guard, "there 's two hospital cars, too. Want to see them? Doc 's in there now."

We walked through the messroom into the doctor's quarters.

"A lady and an officer wants to look at your outfit, Captain," announced the guard.

"Come in," said the doctor. "We 've had only two days to arrange things here, so don't mind what you see."

What we did see was a magnificent white enamel interior. There was a faint smell of carbolic acid, and every available inch of space told. The next car had bunks. In it were two patients. One had got something in his eye, and the other was mending an arm broken by the kick of the gun.

"Americans everywhere, are n't there?" I said.

"You bet you," said the boy with the broken arm. "Coming all the way from Hell Gate to Barnegat."

"What 's the answer to the Austrian note?" I asked.

"Take Metz," said the guard. He hitched a thumb over his shoulder to point to the gun.

"And after that?" I went on.

"Go home."

"Who will be the last to leave, I wonder?"

"We will," said the captain, conclusively. "Doctors will stay in France long after peace is declared to take care of the men."

"They all tell me that," said I. "The engineers claim they will have to make the country tidy after the infantry goes. The quartermaster corps people say they must stay, of course, to feed everybody. The telephone girls know they will be needed till the last minute. Accountants know they must clear up financial

matters before they see the States. Truck drivers say they will have to stay till the last load of baggage is hauled. And a colored soldier told me the other day, 'When we all done climb 'board dat ship, de cap'n 'll be standin' dere wid his old opera glasses an' de whistle 'll be blowin'. He 'll spy me an' say, "Sam, jes take a broom an' go down and sweep off dat dock, fore we sails." ' "

"One thing is certain," put in the captain; "we shall stick by the game as long as there is fighting to do. We 're going to catch Jerry Boche and hand him over to these people to do what they like with him. But if they expect us to stay over here after that is done, they guess again. The boys call the cannon their *Little Dutch Cleanser*. We shall clean up the job, and after that it 's H-O-M-E!"

CHAPTER XVIII

GENTLEMEN ALL

A four-mule team stopped at our door. Sergeant Applegate appeared with a basket in one hand and a package carefully balanced in the other.

"A little present from us boys," he said, as he set the things down on the study table.

"Vegetables, fresh vegetables!" I cried.

"We know you have trouble getting green things. The summer has been bone-dry and I 'm sure the peasants 'round here tell you their crops have failed."

He cut the string with his penknife and took off the lid of the basket.

"Beets, cucumbers, tomatoes, and a lot of lettuce at the bottom."

"How is it you can grow vegetables and the peasants can't?"

"Good American watering-cans and plenty of people to use them," said the sergeant. "Tedious work for the soldiers every night after sun-down. We 've been praying for rain, and I guess our prayers are no good. The boys told me to ask you to pray like anything to-day so they would n't have to do the sprinkling to-night."

"Where are you bound for?" I asked.

"The Holy City. We are turning in the mules, worse luck. They sent them to us to be fattened up, and just when we need them they are called in."

"You won't be sorry to loose Molly, though, will you? The boy that was plowing with her the last time we had dinner at the farm told Lloyd and me that Molly has no ambition. You 've certainly given us a treat," said I.

"The vegetables?" said the sergeant. "Oh, that 's not much. Here 's the real treat."

He took the paper off the package.

"When you were at the farm, you told us how you had been trying to collect enough butter and flour and eggs to make a cake. We made one for you."

"A chocolate layer cake!" I exclaimed.

"We knew you had invited the boys from the garage to dinner to-night, and we thought these things would come in handy. It may take us all day to turn over the mules, and get another skinny team, so I don't say we won't drop in here at dinner time."

In the evening, I put candles in the dining-room. Two tables were set to hold the crowd. Daddy had come in time for the party, and was in the kitchen carving the chickens Rosalie roasted. Madame Criaud and François' mother had killed their choicest birds for the feast. Early and late the boys at the garage had done things for us. Before I returned to Paris, I wanted to get them together to say "thank you." The soldiers who interest

me the most are those that have their two hands on the steering wheel of a motor truck, and the chauffeurs I know the best are those at the Savenay hospital. They are men from many parts of the U. S. A. Some of them have cars of their own at home. Two of them are brothers who, since their father bought one of the first twelve cars that existed in America, have enjoyed the use of twenty-eight other cars of their own. The roof of the garage at the Savenay hospital shelters more than tools and gasoline and motors. The boys that work there have knuckled down to their job far from the exciting front-line trenches that lured them into enlisting in the motor service of a hospital unit in the hope of getting into the fight before anybody else. They have courage and courtesy and cheer. Perhaps the open-air life and being constantly on the move improves a fellow's disposition. Perhaps these boys are special people. I doubt it. I believe they are typical nephews of Uncle Sam, ready to take

any job Uncle Sam puts them at. Certain it is that when I chose a group of our soldiers to show off to an inquiring French journalist who needed to be convinced of the high quality of the American Expeditionary Force I led him to the Savenay garage and swore to him, after he had seen those men as I see them, that the whole American army is made up of boys of the same sort.

The sound of an approaching motor was heard and the singing got nearer. The boys trooped in.

"Where is your lieutenant?" I asked.

"On duty at the garage, so we could come."

"Did he send you all?"

"All but three that had to stay for emergency trips."

Before we sat down to dinner, one of the soldiers said, "Look how I pinched my hand cranking our ambulance to-night."

"Here 's my chance," said I, "to christen my new medicine cabinet. The boys who work in

the car-assembling department at the motor reception park in the Holy City made it for me." I led the way to the study, where I scrubbed the hand with carbolic soap.

"Gee, look at the miles of bandages!" said my patient.

"Yes," said I, "and here 's just the thing to heal up that bruise. It is painful to have anything happen to the fleshy part of your hand at the base of the thumb."

"The guy that slung the brushes on that chest of yours was some painter!"

"See how well he put in the lettering on the top, 'A LITTLE GRAY HOME IN FRANCE,' and look inside the lid, 'C. CURTIS, THE PAINTER.' "

"What 's this name in the other corner, 'NIGH'?"

"That is the doctor. He thought of the medicine cabinet and fitted it up for me. He knows I often have to do a dressing like this and he calls the Little Gray Home a field branch of his office."

When the last of the chocolate cake was disappearing, we heard wheels. Sergeant Applegate and his men walked in.

"I never appreciated this place as I do to-night," said the sergeant, as he took off his overcoat. "We are dog-tired. Say, I should have asked you to wait till to-morrow to pray for that rain. It 's pouring."

We patched up a dinner for the late-comers, and I sat and talked with them while the others smoked with Daddy in the study.

"How goes the farm?" I asked.

"During the week ending last night we sent over to the hospital fifteen hundred francs' worth of vegetables," said the sergeant.

"All for patients, I suppose?"

"Yes, and you may be sure they enjoyed them."

"Tell me how you came to get that farm," I suggested.

"It started in a small way," began the sergeant. "When the first unit marched up from

the Holy City to Savenay to begin work on the hospital, two or three of us got it into our heads that part of our job is teaching convalescents that they are useful. Fresh air and work, the results of which could be seen and handled, there must be, if our wounded are to be led to where they can face the future with hope."

"I see," said I; "like the schools for the reeducation of French soldiers."

"Bill and Jack and I had our eye on this farm because the fields run right up to the property leased by the hospital. The colonel backed us, and we were allowed to rent the farm. At first there were more men in the unit than patients in the wards. We were able to slip out and lose ourselves there. We cleaned up the farmhouse, made furniture of packing cases, and prepared the land for planting. When our gardens began to yield, we invited the colonel to dinner. The spell of the place got him the way it had us. He took off

his blouse and his Sam Brown belt and sat down to eat with us boys. He was so delighted with the lettuce and fresh peas that he was able to catch the vision of what the farm would mean to patients. He promised to send convalescents here to work, for he saw with us that the work was twofold; first, the good it would do the sick boys to have an unlimited supply of farm products; and then the benefit that would come to convalescents from being allowed to work. He enlisted the aid of the American Red Cross in the development of our idea. The work of the farm is all done by patients. Bill and Jack and I direct it and jolly the men who are discouraged."

"Men who are well enough are ordered there," I asked, "detailed to light duty as if they were in a camp?"

"The boys are ordered to come, of course," he replied. "But once there we drop military stuff. It is a difficult proposition to teach cripples how to work. If we had military

discipline it would be next to impossible to dispel embarrassment or resentment in the men who come to us. Usually a detail is sent out in charge of a sergeant, who watches them like a foreman. You take a one-legged boy ordered to report at the farm. He joins others, one-eyed boys, patients suffering from shell-shock, and they are brought to the farm in a truck. You should see their faces when we put them on their honor, send them out to weed or water the garden, and then let them alone. They do wonders. The proof is in the results."

"You must have lots of fun," said I.

"Indeed we do. Last week we had a bunch of East-siders from New York at the threshing machine and it was all we could do to get them away from it. They had never seen anything like that before."

One of the boys came in from the study.

"Say, do you chew tobacco, Mrs. Gibbons?"

"No," I answered. "Why?"

"Well, there was a package of chewing tobacco on your desk—"

"Yes, I know. About two weeks ago I had a convoy here for the night and just before they left a soldier gave me that. He said he wanted to do something for me and he thought the best way to please me was to give me something for some buddy. 'If you 're a chewin' guy and you ain't got no wad, it 's hell.' It has been like that all summer. Boys that had plenty of tobacco gave me some for those that might be without. I have never bought cigarettes. Do you want that pack of chewing tobacco?"

"Got it in my pocket," patting his hip.

"You get all sorts and kinds of men here," said Sergeant Applegate, "like us at the farm. Colonels and majors down to buck privates."

"Mostly buck privates," I commented; "representatives of a hundred and eight organizations have been here. And, do you know, I

have never had a single man do or say anything that offended me."

"How do you manage if you have a mixed bunch, for dinner? Say a captain and a lieutenant and three or four soldiers. How do you seat them?"

"I ask the officers to play their bars are gone and to sprout wings instead."

"And do you get away with it?"

"Yes, we all sit down together at table. It works out all right because you are gentlemen all."

CHAPTER XIX

WHERE IS JACK?

"It has come—the cablegram!"

Captain Wilson climbed down from his car.

"And it is—?"

"A son. Our first boy, born on August 14."

"Congratulations, Captain!" We shook hands.

"I 'm a happy man to-day," said the captain. "Think how long I 've waited for the news. To-day is the sixteenth of September."

"A comforting thought is that letters are certain to come quickly after the cablegram. And you 'll know right away who he looks like, whether his hair is curly, and his name."

"Let 's go to the soda-water fountain," suggested the captain. "I never miss a chance to get a drink of water from your well."

He opened the knotted string of the door to the wire cage around the well.

"I have to keep that tied so the children won't fall in," I said.

We let down the pail.

"Carefully, Captain. Be sure the chain winds up on this side, otherwise the pail gets lost. Rosalie is sick of fishing it out."

"Why don't you have Daniel Finney mend it while he 's here? I see. Your trouble is with the windlass. Finney! Come here a moment."

Finney is the captain's colored orderly. He came to the Little Gray Home early this morning with tools, a bag of cement, and a pole, to fulfil a promise of arranging the children's flag. They want to put it up and take it down like soldiers they have seen in the camps.

"Look at this windlass, my boy," said the captain.

"Done got sprung, ain't it, suh?"

"Get your pliers and bend it here," said the captain.

When Finney had done the trick, he poured himself a drink of water.

"Dat 's a treat," said Finney. "Yes, um, dey ain't no tas' ob disinfectin' 'bout it."

"And I know it won't hurt you," said I, "for I had it analysed at the hospital laboratory when I first came. The boys stop here twenty times a day just on account of that well."

"Some of them do it for an excuse to play with the children," laughed the captain.

"Perhaps," I agreed. "The other day there was a crowd here and they had a circus. Got out an old invalid chair they found in the barn. One soldier sat in with the baby on his lap, and the whole crowd chased round and round the center flower-bed with puppy yapping at their heels. They even mobilized the chickens!"

"Wisht Ah 'd been heah," put in Daniel

Finney. "Ah 'd a cotched one ob dem chickens an' we 'd a broiled it. 'Scuse me, Mis' Gibbons, if Ah takes nuther drink ob dat watah."

"You stick to that kind of drink," said the captain, "and I 'll never put you in the guard house again for *beaucoup zigzag.*"

"Ah ain't a drinkin' man, Cap'n, you knows dat. Ah says gen'ly to de boys to jes drink enuf ob dis yeah vinn blank dat dey kin take keer ob it an' not so much dat de drink 'll take keer ob dem."

Mimi came skipping over, carrying an Alsatian dollie by the foot. The captain tossed her up in his arms. She hugged him enthusiastically.

"Who is sweet?" said the captain.

"It 's me! Captain, do you know where is Jack?"

"Jack? No, dear."

"He is gone!" Shaking her head and holding up her forefinger, she emphasized her

words. "And I don't know where is he at all, at all, at all!"

"Mimi's concern for Jack is as deep as her English is picturesque," said the captain. "Where are the other children?"

"Gone off for the day. A truck stopped here this morning. The driver was an American Indian with fire in his eye. He told me that homesickness for his little boy in America was more than he could bear to-day and he wanted to borrow two of my children."

"You let him have them, did n't you?"

"Yes. He said that before anything could happen to those children he would be a dead Indian. When they pulled out, he was tucking Christine and Lloyd in with his overcoat and Lloyd was asking him why he did n't wear feathers. You see Lloyd is like a French boy. He has got his ideas of American Indians from Wild West pictures at the movies."

We sat on a garden bench with Mimi between us.

"Come on and tell us about Jack," said the captain.

"I did see him the first time at the hospital when he was a sick boy and I did take him for my good soldier."

"I did take him," the captain smiled at me.

"Yes. Mimi does not yet attempt past tenses in English. She gets around by conjugating with 'did.' "

"He did call me to come quickly," said Mimi. "And I did love him wit' all my heart."

"Why did you love him?" asked the captain. He took out a cigar. Mimi wanted to light it for him.

"I do it for papa," she said, dropping the match on the grass.

"Why I did love Jack? Because he would hurt the Germans and he would n't hurt me."

"What did Jack do to make you love him?" asked the captain.

"He did remember mint sticks when he did say it, and he did play and sing for me and

did n't stop. He did play the piano. He did tell me stories about serpents and litta boys. Serpents—like serpents, but not truly serpents. He did tell me another story of a big thing that would come at night and would get on the back of a soldier, and that soldier was Jack when he was dreaming. It did scratch and bite him. Jack has such a pitty face and eyes that laugh. Mama, will you tell Jack to come again?"

"Um-um."

"I 'd rather you 'd say yes or no, *comme ça.* Sometimes um-um means yes and sometimes it means no."

"Mimi is all for precision, is n't she?" asked the captain.

"Precision, is dat Fwench? What does it mean?" she chuckled.

"Go ask Daniel Finney," suggested the captain.

Mimi hopped down and ran away to where

Daniel Finney was adjusting the ropes on the flag-pole.

"Where is Jack?" asked the captain.

"That 's just the trouble," I answered. "We don't know, and Mimi asks everybody she meets, whether they have seen him.

"Jack was a Savenay patient. He had shell-shock, and was a bit queer—nothing violent or irresponsible. He just acted dazed, and seemed to be forgetful and apathetic. I was at the hospital one day, with Mimi, and left her talking to some boys while I went to see the colonel about something. When I came out, I found Mimi perched on the coping of the wall, dangling her little legs, and with one arm around the neck of a marine. 'This is Jack, Mama,' she said, 'and I love him and I am going to take him home with me.'

"Jack used to come out almost every day to the Little Gray Home. I suppose he got a lift mostly, but I know he often walked the

whole distance. He would sit around for hours reading and talking to Mimi. Then after a couple of weeks, he sat down at the piano one day, and played and sang. He had never mentioned music before. He got better after that, and was more cheerful and animated. He would play with the kids, and helped them dig trenches and a dug-out and put up a tent.

"Then suddenly he dropped out of our life. We have heard nothing more of him. He has been sent home or back to some light job in the S. O. S., and will certainly write to us. But poor little Mimi asks every soldier she sees, 'Where is Jack? Do you know Jack?' "

"The boys who have shell-shock or who have become unbalanced through the strain of fighting are a difficult proposition for the A. E. F. to handle," said the captain. "Few of them are really insane—very few, and in most cases nerves are on edge without really affecting the mind, that is in the sense of loss of control of

one's mental processes. It is a cloud, happily a temporary cloud, as in the case of your Jack. If only we could have a Little Gray Home and a Mimi for each case, cure would be rapid."

"And you can't always tell certainly which are mental or shell-shock cases in the hurry of evacuation," I said. "Just after the brilliant drive from Château-Thierry to Fismes, I received a letter from a friend of my brother's who complained that he had been sent to a hospital for mental cases by mistake. He wrote, 'All the patients here are nuts, and the doctors are nuts, too. They 're worse than the patients.' This made me wonder. So I read the letter to the colonel at Savenay, pausing after this extraordinary statement.

" 'Sure proof that the man's sane!' commented the colonel, laughing heartily. He called over the major in charge of mental cases, and made me reread the statement to him. 'Look out, Brown,' he said. "You see what

the patients think about those who care for them.' "

"The colonel was right. It 's hard to deal with mental cases without reflecting in yourself their condition," said the captain.

"Did you ever talk to a brain specialist?" I demanded. "I met one once on a railroad journey, and he was explaining mental cases in the army to me. He said that the line between sanity and insanity is slightly marked for all of us, and small things may push one over the line. The doctor insisted that he could tell a crazy person when he saw one, and that I 'd be astonished if I knew how many people are crazy. 'I see cases all the time,' asserted the doctor, 'and the funny thing is they don't know they 're cases.' The doctor was eyeing me narrowly. 'You can't fool me,' he said. By this time I 'm sure that he and I thought the other mentally unbalanced."

The captain wanted to inspect the flag-pole. I went into the house to finish my mail be-

fore the postman came. When I came out again into the garden I could n't find the captain.

"Ah think de boss is in de kitchen," said Daniel Finney. "Yes, um, he went obah dere wid Miss Mimi a minute ago."

There he was, bending over the stove.

"You 've caught me," said he, laughing. "I 'm looking in the sauce-pan to see if there is enough for me to stay."

The truck came back with the children. "I 've had my lunch," said Christine.

"And Lloyd," said the Indian soldier, "won't want any. He 's eaten too many ginger snaps."

"I ate in a tent," said Christine. "A soldier made hot cakes for me. There were some more soldiers there, too," she went on, "playing cards with match sticks."

When the captain got ready to leave he could not find the men who had come with him. We discovered them in the garden back

of the house, lying on the grass in the sun. They had gone there after their lunch.

"Feel at home, don't they?" said the captain. "My men work long and hard and the little breathing space will make them better soldiers. I thought I deserved the fuss you 've made over me to-day on account of my cablegram. Don't forget that enlisted men are not the only ones that need to be treated special."

CHAPTER XX

WHEN WE GET BACK

If I am more at home one day than another it is Sunday. The decree went out from our general-in-chief early in the game that as far as possible throughout the American army in France the Sabbath must be a day of rest. Boys turn up at the Little Gray Home at any hour, according to their passes. Just after lunch I was sitting in the summer-house when four boys on bicycles wheeled by. As they passed the window, I waved to them.

"Hello, sweetie!" shouted one.

The children ran out and invited the soldiers in. Mimi took two of them by the hand, and led them over to where other soldiers were sitting under a tree. I heard her say, "I like you; you 're my soldier."

"American children. Good Lord! It is six months since I have seen any," said one.

When Rosalie brought out glasses and things for lemonade, Christine came skipping over to get mother to come. I sat down beside the tray and began to put slices of lemon into glasses.

"I can't wait another minute to ask you to forgive me for, for—what I said."

"Oh, you 're the boy that called me sweetie," I exclaimed.

"Yes, ma'am. I 'm ashamed of myself. I did not know you could understand English. If I had known there was an American mother and her children in here, I never—"

"Never mind, my dear boy, I forgive you. In fact I am old enough to be nearly flattered that you said it. Do you like jumping lemonade?"

"Jumping lemonade! What 's that."

"It 's one of our family institutions. My mother invented it. You take a slice of

lemon in a glass, put in sugar over it, then you jump on it with your spoon like this, until you get a lot of juice. Then you pour water on it."

"You 'd use ice water if you were home, Mrs. Gibbons," said the boy who was a D K E at Yale in my brother's time.

"You would that," confirmed the cow-puncher. "Down in Texas we—"

"Say, are you from Texas?"

"I sure am. We 've got the greatest cattle. Look at that."

He drew from his wallet a grimy treasured postal card showing a giant bull.

"That there animal measures six feet four inches from tip to tip of his horns!"

The lad from Virginia gave me a smile. "Buddy," he said, "I guess your creed is: I believe in Texas."

"Funny the difference of opinion about Texas," said the D K E from Yale. "There 's an orderly in my company who

used to be a traveling salesman before he enlisted. He has been down that way, and puts his feeling about the State something like this, 'If I owned Texas and hell, I would rent Texas and live in the other place!' "

The cowpuncher found a more sympathetic listener in the lad from Virginia. I heard the cowpuncher tell the lad from Virginia that the D K E from Yale was "one of them rattle-headed guys you find in this man's army."

"Speaking of home, what are you boys going to do when you get back there?"

"Oh, gee!" cried the cowpuncher, "after I get back to punchin', if the Statue of Liberty ever wants to look at me again she 's got to turn around."

"I see," said I, "you 're a regular home boy, are n't you!"

"You said something, ma'am, you said something!" He waved his glass around, and handed it back for more lemon to jump on.

"When we get back, there 's one thing sure,"

said the D K E from Yale; "the slackers and the slickers will have nothing to do to save themselves but go and hide. There are no slackers in our house," he went on; "they could n't get more out of our family unless they took mother. My brother is in aviation, sister's husband is an artillery officer, and dad's on a battleship looking for submarines."

"Slickers? What are slickers?"

"A slicker is a guy that sits in a swivel chair in Washington," said the cowpuncher.

"Like a pal I have down to the camp," put in a Minnesotan. "Red is his name. He is Irish. When Red goes home, he says he intends to get three jobs. When the boss looks cross-eyed at him, he will quit—just to show he *can* quit. He is going to a restaurant near the dock in New York. Will order a planked steak for three. Not on a plate either—he says he wants it on a platter. When the waiter asks him where the other two are, he will slap his chest and sing out that he is the other two."

"I 'm going to get me my same job when I go back," said the lad from Virginia. "Paid me two hundred dollars a month."

He emptied his purse, and counted his money.

"Twenty-five, thirty-five, forty-five, fifty-five *centimes*—that 's eleven cents—except the American nickel, but there won't any Frog git that."

George Dayton and Ralph Lind joined us.

"I think when I go home," said Ralph, "I could be a laundry clerk in some hotel. I 've been fighting French laundresses down at our camp. I 've had to make out slips to be used as a pass into camp. Also lists stating the prices the women are allowed to charge. I found they were asking thirty cents to wash an O. D. shirt, and one man got stuck ten francs for getting an army blanket washed. You know I am provost-sergeant, and all those troubles are put up to me to solve in the old army game of passing the buck. We could

not afford to pay excessive prices, so I hit upon this scheme. When I landed a French interpreter to explain to the laundresses what the passes were for, they cried. Said we were trying to cheat a lot of hard-working women, and they could not afford to do the laundry for less. But they did need our money, and finally a couple of them accepted the army terms. Next day the rest of them came around and were glad to get a chance at a pass at any price. I had instructed the guards to keep them all out unless they had one. See? Well, it all runs smoothly now, and they call me the father of the laundry bill."

"Laundry clerk in a hotel ain't such a bad job," mused the cowpuncher. "You could live there maybe, anyway git your chow. I 'll be soon back to my punchin'. Eye's gone bad —I was in a mustard attack up the line. Gee, it was fierce. Before that the worst I 'd known was a mouthful of Bull Durham—yankin' my handkerchief out of my tobacco pocket, see?"

"I tell you, Mrs. Gibbons," said George, "when we go back to the States we can't go far wrong if we stick to work that has to do with the primary needs of humanity. We 'll have to get back to the beginnings of things not only in the sense of starting all over again ourselves, but also in the kind of jobs we look for. Got to steer clear of what the French call a *métier de luxe.*"

"Got to cut out high-brow stuff, ain't we?" agreed the cowpuncher.

"Sure," said George, moving over and sitting down beside the cowpuncher. "You see what I mean."

War brings together men who would never have known each other before and friendships are born on a new plane.

"Will our girls get us there? What do you think about it, Mrs. Gibbons?"

"You mean," said I, "will the American girl be content with plain living and willing to work hard?"

"Yes," said George, making room for Titine beside him and stopping to fix her hair ribbon for her, "yes, but more than that. Take it like this—soldiers, men from all walks of life, have learned the lesson that they can get along on nothing at all. And have a good time, too. See here! Failure to reduce living to simplest terms, lack of self-sacrifice and lack of unity, won't win the war. Failure to reduce living to simplest terms, lack of self-sacrifice and lack of unity, when we marry our girls and found our homes—won't win the future. Every fellow you know thinks about just two things, the war to-day and home to-morrow, when we have cleaned up the job, the home he 's got or the home he 's going to make."

"You fellows that are university guys and hang around New York can write your girls that they are going to find you just like I am," said the cowpuncher. "When I git home, I 'm goin' to be damn easy to git along with."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SINGING HEIGHTS

I have been reading a profound analysis of French feeling written by Margaret Deland in an American magazine:

> But after that, the dark. And after *that*, the dawn! It is a Hope! Æons off, perhaps, but a Hope. The Hope of the upward curve of the spiral after it has dipped into the primeval. Back again, these people say, to the beginnings of things, must go our miserable little civilization. Back to some path of realities, to wash us clean of an unreality which has mistaken geographical boundaries for spiritual values, and mechanics for God. Then, up —up—up—toward the singing heights.

It took sturdy courage to speak plainly the truth about French feeling last winter! The "bath of realities" was of blood and pain.

Through suffering France has become intimate with God and remembers her immortal soul.

My little neighbor, François, with eyes sunken deep in the sockets, tells all this in his look. François' older brother, André, came the other morning to ask me to walk over to the farm, "To look at François' earache," he said.

I went up the road with André, through a break in the hedge to find a path leading over a little bridge, and through François' father's meadows to the crescent-shaped group of stone buildings that forms the center of the farm. French peasants house their animals close to themselves. As we came toward the front door, I pointed to the white cross on the wall of the house near the door.

"I have been told that when that sign appears on a Brittany house it means somebody is lost—dead at the war. Is that true, André?"

"There 's nothing in that," he replied stol-

idly. "It 's where my father tries his brush when he whitewashes the rooms in the springtime."

"Who does the whitewashing now?" I inquired.

"Always my father. He did not have to go to war. We are ten children."

We entered the low, dark kitchen where the family lives. Madame Clouette, a wiry woman with anxious, brown eyes, was stirring gruel. She took it safely off the tripod, placed it on the stone platform of the fireplace, and came forward to greet me.

"It is heaven's pity to disturb Madame," she said, drawing out a chair and dusting it carefully, "but Madame knows there is no doctor and we must turn to the Americans."

I sat down by the bed and asked François if he was a good boy.

"Yes, when he is asleep," laughed his mother. "He is of a will power—it is unbelievable, Madame!"

"Why are you so skinny, François-boy?" I asked.

I took his hand and felt his little fore-arm. "André told me you have fifty-four cows. Do you drink lots of milk?"

"Will power again, Madame. He won't drink milk. Your children are city children —probably they love it."

"How old are you, François?" I asked.

"Eight years," said he, eying the shiny nickel case of my thermometer.

"Good," said I, "then you have sense enough to hold this in your mouth without biting it. My boy is only seven and he knows how to keep a thermometer under his tongue."

"Poor child," said his mother; "he has n't slept these two nights. The pain gives him a fever."

"There, François, do you know what time it is in your mouth? It 's a hundred and four. Never mind, old man, it means we 've got to help you get rid of that pain."

"His temperature, is it bad?" asked the mother. "Madame will send for a doctor?"

I telephoned to the hospital when I took the eggs to market. The interpreter answered that I must get the Dame du Château to come, and if she said so they would send down a doctor.

"Yes, yes," I assured her, "André must take his bicycle and hurry to the village and telephone. Make haste, André. Tell them to send the ambulance to the château and I will show them the way here."

Madame Clouette was all of a flutter. Her feelings were mingled, fear for her boy and pride that a splendid American ambulance had drawn up beside her manure heap. Relatives gathered to listen and watch.

"I 'm afraid I 'll step on some of these kids," said the doctor. "What 's the trouble? You see we got tired chasing away out here to look at mild little cases. You handled that last bunch of measles as well as I could. I knew

you would n't mind our passing the buck to you. Your preliminary diagnosis saves precious time for us. We are always glad to come, you understand, when it 's necessary," he added hastily.

"There is big trouble here. I think this kid has an abscess in his ear. What makes me concerned is that swelling back of the ear."

The doctor was examining busily, saying, "All right, little fellow, we won't hurt you." He straightened up and said, "Just as you said, an abscess; worse than that—may be mastoid, you know. I can't take the responsibility of this case. We must have Gracy out here. Carpenter!" he called, "would you mind going right back to the hospital for Major Gracy?" (I have yet to hear that doctor command anybody. He dispenses with "military stuff.")

An American car makes seven kilometers and back in no time. When he arrived, the ear specialist thought quickly. "Prepare

them," he said to me. "I must operate to-night."

I called the father and mother and explained that the doctors must have more instruments and electric light. "To make a thorough examination, dear Madame Clouette." I had my arm around her shoulders now. She was looking at me intently. Monsieur appeared with glasses and a bottle of applejack. "Distilled this myself," said he, "the Christmas François was born." I declined gently for the doctors without asking them. Monsieur poured a glass for himself and tossed it off easily. He wiped his walrus mustache, and disappeared.

"Tell me what they say. O Madame, I can bear it, only be frank!"

"Are they afraid of an operation?" said the specialist. "It 's his only chance." He handed me a silver funnel to wash.

"No, no, no, she 's all right. Did you notice that the daddy went away? Women

don't need suffrage in France. They 've virtually had it since '70."

"If we have to take him to the hospital, are you willing, Madame?"

"Oui, Madame." Her eyes were tearless and the voice was steady.

"It means an operation, you know."

"I understand. They will let me come? O Madame, I am bold—you will come with me?"

"What is she saying?" asked the Doctor.

"She is a brick!" I exclaimed. "My soul—the mothers of France . . . !"

I bundled the boy up and took him in my arms.

"Come, sonny," I said, "the doctors are going to give us a ride in their automobile. Mother is coming too. We are going to take you to the hospital to stop the pain. They have lemon drops there. Do you know what lemon drops are?"

At the receiving office, two orderlies ar-

ranged François on a stretcher, and gave his pillow and blanket back to his mother. Three or four poilus stood smoking at the door. I explained to them about François and brought them over to talk to him and his mother. "You are a soldier?" asked one. "Poilus are well off in this house," said another.

I was giving name, age, etc., to a sergeant at a desk. He came to a place where the printed slip said RANK. . . .

"Ask him what rank he wants to have," I called to one of the French soldiers.

Even his mother laughed when the little fellow answered promptly, "Me? I 'm a lieutenant. Lieutenant François Clouette." He took my hand and smiled.

"Of a will power," his mother had said.

We put François in a ward with poilus. The fellow in the next bed called François "mon vieux," and as the mother and I left, he was telling François cheerily, "Thou art lucky, little one, to be in this hospital. The

Americans are our brothers. After the war I shall go to the United States to get Yankee-fied myself."

The next day I was going into the wards with the Red Cross searcher, Miss Crump, to read to the patients. I saw François about noon. They had put him in a private room with a special nurse. He was just coming out of the ether, and recognized me. Poor lamb, the operation had been one of the worst known to ear surgeons.

Ten days later I went to the hospital to be present at a consultation on François' case. The incision was healing nicely. But François was coughing. Was it pneumonia or were we up against an abscess in the lung?

"I am glad you come," said the Major. "You can tell madame straight about François. She 's been here with him ever since his operation. All I can make out is that the woman sincerely appreciates what we are doing for the boy. Do you know," he continued, "if she had

to pay for this care in a big city back home it would cost her a hundred dollars a day?"

"Uncle Sam's pockets are deep and the hearts of his nephews are very warm," I said. "Doctor, if you save this boy it will be a feather in your cap, and do you realize what good propaganda for America that will be?"

"A physician is never inspired by any other thought than saving his case," responded the major gravely. "His reward is having the opportunity to fight for a human life."

François' day nurse came in with another doctor. She had been out to the tent hospital to get the tuberculosis man.

The doctors began their consultation. Half an hour later, Major Gracy turned to me and said, "It is not pneumonia, and there will be no further trouble from the ear. Pus has got into the lung. A new abscess is there. Tell madame."

"Will he pull through?"

"We do not know."

"Dear Madame Clouette," I began; "you and I know we have a very sick little boy here."

The two doctors stood quietly watching me as I translated their opinion.

"I know, I know, Madame. Was I not here during those five dreadful hours yesterday when he was unconscious! Did Madame hear Prinquiau church bell this morning? The curé will say nine prayers for him to-day."

"She is a wonder, that little mother!" said Major Gracy, "but there is no use telling her yet that the child is clearly the product of alcoholic stock and therefore is practically sure to get tuberculosis, if not immediately, then later. It 's fifty-fifty whether we can save him now. His father's applejack will do for him later. Oh, the ravages of Brittany alcohol!"

François' bird-claw hand fluttered toward his throat. Around the bandaged head lay a rosary. His mother fixed it for him. He

wheezed and coughed and tried to speak. He looked to Major Gracy and held out his hand. Then he spoke.

"Dites, mon vieux," said he, *"donne-moi une cigarette!"*

"What 's that?" said the major.

"He wants to smoke, Doctor," I laughed.

The major got a Camel out of his pocket, and gave it to François. "Tell him not to light it," said he. "The way the kid goes up and down is beyond belief. We 'll save him yet."

The next time I saw François he made his mother give him his toy basket from the window sill. He fished around in the basket and found a Lucky Strike box. With trembling hands he opened it.

"Look, Madame, one, two, three, four. Every time I don't cry when the major dresses my head he gives me a cigarette. I 'll light them when I get home."

"André sat up with François last night to

let me sleep," said Madame Clouette. "André says he won't be a curate when he grows up. He wants to be an American because they have cigarettes."

"I can't let the major get ahead of me, François," I said. "I 'll give you a cigarette because I love you. Help yourself."

"A silver case is better than a pasteboard box—I 'll keep that, too."

His mother gasped. I beckoned to her. We went into the corridor.

"Let him have it, Madame," I urged. "We don't dare cross him if we can help it while he has that temperature."

François lingered all summer. An abscess developed in a tooth that had to be extracted. Then another on the leg. Week after week we did not know. In August fifty-fifty changed to forty-sixty, and then thirty-seventy, with François on the winning side.

September found the boy living in a tent. In the daytime his bed was out in the sun-

shine. He was still pitifully thin, but his cheeks were rosy and the bandages had gone. He had a whole box of lemon drops always on his table now and could eat two every day. American soldiers love kids. They spoiled François lavishly. He told me that one day his friend the aviator came coasting down the clouds and did the loop-the-loop for him. "Just up there!" he cried, pointing with a finger that was steady now.

We took him home the first of October. Major Gracy came to dinner with me afterwards. In the evening I read him Margaret Deland's article.

"If I 'd read that before I came over here, I should not have understood it," said the major. "The unquenchable spirit of the French. Everything against them, enemy hordes sweeping down to ravage and burn and poison, and the handicap of past sins and weaknesses to make more difficult, more complicated, the problem of resistance. They have

held to life through their will power. They know they are going to triumph in the end —they have known it all along. Victory is in sight after they have been down, down, down. François is France."

"And those who have not been close to the world cataclysm, who have not lived with France in her agony, call Mrs. Deland a pessimist," I answered. "But she ends up her analysis with 'the singing heights.' We have taken François home after all these long months in the valley of the shadow. Who would dare say that the suffering which could not crush his spirit has not touched his soul? It must be like that, it is like that, with the French nation. *De profundis—*"

The major completed my thought. "To the singing heights," he said.

CHAPTER XXII

EIGHT RUBBER BOOTS STANDING IN A ROW

"Are you very tired to-night, Madame?" asked Alice, when I came home from the hospital.

"Why?"

"Shortly after you left this morning a small convoy stopped, three trucks and four soldiers. They were boys that you know. The man in command of the convoy calls himself Bill—your funny little English name—one of the tallest of soldiers and with laughing eyes. You told me he had a Western accent. Remember?"

"The others?"

"I had them write down their names in the guest-book."

"I see. Was there a message?"

"Disappointed not to find you—so disappointed I told them to stop on their return to-night. They said they would be late. That 's why, *chère Madame,* I asked if you were tired."

"I hope you said they must stop, Alice!"

"I told them if they saw a light in the study window—"

"Good."

Soldiers that make regular trips past the Little Gray Home I call "steadies." Bill is a Stanford man who usually travels with another known as Curly. They go to a forestry camp with provisions for the "jungle stiffs," as the soldiers that cut lumber in forests are called.

I was reading by the study fire. It was after ten.

Chug-chug-chug—footsteps—voices.

They know the latch of the door.

"Bless you, Mrs. Gibbons—you will never

know what it means to us to come into the study without knocking. This is a corner of home."

Bill sure enough, and Curly with him. Rain-drops glistened on their goggles, and their shoulders were wet.

"Two new friends for you," said Bill, "Robert and Eddie. Every time I come here I bring a couple of new buddies."

We shook hands all around, and settled into steamer chairs.

"They don't provide steamer-chairs and sofa pillows in the army!" said Eddie, lifting another cushion from the floor, and bunching it comfortably under his head.

"How about the feet?" I asked, "pretty wet?"

"Soaked! Gee, think of the chilblains next winter!"

"If I can get one of the organizations working for the army from the human point of view to take over the Little Gray Home when I have

to go back to Paris, I will leave some jars of chilblain stuff here for you."

"Never heard of anything that would help!"

"Yes, there is something!" I urged. "Boil chopped-up carrots in lard, then strain into a jar. It works all right. Better take off your boots," I added, "and toast your toes while you can."

Laughing and tugging. Soon eight rubber boots were standing in a row against the wall, and on the floor were marks of wet stockings going every which way.

"Those organizations you were speaking about," said Bill, "are accomplishing marvels. I have seen the good they do here in France with my own eyes and in many places."

"They can do everything," broke in Curly, "but treat a soldier special."

"Sure," said Robert, "and like as not it amounts to some glad-hand artist doping out sunshine stuff. Gosh, Mrs. Gibbons, there 's lots of things a fellow would not do when he 's

lonely if he could get to the Little Gray Home first. Organizations are on the job, all right, but they can't handle the proposition that every man-child born is something special. There are too many of us for that. This place is an oasis. You reach a comparatively small number of men here, Mrs. Gibbons, so what you do is real."

"The reason the Little Gray Home idea has worked out is that the boys do more for me than I do for them."

"Can't you see, Mrs. Gibbons," said Bill, "that the painted woman of the street knows a lonely soldier is soon parted from his money, if that is the only comfort he can get? You get there first. You get under a fellow's skin not by fussing, not by elaborate hostessing, and not by condescension. You flash a vision of home before us! I have seen rough-necks come in here and undergo a subtle change. They tune up their conduct to the pitch of an

American home. Mrs. Gibbons is for the enlisted man, and the fellows know it."

"You bet you!" cried Curly. "She makes friends with you exactly as if you were a civilian. If you are a university man, she gets you. She does n't care that you are only a damn buck private. If you 're a rough-neck, that does n't matter either. A fellow who comes here is busy, frequently tired, and sometimes sullen, or tingling with resentment because he is a round peg in a square hole. His lieutenant is perhaps not half the man that he is and has given him a raw deal."

"Don't make me sprout wings like that. You know if you want people to like your friends, you must n't praise them too much. I want Eddie and Robert to feel like coming back another time. Bill, don't you want to look in the cupboard there and get some candles? They are in a tin box on the second shelf to the left."

Bill snuffed out old candle stumps with new ones.

"Candles!" said he, "kind of takes you back to your grandmother's time you can't remember. I come from a Western ranch. We have a farm lighting plant on the ranch. Dad harnessed up our waterfall, and we make our own electricity. Before I came into the army, candles were something that lived on birthday cakes and Christmas trees."

"Makes a pretty light, though," said Robert; "there are lots of inconveniences that we are getting used to."

I was putting sugar in the bowls. Robert started the bread and butter around.

"I think it is a pretty poor stunt," said I, "to give you boys coffee at eleven o'clock at night. What you really ought to have is hot chocolate. It 's much more nourishing, but I can't get it."

"Say, you can't get chocolate?" said Curly.

Turning to the others he went on, "Let 's bring her some of that chocolate we ranked the other day."

"Here, I want to get that word. Ranked—what does it mean?"

"We drive our trucks along docks. Niggers are unloading ships. A fellow drops a box off his wheelbarrow. It cracks open, and the stuff gets scattered on the railroad tracks. We have motor trouble accidentally on purpose, and when we shut up our tool-box again, in goes a bunch of chocolate boxes with the tools. We rank that chocolate, see? You don't steal anything in the army, you rank it."

"Nice little habits we 'll take back to the States!" said Bill. "When I was home and dinner time came, if I did n't like what was there I 'd get up and walk out of the house. Eat somewhere else, see? After I enlisted, they made me cook for a while. Whee!

When I get back, I 'll eat any meal my wife is good enough to set on the table. I should n't care how greasy it was."

"Say," said Eddie, "after the war, when we go home, we 'll be sitting in the little old cabaret, and when the clock says nine-thirty, we 'll just naturally beat it. That 's something we 're going to do for months."

"That 's what we 've got to do now," said Bill; "beat it."

"Before I leave," said Robert, "I want to give you something."

He got out his purse.

"Promise me never to give it away." He handed me an American penny.

"The only cent I had on French soil for six weeks!"

CHAPTER XXIII

GOING HOME

"You all are leaving us when we need you most. Winter 's the worst time for fellows on trucks," said Joe. The sergeant from Kentucky had brought a pal to show him the Little Gray Home. The Y chief of this base and a secretary from Akron, Ohio, had dropped in for tea.

"But, Joe," I urged, "the chief here thinks I have started something, and when the north wind blows and the rain comes slanting down to make the road ooze with mud you will still have hot coffee and a good fire at the Little Gray Home."

"Gives me a funny feeling, too," said the chief. "This house surely looks like moving

day. I wish you were twins, Mrs. Gibbons. I am having a devil of a time finding somebody to take up your work."

The chief was born in Ireland. He is a good scout, the best Y. M. C. A'ster I know. Jolly and wise and human. You would n't believe him if he told you his age any more than I do. Khaki uniforms do not hide big men. Big men we want over here. None is too big to handle the business of looking after our boys.

The secretary from Akron, whom I had picked out to take over my job, broke up a bundle of fagots and started a fire. From my steamer-chair beside the tea-table I spread out my hands to the blaze.

"They say any fool can build a fire," said I, "but it takes a philosopher to keep one burning."

"Mrs. K. and I have done heaps of camping together," he answered, squatting down and tipping the tripod until it was solid and level

enough to hold a saucepan of water for our tea. "I 'd jump at this Little Gray Home job if I had her over here. She 'd make this place hum."

I was sympathetic. "Of course we understand that all wives can't come. If some did others would want to, naturally. We must not get a howling mob of incapables over here. But it is tough on the work you are doing that some wives of secretaries are lost to us. A man and his wife in a Y. M. C. A. hut could do the work of three secretaries because they understand each other and are used to working together." I warmed to my subject.

We were comfortably settled by this time, waiting for the water to boil. Madame Criaud brought bread and butter.

"I want to organize an American Woman's Battalion. Two would be better, one for Home Service and the other to replace men who fret back here in the Service of Supplies. Why do we let Englishwomen get ahead of

us!" I cried. "We could follow the telephone service by taking over most of the clerking work. We could even be truck drivers. English girls are. It 's no experiment. In my scheme there is a Woman's Postal Battalion with home and foreign sections. Make the requirements:

"a. She has money of her own or needs to earn a living;

"b. She has a college or high school education or business experience;

"c. She has a brother, father, lover, or husband in the army.

"Women would know they had a better job than knitting. And you bet the boys would get their letters. Then, women's colleges could form hospital units. They could do all the typing and paper work and think how valuable woman's genius for detail would be in keeping records for hospital statistics. Bryn Mawr could take over all that work at Base Hospital Number 8, Smith could take the hos-

pital at the Holy City, Vassar the one at the City of the Edict, and so on. As Abe and Mawress say in the Potash and Perlmutter stories, 'Am I rrrrright or wrrrrrong?' "

The chief and the secretary from Akron beamed indulgently. The chief, however, kind and just when it comes to the other fellow's ideas, observed: "I know that is one of your hobbies, Mrs. Gibbons. There 's something in it, too, for it would release for the front a lot of those boys who sing rather bitterly,

> 'Mother, take down your Service flag,
> Your boy is at —' "

The secretary from Akron, Ohio, was away off somewhere. "She could make it hum. I know she could," he murmured.

I started to pour. Madame Criaud went to call daddy and the children.

"Ready for tea, Daddy?" I asked.

"We are nearly through out there," he an-

swered. "Just got the roll of bedding. Don't forget, no sugar for me, please."

"The chief and I are going to help the boys load that baggage into the ambulance. You 've done enough, Doctor," said the secretary from Akron, Ohio.

The kids with their hats and coats on were sitting in a row on the croquet box. Baby was having her bread and milk in the kitchen.

"What have you there, son?" asked daddy.

"School books," said Lloyd.

"Better give them to me, dear, to put in my bag."

"No, Daddy," said Lloyd, "I need 'em."

"When these children were babies we read guide-books to help us decide where to go next," said daddy. "Now there 's no question about it. The first of October means home."

The problem of getting my establishment to Paris was solved for me by the lieutenant at the Motor Reception Park. He told me the next convoy could take all of my baggage.

"What would look like a lot to you would be lost in one of our trucks. We can take your stuff just as easy as not," he said. The lieutenant's thoughtfulness made it possible to make the journey "in two jumps." Daddy, who had been here for a week's vacation, would take children, governess, and servants with him, and leave the baggage to me. Letters from Paris have been saying that the grippe and yet more reduction in the number of trains are compelling summer people returning to town to wait sometimes eight days for the luggage. Congestion of traffic this year is increased because none knew till the last moment whether schools would open. Our notice from the Ecole Alsacienne came only a week ago. Now the family would travel light-armed—suit-cases and the baby's bedding-roll would go into the compartment with them.

Joe poked his head in the door.

"How about pulling freight?" said he.

We piled into the ambulance and were off

for the station. The Y men came along to help. Mimi was on the front seat of the ambulance. Joe's pal, who has a little girl going on six, took her on his lap.

"Look how riding along fast makes Henry Ford swing on his perch!" cried Christine.

"Oh! Watcha give it that name for!" laughed Joe; "that 's not made of tin; that 's a pretty white bird—dove of peace."

"What *shall* we have for a name, then?" asked Christine. " 'Cause, you did n't know? — Henry laid an egg yesterday and Mama says we have to change his name."

The most dignified sergeant in the army is the railroad transport officer at the Savenay station.

"The Paris train is on time to-day, Doctor," said the sergeant; "it will come in on the first track. If you will all just wait here by the news-stand, I will find you a compartment."

Lloyd was the last one of the crowd to get into the train. I had to drag him away from

a poster showing a life-size poilu, wresting the last silken folds of the flag from the clutches of the German eagle.

"*S-o-u-s-c-r-i-v-e-z à l'-e-m-p-r-u-n-t.* What 's that, Mama?"

"It means give your pennies to the poilus. Hurry, darling!"

The locomotive was telling us the last second had come by ringing a bell—so we knew it was American.

A French sailor ran from the hydrant where he had been filling his canteen—he lifted Lloyd up to daddy. The train moved. American soldiers in cattle-cars, hitched on at the end, were singing,

> "Where do we go from here, boys,
> Where do we go from here?"

CHAPTER XXIV

U. S. 911,350

Truck No. 911,350 swung up the road and came to a full stop in front of our house. I ran out to see who had come. Sergeant George jumped to the ground and saluted. He has hair the color of taffy and is headed soon for the officers' training school.

"You have done lots of favors for us boys," said he; "now we are going to do something for you."

"The boys are always doing things for me. That is why the Little Gray Home idea has worked out. Who is the other boy with you?"

"Don't know him very well," said George. "He knows you though. He 's been cooking in the colonel's mess. The last time you lunched there, he says you went out into the

kitchen and washed your hands at the sink. The boys still remember how tickled you were with the hot water spiggot. Say! people at home don't yet realize what women like you have been up against, keeping house on the edge of the world's battle-field." He wrenched the big iron hook off the other half of the gate, and called to the boy in the truck.

"You can back her in here if you go easy. Mrs. Gibbons, we will just run the truck close to the door so we can load your stuff. This is Zim, who is detailed to convoy the truck to Paris with me."

The boys piled my baggage in the back end of U. S. 911,350. George roped the canvas flap down solidly at the back of the truck. I was satisfied that none of my bundles would drop off. Zim was at the wheel putting on his gloves. George came around the front of the machine to make sure that the saucy celluloid Kewpie doll was securely tied to its place on the radiator.

"You 'll have a fine trip," said I.

"We will have a fine trip, I 'll tell the world," said he. "Why don't you come along?"

"I 'll do it," said I.

It took two minutes to put on my things and arrange with Madame Criaud about the key to the house. U. S. 911,350 moved slowly and carefully through the gate. George was singing:

> "We were sailing along,
> On Moonlight Bay."

We were sailing along, too, on the road to Savenay. Above the hum of the motor, I heard Zim say: "You did n't suspect you were going to be kidnaped and taken back home to Paris like this."

We pulled up for a few minutes in front of the hospital. I hurried in to say good-by and to get the handsome sergeant-major to take my papers to be stamped by the M. P. The head nurse and other friends came out to the car with me. My boys from the garrage,

across the road, had crowded around to take a look at the long-heralded Liberty motor. Not till then did I realize that I was going to have the honor of riding to Paris on the first Liberty truck. The boys explained that the Liberty truck is supposed to be like a certain type-writer, a combination of all the good points in other machines. The only criticism I heard them make was that you have to transfer your gasoline from the reserve tank in a pail. You ought to be able to pump it.

It was n't easy to say good-by. It has been a happy summer. Aunt Patty, as the children called the head nurse, gave me her coat and leggings. Busy people always have time to do nice little things. The colonel came out of his office, and said cheerfully: "We don't like to make a scene right now, but our hearts are broken."

U. S. 911,350 moved slowly.

"Come to me for Christmas in Paris," I cried.

Now we were well under way, and, like Uncle Wiggly Long Ears, were looking for an adventure. George and Zim are young, but too old to know the Garis stories about Uncle Wiggly Long Ears, the rabbit gentleman who puts on his tall silk hat, takes his red, white, and blue barber-pole rheumatism crutch, leaves Nurse Jane, his muskrat lady housekeeper, and goes out to look for an adventure.

Before dark we did sixty kilometers. We arrived at Nort, a village you never heard of. Backing U. S. 911,350 to park it in the yard of the Hôtel de Bretagne brought us our first adventure. The chassis of a Liberty motor is long and the wheels far apart. The truck bumped into the gate and knocked down some of it. It made a hole in the grating and pulled down the solid wall that was only plaster—for all the world like showy façades in Turkey.

"Gee! I thought a German bomb had hit that gate," said Zim, when we were sitting down to dinner. A bald-headed little French-

man was the only other diner. We bowed and shook hands all around. George whispered to me, "What do you bet his profession is?"

"Traveling salesman," I answered.

We named him Uncle Willy. Uncle Willy made a noise when he ate his soup, but his observations about peace talk were shrewd. The boys fed him cigarettes. Cigarettes are scarce in rural France these days. You make a friend instantly if you begin conversation by opening your cigarette case. Good and abundant food is also scarce. And we had a-room-for-more feeling after dinner was finished. I could think only of bowls of *tilleul* to fill in the chinks. That would at least give us something hot, and an excuse to continue eating bread. Madame might have enough sugar to make it satisfyingly sweet. Madame had no sugar. Uncle Willy rose, gave his napkin another safe hitch into his waistcoat, got out the keys on the end of his watch chain, and unlocked a little trunk which sat on two chairs in the corner.

Sure enough, it was a sample trunk, and from it Uncle Willy produced sugar for the *tilleul.* Zim nearly choked, and George had to say something funny quickly.

We left Nort the next morning before eight o'clock. Zim cast his eye cautiously now as we turned narrow corners in the village street. He was afraid of taking down more walls.

"You can testify, Mrs. Gibbons, that it was made of plaster. They will surely try to make Uncle Sammy pay with honest concrete. These Frogs," continued Zim, between puffs at a dope-stick (a Fatima cigarette in soldier slang), "these Frogs don't pay any attention to traffic. Walk right along where they are going, and drive old nags and donkeys without listening to horns. The way they cross streets down at the Holy City made us tired long ago. It 's risky for 'em now. For we 've gotten over paying attention, either."

"That 's all right. You 're learning French

ways," I answered. "You know in Paris, if you get run over, it 's your fault."

"Gee! that is a back-handed way. Do you mean that? . . . Well, I never!"

"Yes, you have to defend yourself for getting run over—they will arrest you for it."

"For the grown-ups I don't care. But the kids. Say, Mrs. Gibbons, the other day I was going through a narrow street. A little girl ran out from the curb. She was n't more than four feet ahead of the front wheels. Brake and horn were no good. I did the only possible thing—made a sharp turn to the left. I grazed the little thing enough to make her fall over, but she was n't hurt."

"What happened to you?"

"Stuck to the seat of the truck and came up inside a café. Smashed it."

"You must have stirred up some excitement," said I.

"Well, I should say! The owner was very

polite. Complimented me on my good judgment—kid was his, see?"

"That was generous of him."

"Was for a fact. But—there was a fat Frenchman in there drinking. He held his beer glass up high and backed till he sat down on a hot stove. Burnt the seat of his trousers clean off. He was the only person in the crowd that got mad."

"You will think you ought to have had your life insured before you trusted Zim's driving," said George. "But I take my life in my hands every time I ride with these French chauffeurs. We delivered a bunch of cars, Fords they were, on the French front last week. I am reminded more and more of the difference between riding with a Frenchman and an American as illustrated in this story: When you are with an American and you have a puncture you say, 'Oh, hell, there goes a tire.' When you are with a Frenchman you say, 'Thank God, that 's only a tire.' "

We "plugged right along," as the boys put it, all morning. At noon we came to the village of St. Georges.

"What do you say we get some coffee here to make us hold out till Angers," proposed George. "I 'll stand treat because of the name of the place."

U. S. 911,350 went slowly through the street —there was only one street—and we were looking for the best place. The Inn of the Red Hat took our eye. When we entered, we found ourselves in a dark kitchen with a row of burnished copper saucepans above the fireplace. Madame, in a spotless white cap, was blinking her eyes and singing an incantation over a pot on the fire. She shut savory steam back into the pot with the lid and turned to shake hands with us. Monsieur was smoking a brown clay pipe near by. The daughter came bustling in from the tiny dining-room where she had arranged bowls and bread and Gruyère cheese. As we sat down at the larger

of the two tables, we noticed another tiny one, set with white cloth and special china. The table napkin had embroidered initials.

"What do you know about that!" exclaimed Zim

"Must be a star boarder," I ventured.

"Something smells awfully good," says Zim.

I asked Marie what was in the air. Marie explained: *"Civet de lièvre."*

"What the dickens is that. Let 's have some!" said George and Zim together.

"Bunny stew," said I. "This means we 'll not try to hold out till Angers."

A French lady took her place at the special table. George nudged Zim's elbow and whispered: "Star boarder."

She explained to me that she had come here early in April. "Much better to be in a little place like this off the beaten track. Big hotels on main routes are impossible these days for good food. Americans everywhere! I ran away from the Grosse Bertha," she laughed.

"Just happened in for lunch the way you did to-day, and I 've stayed ever since."

When we got back to U. S. 911,350 a boy scout was on the truck. He jumped down to the pavement, and greeted us in very good English. He told us that immediately upon the entrance of America in the war he had begun to study it by himself. Since then he 'd had lots of chance to practise. As we pulled up the street, I looked back. He was standing there, still saluting.

We reached the motor park in Angers about two o'clock and found Lieutenant Black in his office. I had been wishing to meet him all summer. Boys coming through from Angers and going through my place have all said of him, "He 's a prince!" He told me about his special barracks and the extra beds in his own room where he makes boys comfortable when they stop there with convoys.

Loud detonations came from the square in front of the barracks buildings. "Target

practice makes a terrific noise, does n't it?" said the lieutenant. "Want to see the boys fire?" The lieutenant's office was near a big gate in a stone wall. "The Blank Teenth Engineers are stationed here." Squads with bayonets were moving out of the gate. Others were returning from a hike. They had on gas masks. Another group came in with bath towels and wrung-out washing over their arms.

"This place is a busy one," said the lieutenant. "They are shipping men right to the front all the time."

"Dear me," said George after we had left the lieutenant, "those boys going to the front! Some contrast to us who have to stay in the S. O. S. Oh, but, Mrs. Gibbons, you have n't met Robby. Robby is n't itching to go to the front the way we are. He never gets mad when the Y. M. C. A. secretary tries to comfort fellows here in the Service of Supplies by telling them, 'Somebody has to do it, you know.'

"The other night the Sergeant brought in some letters. There was one for Robby. Robby 's twenty-eight and drafted. He was reading along. Suddenly he jumped up, put his hand to his forehead, and shouted, 'The son of a gun!'

"We watched him, amazed. He went on talking: 'They 've rejected my brother on account of having false teeth. Look at me.' Here he pulled out his own full upper set, waved it around in one hand and the letter in the other."

From three P. M. until eleven we made one hundred and six miles. Our one stop was at La Flêche. Here we met a Y. M. C. A. superintendent of construction. While the boys helped him repair his Ford, I found a café on the square, and ordered bread and coffee. When the boys came in, they found me talking with the young girl who had prepared coffee for us.

"What have you been saying to make her blush so, Mrs. Gibbons?"

"Nothing much," I answered. "I simply told her she was too pretty to stay single and wanted to know why she did n't get married."

Dimples had slipped out to the kitchen and now came walking back into the café, holding hands with a poilu.

"For goodness' sake, boys, look at this; she is introducing her fiancé to us."

But my boys are not interested in prospective matrimony. When they saw that the girl —a pretty little thing, she was—had eyes only for her own soldier, they were ready to start, and we got under way.

We were not yet out of the village, when George said, "Look what I got cranking that Y man's Ford."

"Some swell finger," commented Zim; "better get something to put on it."

The middle finger of poor George's left hand

was quivering with pain. The nail was already black. I gave Zim my hot water bottle and told him to run back and ask Dimples to fill it. George and I found a pharmacy. Just as the *pharmacien* finished dressing the finger, Zim came speeding across the square.

"They don't even know what a hot water bottle is," he shouted. "How do you tell them to pour in hot water? I unscrewed it, and made the proper motions. Nothing doing. OO-la-la, when I get back to camp I simply must study this lingo."

At Le Mans we stopped at the motor park to find the way out of town. It was a pity the dark came so quickly, for all we saw of the cathedral was a pile of black stone. We talked with two soldiers who, curiously enough, were both from Ohio and both called Anderson. They said a truck was just leaving in the Paris direction and all we had to do was to follow. We could see only its little red tail-light.

"That fellow must have taken his governor off and put the seal in his pocket. He 's going some," said George.

"For all the world like Tinker Bell in 'Peter Pan,'" said I. "And just about as hard to follow."

Follow we did. U. S. 911,350 nearly came to grief a thousand times in the ten miles' chase between the town and the crossroads where Tinker Bell stopped. Tinker Bell trudged across the pebbly road till he came to the side of our truck. Swinging himself on the step and peering at us through his goggles, "Pardon me," said he—"do you know where we are?"

"Why, Tinker Bell," I exclaimed, "are n't you ashamed of yourself! We thought you knew the way. They told us at the park to keep right along with you until we reached some crossroads where you would leave us and we would make a sharp turn to the right!"

"Is that what you call me—Tinker Bell?

Not so bad! I 'm about as good a guide as that flighty fairy might be. The first time my mother took me to the theater, it was to see Maude Adams in 'Peter Pan.' "

"Let 's figure it out on the map," suggested George. He felt back of the gasolene tank for his map. It was gone! Tinker Bell unpacked his pockets to find another, and soon the boys were poring over it together.

"Seems as though somebody had taken a fist-full of Nogents and scattered them all over the map of France," observed George. "Here 's Nogent-le-Roi, Nogent-le-Rotrou, and Nogent-sur-Eure."

"And Nogent-Villars," added Zim, placing his forefinger on the outspread map.

"Well, any way, it 's this Nogent-le-Rotrou we 're making for," said George. "I will just get my search-light and take a look at the sign board."

With astonishing rapidity and confidence they worked out the way. I have no sense of

direction. After a smoke, Tinker Bell left us and went back to his truck. When we got to the sharp turn (luckily we had been on the right track the whole time), Tinker tooted a lusty and friendly farewell and disappeared into the night.

It was long past dinner-time, but we had decided to cut out "eats" in order to cover ground. About nine-thirty we came to a group of houses hardly big enough to be called a village. We stopped for a rest and a bite. I got to talking with the woman who brought us food and came upon the universal tragedy: her only son killed last month in the big offensive. Weeping bitterly, she protested that she could not take our money for the bowls of hot milk.

"Ah, my poor Jean," she sobbed, "he was tall and straight and blue-eyed like the soldier there. It is for him. These boys must avenge his death. Twenty-one boys from this village of Saint-Mars-de-Brières are dead."

When we pulled into La Ferté Bernard it was eleven o'clock. Zim and I waited in the truck while George tried to wake somebody. We could see him inside the hotel archway flashing his searchlight on doors and knocking. Finally a man and his daughter appeared, excited and dismayed because they already had twelve *militaires Américains* in the house.

"Come on in," called George; "she thinks the Americans at the coast have broken loose and are all going to the front."

When I came into the dining-room next morning my two boys were there before me.

"Good morning!" said George. "We got a hustle on and the truck is all ready to start as soon as we finish breakfast. I was just saying to Zim that if a fellow saw this floor when he 'd been drinking—"

The floor was made of tiles, gray diamonds and black diamonds fitted into one another. It gave the effect of cubes with retreating corners, forever mounting.

"He 'd think it was a staircase," observed Zim, "and would try to walk up it."

We had made such an early get-away from La Ferté Bernard that by the time we reached Nogent we were ready for another breakfast. Here we had a dainty and delicious meal, just coffee and bread, but so good and pleasantly served by a mother and her daughter who run a café alone. The father is at the front. While we were ordering the breakfast, George went over to a barber shop to get a shave. He had come back now and was beginning to eat when a rosy-cheeked boy, dressed in white linen coat and apron, ran in and handed him a one hundred franc note.

"I had n't missed it!" exclaimed George, as he fished in his map-case to get out cigarettes for the boy. "That reminds me," said he. "Wait a minute. I must buy another map."

"Let me pay for it," I begged; "then I can keep it as a souvenir of the trip."

George and I talked about Chartres. Zim

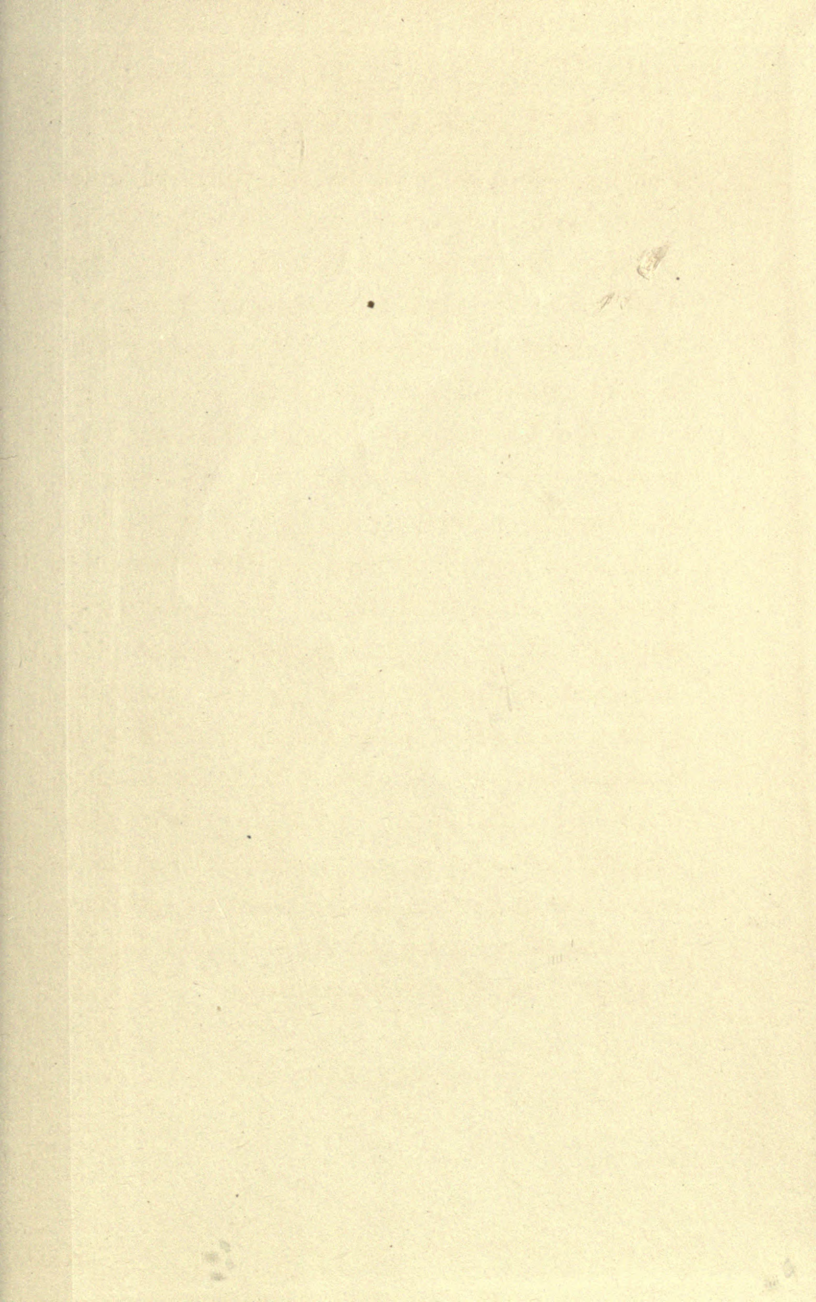
was for speeding. He wanted to hurry by all the cathedrals between Nogent and Paris. But when he saw the spires of Chartres he jumped out first and made for the cathedral. In the end we had to drag him away. We could not remain in our medieval dream. There is no place in France to-day where the war does not thrust itself upon your attention. As we left Chartres, aëroplanes were whirring and doing trick flying all over the town.

But now we were all three for speeding. Paris had to be made by evening. I had invited guests for dinner, and they would be waiting for us. We had no time to see the chapel where Louis XIV married Madame de Maintenon. We hurried through Rambouillet, skirting the forest. We went through Versailles before it was too dark to see the thousand French autos parked in front of the Palace. Paris drew us. Over the Seine at Boulogne, and along the ugly avenue that leads to the Point du Jour. The Arc de Triomphe

loomed before us. In the gloaming it seemed to be floating, detached from the hill. To me it was coming home. And to the boys? They were under the spell of the world's fairy city. We coasted carefully down the Champs Elysées into the Place de la Concorde.

At the Little Gray Home I had not been reading the newspapers. My cry was of amazement as well as of joy. For the first time since August, 1914, I saw the Place de la Concorde ablaze with light. There were cannon everywhere, German cannon—cannon that had been silenced forever by our victorious armies. The Place was black with Parisians who had come to see what is the most eloquent testimony of the change of the past few months, a change wrought by the presence of the American army in France, by the Georges and Zims who had come from the New World for the crusade of the twentieth century.

THE END



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