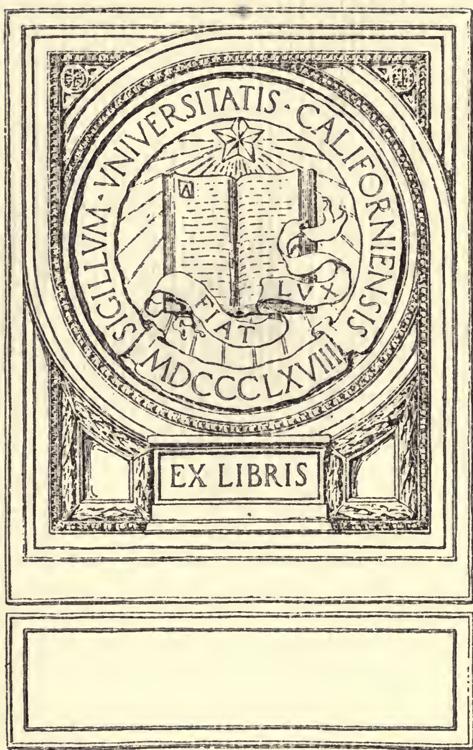
# TROUPING FOR THE TROOPS

MARGARET MAYO

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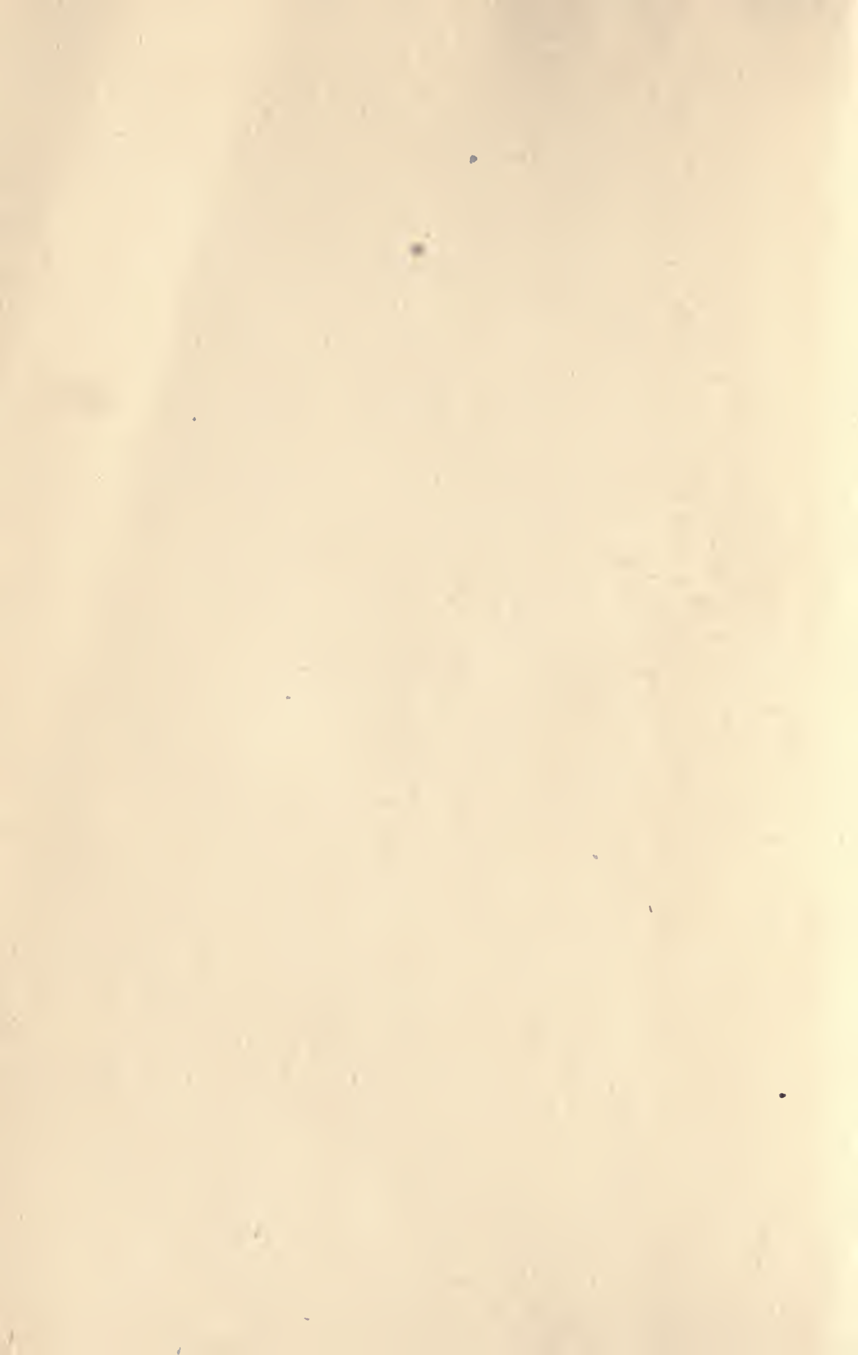


TROUPING FOR
THE TROOPS

MARGARET MAYO

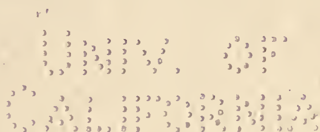
With regards
Margaret Mayo

# TROUPING FOR THE TROOPS

## Fun-Making at the Front

BY

MARGARET MAYO

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TO

MY DEAR LITTLE MOTHER

And to those who, like her, waited, watched and prayed against so many dangers that never came, I dedicate these pocket flash-lights of the last three months of the war as seen by me and my fellow-players in an effort to carry to "the boys" a message of cheer that every sister, wife, and mother would gladly have brought in our place had she been permitted.

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# TROUPING FOR THE TROOPS

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

# TROUPING FOR THE TROOPS

## PART I: ON THE EDGE

Sunday, Sept. 8th, 1918
Somewhere in France.

It is just about one calendar month since we said good-bye to New York. "We" meaning a band of six players from the "Overseas Theatre League" who have come here to play under the "Y" in the American camps in France.

I understand now why those at home are so often disappointed in the lack of color and human detail that they receive in the reports from the Americans over here. Things come too fast for us in this warriors' world and novelties have become commonplaces before we can find time to write home about them. Then, too, the lack of routine in one's daily life over here, the necessity for constant readjustment

to new conditions, the desire to drink in new knowledge of a world about which all those who have come before are eager to report. All these things exhaust both time and vitality and when the "Good nights" are going round one is glad to draw the funny, fat, French feather bed over as much of one's anatomy as it will cover and console the conscience that is trying to get one to write with the old, familiar "manyana." And by the way, I have discovered that the Spanish "manyana" and the French "tout de suite" arrive at about the same time.

On leaving "the other side" I didn't watch the Goddess of Liberty out of sight, nor even the New York dock and in this I am told I was not in the minority. In the first place, since all the friends and relatives of passengers had been forbidden to come within more than gunshot of the dock, a merciful provision for all concerned even in peace times, it was not necessary either for them or for us to stand first on one foot then on the other waving sickly farewells with smiles growing more and more forced. In the second place, there were three classes of persons on board, those eager to get away from conditions at home, those with

splendid and difficult jobs to be tackled on "the other side," big humanitarian jobs, and those whose services the Government had drafted. Any and all of these motives meant "eyes straight ahead" not backward.

A bored ingénue and ex-film actress who shared my stateroom with two other "Overseas" players, voiced her feelings about departure without much ceremony when she said:

"Why should I want to watch the darned Goddess out of sight?"

"I'm so sick of hearing what those pie-faced picture stars get, that I hope I'll never see the 'Land of Liberty' again."

I walked round the deck soon after this remark and most of the sallow faces and dull eyes staring out from the backs of steamer chairs were equally world weary. Of course there had been the long drawn fatigue of getting passports and standing in line for days in badly ventilated offices only to be told that *whatever* one had done or *wherever* one had come, preliminary to departure, one was all wrong and must start over again, and some of the lassitude that was on us now was from the

relief of not having to make out any more "questionnaires."

About half way down the deck, there was one pair of eyes with a different light in them, a pure, holy, far-seeing light. They belonged to a woman who was crossing for the third time within a few months. Her name was Mrs. Ray Brown. I believe she was assisting in the extension and re-organisation of some of the hospital systems, though she never talked about herself, so I do not know. She, at least, knew *why* she was going and to what.

At the end of the deck I stopped to look over the rail. The deck below was swarming with red-coated Polish soldiers. There was a light in most of their faces, too, and a spirit of adventure quickened all their movements.

While I stood at the rail General du Pont, the powder king, joined me. He was in the uniform of the Y. M. C. A. and going over not only to study the activities of that organisation and the Red Cross in relation to the war, but also to "see the war" and to give service where-ever the opportunity might offer. This is a sort of free lance soldiering permitted only to men of unusual power, influence and money

and very much envied by the less fortunate who are restricted by a more limited field of action. The General was joined in turn by a rich young stock-broker who had been known around New York for years as a sort of harmless lounge lizard and indulgent "first nighter." His ambition at present was to get to the front and drive an ambulance for the Red Cross. He had already acquired the uniform but I am told that he is now bewailing his fate in the warehouse of a dull French port where he has been set to "counting chemises." Upon hearing which, one of his friends remarked that his reputation on Broadway had no doubt preceded him.

The next person to join our group was the dark, snappy-eyed wife of a Spanish official who was greatly perturbed because America was not sending her most beautiful "cocottes" to the cafés of Spain to compete with the German cocottes who were there in great numbers heavily backed by their government to spread German propaganda amongst their table companions.

We were interrupted by an emissary to Belgium who pointed out to us the floating city

that now surrounded us, merchantmen, sailing vessels, torpedo destroyers, battleships, transports, fruit ships, coalers, twenty-two in all moving forward in neighbourly proximity on a sea of gold, while airplanes and dirigibles floated like guardian angels above them. It reminded one of Venice in a late September sun with its canals and baby castles, and one felt almost as though it were possible to step about on this still sea of gold from ship to ship.

At noon of next day while most of us were at "déjeuner" our particular ship, the fastest of the convoy suddenly leapt ahead. The change in speed was so sudden and so apparent that some of the men went up on deck to inquire about it. They learned that a submarine had hit a provision ship just in our wake and our captain having women and children aboard, had, according to his orders, put on "full speed ahead." In an incredibly short time we were out in the now gray sea alone.

That night and every night no lights were permitted on deck, even the illuminated wrist-watches which most of the passengers wore were ordered "turned in," meaning inside out

on the wrist. The air was heavy and hot and the staterooms overcrowded and we were still in the danger zone so most of the passengers preferred to remain on deck and finally, when most of these dark mysterious figures had ceased bumping into each other and apologising for having got into the wrong chairs, arms, or laps, one of the American "entertainers"—Gray by name—woke many, and amused some of us, by marching along the deck with three attendants and calling out in a military manner "Cover up your wrist watches and your lieutenants."

When we looked round the deck in the approaching dawn we realised to how many couples this command might have applied and during the day the number of uniforms on deck seemed constantly to increase. We got the explanation of this at about the same time that it reached the Captain. Besides the officers who were booked on our deck there was a full company of our boys in the steerage and two hundred and fifty other boys who were trying to catch up with their commands, having taken too long on previous occasions to bid their sweethearts "good-bye." Among the former

was the son of a Milwaukee brewer who pays taxes on thirty million a year. When the pangs of hunger began to gnaw, our government having neglected to equip these boys with the bread baskets with which the average steerage passenger "pieces out," the son of our many times millionaire remembered a rich friend of his father's who was reported as being aboard ship. A message was manœuvred to the said friend and a return message was accompanied by an official permit for young brewer to visit "father's friend" on deck. This was the beginning of a two days' successful foraging campaign from the steerage to the first class. Those below who had no friends above, got the word up on deck and were adopted. If they were not always permitted to visit their unseen protectors they could at least receive sweets and food from them and by noon of the second day every woman on board was surreptitiously dropping part of her meal into a paper in her lap and stealing out on deck with it to some waiting "prowler."

But on the morning of the third day when an overly hungry youth called at the stateroom of one of these ladies before she had had

her bath and asked for the breakfast promised him, the stewardess who was in attendance thought the matter had gone far enough and evidently reported her observations to headquarters and by noon time the Captain had issued orders that no more visits were to be permitted from the Netherlands.

There was a great deal of bemoaning about this and some depressing rumours came up from below. First of all one of the boys down there died of heart failure and was buried at sea, a second one engaged in a peppery bout with one of his fellows, was knocked off or fell overboard, a third jumped over and was drowned. Each of us tried to argue that a life more or less mattered little when so many were going to the sacrifice but each of us felt the double tragedy of these mere boys going under without the big chance of first "going over the top."

On the first Sunday morning of the voyage the sunlight returned to us and I ambled out on deck. I heard a monotonous mumbling. I followed the direction of the sound and soon looked down on hundreds of red coats on the backs of kneeling Polish soldiers. Against a

background of ally flags a priest in white vestments officiated at an emergency altar made up of packing cases. A ray of sunlight fell aslant of his face as he turned with uplifted arms to pronounce the benediction.

The next night I stood at the door of the saloon after dinner with Parker Nevin, a typical New Yorker. The curtains were drawn to shut out the light from prowling submarines and the decks outside were pitch black, but inside, the atmosphere was quite as gay as in peace times and the lights quite as bright. Some Y. M. C. A. "Entertainers," two of them members of my unit, had just concluded a show that would not have bored a lover of the Ziegfeld Follies, and a dance was now starting in which there was no small sprinkling of "Y" and Red Cross uniforms. At the far end of the corridor through a cloud of smoke, one could see other members of these two organizations sipping light wines, smoking and playing bridge. It was all harmless enough but picturesque. I heard Parker Nevin's sigh. I turned to see him shaking his head sadly. I asked his trouble. He answered with a sad little smile that the world was all upside down,

"The Y. M. C. A. dancing and the Red Cross drinking and the soldiers praying."

The short respite from danger zone to danger zone was soon over and new interest was provided when we failed to meet our convoy on the other side, at either of the spots designated. Using his own judgment our Captain shot ahead full speed unconducted and a more decorous fellow ship just behind that waited for the convoy was torpedoed for its pains.

The moon burst forth on our last night aboard, round and red as harvest, and at midnight with the flood tide we made our way up the beautiful Gironde with "La Belle France" smiling from either shore. All the steamer chairs were occupied and many confidential promises were exchanged. Then again there were those who sat apart gazing silently out over the waters toward the soft, mysterious tree-fringed shores. Was this new phase of life going to fill the aching void or would it, too, disappoint them?

With the early morning came all the hustle and confusion of disembarking at Bordeaux. Officials demanding passports and health cer-

tificates and giving landing permits to some and subjecting others who were under suspicion to further examination, luggage to be weighed and checked, identification papers and photographs to be signed—Heaven knows what other details—and then all of us loaded into the toy French train bound for Paris. On our way to the station we passed our Polish friends, hundreds of them, in their red coats marching with a jaunty air and smiling faces. "Bon chance!" we called to them with lumps in our throats and they called back similar farewells to us.

Then hours of soul satisfying landscape each of us exclaiming at first at sight of a new château, picturesque courtyard or vineyard, then one by one subsiding under the calm of the beautiful well tilled fields, winding streams edged with poplars and the low lying hills over which creep the white ribbon roads that lose themselves in the pale blue horizon.

But we were barely under the spell of all this gentle domesticity when we were startled out of our reverie by suddenly whizzing through a dusty covered, training encampment of American soldiers and here we caught our first sight of German prisoners. They were laying Ameri-

can tracks under the direction of American engineers and a little further on we saw American locomotives and cars moving hundreds of American flying machines over American tracks already laid. From here on the landscape was repeatedly dotted by signs of the most stirring American activity. There was a certain pathos in the picture of a bent-backed old Frenchman bringing his one or two cows round his hay stack into his quiet little courtyard only to see them sent flying for their lives before a huge American motor truck that came rattling across his court yard almost upon his heels.

One began to speculate as to the permanent change that busy industrial America was going to effect in dreamy picturesque France.

It was night when we crept into Paris. No eager porters, "facteurs," to snatch our luggage from our hands, no one even to lift it from the railway carriages. We shoved, pulled, or pushed it onto the platform as best we could and struggled with it up an escalator that was not working. Outside in the semi-darkness a few army cars and trucks loaned to the Y. M.

C. A. were waiting to take us to our various hotels and with hasty good-byes to ship acquaintances scattering now to all parts of France, we rattled away over the cobble stones into the narrow winding byways, across the Seine that shone like a silver ribbon in the moonlight and into the lovely white, still gardens of the Tuileries.

We gasped at the beauty of it all. I had seen Paris many times in the full glare of its yellow night lights, its tawdry night prowlers exchanging cheap pleasantries, everything false, fakey and covered with tinsel to enslave and betray the senses of the already bewildered stranger, but I had never seen Paris robbed of cheap camouflage lit only by the moon and the starlight and a faint green ray that peeped from beneath the heads of the elevated street lamps; it was as though—some one of our party remarked—as though old Paris were dead and the soul of new Paris were arising out of the débris.

When we reached the Hotel, the "Y" had seen to it that our rooms and a hot supper were waiting.

As I looked down the long supper table I

knew for the first time just how many sorts and conditions of men and women had crossed under the auspices of the "Y" on our steamer. There were "spiritual advisers" as the boys call them, engineers for hut construction and road building, supply men to assist in the provisioning of these huts, athletic instructors, canteen workers, secretaries, stenographers, bankers, and other important American financiers and last, but not least popular, our own little band of American "entertainers" bound for we knew not what nor where. The interesting instruction given us before leaving America was so to arrange our programme that we would not be disconcerted if we found it necessary to cut our "show" in half and rush on to another camp where the boys were about to go into action and needed relief from their tense state of thought. Upon talking to some of the Generals since, I'm inclined to agree with them that it is the boys who have just come out of action, having been obliged to fight across the bodies of their fallen comrades, the boys who are trying to forget the sight of staring eyes in ghastly upturned faces, these are the boys who need to be wakened from their trance of

horror and brought back to a realisation that the world still laughs and plays somewhere. These are the boys that we are hoping later to reach.

After supper we were informed that we were to report at a little chapel just back of the Madeleine at 9.30 the next morning for "conference." A murmur of rebellion was distinctly audible as we made our way to bed. Early morning conference about a lot of Y. M. C. A. dogma that could not possibly interest us when we were all dying to spend our first morning in Paris basking in the sunlight, gazing in shop windows, or sipping our coffee, French fashion, at the dirty little outdoor tables looking out on the busy boulevards.

The spirit of resentment was so strong in some of the travellers that they did not go near the Chapel the next morning. Theirs was the loss for those of us who went to "scoff remained to pray."

We found not only a part of our ship's party there but hundreds of other recent arrivals under the "Y." Some had come by way of

England, some on Army transports, some on passenger ships.

The handful of men waiting to talk to us in an informal way was not made up of "preachers" as we had supposed it would be but of various workers—representing the more important branches of the "Y," activities, workers who had been at their jobs for many months, who had served not only in Paris and in the advanced zones of war but some of them up to the front line trenches.

They were not there to make us feel their superiority or offer advice; they were there to hold out their hands and help us across the stepping stones on which their poor feet and hearts had too often been bruised. They were there to beg that we, fresh from an unridden country with strong nerves and brave hearts, remember always the shattered condition of the nerves of our French allies ridden by four years of war, privation and discouragement. They asked the question, how many out of the hundreds of us assembled there were now living in the houses in which we were born; three persons raised hands. They asked how many of us were living in houses in which we

had been for more than ten years. A few more persons raised hands. Then they asked us to remember that the average Frenchman was accustomed to live not only in the house of his birth but in the house in which his grandfather and his great-grandfather had lived and that when this home was invaded, or threatened by invasion, he was like a lost child crying out in the wilderness and yet each one of the men and women amongst whom we were to take up our duties had lived in constant dread of losing the little left to them and there was not one among them who had not lost at least one person out of their lives whose coming had once quickened their pulses.

The speakers also reminded us that there were many tired, overworked, disappointed Americans who also deserved our patience and our admiration, men and women who had volunteered at the very outset of the struggle who had given up good lucrative positions at home, some of them big executive positions, and who for the good of the cause had forced themselves to fit into dull obscure niches over here and work for eighteen hours a day at secretarial jobs which they had outgrown at home

in their youth. Some of the jobs were in out of the way ports far from Paris or the battle line, or from anything to stimulate interest in their performance and yet because some one must do this dull work these men and women had consented to be the martyrs.

It takes seven men behind the line to keep one man in the line so the experts have figured out and the man to be pitied is the man who has come to France with high hopes of picturesque service only to find himself the seventh behind the gun, relegated to counting packing cases in some out of the way port.

After our approaching relations with the French had been touched upon, the engineer at the head of the hut construction told us how his men were managing to complete one hut a day at an evarege cost of from fifteen to twenty thousand dollars. He told us something of the difficulty of procuring the materials for these huts and how diplomatic bodies both in France and America had to pass upon a request for even a few pounds of nails. Next followed a report from one of the supply agents who explained that by command of General Pershing the "Y." had taken over the grocery depart-

ment in addition to its canteen business. We learned that bacon was worth so much in Spain, chocolate so much here, sweet crackers so much there, etc., and to our amazement we learned that the Y. M. C. A. in France alone was handling in its construction and provision department more than one hundred million dollars a year.

Next came a report from one of the athletic directors and from him we learned that General Pershing had just directed the "Y." to teach baseball to both the American and French troops. He explained the inclination of the naturally polite Frenchman to sacrifice a home run while he apologised to his opponent for having seemed rude to him, he said too that the Frenchmen were often more anxious to acquire our slang than our strokes. Every good play with a Frenchman was a "peepin."

One of the most important banking men in America who had enlisted in the service of the "Y" spoke of what he hoped to accomplish in the way of better exchange and somewhere far down the line some of the veteran "spiritual advisers" were permitted a word. They were each of them men, every inch, sunny, brave,

and with faces radiating healthy humour and fine understanding.

Their warning to the new arrivals was not to take advantage of a world crisis to thrust their personal creeds or propaganda down the throats of the defenceless but rather to avoid reference to any creed and to post in the huts an announcement of a Jewish ceremony as quickly as the announcement of a Presbyterian one. They were urged to allow their lives and their deeds rather than their words to indicate their motives and one so-called "preacher" gave the following rule of living as sufficient creed for any man:

"Keep yourself persistently at your best;

"Keep yourself persistently in the presence of the best;

"Be your best and share your best."

On my way home to luncheon I kept repeating the words of this last speaker and I applied his rule mentally to the whole art of living, the æsthetic side, the business side, the physical and the spiritual side. It seemed equally sound in control of either.

When I got back to the hotel I found

a "Y" secretary who had the Paris division of camp entertainment in charge, waiting to ask if our Unit of six would play in the Tuileries Gardens on Sunday afternoon to an audience of twenty-five thousand soldiers. There was to be a sort of continuous performance, the first of its kind ever given, it was to run from two until seven and three regimental bands and three singers from the Opera Comique were to fill a large part of the programme. Being a fatalist, I accepted though it seemed to me that our few small personalities and our limited bag of tricks could not go far in the open, scattered amongst twenty-five thousand men of dissimilar tastes and tongues. It was a golden afternoon when we made our way up the high platform in the centre of the Gardens. A backing of lattice and a roof of overhanging boughs was our only enclosure, yet, strangely enough almost every line that we spoke or sang got a hearty and almost universal response. After the performance which was hailed as a great success we were photographed and pampered and sent back to our hotel in one of the Army cars. Frenchmen doffed their caps to us as we passed and Americans cheered us. It

was all very exciting and much too pleasant to seem like war work. I remembered the rather stinging remark of a General in whose company I had dined the night before, as guest of the Paymaster of Marines. The General had been in an important command at Belleau Woods a few weeks before when the Marines prevented the Boche from entering Paris. He had acquitted himself so well that he was to receive the Legion of Honour on the morning following our dinner party. He was not a sentimentalist and he said that if the overseas entertainers were serious in wishing to accomplish real good they would devote very little time to the camps around Paris but get as quickly as possible to the boys fresh from action and scenes of horror. I was glad to have played in the Tuileries but eager to press on toward the front.

The next day, our last in Paris for a long while to come, we lunched at the Ritz, or at least most of us did so, some of us as the guests of General du Pont who had crossed with us on the steamer and who was now bidding us Godspeed and I as the guest of Mary Young and John Craig, who were in town for

a few days to get supplies and who were eager to tell me of the splendid success they were having in the Camps with "Baby Mine." They had asked me for the use of the play when the first ship-load of our boys were sailing for France and while I had been proud of the opportunity to give it for such a cause, I had been sceptical about their being able to get any effect from it, played in tents or out-of-doors, with no scenery or properties. They now told me laughingly how they carried three large bisque dolls under their arms to represent the babies and balanced a soap or cracker box on two chairs to suggest a cradle and tried, when possible, to seat the boys above them in a semicircle on the hillside and in this way they could play to thousands at one performance. Their eyes were dancing with the joy of the good they were doing and as I looked across the table at these two who had closed up their splendid house in Boston and turned their backs on the Stock Company it had taken them years to establish it seemed to me that Mary still looked only a child—and yet she and John had already given two boys to the army and one of them to the Field of Honour—and would continue to

give of their best until the last big gun should be fired.

Just now, with characteristic generosity, it was their fixed purpose to make me feel that it was my play that had been responsible for their success and while I knew quite differently they did succeed in giving me a stouter heart for the bit that I was hoping to contribute to this "Man's War" and everything seemed to get very bright in the big restaurant and I noticed for the first time, that the sun had come out.

I looked round the Ritz and contrasted the present picture with that of the old days when Maxine Elliot used to sit at a certain round table in the corner in all her luscious beauty, bankers, leading-men, tennis and polo champions hanging over the back of her chair. I remembered a smaller table where Ethel Levy used to lunch during her great success in her first Parisienne review, and the chair on her left where her favourite poodle used to sit in state and a chair on her right usually occupied by the Younger Guitry. The scene was much changed now. In the entire length of the dining-room and in the charming court outside,

the only men to be seen out of uniform were the waiters and the few women present were also mostly in uniform, Red Cross or Y. M. C. A., and at a little table apart, wrapped in a long dark service cape, a veil bound round her now serious brow, sat the once gay and colourful Elsie de Wolfe. And on every side men in khaki, blue, or grey, but of all the uniforms present it seemed to me that the grey one with the black and white trimmings, that of the Italian flying corps, was the most interesting and the most distinguished.

In spite of changed accoutrements and conditions the same old gentle reassuring dignity hung over the Ritz guests, like a soft gauze canopy not to be pierced by harsh sounds. And the greetings and recognitions and good-byes that would have been boisterous in the street outside sounded only like the humming of bees in June time. A Ritz is always a Ritz I thought as we passed out into the pebble pathed sunlit garden for our coffee.

At the far end of the garden, sipping his coffee and smoking a made-to-order cigarette, sat George Burr, in earnest conference with two officials of the Red Cross. He had abandoned

the administration of large offices in every important city in America and crossed the ocean to offer his services to the Red Cross in any capacity in which they could use him—no matter how humble. He had no premonition that he was soon to become the beloved head of the whole organization and be known by the fond title of "The Big Col."

He was joined by Gilbert White, America's most famous unpublished wit, now serving in the Signal Corps, and by Mrs. Florence Kendal. Gilbert had just drawn a cartoon of Mrs. Kendal, a charming young woman of fifty, leaving New York to establish an officer's convalescent home in France. On the curb, waving good-bye to his mother as she passed down Fifth Avenue, stood her popular son Messmore. He was saying ruefully to the bystanders—"I'm too old to fight but I'm sending mother."

We all had a good laugh at Gilbert's cartoon, then simultaneously, every one seemed to realize that "dejune"—the only enjoyable respite still permitted in war time—was over and within a few minutes the garden and restaurant were silent and deserted.

That night another Army car tore its way through the streets with us and out into the country to a little band of engineers stationed near some barge canal. When we arrived they were still busy with saw and hammer finishing a platform which they had erected hurriedly under a canvas covering. We were chilled to the bone and a little depressed by the dim light of two tottering torches but we gave what spirit we could to the show and left to their hurrahs, never having clearly understood to whom we had really played.

The next morning we left Paris amidst the customary confusion of mysterious servants arriving in the hotel lobby at the last moment and the laundry that always returns only in time to be carried under one's arm.

We had already begun the shedding process so familiar to even the most experienced travellers who come over in war time. Most of us had left our trunks containing quantities of soap and shoes and sugar in the keeping of our landlords, having cussed out the misinformants on the other side who had told us that these

and many other things were not to be had in Paris.

Our first meal in the hotel had shown us that Paris was suffering from less food restriction than we were at home, and our first promenade up the Avenue de l'Opera had opened our eyes to the astonishing fact that, now as always, everything in the world was to be bought in Paris and many military things in much snappier more convenient design than at home. Even the woollens of which we had been warned there was such a scarcity, were displayed in every outfitter's window.

We had meant to write home about all these things for the sake of other benighted travellers who would no doubt follow us, and now we were leaving Paris without having found time for more than the conventional cable home "Well and happy."

At the station again confusion and distress, no porters, insufficient help for the weighing and checking of baggage, no compartments to be reserved, necessity for showing passports and getting movement orders stamped in order to "check out," train about to leave and only one or two bored officials to serve long lines of

excited travellers, indifferent shrugging of shoulders on part of officials and yet some way or other when the toy train at last departed, amidst shrill boastful whistling, all those who had hoped to be aboard had managed to be there, hot, angry and perspiring to be sure, but present.

Some hours later our unit of six was clattering up the main street of Chaumont, one of the most picturesque, most historic villages in France. We were on our way to the principal hotel at G. H. Q.—meaning the General Headquarters of the American Army in France. If we had put on a wishing cap and succeeded in winning our wish we could scarcely have found ourselves in a more fortunate spot as a starting point for our campaign of the American camps.

Even before we reached our hotel we were receiving familiar hellos from every side and before we had had time to register and get to our rooms we had had to put our luggage down time and again to shake hands with old friends from England, America, anywhere and everywhere for to G. H. Q. sooner or later comes almost every one engaged in the business of

war. High officials, war correspondents, magazine writers, camera and "movie" men, Red Cross workers, canteen officers, American politicians and millionaires over draft age on their way to the front to catch a quick glimpse of the war, spies, staff officers, supply agents, all kinds, colours and conditions of men of all orders and ranks and degrees of preferment.

We got to our rooms as soon as we could for we were scheduled to give a performance that same night in one of the Y. M. C. A. huts on the edge of the town. When one of the young women of the company ventured a criticism of her room the tired proprietress explained in rapid-fire French that we were fortunate to get any rooms at all since no less a personage than a General had been obliged to sleep on a park bench the night before with his men around him on the ground.

My room was amusing in its outlook. From my window I looked down upon the back court of the hotel, with the old fashioned pump and stone laundry basins, plump-armed French maids preparing the vegetables for the evening meal, cats and mongrel dogs on the kitchen tables or under them, pigeons pecking at what-

ever they could find on the tables or under them, pigs grunting from a nearby pen, to remind the proprietor that it was also their supper time, guests calling in bad French from their windows to the servants in the courtyard below—in short, a typical French small town hotel, and back of this domestic scene of disorder and confusion a picturesque vine covered arch of heavy masonry through which one caught a vista of winding moss-grown steps and tangled garden that the greatest water colour artist of them all might have been delighted to paint. France! "La belle France!"

Before our hats were even off Isaac Marcosson burst into the room, fresh from the front and on his way up the street to the barracks now occupied by General Pershing and his staff and known by the boys as G. H. Q.

I had never before kissed Isaac Marcosson but in the excitement of the moment I did so now. I am inclined to think that Mary Young who was with me also kissed him. She had stopped off at G. H. Q. to see our performance before going on into Joan of Arc's country to resume the playing of "Baby Mine" while she rehearsed in the forthcoming pageant

of "Joan" in which she was to play the maid herself.

In a few moments Mary, Isaac Marcosson and I were curled up on the foot of the high French bed, the only comfortable place in the room to sit, eating from a tin of chocolates that he had bought at a Northern canteen and reminiscing about our last meeting at Carnegie Hall in New York just after he had delivered his maiden lecture, and here we were such a short time afterward in such a strange place under such different conditions and he, in the meantime had seen three battle fronts. He touched upon a few of the high points and humorous incidents of his latest experiences with the rapidity of which he alone is master and went on his way with a promise to see us later that evening.

When we reached the hut where we were to play that night we found it so packed that we could scarcely force our way through to get back of the stage and the green silesia curtains that had been provided for us. Bodies hung through the windows, heads protruded from the skylights and although we were early we were told that our audience had been in its

seats, eager for good places, for as much as two hours before our arrival.

We gave our best and from the cheers that came back from the boys and the invitations to stay with them forever, they evidently found our best good enough for them. It was a wonderful night, or so it seemed to us. Generals, Colonels, Majors and Lieutenants also thanked us and assured us that we had given them and their men the best show they had seen since they left America. The officers were not supposed to attend this performance as we were to give a special performance for them later in the week but several of them had "slipped in" as they put it, and some of them remained for a cup of chocolate and an American doughnut with us in the back office of the "Y" hut, where the hostess and the secretary of the hut had graciously prepared a little supper for us.

When we got back to the hotel who should emerge out of the darkness of the court but Arthur Ruhl who had been waiting for our return. He too was down from the Front, having just finished some new work for Colliers which he had managed to get "passed" by the censor that afternoon. The only thing that

prevented him from being completely happy was the prospect of having to sleep in the hotel bath tub that night, a fate that frequently overtakes late arrivals. He was rescued later, however, by Charles Edward Kloeber, one of America's most picturesque war correspondents and general war time pet.

And so the hello's and good-byes continued from early morning until late at night. The next day at luncheon I met a fashionable Westchester woman whose country place I had passed, near mine, for years. She was wearing a Red Cross uniform and her husband, one of the brainiest men in New York State, was serving on General Pershing's staff. She and I had never known each other at home but by the time we rose from the luncheon table we were fast friends.

The first few days at G. H. Q. will always seem like a glimpse of fairy land to me, the sunlit court of our funny hotel with excited French waitresses screaming at generals and privates alike, the gay little groups around the dirty, iron tables, war correspondents, staff officers, and all sorts of birds of passage, the

quaint winding streets with huge dust-covered military trucks dashing through them, the guard mount, each morning; the wonderful marine band organised by Damrosch himself at the time of his last visit to see General Pershing, the hours I stole for dreaming in a still, secluded garden back of the old bastille that looked down hundreds of feet upon a beautiful valley dotted with fields, homes, flower-strewn gardens and hemmed in on the other side by low-lying hills over which the broad white road made its way toward Paris—a valley through which Cæsar himself had fought, and on the other side of the town from a high bluff another view even more lovely of a lazy, poplar edged canal winding in and out through a still green meadow, a stream having broken from its banks and run wilfully away in an opposite direction, children of the peasants wading in the stream, cattle grazing by its side, a white road winding out of sight up the valley toward a famous old château where no less a personage than General Pershing himself was housed, and all this within ear-shot of the shrill whistle of French locomotives bearing troops back and forward from the front line

trenches and not infrequently German prisoners. It was a rare sight to see a real troop train come home laden with all the paraphernalia of war, men lounging about in the flat cars or hanging their feet out of the open doorways while they played cards or checkers, horses and straw and fighting apparatus all piled in together and one day a curious sight came by—an entire train load of German prisoners guarded only by wounded French soldiers. These were glimpses one caught of what was going on further up the line, but the sunshine and the laughter seemed at first to make all the pain of it unreal. Then, too, the first camps that we played differed so much in avocation and personelle that we were constantly excited by surprises. At the Gas School where deadly and important experiments are made we dined at the officers' mess which was served in what looked like an iron-lined hogshead. I pricked up my ears when I heard one of the men say he had to be up early in the morning to "shoot dogs." He explained to me later that it is necessary for them to shoot poisonous gases into the lungs of the dogs, rabbits and even snails to discover ways of combating

their effect. He told me, too, of the experiments being made by injecting certain fluids or gelatins in the horses' hoofs and sealing them up there to protect the beasts from the poisoned earth where deadly gases have been used.

Dogs are procured from the neighbouring villages or shipped up from Paris by the car load. I began to wonder if the improved condition I had noticed amongst the Paris cab horses meant only that the fittest were spared from experimentation. "C'est la guerre."

On our way out from the camp that night a soldier jumped on the running board of our car as we passed one of the sentry posts, refused to accept our countersign and ordered our chauffeur to take us to the guard-house. We were haled before a sleepy-looking officer who pronounced us suspicious characters, said he had heard of no entertainment being permitted that night in the camp and gave orders that we be locked up for trial in the morning. Tommy Gray, one of our players produced his false whiskers and other stage "props" in support of his contention that he was a mere actor, Will Morrisey offered to play his violin to

prove that he was an "entertainer," Lois Meredith, our ingénue went into giggling hysterics to prove her right to the title, Elizabeth Brill our leading chanteuse became properly temperamental and I argued as calmly as my bad disposition would permit, but all to no avail, we were about to be led forth to a night of torture when a captain who had been chief host at the supper after the performance appeared in the doorway and "gave us the laugh" and we realised for the first time that we had been the victims of a clever practical joke. The story went the rounds of headquarters the next day and for some reason or other seemed to add to our popularity.

Of course it made confirmed sceptics of us and a few nights later when one of the boys brought in a small German balloon that had fallen near the tent in which we were playing we refused at first to even approach it for inspection for we thought they had concealed some explosive inside of it.

From the Gas Camp we were taken to the wood choppers' camp where hundreds of sturdy Americans, many of them engineers, were engaged night and day in cutting down

and transporting to headquarters a forest in which Marie Antoinette had once played. Winter was coming on and it was necessary to work fast before the snows came, though even the snow would not stop them, so they said. To get to this camp we abandoned our big army Renault for the first time and took to Ford cars for the roads were thought difficult. They would not seem so to the average American. We were rather relieved to lose the Renault for with it we lost Conde, the speed fiend, who had been driving us up and down hill at sixty miles an hour and barely touching the earth, when we reached a level stretch of road. When we ventured a protest he reminded us that he had been the favourite driver of the late President of France and had also driven in the automobile races in New York. In his opinion this evidently made him immune from accident and criticism. One night when we were irritated into being very sharp with him he admitted that he had been driving fast out of temper because three bees had "bited" him that day. Later on when I offered him ten francs to soothe his ruffled feelings he drew himself up proudly and reminded me that he was a soldier

in the Army. When I confessed my faux pas to a millionaire American that night he told me that he'd made a fool of himself by trying to tip a chauffeur that had been loaned to him from the Army Transportation Department and had discovered that the chauffeur was President of a company at home in which he merely owned stock and the chauffeur had twice as much money as he had. Such awkward situations as these leave one entirely at the mercy of one's driver over here and when we got into the dark woods I was thankful that Conde was not at the wheel. Oh, those delicious woods, the smell of smoke from burning autumn leaves! We picked up a doctor who was walking to a camp beyond ours to see some negro boys. He too was rejoicing in the clean fresh odour of the woods. What a relief after the smelly courtyards of the French hotels. He said France had knocked his germ theories all hollow for if there were anything in germs all France would have been dead long ago.

As usual we found our audience had been waiting for us long before the appointed time. They were a fine looking lot of young "hus-

kies" and how they did laugh at the show and how they did cheer, lined up either side of the wood road, as we called our good-byes to them and their camp fires.

The next night was "negro camp night" and I've never seen so many square feet of white teeth before nor since. The Commander told me that he had four companies of these boys when he landed and he loved them. He'd lost a great many of them because they were unable to endure the damp and the cold and two of his companies had been detailed at Southern ports to work on the new American-made docks. We had seen one of these docks before landing at Bordeaux and the brave fearless way in which it juts out to meet in-coming ships is guaranteed to thrill even the dullest edged American.

I could imagine these black good natured faces in front of me much more habitually gay down on the Southern docks than way up here in the north preparing to go "over the top" to what they call a "good mornin' Jesus." They had forgotten their troubles for the moment however, and so had General du Pont in the front row and Major Wills, the Paymaster

of the Marine Corps, and the Chief Censor of the War Correspondents and several other friends who had stopped in at our hotel to see us on their way down to Paris and decided to attach themselves to our party for the evening to "hear the coons laugh." And how those boys *did* laugh, and those teeth!

When our show was over the boys volunteered a return entertainment and with their Commander's permission they hopped onto the stage and did some wonderful buck dancing and when we all piled into our cars and headed back for G. H. Q. our chief comedian again declared that it was the best war he had ever attended.

The next night we left our hotel early and drove, or rather flew, for Conde was with us again, over miles of beautiful rolling hills to the Ordnance Camp. We were to have mess with the officers and give a show for them afterward. This function seemed to take on more dignity than any of the others, perhaps because we were made serious before dinner by being shown through the laboratory and the class and experimental rooms where row upon

row of hellish contrivances for killing were on exhibition, some of them of our own invention, some of them souvenirs from the enemy. It was the first time that I had known that powder comes in hard brittle sticks, some of it looks and feels almost exactly like uncooked spaghetti or macaroni. We were afterward told that the young captain who explained the mechanism of some of the more deadly bombs, was a very great genius and had just made a discovery of great importance. He had the clear blue, far-seeing eyes of a genius and looked like the sort of young man the world needs.

After the "show," as we call it, we found that some of the officers who were billeted in a town below, through which we must pass, had prepared a supper for us in the village tavern, and were determined to way-lay us. They did so and when I looked round the long, narrow, dingy walled room lit by a few sputtering candles and surveyed the picturesque, incongruous party at the long table, the blue of an occasional French uniform off-setting the khaki of our boys, a chaplain whom we had picked up on the way, the gay tinsel and chiffon of

our gowns, and over it all the haze of cigarette smoke and through the hum of voices the popping of champagne corks from bottles of which the women did not partake, a little song, much laughter, it looked like a scene from François Villon, and I felt that life was being made much too easy and too picturesque for us, but the very next day we got our first introduction to the more serious side of it all. When we came down for breakfast in the court we found the place almost deserted. I looked at my watch thinking that I was later than usual. On the contrary I was earlier. I asked one of the habitués of the place what had become of everybody—meaning more especially the war correspondents, journalists, and staff officials.

He said that every one was up at G. H. Q. and I thought he looked rather sinister about it.

A little later I heard a young lieutenant at the next table say that thousands of troops had passed through the village during the night on their way to the front.

I went for a walk and was amazed to see how many grey camions had suddenly stolen into the streets as from nowhere.

At luncheon when the men returned from G. H. Q. there was a silent expectant something in the air and a constraint about discussing something that every one apparently felt rather than knew.

Later as we got more familiar with the traditions of war we came to know that this sudden suspension of social candour—this tightening of the moral fibre, always precedes the declaration of each big "offensive" and until the big guns are actually firing and the knowledge of the manœuvre has become common property one has a feeling of being suspended in space awaiting some unavoidable cataclysm and not being permitted to discuss one's forebodings with one's neighbour.

So impossible is it to determine the extent of an "offensive" at its inception that it is only on looking back upon it that history is able to label it in relation to its most salient point. This movement was to be known in history as the "Saint Mihiel Drive."

We knew nothing of all this however when we were loaded into the car after luncheon, to "show" in our first hospital. It was a base

hospital on the edge of the town. Even yet I don't feel like writing about it. I'll never get away from the consciousness of that side of war again no matter how funny the stories round the supper table. No matter how bright the morning sunshine, there will always be that dark, gaping, subterranean passage underneath all the flow of chatter and chaff and art. Of all the hungry disappointed eyes that looked out from those grey coverlets, eyes narrowed by pain, I think the childlike eyes of the dumb, puzzled negroes will haunt me longest. They made me think of wounded animals who had never harmed any one and who could only wonder at their fate.

On our way home we passed several lines of great dust-covered camions on their way toward "the front" and when we got back to the hotel we found what we called our "camp followers" waiting in the court for us, young lieutenants who had attached themselves to our party without consulting us, who insisted upon carrying our coats and usually ended by losing them, who frisked about like gay young puppies regardless of what mood one might be in. I was tired and longed to get to my room

and I said irritably to one of our unit that I wished we could lose the infants for a while.

I had occasion to regret that remark the very next afternoon and I shall always remember it with shame. When we came out from luncheon there were our "Newfoundland pups" as usual in the court but their faces were grave and their smiles a little forced and their "roll-ups" were slung across their shoulders. They'd been suddenly called "to the front."

We knew what that meant. The white faces of those poor boys in the hospital yesterday rose between me and the red-cheeked youths who stood before us now. They held out their hands one by one, each with some message to the girl he had left behind in the States. And right here I want to make my first criticism of Uncle Sam even though I may be hanged for it. If he could know how his boys over here have lost confidence in both his conscience and his ability to deliver their messages to their loved ones at home he would be sorry.

"It's pretty tough," so one of them put it, "when you're 'going over the top' to feel you can't even get a last word back to your girl."

He showed me the picture of his girl, young

brave, sweet and trusting. She was sitting outside a lonely looking shack in North Dakota. She seemed to be looking out over the plains for the return of "her boy."

The boy told me how he had written to her every single day since he left, nearly nine months ago, and how he had received a letter from her only yesterday saying that she had had only four letters from him since his departure. He had figured out that according to that average, it would mean that more than two hundred and fifty ships must have been sunk each bearing a letter from him. This of course was impossible, so what had they done with his letters? "Dumped them into the sea," was his conclusion, "It saves trouble." I'm sorry to say that is the cynical conclusion of many of the boys over here. I suggested to this chap that he might have written things that the censor couldn't pass. "No chance," he answered. "The first thing a fellow gets in his head over here is that all he can write home is "well and love" and, then, half a dozen other guys have to read it before it gets a fair start, but some of us boys would like to get even that much back if we could, but I guess there's not much

chance of my girl getting a last message from me unless one of you folks run across her."

I took her name and had another look at the dreamy face in the photograph, that sublime line of Masefield's came back to me,—"Each man follows his Helen with her gift of grief." How many of these men would return to their Helens?

All the voices became blurred now in a general buzz of good-byes, there was a genial reaching out of hands and meeting of eyes that said only too plainly that they knew it might be for the last time. I couldn't speak and I knew it would not be considered sporty of me to cry. I just held out my hand and nodded, and oh, the ache in my throat! It was my first necessity for keeping a stiff upper lip and I wondered how mothers and sisters and sweethearts live through such hours without breaking the courage of their men when I could suffer so about men who, a moment before, had been only a nuisance to me. The mothers and sweethearts of these boys would have been proud if they could have seen them turning their faces to the front that day, each eager to "go over the top." They were a brave looking

lot, God grant we may see them again in America as whole in mind and body as then.

At eight the next morning the speed maniac, Conde, was waiting in his big Renault to take us away from G. H. Q. to what and where? We had been told the name of our next headquarters but it meant little to us. We knew only that it was in the "advanced zone."

# PART II: THE ADVANCED ZONE

In the Argonne
Wednesday night,
11:15
Sept. 25, 1918.

Within a few miles of us the greatest battle in history is just starting. Big guns are thundering, the lights are flashing across No Man's Land, and air ships are buzzing overhead in the starlight and yet I am able to turn my back upon this and a golden moon and sit here in a tiny barracks room on the head of one of the three cots upon which I and two of the other players sleep, and write; for it is all so wonderful that one feels an impulse to share it with those who are not here, even while everything tempts one outside.

Day after day, night after night, camions have streamed along "The Sacred Road"— which is what the French call the broad white highway from Bar-le-duc to Verdun—infan-

try, cavalry, machine guns, tanks, one endless procession manned by Americans, French, Singalese, Amanites, Chinese, African negroes and American negroes—a line broken here and there by the pompous, cars of high officials, French or American, ministers of state, and generals. And back and forth on the newly laid American railroad tracks at the foot of the hill on which we are now billeted large American engines have been bearing hither and thither for days heavy artillery, gasoline, provisions and ammunition and sections of portable houses and long sections of empty Red Cross hospital cars. To-morrow these cars with the big red crosses painted on their sides will come back from the front—but not empty. Many of them will bear back to the waiting nurses behind the lines some of the boys that we have seen staggering along "The Sacred Road" these past few nights, exhausted by long marches and the sixty pound packs on their backs—boys who were so weary that when the occasional order came to halt they would sink back in the roadway too tired to drag themselves to one side or to even remove their packs, and too numb to care for the huge camions that

whizzed by so close to them that we, watching, feared for their lives. The surgeon who stood by my side explained to me that when one of these boys could no longer keep up with his comrades he was divested of his pack and considered good for six more miles. If he could then stagger no further he was allowed to drop out until he was treated—his feet were bathed and protectors put over the blisters and then a man who would ordinarily be told to stay in bed for days—was shoved back into the march and told to catch up with his regiment—"and many of these chaps" he said "are college boys or mother's pets, tenderly reared." I looked at the ones who lay before me along the roadside —in the mud or on the wet earth. "That boy over there," I said to the Doctor, "looks as though he were dead. Let's speak to him." The doctor shook his head. "He's still alive but he's too tired to answer," he said. "He wants only to be left alone—they all do."

We walked on up the road, past what seemed miles of these same mute listless figures. Sometimes the order would come to march and they would stagger to their feet and move on—

still without even a murmur. "Boots! boots! boots!" Kipling knew.

The surgeon who walked by my side was a wealthy southerner who had been requested by the Government to accept the direction of a large corps of surgeons and Red Cross workers. He had three homes in America, a devoted family and a large practice and yet he was glad to sacrifice all these, and more, to sleep on a hard cot in an advanced war zone, if he was fortunate enough to be spared for a few hours to sleep, and he pretended that he liked "corn willie." His big, heavy voice grew very tender when he spoke of his doughboys and yet he told me quite calmly while we stood under a wayside cross, bearing the drooping figure of the Christ—a cross surrounded by pines and marking one of the bloodiest cross-ways in France, he told me that his first duty and *any* surgeon's first duty on the battlefield is to treat first the men who need treatment least, for these can be made to quickly fight again while the more fatally wounded are only a drag on the army and are to be treated only out of compassion after the more fortunate ones have been put on their feet. A few moments later

this same big fellow gave to a tired doughboy his last cigarette—the cigarette he had been treasuring to smoke on his way home. "C'est la guerre," he said when I smiled at his tender action so in contrast to the harsh principles of procedure that he had just outlined.

"C'est la guerre—C'est la guerre!" Everywhere from every one on every side one hears it. It comes rumbling back to me now from the first night when we pressed into the "advanced zone." But that night it was said merrily almost in a spirit of derision for we were dining in a famous old château—one in which General Joffre had lived during the battle of the Marne and in which Napoleon was said to have taken refuge when he was trying to escape capture. The wine which we were enjoying had been poured from bottles whose corks were mildewed from long storage in the vaults of the château—a late September sun was dancing in and out between the branches of the trees and the shadows lay gently on the long peaceful lawn and some of our players were dancing on the terrace to the strains of the band that had come to serenade us before assisting in the entertainment which we were

about to give in the eleventh century stable which had been lighted by candles and decorated with flags for our performance.

Life seemed very idyllic and gay this night and death very far away, and yet the next morning these same officers would be leading their men in sham battle to prepare them for their part in the great death struggle that was bound to come soon to many of them. It came sooner than we expected and the next day we were ordered to "double up" on our performances and play our four days' schedule in that region in two days as the entire division of forty thousand or more was to move forward to relieve another division that was going immediately to the front. We watched many of them get under way—fine stalwart fellows, with the wild-cat insignia on the sleeves of their uniforms. I saw their handsome General later in Paris taking his first "permission" since the war and it was amusing to watch the admiring glances of the French girls change into slightly shocked expressions as they beheld the black cat on his sleeve which to them suggests a very questionable vocation.

While these forty thousand "Wild Cats"

were moving forward we were called back to Paris to be fitted with gas masks, iron helmets, "roll ups," cots, and blankets before proceeding yet further into the advanced zone.

On our way to Paris we stopped for luncheon at Chaumont, G. H. Q. and here we found many old friends and got our first word of the American victory at St. Mihiel and two men who had been in the action the night before told us how the old men and women in the regained territory who had thought France lost to them forever had thrown their arms about the knees of the on-marching Americans and kissed their feet and wept. How also that not one woman in all that newly conquered area had been left undefiled by their late German conquerors and how all the young girls had been carried away by the now retreating Germans.

When we reached Paris that night it was in time to experience the first air raid that Paris had seen in a month and one of the heaviest raids it had ever seen—and as history has since proven, the *last*.

It came just as I had tucked myself in for

the night. My first thought was that I was utterly alone and I was a little sorry for myself. I wished that I knew some one to whom I could go to get "snuggled up." Not knowing any such person and not even remembering on what floor to find any of the other members of the company I lay quite still and waited. There were occasional flashes of light from the barrage firing on the enemy planes and the changing direction of this firing caused the sound of it to die away and return like the rumble of thunder. After a time I heard voices in the corridor. I slipped on my dressing gown and went out. Three men in white pyjamas were standing in the doorway next to mine. They asked me if I was nervous and whether I would not like to go down to the cellar. I replied that I was a fatalist and one of them laughed and called that a good idea. I went back to bed and with the barrage still thundering and dying away and returning, I finally went to sleep.

The next morning I learned that not one of our company had taken the precaution of going into the cellar while every French person in

the hotel had done so. This was explained by an old American resident on the ground that the nerves of the French had been unsettled by a long succession of raids, while to us a raid was still in the nature of a novelty.

Armed with all sorts of military orders the next morning we set out on our quest for gas masks and helmets and had our first lesson in the use of the mask. It wasn't a very cheery business. The fat puffy lieutenant delegated to instruct us seemed very bored with us and we thought him in danger of apoplexy from having so often to blow up his cheeks and to hold the air in them while adjusting his experimental mask. To concentrate our attention on the business in hand, and on himself, he told us terrifying stories about what had happened to others before us who had been stupid or slow in adjusting their masks in battles and he repeated the old saying about there being only two kinds of men where gas attacks were concerned—the quick and the dead.

After more than an hour of this exhausting drill when he had alternately bullied and coaxed us to keep pace with his rapid counting —and when each woman in the party had been

made to feel that her hair was a crime against nature because it would get entangled in the straps of her mask and when most of the men had decided that there was something defective in their teeth, nose, ears or lungs—after all this boredom the young instructor swooped down upon Elizabeth Brice and me with an accusing eye, thrust his fingers under the edges of our masks just beneath our chins and thundered at us that our faces were too small for our masks. We thought it would have been more gallant of him to have put it the other way round but we were too cowed and exhausted to protest and I personally felt that I would rather be gassed than go through this ordeal again and said so.

Again I was properly rebuked and informed that the army was not concerned with my preference in such matters and that we would not be allowed to enter the danger zone until our masks did fit properly.

Telephoning followed and it was ascertained that there was a carload of new masks—small sizes—on the way from Bordeaux but since this car was in charge of a "Frog"—as the lieutenant put it—there was no telling whether the

masks would arrive during the present war. Anyway we could call the next morning and see.

This was rather a let down after our impatience to get off to "the front" and we were feeling a little depressed when we reached the hotel.

In front of the hotel we found Senator Hollis waiting with a friend from one of the Southern Encampments.

The Senator suggested that we join them for dinner at Montmartre. We were tired and ready for our beds but we remembered that the Senator had lost his only boy in the air service less than a week ago and we knew that we could help him by sharing the burden of entertaining his friend and also by trying to keep his mind off his loss.

How little I had known Montmartre in the old days—the days when I'd dashed up the hill in the wild hours of the night in a cab or taxi with a lot of laughing Americans whose only idea was to use Pigale's and the Moulin Rouge as a stopping place for another drink. There were no cabs nor taxis to draw us up the hill to-night. We took the "Metro" to the foot of

the mountain, then climbed tier upon tier of steep stone steps—stopping at every landing to look down on Paris as we had never seen it before—Paris lit by the setting sun on the one side and the rising moon on the other—dim, mysterious, alluring Paris. I loved it for the first time in my life—and I knew for the first time the lure of Montmartre—how many lovers had climbed these steps in the moonlight and halted at each landing and looked down into the mist and then into each other's eyes. How little would the rich tourist ever know of the real Montmartre.

When we reached the top of the hill and made our way along the middle of the street on the rough cobble stones, we passed the Cuckoo and other famous little cafés made so by hectic writers and we stopped outside a semi-outdoor eating place from which we could look across the street at the Sacré Cœur. The seats were all taken at the outdoor tables so we gave our dinner order and went on to the place of the Martyr to watch the afterglow of the sunset and wait our turn at table.

For the first time I saw the statue at the foot of the Cathedral—the statue of the Martyr that

gave the mountain its name—the statue that has looked down so many years on gay, wicked, sorrowing Paris.

After dinner we wandered through the crooked narrow streets searching for the old Moulin Rouge. We were told it had been burned—probably by an exploding shell. A little further on we passed the Black Cat—it was too early to go home—we went inside. Here again was the real Montmartre. A funny, low ceiling vaultlike room with plaster walls daubed with cheap drawings, fine etchings, nude paintings, charcoal cartoons, black cats; bits of red and white plaid gingham, faded leaves, shelves containing pewter mugs, brass bowls and all sorts of discarded bric-à-brac, a platform at the far end of the room with a piano on it, a small picture screen behind it, a bar to the right of it and a stair to the left of it. Benches in the room and long tables and all of these occupied by all sorts and conditions of humans. Frenchmen, and French soldiers, American doughboys and officers, and here and there a cheap cocotte—and smoke! One could scarcely see the length of the room.

The entertainment was being given by

French soloists and by naughty tales told in silhouette by paper figures on the "movie screen."

After an interval some one asked one of the Americans present to sing. He passed along the word that Miss Brice of our company could sing and in a jiffy she was forced on to the platform and Mr. Morrisey of our company was rattling off an accompaniment for her. The French and the Americans were wild with delight. She was given a "double claque" and made to sing until she was hoarse then we went out into the street again and glanced almost with envy at some of the gay little groups that we saw around some of the small bars, then we picked our way down the steep steps and farewell Montmartre.

The next morning our gas masks had not arrived but the young lieutenant having apparently had a good night's sleep decided that we could proceed with the large masks and use them as a camouflage if questioned en route, provided we would exchange them at one of the hospital bases further up where he had recently shipped some small masks for Red Cross nurses.

We went to another part of the town for our iron helmets and then returned to the "Y" armed with our new implements of war.

Here we accumulated our "roll-ups" blankets and cots, for we could be sure of no bedding accommodations in the region to which we were going. How we came to detest these blankets and cots during the following weeks when we staggered under them by day and tried to cling to them by night! And how we longed to throw away our gas masks and helmets and all the rest of our cursed paraphernalia and how weary we grew always having to go back for one or the other of these that some one in the party had always forgotten.

Our first irritation began at the Paris station when our trappings became entangled with those of other cross grained individuals also pushing and jostling to make the overcrowded train. But once we were on the edge of the country where real battles had been fought and looking out the car windows at shell holes, graves, grass-grown trenches and heaps of mortar and brick where villages had been, we forgot all our lesser trials and began

to suspect something of the seriousness of the great tragedy that we were approaching.

A little further up we began to see on the white roadways, paralleling the track, long lines of grey camions moving north with men and supplies, then cavalry halted on the banks of the streams or canals for their noonday rest, then more shell holes—one with an impudent poppy nodding from its very brink, and hours and hours later, because the railways were congested with supply and hospital trains, we reached a town in the region of the Argonne, which we were to use as a central point for our scouting tours—a town that was to be for many months a point of contact between the Argonne trail and the more removed political and supply bases that fed one of the final battles of the war. Day and night, day and night, so close that one could scarcely pick one's way across the road, the great grey camions rumbled through the streets of the little village on their way to "The Sacred Road" that would lead them later toward the encounter. Some of the camions were loaded with men packed so tight that they made one think only of the animals that one sees in cattle cars—animals being

shipped to pens for slaughter. Other camions bore heavy fire arms and ammunition.

The streets of the village and the hotels were filled with wayfarers, some of importance, some who had failed to connect with their regiments, a few I have reason to believe who were trying to desert—young boys who had been detached intentionally or otherwise from their command and who feared to be caught by the local military police and thrown into jail.

One of these boys had been sent back down the line with a detail of sick horses. He had delivered his horses but had failed to catch up again with his regiment and was wandering about the streets, frightened and hungry when a kindly officer succeeded in getting his confidence and persuaded him to go to the police and tell his tale and escape capture and arrest.

Sometimes a whole company of lost men would drift into the village, hungry and footsore and with no place to sleep, some misunderstanding having left them without proper provision or command. In such a case the "Y" would allow them to sleep on the floor of the canteen and provide them, as far as possible, with chocolate.

We played two nights in this town in a theatre rented by the French to the "Y" for the price of the electricity. The show was a great success—it was the first that many of the boys had seen since leaving America. Our audience was made up of cavalrymen, infantrymen, airmen, doughboys and officers, French and American, for every variety of soldier was either passing through the town or stationed near it. They all applauded and our own boys cheered and whistled. We were cold and hungry after our performance so the "Y" man led us back to the kitchen of the canteen where a tired soul was ladelling out hot chocolate from huge caldrons on the range and by the time we left the kitchen the floor of the hall leading to it had become so occupied by exhausted soldiers that we had to fairly step over them to get back to the street.

There was no room for us in any of the hotels so we slept on our cots in a store room of the "Y" across the street—if one can ever be said to sleep the first night he rides a cot. I was wakened early the next morning to find a dignified old gentleman—a French official in silk hat and civilian clothes—waiting outside

my door to apologise for what he considered the rude behaviour of the boys who had whistled at our show the night before. He said that he thought the performance most amusing and deserving of anything but derision, and it was only by the aid of one of his countrymen who was called in to interpret for us that I was able to make him understand that with the Americans whistling is a mark of approval, whereas in the French theatre it indicates the reverse.

During the day we wandered about the streets and everywhere one turned there were opportunities for doing good. For instance some of those up here on the edge of the danger zone undergoing hardships were inclined to speak slightingly of those in Paris in executive positions who "had it easy," but when we pointed out to them that the chaps in Paris would give their eye teeth to be up near the firing line and that they were already dreading the day when they must go home and tell their sweethearts and families that they got only to Paris—then the chaps up nearer the front were happier again.

I climbed up to a magnificent view on a high

mountain back of the hotel. Soldiers crowded every nook and crannie of the ruined cathedral on the mountain's crest. They also were on their way to the front. At the foot of the hill, tied to an iron ring in an old stone wall, stood a wreck of a horse with a festering shrapnel wound in his shoulder. The poor beast strained in vain toward a few spears of grass growing just outside his reach. I gathered the grass and gave it to him. I found a sympathetic French girl in a shack near by and she found some hay for the beast. I was so grateful that I cried. She brought me some water to wash the tears away and the sea that rolls between our two countries and the babble of tongues that confuse meant very little.

I couldn't leave the horse until some one had adopted him and at last an ambulance came and took him away, still munching the hay that we transferred to the ambulance.

Further down the street a French lad was carrying a fox terrier in his arms and crying over it—a passing camion had broken its leg. Again the tears came to my eyes and yet I looked down that same street at miles upon miles of human beings borne forward to slaugh-

ter in these same grey camions and I could not cry. It was all too horrible and too colossal —neither could I sleep that night for we were now in a hotel with rooms fronting on the street and the constant procession of hoofs and wheels on the cobble stones sounded to our tired nerves like the roar of the ocean.

As I came in that evening I had noticed through the open door of the room next to mine a bent old figure in black, sitting near the window, gazing into space. Near her on the bed sat a young girl so tragic and strained in her grief that I was sure she did not even know that the door stood ajar and I hurried into my own room feeling a little ashamed of having seen what was not meant for my eyes.

Later in the night, as I turned my pillow again and again trying to make it fit into the tired spot in the back of my neck, I heard the door of the next room thrown open and I could almost see the girl who fell sobbing with her arms round her mother. I've heard many women cry in my life and some men but I never knew until then what agony could come out of a human soul. And the mother spoke no word—it was no use. It was daylight when

the sobs at last died into low infrequent moans and I learned that the girl had come from the death bed of her fiancé whom she and the poor old mother had travelled days and nights to find.

We played many nights in this town for the steady stream of troops continued to pass through it. We also played the engineering camps, supply camps and aviation camps thereabouts—there were sixteen of the last—and I shall never forget the first time that we drove up to one of the most important of these, the "First Pursuit Group." Everything as far as the eye could reach had been camouflaged, hangars, huts and trucks and the green and yellow new-art designs looked so fantastic and queer in the twilight.

"The Little Major," as he was fondly called by the men of his group, had arranged for us to dine before the show in the mess tent at the foot of the hill, below a newly ploughed field. By the time dinner was over the rain was coming down in torrents, the field was a lake of mud and it was impossible to move the automobile that had brought us.

We set out on foot toward the distant han-

gar where men from other aviation camps were also waiting for us. We were not supposed even to use our pocket flashes, for enemy observation planes might be far above us in the black sky. The women carried their evening slippers under their arms, meaning to put them on later when we reached the hangar and it was not until we were at the very entrance of it that one of the girls discovered that one of her slippers was missing. Such a to-do! It was not an easy matter to get satin slippers in this benighted corner of the earth and we were headed for even more benighted regions.

She was tired and depressed by the long pull through the mud and she fell onto a camp stool inside the big truck that had been rolled inside the hangar to serve as a dressing room and began to cry. Her street shoes were caked in mud to their tops and she refused to try to play in them.

Three aviators immediately shot off into the darkness with one of our own men to search the muddy field for the missing slipper. They returned with it at last and by this time the audience which we had *heard* but not *seen* were booing, whistling and clapping with impa-

tience. At last the missing slipper was recovered and on the lady's small foot. I was frightfully nervous as I pushed aside the green silesia curtains that we always carried and cleared my throat to make the supposedly comic speech with which we always opened the show. I never could remember afterward just what I said, for of all the picturesque audiences that I had ever seen this was certainly the most fantastic.

There were twenty-five hundred men, so we were afterwards told, huddled together on the ground and above them imperilling their own lives and those of the men underneath, were hundreds of others intertwined in the huge steel framework supporting the largest hangar that I had ever seen. Some of the men seemed to be holding onto their perches like monkeys, their feet crossed round a bar of steel, others had made themselves comfortable on wide beams and were lying with their hands crossed under their heads, and all through the performance I could scarcely keep my mind on the lines of the playlet for trying to locate various members of the audience and fearing that some of them would tumble off their

perches when they released their hold to applaud—and how they did applaud and yell, and how wild and picturesque it all looked in the fog that had crept in through the cracks and made golden circles round the dim torch light. And then came the whir of an enemy observation plane overhead and a hush and nothing said and then on with the show.

The next day we were sent to a camp nearby where it was hoped that Miss Brice and I would at last find the small gas masks. There was nothing among the American masks that would do, so it was decided to give us the old style French masks for which we were devoutly grateful for they seemed far easier to adjust. It was pointed out to us that the oxygen in these would not last so many hours as in the American masks but we in turn pointed out that we couldn't run more than one hour at the most.

We had received our final equipment none too soon for the next morning with our blankets, folding cots, new masks and helmets we were loaded into an army car and taken yet further up the line to an engineering camp

on the side of a hill on the edge of the Argonne forest.

It was explained that we could be billeted here in the engineers' barracks because there was a supply station nearby, from which provisions and ammunition were "shot" up to men in the front lines, just above, and we would also have thousands of troops to which to play, as the woods for miles around were sheltering troops that kept under cover by day and marched by night, so that the enemy's observation planes might not discover the full strength of the blow that we were preparing to deliver.

Some of the officers in the barracks were kind enough to give up one of their rooms to the three women of our company and our cots were tucked into this room so closely that we had to crawl over the foot of them to get into bed. The men of the company were put into an equally small room behind the kitchen of the officers' mess and Mr. Morrisey says that he will never forget the sound of the rats claws as they scratched their way up and over the slick surface of the tarpaulin under which it was necessary to sleep to keep out the dampness. He says he used to lie awake in the night

and gamble with himself as to which of the rats would get "over the top" first.

At the foot of the hill below the main building was a black little "lean-to" called "The Greasy Spoon."

It was at the intersection of many lines of track that our American engineers had been laying for months—track connecting with our main bases of supplies hundreds of miles below, with the shipsdocks still further below, and with intermediary hospitals and supply bases, and finally with the very outposts of what was to mark the starting point of the great and final offensive.

And over these tracks every twenty minutes American engines were passing with long trains of American cars—cars bearing food, guns, tanks, aeroplanes, Red Cross supplies, humáns, live stock, portable houses, hospital tents and huge barrels of gasoline and oil. And wherever these latter were known to be sidetracked the Boche planes were quickly overhead to drop explosives in the hope of starting a general conflagration. The light from these explosives, sometimes near sometimes far, was almost the only light that we saw these

nights, for the camp was obliged to keep itself in utter darkness lest even one tiny spark of light might serve as a target for the Boche planes constantly hovering overhead.

The hut in which we gave our first show was hermetically sealed and the entrance hung with double curtains so that no ray of light should escape, and not even a lighted cigarette was permitted to any one departing from it and the same rules were applied to the mess room and sleeping quarters.

In fact divers tales were told of a whole company being wiped out near that very spot by an idiot who had lighted a cigarette just as a Boche bombing plane was passing overhead, though it was suspected by some that he was a spy and took this way of giving a signal.

In any case, the black surroundings did not prevent the thousands of boys hidden with their commands in the adjoining woods from finding their way to the hut for our first show and in spite of the fact that we gave two shows the same night hundreds had to be sent away with the promise of other shows the next night for those who had not been swept on toward

"the front." It was late when we'd finished the second performance and as usual we were hungry, so one of the officers helped us to pick our way down the hill to "The Greasy Spoon" and here we met our first "Corned Willie" also some undecorated heroes.

A youth who had been on duty forty-eight hours, his face smeared with soot, his hands red and swollen, stood with his back to the glowing oven "slinging" corn willie, beans, and coffee across a counter of dry goods boxes to tired grimy trainmen who were averaging only three hours' sleep a night and were putting through a train every twenty minutes—an American train over American tracks laid by American engineers, manned by American soldiers, bearing American supplies, ammunition, and men. Just now they were rejoicing in having run a train for the first time over the last section of track laid to the very line of what was soon to become our fighting front—these last miles of track had been laid under shell fire but would save eight hours in the transportation of the wounded and that eight hours would mean life or death to hundreds.

It was in "The Greasy Spoon" that we first heard the doughboys' frank opinion of what they called "Sammie backers," meaning the fellows who stay at home and send them cigarettes and "good wishes."

In fact there were few things, persons, or institutions that did not come in for their fair share of criticism in the black little shanty with its long benches and tables lit only by flickering candles and the yellow light from the open oven. Generals, Presidents and fickle sweethearts were introduced and retired with a phrase or a shrug and above the jangle of tin pans and forks one caught fragmentary reports of the night's happenings, trains overturned, gasoline cars shelled, tracks blown out, and trainmen killed.

I was inclined to wonder if these moody, overworked men and boys were colouring some of the details to entertain us "tenderfeet"— but next morning in the officers' mess where we were treated like members of the family, we could not escape hearing most of these reports repeated and we began to look with new admiration on the grim business like men who sat with us at table. They were not typical

army men nor were all of them young enough to come within the draft age. Some of them were men not unlike others I mentioned earlier, rich, successful and at the height of their business careers. They had given up interesting occupations to assume duties they had left behind in their youth and had not seen their homes since the very start of the war. Who can say when the records of these years are printed that there is no idealism in the business world of to-day?

After breakfast, we walked to the little French Cemetery on the top of the hill, above the barracks, and here the American flags told the tale of many who would never see their homes again—not men who had been mentioned for brilliant service or had the thrill of going "over the top" but men who had died in obscurity providing ways and means for their more fortunate fellows to go "over the top."

The Chaplain of the regiment joined us in our walk and asked if we'd like to take a look at a lost division that was making camp in the woods above. We asked what he meant by "lost." He told us how the Commander of

these twenty thousand men had received instructions to proceed to this point, where further orders were presumably to be waiting for him, but, finding no orders, he had no other course than to conceal his men in the woods and bide his time.

From where we stood there was no sign of life whatever, but we had not beat our way more than a hundred feet through the thick underbrush when we literally fell upon thousands of burrowing, slashing humans, hacking their way through the vines and bushes to make trails to central points of manœuvre, and using the cut boughs to camouflage the tops of their "pup tents" and wagons, so that enemy observation planes could see only what was apparently a thick forest. These thousands of busy, bent figures made one think of ants taking possession of a new home. So close and so well concealed were their "pup tents" that it took us some time to realise that we were in the midst of whole villages of them—canvas coops, so low and so small that the two men allotted to each have barely room enough to crawl in side by side and roll up in their blankets—the canvas is supposed to protect the

men from the rain but it is taken as a matter of course that in case of hard rain the men wake up in puddles of water. One of our players remarked that these must be called "pup tents" because no dog would sleep in them. And speaking of dogs our doughboys have dubbed the identification tags which the army are compelled to wear on their wrists or necks "dog tags." This is typical of the matter-of-fact way in which our men regard the grim business of war. They have no false sentimentality to buoy them up, no love of adventure, no inborn lust of blood, nothing but a frank abhorrence for the wholesale butchery and brutality into which they find themselves plunged and a steady stoical determination to see the job through.

"Somebody has to do it," one of them said to me, "so we might as well get it over as soon as possible."

One doughboy, hacking at a tough root near a space being cleared for the cooking oven, expressed what most of them feel about France. He was hungry and tired and drenched to the skin and he didn't care who heard him. "The only thing that would serve the Germans

right," he said, "would be to give them a damned good licking and then give them France." The officer who stood near me pretended not to hear, but I caught a sly smile lurking around his lips and I remarked that the French scenery didn't seem to impress the doughboys as much as it did the American tourists. He answered that it was not the scenery that got on their nerves but the lack of sanitary plumbing, and he admitted that it would be a pretty hard matter for travel pamphlets ever to "sell" France to any of our doughboys.

"Come on, fellows," shouted this particular boy when he'd finally torn out the unruly root and given way to the mess sergeant who was waiting to lay his brick for the oven.

"I'm going down to the de-louser." The "de-louser" is the name the boys give to the public baths that assist them in separating themselves and their clothes from their cooties.

"Those boys are willing to miss their mess to get that bath," the officer said, "they're a damned clean lot," and so they were and soon a long line of them was filing down the hill, some toward the de-louser, some to carry up

the water for the mess—and by the time we reached our barracks mid-way on the hill, some of them were already filing back again and once more I was reminded of ants—busy and steady, their minds thoroughly on the affair of the moment.

This "lodging for the night" we soon learned was typical of hundreds of others in the forest all round us. And each day our local "Y" guide would take us in a car to some thicket where within twenty minutes we would have such an audience as none of us shall probably ever see again. Sometimes we would mount a truck for our performance; for wagons, artillery, and horses were also concealed in these woods, but more often we would play on the ground, and the officer in command would give the order for the first few hundred boys to lie flat, those behind them were permitted to kneel, those at the back could stand and those who were "left over" would "shinney" up the trees like squirrels and drape themselves across the branches and hang suspended in strained attitudes during the entire show. If we happened to be playing in a young forest we were sometimes almost dizzy

with the swaying of the slender saplings waving back and forth under the weight of human bodies.

Sometimes our performance would be cancelled or cut short by the men to whom we were playing being suddenly ordered forward. On one occasion when our "Y" conductor had happened to leave us to the Colonel of the regiment who had volunteered to send us home in his car, the whole division was ordered forward in the midst of our performance. The Colonel had no alternative but to move with them and we were obliged to walk to the nearest railway station and beat our way "home" huddled together on a meat chest in a box car. We arrived about midnight, hungry and chilled and as we picked our way through the mud and the darkness up the hill toward the barracks Ray Walker our musician drew his foot out of a hole and paused long enough to remark that he was sick of life and he didn't care whether his gas mask fitted or not.

But the next morning we were all going back down the hill in the sunlight with the despised gas masks and helmets, because the Col-

onel of the regiment where we were billeted had decided that we had been working so hard that we deserved a little pleasure trip and had detailed one of his lieutenants to take us, in a limousine, to see the ruins of Verdun a few miles distant. Verdun! White dust-covered heaps of stone and bricks, crumbling mortar, silent streets paved with huge, shiny cobble-stones, solemn faced gates that have withstood for ages the onslaughts of man and of nature, the sluggish Meuse winding stealthily round the base of the hill and, looking up from the Gateway, the walls of the magnificent Cathedral still crowning the hill-top.

We halted the car at the foot of the hill and our lieutenant went in search of some one who would give us permission to enter the fortress underneath the mountain.

He was gone so long that our party disappeared, one by one, up the mountain side—each impatient to do his or her own exploring. I was last to leave the car and as I did so I noticed a small man in black coming toward me round the bend in the white road-way. With him walked a soldier in American uniform and several French officials. He made

his way up the hill with them talking earnestly. It was Secretary Baker.

Out of the golden stillness came a "Hello"—our Lieutenant was returning with a military guide to lead us through the Fortress. We entered by way of a cold damp tunnel through which narrow gauge cars were being pushed—they were laden with provisions and presently we were in the midst of huge bakeries where miles of bread, flour and cereals were stored—from there we passed to what looked like a wholesale grocery store and from there to a restaurant where thousands of men were having their mid-day meal, discussing the politics, feuds or amusements of their underground world with the same vehemence with which we discuss similar matters in our over-world.

With the artist's desire to show us a contrasting picture the guide now led us to a gay little chapel—still underground—where these same men were accustomed to worship. It was charming and reassuring in colour and detail but it always seems incongruous to think of men communing with God underground and later when we passed out into the sunlight I

felt as though I had emerged from a strange world of gnomes.

On top of the hill, sublime in its isolation and with dignity wrapping it round and enfolding it in a soft mantle of haze, stood the great Cathedral.

We climbed up to it—no tourists—no voice to break the silence save that of one lone watchman.

We gazed in awe at the high vaulted entrance that still remained intact, then stepped with reverence on the worn stones leading to the main body of the church—stones over which so many thousands of feet had so often borne aching or rejoicing hearts.

We were barely out of the shadow of the vestibule when a shaft of light made us turn our eyes upward and there before us stood the four great twisted columns of marble that had once supported the canopy of the high altar, now reaching their empty arms toward the sunlight pouring through the shell-torn roof and to the blue sky beyond.

And the altar itself—that fine slab of unadorned marble that seemed all the more imposing stripped of everything save its own en-

during quality and symbolism! We edged nearer to it and lingered there, saying little. Its very presence gave one a confidence in the ultimate survival of the fine and the strong.

Next the guide led us to one of the smaller sanctuaries of the cathedral where a shell had just shattered the crucifix above the altar—fragments of blue glass still lay on the tiled floor where they had fallen from a broken vase. We turned our eyes again toward the high altar. Doves now flew in and out at random through the great shell hole in the vaulted ceiling, the altar was bathed in noon sunlight and through the shattered windows in the opposite wall unruly vines were beginning to creep from the garden of the Convent of Marguerite, nestling with such confidence under the eaves of its great protector. And everywhere there was majesty and calm dignity—damage, perhaps but not destruction. There was a spirit within those battered walls that seemed to defy destruction.

We were late reaching camp for our luncheon and I at first thought that the restrained air of the Colonel and the heavy silence of his men was due to our tardiness. Then I remem-

bered another and similar change in the social atmosphere weeks before at G. H. Q. just before the big drive on Saint Mihiel and I felt certain that the hour of attack was at hand. Week upon week of preparation had been under way and it had been remarked the past few days that the necessary apparatus for the placement of some of the large naval guns converted to land service was the only thing delaying the announcement of the "zero hour." And now no doubt the big guns were in place and one might expect to hear their thunder at any moment.

This conclusion was strengthened by the arrival of a courier before we had finished luncheon. He had come to tell us that the "matinee" we were to play that afternoon for his regiment in the woods nearby must be cancelled. The division was moving forward in response to a sudden order.

Being set free from all other engagements, there seemed no reason why we should not consider an invitation to a pleasure party to which "the Little Major" of the Aviation Camp, miles back down the line had been trying for days to entice us. He had 'phoned our Colonel

of Engineers about it and even sent one of his flyers over our barracks to drop a note in our vicinity reminding us of it. And after a few hints on our part to our Colonel, who was no doubt glad to be rid of our prattle at such a critical moment we were loaded into his car and sent down the line to the Aviation Camp—it being understood of course that we were to return to the barracks at a reasonable hour.

When we arrived at the Aviation Field we found that the "Little Major" and some of his officers had taken up their billet with a charming old French couple in the village nearby and it was here that a dinner and dance were awaiting us—the first real dance since we had left America. The lion of the occasion was to be Eddie Rickenbacker who had just brought down his eighth Boche plane and who was soon destined to win the title of "The American Ace" and to be told by the Commander decorating him to increase his chest expansion to accommodate the many more decorations awaiting him.

The Major's charming dining room with its polished walnut and candle light and flow-

ers looked strangely civilised after the rough surroundings to which we had become accustomed and he had managed to get together a stringed orchestra and it played between courses and we all danced and "The Little Major" seemed in fine spirits. One of his men confided to me that it was because he'd got a Boche that day. He said the men could always tell when they saw the Major coming home whether he had got a Boche for if he'd had a good day he always did a flip-flap over the hangar. I expressed surprise that a commander of a wing should be permitted to fly. His Aide replied that the Major ought not to do it, but he did. The Major discovered by now that we were talking about him and he became self-conscious and blushed like a girl, so to change the subject, I asked the man on my right the customary bromidic question as to what had been his most thrilling experience in the service. He told me of having been ordered one night during his earlier term of service to proceed to a certain point, pick up a certain passenger to whom he was not to speak, proceed with him across the German lines, drop him at a certain point, still without speaking, and leave him there. The

man was, of course, one of our spies but my partner said that the most disagreeable moment of his whole life was when he was obliged to depart without even a word of farewell leaving his unknown passenger in that "black land of hell."

By the time he had reached his dramatic climax the others at table suddenly burst into boos and derisive cat-calls and declared that the party was becoming much too solemn, so the dinner table was pushed aside and we began dancing in real earnest and every one was feeling deliciously reckless and merry. Then suddenly "The Little Major" was called to the 'phone and again the old air of suppressed excitement about which no one speaks but every one feels, and later, without any one exactly saying so, it seemed to get round from guest to guest, that we would hear the big guns before morning.

When we reached the foot of the hill on which our barracks stood, it was later than we had meant it to be. The moon had escaped from the few shifting clouds and the whole valley was bathed in a soft hazy light. We were

still in a very happy mood and we stopped half way up the hill to look down on the valley below us and at the dark line of the Argonne Forest beyond it, when suddenly out of the silvery distance at a quarter past eleven, came the boom of the first Great Gun of the last great battle of the World's Greatest Conflict—and in quick succession more guns—great Naval monsters pressed into land service, far from their natural bases—then flashes of light in front and to each side of us until we stood in a wide horse-shoe of light. Oh, the thrill of it! I sometimes think if I am ever to be born again I should like it to be as a war correspondent with just enough income to insure me against a poverty-stricken old age, and then I should like to stay always in sound of the guns. Great Commanders must manipulate affairs from afar, their lives are too precious to be put in peril, doughboys are soon killed if they are given their chance at the front, but War correspondents are free agents—they can follow the sky rockets of war and dash from battle to battle wherever the fighting is thickest.

All night the heavy firing continued and when it died down the next morning, I was

alarmed, lest something had given us a temporary set-back, but the seasoned campaigners assured me that the silence was a good sign for it meant that we had driven the enemy so far that we must cease firing until we could move our artillery forward to pursue them, and so it proved to be, and so it continued to be day after day and week after week.

And as our army advanced our little "Entertainment Unit" was also permitted to advance, and next time, after fond farewells to the Engineer group with whom we had been billeted so long and so well, we were loaded into a big brown touring car and carried up the "Great White Way" toward the direction in which the big guns had again resumed their booming. Now that the battle was on, the Army no longer confined itself to moving troops and supplies by night and we had to pick our way in and out as best we could between the steady stream of heavily laden camions moving forward and the returning stream of empty camions moving back for fresh supplies. It was tedious business and we were sometimes blocked for hours and at times like this we would amuse ourselves watching the

strange assortment of men and things moving toward "the front."

Few regiments of men were without their animal mascots—sometimes it would be a huge shaggy dog balancing himself as well as he could on top of the rolling, rocking munitions, upon top of which he had been placed, sometimes it was a goat held in the arms of some youth staring into space with dreamy eyes, sometimes a rooster or a parrot. I even saw an eagle and a young pig with a ribbon round his neck. And they all moved forward together —infantry, cavalry, artillery—black, white and yellow—all toward a fate that promised them little hope of escape from mutilation.

When we finally reached our destination it proved to be a somewhat shell-torn town in the heart of which two important war arteries crossed and so great was the congestion that we could scarcely work our way to the entrance of the Canteen above which our Unit was billeted.

When we did finally get to the door and up the rickety stairs and look down upon the streets from the windows of the one, desolate room where the three women were to sleep, I

fairly gasped at the colour and picturesqueness of the surging billowing sea of camions, men and animals all striving to fight their way through the congestion at the cross-roads and in spite of the waving arms and harsh commands of the American military police, the "Froggies" would get their camions out of line and the more excited they became by argument the further out of line they would get and general bedlam would prevail with every one except the stoical round-faced Amanites who seemed to sit at the wheels of their huge motor trucks without speaking, smiling, or looking to the right or the left at the Red Cross wagons, the machine guns, the "baby tanks" or parent tanks, the French cavalry, the black or white infantry, or mules—all struggling to disentangle themselves from the constantly occurring "mix-ups."

When we had tired watching this "midway plaisance" effect from our windows we closed the shutters and lit our candles—here again no ray of light was permitted without everything being hermetically sealed.

The sole furniture of our room consisted of the three cots which we had brought with us

and on which the men had placed our blankets, one long rough board table with bench and one dry goods box on which was placed a small tin pan and near which stood a tin pail filled with water. This was all. The walls of the room were streaked with weather stains from the last rain and the cracks in the uncarpeted floor were filled with the dirt of ages.

The resident "Y" man had broken up some packing cases to make firewood for us and we started a little blaze and got out our towels and soap to make ready for dinner which we were told we were to eat at the sergeants' mess across the street and after which we were to give two performances in the town theatre—a little old glorified stable that had defied both shell fire and the ravages of time.

It did boast a stage, however, and tin reflectors for the footlights. The organ for this festive occasion, so the boys at the mess table told us, had been purloined from a distant "Y" hut and might be requisitioned at any moment.

We learned other things in this jolly little Mess with its open fire and long benches and its tables covered with gay oilcloth and its kitchen with glowing range gaping through the

open door and sunny faced good natured boys officiating at the range and smiling at the thought of the surprise that was going to "knock us cold" when they gave us pumpkin pie for our supper. We gathered from this fragmentary conversation that here, at last, we were to play to the men who so many of the Commanders had said were in greatest need of us—the men who were just on the eve of "going over the top." The boys of the mess were stationed in the village as were their whole division—a division that had been "stuck in the mud" up there for months holding the Argonne line which they and their dead comrades had helped to establish four years ago and it was only since "the big offensive" had begun to shove this line back that the currents of fresh war activities flowing toward the firing line had begun to vitalise the air of their torpid little village.

These currents were running flood tide now—sometimes the men passed through in whole divisions but more often in isolated hundreds or as individuals and those last were the ones who touched our hearts most, they were called "replacements." They had been detached from

their own regiments or recruited from convalescent wards and shot forward into unknown terrors with no comrades by their sides, knowing only that on the morrow they must take the places of the fallen. And this village was their last stopping place on the night before going into action. And on and on they came in such numbers that it was impossible for the Army, the "Y," or the residents to find shelter for them and they would curl up in doorways or in the thickets beyond the village, or in barns, or stretch themselves on the "Y" floor, if they were early enough in town to find space there, and draw their overcoats or their blanket over them—for by the time they had reached this place they had been stripped of most of their other equipment. It was impossible to march long, under the weight of a sixty pound pack and extra rounds of ammunition, and although the weather was beginning to be bitter cold, when asked to choose between extra ammunition and their blankets, I am told they invariably chose the extra ammunition.

Oh, the joy of being able to offer shelter for at least a few hours each night in the theatre to at least a part of these cold, lonely, friendless

souls and to hear them laugh at our silly nonsense and to make them forget that they were only so much fodder to be fed on the morrow into the same relentless maw that had swallowed up their comrades before them.

An unfortunate thing happened one night, Miss Meredith, our ingénue, was ill and it had been decided that we had better not attempt more than one performance that night, for in addition to our night work we were playing the Camps in the woods during the day and we feared that the young lady might lose her voice entirely.

The "Y" man failed, however, to post a notice of the second performance being cancelled and when I came out the back entrance of the theatre, with two others of the Company, he rushed up to me to say that thousands of the boys, out in front, were clamouring for admittance, and that they had stood in line for three hours expecting a second show and were about to break in the door.

It was pitch black in the streets—no lights were permitted—not even a pocket flash—our Company was stopping some distance from the

theatre—and the others had gone home some time before us.

I suggested that they open the doors and let the boys in so that we could explain to them. The "Y" man said that once they were in, they would demand a performance and probably tear up the place if they didn't get it. He suggested that I go round to the front of the theatre and speak to them in the street. I picked my way through the dark alley as well as I could and found myself in the midst of thousands of them. When the "Y" man told them I was there—it was so dark they couldn't see me—they were quiet and attentive but when I explained that we could not give a second "show" they booed and protested. I told them that if they would only come again the next night we would play all night for them if they wished it.

"We'll not be *here* to-morrow night," came a voice out of the darkness. "You needn't trouble. We'll be in the trenches to-morrow night," was another bitter answer, and I knew it was the truth.

By this time I was desperate. I resolved to rush back to the two members I had left at the

stage entrance and see if we three could not give a show. When I got back through the crowd and the darkness they had gone. I stumbled up the dark street as best I could, the "Y" man also having become detached by now, and I burst into the room where Miss Meredith had made ready for her cot. She was in her dressing gown and very white but willing to make an attempt at another show if I could find the others.

I looked in the back part of the building where the men were quartered, not one of them there, and at last I fumbled my way back through the dark street to tell the boys waiting at the theatre that there was no hope of another show. But they had evidently divined this and had slipped away into the night, no doubt cursing us in their hearts. I went back to our desolate little room and sat by the few remaining embers with my head in my hands so tired and so depressed and so sorry for the bitter thoughts that those boys would carry away with them that I didn't care a whoop whether I lived or died.

One of the officers scolded me next day when

I was still in the dumps and said I would never make a good soldier if I was going to have regrets, but I did have regrets and each day and night no matter to how many men we played I was always conscious that we would never again have the opportunity of playing to those men who had waited so long that night in the dark and the cold and who are now—God knows where. And so long as we stayed in that town—no matter how heavy our work during the day, nor how ill or tired we felt at night, we always gave our two shows, for here, if ever, they were needed, for day by day and night by night the steady stream of victims and war implements never ceased passing under our windows—feeding—feeding—feeding!

And soon came back the returning stream—the dead and the dying—and sometimes came with them long lines of German prisoners being marching to the barb wire pens already provided for them further down the line—and most of these looked young, well fed and content to be taken.

Soon the temporary hospitals in the barns and woods nearby began to fill and overflow with the maimed and gassed and what a pity

that those at home could not have seen the unbelievable efficiency with which the great sanitary experts and surgeons of our country handled the hygiene and surgical necessities of situations, that men of less resource would have considered impossible.

The relay system, the tabulation system, the impromptu operating devices, sterilising devices, and heating apparatus, the specialisation for gas cases, psychopathic cases, surgical cases and medical cases, handled in tents, stables or sheds and the Herculean endurance of these men who kept their brains clear and their hands steady for seventy-two hours at a stretch. Oh, Humanity, be proud! You can never be proud enough of your best—never!

We tried sometimes to play to some of the men in the hospital tents who had not been too seriously gassed, for while our nights were still needed at the theatre our days were now comparatively free. We found, however, that as soon as the patients were sufficiently recovered to take notice of us, they were relayed to hospitals further down the line in order to make way for new cases, so we gave up these attempts and went back to our old scheme of

hunting out the encampments in the woods or playing to troops halted along the roadside.

One Sunday we were sent forward to within three miles of the firing line, into woods that had been for the past four years in possession of the Boche. We were to play chiefly to a company of engineers who had not even seen a woman in eighteen months. They had belonged to one of the detachments that go in advance of the attacking forces to cut the barb wire or follow behind to clean up the wreckage left in the wake of victory. The roads through the deep rain-soaked wood were almost impassable and by the time we reached the place where we were to leave the car and proceed on foot we were already late. We came upon our audience still farther in the thicket sitting on the wet ground, or logs, round a stage that they had built and equipped from German loot which they had salvaged from the recent drive. It was screened from above by a thick canopy of leaves and boughs so as to escape detection by the enemy planes. Four small German machine guns, also salvaged, served as chairs for us and the table made from beech wood was edged with German shells and adorned with

German canteens filled with goldenrod—a flower that apparently blooms in every country. There was even a piano salvaged from a nearby dugout that had been occupied for four years by German officers. We inspected the dugout later and found that it was cement lined, calcimined and wired for electricity. The piano which had been originally captured by the Boche from the French was now to be played by an American musician.

Being Sunday the Army Chaplain opened the "show" with prayer; then standing we all repeated the oath of allegiance with the men and officers; then the regimental band that had marched from a camp some miles below played the National Anthem, and at intervals through it all came the steady boom of the big guns, slaughtering while we prayed.

On our way out of this section we passed through another part of the forest. There were a great many graves by the roadside made for the German dead during their four years' occupation. The Huns had stolen tombstones from the French Cemeteries and painted German inscriptions over the carved inscriptions of the French.

When still further down the line in a desolate little village we were requested by a Colonel's aide to give a performance to part of a division temporarily quartered there, we did so —on the steps of a shelled cathedral, the highest point of vantage in the town. The men stood on the side of the hill beneath us. We felt several times that we were losing their attention, even though their eyes were on us, and we heard the faint whirrings of machines evidently high in the clouds. One of the officers confided to us later that he had been obliged to have the order passed from man to man not to look up, for he knew from the peculiar throbbing of the engines that they belonged to the enemy and a sea of white faces turned upward is far easier to discern than the tops of heads—*bald* heads, of course, excepted. We were growing quite accustomed to overhead enemies by now but we all looked up a few days later when we were giving a performance to what was left of an Oregon division and we counted 107 of our own planes flying past at sunset in perfect formation toward the front. We learned later that some of our friends of the first pursuit group were among them and that they formed

part of one of the largest formations ever sent across the German lines. And *all* of them returned.

When we got back to our mess that night we were perfectly certain that some rumour was going the rounds in which we were not partners and the next morning Tommy Gray of our unit who had been sighing for a priest to confess him fell upon the information that had not yet reached even our camp officials.

After walking miles toward a camp where he arrived only to find the Priest down with the "flu," a Jewish Rabbi undertook to guide him to a camp of the Seventy-Seventh Division, further on, where he believed a priest was to be had and to their astonishment they found men loading an aeroplane with provisions and homing pigeons which it was hoped they could drop to a battalion of their men that had been cut off by the enemy—a battalion that has since covered itself in glory, and become one of the picturesque features of the war.

It was quite a feather in Tommy's cap to have found out something that none of the men in our division actually knew, and while he

wasn't encouraged by the officers to talk about it we had become such close friends with the boys in the sergeants' mess that it somehow leaked out, and since it only confirmed rumours which they had already heard, it seemed rather stingy of us to be too reticent about it and each morning each asked his neighbour guardedly if he had "heard anything." But it was not until weeks later that we heard the details of the ultimate fate of the battalion and of the stout heart of commander Whittelsey who shaved each morning with death at his elbow just to keep up the morale of his men.

In the meantime our friendship with the boys in the mess grew warmer and we used to linger longer and longer over our hot cakes and molasses to hear the boys spin their yarns and chaff each other.

Rodeheaver of Billy Sunday fame "blew in" for coffee one morning and told us of the songs that he'd been singing in the mouths of the cannon and the boys responded with fifty-seven verses of a doughboy lay which seemed familiar to them but was quite new to me. It was something about a boy from Arkansas who couldn't bear to kill a fly and what happened

to him at the front and the refrain was always the same—"Oh this bloody, Bloody War!"

Rodeheaver chuckled with delight and told us some funny stories and left us laughing when he said Good-bye and after he had disappeared down the alley the boys proceeded to dissect him and religionists in general and other celebrities of their country and of every other fellow's country and there was enough American humour forthcoming from that group to have kept George Ade chronicling for the rest of his natural life—tender college youths, wild western thoroughbreds, East Side gangsters and country yokels all equally dear to each other and all determined to have their little joke till the finish. One chubby faced youth with an interrupted college career put his chin in his hands and gazed at the fire and said dolefully: "To think that one so young as I should have been through two wars!" I asked what he meant and it seems he had been through both the Mexican Border flurry and this and he still looked too young to be out at night.

Only twice did I ever see their spirits even temporarily overcast. The first time was when two of the "casuals" from another division

"helping out" in the kitchen were ordered back to the front. They, too, were infants, but they had already been "over the top" once and landed in hospitals from which they had beaten their way to this place and now they were off for their second chance with death. It touched one's heart to see the other chaps stuffing cigarettes and chocolate into their pockets and digging up mascots for them—and as the two infants swung out the alley and into the street they called back to us gaily, "Good-bye, fellows, see you in New York or hell."

The next morning at breakfast one of the boys brought in a letter on the envelope of which was scrawled in a fine, feeble hand the name of a youth whom they knew and in the corner of the envelope was this request from his mother: "Will some one please give this to my boy somewhere in France." The youth had been the chauffeur of the Colonel in that regiment and he had been killed by an exploding shell only that morning. The letter had been wandering around France for five months and had missed him by only five hours. And again "C'est la Guerre." Some lines of Grantland

Rice came back to me—lines from a Mother's Prayer.

> My baby's gone; gone is my little lad;
> And now a man stands in his place,
> Stands where I cannot be, or see or shield.
> God guard Thou him!
> When guns are still and strife is overpast.
> Whisper to him, where'er he lies this night,
> The words I fain would speak could I be near;
> For, though he is no more a child,
> I always am his Mother."

There was a hush at the table after the directions on the envelope had been read aloud and we all hailed the first opportunity of interruption when one of the boys rushed in from the street and told us to "come and see the fun." It was pretty well over when we arrived but it had evidently had something to do with a goat that was travelling as a mascot on top of one of the big camions and who had taken advantage of the congestion of the traffic to start a little attack of his own on the unsuspecting driver whose back had been toward him.

In front of the goat's vehicle was something even more amusing—an American driver swearing at French mules in English and then

trying to conciliate them with the few words of French that he knew.

I noticed that the mules had no gas masks tied under their chins while all the horses wore them and I was told that the mules were so "damned stubborn" that nobody could ever get the masks on them in time to save their fool lives, so the Government had given up supplying them with them.

Our little street party was broken up by the news that a perfectly good German piano had just been captured and unloaded on one of the salvage dumps further up the line and, before we knew it, the Mess Sergeant and half a dozen of the boys had got a truck and were off to get that piano for us, to replace the poor one that we were in hourly fear of losing from the village "Show Shop."

The fact that the salvage dump was under shell fire only heightened their enthusiasm and some of the members of our unit decided to go with them. They didn't get the piano but they got sensations about which they are still strangely non-committal and the next day when I went over the same trail with one of the officers and saw the death and desolation that lay

either side of it, I realised why those returning from it had had nothing to say. *"The Salvage Dump!"* What will all Europe be after this frightful struggle but one huge Salvage Dump? Odds and ends of wreckage, animate and inanimate, heaped together on the blood-soaked shores of the flood of war.

When we woke next morning we found a large car waiting outside our window to bear us back to Bar-le-duc, the headquarters of that particular region—and we were told that the Paris office had been wiring for us for days to proceed to the next "sector" where we were long overdue. It was not easy to say Good-bye to what had been our first real taste of battle and as our car edged its way back down the line against the steady stream of men and munitions still pouring toward the front and as the din of the big guns grew fainter and fainter our spirits sank lower and lower.

At Bar-le-duc, however, where we were to stay for the night, we were met by "Hellos" from every side and in the main hotel we found war correspondents from New York, London, and Paris and many friends we'd not seen since

the beginning of our tour at G. H. Q. It was by one of these that we were dubbed "The Mayo Shock Unit," we having been farther to the front, at that time, than any other "Players," and the title stuck to us for the remainder of our tour, much to the temporary distress of my mother who heard about it without knowing the compliment it implied. Bar-le-duc it seemed had become a non-official headquarters for all those who needed to keep in close touch with everything going on at the Argonne front—journalists, war lords, and war heroes, air conquerors and naval attachés.

In one corner of the café munching cheese and jam sat Will Irwin, George Barr Baker, Maximilian Foster, Bozeman Bulger, Arthur Ruhl, Cameron McKenzie and Charles Kloeber—at the other side of the room with their rum and coffee were Damon Runyon, Claire Kenamore and Eddie Rickenbacker, now the American Ace. Further on were A. L. James, Douglas McArthur, the youngest General in the army, Allen of the London *Times* and a half dozen comrades. At the cashier's desk was Alexander Wolcott, Patron Saint of "the Stars and Stripes," threatening to report

"the joint" and have it closed if the proprietor did not make good a five francs overcharge to one of the doughboys. It seemed as if we were in the Knickerbocker Café and the Savoy Grille and the Crillon Restaurant all rolled into one, and then some one mentioned Don Martin and that only he out of that whole crowd was missing. There was a silence after this, then one of the boys suggested that we all walk round to the Press headquarters and find out what day had been fixed for his funeral in Paris. We stopped on the way to look from the bridge at the sluggish canal and at the gay coloured crockery that accidentally decorated some of the steps leading down to it. At the office there was apparently little news from the front and Will Irwin fell into a chair by the fire and began pounding his beloved typewriter. The rest of us had a look at the big map on the wall and felt vexed to see that the horrid little kink in the line, at the foot of the Argonne, was still unstraightened and so many lives had been given in the effort. Less stubborn strongholds were yielding, however, and the line was moving forward rapidly and as we returned down the street some one dared to prophecy

that peace negotiations would be under way by Christmas. This was considered by the others as being highly absurd and one chap, who insisted that he had come over with the first Napoleon, gave it as his opinion that the blooming war would *never* be over and became so depressed about it that it was decided to take him into a café nearby where *somebody* had a special "pull" and could get *everybody* a hot rum with spice which was thought most necessary by now to counteract the cold. And over the spiced rum the possible end of the war was again discussed and when obliged to face the thought of a world without a war they became more and more melancholy and some one decided that the least our Government could do for us in such an emergency would be to rent a nice warm country like Spain and allow those who had no other occupation to start another war. One preferred Bulgaria for the cheese, another Palestine for the tangerines and some one else China because of no "grafters," and by the time the map of the world had been covered with imaginary battles it was decided that they now needed the cold to counteract the rum and again we ambled down the street.

At the French post one of the English boys left us to send a wire to his "little French girl." Another woman of my unit and I pretended that our vanity was hurt because he was so willing to abandon our company, upon which he remarked: "There is no satisfaction in you American women because your brains never cease to function."

When we got back to the "Y" we found our old chauffeur, "Conde—the speed maniac"—loading papers and cigarettes into a large army car in front of the door. He was blissfully happy, having received permission to make one trip each day to the very front line, if he could get there, to deliver those things to the boys. He had to drive all night to get back in time to make the next day's trip, but was perfectly satisfied with the three hours sleep that he got each morning. Upstairs other packages of papers and cigarettes were being prepared for some one who was to drop them over the fighting front from aeroplanes. One of the bystanders suggested that the Secretary had better put some "Y" cards with the gifts or the boys would think that the "Knights of Colum-

bus" had sent them. The busy little Secretary answered that he didn't care if the boys thought they came from God so long as they got them and this is probably what the boys did think.

We went into the next room to inquire for our mail and I found a second and more insistent telegram from Paris saying that it was most important that we report back there at once. I couldn't imagine anything more important than the work we were leaving at the front but we, in our small way, were also soldiers and under orders and as soon as we could get the necessary travel papers we caught the night train for Paris. It was impossible to get sleepers or reserved seats, for every available comfort was retained for the wounded and all trains were running out of schedule to make way for the "Blessés."

No lights were permitted in any of the compartments and at each station mobs of desperate travellers forced their way into our pitch black compartments, fell over our feet and our baggage, sat upon us and cursed us as we cursed them and the entire night's ride to Paris consisted of a series of pitched battles between

those in the train and those, at way stations, attempting to *get* into it.

When we finally reached headquarters we found that we were to be sent next into the quarantined camps in the S. O. S. where the Spanish Grippe and the Flu had necessitated the men's being shut up for weeks with no diversion and where the inaction was making savages of them.

It was not an easy matter to leave the big guns so far behind but we were promised that if we would go into the S. O. S. for two weeks that we might return to the Front at the end of that time. I shook my head and answered that the fighting would be over before we ever got back to the front. The "Y" secretary said, we'd be lucky if the war was over in two years, but as it turned out I was right.

I find it as difficult to *write* of the S. O. S. as our men find it to *go* there, or to remain there, and yet many of our *true* heroes are there and have *been* there since the beginning of the war. There has been no pomp, glory nor excitement for them. They have had to play the unpicturesque rôle of "The Man Behind the Gun"—I dare say there are not ten amongst all those

thousands that go to make up the great belly of the sea that sends its waves toward the front, who would not gladly have risked arms, legs, and life itself, any and every hour of the day in preference to the enforced safety of those who must prepare the ways and means for those who reap death and decoration. Mothers and sweethearts and those at home take care that no shade of disappointment crosses your face when your returning man tells you that he did not get up to "the front." Remember that it takes seven men back of the line to keep one man in the line and that your Government, not your son or sweetheart, has "the say" as to who the lucky seventh shall be who goes over the top, and remember, too, that it is the consensus of opinion of those who have dealt in this bloody business that "there are no cowards."

Then, too, you'll hear tales of misfits, men reduced in rank, or relieved of their command, —this does not prove cowardice, it means only that in the business of war as in the business of life some men, many men, through no fault of their own get shoved into the wrong cubby holes. These must be re-classified.

In one of the big re-classification centres in

the S. O. S. I found the following lines by Robert Freeman printed on a little pamphlet in the hall of the "Y" Hut.:

I played with my blocks, I was but a child,
Houses I builded, castles I piled;
But they tottered and fell, all my labour was vain.
Yet my father said kindly: "We'll try it again!"

I played with my days. What's time to a lad?
Why pore over books? Play! Play, and be glad!
Till my youth was all spent, like a sweet summer rain.
Yet my father said kindly: "We'll try it again!"

I played with my chance. Such gifts as were mine
To work with, to win with, to serve the divine,
I seized for myself, for myself they have lain.
Yet my father says kindly: "We'll try it again!"

I played with my soul, the soul that is I;
The best that is in me, I smothered the cry,
I lulled it, I dulled it—and now, oh, the pain!
Yet my father says kindly: "We'll try it again!"

Our only glimpse of home life in the S. O. S. was provided by Mrs. Mallon, the matron of the "Y" hut at Saumur—only *this* time the "hut" happened to be a handsome château converted into a social haven for the men and of-

ficers of the big artillery training camp. There were large cosy arm chairs in front of the open fire, and books to read and a piano and a writing room and a dainty tea table where chocolate and cakes were served each afternoon and on the mantel the photograph of Mrs. Mallon in the centre of a large family group.

She saw me glance at the photograph and the colour crept up to the edge of her lovely snowy hair. A little later she bent over me and whispered: "It's in awful taste for me to have that photograph there but it encourages the boys to tell me more about themselves when they realise that I am the mother of that family," and still later, by the fire that night, she told me how many boys out of a sense of chivalry and, not knowing the French customs, would find, after calling a few times on a French girl, that they were considered by the family to be engaged to her and rather than place her in an awkward position they would often place themselves in a very unhappy one and would be breaking their hearts in secret because of the girl at home whom they really loved.

She said she used to watch them day after day when they began to droop and lose heart

and very often they would finally ask her about her boys and little by little they would confide in her and permit her to help them out of difficulties with which she with her worldly knowledge and experience knew how to cope.

Not all of the men in this town were there for re-classification. Many of them belonged to the light artillery that was fighting sham battles each day on the planes just back of the town and straining to get into "the real thing" —others were there for cavalry training and it was a wonderful sight to see them sitting their horses so splendidly and taking the jumps on a field where Napoleon himself had trained.

From the artillery, cavalry, and re-classification camps of the S. O. S. we passed into what is known as "The Forbidden City"—a name given to Tours by the men in the smaller towns near it, who are forbidden to enter it. Perhaps this is because America already has more men there than can be comfortably disciplined in one town—for grey-roofed, mud-ridden Tours is the very hub of the wheel of America's war industry in Europe—a wheel with spokes pointing toward Paris and the

fighting front beyond it, toward Switzerland, Italy, the South of France—in any, and all directions, where we are obliged to deal in the ways and means of butchery and its after effects. Outside the city walls were miles of tracks laid by our engineers, acres of railroad yards devoted to the loading and shipping of our war implements and food supplies, trucks, automobiles, aeroplanes and hospital equipment—and within the city walls the streets teeming with our army officials, engineers, carpenters, mechanicians, telephone girls and technical experts. For instance some of the finest watch makers are needed for the delicate adjustments of the aeroplane mechanism and I was told that the superintendent of the Waltham Watch works was putting in ten hours a day in Tours as one of Uncle Sam's dollar a day men—and that he was one of many rich volunteers from America's business world who were sacrificing fortune and family comfort without any hope of recognition for service beyond that given them by their own soul's approval.

Tours was a little world of itself, and with the military and the industrial factions run-

ning hand in hand or rather watching each other out of the corner of the eye one got that uncomfortable feeling of hidden treachery, secret rebellion, sullen fear and hate that I used to feel under the smiling surface of Germany's suavity or sometimes under the smooth waters at Salt Lake City.

It is a condition that arises out of the disciplining of the every detail and thought of lives that, robbed of their natural freedom, feel justified in cheating the oppressor who has robbed them, and then follows suspicion and hatred and intrigue and frantic striving for power lest one be destroyed lacking it, and the next evolution is called politics and out of that grows corruption, dishonesty and every other horror and the end of it all is open war. And in a small way the little Kingdom of Tours while loyal to the country of its birth and fervent toward the cause that it was pledged to serve, seemed to me to be going through all the internal agony of a militarised industrial centre and I knew once and for all that I should rather be dead than obliged to live long in any atmosphere where one must be eternally on the alert against the subtle tyrannies of a military government.

I was homesick for the big free spirit at the front where each man took it for granted that his fellow was more than equal to looking after his own job and I wished—as they wished—that each man in Tours could have a breath of "the air up there" even though it might eventually be charged with gas. Anything was better than this heaviness and dullness and drabness. I was thankful when our work here was done. In fact we played two performances here each night—and most days—not altogether out of kindness of heart—but in order to cover this area that much sooner and be on our way.

In the next town we arrived late, having been sent by motor and lost our way—not so late however as we should have been by train for the tracks were now so congested by "blessé" trains relaying the wounded to hospitals further down the line that all train schedules had been practically abandoned. We were hustled into another car with very little supper and were again driven miles through the cold to the outskirts of the town where we played to an audience of twenty-five hundred men who had

been in quarantine for "ages" as they said and who were feeling perfectly desperate for a break in the monotony.

One of the "Y" women and a Red Cross nurse came back to the dressing room of the hut to tell me confidentially that the men had worked until seven that night decorating a new hall that they themselves had renovated and painted and that they had been scheming for days to "get up" a supper after the show and would be heart broken unless we came. We all looked at each other in despair for, in spite of having had better living accommodations in the S. O. S. than on any other part of the tour, the depressed state of the men to whom we played, or the great number of hospital shows, or the constant rain or something or other had pulled us down in a few days more than all the real hardships at the front—and we were so tired, as one of the girls put it, that our very souls ached. The men of our unit tried to explain this for us but the inevitable answer came back —"Just come for a few minutes. They haven't seen any girls for so long. It will do them so much good." We knew the speech by heart and we had often responded to it when we were

longing and aching for our beds, and to-night on the way out we had pledged ourselves to each other not to give in to it again, and now we were all ashamed to refuse them and also ashamed to go back on our word to ourselves and to each other.

I looked at the weaker of the two girls and said: "Well, how about it?" She answered that she would do whatever the rest of us did.

The men of our unit argued, and truthfully, that it was the girls that the boys wanted to see and that they would never be missed and were going home.

When we saw how hard the boys must have worked to decorate the barracks and with what pleasure they watched each course of the supper come onto the long tables we were glad that we had not disappointed them but, Ye gods, there were hundreds of them and they had a band waiting to play dance music and there were only three of us.

I shall never forget that dance—it seemed to me I'd only been turned in one direction when some one from out the long lines of uniforms that penned us in would seize me and turn me round in another direction and some one else

would snatch me from him and step on me, and then release me to another before he'd even consoled me and so on and so on for hours and here and there out of the corner of my eye I could catch fleeting glimpses of a pink dress and a tan coloured dress and I knew the same thing was happening to the other two girls.

Some time later on we leaned backed in the car too exhausted to speak. When we were about half way home one of the girls said wearily—"Well, I've only *one* life to give for my country, thank God!"

And the next morning I thought my time had come to give mine. The expected had happened—after dancing with men just recovering from Flu and just taking it on—I'd got one of the "going or coming" germs and it was only by the aid of all my will power, Mr. Morrisey's rum, and Miss Brice's quinine, that I was able to keep going until we had played our last performance in the S. O. S.—temperature 104—and fallen exhausted into the first train that would get us back to Paris.

Three times we were booked out of Paris to return to the front and as many times were we stopped by delays in travelling permits, illness,

this, that or the other, and before we could make a fourth attempt came rumours of the approaching armistice and with the probability of a rapid shifting of troops it was decided to send no more entertainers north until something decisive could be learned so, as I had predicted, we never again reached "the Front."

Instead, we played the remaining ten days of our signed service in and around Paris, at Long Champs once the fashionable racing course, now converted into an army transportation headquarters, at the Palais de Glace, once the old skating rink, now the "Y" Theatre, at the Soldiers and Sailors' Club, the Pavillon and other places, and while there was very little thrill in playing under such normal conditions there was at least the interest of daily and conflicting rumours from the front and one night on our way home from the Palais de Glace where we had played to twenty-five hundred cheering men and seen so many New Yorkers in the audience that we almost thought it a first night, we met the French people surging through the streets, their arms round each other —and we were told that the Kaiser had been dethroned and that Berlin was in the throes of

revolution. There was an hour's pandemonium in the streets of Paris and every one devoutly hoped the Huns were wreaking upon the Kaiser some of the vengeance that we should have liked to wreak on him.

And then came the morning of November the 11th when all ears were open for the sound of the cannon that should proclaim the signing of the armistice. I myself heard nothing, but at noon boys began parading down the Avenue de l'Opera with flags—their hands on each other's shoulders. By two o'clock the streets were swarming with men, women and children, marching aimlessly back and forth, hugging and kissing each other and sometimes trying to sing the Marseillaise.

At three o'clock when I looked down on the Place de l'Opera from the top of the Equitable Building, where I had joined friends, the streets were a mosaic of black, blue and tan, the red caps of the French soldiers with their yellow cross bars standing out like sunflowers amongst the more sombre colours of the swaying masses of humans below us. Occasional vehicles overladen with shouting soldiers made

their way here and there through the streets but these were few and far between and there were no bands or horns available to help out the voices that were trying to sing.

Across the street from us in front of the Rue de la Paix, it soon became the fashion for American and French soldiers, hands on shoulders, to form in long lines and march into the bar of the café for a drink.

We watched the crowds without finding much variety in their antics until the wonderful Paris twilight began to wrap the distant steeples and turrets in mist. Opposite us the victory group on top of the Paris Opera House was silhouetted sharply against the sky and just underneath it the siren that had sounded so many alarms to terrified Paris in the four dreadful years just passed, seemed to be brooding on its lost occupation and I wondered how many years it would be before all the "Cave de Secours" signs would have disappeared from over the cellarways that had so long offered sanctuary to the fleeing.

With friends of the Marine Corps I drove down to the Place de la Concorde out through the Champs Elysée and into the Bois.

The guns from the submarine on the Seine were still booming their tidings of victory as we neared the Arc de Triomphe. A procession of French men and women bearing the flags and banners of the Allies swept through the splendid opening and on toward the Bois, singing the Marseillaise.

As we passed further into the Bois we saw no one save here and there a pair of strolling lovers, unmindful of any tumult, save that in their own hearts. And ephemeral things, such as war, and immortal things, such as love, seemed once again, after four years of nightmare, to slip into their rightful proportions to each other.

The haze grew more dense, little lakes here and there were barely discernible, the tall groups of poplars, in some of the more open spaces looked ghostlike and majestic against the poorly lighted sky. And nature, as though pitying the tired hearts and worn nerves of its war-weary victims, wrapped lovers and lone souls alike, in one of those soft enfolding nights that seem to bless and restore.

We returned by way of "The Dolphin," found ourselves the only guests there, drank

our tea, port, or champagne-cocktails with what spirit of conquest we could muster, and reached the edge of the Bois just as a searchlight shot a long yellow stream of flame from the Eifel tower. It was the first time the tower had been lit since the war and it was the most lovely and most thrilling moment of the day's demonstration.

The crowds were becoming more subdued and less dense as we reached the hotel at the far end of the Tuileries Gardens.

I had barely time to dress before our final performance at the Pavillon and, in one way, all the unit were glad to be playing, for each one of them was too highly keyed by the day's events to want to stay in doors.

The performance seemed like an anti-climax after the one we had given the previous Saturday night at the Palais de Glace and both we and our audience were eager to get into the street again and be a part of the mob.

Both feigned enthusiasm, however, and at last we sang our final chorus, as a unit, having played to more than one hundred and twenty five thousand American men in France.

So ended our last three months, as an official

unit, also the last three months of the war. In spite of all efforts to hasten our departure from America, Fate had timed our finish, to a day, to the finish of the fighting in France.

THE END

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