BACK OF THE FRONT IN FRANCE

BRADLEY

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Letters from Amy Owen Bradley, motor driver of the American fund for French wounded

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BACK OF THE FRONT IN FRANCE ***



Interior of A. F. F. W. Dépôt at Quimper

BACK OF THE FRONT IN FRANCE

LETTERS FROM AMY OWEN BRADLEY

MOTOR DRIVER

OF THE

AMERICAN FUND FOR FRENCH WOUNDED

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON

W. A. BUTTERFIELD

59 BROMFIELD ST.

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W. A. BUTTERFIELD
SEPTEMBER, 1918

Dedicated

TO THE MANY WORKERS FOR
THE AMERICAN FUND FOR FRENCH WOUNDED
WHOSE LABORS HAVE ENABLED HELP
AND ENCOURAGEMENT
TO BE BROUGHT TO SO MANY BRAVE SOLDIERS
AND DEVOTED WOMEN OF FRANCE
IN THEIR TIME OF TRIAL

FOREWORD

THESE letters from a young American girl in France to her family, were written without thought of publication. She is still in France and has therefore been unable to revise them herself, or correct errors due to the haste with which they were written.

They are the simple record of what she has seen and felt in France, in doing work that has taken her from Brittany to the Alps.

R. M. B.

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INTRODUCTION

THE American Fund for French Wounded started its work of emergency relief for the sufferers in France in April, 1915, as a part of an English organization. By December, 1915, the desire to help France and to testify to the deep sympathy with her cause had resulted in such a rapid growth of the organization in this country that an independent American society was formed with a central distributing depot in Paris.

The work in America has been carried on by many hundreds of committees throughout the entire country. In these committees thousands of workers have for more than three years given countless hours of labor, preparing and packing surgical dressings, hospital supplies and garments, refugee clothing and comfort bags. Over 40,000 cases filled with these supplies have been forwarded to France in that time, besides motor cars and trucks for the delivery service of the Fund, and sums of money for immediate emergency calls.

In France, these supplies have been distributed from the Paris Depot and from the many branch depots and dispensaries, this work being carried on with the approval of the French Government and in coöperation with the American Red Cross.

It is hoped that these letters may help some of the many devoted workers of the Fund to follow in imagination their handiwork until it reaches those who are so sorely in need across the sea.

BACK OF THE FRONT IN FRANCE

CHAPTER I

WINTER IN PARIS

Paris, October 31, 1916.

HERE we are, arrived safely, after spending our first night in Bordeaux, and I am staying with Uncle Owen and Marie.

The statue of Alsace-Lorraine in the Place de la Concorde still wears her mourning wreaths, but she holds a French flag in one of her hands.

We went yesterday to see the headquarters of the American Fund for French Wounded at the Alcazar d'Eté. The office is near the Champs Elysées in a lovely place surrounded by trees, and the sun comes pouring into the workrooms.

At present, in the mornings I am to file papers containing requests, and in the afternoons to pack comfort bags. We are to work in shifts of five hours a day each, which doesn't sound very appalling, but it is quite strenuous.

It makes you realize how near the Germans got to Paris to go out to Neuilly, and see the trenches and barbed wire on the old wall of Paris. We walked there with some Ambulance boys who were on the

steamer. They wore their uniforms for the first time, and were tremendously proud of them. Every time they meet an officer, of course they have to salute. They were very shy about it, and when they saw an officer coming, half a block away, they would tell us not to laugh or look at them, and as of course we met about three officers in every block, our conversation was constantly interrupted by saluting. We would be laughing over something, when suddenly a wooden expression would come over the boys' faces, half a block would be paced in silence, and then a salute like a railroad signal moving up and down would follow, when the conversation would resume its natural flow. These Ambulance boys are probably going to the Argonne section,—one has already gone, and bade us a very cheerful and desperately serious farewell. That section is no joke.

One of the Ambulance boys thought he would see Paris the other day, so he wandered about (really to practice saluting in his uniform). Finally, being tired, he sat down at a table in a café to rest. When he got up to go, he picked up his gloves, and was greeted by a piercing scream from a Frenchwoman near by, who said he was going off with a pair of gloves belonging to an English officer at a table opposite. Neither understood French, but the English officer left, seeing that some kind of row was up, and not wanting to be involved in it. The woman, however, hung on to the American, and yelled for the police. Meanwhile a crowd gathered. A passing voice came out of it,—"There's one of those Ambulance boys in trouble again." The policeman asked him for something, probably his "permis de séjour," and, as he couldn't understand, he didn't produce it. Then he and the woman were both hauled off to the police

station, where, naturally, he swore that the pair of gloves he had were his own, made in the U. S. A., showed his “permis de séjour,” and was let go at once. When he got home, he found that he had two pairs of gloves!

The Ambulance men certainly do have odd experiences on account of being unable to speak the “lingo.” At Bordeaux, Eliot’s bags failed to get on the train because he didn’t have a ticket, he got one of the few porters, exclaiming, “Vous-me-ici!” and ran for the ticket window. There was a whole line of soldiers buying tickets, but, nothing daunted, he seized the porter by one hand, and rushed down the whole line of soldiers, tipping each one a franc (as he had nothing smaller). They all laughed, and let him get to the window and buy his ticket. He said he was bankrupt from that time on.

Paris, November 30, 1916.

Yesterday in the metro, I saw a common soldier on crutches get into the car. A colonel, with a very careworn face, got up and gave him his seat saying, “It is hard for you to stand, my boy.” The soldier was only a lad, and he blushed and said, “Merci, mon Colonel,” and had a frightful time keeping his balance, while trying to salute. The Colonel held him up while he saluted, and helped him to the seat. When he got off, the car was crowded, and the Colonel helped him to the door and out.

My work has been changed, and I now drive a Ford to do errands about Paris. The car, whose name is “Lizzie,” is painted gray, with red crosses and “Comité Américain pour les Blessés Français” on one side, and “American Fund for French Wounded” on

the other. I've had her for two days, and take care of her as well as drive her. I also wear a uniform which consists of my leather coat with shoulder straps, marked A. F. F. W., and a blue felt hat with A. F. F. W. on the hatband. Nobody in Paris knows what it means, as the Motor Service of the A. F. F. W. has had uniforms only a week. Hence every one stares, especially as most women in France don't wear uniforms in the street (one does not even see many uniformed nurses). However, I've discovered a way not to be stared at, and that is to stand near the door of the metro, where they take you for a new variety of ticket-woman.

The first time I had Lizzie out I was to be a messenger, and I left her in front of the Alcazar d'Eté while I went to lunch. When I came back, lo! there was a flat tire, and I proceeded to take it off and put in a new inner tube. No sooner had I started to change it, than six soldiers emerged from the atmosphere, in their atmospheric blue uniforms, all asking if they could give me a "coup de main," and they would not let me put the tire on myself. Then I needed an electric tape, and the lieutenant rushed off to a near-by taxi and got a piece for me. At last I started out, but lo! Lizzie was in a vicious mood, and the tire went flat again in about two feet. I had to take it off again, and again to my aid a French soldier sprang, full armed with a monkey-wrench, from the pavement of the Champs Elysées.

Paris, January 1, 1917.

The night before Christmas, I thought of you sitting about the fire, and hanging up the stockings, but it made me too homesick to think of it.

On Christmas Eve, I went to a canteen party. There was a big room in which were three long tables filled with soldiers,—every kind of soldier, all in their rain-and-sun faded uniforms, for they were going back to the front the next day. When we got there, they were all eating under a ceiling festooned with red, white, and blue, and the entertainment was ready to begin. Various people sang French songs for them, which they politely clapped. Then a woman with a magnificent voice sang a song in French about Christmas night. There was a dead silence, then "Un, deux, trois; un, deux, trois," and they all clapped in rhythm. It is thrilling to hear, and they do it when especially pleased. They shouted and stamped their feet for more, but they were not to have more from her then. The entertainment went on; Harvard and Yale songs were sung by the Ambulance boys, accompanied by mandolin, guitar, and piano. Those were wildly applauded in the same manner. A Belgian started to sing; he had a fearful voice, but he was good-naturedly clapped and cheered. Then one of the Ambulance boys got up and sang "My Laddie," and "My Little Gray Home in the West," in one of the sweetest, truest voices I have ever heard. The poilus listened so intently that you could have heard a pin drop. Of course they couldn't understand the words, but they loved it, and yelled "bis" and "encore." When he had sat down, they all began calling something. At first we didn't know what. Then we realized it was "Tippé-ré-ree" that they wanted, so we all sang it together. The poilus sang, too, though heaven knows how they pronounced the words, or whether they sang in French or Flemish.

After that, we passed candy to them, and every one of them said, "Merci, Mademoiselle." When I came to one of the side tables, where the seats were against

the wall, I handed the bowl to the end man and told him to pass it down. That went very well; they smiled their “Merci, Mademoiselle” across the table to me, until the bowl came to a colored man as black as soot. He took it from the next man, reached it across the table to me, and said, “I want it from your own hands,” so I had to pass it up the rest of the way, leaning across the table!

Then the black man wanted to sing. He sang;—the song was about a Belgian saying good-bye to his relations. A verse was devoted to each—Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, Wife, Little Girl, Son, Aunt, Uncle, all listened to with great patience. Each stanza was droned out in a deep, sad voice, while the singer rolled his eyes to the ceiling in a kind of amen at the end. After the “Uncle,” he began on the “Cousins,” and the poilus saw no end. They clapped vociferously, and yelled to him to sit down, which he finally did among cheers, claps, and laughter. When they’d finally got him seated, a young, sensitive-looking French soldier arose. They all shouted, “un camarade—un poilu!” He cleared his throat and began, at first very low and timidly, a song about “La Lune,” and the rest all joined in the chorus. It was quite lovely.

At the end they all stood up and sang the “Marseillaise,” until the welkin rang. Then they shouted, “Vive l’Amérique!” “Vive la France!” and, though no English were there, “Vive l’Angleterre!”

When they went out, we gave them comfort bags to take away, and they went off gloating over their peeps into them.

On Christmas afternoon, Marie and I went to a hospital to distribute comfort bags. All the men were as dressed up as they could be under the

circumstances, and were smiling at us from their beds when we came in. We gave each one a bag. They were delighted, especially as the bags came from America, and were particularly nice ones. A good many of the bags contained musical instruments, such as mouth organs. Most of the men didn't know how to play them, but one poilu did, and I dare say strange and weird sounds were issuing from that ward by morning, for, as one soldier said, "We have plenty of time here to learn." A good many of the bags had messages in English in them on postal cards. These we translated for them, and they loved them, especially the ones from children. One man had a tiny pink looking-glass in his bag. He considered it a treasure of untold value, and kept picking it up and looking at it, back and front, every few moments. I really don't know whether he liked the back or the front better. In some of the bags was chewing gum, and as we hadn't time to take it out, Marie made them a speech, and told them not to swallow it or they would be ill. She said that the Americans chew it for good luck, and then spit it out.

When we went away, the men called "au revoir" after us, and one of the sisters, a tiny lady in a white coiffe, kissed us on both cheeks "to thank you for my poilus."

Paris, January 6th, 1917.

This week I have done absolutely nothing but lie on my back under Lizzie, or else scrub and arrange her from above. She has a nervous, temperamental disposition, poor dear, and one never can tell what she will do next. She has really been an awful trial to my nerves during this last month, as I have driven her nearly every day, and every day she has done

something. There's nothing I don't know about 1914 Fords by now. First, her carburetor leaked perpetually for a week,—awful! when gasoline is 3.60 francs for five liters. Neither they, at the Ford place, nor we, at the garage, could find out what the matter was. It seemed to be plain cussedness,—however we changed the carburetor. I wrote you before, that the first day I drove her she had three tire-changing fits,—last week she had another spell of them in the other rear tire. The tires were completely worn out, so we got new ones. You'd think that would be enough, but no, we took her all to pieces and cleaned out the carbon, for the second time in two weeks, and put her together again. She wasn't a bit grateful, however, and the next day obligingly dropped off her gasoline pipe for me. It had come unsoldered. I must say to her credit that she had the sense to do it in the garage doorway, and not at the Place de l'Opéra or the Champs Elysées or the Arc de Triomphe (why add insult to injury?) or the Faubourg St. Honoré which she had chosen as fitting settings for her other tantrums. However, it took two days to get it soldered on again, as it is almost impossible to find people who can do the job, which takes about fifteen minutes perhaps. Was that enough? No. The next day I took Cousin Bessie to do some errands needed for her trip to the front. Lizzie had fits again. The next day I took her out to the Ford place as oil was leaking through her piston rings, and she went on two cylinders,—which made her motion like that caused by Dummerston "Thank-ye-ma'ams." They couldn't mend her till the middle of next week, and I have spent the last two days in painting her outsides, which were completely bare in places. Of course I got under her to paint the rods below, that were all rusty. When the paint fell on my

face, I felt like Michael Angelo painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. I also got a lot of it in my hair, which so helps one's personal appearance!

If there is one thing in life that I never expected to be, it is a coal heaver. The business as conducted in Boston has never appealed to me. Nevertheless,—I have been one. It is almost impossible to get coal here. You have to fetch it yourself. Barbara Howe, from Boston, and I went to get some the other day, on the way home from work in Lizzie. We finally managed to get a bag containing a scant two bushels, I should say, and paid ten francs for it. Miss Howe had just received a letter from her family, commenting on how luxuriously she was living in an apartment by herself! She told me that, just as we were heaving the bag up the steps, and we collapsed with giggles, and could go no farther for some moments, to the astonishment of the passing inhabitants of Paris.

Paris, February 2.

Monday, Dorothy and I went to another hospital. It was run by sisters, and was as clean and neat as a pin, and very sunny. The men were all in little rooms, two or three together, and all convalescent. They were making little chains out of beads, very patiently, and seemed glad to see us. One man, who was plastered all over with medals, and had one leg, took great joy in telling us which medal was which, but wouldn't tell us how he got them. A man with one arm said, "Yes, when one has only one leg the medals are good as a consolation, only you've got to do something to get them." He didn't have any medals, but seemed to think it unnecessary for him, as he had both legs.

We have just heard the news of our having broken relations with Germany. Dorothy and I were out in the motor the morning the news came, and an old gentleman nearly fell out of a passing taxi trying to salute us. At the hospitals, they all say that they hope soon to welcome our country, as well as ourselves, as allies.

Marie got a letter from her filleul, telling how he had hung a big sign over the trench proclaiming that the U. S. is now against the “barbares,” which greatly enraged the opposing Hun. Also all along the front they have fired salvos of the 75’s to arouse the Boches, and to celebrate our breaking off diplomatic relations.

I do hope our supplies won’t stop coming on account of the submarines and the break with Germany. The need is so terrible, and still as great, if not greater, than ever.

I have just got S.’s letter about her house-party. It does seem so jolly and cozy and safe. It is a good thing that there is a spot left on earth where one can laugh, just for the joy of laughing.

The number of wounded is a thing one never gets used to. It is awful to see every other soldier wearing a “wounded” badge. Imagine if every second man in the Boston subway wore one, and nearly every woman were in deep black. It’s terrible to think of. However, more and more, one perceives the courage behind, and that seems the greatest thing of all.

CHAPTER II

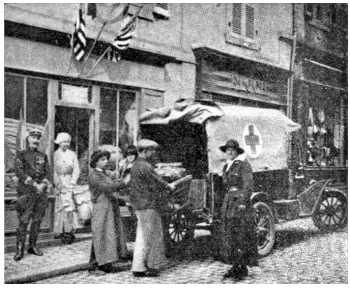
Brittany and Its Hospitals

Le Mans, March 8, 1917.

THIS postal shows where we (Mrs. Lee, Katherine Key, and I) are to-night, after a very cold journey across snow-swept plains and hills from Chartres. We went to see the Cathedral again, and it was magnificent in a moment's sunshine with the dazzling snow outside. We are traveling in the Ford truck, Maggie (so called because she was given by the Magnolia Committee), on our way to Quimper, where the dépôt is to be established for the distribution of hospital supplies.

Quimper, Brittany, March 12.

We are getting the dépôt open slowly. The things are untangled from the red tape of the railway station, and to-day we have been to the Board of Health.



A. F. F. W. Dépôt at Quimper

We have two adorable French soldiers who work for us. They are both from the invaded region,—one from Lille. Both have had operations lately, and one has his head and ear done up in a bandage. The other has his nose stuffed up with cotton and has been wounded three times. They insist on working terribly hard, and it is all we can do to keep them from overdoing. We pay them two francs a day, which seems little, but is the regular pay. One of them hesitated about taking it at first, but said that as he had had only five cents a day since the beginning of the war, he would take it, as he needed it. He certainly did. When he first came to us he looked woebegone, but now he smiles and shaves and looks a little pinker. We gave him a comfort bag, and he was delighted to find a pair of socks in it. He said he hadn't any, as they cost too much, so we gave him an extra pair and a sweater. When he saw the pajamas that we were unpacking he asked the usual question: "What are they, Mademoiselle?" I explained and asked him if he had a nightshirt to wear at the hospital (he is still staying there) and he said, no, so I told him to choose one. Having red hair, he promptly chose a pale pink one with bright pink facings.

The other man has a Croix de Guerre with a star. We asked him how he got it, and he explained shyly that he was the first to enter the Fort de Douaumont when the French retook it, during the battle of Verdun. He said he was not wounded there, but at the Chemin des Dames, which was—"Whew-w-w-w," worse than anything he had seen "with hand-grenades and artillery you know,—the longer the war lasts, the better they know how to use those things." He said that at Verdun he was up to his hips in mud most of the time, and no one could fire a

gun, as (except for the artillery) it was all “very near with grenades.” Now, he lifts crates for us as if they were dominoes, and washes the windows till they shine like crystal.

Quimper, Brittany, March 19, 1917.

This is the most lovely spot you ever saw, and it is spring and warm. The primroses, and gorse, and violets, and little daisies, and jonquils are out, and the lilac buds are just bursting open.

On Sunday we went to Concarneau. The sea was the most tender spring blue. It was so peaceful and quiet that I could hardly believe we were in a Red Cross car, bowling along to take supplies to two hospitals filled with wounded and sick soldiers. The roadsides were sprinkled with little farmhouses. Through the open doors of some we saw the beautifully carved, but deadly, closed, Breton beds in the main room, in others, very modern iron beds, thank heaven! All the people were out strolling on the roads in their picturesque Sunday clothes, the women in their immaculate starched caps, and the men wearing embroidered waist-coats with buckles and velvet streamers. The children are dressed exactly like the grown people, long skirts and all. They stroll with their cows and horses, hens and pigs, casually down the road, so we have to be careful not to go too fast. Every now and then, we pass a soldier on leave, with the others. Once we passed one of their two-wheeled vehicles filled with women in white coiffes, an old man, and in the middle a soldier. One of the girls had her arm around his neck, and he had his about her waist. They were driving toward the railway station.

When we got to Concarneau we went first to a lovely pink house; it was beautiful against the blue sea, and was in the midst of a box-hedged garden, on the top of cliffs overlooking the water. On the front gate was a Red Cross flag, and they took care of twenty-five convalescent soldiers there. The soldiers certainly must have a serene and peaceful convalescence. They can fish from the rocks and walk on the beach. We gave them some reclining chairs and left some “comfort bags” for them (they call them “sacs surprises”).

Mme. Toiray said that several days ago, she was waked by the sound of shooting on the sea, and a Norwegian ship was torpedoed almost outside her window. It seemed impossible on the smiling, shining blue sea that we were looking at, that seemed as harmless as at Manchester. They have suffered badly here from submarines. In one village there are sixty-four orphans, whose fathers were killed on the little blue-sailed fishing boats, blown up by those Boche submarines. They are thick around these coasts. They tell us that the Germans fire with rifles on the sailors who are clinging to the wreckage. There are also mines about.

In another hospital that we went to see, most of the patients were out, but there were two in bed, and we gave them bags. They were so excited! Every time they fished in the bags, and drew out a new little package, they smiled more broadly, and one, a very pale boy with huge blue eyes, was quite pink with pleasure when he got his last present. He found an extraordinary brush in his bag, something like a bottle brush, only twisted round like a doughnut. None of us knew what it was for but, nothing daunted, he told us, in his weak voice, all the things

he was going to use it for, and was much amused and pleased with his necessity for invention.

In leaving supplies at the hospitals, after having ascertained the number of wounded, we have to extract from the authorities what they need by asking questions about each article, for they are always so afraid of imposing on us, that they never ask for enough.

After finishing our visits to the hospitals, we went to see the old town that used to be an island, and is surrounded by a wall. It has tiny winding streets, overhanging and rickety houses, and arched and carved doorways in all kinds of odd little corners. We went into the church, and there, under the gray stone vaulted roof, a hundred or more women in their white caps were kneeling in silence, a few men among them. Before the altar was the black pavilion that they have here for coffins, but in it was no coffin. The priest was saying something very low, and a devout “Amen” came from the kneeling congregation as we entered. We stole out again. I don’t know whose the funeral was, but it must have been for some one from Concarneau, who had died away from home.

Brest, Finistère, March 30, 1917.

Since we left Quimper we have visited one hospital on the way, at Châteaulin, which is quite a pretty town. There was a ladder in the locks for the salmon to climb up. There were only about twenty-seven “blessés” in the hospital, and we found them in the garden, playing croquet in the rain with an ancient set sent by us. We gave out comfort bags to the men, and they were enormously pleased as usual. One

man had no name in his bag, and was terribly upset to have no “dame Américaine” to thank. Therefore I gave him the name of Mrs. Rice in Brattleboro, Vermont, to thank, and he was thrilled, and wanted to know all about her, where she lived, etc. He was a well-educated boy, and actually said he knew where Boston was. I told him Vermont was named by a Frenchman, because the mountains were so green, which piece of information interested him greatly. The nicest man in the hospital was a mobilized priest, who had been wounded. He was so excited over the bags, and told us that they did a great deal for the morale of the men. Every one tells that to us, and it can’t be too much emphasized. Several peasant women, in their little white caps and black dresses, have come to thank us personally for making their sons, in the hospitals near by, so happy with our presents of bags. One man came on his way back to the front to thank us. He had been out when we gave the bags and we had left one for him. Unfortunately we were away that day, but his little, white-capped mother came a day or two later, all the way from Concarneau—a distance of twenty-five kilometers—to make sure that we were thanked.

Going through Plougastel-Daoulas, a tiny little place, we stopped for a moment to see the church, a very old one, and a white-capped old woman came running out of a house across the street to thank us for our “bonté” to her son, to whom we had given a bag. He was at Benodet, a little village by the sea, where there is a hospital of convalescent wounded. No one had been near them until we came. He had written her on some of the letter-paper in the bag, and she showed us the “enveloppe Américaine” as a great curiosity. She said he had written to thank the “bonne dame Américaine” whose name he had found

in the bag. It contained a picture of the sender's house with a vegetable garden in front of it, in which flourished cabbages, potatoes, and beets. Those vegetables were a real tangible link between him and the Iowa lady. I dare say she'll get a letter from him asking all kinds of questions, and telling how he managed his garden.

One little man had lots of letter-paper and *no one* to write to. He was nearly in tears over it, and I gave him S.'s name, as I knew she'd be sure to answer, and told him she was my sister, which made her more real to him. He was much pleased.

After we had spent the night at Châteaulin, we came on to Brest through the loveliest, hilly, wild country. We took a country road, and finally ended up at a ferry, where we bobbled across the river in company with two cows, two peasants, and a horse and cart. Two sailors, whom we overtook, told us they were walking to Brest, about eight kilometers (five miles), and we asked them if they wanted a ride. They accepted joyfully, and told Mrs. Lee (all their conversation was respectfully directed to her) that they had never been in an automobile before. They certainly had a novel experience going in a Ford Red Cross camion on top of bales of wool, jerseys, comfort bags, etc. You should have seen the expression on the face of the Octroi man when he lifted up the back flap, and saw two sailors enthroned on a "tas de choses." He let us go on without looking any further.

When I went to the garage in the morning, we found a flat tire. I started to take it off while Katherine gave mental support, when we heard a voice behind us saying, "You 'ave 'ad a misfortune, 'aven't you?" There was a British Tommy, as large as life and twice

as natural.

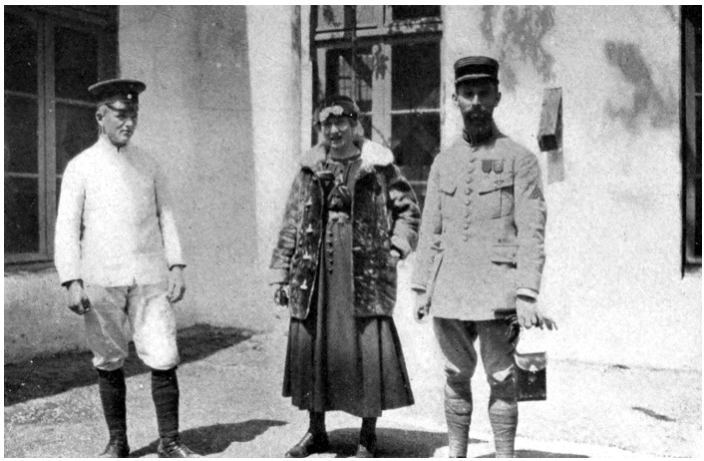
He grabbed the tools away from me and proceeded to put the new tire on, conversing gayly all the while, even while pumping. He was very young and pink cheeked. He asked what we were doing here. We told him. “Well,” he said, “Americans and British is all the same. I might ’ave been born over on that side of the water, an’ you on this side, an’ you’d ’a been British and me Yankee.” (Puff, pump, pump.) “H’America ’as to think for awhile before she jumps in, she ’as so many Germans.” (Puff.) “Pretty soon you may be looking after some of your own boys though.” (Pump.) “I looks after these Portuguese ’ere. I don’t know exactly ’oo I’m under. I’m very free. At the front they supervise you, but ’ere so long as the car runs, I can do as I like.” (Pump, pump—proud glance at his perfect motor in the corner.) “I belongs to the A. S. C. There’s two other Englishmen ’ere besides me, and the officers’ servants. I don’t know ’oo I’m under (that seemed to bother him) but I drive the colonel around, so I sticks to ’im and ’e *sticks to me*.” (Pump, pump.) We asked him where he’d been. “Aow, around. I came here from Paree (Paris, French touch). The road from Paree is full of ’airpin bends. I got ditched at night, so I ran to the nearest town and got six men to pull the car out of the ditch, but when I started ’er up,—h’out she come, so they got a ride back to town,” etc., etc.

“Well, now, I ’opes you ’ave good luck with that tire —aow, that’s nothin’—glad to ’elp, you know. Now I’ll brush up an’ see my sweet-’eart. ’Ope you never see me in those ’ospitals you see.”

So hoping that we should *not* meet again, we parted.

Quimper, Finistère, April 8, ’17.

Our last day at Brest was the most interesting of all. We visited the big marine hospital, which is perfect, and looks just like a ship, another big hospital, also admirable, and a third in what used to be a jail. The Médecin-chef was a dear kindly old soul, and very efficient, too. He organized, cleaned, and whitewashed the whole thing in fifteen days. It was an excellent hospital. He showed us down rows of whitewashed rooms, some with improvised beds of wood, where the men slept who didn’t have to stay in bed all day. The Médecin-chef asked us if we would be afraid of the Boches, and when we said, “No,” he took us up to the top of the building to a ward of German prisoners, guarded by a sailor with a gun and fixed bayonet. The ward was very nice, just like the ones downstairs. Most of the prisoners were very young boys, one looked no older than sixteen. They had a special doctor all to themselves (each floor has its doctor there), and he told us about their different wounds, how they were, etc., and jollied them up. In one corner of the room, they had made a little chapel out of paper, that they had cut out and colored, and over it was a sign written in German, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Strange, wasn’t it? They were as fat and rosy as the French wounded (who look remarkably healthy, usually). They have the same food and care as the French, and the same liberties, except that of walking about the town when convalescent. There was a yard, however, where they could go out.



Miss Key with a German Prisoner and a French Doctor

As this is Easter Sunday, we went to mass in the cathedral at Quimper. It was filled with peasant women in their best black velvet dresses and white caps, children, in their colored silk aprons, and peasant men in black velvet suits embroidered in yellow. Many soldiers were there too, some on crutches, some with their heads bandaged, and some with no visible wounds. There were very few townspeople in ordinary clothes, like ourselves. The service was absolutely silent, except for a little bell that rang now and then, and a scraping when the prie-dieu chairs were turned around. Far outside on the hill we could hear a bugle blowing.

When the service was over, we all went out amid the clatter of sabots. What do you think we saw? Above the “Mairie” opposite, a huge French flag flung out. Under it were the flags of all the Allies, and in the middle, taller than all the others, our own beloved stars and stripes, floating in the breeze. I don’t believe any of us have ever been much more thrilled, though it did give one an awful, choky feeling, too.

Of course we went over to the “Mairie” and asked for the Mayor’s secretary, a good friend of ours. We are the only Americans here, and we, as Americans, thanked him, for America, for putting our flag with the others, where for so long we had wanted it to be. He was quite touched, and quietly congratulated us on being allies. He felt that our flag must be with the others, he said, and he had sent to Nantes to have one made. You cannot buy flags like it in France now, though in a few days they hope to have many. When we went out, there was another like it over the Préfecture de Police, only this time it was alone, with a French flag on either side.

When we give our bags to the “blessés” now, we say they are from their allies, “the Americans.” The soldiers are always very grave, they thank us and say, “O yes, Mademoiselle but it makes us sad to think that another country must suffer as we have,” and they look at us with a kind of grave pity, when they thank us for our “gentilesse.”



UNITED STATES FLAG ON MAIRIE AT QUIMPER

Quimper, May 1.

The best way to tell you about our work here is to

describe a visit to the Hôpital Mixte, as an example, though of course they vary.

We walked through an arched doorway, over which French and Red Cross flags were fluttering, and found ourselves in a garden with buildings on four sides. It is a really pretty garden, with trees, box-hedges, and paths. The pear trees and camellias are all in bloom now. Everything is a tender spring green, and it seems as though all the white flowers in the world were blooming together, and trying to make a kind of resurrection for all the pure, brave souls who have died in the war. Strangely enough, the young recruits of the Class of 1918, whom we hear marching through the towns at all hours, and see all day, have uniforms of white unbleached cotton, too.

But I was telling you about the Hôpital Mixte. A sister, in white too, met us at the door. We asked for the Médecin-chef, and afterwards the sisters showed us the linen room. You never saw such an immaculate place. No boots are ever allowed to tread on the shiny floor, and the sisters almost dance over it on little pads, left in the doorway for the purpose. All the sheets, pillowcases, socks, pajamas, shirts, and pieces of old linen are arranged in patterns. We exclaimed, and said that it must have taken a long time to make it so beautiful. The sister smiled, and said, “No, not when one is used to it,” and explained that this arrangement lets the air in between the piles of linen, which is good for it. It was all darned and patched to the last degree. We saw some familiar day-shirts with the U. S. flags on the pockets, and they seemed to consist more of patches than of original shirt. “All the things have to be mended every time they are washed,” she explained. “There

are only fourteen sisters to do everything." "How many wounded have you?" we asked. "Two hundred and fifty, and we expect another fifty to-morrow; we are cleaning an empty ward upstairs for them." We told her that we had presents from America for the soldiers. "Already, from America, for *my* soldiers!"

As we entered the first ward, she called to the soldiers from the doorway, "Mes enfants, here are some ladies from America, with presents for you from the United States!" Heads popped up from battered pillows on lines of wobbly beds, and pale faces looked at us with interest, as an incident in a life of boredom. A thin man, with a leg in a plaster cast, was the first to receive a surprise bag. "Am I to choose," he said, "one little package, and pass the bag along?" You should have seen him beam with pleasure when we told him it was all for him, and that he would find within a card from the American lady who sent the bag. They loved the mouth organs. A man who had been wounded twice before, whose Croix de Guerre and Médaille Militaire hung over his fever chart, told me he was going to keep his mouth organ for his little boy. We asked him where the child was; he said he did not know, but he had read in the paper that morning that his village had been liberated from the Germans. He had had no news of his family until a month ago. Then he learned that his wife had died, and his little boy was safe with his grandparents. His family did not know where he was, nor he, where they were, but such was his faith in France and all she undertook, that he knew that there, in that far away hospital, his little boy would come to him, somehow. He would keep his American gift, the little mouth-organ, safe until he saw his boy. Do you wonder they thank us for those bags? The doctors tell us they are wonderful for the morale of

their soldiers. Long hours of lying in bed slip away as they play the games found in the bags, or exchange and examine each others' presents. Above all they love penknives, pipes, socks, and razors. They like raffia, and it is hard to get it here. Send bright colors, they make such pretty things of it, and it helps to pass many a weary hour. A soldier can work with it, flat on his back, when he cannot hold a puzzle or any game in his hand.

We saw one hospital of Senegalese; there were about two hundred of them, all having had frozen feet. I never saw such black people, and most of them are huge. They say the Germans are very much afraid of them. The French put a few of their own French soldiers in with them, to show that they have the same treatment as the French. The doctor said he had an awful time managing them, as they don't care whether they sleep in bed, or on the floor, also when they are out in the garden, if they feel too hot, they shed their clothes and promenade with nothing on, whereas the bushes are clad in promiscuous shirts and trousers.

Quimper, May 11, 1917.

The Lieutenant-Colonel of this district is most kind,—though very fiery, too. There is nothing he hasn't done for us. You should have seen him inspect the dépôt. He grabbed the smallest pair of blue underdrawers from a shelf, held it up against himself and said: "Rather small, ladies." Then he grabbed a shirt and said it was much better than any he had ever had. He looked through everything and was enchanted. Then he sat down and asked us questions, taking notes of answers, and talked to us, giving us information and advice as to how we should work.



Sisters at a Hospital

I happened to mention to the Colonel that I had a filleul who had not had leave for a long time. The Colonel wrote his Captain and asked him to let him come here on leave. Wasn't that kind, when he has all Quimper to manage? My filleul is a strong looking man, shorter than I am, with immense feet, and in civil life is a potter. He is intelligent, with a sense of humor, but very shy and so afraid of doing anything wrong. He had had bronchitis and the Colonel told me to bring him to see him, and that he would look after him. The Colonel was so nice. He called my filleul "tu" and "mon brave garçon" at once, and asked him about his family. Filleul told him they were behind the German lines and said he had heard once, through a prisoner, that his wife was well. The Colonel was so sympathetic that all three of us were on the verge of tears. Then as I was going away he told him to come and see him in the evenings. He asked him how his regiment in Alsace was, and whether the young boys do well, and my filleul answered that they do. My filleul brought some trench bread with him, awful stuff by the time it got to me. He said it felt so strange to be in bed that the first night he hardly slept. Where he had been, at one time, they had to use ice instead of water, and had

only half-cooked beans. They didn't do much fighting because the Boches opposite them were only boys of the 1918 class. "They were only kids, so when they were hungry, we gave them bread." I asked him if the Germans were brave and he said, "They certainly were at Verdun." There his beloved Captain Thorrel was killed beside him. He was hit on the helmet and was buried there. The soldiers called him "Père Thorrel" and adored him.

During this interval the writer went to Verdun and was in Paris for a few weeks, returning to Brittany about the middle of June.

Brest, Finistère, July 13, 1917.

We have been to see some tuberculosis hospitals. There are four hundred patients living in what used to be five small summer hotels by the sea. Some of the soldiers have been there since the beginning of the war, and they have no women nurses, and no women are allowed even to go into the wards to clean. The soldiers are taken care of by the doctor, who does his best, and by Anamites from French Indo-China, who understand little French and speak a kind of Chinese patois,—you may imagine their ideas of hygiene,—if you can! There has been no operating-room (they are bone cases) though now one is being installed.

The soldiers are of all kinds, from peasants to men of education. They are all thrown together, "until we die," as one of them expressed it. Until a few months ago they were all depressed, cold, bored, badly nourished, and had nothing to do but sit about waiting to die. Many of them are curable cases, too.

Now they have a Soldiers' Club formed by the Vicomtesse de X. and her sister. She is a charming young Frenchwoman (whose husband, by the way, is a "simple soldat" in the trenches). There, under her guidance they sing, play such games as are possible (they have nothing to play games with), and thanks to a kind American, may each have a cup of cocoa and a piece of war-bread, spread with jam. Then they go home to their dismal damp barracks of hotels. The cheering effect it has produced is wonderful, but the soldiers want books, serious books. They have none whatever except a few novels, and they are clamoring for memoirs and books of travel. Some of them, especially those from the "invaded country," had libraries of their own at home. "Nous voici," one said, "we cannot move away;—but if we could only travel in imagination! Most of all we want books of travel, Mademoiselle, and adventure, biographies too. We have a few novels, it is true, but we have read them over and over. We should so like to use our minds!"

Some of them had war-stained uniforms that were scarcely warm. We could get them some other clothes, but they asked for books!

If enough books could be collected they could start a traveling library between all the tuberculosis hospitals in this region. You might put an appeal in the paper to raise money for books for them.[1]

[1] This was done, and met with a most generous response.

At St. Anne d'Auray we saw a marvelous tuberculosis hospital all out of doors. The very sick cases are isolated and the groups of patients are separated according to the stage of the disease. The Médecin-Chef, Dr. Besançon, has had an out-of-door sun-shed

built for them, all of cement with rounded corners. One man does nothing but whitewash all the time; when he finishes he begins again on the room he did first. The patients are never in the rooms except at night. Those who are well enough do a little work in the garden, and there are also out-of-door games for them.

Mrs. Post is doing wonderful work for the tuberculous civilians in the neighborhood of Morlaix. She has French nurses staying with her, who visit the patients in their homes. This educates the families, and the tubercular children have shown so much improvement that the people think it almost a miracle, do anything she says, and bring their friends. She does not try to make them do too many things at once, but studies the natural habits of the people and adapts them to corrective methods as much as possible, without changing them. For that reason she has French nurses almost entirely, as their tradition of nursing is the care of the patients in the home.

She is now adapting a wonderful old place for a hospital for the study and cure of tuberculosis. It has only fifty beds and they are for military patients, but the hospital mainly consists of the grounds, where the people come to be treated during the day, and go home at night. In this way the patients are watched and at the same time their families at home see the results and are educated. She seems to be doing a really wonderful work, and one that will last. Mrs. Whitney Warren has endowed the hospital.

Quimper, July 17, 1917.

Here I sit at the desk in the Quimper dépôt, waiting

for something to happen (Maggie's lack of rear axle having paralyzed our distributing facilities). I am surrounded by religious tracts and chewing gum, Wrigley's. The reason is that they come in comfort bags. The French government disapproves of the first article, and the all-confiding stomach of the poilu of the second, so we have orders to extract these two things from the bags.

What do you think of my coming home for a few months and then coming back here? I don't dare to think of it. It would be wonderful, but I'm afraid it would be hard to come back to France, not to mention the submarines one might meet en route. Anyway, there are times when I'd rather die a few miles nearer home than remain on distant dry land. Luckily that spirit doesn't strike one often.

The Brattleboro Committee has sent the kind of thing needed here most,—that is shirts, socks, etc., in fact, clothes. There is a crying need for those felt slippers, too. Every one asks for them. They are used in the house as they are quiet and clean, and when the men go out they put sabots on over them. I have a great respect for sabots. In winter they are warm and dry. The soldiers wear them in the trenches often, and the doctors say they save many a poilu from having frozen feet.

It is funny to see how fashionable it is now to be American. We are quite the "dernier cri." All the hats of the latest style in the windows, for instance, are of our army shape, only in varied colors. The little boys run out and ask you what the American flag is like. The peasant women always smile and nod when they find that we are "Américaines."

One day on one of our trips we were taking tea in

what had been a garage (originally, I suppose, a barn, as it had a thatched roof). Two Canadian officers who passed us had said, “Bong jour, Madame,” and then discovering suddenly that we spoke English came over to explain that that was all the French they knew. They said “caw-fee” to the waiter several times very slowly and he brought it. One turned out to be from Minnesota, one of the 23,000 Americans who had enlisted in the Canadian Army when the war broke out, because he was “sick of sittin’ round and seein’ us do nothin’.” The Minnesota man had been a lumberman at home, and had been sent here to cut down trees. He let loose a little “hot stuff” on what he thought of French methods. Can’t you see him?—huge and straight, and sun-burned, used to cutting down any trees he wanted, acres at a time, now confronted with the French method of signing papers “every time you cut down a match-stick.” The other said it did not matter what you cut down, so long as it was the best way to lick the Germans, but he considered that the French did have a Special Providence watching over them. “Yes,” said the one from Minnesota, “they have, and you can bet Providence is going to see them right through to the end, too.” Then followed a dissertation on the general “messiness” of France, putting their barns and their houses “plumb together” so you didn’t know which was which. “When I first came over,” he said, “I blushed till I had no more blushin’ in me, at their messiness, and lack of system, and general habit of livin’; and now I keep right on blushin’. Look at us, takin’ tea in a barn!” Then we left, and he ordered mixed crême de menthe and another liqueur.

At a French port, where our work took us a few days ago, we went to the American consul’s to ask a

question. While we were there two torpedoed captains came in to get papers to enable them to go home on liners, as their merchant ships had been sunk near there. Their men had got off safely, but one man had hurt himself falling into the boat, as a shell had cut the line while he was letting himself down. One of the captains was greatly agitated because he had gone, according to directions, to a certain latitude and longitude, where he was told he would be met by a convoy, but was met instead by a submarine. He was also angry because he had been sunk by shellfire, not by a torpedo, and had not had a chance to shell back. The other man, who had been very quiet, and had said that he had had a "sailin' vessel," interposed to say that wasn't the point;—the point was that they had lost their cargoes, one of flour, the other of machine oil, and those cargoes were needed. He hadn't any gun to fire back with either.

The next day, coming up on the train, we got by chance into the same compartment with the two Captains; the one who had been so agitated could not understand French, and was much excited over getting his men settled on the train. The quiet one twinkled a smile at us out of his very blue eyes and said nothing. He was a big man with a slow smile. Beside him was another man with his head done up in a bandage. The Captain leaned over, and asked the bandaged one if his head ached, patting him on the knee when he answered that it did. It developed that the head had a piece of shell in it. The big Captain came from "The State o' Maine, near Bangor," and had been torpedoed before, on another "sailin'" vessel. They hadn't had any contraband on board, but the Austrian submarine with German officers, which sank her, wanted her provisions,—a nine

months' supply,—and her chronometer too, as they are short of chronometers in Germany. The captain said that the Germans on the submarines were an excitable lot,—they had taken him on board the submarine both times he was torpedoed, to boast to him about their engines. With that he relapsed into silence, then added that there was about as much danger of being submarined as of being hit by lightning. That is what he had "told his folks," but the first time it happened they had to know of it, because it was in the newspapers, and when they heard of it they were "kinder s'prised." We asked if his family knew that he had been hit this time? He said "No," he had cabled them that all had landed safely!!

CHAPTER III

A Visit to Verdun

Paris, May 17, 1917.

IN my last letter I told you that we might get a chance to go to Verdun. Now that we have been there, I can hardly believe it, it all happened so quickly and was over so soon. Yet while it lasted it seemed a thousand years, and does now.

Mrs. Lee, Katherine, and I got our papers to go Monday at noon and started off at once in Maggie. We used the ordinary road maps of France, and were told we could take any route we wanted, so we went from Paris to Meaux, to Château-Thierry, to Epernay, to Chalons-sur-Marne, to St. Menehould, and by Clermont-en-Argonne to Verdun.

I have seldom seen anything as beautiful as the spring in France. We went for miles on straight roads between rows of feathery trees, with fields of brilliant green on either side. No wonder the Germans thought it worth fighting for. There didn't seem to be a single dead blade of grass or twig of tree, or a stone where it shouldn't be. The sky was the most heavenly blue, and the fields and woods were filled with hyacinths and violets and primroses and lilies of the valley and with the songs of birds. Sometimes, instead of going through green trees we went through valleys of pink apple blossoms that almost overpowered you with their sweet smell of

spring. Everything seemed jubilantly full of life.

Then, all of a sudden, perhaps an hour from Paris, we came on a grave by the roadside, a rustic cross, with a little red white and blue cockade on it, and “Patrie” on the little fence that surrounded it. After that, we came on another and another, then on a little group, and finally to mounds with large crosses on them, all the same. Some had the number of the regiment on them and a very few the names of the soldiers. All the time we were driving along the perfect quiet roads under the blue shadows of the trees, with great splotches of sunlight filtering through them.

When we got to Epernay we stopped the motor to see if there was a flat tire, and heard the guns for the first time. I suppose we could have heard them before that, but the Ford was going so we didn’t. They sounded like giant fire-crackers on the Fourth of July, only they went off very close together.



"Maggie" in Center of a Ruined Town

But before that, we saw our first devastated village. It was a little place. Some of the houses had no roofs, and showed signs of fire, a few trees were twisted about and dead. The gateposts of one house were

intact and the steps gone. Two huge lilac bushes were in bloom on either side of them and the wistaria vines in full flower over the doorway,—that led into nothing. Other houses were occupied and we saw a few women and children and many soldiers lodged there. Red Cross flags stuck out of some doorways.

In the fields they were replanting the grapevines, and in some places they looked like forests of little sticks. In other places men were ploughing. In those fields we saw little red and white flags for no apparent reason. They were, however, to mark unexploded shells and the plows gave them a wide berth.

After that we began to pass convoys of wagons and soldiers marching.

About half-past seven we arrived at Chalons-sur-Marne, where we spent the night in a large hotel with beautiful beds, and we had an excellent supper. When I went up to bed I neglected to pull the heavy curtains quite close and a ray of light penetrated into the courtyard below. Before I knew it the landlady had come flying upstairs and asked me to close the curtains tight as “Taubes” came nearly every night and dropped bombs. Some had come the night before and had dropped three bombs, but no one was hurt. None came that night, however, and we were all so sleepy that unless they had dropped on us I don’t suppose we should have known it, though the landlady swore we would. She told us that the German officers had stayed in her hotel and were “assez gentils”; they were there for ten days, had brought their own cook, and requisitioned everything, but paid for it.

The next day was the longest I have ever lived. We started out at eight o’clock and went to the “Mairie”

to see whether we could get some “Affiches” that are posted on the houses there. They read “Cave de refuge en cas de bombardement” and are stuck on all houses with cellars. Those houses are never allowed to lock their doors. We couldn’t get any to take home, but hope they can send us some.

When we were in the street a man came along with a drum and banged on it and every one collected around him. We thought some thrilling war news was about to be announced, instead of which he read some regulations about muzzling dogs, which was a disappointment.

After that thrill we started. The road was infested with wagons and trucks and gun carriages. The soldiers all looked at us as a fearful curiosity and got out of our way as fast as possible. Some yelled after us, “C’est bien ça!” You know Maggie has “Comité Américain pour les Blessés Français” on her side. Others didn’t say anything but gazed open-mouthed, and others cheered and threw their caps in the air or waved their casques. They were all very healthy looking and clean and very picturesque in their horizon-blue uniforms, especially those on horseback, for nearly every one had stuck a spray of white or purple lilac in his helmet or his coat, and all the horses’ bridles and harnesses were trimmed with either lilacs, lilies of the valley, or primroses. Even the gray automobile trucks had huge bunches of lilacs on them, and the men marching on foot looked like the forest in Macbeth coming to meet you, only instead of trees there were flowers.

Just as we entered the town a gendarme hopped out of a little box by the side of the road, and waved a red flag at us. He asked for our papers, which we gave him to look at, and he evaporated into a little

house to copy them down, while we asked a haggard old woman for some water for Maggie's radiator. Coming down the street, what should we see but the familiar and immaculate uniform of an American Ambulance boy! He stopped, grinned, took off his hat, said, "How do you do" and went down the road at double quick time. In half a second, back he came with another boy. They both stopped and blushingly asked if they could do anything for us. Our oil was getting low, so I asked if we could have some. They said they'd give us everything they had, oil, gasoline, themselves as guides. The gendarme having finished with our papers, we therefore drove around the corner to where they were. There were the neat little Ford ambulances all in a row. The section leader nearly fell out of an upstairs window when we drove in and all the boys came running out to see us. I told them the oil leaked below and immediately four pairs of gallant feet were seen waving from beneath the car. They all wanted to be detailed to "show us 'round" and finally one man got it, a Professor from Cornell.

We wanted to see a Poste de Secours so we went off on a most atrocious road of mud and horrid little railroad tracks. All around us were barbed wire entanglements, some high and some low. The kind they dread the most is about knee high, because the artillery can't cut it easily. There were also barricades of it to pull across the road and stake down. Suddenly we came to the top of a hill, and on one side of the road was a kind of fish-net filled with moss, but so thin that you could see through it. It was a screen, and without it we would have been in full sight of the enemy. Mr. Stanley said to go quickly, so I did. All was perfect silence but for the buzzing and rattling of Maggie, and we could see on

the blue hill opposite streaks of white, which were the German trenches.

I forgot to say that the country there is quite hilly and looks like that around Brattleboro, only there are fewer trees and more cultivated land.

Every now and then we passed shell holes in the fields, and once we went over one in the road that had come that night and hadn't yet been mended. We then went through a village that had once been. Mr. Stanley said it was a hot corner, and it was screened on all sides and consisted of one twisted tree, a lilac bush in bloom, and grass growing up among innumerable stones,—nothing else.

We then went into the woods again, beautiful woods on the side of a hill. There were holes in the hillside all along at intervals and out of them came numerous blue-clad soldiers, all grinning and excited at seeing women there. Mr. Stanley said that these were palatial abris (dugouts). Of course the soldiers all wanted to show us around and asked us to drink some coffee with them. We did go into one dugout. It was quite nice, with a table, mirror, and beds in tiers like a sleeping car. Behind it was another room with more beds, and behind that still another, where they retired when the bombardment was particularly hot. We gave them cigarettes and took their photographs, which was quite a piece of work as there were hundreds of them by that time, and all of them wanted to be in the picture. We could think of nothing but the "Country of the Dwarfs," as all the way along men would keep popping out of the holes in the side of the hills.

Finally we went up over the top of a hill—after having photographed a man being shaved with about fifty companions around him,—then along another

screened road to a town. There was nothing there but one big tree and three sides of a little church. The rest was trenches and stones, so razed to the ground that you would never have known that it had been a town in the past. Mr. Stanley had gone to sleep under that tree the day before and had been awakened by a shell landing in its upper branches. Another had landed that morning. In a little recess we found a Ford Ambulance and in it a boy writing a letter. He grinned broadly and hopped down from the seat to meet us.



THE MORNING SHAVE, BACK OF THE TRENCHES

They then asked us if we wished to see No Man's Land. We said "Yes," of course, and we climbed up a little hill and looked over the top. Mr. Stanley told us not to bunch together too much, as "they" could see us and we were within mitrailleuse and rifle range. There was No Man's Land. Only a quarter of a mile away were the German trenches. No Man's Land was green and filled with sunlight and the birds were singing in it,—but there was in it also a wide stretch of barbed wire and some gray dead trees with every

twig standing out against the blue hills beyond. On the ground a few feet away was a large shell. They told us to leave it alone as it might explode. It was a "silent Austrian" which is much dreaded as it doesn't make any noise until it explodes. It had evidently landed there during the night.

After we'd walked around there a little, we went along another *fearfully* muddy road. We saw some new shell holes and jumped out and got some pieces of shell, though Mr. Stanley told us to keep the motor going. Then we got into the woods again, on a perfect road, and drove along until we came to a little log cabin with a Red Cross flag on it and a doctor standing out to greet us. He let us come in and showed us his dressing station, rough but clean, with bandages and bottles all around the walls. Outside he had a mother dog and some darling, fat, wobbly puppies, and two little wild boars that he had tamed, whose photograph we took with him. He called them by grunting like a pig, and crying, "Viens,—ti-ti—viens!" They wouldn't stay still, so he grabbed one and held it. You never heard such squeals. I should think every Boche for miles around would have heard it. Then he gave us some gas masks as he said we ought to have them. He seemed to have quite a collection of things, extra helmets, etc. A man was having his eye dressed, but otherwise there were no wounded.

By that time it was one o'clock and we went back and left Mr. Stanley. Then we went on, along the silent, beautiful road, every now and then passing groups of soldiers decorated with lilacs, and sitting by the roadside eating bread and drinking wine out of their canteens.



PET BABY WILD BOAR

When we got to the next place I never imagined there could be such desolation. Not a house was left standing, all were knocked to bits by the shells; the church was in ruins and the altar knocked crooked,

with a huge hole in it. There was no roof to it nor to any house in the whole town. Yet on walls were still left the names of the streets and the signs to the next town, “Verdun 29 Kilometers, Metz—K.” The curtains were still hanging on some windows, with the glass still in them, and pieces of kitchen stoves, shoes, beds, and some furniture were strewn over and among the stones. In one place a cupboard had had the sides ripped down and a pile of bottles were still intact on some shelves. Yet birds were singing and bits of garden were still in bloom as if nothing had happened. A long flight of steps at the end of a street, worn by ages of feet going up and down, led to nothing and one couldn’t imagine what had been there in the past. There was only a wall with wistaria in full bloom on it and an immense lilac bush growing up by the side, around which swarms of bees were buzzing.

Mrs. Lee had brought some bread and jelly and sardines, so we sat among the ruins and ate them, listening to the birds singing and hearing now and then a boom of distant cannon.

Then we went on, and before we knew it, had come to a gate and realized it must be Verdun because the last kilometer post had said, “Verdun 1 K.”

We went through, passed a sentry and the high walls of the citadel, all scarred with shell shots. We asked a soldier for the Bureau de la Place and found we had gone too far and were calmly on our way to Douaumont, so we went back and drew up in front of a narrow door, popping a tire as we did so. However, we got out and jacked it up, and then went to see the Commandant. We arrived in a large room where the Captain was. He told us to sit down. We hauled out our papers, and he disappeared to look us up. There

were several telephones in there, and all of them had this placard on them: “Attention! The German Listening Post can hear you.” We hadn’t been announced from Paris yet, so we had to wait some time. While we waited the Captain showed us official photographs of the battles around there and pieces of shell. The Germans had just sent in nine 380’s—their biggest—two days before, and the captain had pieces of them, some of which he gave to us.

Then he showed us some of the citadel. As it is “sacred ground” so to speak, I won’t describe it.

After a while the Colonel appeared and offered to show us about in his machine, so we made the tour of the town. It was a repetition of what we had already seen on a larger scale. The fashionable residence section especially was razed to the ground. One saw portions of houses such as are on the sunny side of Commonwealth Avenue, and more beautiful by far, literally pulverized. The theater looked as if some Viking god had had an orgy there. The Cathedral was open to every wind that blew. The Colonel, a perfect dear with white hair, told us how he was trying to save some old paintings on a ceiling in the town that dated almost from Roman times. Also he had had beautiful doorways propped up with beams.

They showed us the “Place” where the German Emperor had boasted he’d review his troops. The saddest place of all was a huge building in the top of which grain had been stored. It had caught on fire and three hundred French soldiers were roasted alive in it, because the windows in the rooms downstairs were barred. There was nothing there but one wall when we saw it. In one place was a huge sign, telling that Singer Sewing Machines were for sale. In

another house, torn open, we saw pictures and mottoes still hanging on the wall. In another house a bed was left with the bedclothes thrown over the foot-board.

We went into a garden on the ramparts and there saw all the surrounding countryside. It was green, but the trees in some places stood up like broken dead reeds against the blue sky. We heard the cannon booming away as the Colonel pointed out the direction of Douaumont, of Vaux, etc. Then we looked down on the town. There wasn't a single whole house in it. The Colonel said it would have to be either razed completely or built again in another place. While we were standing there an aëroplane flew overhead and the Colonel looked calmly up and said, "Un Français."

We went to a hospital in the cellar of a large building. Everything is in cellars there and the cellar windows are filled with sandbags, too. There we left the supplies we had in the automobile. It was clean, but all underground. There was no one in it. Unless they were very badly wounded and couldn't possibly go any further, they were not sent to that hospital, which is known as "Les Chambres des Morts." There were four American Ambulance boys sitting waiting in their ambulances outside.

Another hospital we saw had rows of helmets which had been pierced by shells. All the men had been trepanned, a piece of rib taken out and put in their skulls where the bone was broken,—and all had lived.

They asked us to dinner, so we dined with the Captain and the Colonel and the Commandant, also the officer who has command of the mitrailleuses of the forts of Vaux, and two others. They gave us all

kinds of souvenirs and were very kind and tired looking. The one from Vaux gave us some flowers he had gathered at the fort there that morning. I inclose some with a piece of lilac from a ruined garden in Verdun that the Colonel gave me. The captain presented us each with a little medal.

I forgot to say that the Colonel showed us the shell holes of the 380's. They are as big around as our Boston house is long, and about 6½ feet deep. One hit on the side of a house where about forty soldiers were, and burst into the room. No one was even scratched, though the wall had an immense hole in it and the stones were scarred with a kind of petrified splash mark.

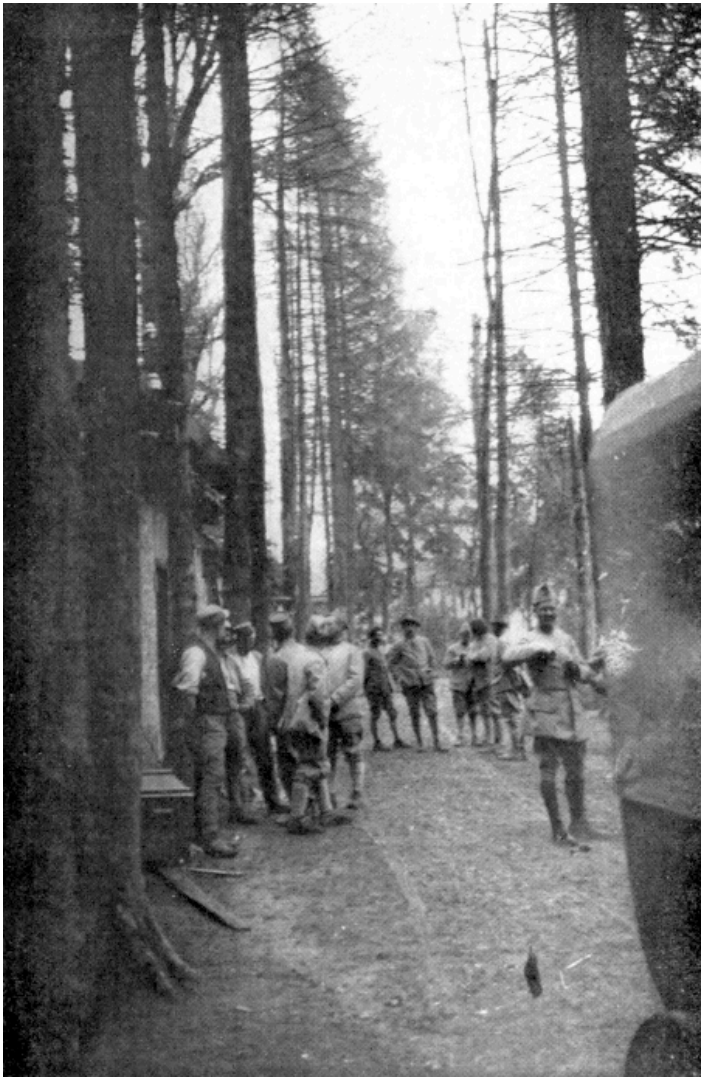
We couldn't spend the night in Verdun so we started after dinner. It got dark at once and of course we got lost and didn't dare light our lights. Finally we landed halfway up a hill, on a road simply pock-marked with shell holes and there we stayed till morning light. Naturally we didn't sleep a wink, but I never knew a night to go so fast. It was warm, though drizzling a little, and we sat and watched the guns hating each other on three sides of us. They boomed steadily all night long and the sky was lit up with flashes of light from them, and with star shells. We heard an aëroplane and saw it like a huge, warm star over our heads, dipping and gliding. Then it disappeared, and came again, and we saw another rise to meet it. Then they both seemed to fall and all of a sudden one went out. Through it all we could hear the crickets chirping. Towards dawn, the guns got more hateful and there was a steady roar in the distance. At the same time the birds began waking up around us, first with sleepy chirps, and then they sang. Where they were, I don't know, as the hill we

were on was as barren as could be.

When it got quite light, towards 3.30, I tightened up the brakes and we started off down the hill again. We went through woods on a fearful road and finally came to a kind of cavalry camp. There we asked the way to Bar-le-Duc, and found that we had lost our way and were almost in the front-fine trenches. We therefore retraced our steps, and went on to Bar-le-Duc where we had breakfast and went to bed till noon.

In all, we came across five sections of the American Ambulance on our way out. They were all surprised to see us, and greeted us with cheers and grins and hat waving. I saw an awfully nice boy in one of them, a friend of Winthrop's. I wish you knew him, he is about six feet three with brown eyes and a charming smile.

We spent that night in Vitry-le-François, where the Germans had been for ten days, taking everything, and had left in payment a "bon de réquisition" for 50 francs.



"Somewhere" Near Verdun

CHAPTER IV

PERSHING'S TROOPS ARRIVE

Paris, June 13, 1917.

M., YOUR birthday is being celebrated by the arrival of General Pershing in Paris. To-day when I went through the Place de la Concorde, there was a huge crowd standing outside the Hotel Crillon where he is going to stay. Among them were many Canadians,—and war-worn veterans they are,—beautifully tanned, but under it that hollow-cheeked, drawn-eyed trench look so many of them have from being constantly tense. One sees so many wounded and tired-looking men, also fine ones, all with the same stamp on them.

Sometimes the war makes me feel actually sick physically, it is so overpowering and crushing. I can't think of anything to compare it to but a steam-roller in a dream, coming on when you can't move.

There is no doubt that in spite of the splendid successes of the English, there is a feeling of awfulness about it all, that I didn't feel at first. Gains do not mean so much to people now, for they know that every gain means fearful losses. Just the same, there is a dogged determination to win. We feel the awfulness, while waiting for the United States troops. If only a few come, the moral effect will be tremendous, but of course, more than a few men are needed, and above all, food.

June 14, 1917.

To-day I almost got run over by a man on a simple bicycle because I had turned around to look at the first U. S. soldier I have seen. Oh! but they are good looking and straight! Paris is quite thrilled over them and there is a perpetual crowd outside the Crillon all day long. There are about ten automobiles, beautiful gray ones, with chauffeurs in steel helmets, waiting outside the hotel this morning. I wonder whether it means that Pershing is going to take a trip to the front.

One American soldier passed me just now, as I was passing two English naval men (Paris is full of them now). They both turned around and said to each other, "Aou, smart looking chap!" Our men certainly do have a certain "swank" about them, though they don't have the color scheme of the French that is so attractive, nor yet the perfect, immaculate fitness of the British Army.

Paris, August 16, 1917.

"There's a pause in the day's occupation," I having locked myself in my room so that neither the maid, nor the hotel proprietor, nor any one in fact, but a locksmith can get me out. Hence, here I am waiting in the hope that a locksmith will be found to extricate me. If you never get this letter you'll know that I've slowly died of starvation in my room, while the hotel people are gone to get the necessary papers to get a locksmith demobilized long enough to let me out.

To-morrow, I am going down to Bonnaqueil for a three weeks' vacation. Thank Heaven! I need the rest

badly, and I am probably going up toward the front when I come back.

Paris, September 14, 1917.

I feel much better after my vacation and am quite rested and joyful to be at work again. As soon as I get my papers I am going up to Nancy, and in the meantime I am mostly employed in combining the insides of “Eddie, Jr.” with “Lizzie’s” cast off appendices and tonsils and making a Ford out of it. Also “Blighty” came back from the American “front” in a mess, evidently having been tried by every soldier there, so we’ve had to amputate her radiator and commutator, and apply disinfectants to the insides of her cylinders, and grind her valves, and apply artificial respiration to her carburetor. She is still in a state of coma, but I hope will be out again by to-morrow. She is called “Blighty” because she’s English, having a right-hand drive.

On my way up here, I was waiting with the Comtesse and Marie for my train to Paris when we saw some American troops at the station. One of our boys about seven feet tall came near us, and the Comtesse who, you know, is tiny, coming only to my shoulder, said “Vive l’Amérique,” up at him. He looked all around and up, and then down, and at last saw her looking up at him, and then he grinned and saluted. They were such nice and very American soldiers. Her eyes filled with tears and she said, “Their poor mothers!” I hadn’t thought of that, I was so proud to see them here, and they all looked so safe and healthy and were joking away trying to buy tobacco and coffee at the station buffet.

Paris, September 23, 1917.

People here have ceased to discuss Russia, and when the Russian officers, who are staying in this hotel, go out, they dress in civilian clothes in order not to be insulted in the streets. I never hear the end of the war discussed, but there is an atmosphere of tense determination. People look with hope to the English who are heroic in their present efforts and victories, and we are very popular. I think the French have hope and faith in the United States for great things in the future, but when they look at our straight, efficient, wonderful looking soldiers they say: “The Americans are magnificent, but if they had only come two years ago!”

I hope a great effort will be made to give our soldiers proper amusement both at the front and in Paris. One can’t help noticing conditions. Just recently a new club has been opened here for the Canadian and Australian soldiers, but nevertheless one meets them wandering about the streets in lost-looking groups. They look strong and brown, but often they look so sad and lost with a patient, worn expression, and eyes that seem strained from looking at—one doesn’t know what. They are here for only four to seven days’ leave, and it is pathetic, when one thinks what they have come through and are going back to. I suppose our soldiers will get to look like that, too. Just now they are an inspiring sight of efficiency personified.

I heard the nicest thing about our soldiers the other day from a French lady. She lives at one of the ports and when the American Engineers came, opened her house to give them the use of her library and offered to teach them French. The Colonel was delighted, and thanked her “mais délicieusement” and all the

soldiers were as nice as nice could be and took great care of the books, always covering them with paper. Also, they were so polite and modest, and “sérieux” and “convenables” that the whole place is in love with them, and her daughter is quite enchanted with one who is a dentist in ordinary life. She says he has beautiful manners and luckily is “très sérieux” and married!

CHAPTER V

Back of the Front at Nancy

Grand Hotel, Place Stanislas,
Nancy, October 7, 1917.

HERE I am at Nancy! It is a beautiful place, in the frigid zone I am sure—and *they say* in the war zone. We motored through from Paris all in one day, arriving here at half past two in the morning, and it took us nineteen hours. The last part of our journey was made in the pitch darkness and rain. One of the several times that we got lost was at Bar-le-Duc, at midnight, in the pouring rain. The road we should have taken was blocked by the "dégâts" of the last raid, so we had to circle around and around, to find a road that we could take, but eventually we saw a glimmer of light. Mrs. Dawson and Miss Mitchell called "Madame!" at it, and a head appeared and gave vague and sleepy directions. There wasn't a light in the whole town, nor in any town that we went through, and you have no idea how ghastly ruined villages look by the headlights of a Ford when the ruins are shiny and wet.

During our travels, we have come on several "Somewhere in France's," that is, brand-new barracks with the U. S. flag flying over them. Most of them are being built, but once we suddenly saw the field in front of a camp shake, and realized that they were our soldiers drilling! We passed one, crossing the road from one barrack to another, with a

saucepan in his hand. When he saw “American Fund for French Wounded” on our car, he grinned and waved the saucepan, which was bad for its contents.

Later we saw a most picturesque sight: a red camp fire, with steel-helmeted, khaki-clad figures around it, toasting themselves and their food. As we passed by, they waved and shouted, “Hello!” and one said, “Gee, but it’s fine to see white folks; what are you doing in this corner of the world?”

S., your photograph has arrived and I am overjoyed. I had to leave my photograph books behind in Paris, as every extra ounce of baggage counts, so now the picture gallery in my room in this hotel consists of S., a tiny photograph of Mamma when she (—horrors!—a mouse just ran across the floor of my room!!...) was a little girl, one of Papa and the picture of Brattleboro by Miss Keyes, also a Nativity by Rembrandt. Above the door is an awful panel of a baby-carriage running away downhill with the baby in it. Something has got to be done to suppress it soon,—very soon. Above the other door is a panel of a muddy railway-yard with an old woman running across the road, about to come to grief in a large puddle. The perspective is awful. The rest of the room isn’t so bad, gray, plain, and clean, in fact rather pleasant when the sun shines.

Did I tell you that Appleton Miles is at the head of a section now, and awfully well thought of in all the work he has done? In fact, he is one of the best men.

Of course there are a million things I should like to tell you and can’t. If I even begin to mention the people I see, it would give a lot away. If you are bursting with curiosity, just think how I am exploding with what I want to tell you and can’t! I think I’d better stop.

Nancy, October 21, 1917.

It is a year to-day since I started on my travels for France, and such celebrations as I've been having!

On Tuesday, Mrs. Dawson, the head of our dépôt, went to see a very famous regiment that is near here,—the one Victor Chapman served in. She was most wonderfully received by the general, who, by the way, has five palms (meaning many citations in Army orders) and a star on his Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honor too. They gave her tea, and when she went away, a perfectly coal-black man stepped out from the ranks, and presented her with a poem, so well done in penmanship and design that it looked almost as if it were beautifully engraved. It was written in some Persian-looking writing, and was translated below into French. The poem was to thank God that the Americans were here, and to welcome her as their representative. The General apologized for not producing something better,—it was impromptu, he said, as she had come unexpectedly to see their hospitals.

That was not all the excitement of the day, however. At six o'clock, I was in my room when the "tocsin," the signal for air raids, went off. At the same moment the 75's on the hills around went banging away. They make an odd sound, like a loose, very thick elastic being snapped. Then, bang-bang-bang, the machine gun on the top of the next building went off, with a terrific cackle, and shot up white balls with a poppy-puff noise. Meantime the searchlights were waving and we could hear, above it all, the penetrating and sky-filling whirr of the enemy machines above us. The electric lights dimmed every time a bomb dropped. You could tell the bombs by

the kind of dead, deafening thud and bang, and the shaking of the hotel.

Just at that time Mrs. Dawson's motor had reached the railway station and the first bomb went off on the station. It's "forbidden to circulate" during an attack, but just the same, they bumped away from the station as fast as they could. Guns were firing on the Boche and splinters were falling all around. They make a spark when they fall, like those struck out by horses' feet. There were no lights in the town and they had to turn out the lights of their car, so of course they blew their horn as loud as they could, but such was the noise that they could not hear it themselves.

They arrived safely at the hotel, and about half past seven, the raid having let up a bit, we started to have dinner. You never knew such a hectic meal. The cook was having hysterics in the cellar, an English officer and a little French couple and ourselves were the only stable population of the dining room. The rest, consisting of some women and a bald-headed man, kept popping up and down, to and from the cellar. The women took food with them when they went down, but the poor man was trying to eat his soup. He took two mouthfuls. Then the guns went off, and down he'd go again. The English officer, who, by the way, had a Victoria Cross, said: "I'm jolly sorry for him, his soup's getting so cold. I can't speak French, or I'd tell him to take his plate with him."

Marthe, the little pink-cheeked maid, was a wonder and served away as placidly as ever. Well, it kept up intermittently until about ten, and then, after having collected some splinters from in front of the hotel, we decided to go to bed. Monsieur Martin, one of the officials, and a friend of ours, came in during the

evening to tell us that a good deal of injury had been done, and some lives lost, as a train had been hit. The Boches always try for the stations and so most of the bombs had been dropped there.

The station is some distance off, by the way, and this cellar is about the best one in town, having several exits and being of reënforced concrete, so we are absolutely safe. There is always time to get down cellar, and a vaulted cellar, such as ours, has never been known to give in. When you hear that cellars have been smashed, you may be sure that they are the flat kind.

I thought that I would write you about the bombings, as they are in the American papers, but don't get worried if you read of more bombardments of Nancy. An air-raid is mostly noise and some buildings smashed in, but no one who has taken the proper precautions has been hit. Only those who stay upstairs, or go out on the street have been hurt.

Well, the next day, of course, we went to see the destruction, or rather, we couldn't help seeing it, as it was all down the business section where our work took us. It is strange, ludicrous, horrid, and very sad. The next night at six, the Boches, with their usual precision, began again. It was the same, except that the Boches dropped an incendiary bomb, and, with the white searchlights waving about the sky, the red glare was weird.

We were at the doorway of the hotel at one time, and saw two bombs drop in a distant part of the town. For a second the bomb flares up bright red, and then it is utterly dark. Then comes the bang. They struck two houses, but there was no loss of life in them. You should see the houses, though! All three stories were in a mess on the street, and the débris

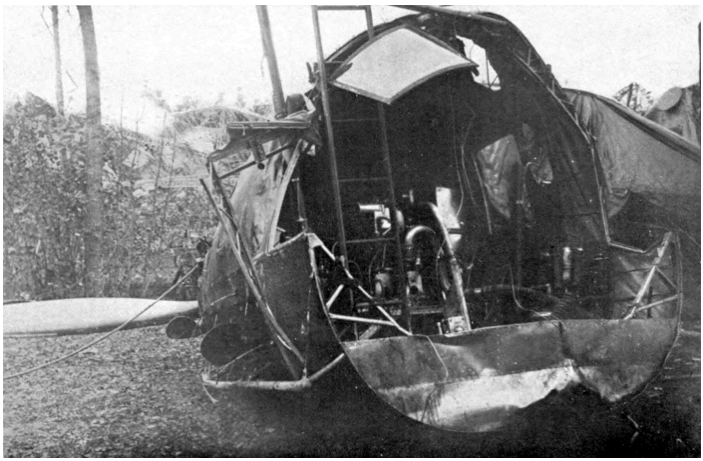
was so finely splintered up that one couldn't tell what had been in the houses. On one wall, however, two stories up, was a big mirror, intact, also a smaller one on the floor above, and two pictures and a little what-not with roses on it, entirely undisturbed, in another corner, all by itself, a piano untouched.

Russell Cogswell and some of his section offered their services, and did nobly. They evacuated the hospital in the middle of the raid, and also collected the killed and wounded. The town is full of admiration for them.

A day or two after, a Boche aëroplane was brought in smashed, and dumped in the Place, in front of the statue of Stanislas, King of Poland. It is the custom to do that here, whenever one is brought down in the neighborhood. When Guynemer guarded Nancy, there were sometimes three at one time.

That night I was waked at four A.M. by gun firing, and the tocsin, also the siren, which is for long distance guns bombarding the town. I hurriedly put on a few clothes, but nothing more happened, so I went to sleep again. At six the same performance was repeated. In the morning I went downstairs to learn that this time it had been Zeppelins! They hadn't dropped anything and were going very slowly, evidently lost in the fog on their way back from somewhere. Since then we have heard that they were coming back from England. One has been brought down in flames not far from here, so to-day we went to see it. From all the country around, people were flocking there, and we met officers driving over in any kind of little cart. Three generals, French, American, and English were looking at it, and we saw them being introduced to each other in front of

it. We were not allowed very near. It is a mess, just a mass of metal scaffolding and two huge tanks. We saw it huddled up in the middle of a ploughed field, and over it, the tender, delicately tinted sunset, the crescent moon, and one star.



MOTOR OF ZEPPELIN AT BOURBONNE

Before going to see the Zeppelin, we lunched at the Préfecture.

The Préfet, Monsieur Mirman, and his wife are extremely nice and have five daughters and a little boy of ten. While we were there the message came that a second Zepp had been brought down, and to-night we hear that the third and also the fourth are down, somewhere along the line. The one we saw got so near to Germany that if the men had known where they were, and the wind had been right, they could have jumped in parachutes and landed behind the German lines. I'm glad that these Zeppelins will molest the world no more:—aren't you?

At Monsieur Mirman's we met a French officer, a Commandant of Chasseurs, big, lithe, and gray, with fitness written all over him. He had on a Croix de

Guerre with two palms, a silver star, and also the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor. We heard later that before the war he was governor of one of the French colonies. His wife was very charming and cultured, and learned Arabic so that she could help him, and he worshiped her and never did anything without her. When the war broke out he was recalled, so they came back to France. Just before the attack at the Aisne, he received word from her that she was dying, but that he was not to come to her if France needed him more than she. He couldn't leave, so he had to send back word that France did need him, and he never saw her again. He would not let his soldiers be told, lest their sympathy for him should lessen the spirit they needed for the attack, and never once did he let his personal sorrow be seen. His soldiers adore him and will follow him anywhere. The Préfet told us that, before this attack in the Battle of the Aisne, he jumped on the parapet, and while the Germans were shooting at him and miraculously missing him, he made a speech to his men, ending "Follow me!" Then he led them to the attack and won.

The Commandant, in speaking of the American Ambulance men, said he thought they must be brave men to endure constantly seeing such awful sights, that he could not bear it. He hardly ever saw the dead and wounded, as they fell behind him.

He seemed very fond of the Préfet's little girl aged three, and made her toy cat and dog have a fight on the Salon floor, greatly to her funny little bubbling joy.

I inclose the Roll of Honor with his citation on the back, which was given to me by the aumonier the other day, when he came in to thank us for our gifts.

The aumonier is a fine little man with a black beard and looked so funny in his chasseur's cap and coat over his priest's skirts. When he gave it to me he said: "Mademoiselle, you do not know the names, but they are among the bravest and most glorious of France."

Now I must go out. We are going to Pont-à-Mousson this afternoon with Monsieur Martin. He is the most delightfully genial and informal person, with a tremendous amount of nerve, totally unconscious of himself, and with a keen sense of humor. He always has a twinkle in his eye and a little joke, no matter what happens.

When the bombing goes on, he has to receive the telephone messages that tell where the bomb has hit, etc., also he has to go out to see what harm has been done, and help the people hurt. One day Mrs. Dawson was in his office on business when a raid began. She said that Monsieur Martin was as calm as ever, and had his little joke with the telephone girl in the cellar, calling down: "Poor child, are the mice very terrifying down there?" and all the while the Germans were bombing away from above for all they were worth!

He now adds to his duties by helping every American soldier find his way, though he works in his office till midnight nearly every evening. He always takes us about to see things, and in fact has adopted us. Every night he comes in with the communiqué and after a bombing he comes to reassure us, and tell us what has been done. In fact, I think he considers that we are quite helpless without him. Last night we played "It" with him, and "I have a Cat" and he loved both the games.

Nancy, November 4, 1917.

We have been to three postes to take supplies, and you can have no idea how marvelous it is. The best troops of France are here, Chasseurs and Zouaves, all the very finest of men and officers. I'll have to tell you about them one by one.



REMAINS OF A "TAUBE" AT CHAMPENOUX

First we went to see the Chasseur Commandant I told you about, whom we met last week at the Préfet's. We sloshed through mud and water with our supplies, taking detours on the hills, as the valley was flooded, till we got to the little town where his battalion is billeted. It was mostly mud and manure heaps, but out from a very rickety, though charming, old house came the Commandant gay as ever, and neat as a pin, with his officers the same. The men were all neat too, and swarming about the town. One wonders how they could keep so clean. In a field near by some of them were playing soccer, and you should have seen the fountains of water that spurted

up when they ran.

After we had given the doctor our supplies the Commandant asked us to tea, and we went into the house. In peace times it must have been quite lovely but now it is bare, except for a crocodile skin hanging on one door, and a bunch of mistletoe from Christmas 1913 over the huge table. The owner of the house is still living there, a little fat, black-bearded man, dressed in corduroy with a huge black bow-tie at his neck. He was a graduate of the Beaux Arts, had traveled much, and two years before the war had bought his old house, and was about to settle down there for the rest of his days. He's there, but one could hardly say settled, with officers billeted in every available corner.

Some of the young officers came in and we had a merry time. One of the sous-lieutenants, fat and forty, kept us all in gales of laughter. He had lived in Paris and one could see was a man of the world. His superior officer told us that he was hard to keep in his place, "though, of course, with only two stripes, he should stay in the background." This was said with a twinkle at the sous-lieutenant, who immediately replied, "Que voulez-vous—I am indispensable—the maid of all work, you know." At this they all roared, he having previously conjured up from somewhere the mixture of tin cups, plates, china cups, glasses, and cracked coffee pot, which is the invariable tea service at the front. But you should have seen the cake! The cook had been a Paris chef and it was a creation of cream frosting ingeniously and wonderfully arranged to cover all the cracks in the platter! The officers and doctors joked about everything except Italy, where they were all keen to go. They told us that on All Saints' Day they had

asked the Italians near here to dine with them, but the Italians had sent word that they were feeling too deeply for their fellow soldiers in Italy, and too sad, and could not be gay, so they would not come. The Chasseurs said they understood and were very sorry for the poor fellows.

The Captain in this camp, young, slender, and blushing, graduated from St. Cyr in 1914, and was one of the few who came through the famous charge they made in their white gloves and plumes.

After we had bidden them good-bye, we went on to the next poste, this time in a tiny farmhouse on the bank of the river where we were met by Commandant V. You never saw such mud. The whole town had been flooded the day before. On the way we were stopped by some Chasseurs; we wondered why. They crowded around, said to us:—"The Americans are very nice," and then, suddenly overcome by their own boldness, evaporated.

Mademoiselle Mirman was also there and had brought with her an old friend of the Préfet and of the Commandant V., a simple poilu, and the two soldiers were the light and life of the party. It was the last day that the poilu could come to see his friend the Commandant, because he said, "I am being demobilized, I am too old. It is very hard, but I must go back to civilian life now."

I must tell you about Commandant V. who has a very strong and rugged face. Before the Battle of Verdun, his colonel told him to hold a certain place and said good-bye to him, never expecting to see him again. V. held the place until every man was killed, and he himself wounded in three places. Then he fainted. When he came to, a German was standing over him saying that he was dead, so he lay still and listened

to all around him. When night came, he crawled away until he heard French spoken in a shellhole. He got to the hole, and told the men who he was. They refused to believe him, and told him that he had been killed that morning! Then he asked to be taken to the colonel who recognized him. He told the colonel that he must attack at once, and win back the place where he had been, as the Germans were disorganized there, but the colonel said he could not. V. said, “If I lead the attack, will you order it?” So he led the attack, wounded as he was, and won back the ground they had lost in the morning.

When we went away the two men gave each other the accolade (the kiss on both cheeks) before they said good-bye,—one a poilu and the other a major.

At the third poste to which we went another day, the village where the troops were billeted was chiefly mud, manure, and pigs. A few scraggly chickens, children, and old people hang around the doorways of what houses are still whole. You can’t imagine a more desolate or dreary place, and so near the front there is nothing whatever to do, not even the warmth of a fire to sit by, and raw cold outside and in.

It is typical, and the kind of place our soldiers are going to be billeted in all winter, and are in now. The men sleep in cow barns, lofts, in fact anywhere at all that is comparatively dry and offers space enough for them to lie on the straw-covered floor. The place is often pitch dark, and heated usually by a smelly lantern, which gives both heat and light, and it is aired only by strong drafts. If our men don’t write home as often as their families think they should, I can understand why, as there is no place for writing.

The officers' quarters are sometimes much better, like those I described at the other postes, but in this place though they had rooms in a house, they were dark and damp, and their neat, little, rickety cots were jammed in as close together as the room would allow. There was no place to sit and read or write, unless the room in another building, where we lunched with them, could be used for that. At best, though, it was desolate.

In taking supplies, we get to know doctors and officers in a very pleasant, friendly way. They are always charming, and always glad to see us,—really glad. I think the combination of our being Americans, bringing supplies as soon as they are asked for, and bringing them ourselves, thus breaking the monotony of their lives a little, means a great deal to them. It certainly does to us.

Nancy, November 10, 1917.

The roads now are infested by camions taking our troops to the front in hundreds. The men stay from five to ten days and then are replaced by others. The other day I rescued five United States cooks, who were lost from their regiment on its way to the front, and restored them to their convoy. The next day, coming over the same road, I saw a car stopped and surrounded by soldiers, — "more cooks," I thought. So in my rattling and muddy Ford, with the wash bouncing around like a huge white balloon behind, I slowed up, at the same time calling out, "Are you broken down; can I help?"

Imagine my horror when a *general* came forward and saluted me. He said, "No, we aren't broken down, but we are in trouble. The trouble with us is, we

haven't had the pleasure of speaking to an American lady for a long time, so I am delighted that you have stopped and given me that pleasure and opportunity." Wasn't that nice of him? Of course I had to stop and talk for a few minutes then. He was a Brigadier-General and had been in the army thirty-seven years. He came from Texas originally, but his last residence was near Boston and I think his family live there now.

After a while, I said good-bye, but that wasn't all. No sooner had I got to Nancy than the General's car drove up to our dépôt with an invitation for me and Mrs. Dawson to lunch with him. Well, we went, and he was as nice as could be, with the most courteous manners. He talked about everything under the sun, and when he spoke about home, he asked me if I didn't get homesick sometimes. He is straight and thin, and soldierly, with very blue eyes.

I suppose you read in the communiqué that twelve of our men were taken prisoners and three were killed and two wounded. Some one told us that the Germans came two hundred strong in the night and got them. They make a kind of scoop of themselves behind a barrage and swing out from their trenches. The German prisoner, captured by the Americans, was nearly stripped of his clothes for souvenirs, and when they were amputating his arm, he bravely asked if they wanted that, too!

I must close now and go to bed, as it is getting both late and cold. The guns are very loud to-night, and have been going all day.

Nancy, Nov. 16th, 1917.

Work has been somewhat slack while things are getting settled in Paris.

We get differing accounts from passing Americans who come to our dépôt because we are the only American women they have seen since landing. They have lived in mud for months and are very homesick. But most of them agree that the U. S. Army won't be an important factor before June at the earliest, because they can't be trained before then. There is a lot of pneumonia among those that are here, on account of poor equipment. This we hear from one side, from another we hear that they have all they want and are very well off.

The Red Cross also seems to have been in a state of upheaval, but that is straightening out. I suppose that one should look at these things from a proper perspective, that really they are going all right, and are being organized wonderfully from some head who has an ultimate plan.

The soldiers are pouring in now, and I suppose you, at home, see the progress they have made more than we can here.

Some of the people we have seen are afraid that we won't come up to the scratch in time, and that the French are banking too much on us. Perhaps that is greenness, though, and shows a sense of responsibility that is good for them, being judiciously instilled by their superiors. Anyway, I can't help thinking they'll come out all right in the end, since, for one thing, the French think they are fine soldiers, and that is a tremendous compliment.

Did I tell you about the American soldier, Clarence Morton, in the hospital here? He has a mastoid ear, so they left him here. He says he almost got to the

front but his ear “got hurting so I had to stop, because I couldn’t hide I had an earache when the abscess burst.” His one idea now is to get back to his battery. He’s the right stuff.

He keeps his belongings in a towel; they consist of a bullet from his gun and newspaper clippings about the U. S. Army, especially about the Artillery. He seats us in a row when we go to see him, and talks away with the greatest joy. He remarks every time that he’s “a great reader, yes Ma’am”; and he certainly is. He reads the papers that the American dentist here brings him, from beginning to end, and it is quite a job to keep him supplied with books. When we come into the ward, he is flat on his back or draped around a chair, perfectly oblivious of the outside world. Then one of the near-by poilus punches him, which sometimes has to be done twice, before he is aware of our arrival.

The Sister says that he is always smiling, and when we told him that the Sister said he seemed happy, he said: “Yes Ma’am, I like to be seeming happy.”

Grand Hotel, Place Stanislas,
Nancy, November 25, 1917.

Last Sunday, we all took a drive, and landed at an aviation camp near here. It is half British, half French. They took us about and showed us the machines, which were most interesting. Those for night work were painted black and dark brown, those for day flying, every color under the shining heavens that the aviator wanted. On the exhaust pipes of each French plane were little iron crosses painted, to show how many Boches he’d brought down. They were perfectly beautiful to look at and

every one was distinctly individual, no two were exactly alike, even of the same kind. They had little mascots in them, rag dolls, or anything else that the aviator fancied. They nearly always take a little week-end suitcase along, in case they have to make a forced landing somewhere.

Week before last, four of them had to land in Germany. They burnt their machines, and they are loose about the country there now, with 125 marks on their heads as reward for whoever captures them. They rather think they'll get back all right though, as they aren't far from the lines and are in a quiet sector. They let me climb into one machine and showed me how it worked. Now I'd give anything to fly; you have no idea the thrilling sensation you have, all nicely and compactly tucked in with a wireless and everything convenient to steer you through the clouds and air. Also, of course, they showed us their bombs and bomb-dropping arrangements. They have some perfectly huge machines that came across from England. Afterwards we had tea with them, and they talked about a lot of things, once about an air-man, mechanic and observer, who flew from England to Constantinople and dropped bombs on the Goeben when it was there. Then he flew back to England.

The English aviators seem to be a very fine type of man, and nearly all Oxford and Cambridge men, in fact England's choicest. More of the French belong to the adventurer class, which of course means every kind. Some of the English aviators are perfect dears, and such infants that you expect their voices to crack if they become excited talking. I imagine they are just out of school; in fact one or two have almost downy faces!

The French Commandant had an abri built for his men to get into when the Boche came to pay his respects. He is also very fond of vegetables, so he told the men to make a vegetable garden on top. Then as none of the aviators, of course, ever dreamed of taking to the abri, they stored the vegetables (légumes) in it. A sign is now over the door “Abri des Gros Légumes.” “Gros Légumes” is slang for officers. The soldiers put it up and the Commandant shows it to every one with laughter and pride.

Speaking about aviators, I must tell you about an American, who has been here lately. When the war broke out he was at college, but he couldn’t stand it, so with some other men he eloped across the border, and joined the Canadian army in 1915. His family disapproved, but he went to France as a Tommy just the same, and was in all the fighting from then on. After about two years he was wounded and discharged, but, as soon as he was well enough, he tried to enlist in our army and was refused on account of physical disability. Then he got work for the Red Cross and came to France again, and helped with the poor children. Their pitiable condition appealed to his sympathy and I used to find him smuggling caps and mufflers on to them to keep them warm! Nevertheless, as he saw our troops going to the front, day by day, it got on his nerves, and he went to the French recruiting officer, and succeeded in getting accepted in the French aviation corps. He tells me that he entered the Canadian army for adventure, but is going now as a duty. He says he knows he can’t last long, and I think he can’t, for he looks very frail, but what can you say about such spirit? He has written some poetry which has been published. If I see him again I will try to get hold of

it, but I don't know where he is now. He used to bring tobacco and books to Clarence Morton, the American soldier in the hospital here whom I wrote you about, though he had nothing but his Red Cross salary, which is now stopped. When he went away he left all his books with us for any American soldiers who happened to be sick here. The books were mostly poetry, including Kipling's, also a few magazines, the "First Hundred Thousand" and "Fortitude."

Nancy, November 25, 1917.

Last Friday, Mrs. Dawson and Miss Mitchell went to lunch at one of the American hospitals in this region, but I couldn't go with them, as I was driving Dr. Alice Brown's dispensary car with Commandant V.

At the luncheon was a French corporal, who had just escaped from Germany, having been a prisoner there for twenty-two months. He had been moved from prison camp to prison camp,—"pas trop mal," but eventually they wanted him to work in a munition factory, which he refused. For punishment, they made him stand at attention for thirteen hours, with his face to the wall and a German with a bayonet behind him to prick him if he relaxed. At the end of that time he was taken out to a farm, with another prisoner, where an awful old man and woman put them in the dirtiest place they could for the night. In the morning they were told to hoe beets. They said they didn't know how, but were told, just the same, that they must, so they spoiled all the beets. In the afternoon, the same performance with potatoes. Then they were put in a reprisal camp, and fed on bread and water only. Finally they decided that they might as well die in trying to escape as die there. The

barbed wire inclosing the camp was made somewhat like a picket fence, and how they got through it they hardly know, but one night they climbed it and in their prison clothes started to walk to Holland. They had twenty-four squares of chocolate and fifty biscuits that they had obtained somehow, and in order to make the biscuits last they dared only suck them. They traveled only at night, swimming the rivers. On the way they met only three persons, an old woman cutting grass, which she was stealing in the middle of the night for her cow, and two Russian prisoners, also escaping. They compared improvised maps with the Russians, consulted their compass which they had mounted on a pin (the box part having been spoiled, when they were swimming a river), and shook hands with them and wished them good luck. Eventually they grew so weak that they decided they would have to give themselves up, so one day at dawn they spoke to a peasant. They asked him where they were, and imagine their joy when they found they were in Holland!

The peasant took them to his house, and his wife cooked a meal for them, which made them weep, but when it was before them, they could not eat a mouthful. However, the peasant woman nursed them and gave them clothes, and they were able to reach France. Now they are told that they need not fight any more, but they have rejoined their old regiment, under different names, and are back fighting the Boches.

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For the last four days I have been driving Dr. Alice Brown, of Winetka, Ill., on her rounds of dispensary work. She visits six towns, each twice a week, to look

after the women and children, who have had no medical care since the war. Dr. Brown doesn't speak a word of French, but she is so gentle and sweet with the people that they have absolute trust in her, and no matter how much she hurts them, in treating infected fingers, pricking boils etc., they always thank her, sometimes with tears in their eyes.

As helpers she has a trained nurse and Madame Delabeck, a Belgian, who has a coiffeur establishment in Winetka. Madame Delabeck is a wonder, and knows just how to explain to the people what they must do to cure themselves, and knows too just when to laugh, and when to sympathize with their ailments.

In the dispensary we have happenings from the tragic to the ridiculous every day; for instance, at the end of the day, the nurse is cleaning a child's head with strong antiseptic, Madame Delabeck is tactfully telling a mother that she must wash her baby, while I flash the pocket flash light (no other light being allowed on account of the nearness of the Boche) down a small boy's throat for Dr. Brown, at the same time coaxing him to put out his tongue—"tire la langue, mon petit." His proud mamma stands by, blandly smiling at her prodigy's tongue prowess. All of a sudden Dr. Brown sees four small boys in the background, who, not wishing to be outdone, stick out their tongues, while one of them is about to cast her only thermometer on the floor! Consternation, but helplessness on her part because she can't speak French. Finally, however, the thermometer is rescued, the right tongue is waving in the air, the others restored to their proper places and the consultation continues.

I wish I could keep on with this work as it is the kind

I like best.

The sickness among the people here is due mostly to two things:—nerves from being constantly bombed and living in cellars, and bad nourishment. Nearly every child that comes in is suffering from the food, and many of the grown people too.

The war bread here is very bad, and has made a good many people ill, including myself, and we ourselves have had practically to give up eating it.

The children have a fearful amount of impetigo and scabies, they nearly all have worms, due, Dr. Brown thinks, to the bad lard; pink-eye and bad colds are ever present, and in one place they have mumps. The grown people suffer more from nerves, which affect the digestion, and give them headaches and bad eyes.

The husbands of many of these women have been killed or wounded; the women have to go out to work, and leave their once tidy homes neglected and dirty.

All of these towns, except one, contain factories where the women are employed and which are constantly bombed.

Imagine the strain of working from 6 A.M. to 6 P.M., —knowing that the blast furnaces light up the sky for miles around, hearing the alarm for an air raid go off, keeping on working, though you know that the enemy is coming for you,—then on top of that having your husband at war, and your children, sometimes little ones, running the streets all day with no lunch except a piece of war bread and a bit of chocolate because there isn't time to go home and cook for them. That is how they have lived for the

last three years. Do you wonder that they sometimes come to us and say: “I don’t know what the matter is, but I seem to feel tired all the time.” Yet these women are the very ones who want to fight the war until there is a deciding victory for France, and I have never heard them complaining of their hardships. Sometimes they sigh and comment on the length of the war,—all are weary of it—but usually they say: “We shall hold out to the very end.” They have absolute faith and trust in us and in the English, of whom they say: “Ils ne lâcheront jamais” (“they will never let go”). They wait for hours to see “la doctoresse Américaine” and so many flock to her that we have to turn some away. The very fact that we are helping the civilians makes them think that we must have immense resources ready at hand. We are the only Americans they have seen, and they are so grateful and eager that it is pathetic to see them and almost frightening to realize the faith they have in us to end the war, and start them on a normal existence again. I pray we may not fail them when they need us most!

Nancy, December 15, 1917.

On Thanksgiving we were all invited to dine at the hospital at Toul at 6.30, so at 6 we started off in the motor, taking Monsieur Martin with us. He was delighted, of course, because he had never heard of such a thing as Thanksgiving before.

As no turkey can be procured, we had to take with us a huge and piping hot goose in a covered dish. Miss Mitchell and Miss de Schweinitz sat in front, Monsieur Martin and I in the back and Monsieur Martin held the goose, and he thought it so nice and informally American. Well, we went along, balancing

the goose and chatting, and were nearly there, when —pop! went a tire! We had none pumped up to change with, so we had to put in a new inner tube, which is a fearful job on the big Overland tires. In fact we worked away about half an hour, and didn't accomplish much, Monsieur Martin hopping about on the outskirts, jacking up the car, and holding the lanterns and saying how "malheureux" it was that he didn't know anything about a car. We all got quite weak from laughing. Meanwhile, of course, the goose was getting chilled all alone in its glory on the back seat. After a while we heard a motor coming with two men in it, so we stopped it, and asked if they would help us. They said they would be delighted to if we could lend them some gasolene, for they had a leak in their gasolene tank and otherwise couldn't get to Nancy if they stopped! Luckily we had some. They tried and tried for about another hour, while the goose congealed, and they couldn't do it. Then along came a camion. They tried for half an hour more and at last got the tire on.

All this time no one got in the least impatient or angry as Americans probably would have done. They said the tire was marvelous, it must have some "trick" to it, so that really it worked very easily,—if only you knew how. It *must* be practical, because it was American, and everything American was practical. At last they got it changed, and we went on our way with a stone-cold goose, two hours late!

When we got to the hospital, dinner was half finished. They had waited an hour for us. The Staff of the Toul Hospital was there, some English and Irish aviators who had been asked over, and five American aviators who had heard there was a place where you could get a Thanksgiving dinner for

twenty-five cents, so they had turned up! They had to go immediately after dinner but the English and Irish stayed on. There was one fascinator among them,—an Irish Captain with red face and hair, and white eyebrows, but most beautifully made and graceful.

After dinner we played “Going to Jerusalem” and “Winkum” and danced a Virginia reel. You should have seen the Irishman! We were all weakly collapsed about the room from laughing. It was a queer gathering, two women dentists, French, English, and American nurses and doctors, aviators, and ourselves. We shan’t see the Irish Captain again for he is going home on leave for five months. Perhaps that is why he was so joyous for he hadn’t had any leave since the War began. When it was all over Monsieur Martin remarked: “Eh bien!—I have found that the English are not so cold as I thought.”

Well, we got happily home, and the next day I took Dr. Brown to a poste near the front. Did I tell you that we were given gas masks and told to bring them every time we went there?

Many houses in these bombarded towns look only partially demolished on the outside, but often inside there is nothing left. Sometimes half the house or the upper story is gone, and people are still living in the rooms below.

In one, we found an old couple who are still running their bakery in the downstairs rooms, and there is literally no upstairs at all. Six shells have hit the house. When we said that we thought them courageous, they said, “Que voulez-vous? We are not rich and we must stay, we don’t want to be refugees.”

At another house was a little “pâtisserie.” We went in and had tea and the woman was so pleased to have us that, instead of letting herself be paid, she gave us a huge bunch of roses. Though most of the houses are smashed, and grass is growing in the streets, and the population is reduced to a few, those that stay are brave and cheerful, and have the finest spirit of comradeship that you can imagine.

The other day, when we were at work at this poste, the Boche started a cannonading outside the town. We could see the shells hit with a flash, and their smoke. The people said: “What is the matter with them to-day?” and went on about their affairs as if nothing extraordinary were happening. Most of the people live in their cellars, and don’t go out walking much in the open, and carry their gas masks.

They overwhelm us with hospitality and kindnesses. For instance, when we arrive, Mlle. Marie, a little apple-faced woman, runs to her house where she gets a huge pot of steaming hot chocolate and some crackers to warm us after the drive from Nancy. She does it every time we come. Another day when I came, my face was very cold from the wind. A young girl (who is an artist, and now paints sunset scenes on burst shell casings!), immediately sat down and made me a fur collar out of the skins of some rabbits that another young girl had raised herself. Another time, a whole band of forty pieces was ordered out to give a concert to the four of us, Dr. Brown, Mme. Delabeck, the trained nurse, and myself. The band is one that belongs to an attacking regiment, and is now “en repos.” The men are stretcher bearers when in action. One of the men had lived in Chicago, and spoke excellent English. They played beautiful music, and one man gave some songs from Carmen to a low

accompaniment. While the band was playing softly the Germans suddenly turned their guns our way and some shells went over us. The band went right on, perfectly unconcerned, and ended in a burst of martial music. When it was over the bandmaster explained that the Germans could hear us and had probably sent those shells over to see if they could "déranger la musique."

Dr. Brown is given all kinds of presents, flowers, baskets of apples, just like a country minister at home. This is certainly inspiring work, and especially so as it is reconstructive. There is a feeling of real neighborliness that I might almost say isn't to be found anywhere else in the world. You can't possibly imagine a more cheerful and helpful foundation for work.

One day while Dr. Brown was giving her treatments she did not need Miss Mitchell and me, so we took a walk with one of the officials. We went along a road and were told to be very careful about walking in line because the Boche had shelled the road at that time the day before. I took a picture from a house near by, and I had to take it from between the shutters, because if the Boche had seen the open window, he would have "donné un coup de canon." Then we went out to a Poste Avancée very near the German lines. In fact we went to within two hundred yards of them. We could hear torpedoes and some rifles went off, which caused the soldiers by the wayside to peer cautiously through the burlap camouflage with which the road is lined everywhere. At the Poste Avancée they were in need of bandages, so we brought them some the next day. When we came out from the Poste we had to speak low so that the enemy shouldn't hear us, and Miss Mitchell had

to hide her red scarf. We also went to a slope from which you can see the Boche trenches wonderfully, they are not at all far away,—in fact right there.



POSTE DE SECOURS

Every one asks us for flags, from the Commandant of the famous Chasseur Regiment of the region, to the Sisters who want to show them to the children in the little schools that still keep up.

Things look about as black as they can now, don't they? It looks as if only a miracle could save the East from the grip of Germany, yet they *must* be beaten, so I imagine the war will go on and on. But if people at home have the courage of those here, we can't help winning in the end. Does France seem so far away to Americans that they won't be able to see *why* Germany has to be beaten?

Speaking of atrocities, I saw a woman yesterday, who herself saw her neighbor's child of three killed in its mother's arms, when the Germans were there early in the war. We took her own child over to the hospital here because its arm had become so bad from a wound given by a German at that time, that it

had to be amputated.

We went one day to Bois-le-Prêtre to see the famous fountain where, even during the hardest fighting early in the war, the French and Germans both went for water. It now belongs to the French, though it isn't far from the German lines. While we were there some shells whistled overhead, and dropped in the woods, smashing the trees, and some torpedoes went off farther away. We had tea, consisting of cakes and champagne, in an abri with the Commandant and some of his officers, and visited some trenches, but not front line ones.

When we were walking through the woods in a perfect tangle of barbed wire and trenches, we came to a kind of furrow in the ground. The Commandant pointed to it and said to me that it was the second line of defense. If they had to retreat, they would go as far as that. Like a fool, I said: "But suppose you have to go farther, where do you go?" He made me a low and gracious bow and said: "Mademoiselle, we go no farther, we die."

Paris, December 27, 1917.

I am here for a week in Uncle Owen's apartment, before starting with Mrs. Lee for the Chambéry dépôt day after to-morrow. Uncle Owen and Marie have just gone south for the winter, and isn't it dear of them to let me stay on here with the maids?

The day before Christmas was full, and spent in taking bags to hospitals. In the evening I went to the same canteen as last year, and the same things were done again, until just before the end, when all of Boston somehow appeared, and we sang Christmas carols, led by Dr. Cabot! I saw Nora Saltonstall and

Hannah Fiske, who said she was so glad to get here where she could get something to eat. Also Miss Curtis and Hilda Williams were there and Griette, who looked well but tired. It was nice to get a glimpse of them all for every one is so busy that it is practically impossible to see people except by the most tremendous effort, and every one is always out except in the evening, when it is impossible to get about.

On Christmas afternoon I went to Mrs. N.'s to a party of stray Americans. It was so nice and Christmas-y, with a tiny tree in the corner for the babies. We had tea and cakes, and Garneau had sent some sugar from the front for the party, but unfortunately he had sent it in a tobacco tin, and it tasted of the tobacco, greatly to Mrs. N.'s distress, so she used up *all* her own allowance for the party, and expects to use the tobacco-flavored sugar for the next month, herself.

Then in the evening, I asked Marie's family to dine with me, and we had a very nice time, so that's how Christmas passed, but all the time I was longing to be at home with you.

CHAPTER VI

CHAMBÉRY AND OUR SOLDIERS ON LEAVE

Hotel de France,
Chambéry, Jan. 5, 1918.

I AM sitting in my room in the hotel with my feet on the radiator, and the window wide open. Outside is the most romantic line of chimney pots against the "mountains of eternal snow," which at this moment are of a luminous rose color, and swathed in a veil of pale mists, making them seem infinitely high.

Coming up in the train the other day we met a chasseur, who was stationed in Belgium, and asked him if he thought there would be an advance there. He simply said, "No, because it takes sixteen hours to advance 400 meters, on account of the mud." Then he said that the men carrying their packs on their backs have to be tied together by ropes in order not to drown in it, and every time they take a step they have to pull each foot out with both hands. Also they get their food by passing it along, on the principle of an old-fashioned fire bucket line and the end ones get it cold on account of the distance, or if there isn't enough, don't get it at all. The mud is icy cold and they have orders to cut their overcoats off above the mud, which comes half way up the thigh. At the end of eight days you can imagine how warm they are and their overcoats can't be lengthened again. An

officer here told us the other night that it was even worse at Verdun, because they were being shot at and shelled in addition. He had seen his men drown in the mud ten feet in front of him, “as far off as that table,” he said, and he and the nearest man to him were powerless to save them, though they sank slowly. He said there wasn’t a single man in his regiment who was there at the beginning. They were all killed or wounded or just couldn’t go on. After one attack and before another, sometimes a man, who had been as brave as could be the first time, would just sit down and cry and say he couldn’t go on. It wasn’t because he was a coward either, but because he had simply come to the end of his powers!

The officer who told us all this belonged to the “Iron Regiment” of the “Troupes d’Afrique,” which we saw several months ago in Bois le Prêtre. These troops are always used for attack. He was a strange-looking man with black hair and a dark complexion, and intense hazel eyes. He spoke quietly but with suppressed fire. He looked as if he might have some queer Arab mixture in him. Then he calmly said that the War couldn’t end till 1920, he thought, to thoroughly beat the Germans, but that would be done eventually. We hear that, at all times and from all sides, and everywhere they say that 1918 will be the worst year, because Germany knows America’s latent power, and knows she must win before we can get in. The French all say they can hold on till we get in, but they count on us to win.

A sweet, dimpled little French boy in the train, who had just graduated from the School of Artillery, told us that he had been training with the Americans, whom he described as “beaux” and “grands.” Every

morning before drill, he said, they felt cold, so they lined the French up on one side and the Americans on the other and boxed. Their "képis" and the American hats went every which way. They didn't speak each other's language,—"but we understood each other very well." One American cut a Frenchman's head open with his fist by mistake, —"but they were friends, so it didn't matter."

We have just got settled in our dépôt, and to-morrow some médecin-chefs are coming to see us and our supplies.

Chambéry, Jan. 20, 1918.

Last week, at Lyons, we met some refugees from near Cambrai who had been evacuated through Holland to France. There were a lot of them with their children, carrying their worldly goods done up in blankets. Two, a man and his wife whom we talked to, seemed to be of better class than the others, and we learned that they had kept a rather large store. They thought we were English, therefore what they said about the United States was not said to flatter us. They told us that had it not been for the American food they would have died of starvation before now, but that the food relief was admirably well administered, and that it is sacred, *i.e.* the Germans even now don't dare touch it. They got once a month rice, flour, cereals, salt meat (they'd had no fresh meat since the beginning of the war), cocoa, sugar, and condensed milk. The Germans took all such things as milk and eggs for themselves. Also, as they were supposed to reap a certain amount of the harvest for the civilian population, and give it to them, the Germans substituted the bad flour they made for the good flour sent from the United States

for the refugees. The result was that the refugees got all bad flour. They said the bread was like glue, and pulled out in long strings like molasses candy when bitten, and all their teeth fell out.

The German doctors were supposed to take care of them. The way they did it was to give them advice that could not be followed as to diet and prescriptions—there were *no* drugs there—, then they laughed at the patients' dismay!

The Germans themselves haven't enough to eat. The troops in the first-line trenches are given enough, but those in the rear are not. The young boys of seventeen and eighteen came and asked the civilians for bread frequently, but they haven't enough themselves, so they could not give them any.

Another thing they said was that the discipline in the German army is terrific. Men are shot for the slightest thing, because the officers fear revolt. The officers and men have different newspapers, also. If a man reads or repeats news from his officer's paper which is not in his own paper, he is punished. The queer part of it is, that the men don't want to read the officers' papers, they are so submissive by nature. For that reason some of them didn't know for *months* that the United States was in the war.

I asked them whether they had known of such atrocities as the cutting off of children's hands. They said, "No," that to be fair to the Germans they could not say they had, but they had known wholesale violation of young girls; that, however, was in the beginning of the war. It still occurred now, of course, but, where they were, not publicly sanctioned. They said they thought the first troops sent into Belgium and France must have been picked for their criminal

qualities, as those that had come there since were not the same, though they were all barbarians.

The officers, they thought, must be sent to a regular school to learn how to loot as part of their training. Whenever they came to a town they went into each house and made an inventory of each room, which they pasted on the wall of the room. If, after that, an inhabitant of the house moved so much as a knife or a spoon from one room to another, he was punished. The officers would send soldiers to requisition things in the houses. One day they would come and take four chairs, for instance, chop them up before their owners' eyes, and tell them they were for firewood and take them away in a cart. Another time they would take candlesticks, beds, blankets, china, and everything, with no explanation. A day or two later the people would see their things going to the rear, dumped in a cart with old stoves and pipes, all mixed together with pictures, bronze statues, etc.

One day, they said, two English aviators were brought down over the town. All the people felt very sad, and some went about weeping. The next day they were forbidden to go to the funeral over which the Germans were rejoicing. Every one went just the same. They were forbidden to put flowers on the graves. The Germans placed a guard in hiding to take down the names of those who went, nevertheless, and *covered* the graves with flowers. Every one was punished. I asked what the punishment was. They said to have manacles on their hands and live on bread and water for four days and sweep the streets. One old man, who used to be a millionaire, they said, was made to do it, too. The Germans are no respecters of persons. To shock the inhabitants, they used the churches for cafés and cinemas. When the

curé objected, he was punished.

I must tell you about the Belgian military tuberculosis hospital at Chambéry. There are one hundred and twenty-five men in it, hardly one of whom knows what has become of his family. There is every kind of man, some speak English, French, and Flemish, others only Flemish. There are only men infirmiers, one to each ward of fifty, to take care of the patients, and doctors and infirmiers are both tired out.

The one bright ray of sunshine in the place is a brave Englishwoman, Lady Baird, but she is perfectly worn out and *must* take a rest soon. I don't see how she stands it. She says the men are so patient and cheerful. They have nothing. Some who are well enough can't go out because they have no shoes, so they have to stay in. Of course she and we are trying to get them things that they need. They had but one wash basin for fifty men, they had no screens at all. Lady Baird bought some, as she found that even the men who were dying were left in the wards with the others talking around them.

When we went there with comfort bags the men were very shy. They had seen scarcely any one but Lady Baird. They said "Merci," sometimes "Merci, de tout cœur." When we left, instead of the usual gayety that follows in the wake of the bags, they were nearly all weeping because they were so glad that somebody had come to see them, and cared a little about them. Some of the bags had lovely letters in them. Lady Baird was weeping, too, and we were on the verge of collapse, and the Ford wouldn't budge from the door!

Now Lady Baird has got them to make out a list of

books that they'd like, which occupies them, and I'm going to get them some with the money you sent over. I saw only one book in the whole place. The librarian here is very nice. When I told him they were books for the tuberculous Belgians because the time seemed so long to them, he said: "Ah yes, Mademoiselle, I know, I have tuberculosis myself." He was waiting to go to a sanitarium in Switzerland and has added books himself to those they asked for.

Chambéry.

I inclose some letters of thanks from two hospitals to which I sent periodicals from the money given me for that purpose by the "Transcript" readers, some of whose names are unknown to me. Of course the soldiers thank me as representing the givers.

It's rather pathetic, isn't it, to end up by wishing me a long life, when many of them are probably dying.

Perhaps you can translate the letters and put them in the "Transcript," in order that people may see that their gifts really are appreciated, and are giving pleasure.

Translation

LETTER FROM THE SOLDIERS AT THE HOSPITAL
AT
VANNES

Madame:

It is with profound joy and veritable pleasure that we frequently receive the illustrated periodicals, which your great generosity and kindness have been the means of sending us.

This gesture is the more charming, the more

noble, that it is addressed to all this little colony of sick men; it is truly a good work.

I assure you, Madame, that this is well understood at our hospital. Every one has the benefit of them, all read them with pleasure, and it is upon the urgent demand of all, and in the name of all, that I address to you our most sincere and grateful thanks.

This gracious gift provides us, not only a moment of diversion, in which we forget our physical sufferings, but it is also a precious moral support, which in our case is of inestimable help.

In return for this good deed, receive, Madame, from all your grateful, poor, sick men (de tous vos petits malades reconnaissants) their best wishes for your health, long life, and happiness, as well as their renewed thanks.

Fifteen signatures.

Translation

Hôpital de Trébeurden.

Madame:

Wounded or ill, we have all the care needed at the hospital; we lacked only occupation for the mind, but, thanks to your solicitude, we now have the means of diversion, and it is with keen pleasure that we thank you for your gift of books, periodicals, and magazines.

When we shall have returned to our homes after victory, when we recount to our

children the episodes of this formidable war, we shall tell them of the generous way in which you came to relieve our sufferings, and share our common sacrifices, for the defense of our just cause.

We want them, too, to keep in their hearts a place of honor for your noble American nation.

A group of grateful soldiers,
A. Carow, Motor Driver,
and ten others.

Chambéry, Jan. 27, 1918.

How good that G. is a first lieutenant. I am terribly proud of him, aren't you? But, oh, how I hate to think of his being in the War. There is so much that the boys can't imagine, possibly. Any one can stand the fighting, but the sitting in the mud for days with *nothing* to do, and the dirt, and the routine, and the oppressive boredom is what tires and tests them. If they don't have ideals, they are lost,—there is no just getting along; they either live by their ideals, or lose them. I don't believe there's any middle way. I don't worry about that for G., for he is an idealist anyway, but I'm afraid he will have moments of agony of mind more intense than we can imagine. It's impossible for us to know what the soldiers go through, and the more I see of them, the more I'm convinced that I know nothing at all about the war.

I often wish that I could do some definite good somewhere, or rather see the results of it. We see hundreds of wounded once or twice, and they are such dears, just like children in the way they tell us little things about themselves that bubble forth, but

we never stay long enough anywhere to see them get well, or even improve. We pass on, with a memory of a face or a voice, or even that indefinite thing called atmosphere, and we never know whether they get well, or die (though sometimes that is all too evident), or whether they see their families again, or a million and one other things that they tell us about so eagerly.

The other day when we were giving out “sacs surprises” in the hospital here, we went down the ward, talking to the men as usual as we gave out the bags, explaining about chewing gum and corncob pipes, and translating the letters written in English, till we came to the end of the ward. There, singing in his bed, was a little Belgian soldier. We’d seen him at the Belgian hospital a few days before, and, when we came along, he stopped singing, and said, “Bon jour.” I said, “You are singing this morning; are you happy?” He smiled a little, and then said, “No, Mademoiselle, but they cut off my leg this morning; it hurts, and I feel as if I must cry, so I sing instead, that no one may know,” and he went on humming softly to himself. He seemed no more than eighteen.

Opposite him was a very sick-looking man. The doctor stopped, and told us he was a German. “Shall we give him a bag?” we asked the doctor. He wouldn’t say; do as we please. We still asked, “Shall we?” Then came a kind of chorus from the nearest sick men, “Mais oui, oui, donnez, Mesdames,” and the little Belgian nodded his head in the middle of his song. Mrs. Lee took the bag over to the Boche. He looked surprised, and then said: “But I’m a German.” Mrs. Lee told him that he was no longer an enemy, now that he was sick, and he just clutched the bag with a whispered “Merci,” and shut his eyes tight.

Chambéry, February 6, 1918.

There is some really thrilling news to tell you about Chambéry: it is about to become a recreation center for American soldiers on leave. They are to come at the rate of about two hundred a week to Aix, Challes, and Chambéry. Ten different recreation centers are being arranged, to which the American soldiers may go. Each man may choose which place he prefers, or, if he has no choice, he may go the regular round, a "leave" in each place. The object is, of course, to keep them out of the big cities, and to give them so good a time that they won't want to go to them. In fact, they are not to be allowed to go to them. Of course this applies only to men; officers may go where they choose.

All the hotels at Chambéry have been taken over by the Y. M. C. A., and are to be used for the men. In that way, they feel they are really having a vacation, and yet there is no chance of undesirable people coming to them. In fact, even the maids are to sleep elsewhere, and Mrs. Lee and I are to have a little suite to ourselves, in an "L" that is cut off from the rest of the hotel, but are to have our meals in the dining room, which is expected to have a good influence. Every one else, except one elderly Frenchwoman, has to leave the hotel. I think the same arrangements are being made in all the other places. These beautiful, empty, pre-war watering-places lend themselves admirably to the Y. M. C. A. plan, which I believe is General Pershing's, and carried out by the Y. M. C. A.

Mrs. Lee and I feel the weight of the nation upon us, as the people here regard us as pillars of support. Madame R. asked us how often it was expected that

the town would be shot up! I certainly am in luck to see, first, our first battalion on its way to the front, and the French impressions therefrom, and then the organization for, and arrival of the first batch on leave, and the ensuing opinion also. It's just luck it happened that way.

The people of the town have organized a committee of hospitality for the soldiers; they have planned excursions for them, arranged to meet them at the train,—all this is to be actively carried out by those who can speak English, and a certain number are going to help them shop. They have also arranged to give them a Club House where they can read, write, smoke, play games, and eat their luncheon, and get hot chocolate, tea, and coffee, between excursions. There also will be a room where they will have a chance to meet "convenable" French people of the town, with the aid of the English-speaking ones, and the Y. M. C. A. ladies and men who are coming to live there, and do most of the actual running of the club. All this, the French committee, bursting with enthusiasm, told Mr. Cate who is making the arrangements here, and he, being just the right, tactful kind of person, of course agreed at once, only dropping suggestions where they'd best take root, and then going away and letting the French people run it themselves, and now we have been asked to their next meeting to hear their plans, and tell them what we can that may help. Monsieur Lugon says that they intend to ask Mrs. Lee and me to get the furnishings for the Club, as we would know better what our boys would like. The Y. M. C. A. has offered funds, I believe.

Besides, they are to have all the sports they like, and the theater to use as they want. American and

English companies are coming to play in it. All the grocers and shopkeepers have been assembled, and have agreed to uniform prices, and a price list is being put up in hotels and in the shops, so that the soldier shall not be "done," or the prices rise too high for the people here. This is done in all the towns where United States troops go. Also, they are going to have a goodly number of American films in the cinemas. In fact, the whole town is agog, and we are too!

There is being organized by the French people a society, called "The French Homes," the object of which is to have nice French families meet American soldiers, and French officers receive American officers in their houses, with the hope that they may become real friends. Thus the American may feel he knows a family here, and ultimately the two nations may understand each other better. This is approved by the French authorities and by the American, and is so worked out by both, that if a soldier, who is a lawyer by profession, for instance, wants to go to the seashore, to a French family, his application is sent in to the United States Headquarters; he is looked up, and if his record is all right, he is sent to the family of a French lawyer at the seashore, who has been looked up by the "French Homes" Society, and is on their lists. All right in that case, but can't you see an enlightened and keen American farmer from the West, landing on a French peasant? I hope they have some provision for cases like that.

Chambéry, February 22, 1918.

We went to Grenoble last week, and visited the hospitals there. Nothing unusual about them; they

were comparatively empty, as are all the hospitals in this region now. One hospital, in a convent, was in the most beautiful place I have ever seen anywhere. It was above Grenoble, on the "hill" opposite the Grande Chartreuse. From it you could see the whole range, covered with new-fallen snow, and the whole valley down to Mt. Blanc and up to Aix-les-Bains, tinted with the colors of spring and blue mist. Each soldier had beside his bed a bowl, in which were little wild violet and primrose plants. The place was clean, and very poor, but the sisters made the soldiers as happy as could be. In peace times I believe they are cloistered nuns. I often wonder if they ever can go back to it, after this very human joy of taking care of their soldier "enfants." Just below the convent was a graveyard, and there we saw one of the little sisters going from grave to grave, saying a prayer at each.



American Soldiers at Chambéry

In another hospital, we found a doctor who had been wounded earlier in the war, and had been nursed at Neuilly. Among his patients were many Arabs, and

the hospital was installed in what was meant for a huge factory, but the machinery had never been put into the long rooms. He had had a push cart made for the dressings and food, and little bed tables for the men. He showed them to us with pride, and then hastily added: “But it isn’t original; I learned it from the Americans at Neuilly.” He also had started a library for his men, comprising books on agriculture and trade, because a great many of the soldiers, he said, knew nothing much about their trades, or any trade. It would be important, after the war, that they should be “instruits” in something, so he had that library for them to use during their convalescence, and many of them were glad to have an opportunity to study. He was a very young doctor, and had been wounded in the back, and was quite lame, but he must be rather brilliant, as he was the Médecin-chef of a very large hospital, mostly for those who were recovering from their wounds, but not well enough to dispense with care and dressings.

Then we came back here and thrill of thrills, the Americans have arrived! They came to Aix first, and what excitement! They had a French band and a colored band, and both bands paraded up and down the streets until every one thought they’d burst from exertion. You can imagine the effect the colored band had on the inhabitants!

Then two days later a trainload of them arrived at Chambéry. They are regulars, over a hundred of them, and, with the exception of about six, are as clean and well-behaved a lot of men as you could expect to see anywhere. In fact, they are making an excellent impression, and we are most awfully proud of them. There must be about seventy swarming about in this hotel, and they don’t do any of the

things one would expect of rough soldiers. They don't yell up and down the corridors, they don't eat with their knives, they don't trample mud all over the place, or come in noisy at all hours. Instead, they get shaves and shoe shines and baths, until they glisten, grin and say "good mornin' ma'am," and "good evenin'," sing sentimental songs, or rather bellow them, at the piano, and play cards and billiards, and read books, and are insatiable about "seein' the sights." First, they walk about the town, most erect and proper, in groups, and then they make for the "environgs" on bicycles of every sort and description, mostly painted bright purple. Sometimes they whiz, sometimes they wobble down the streets. One hears, "Hi, there, Bill, where you goin'?" "Dunno, but I'm still goin'," comes from Bill, and he wobbles adroitly into the "fontaine des elephants," which, however, remains calm, even though charged by American infantry.

Last night, after dinner, we found Sergeant B. in the salon immersed in a book, and lost to the world. We were talking to some others, and, all of a sudden, out came the most tremendous guffaw, "Ha-haw-haw" from Sergeant B., who is immense, over six feet, and blond. He was reading the "First Hundred Thousand" and had got to where Private Mucklewame became mixed up with himself, trying to obey orders. Sergeant B. said it was just like that at first.

They really are as upright and manly a lot of men as you could expect to see anywhere, the world over. It is great fun to hear them discuss the "greenhorns,"—militia, draft, and the Plattsburg officers. The highest praise they can give is to say emphatically, "He's a *white* man."

Saturday, Monsieur le Maire gave a reception for

them in the Mairie. It was all decorated with flags and flowers. The Mayor made a speech, which was translated; the band played the “Star-spangled Banner”; Major Edmonds made an excellent speech in reply, and the band played the “Marseillaise,” while our boys, so straight and fine, stood at attention, saluting. All the French people stood around and admired them. Then they drank to the health of the United States, and Monsieur le Maire gave his arm to Mrs. Lee when he proposed the toast. Every one drank the health of France, America, and their Allies. We were presented with bouquets of flowers, as were all the English-speaking ladies there.

These soldiers were sent from America in secret; they had no send-off, and this was the first thing that had been done for them. They loved it, and smiled shyly, and bowed with funny, stiff bows to the French ladies who endeavored to entertain them, while they sipped champagne, which a little boy, who told me he’d been brought up in an orphan asylum, said he’d never seen the “likes of” before. Needless to say, none of them got too much, as they explained, “that was a swell party the French gave to honor us,” and you can just believe they were being an honor to their country with all their might.

We’ve got to know some of them really well: Corporal Hackett, who was the first man wounded (a shell burst and killed his best friend, on whose knees his head was resting); Privates Gray and Osborne, the latter being the man who put up the telephone line, on which they first talked across to San Francisco, and who has been everything imaginable, beginning as a steeple-jack. Also, Sergeant Blood and a lot of others, and Mr. T., whom I met when he was at Harvard, and who is one of the nicest people

imaginable, doing more for the men unofficially than the Y. M. C. A. can do officially.

We went over to the Y. M. C. A. to a service. There was a wonderful chaplain, and the best singing I've heard for a long time, by a quartet. They sang the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" to close the service, and, after the service, songs of all kinds, some popular, some sentimental, and some lovely part songs. The man who took the bass had the strongest, gentlest kind of face, and he sang something about home that he said always made him feel homesick, and every one more or less wept, and felt better for it. Afterwards, we sat about and talked, and had chocolate and sandwiches. Mr. T. introduced a perfectly killing sergeant to me, who, as he said, is "pure gold." He used to be a miner, and none of the edges are rubbed off, but he is jolly, and wholesome, and most gentle by nature, and killingly funny, too. He worked out West, where I guess he met Baron Munchausen, and beat him all to pieces telling yarns. He certainly got off some wonderful ones last night, and said he'd written them home to his girl and hoped the censor'd let them through. It surely would be worth a censor's while to read them! When we went away he said, "Well, good-bye, if I don't get killed, I hope we'll meet again."

I inclose "Iodine and Pills," a "trench verse" they are fond of singing, as the men are given those two remedies for most of their ailments. They go up to the trenches singing it, and I wonder *what* the Germans think! They think hardly at all about the Germans, except as a menace to be removed from the opposite trench. The Germans have tried a lot of stunts to fool the Americans, but haven't succeeded at all, as our soldiers seem to consider No Man's

Land as belonging to the Americans, and “no trespassing” of any kind is allowed. Our soldiers don’t talk much about the French, either. They all say they’re here to get things done as fast as they can, and then go home. None of them want to stay a minute longer. When they do speak of the French, it’s “that poilu with the citations,” or “that old lady who dried my shoes,” etc.

These are answers to some questions that we asked them: *What do you eat?* Flapjacks for breakfast, biscuits, meat balls, butter, fried potatoes, bacon, coffee (“Java”), bread (“punk”); “cup in one hand, mess kit in the other, keep the line a-moving.” “Chow”—meals or food; chow call is blown on a bugle behind the lines, but the proper name is mess call. The food comes in thermos cans at the front, actually into the trenches, so they get it hot. Dinner consists of beans, beef, potatoes, coffee, blackberry jam; supper of hash, “slum-stew,” with or without the jacket, and “camouflage-slum,” stew with a crust (“deep-sea slum” is watery stew with boiled potatoes), doughnuts, biscuits and butter and sirup, stewed prunes, stewed figs, apple fritters, corn fritters; not all that at one meal, though. When you work for supper you have three big sandwiches, otherwise you have a good supper. *Where do you sleep?* Sleep in a dugout in the trenches, otherwise anywhere, over, under, or among cows. Every sleeping place is marked with its inhabitants, for instance: 1 corporal, 3 men, 2 cows, 6 chickens; 4 horses, 40 men. Billets are classified; a haymow takes from eighteen to twenty men. Sometimes you can fill a bag with straw for a mattress and make a bed of boxes and chickenwire. *How do you get your letters?* Letters and packages are delivered to you right where you are.

IODINE AND PILLS

Iodine and pills!
Iodine and pills!
Good for the rheumatism,
Good for the chills;
Bones may be broken,
Mumps in your gills,
Iodine and pills will cure you—
Iodine and pills.

Chambéry, March 3, 1918.

I must tell you more about our soldiers. We are so proud of their behavior, as a whole, that we don't know what to do. Certainly as P. S. put it, "life is stripped of all its fixings" over here, and the wonderful part of it is that you find so many more beautiful qualities in people than, at home, you would think they could have.

These men have had no leave for nine months, and have had their baptism of fire, too, and they seem to crave to talk to you about everything under the sun, usually about home, but often about the War, too. The Y. M. C. A. is really homelike, so they crowd it, and talk to the workers, or just sit and drink in the atmosphere. As one of them expressed it, "You've no idea what it means to us to see honest-to-God American women around." One of them told Miss Davison that if the American women were taken away from them, they'd shoot themselves, and she was almost frightened by his look. I don't believe you, over there, can realize the state of mind they are in—they are very alert and sensitive in every fiber, so that the slightest thing one says or does influences them. Of course, it's a strain for us, as we

have to keep them interested and amused. Anything at all emotional is too much for them,—and we *have* to be calm. For instance, the day before they left, the quartet sang "My Little Gray Home in the West" very beautifully. Nearly every man was almost in tears, and the quartet had to sing something crazy quickly, to bring back their balance again. Afterwards, one of the men remarked, "We can't stand much of that, you know."



American Soldiers on Y. M. C. A. Steps at Chambéry

Mr. T. introduced a little man with red hair to me. This is what he told me about him: a French aëroplane came down in No Man's Land, in broad daylight. The pilot and observer were both dazed, and made for the *German* trenches. Out hops the little red-haired man from ours, dashes across No Man's Land, turns the observer and pilot around, and leads them back to our trenches. Then he goes back to the aëroplane, takes out all the photographs and plates, and brings them back. Meanwhile, every German sniper is firing at him, and, two seconds after he left the aëroplane, it was blown to

smithereens by a shell. When I congratulated him, he blushed crimson and said, “Oh, that was nothin’, any one else who’d thought of it would have done it, you know.” Then he hastily changed the conversation to gas masks, and we chatted gaily for a while. Afterwards he came up to say “Good-bye” and said, “That was the nicest conversation I’ve had, since we’ve been in France. I haven’t had the pleasure of talking with an American lady before.”

While I was taking a photograph of a group of soldiers, a boy, who was standing watching, looked as if he wanted his picture taken, too. I found he wanted to send it to his guardian. “She’s an old lady, you know,” he said, “and if you take me up against a house, she’ll think I’m in a city, and not get worried so much.”

Another little boy, with a southern accent, told me that he knew how to speak French,—he could say, “Oui-oui.” When he got to the hotel, he had a trench cough, and the landlady, being a motherly soul, asked him something. He said “Oui-oui,” cheerfully, and, before he knew it, he was whopped into bed with a huge mustard plaster clapped on his chest, and, in that helpless state, made to drink something hot that tasted “something awful,” before the zealous landlady sent for the American doctor. Another boy fell desperately in love with a French girl, and wanted to marry her before going back to the front. He went to see the Provost Marshal, the Colonel, the Préfet, and, in fact, all the authorities about it. The French girl was a bit amazed at such headlong American methods. Her mother objected of course, and, as neither of them spoke a word of English, nor he a word of French, they came to Monsieur Lugon to beg him to interpret for them, and explain that the

girl wished to wait until after the war.

An old sergeant, who has been in the Army twenty-seven years, said he bet his wife that the war would be over by Christmas of last year: “Of course I didn’t believe it,” said he, “but it makes a subject for conversation with her.”

We went to see them off at the station when the troop train came to take them away, and we rode with them as far as Aix. I can’t tell you what it was like to see them go away. We shook hands with all, and stood and waved good-byes to them, and they all waved caps and handkerchiefs out of the windows, and called as they passed us, “Look at me, Miss Davison; wave to me, Mrs. Lee; Miss Bradley, Good-bye!” and away the train went. We could see them waving as long as it was in sight.

Chambéry, March 10.

This week we went to a place where there had been a railway accident, not a very bad one, but to English troops. Mrs. Lee thought that they might need things, and also that there might be no one there who could speak English, so we filled up Maggie with all kinds of bandages, and went. We had difficulties getting there, as the snow got deeper and deeper as we climbed, and if we had met something it would have been impossible to pass it. We did come upon a car, and had a wretched time creeping slowly behind it for miles, until, eventually, we got to a bridge where there was space to pass.

When we got to the town nearest the accident, it was swarming with Tommies, such nice looking ones, too. We didn’t get to the hospital until eight at night,

and, sure enough, there was only one nurse and she spoke no English. We asked if we might see the men, but when we went into the wards, they were nearly all asleep, or rather trying to sleep, after the accident. I never saw such grit as they have. Imagine being shut in a box car that has fallen off an embankment, and unable to get out, with eight horses kicking around you. When they heard English spoken, they nearly all opened their eyes and smiled at us. Some of them weren't really very badly hurt, but much shaken up. We gave them some tobacco and the never-to-be-forgotten comfort bags. One boy, the worst hurt, was in a room by himself and only half conscious. When Mrs. Lee went up to him and said a few words in English, he smiled, and opened his one openable eye, and said cheerfully, "Oh, I'm quite all right, thanks very much." He wasn't, at all, poor dear, because he had bad internal injuries, too.



Belgian Tuberculosis Hospital at Chambery

Most of them were excited and glad to talk. One man who had the Mons Star and had never been wounded before, grinned and said, “We was just lucky enough, yes Ma’am.” He had a bandage around his head, a broken arm, rib, and ankle.

Mrs. Lee arranged with the nurse to write home to their families, and then we left them, because they mustn't be excited. It was good to see the restful expression that came over their faces, when they shut their eyes to go to sleep again, after they'd been speaking English a little.

I am sending you a picture of the Belgians outside the tuberculosis hospital here. The little boy on crutches, in the foreground, is the one who had his leg cut off, and was singing in his bed, the day we gave the bag to the German prisoner.

Chambéry, March 22, 1918.

We have changed our dépôt here to a room in the château of the Dukes of Savoy. It is most romantic, as the room is in the old part of the château, directly over the portcullis, and the walls are about six feet thick. The view from it is magnificent, out towards the Alps and across the basin where Chambéry is. Imagine the bandages and pillows you so carefully make at home, on shelves in a thirteenth century castle. They don't stay there long, however, as we take them to the hospitals almost as soon as we get them.

Chambéry, March 26, 1918.

The war news to-day seems as black as it can be, unless it gets blacker to-morrow. People stand in crowds where the communiqués are posted, almost breathless. There is a feeling that *this* is the great battle of the War, as a deciding factor in its outcome. The Germans cannot win,—still they continue to advance, and we were prepared as much as possible.

Last night the —— United States Engineers, who were on leave here, were summoned back to their regiments after only two days' leave. They left, singing, and the whole town turned out to see them off.

To-day, the allied communiqués state that Bapaume has fallen, and Noyon is being evacuated. All kinds of rumors circulate as to new kinds of gas shells used by the Germans, and that, with the fact that Paris is being shelled, adds to the anxiety of the hour.

Chambéry, Easter, March 31.

Since I last wrote, we have been on a trip to visit hospitals in two lonely and remote places. They have no comforts at all, but they are not badly off, as they have at present very few sick and wounded, so the patients get good care. Probably, a year ago, I should have been horrified at their desolateness, but now that I see them clean, and the men well cared for, as far as bare essentials go, I say they aren't badly off.

The weather has been perfect, and now the cherry trees are all out, and the violets and primroses are in masses everywhere, not to speak of periwinkles like little blue stars.

I have a very amusing letter from Phil, in which he describes a football game, for all the world like the game of croquet in "Alice"; only instead of the Duchess yelling "Off with her head," German shells kept landing all around, until they found themselves lined up against nobody, as the opposing side had taken to shelter, and had disappeared like Alice's wickets.

If you want to "see America," I've decided that the

best way is to come to France, for you certainly see men from all parts, fresh from home, and untainted to an extraordinary degree by any outside influences. Though they are wonderfully quick to register impressions, and to improve their shining hours by taking in all the French can show them, yet they remain absolutely *frankly* American, and don't try to be anything else. Considering that they are of all kinds, that is really wonderful, and gives you great faith in America as a nation. They do take suggestions from others in matters that are practical, but they have faith only in American things, and leave the foreigner to his own ways mostly.

One American, who was here (I didn't see him, but Miss Davison told me about him), was taken prisoner by the Germans and escaped. Ten of them were captured. The Germans took them back of the lines blindfolded, and tortured them, in the hope that they would answer questions about transports, etc. Miss Davison said she didn't dare ask what was done to them, but one thing was to burn them. The man she saw was taken prisoner in January, and he still had an unhealed ring of raw flesh around his wrist, from being burned by mustard gas.

After the Germans had finished torturing them, they were put in the end of some barracks, with one guard over them. Their arms were taken away, of course, but their tobacco and matches were left them. At one end of the room they were in, was a huge pile of packing and excelsior. They decided to escape at once, so they calmly planned it in English, while the guard stood by, not understanding them. One of them got behind a post; another set fire to the excelsior. The guard started to put the fire out. They grabbed his gun, dispatched him, and, in the

confusion, escaped. Soon they came to an outpost, they also got this guard's gun and ammunition; five of them had disappeared by then, and, they think, were killed.

Then they started to walk to the front and France. What their adventures were, I don't know. They traveled at night, and guided themselves by the stars, one of them being a Westerner and used to it. At last, they were all so tired they couldn't go any farther. A Frenchman came up to them, took them in, and gave them food and a rest, and told them where the American lines were. They were in Alsace. Somehow they got through Switzerland, and back to the Americans. Never again, they say, will they be taken prisoners.

I am so glad, H., that you like the hospital work. You are doing better than I am, as during the two operations that I saw, I had to go out about eight times.

Every day, I want more to get back home (how I hate this chaotic mix up!) and I should take the first boat if there were any real reason for going, but somehow one can't leave here when there is so much to do, and one is really needed.

I often wonder what we'll all do after the war—to sit down in the same old rut will be impossible; but, as S. says, there's always a vista ahead, and, when we come home and get off at the docks, I imagine there'll be one waiting behind the Statue of Liberty, leading on to the Promised Land.

Chambéry, April 6, 1918.

We have been fearfully busy distributing bags in the

hospitals for the Easter fêtes. I think in four days, we must have distributed about seven hundred bags, besides visiting all the hospitals in Aix and Chambéry twice, to know the exact number of soldiers to give bags to. The men are pouring in, some every day, and the hospitals are filling up. They send here mostly men with small wounds, or sick men—a great many seem to be suffering from rheumatism and indigestion, I suppose as a result of the winter. The Verdun-Nancy Sector send their people here. That is interesting, as they are the French who have been with the Americans. I asked one man who had been with our artillery, if it was good, and he said, “très bon,” but that they didn’t yet realize all that war was, and needed seasoned men with them. I wish I hadn’t told him I was American when I asked him, as he might have said more. Quite often they take me for French, especially when they come from the provinces and speak with an accent themselves.

Of course, with the offensive on, we have no Americans here on leave now, and probably shall not have until it is over.

The weather here is perfect, and as for the country! I have never seen so many kinds of flowers in my life. Every kind of fruit tree and hawthorn is in bloom, and the meadows are carpeted like tapestry with jonquils, primroses, cowslips, buttercups, pâquerettes, violets, and anemones, besides many other flowers, the names of which I do not know. I also heard a nightingale the other day. I never have seen such a beautiful spring.

One of the boys, who came down from Noyon, said that all the old trenches there were nearly obliterated with flowers of every kind, growing wild, but now, just about a week later, they are being used again for

war!

There is a very nice little old lady, a teacher of English in the schools here, who loves walking, and every time I get a chance I go with her. She knows the most heavenly walks, up little grassy lanes in the mountains. On our way home the other day, we saw an old woman and a little boy ploughing a field. Hitched to the plow were two cows. I wish I could have had a picture of them. It is typical of how the labor on the soil is now done in this region, on the little patchwork fields.

P.S. Mrs. Baker got a loaf of white bread from the United States Army, as a present, the other day. It tasted just as cake would have at home.

Chambéry, April 14, 1918.

Still the battle continues, and we all hold our breath and wait. A wounded French corporal, who came here the other day, said that the English were fighting like demons, and keeping the morale and courage of the French at top pitch by their wonderful example, the example of every man among them. We sit and wonder, and hear of Paris being bombed and shelled.

No men arrive on leave, nor will arrive for some weeks, and, when they do, they will have learned what war is. Wounded are coming in slowly now,—but coming.

The regiment, that belongs in this neighborhood in peace times, has been practically wiped out, this last week. The Colonel, Commandant, and staff were in a château, watching operations. Things were very critical, when suddenly they saw English

reënforcements coming. The English reached the château, suddenly turned, and began firing on their allies! They were Germans, dressed as English! The Colonel was killed, the Commandant taken prisoner, and, though they made the Germans pay dearly for their little ruse, they were nearly all killed before communications were reëstablished.

I have come to know a good many people here now. They are extremely nice, and lately, as work has been slack, on account of the impossibility of getting supplies from Paris, I have had time to take tea and to walk with some of them. It is pleasant to see something of the outside world, and helps, I hope, besides, in spreading good feeling between the Americans and the French.

One of the officers, who has been in several places, says that the feeling towards the Americans is warmer in Chambéry than anywhere else he has been. I can't help thinking that it is partly due to the fact that the A. F. F. W. came here winter before last, before America was in the War. It is important, of course, to keep up the feeling, and it is certainly very agreeable.

The other day, the head of the United States Medical Department here came to lunch with us. He came to France a year ago, and as the British were short of medical officers, he served with them, and was gassed twice.

I now see why there are such terrible losses in the medical units. The young doctors go over the top, just behind the men who are charging. This doctor said he went over three times in one day, and each time he took one third of his stretcher bearers with him. He worked for three days before he was able to assemble his men, and have roll call. Then, out of

five hundred stretcher bearers, only one hundred and fifty answered. He says, that though they are unarmed and wear a Red Cross arm band, they are shot at by snipers, when dressing the wounded.

He told us that once he had been attending to six badly wounded men in a shell hole, and he started to come out to go to another hole where he heard some others calling for help, but he was immediately shot at. He couldn't believe it, and put his hat up on the end of a bayonet, to see which direction the shots were coming from. Then he got out again, in such a way that his arm band would be plainly seen at the place from which the shots came. They shot again. Then he took off his arm band, borrowed a Tommy's rifle, and, while one of the Tommies moved a helmet on a bayonet, he crawled around behind the sniper and "winged him." He then went over and dressed the sniper's wound, and took his arm band out of his pocket, waving it in the Boche's face. The Boche merely shook his head, raised his eyebrows, and said "Ya, Ya."



A. F. F. W. Dépôt at Chambéry

230. CHAMBERY—Le Château des Ducs de Savoie (XI-siècle)—

Monument historique

Chambéry, Savoie, April 21st, 1918.

Yesterday, we went to see a family of refugees, and took them clothes and refugee bags. The family consisted of a mother and six children, the oldest an undersized boy of thirteen. It was pathetic to see their joy over the toys in the bags, as, of course, they had had nothing like that since the War began. The oldest little girl of eleven was proud, too, of the clothes we brought them, and began at once to plan how they could be made over. In their entire little house, they had one chair, two benches, a table, a stove, two glasses, three cups, a few plates and spoons. We did not see the back room where they slept. The children and the house were all scrupulously clean. The mother and little boy and oldest girl worked in the fields, and the younger children went to school.

When we asked them whether they found food available there, they said that their neighbors were very good to them and brought them potatoes, etc. The neighbors are as poor as they are.

We go often to see refugee families, and Miss Wells, of the Red Cross, who is here looking after the refugees in Isère and Savoie, and who is very efficient and very nice, has promised us shoes and beds for them. We are doing the clothing part and are coöperating with the Red Cross practically, as well as theoretically, here.

If the refugees can, they pay for the beds and furniture on the installment plan, for giving the

things outright tends to make them sit back, and look on their lives as irreparably broken.

It seems almost inconceivable, when we drive into the loveliest little villages, to find the most abject misery. In one town we found a little boy with whooping cough, so they said, and a very bad throat. Mrs. Baker went to the Préfecture and got them to send a doctor at once, but the next time we went, we heard that he had died of diphtheria. The woman who looked after the family, until the father arrived, as the mother was grief-stricken is a perfect wonder. Uneducated, and dirty to a degree,—but she had no soap,—she took care of her own three small children, two belonging to the woman whose child had diphtheria, and another family, consisting of a mother with a new-born baby, and six children. All are refugees. She looks very thin and tired, but now it will not be so hard for her. She said she found it hard to ask for things,—but she had no needle and thread to mend with,—could we bring her some? The children under four didn't know what sugar was. They look healthy but nearly all have something the matter, either skin-disease, or swollen glands, or ear trouble.

The Red Cross has now made us part of their Casualty Bureau, to look up U. S. soldiers who have somehow got lost, and are "missing." Sometimes they have been wounded with the French, and have been put in a French hospital; sometimes, perhaps, they haven't written home, and their families are making inquiries, or sometimes they may have written, but their letters have been censored out, as our censor is very strict. We keep getting notices asking us to look up U. S. soldiers who are "missing," but we have found only one American in a hospital

here, and he has rheumatism, and isn't lost.

Lady Baird is back here again working for the Belgians, and has a nurse to work under her. She is also starting social work for the men, through some ladies who are coming especially for that purpose. They are to live together near the hospital, and devote all their time to working for the men.

Madame R. and I went there this afternoon in the rain, and gave the men oranges, and some other things we bought for them. They were pathetically grateful, and above all eager to be talked to. Some of the new ones, boys of twenty and twenty-two, speak English and have lived in England, and after being wounded have been nursed in English hospitals. Imagine the contrast! One boy of twenty said he had been "réformé" on account of wounds, but had asked to go back to fight. He was then taken prisoner, and is now back, exchanged, and dying up here of tuberculosis.

The battle of Picardy, up north, continues with no decision, and no slackening of anxiety.

Chambéry, Savoie, May 5, 1918.

Letters certainly do make the most tremendous difference to one over here, especially letters from home. I was in the most terrific gloom and couldn't imagine exactly why,—then to-day, I came downstairs and found the B letter box full of letters with U. S. postage stamps on them;—it had been empty for nearly four solid weeks. I had heard, too, that cables had been stopped; of course it was probably only a rumor, but one couldn't help wondering what under the sun was happening, and feeling rather like a detached and dark meteor,

sailing through space. You can't imagine how jubilant I've been feeling, ever since I got those letters.

The Liberty Loan parade must have been quite impressive. A tank going down Commonwealth Avenue! It does seem as if the earth was really turned inside out.

Oh, I am so utterly *sick* from the War! It is a rotten business from beginning to end. One has to *think*: "one little ray of pure white light is worth a boundless space of darkness," but the darkness is so black just now that many people have forgotten that the light exists, and so there is misery, and wickedness, and hopelessness at every hand—until the most unexpected moments sometimes. Then one sees the light, quite like the Holy Grail journeying through the world in King Arthur's time. It appears unexpectedly, and vanishes, but you know it has been there. But enough of that.

This week we have been most frightfully busy. We went to a school where réformés are learning new trades. Every man there had either a hand or a foot or two missing, yet there they were, cheerful as could be, learning to be shoemakers, tailors, to make baskets, and learning to write again. The most cheerful man in the whole place was one in a roller chair, with both legs off at the knees. He was learning to be a cobbler, and was whistling a merry tune when we came in. We gave each one a sac-surprise, and a shirt from "l'Amérique," and they were overjoyed, especially with the sacs, which are always an unalloyed pleasure. We tell them that the sacs come straight to them from some one in America, and they are delighted beyond words, and so *disappointed* if there isn't a letter in the bag from

some one whom they may thank. The funniest things sometimes make them the happiest. The other day, when we gave out the sacs, I heard a joyous “Oh, que je suis heureux!” from behind me, and there was a poilu with a little wooden duck on wheels, that opened and shut his mouth with a clack when he rolled. Now that poilu may be seen in Aix, walking slowly down the street on his crutches, and behind him, so good and faithful, the little duck on a string, clacking along, truly conversational and companionable—most comforting and sympathetic to the little poilu.

We also went this week, to see a hospital with nothing but old people, refugees, in it. I almost couldn’t bear it. Some of them were quite out of their heads, and others were childish, and all so old. They all came from the invaded districts, and, even when the War is over, they never can go back, yet in some of them there is still the desire to go home,—to a home that does not exist. Some of them have been well off too, and now they are propped up in beds in long lines, immaculately clean,—some with sorrow stamped on their faces, some with gentleness and kindness, and others with worldliness and meanness, —all together, to stay probably until they die. Some can go out and sit in the sun, and gossip and knit, but most are too rheumatic. Poor old souls! The place they are in has the most romantic name,—Pont de Beauvoisin. I wonder how the name came, don’t you?

Another day we took some furniture up into the back country, to some refugees. We had four chairs hooked over the hood of the Ford, one chair out over the side, held on by Mrs. Baker, and behind, Maggie was bulging with two beds, two mattresses, and

pillows. As you can imagine, every one stared at us, and probably thought us crazy. Naturally, we met a hay-cart on a narrow road. It betook itself to the field, with much “Ugh-aaa”-ing by the drivers to the oxen, and we got by with triumph.

Coming home from Aix one evening, we were stopped at the crossroads by a woman. She told us that one of the refugee women at Viviers was ill, and could we get a doctor at once, as she seemed in a very bad state. We therefore hurried back to Chambéry, and Mrs. Baker telephoned to most of the doctors in town, and eventually got one. I then started out with him, and some blankets, and an American Ambulance man, Mr. Ware, to get the woman and bring her to the hospital if need be. You have no idea what a lovely drive it was in the moonlight, with the nightingales singing around us, and the feathery white onion blossoms, like ghosts of flowers, dim, under the trees by the roadside. Truth forces me to add that they smelt of onions, too! At last we came to the lake, quiet in the moonlight under the mountains, and went slowly through the tiny village, where the warm candle light was streaming out of the windows of the houses.

When we came to the house, the doctor went up to see the woman, while Mr. Ware and I waited to see what his verdict would be, and there, in the peaceful moonlight, one of the neighbors told us the refugee woman’s story.

She and her little girls had escaped from St. Michel (Aisne), after being under the Germans for three years. Her husband and son of seventeen had been kept there to work. “She has been through everything,—everything, the poor woman, and she has nothing. But she is proud; she is ashamed to tell

us that she is hungry, she would rather go without. But we know what it is to be in need, and we give her from what we have ourselves, and she has to take it for the children,—but for herself, never anything. She cries when she thanks us, but we understand, and we give as much as possible, a little at a time, so that she won't find it out. She would do the same thing for us,—que voulez-vous?"

Then she went on to tell us about the woman's life under the Germans. She was put in prison. I asked what for. "Because she tried to get some milk for her children." Then, because she refused to work, they beat her until her leg became all black, and she was very ill in prison. But there was a Boche doctor who was good. He came at night "in secret," and cared for her and her children, brought them food and a bottle of iodine that cost eight francs!—a tiny bottle. If he had been caught, he would have been punished too. Eventually, she was evacuated and came here, "but she has lost all her strength."

When the doctor came downstairs, he said that she was too ill to be moved just then, but, in a day or two, we are going to take her to the hospital. Yesterday, she was much better. The neighbors take care of her and the children, and see that the children get to school. The oldest girl is nine years old and just learning her letters. She was five when the War started, but, in the "invaded country," she wasn't allowed to go to school.

Did I tell you that we have four American boys to help us lift cases and do heavy work? They say "Oui" to every outburst on the part of the French with whom they come in contact. The other day we were taking mattresses down from an attic, to be made over. The woman who showed them to us was

thrilled to have American soldiers heave things about. She was about sixty and had a red wig.

Says she: “Que Monsieur est fort!”

“Oui.”

“Combien de matelas, Monsieur peut-il porter à la fois?”

“Oui.”

“Monsieur comprend le Français?”

“Oui.”

“C’est ça, venez avec moi chercher les matelas.”

“Oui.” Stands firmly rooted.

“Mais, Monsieur, venez avec moi!”

“Oui,—say, Miss Bradley, she’s getting excited about something, you’d better come here.” Explanation.

“Ah! Monsieur ne comprend *pas* le Français!”

“Oui.”

Heave! plunk! comes a mattress out of the window from two stories up, which completely shatters the nerves of all the surrounding hens and chickens, as well as of the lady of the red wig.

A French soldier was here the other night wearing a most wonderful decoration. One of the U. S. soldiers wanted to know what it was, so he tapped a little white-haired man, who was standing by, on the shoulder and said: “Say, can you please tell me just what decoration that feller has on?” The man looked surprised, backed off, and said nothing. We found out afterwards that he was the King of Montenegro, and, they say, prone to hang people “for nothing at all”!

Well, good night; neither my brain nor my pen will work any more. Guess what I've been playing to-night with one of the U. S. soldiers, and two Albert girls, chaperoned by Monsieur Albert, père, while brother Albert, on leave from the front, was making up verses in the corner? We played Pounce! my children, Pounce! The great tonic for forgetfulness. They call it something else, but 'tis the same old game.

Chambéry.

Last week we saw some more refugees, poor, pathetic, old people! We carried the very feeble and sick ones in our "ambulance" from the station to the houses where they are to live. There was one poor young woman with dreadful bronchitis, and her two little children, also both sick; several old women unable to walk, and two old blind brothers, who clung pitifully to each other and to their bundles of belongings, for fear of being separated.

All had pathetic stories,—the old men were all that was left of a family of nine brothers, the rest of whom had been taken away to Germany; the young woman's husband had been taken away before her eyes, she did not know where, and the old women had their children and grandchildren all taken away too. As the old men went up the steps of the hospital, one said to the other, "Count the steps, mon frère, we must become familiar with them, so that we can be independent here."

One woman of fifty, whom Mrs. Baker saw, was bedridden, and said she was discouraged because she had so long to wait to die. Mrs. Baker said, "Yes, but your patience will be recompensed by a great, great

crown," and the sick woman smiled and kept repeating, "une grande, grande couronne."

A few days later, we went to see some of them again, at a home for refugees. When they heard that an American automobile was at the door, they came flocking out to see it, on canes and crutches, and slowly down the steps, one and all to ask me the same question: "When will the Americans save France?" I did not dare tell them it might take years, they were all so old and full of hope. So I told them that our men were wonderful, strong soldiers, and gentle, too,—as they are with old people and children,—and that surely France would be delivered by them.

They wanted to know, too, whether we would keep on feeding the invaded country, for without our food, they said, they would all have died. I told them that we never forget the brave people in the invaded country.

Poor old people! You should have seen them, all so eager and happy with the renewed hope that they might see the end of the War. I had to tell them, too, never to despair, for the Americans have a long way to come, but that we are coming, coming, as fast as we can, and that if we suffer reverses, we will only go on with more courage, and never stop until all France is free!

Transcriber's Notes:

Variations in spelling and hyphenation are retained.

Perceived typographical errors have been changed.



*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BACK OF THE FRONT IN FRANCE ***

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