

PFC OF '18

HOWARD TAYLER
ST. PAUL MINN.

INTRODUCTION

As a youngster, I thoroughly enjoyed listening to Civil War Veterans tell tales of their experiences. Maybe they were exaggerated stories, but if so, I was too young to recognize it. However, as I became older, I was convinced that some of the old soldiers not only quoted their own experiences, but also told stories, in the first person, of other men's experiences. By 1933 when the G.A.R. had its 67th National Encampment in St. Paul, it seemed that all these fine old gentlemen that survived had known Lincoln personally, all had fought side by side with Grant, all had been with Sherman on his March to the Sea, and not one had missed the Battle of Gettysburg.

It was about this time that my children, Phyllis and Howie, sat on my knees after dinner while I read the funnies and the Adventures of Peter Rabbit in the Green Forest. Invariably, this was followed by what Howie used to describe "a story out of your mouth". Hunting and fishing stories were related and stories of my boyhood, but we would invariably get back to the old favorite. "Now, Daddy, tell us a story about your war." Stories of "my war" of 1918 that I could tell them were limited, but the children remained interested listeners regardless of the repetition although I frequently found myself in a predicament to remember exactly what I had previously said a few evenings before. I was forever being corrected. Little minds have the uncanny ability to remember details. By the time Eudora and Randy were old enough for war stories, my two older critics used to listen in but pretend they were busy at something else, until, suddenly one would interrupt: "That isn't the way you told us about it, Daddy," or, "Gee, Dad, that's getting to be quite a story."

Finally, one day a few years later, after the evening of story telling was over and the little ones had been tucked in bed, Howie came to me: "Dad, why

don't you take your diary and the letters you wrote to Mom and Grandfather Tayler, and write a true story of what really happened, so when you get as old as the Civil War Veterans that you told us about, we can politely listen to your tales, and then refer to your book to get the true facts."

His idea grew upon me and finally I went to work. The printed record is now completed. Exaggerations may increase with my age, but war stories "out of the mouth" can now be checked.

Hardly had I a fair start on my story, when Howie, God bless him, heard the call from the Great Master, and, little soldier that he was, answered roll call and reported for special duty under sealed orders.

It was good that he encouraged me to start on a story of my experiences, for during the balance of the winter, during those long evenings when one feels so alone, I busied myself in writing.

This story of my remembrances has in no way been tinted to make it more interesting. My experiences were those of the average soldier in France when we thought we were fighting a war to end all wars. I traveled over most of the nation by train, or truck, or foot. I know the peasants and "well to do" French. I have slept ahead of the heavy artillery and listened to the projectiles whistle overhead. I have been in air raids as terrific as any ever witnessed in that war. I have seen the roads filled with fresh troops marching to the front and the ambulances and Red Cross trains return. I have seen French Refugees trudging out the zone of advance, pulling two wheeled carts piled high with their possessions and huge bundles on their backs, with perhaps a dog, a few goats, and a cow following. I have seen towns that were leveled by shell fire; and "dog fights" in the air.

I have worked in tremendous camps building barracks, railroads, warehouses and hospitals; and for months watched the northern sky flare up like an enormous

Fourth of July celebration, with rockets and flares bursting in the air; for months the constant boom-boom of the western front rang in my ears.

I saw enough to know exactly what war is and the hardships that go with it. Yet, I have not seen so much but what I know that at times there can be had fun during a war.

My story is related as I saw it, not as others told it. My thoughts and beliefs were not necessarily true, but if I believe them, then I lived them.

That was many years ago, but the many happy days I had are indelible in my mind. The bitterness I accumulated over these months ^{have} has not been recorded. God is merciful to make us forget what is not good to remember.

Army days are not unbearable. I never feared death. We lived from day to day, hoping that tomorrow would be better. I was optimistic always. True, my optimism generally developed disappointment, but disappointments were brushed aside by optimism. Visions of home and happy days to come carried us through.

Howard Taylor 1940

CONTENTS

	Page
I THE CALL TO ARMS	1
II CONSCRIPTION	12
III THREE WEEKS A ROOKIE	16
IV MESS FUNDS	30
V EASTWARD, FIRST STOP FRANCE	33
VI BREST FRANCE FOR MUMPS	42
VII COOTIES	49
VIII THIRD CLASS ACROSS FRANCE	52
IX A CLAM GUN WAS A SHOVEL	59
X COLOMBEY LA BELLES AIR DEPOT	62
XI SONGS	70
XII LANGRES	72
XIII MAIL	78
XIV HOUSEMONT ARTILLERY CAMP	81
XV INTO THE MEUSE-ARGONNE	107
XVI ON THE BUM	118
XVII CHATEL CHEHERY AND RETURN	125
XVIII AFTER THE ARMISTICE	131
XIX WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS	141
XX CHRISTMAS IN GIVRY-EN-ARGONNE	144
XXI BREST AGAIN	151
XXII ON LEAVE	157
XXIII IN THE HOSPITAL AGAIN	171
XXIV U.S.S. LEVIATHAN	186
XXV GOODBYE TO FRANCE	188

PFC of '18

Chapter 1

THE CALL TO ARMS

From the time hostilities broke out in Europe during 1914, the War was freely discussed in school and on the streets. The chief topic at the dinner table was always War. As months slipped by, I became so saturated with truths and propaganda that I couldn't tell one from the other. Propaganda is difficult to recognize, especially when one wants it to be true.

Many of my friends had joined volunteer ambulance corps and were serving in France; some had joined the Canadian forces. I became restless and jittery. That the United States would ultimately become involved in the War was a foregone conclusion; we were marching to it step by step. We all knew it. The newspapers had gradually dropped their "stay neutral" appeal and had boldly taken sides against Germany, but I had never been neutral. From the time the Germans fought their way through Belgium in August, 1914, I hated Germany and German "kultur" and the Kaiser, and with the progress of the War my sympathy for the Allies increased with my bitterness for the Central Powers.

President Wilson received no votes from our home in 1916 because "He kept us out of War". We had long since become impatient and irritated with his note-writing to the Imperial Government and now were demanding action to save this nation from disgrace. We believed the United States was the laughing-stock of the world, and we were not proud of our President.

I was reared in a Republican family, Democrats never do things sanely in the eyes of Republicans. My father's opinions were strong and convincing, and, as I was very fond of him, I respected his convictions. My English born grandfather lived with us during those days; he was a typical Son of the Empire with his bull-headed, bull-dog determination, loving peace and quiet but a hell on wheels when anyone trod on the toes of his beloved Brittania. He was a wonderful old gentleman, loyal to the core to everything held sacred and dear to his heart; his family, his church, his party, or his country. Those who disagreed were pin-headed old fools. There was no compromise in his make-up. He feared nothing, and I admired him for that especially. One day as we walked through the park with my dog and approached the pond, he picked up a stick and threw it in for the dog to retrieve. The dog loved it and so did grandfather, but a policeman apparently objected. "Hey, you!! That dog can't swim in the pond".

"He doesn't seem to be having any difficulty," replied the old man in his slow English manner. He picked up the stick and threw it again; the cop turned his back and walked away. What I would not have given for grandfather's fearless determination. Police never behave like that for me.

My grandfather had little to do but read. Naturally he read and believed the English version even to the ridiculous statements that the Germans were mutilating and disfiguring Belgian children by gouging out their eyes and cutting off their hands.

However, we were by no means alone. Propaganda was having its desired effect. Slowly and surely the tide of American judgment began to run against Germany.

Public feeling and hatred for the German government was coming to a white heat. Momentarily we looked for the President to ask the Congress to break diplomatic relations with Germany. Political pressure was brought to bear, and finally, on April 4th after only thirty days of his new term of office had elapsed, he made his famous speech to Congress.

On April 6, 1917, when Congress declared a state of War existed between us and Germany, I was three months past nineteen years of age, with patriotic love for my country in my heart, adventure in my blood, and hate and bitterness in my soul. I had had plenty of time to think it over and knew exactly what I was going to do; so I immediately went to the Marine recruiting office and very proudly offered my services to my country as a volunteer to save the world for democracy.

Strange what thoughts run through a boy's mind at a time like that; the burden of saving civilization rested on my shoulders that day. The women and children of America were banking on me to protect them, the homes and family life of my country were depending on me for salvation. It was my duty. I must not shirk.

To me, the Marine Corps seemed the most adventurous and exciting. I believed it was the toughest assignment I could get, and that was what I wanted. Recruits for the Marine Corps were plentiful. The office was filled when I got there that first day of war, April 6, 1917, and I had to wait my turn to get to the examiners.

First, I picked out different colored yarn from a box; this was to detect color-blindness, if any. Eyes were next to read the letters on the chart; ear examination to detect tendencies of deafness. These were followed by chest, heart, and the general examination where I was put through the usual exercises. When, however, I was told to touch my shoulders with my finger tips, they discovered my stiff right elbow. I attempted to explain how as a boy of four,

I had broken it, and again at the age of five, and now even if it didn't appear to be set straight, it was still perfectly strong and useful; but they were not interested in my boyhood. "That elbow isn't good enough for the Marine Corps," he said, "Sorry, next."

It was quite a jolt to me. I had no idea that I might be rejected; my heart was set on enlisting in the Marine Corps - "The Soldiers of the Sea" - and I went home very much disappointed and depressed.

Feverish activity, appealing for volunteers in all branches of the service, commenced with the declaration of war. The need for fighting men was brought to us at mass meetings, in the news, editorial and advertising columns of the newspapers, and through circulars distributed by Boy Scouts during patriotic demonstrations, and even through assemblies in high schools. Firms promised their employees that they who enlisted would be given their old jobs back when they returned. High schools offered diplomas to those seniors who joined the colors.

The Minnesota Naval Militia called for men to fill their ranks to war strength. The National Guard received orders to fill their depleted ranks with the least possible delay. Field Hospital and Ambulance companies were recruited. The U. S. Navy carried on a vigorous campaign for recruits to "Join the Navy and see the World", and "Earn while you learn". The Marine Corps wanted only American citizens of the highest qualifications and let the nation know the advantages of an enlistment in the Marine Corps.

After consideration, I determined to try the Marine Corps again, and the next week I appeared at the recruiting office, and tried to give the impression that I had never been inside the place before. Everything went grand for a while, but unfortunately I got the same examiner who started the usual routine, eyes, ears, throat, heart, lungs. I was getting by beautifully, he hadn't recognized me, and I thought surely he had forgotten me until he looked at the elbow, turned

it over, and then asked me to touch my shoulder.

"Put it down," he said. "You were here last week, and I told you we couldn't use you. Isn't that so?"


"Yes, sir, it is, but you were awfully busy then."

"You must be awfully damn anxious to get into the service."

"Yes, sir, I am."

"All right, then let me look at that arm again, and I will try to get a waiver."

I left the office joyous and confident, but after waiting several days for a verdict, I got the bad news that "I had patriotically offered my service but had been rejected because of physical disability."

	UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RECRUITING STATION
R.S., St. Paul, Minn.,	May 1st 1917
(Barracks or Recruiting Office)	(Date)
<i>This is to certify that Mr. Howard Taylor has patriotically offered his services to the United States Marine Corps but has been rejected for physical disabilities.</i>	
<i>McDonald</i> 1st Lieut USMC Recruiting Officer (Red)	
[Seal Here]	

I cannot remember now how many times I attempted to enlist in one branch of the service or another; but besides the Marine Corps, I recall making application at the recruiting office of the Naval Militia and the Coast Artillery office. I wanted to join the local branch of the American Ambulance Field Service, but didn't have the \$450.00 that they required to care for my expenses.

St. Paul Branch

American Ambulance Field Service in France

Address correspondence to
C. W. GORDON, Chairman
Gordon-Ferguson Co.
St. Paul, Minn.

Send contributions to
R. C. LILLY, Treasurer
Merchants National Bank
St. Paul, Minn.

COMMITTEE

C. W. GORDON, Chairman
Mrs. S. B. Dean
Mrs. C. M. Griggs
Mrs. Archibald McLaren
Mrs. Roger B. Shepard
Mrs. Horace Thompson
Mr. C. W. Ames
Mr. Oliver Crosby
Mr. William J. Dean
Mr. Samuel W. Dittschauer
Mr. A. H. Warren, Jr.

St. Paul, Minn. May 15, 1917.

Mr. Howard Tayler,
319 Wilder Ave.,
St. Paul, Minn.

Dear Sir;

Your name has been handed me with the information that you wish to join the American Ambulance Field Service in France. If you will be kind enough to call at my office, 1405 Pioneer Bldg., I will endeavor to give you detailed information and explain to you the qualifications which are necessary.

I might add that those being accepted receive no compensation, and will be under an expense of about \$450.00.

Trusting that I may see you in the very near future, I am

Yours very truly,

C. W. Gordon

Later on I tried the Y.M.C.A. Service but wasn't considered because of my youth. Because the high schools promised diplomas of graduation to seniors who enlisted, it seemed a simple way to chuck away books and get finished with school, particularly as I was having considerable difficulty with my French and needed the credit to graduate, and each day that went by found me in more serious difficulty because of my lack of interest in school caused by my determination to enlist during the time of War mania. But men were plentiful during the first few weeks and the medical examiners could afford to be a bit particular. I couldn't enlist so attempted to settle down to the strenuous task of applying myself sufficiently to graduate. I did so, and then got a job as time-keeper at the Fair Grounds for the summer. I entered the University of Minnesota in the Fall without the slightest idea that I would finish the year, expecting that at any time I would manage to enlist for service in something, and so it was at the University I found it even more difficult to apply myself. My friends were leaving every day, some being called by the draft and some voluntarily enlisting in their favorite branch of the Service to avoid the draft and the possibility of being put in the Infantry, a place nobody seemed to care for. I was not very proud to be out of uniform. I was ashamed to meet the fathers and mothers of boys who had gone to the colors. A few of my friends had come back home from France to enlist in the Army and go into officers' training camps after serving out their six month enlistment period in Ambulance Corps. Newspapers and magazine editorials, speeches, war loans, recruiting offices, parades, soldiers on the streets, Marines on the mail trucks, Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. drives for war funds, organizations of the K.C. overseas force, Salvation Army lassies overseas with the famous coffee and doughnuts, reception committees to greet troop trains as they went through the city, flags flying from all public buildings and most residences, the service flag in the front window of every home that had furnished

a man or woman to the Service, the talk of wheatless days, and meatless days, the limitations on sugar, the confusion and excitement and dynamic propaganda had reached great heights. The Home Guard, searching for men without registration cards, raided saloons and pool rooms and occasionally arrested a slacker.

It was exceedingly difficult to concentrate on studies with all this going on. The urge and pressure were too great, and I again renewed my efforts. The Engineer Corps was recruited in the Railroad Building, and the recruiting officer was a personal friend of my father. Dad knew how unhappy I was and consented to introduce me properly and to ask him as a personal favor to assist me in enlisting. This was done. My application was taken, and the recruiting officer telephoned to the examiner at Fort Snelling to tell him I was coming and asked him to overlook an impaired elbow if possible because I was very eager to get in. At the Fort, the examination went along fairly well with several minutes consumed asking me questions about the arm. They finally concluded that it could be overlooked, and went ahead with the examination until he looked at my feet, as flat as a South Dakota prairie. This was the first time an examiner had got^{ten} as far as my feet, and consequently I hadn't considered them as an impairment. He shook his head, and the heavy sinking feeling came over me again. Nevertheless, I rallied for a moment.

"Doctor, what is there about these feet that would possibly prevent my enlisting in the Engineer Corps? I can do anything anybody else can."

He promptly put me through exercises, jumping on one foot, then on the other, and then the same thing, only on my toes.

"Doesn't that hurt you?" he asked.

"Hurt? No, that doesn't bother at all. Is it supposed to?" I asked disappointedly.

"Well, if I am nuts enough to okay that elbow, I guess I might as well be completely crazy and overlook the feet."

I was taken over to the corner of the office and finger-printed. I then held up my right hand and took the oath:

"I, Howard Tayler, do solemnly swear that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America; that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies whomsoever; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War."

This was on January 24, 1918. I was told to report back again on the twenty-eighth and to be ready on that day to leave for Camp Devens, Massachusetts. I hurried back to the University because I was in the line-up for a fraternity hockey game that afternoon. After the game, I told my friends of my enlistment, bade them good-bye, collected my books, gym suit, and military uniform, checked out, and left for home to tell my father of my great success. Dad was, I think, rather proud but said it was tough on him to think of his oldest son who was only a kid, leaving for War. My mother had died four years before; and my sister Gladys, while only eighteen at the time, had done wonders in running the home for my father, younger brother, seven-year old sister, and me. I am sure she was as much concerned about my enlistment as anyone could be. That evening I broke the news to "my one and only", but Martha and I had talked it over many times before, so there was no surprise or disapproval there. Everyone seemed happy and proud that at last I was going.

I spent the next two days around home, putting clothes away, packing up, and arranging things for what might be a long trip as I had enlisted for the "duration." I never once, however, felt that there was even a possibility of not coming back.

I reported again on the fourth day to take my typhoid shot and to receive travel orders and maintenance money with railroad tickets. My father accompanied

me that day, presumably just to be with me on our last day together. He sat in the hospital building and watched a line of forty or fifty of us approach the doctor and nurses that were armed with needles and serum, and, as a few ahead of me fainted just before reaching their turn, he was wondering if I would be the next to keel over. But I kept my eyes off the operations ahead to prevent any possibility of being so sympathetic that I, too, would be worked up to a point of passing out. With the vaccination and typhoid shot over, we crossed the parade grounds to the supply office to get my uniform and equipment, shoes that didn't fit and a summer uniform with no overcoat or hat. When I protested, I was told orders were to equip all the men as best they could.

"You take them with you and exchange them in Camp Devens," he said.

"Have you a suit-case, or shall I roll them in a bundle?"

He rolled them in a bundle and directed me to where I would receive my ration money and railroad tickets, as well as travel orders.

I was instructed to leave that night and report to the commanding officer of the 25th Engineers in Camp Devens, Massachusetts, without delay.

That evening found me on my way. I descended the front steps and under the Stars and Stripes that had flown there since the day War was declared. It was a great home I was leaving, typically American and one that I had lived in during all my years of later boyhood. It was the shrine of many happy days. I loved home, and now, when the hour had arrived to leave it, my heart was a little heavy. It might be years before I could enjoy its comforts again; at least I knew for certain that my boyhood days were over.

I turned for one last look at the old home, to get a picture that was to stay in my mind for the months to come. There in the front window hung the little red and white service flag with a blue star in the center. "One man has left this home in answer to the Colors."

"The kid has gone to the Colors
And we don't know what to say;
The kid we have loved and cuddled
Stepped out for the flag today.
We thought him a child, a baby,
With never a care at all,
But his Country called him man-size
And the Kid has heard the call.

He paused to watch the recruiting
Where, fired by the fife and drum,
He bowed his head to Old Glory
And thought that it whispered: "Come!"
The Kid, not being a slacker,
Stood forth with patriot-joy
To add his name to the roster--
And God, we're proud of the boy!"
----W. M. Herschell

CHAPTER II

CONSCRIPTION

Six weeks after the declaration of war, the Selective Draft Bill became a law on May 18, 1917, and on June 5th, all men from ages 21 to 30, both inclusive, were required to register. The drawing did not take place until July 20.

It was explained by ^{Wilson} the President that the primary object of the measure was not to draw men indiscriminately into the army by force but to select from among the citizens of a nation which had "volunteered in mass."

From experiences of other nations particularly Canada, this Country knew especially well after a few weeks of war that the "Volunteer System" of bringing its army up to war strength was not the answer.

William Jennings Bryan's fine sounding phrase that if the Country were indeed endangered, "A million men would leap to arms between sunrise and sunset" was accepted as gospel by thousands, but somehow it didn't work out that way. Perhaps some of the boys weren't convinced that the Country was "indeed endangered." At least it took four months to secure 183,898 men by the volunteer route to bring our army up to its maximum war strength of 300,000.

However, volunteers for the National Guard, the Navy, and officer training schools were more plentiful, but presumably many who volunteered were influenced in varying degrees by the prospect of the draft.

The idea then prevailing was that it was more honorable to enlist than to wait for the draft. It was hard for some of us to look upon the draft as anything more than a measure of complusion to be adopted as a last resort.

I did not come within the age limits of the draft, and it was not

necessary for me to register. Consequently, I was not particularly interested in the mechanics of "the selective draft", so now have referred to Willus J. Abbot's "History of the World War" to get the following description of the registration and selection of civilians for service in the army.

"The registration held on June 5, 1917, proceeded in every state of the Union without any resistance or violent outbreak whatsoever. More than nine and a half millions of men came up to the places of registry, and enrolled their names, answering the questions prescribed that the authorities might afterwards judge of their fitness for active service. The whole epoch-making undertaking went off with even more smoothness than a presidential election.

"The next step was the selection from the whole number of registrants the 687,000 men whom it had been determined should constitute the first draft. On registering each man had been given a number, and in some districts where the population was large those numbers ran up as high as 10,500. In all there were 4,557 registration districts. The individual registrant therefore would be known as Number B in District X. It was determined to then hold a central drawing at Washington in which numbers up to 10,500 would be drawn from a bowl. Every man holding such a number would be summoned for service. Many districts of course, had no such number of registrants and would only furnish men in proportion to the numbers enrolled.

"The occasion was a historic one and a contemporary description of the scene will be interesting. The drawing was held in one of the rooms of the Senate Office Building and was conducted by Secretary of War, Baker. An eye witness writes of the scene:

"A handkerchief was tied about the eyes of Secretary Baker, the camera squad focused their instruments, the calcium light of the movie operators played upon the **big** blackboards in the rear, and the lottery began.

"Secretary Baker plunged his hand into the large glass jar, containing

the 10,500 numbers enclosed in capsules and drew one, announcing to the spectators, "I have drawn the first number." A clerk assigned by the War Department opened the capsule and announced "258". An officer seated at the long table upon which were spread the tally sheets repeated the number, and another clerk walked to a large blackboard at the rear and wrote upon it the figures. Senator Chamberlain of Oregon, likewise blindfolded, drew the second number. He was plainly nervous. His hand was guided to the top of the jar, which was fourteen inches in diameter. "The second number is 2,522", said the announcer, and again there came the click of the cameras, the rustle of copy paper, and the murmur of excited men and women who thronged the committee room.

"Members of Congress and high officials of the Army attended the start of the drawing. Eight numbers were drawn by officials before the ceremony became routine, with students from various universities acting as the blindfolded withdrawers of the fateful capsules.

"A round of applause greeted the appearance of General Crowder, who had worked tirelessly for days perfecting the details of the nationwide lottery. Adj. Gen. McCain, too, was applauded by the throng which crowded the committee rooms. Members of the Senate and House Committees on Military Affairs and other members of Congress occupied seats of honor at the drawing.

"The unprecedented ceremony seemed particularly to impress Representative Julius Kahn, who had led the fight in the House on the Army Draft bill. "It is an inspiring sight" he commented, as he left the room soon after the proceedings settled down to a routine basis. Mr. Kahn was born in Germany, and came to the United States when a child.

"As the eighth number was drawn by an official, Secretary Baker said, "We will wait a moment while the photographers remove their apparatus. Meanwhile I want to ask that perfect quiet prevail. This is a most important occasion and absolute quiet is necessary."

"John Phillips, a student of Princeton University, was the first "Regular Teller" who took his place at the glass jar and began to draw out the capsules-- black looking affairs, because the paper upon which the numbers were written was coated black on the outer surface. It was impossible for anyone to examine the exterior of a capsule and ascertain the number within. The blindfolding lent an additional touch of the dramatic to the event, but it was unnecessary. Every few minutes Major Gen. C. A. Devol, delegated by Secretary Baker to guard the glass container, walked over to stir the capsules with a long wooden spoon. On the handle of the spoon was a piece of bunting, red, white and blue. General Devol stirred deeply, bringing the capsules at the top to the bottom. While this stirring process was on, there was a momentary pause in the recording of the numbers. The only interruptions were the frequent changes of tired announcers and tabulators and the removal of the blackboards. When a group of 500 numbers had been written, the first section of the board was taken out to be photographed to establish an absolute record, while a second section was substituted.

"The lottery ended at 2:15 o'clock on the morning of July 21, and later the same day, the figures were officially checked."

CHAPTER III

THREE WEEKS A ROOKIE

After my first night on the train going east I arrived in Chicago and stopped over to visit two aunts, a cousin, and an uncle of mine, and to see my grandparents who had recently moved there from our home in St. Paul. The city had just had its worst snowstorm in years, and I was told the storm had swept eastward. My uncle, Fred Tayler, met me at the railroad station and spent the entire day with me. I had a great day visiting with all the relatives. He took me to the train that evening and told me how very proud he was of me and how badly he felt that he could not go along. From this conversation I took it that he was afraid that this was our last day together. I didn't comprehend exactly what he meant until six months later when I got a letter from home that he had died.

The second morning I arrived in Detroit two hours late because of the storm, and would have missed my connection east if I had wanted to make it, but I had planned to spend the day with an aunt and uncle on my mother's side. I also spent the night there because I figured the trains wouldn't get through anyway.

The third morning I left for Buffalo and arrived there four hours late. From Buffalo I went to Albany where I got the Troy local and then on to Ayer, Massachusetts, where I arrived at 5:30 P.M., four full days since leaving home.

The trip had been a terribly hard one. I was dead for sleep and had a bad cold so decided to put up in a hotel for the night even though I was only a short bus ride from Camp. In the hotel restaurant I had dinner and struck up an acquaintance with three men from the Camp. They were plainly disgusted with Army life and were undoubtedly "drafts" because they used no uncertain terms in telling me what they thought of a guy that enlisted voluntarily in

this man's Army. This did anything but cheer me up, perhaps they were right, so I went up to my room for bed, lonesome and disturbed. The room was cold when I left my baggage there before dinner, but I had turned on the heat and naturally expected to find a warm room when I returned, but to add to my dismay, it was still cold, and after examination I found the radiator disconnected. I was exasperated and lost no time in reporting it to the clerk.

"I know it," he said, "but that's the last room in the house. Take it or leave it."

I took it.

The next day was Saturday. I didn't wake up until 8:30 o'clock, and while I didn't realize it at the time, this was my last day to stay in bed until that unearthly hour for many months to come; nor when I was dressed and had bacon and eggs for breakfast, did I realize that this was to be my last bacon and eggs for over a year. I inquired as to how to get to Camp Devens and boarded the bus, paid a twenty-five cent fare, and within about thirty minutes reported to Headquarter's Company.

It happened that there was another man leaving Fort Snelling for Camp Devens and the 25th Engineers at the same time that I left. Our travel orders included both of us, but opposite my name it said "in charge". I didn't realize just what this meant until I reported and the officer looked over my orders and said,

"Where is your man?"

"I don't know," I said, "the last I saw of him was in Chicago."

"Where have you been?"

"I stopped off for a day in Chicago to visit some relatives."

"All right, that accounts for one day."

"I also spent a day in Detroit", I answered.

"Visiting relatives?"

"Yes Sir".

"Well, for your own information, Tayler, I might remind you that you are in the Army now. Your orders say to report immediately to the Commanding Officer of the 25th Engineers. It doesn't say anything about taking a few days off to visit relatives enroute. You have been four days and five nights in reporting, and besides that, you were in charge of a man and didn't bring him with you. He reported twenty-four hours ahead of you. This Country is at War. Keep that in mind from now on."

"Now, report to the Medical Officer for inoculation."

I knew I had to take three typhoid shots but didn't expect another vaccination, nor was I supposed to get one, but the first one had healed up so completely that the medic doubted if I had even been vaccinated; so he gave me another, with a remark that the first was in the wrong arm anyway.

One of the men took me over to Company D's barracks, and I was assigned to a bunk. As it was Saturday, the men had the afternoon off; so I stayed around the barracks quite alone with a sore arm and fever, but went to a show that night with some of the men. Sunday was a day of rest, and because I didn't have a uniform yet, I hesitated to leave the barracks except to go over to the Y for church services. I got acquainted with several more men and got a few pointers on Army life. My impressions during these first few hours were very favorable. I was very much impressed with everything and sat down and wrote a letter home, my first since leaving.

"Sunday February 3rd, 1918
Camp Devens, Mass.

Dear Dad: Everything is going jake. I got in camp yesterday morning at about 9:30. Had my second shot in the arm for typhoid, also another vaccination as they claimed the first one was no good, at least it didn't look like it.

I am with Company D in the 25th Reg. but expect to be transferred into another company or even into the 33rd Engr.'s that is just forming. It is hard to tell just what they will do. Right now I am among a splendid bunch of fellows. They are always ready to help somebody else, at least that is the way they have been to me. They help me out in all kinds of ways, putting me wise to military customs. Company D seems to be composed mostly of drafted men that were put here because they were more valuable as mechanics. This Company has expected to leave for the last two weeks and are now just killing time until they go over. They expect to leave any day. So if I can stay with them, my time in Camp will be short. They are completely equipped with their canvas sacks that are to carry or rather ship their extra clothing in. We are allowed to take 75 pounds across. They have their trench shoes (two pairs). These shoes are of split leather with hob nails in the soles and are a very rough shoe generally. They also have their identification disks that they wear around their necks. So everything is in readiness to move.

I am on the second floor of a two story barracks. We have spring beds. A tick filled with straw is used for a mattress. For covers we have a comfort and four army blankets. I have not had my uniform issued yet but will get it as soon as I am assigned to a Company.

I am awfully comfortable here, the barracks are steam-heated, with electric lights. We have shower baths, a good place to wash and a place to wash our clothes. Saturday afternoon and Sunday is our own, but we have to stay around Camp. This is some big place. At one time they had 42,000 men, now it is about 25,000, but it is pretty hard to tell exactly how many because they are coming and going so fast.

I hope that I can stick with this bunch because I am pretty well acquainted now and am getting interested in the work. I think I am going to like this work

very much, but I don't know about Bill's coming just yet as there is no one here any younger than I. If I were he, I would go to school until spring, and then see how things stand. I think that is best. There is no doubt in my mind but that I am in the best branch of the service, and I think it is just what I want, but I would advise Bill to stay out for a while.

We have men here from all parts of the country. The man on my left is from California, and on my right is a man from Maine. I hear some funny speaking; all the boys speak a different dialect. A fellow from Texas, we call him Tex, just said, "How do you tell when you have a frost-bite?" He got the ha ha from the crowd.

Taps blow at 10:00 P.M. and all lights out. We rise at 6:15 and have roll call at 6:30, except on Sunday when we get up an hour later.

We have swell feed. Today noon we had chicken, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, peas, parsnips, cocoa, cranberry sauce, rice pudding, and bread and butter, also jam. We can have all we want of everything. This was of course Sunday noon, but all the meals are great and are served in cafeteria style. Every man has his own mess kit and keeps it and has to wash it every meal.

We have a dandy theatre here. It is twice as large as an ordinary movie, and runs a show as good as the Orpheum three nights a week. Seats are 10, 25, and 50 cents. I went last night with three fellows; we had two bit seats. The Y.M.C.A. gives free movies three nights a week. Church services are held in the Y every Sunday morning. I went today.

I guess I have exhausted all the news now; that's about all. I am well and mighty glad I am a soldier."

The following afternoon I was called to be transferred to Company E. After I reported, I was issued a nearly complete outfit and put on the uniform for the first time. There were thirty-seven men there from the Twin Cities,

but I knew none of them, except I had a letter of introduction to C. L. O'Brien of St. Paul. After I met him, he introduced me around and it was only a short time before I had met them all. Some had been in the service three or four months and were eager to get some late news from home, and as the Company was in quarantine for measles and couldn't leave the barracks in the evening, I was fairly well acquainted before the day was over.

The next day I was put on the awkward squad to practice the manual of arms in an attempt to catch up with the other men. I did my best and really thought I wasn't so bad because I had had a few hours of training at the University before I left school, but the lieutenant that was acting as drill master spotted me.

"You, you in the rear rank", as he pointed at me, "you're terrible! How long have you been in the Army?"

"This is my fourth day, sir."

"Only four days, huh. Well, you are not doing so damn bad, but you will need a hell of a lot of practice."

I also had my first experience of belly inspection that day. It was a new one on me but an old story to the rest of the Company. It was rather humorous to see 250 men lined up and walking by the doctor with their shirts pulled up high so the examiners could look at their stomachs for the first indication of measles. It had its serious side also. If measles were found, it meant that the Company stayed in quarantine, and the victim went to the Infirmary and would in all probability be there when we sailed for France. But luckily no suspects were found.

The next day I stood my first formal rifle and pack inspection. I had heard that to fall down on this meant one day of fatigue scrubbing the barracks floors. I am sure that I was plainly nervous as the inspecting officer approached

with the Top Sargeant following with his pad and pencil, taking names of a few men with dusty rifles or untidy dress, or with packs rolled incorrectly. I was relieved after presenting arms for inspection to see them go on to the next man without comment. At this formation, it was announced that our quarantine would be lifted at 6:00 P.M. that day and that we could leave our barracks in the evening. The men had been in quarantine for three weeks and naturally were hilarious to hear that at last they could move around again, see the shows and have visitors.

It was only twenty-three days from the time I arrived in Camp until the day we left for France. All of my military training was jammed into those few days. During that short time I was supposed to be molded into a soldier, and these three weeks were crammed full of new experiences with different living conditions than I had been accustomed to, with discipline which at times seemed almost to drive me mad, and with bugle calls that were entirely foreign at first but which rapidly became familiar commands. I was like a dog learning to perform to the sound of a whistle or the crack of a whip, for each signal meant to do something different, Reveille; first call; fall in; mess; assembly; call to quarters; taps, etc. By asking questions of men who were willing to help me and by being eager to learn, in three long weeks I thought I knew all that was necessary to get by, and as a matter of fact I did. It was proved to my entire satisfaction, before long, that it didn't require brains to be a private in the Engineer Corps. The only men who got in trouble were those that tried to think rather than do what they were told, and the dumber you were the less work would be given you, and those that got by without doing their share of the work were the wise ones. There were plenty of men who thought that their willingness and enthusiasm would be rewarded; so they volunteered for everything. There was no harm in letting them do the work if they wanted to. Perhaps our attitude

would have been different if the Company was just in process of organization, but by the time I got there the Regiment was completely organized for oversea's service, and there wasn't a possibility of advancement, certainly not for me because of my age and lack of knowledge of any trade; so I did what I was told without offering any suggestions of improvement and got by wonderfully well without any friction or trouble.

We were put through what was commonly referred to as the gas school. It consisted of a shed filled with tear gas. The doors were closed on us long enough to make our eyes smart and water before we were allowed out. This was done, we were told, to impress upon us the necessity of wearing gas masks. I don't know where they got the idea that any of us questioned the advisability of masks. But to make sure, they put us through the torture chamber.

"No sense to it all," we said.

Part of my training consisted of being assigned to Kitchen Police. In spite of all the adverse comments about KP, I don't recall that even my first experience was impressive except that it was on a Saturday when I should have had the afternoon off, but instead I had to work in the kitchen. Referring to my diary, I find this:

"I was called at 5:45 to do kitchen work. It was my first time on the job. We had to hand out the grub at mess time, also sweep the floors after each meal, and mop it once during the day. The tables had to be washed after each meal. Besides this we had to peel spuds and wash the pans."

One morning I was a little slow at coming to attention just before calisthenics (I forgot to mention that we had fifteen minutes of setting up exercises out in the winter weather each morning from 6:30 to 6:45) and the Top Sargeant put me on fatigue scrubbing the barracks floors all day on my hands and knees. I figured this was too severe punishment for so small an

offense; so the incident didn't increase my loyalty to the "top kick" any, but it did make me respect his authority. However, I had a tendency to dislike him for the rest of my Army days, and any opportunity I got to do something to make his job a little tougher, I did. But, I saw to it there was never another reason for me to be disciplined.

We had bayonet practice jabbing at a bundle of twigs swung from cross bars. I had my turn at latrine guard but never knew what my specific duties were on that detail, except perhaps to keep the men from loitering around in a nice warm place on a cold day, and I didn't care to enforce this order too severely because things might be reversed some day and I might like to do a little loafing myself. So I spent my time picking up cigarette butts and candy wrappers and watched the men's clothes while they took showers. I could do most of this with little physical effort and yet appear to be busy. It wasn't a bad job at all for a cold day, especially when one was excused from all that everlasting monotonous routine of making soldiers out of rookies.

I was required to learn the general orders for sentries but for some reason or other was never on a guard mount in the States although I was kept in a constant state of uneasiness thinking from day to day that my name would appear on the bulletin board under "Details for Tomorrow." I was so thoroughly impressed with the necessity of memorizing those twelve general orders and of the penalty that was likely to befall this poor rookie if I didn't have them mastered before the Officer of the Day appeared on my post, that I dreaded the day when I would eventually have to take my turn on Guard Mount, but we sailed for France without my Company having the assurance of a sound night's sleep under the guardianship of my watchful eye. I was glad of this because the guards were required not only to walk their post in a military manner but to wear only regulation equipment. This meant no overshoes or mittens or cap that would cover the ears, but ordinary

dress (Russets) shoes, horse hide gloves, and campaign hats. Our nice mufflers and helmets so thoughtfully donated by the Red Cross after the women of America had spent hours of time knitting were not allowed to be used in sub-zero weather in the states.

In looking over these general orders it doesn't look so difficult to memorize them now, but at the time, they bothered me considerably. The boys in our army today have it a little easier, the 9th order is now eliminated.

For some time it was a mystery to me why they were called general orders for "Interior" guard when they were always used by sentries out in that winter weather, but later it dawned on me that "Interior" referred to the camp, not the air, and every barracks had its interior guard around the building.

The following is the way we learned them so that if the Officer of the Day asked for number so and so we were prepared to sing it out:

- (1) To take charge of this post and all government property in view.
- (2) To walk my post in a military manner, keeping always on the alert, and observing anything that takes place within sight or hearing.
- (3) To report all violations of orders I am instructed to enforce.
- (4) To repeat all calls from posts more distant from the guardhouse than my own.
- (5) To quit my post only when properly relieved.
- (6) To receive, obey and pass on to the sentinel who relieves me, all orders from the commanding officers, officer of the day, and officers and noncommissioned officers of the guard only.
- (7) To talk to no one except in line of duty.
- (8) To give the alarm in case of fire or disorder.
- (9) To allow no one to commit a nuisance on or in the vicinity of my post.
- (10) To call the corporal of the guard in any case not covered by instructions.
- (11) To salute all officers and colors or standards not cased.
- (12) To be especially watchful at night and during the time for challenging to challenge all persons on or near my post, and to allow no one to pass without proper authority.

Each man was on the Guard Mount for twenty-four hours, doing two hours on actual guard duty, and four in the guard house resting and thawing out. One of the boys from Mississippi skipped out during his four hours and went to a dance. He possibly could have got away with it unnoticed if he had gotten back before he was called for guard mount again, but he became very infatuated with a young lady and forgot until he was an hour overdue. When he came back, he was of course arrested and put in the guard house. This was a very serious offense, and probably would call for a Court Martial, but he was only put to an indefinite time sentence of scrubbing barracks floors and walls. He realized that this was a light sentence and pretended not to mind it when the men kidded him about being our permanent scrub woman. "I would rather scrub floors in a steam-heated barracks", he used to say, "than to do squads east and west on a parade grounds covered with snow and a northwest wind blowing in zero weather. You guys are saps to do it when you could just as well stay inside". But his job didn't last long. In a few days he packed up with the rest of us and went overseas, and all was forgiven.

It seemed that our training required endless hours at the Manual of Arms, and drill formations. It got very tiresome and most of us hated it, probably because of the cold weather and our anxiety to leave for France. I do believe, however, that we were fairly well trained before we sailed and certainly in excellent physical condition. We had long practice marches under full pack, and after the first crop of blisters, until our field shoes got broken in, we found those heavy shoes a real comfort while marching over rough ground.

Because of the influenza epidemic, all windows in the barracks were ordered to be opened wide at night. It was so cold we all slept in our clothes while the water in the fire pails froze every night. For a few nights, some of the men would get up after all was dark and quietly close the windows, but as soon as the officers got wise to what we were doing, they stationed guards to keep the windows open.

The fresh air didn't do much good, it was too severe, and most of the men slept with their heads under the blankets. Each day brought out new "latrine" rumors about when we were going to sail, and each day, something would be done to indicate that these rumors were based on facts. For instance, we greased and packed our rifles for shipment, we had daily inspection of equipment and ordinances, all our extra clothing had to be laid out just so on our bunks so that the inspecting officer could see in a glance if anything was missing. If we were short anything, our name and the name of the item was taken, and we were instructed to get it from the Supply Sargeant. The next day was another inspection to see if we had done what we were told; then finally an outside officer made the final check-up. He discovered that most of us had no soap. That afternoon the Supply Sargeant came through with cases of large bars of Ivory Soap, and we were all told to buy three bars for a quarter. A terrible howl of protest was put up. We figured that as long as the government wasn't furnishing the soap that we should have the choice as to the kind to purchase; so we flatly refused to spend two bits for something we didn't want. The Supply Sargeant declined to argue and left. In a few minutes the Captain came bounding in, someone called "Attention", and we stood rigid and tense.

"I am commanding you all to buy three bars of Ivory Soap. Anyone refusing to comply will be reprimanded. No one is to leave this Country without three bars. If there are any protests or complaints, let's have them now."

Not a man stirred. The tough guys of a few minutes before didn't even blink an eye.

"Sargeant Flemming, distribute the soap! At Ease!"

I bought mine, but it was the last Ivory Soap I ever purchased. Since that day, I never see Ivory Soap on the grocer's shelf but what the stern face of the Captain appears and shouts "I command you to buy three bars."

Our barracks were always kept immaculately clean, but during those last few days they were scrubbed^b daily from top to bottom, and each time they were cleaned we felt sure that it would be the last. Finally, after a week of being keyed up, we loaded everything on trucks and hauled it to the railroad station. We were given postal cards that we were required to address and stamp, and on the reverse side we were to write "Have arrived safely in France", and sign. They were then collected and were to be mailed from Camp Devens as soon as word had been received that we arrived in France. Certainly after all this, it must be our last day in Camp. We waited, but didn't go.

The next morning the barracks were a beehive of activity. We swept and scrubbed again. We were ordered to roll our packs. We had inspection and then a ten o'clock "noon" dinner, an extra big feed, our last! We returned to our barracks and stood around, fidgety and nervous, like football players waiting for the coach to give the word to go into the game. The whistle blew. We grabbed our packs to sling them on.

"Attention Men! Unroll your packs and arrange your bunks. We won't leave today."

Now we were disgusted. We weren't even on speaking terms with our best friends. The Army, the Government, the Officers, got a terrible tongue lashing. There was nothing held back, and when the usual and common words were used up, the original ones came into being, not out loud, you understand, more of a mumble for fear we would be heard.

That evening, our officers used their heads. We were all asked to chip in a quarter for a party. We had ice cream and cake and a package of cigarettes. Some entertainers came in from the Y.M.C.A. and some of our own talented men put on skits and boxing matches. We had a nice evening, and before it was over, all were happy, and we went to bed with the assurance that we would leave tomorrow.

The next day we cleaned up all over again, had another early dinner, but this time when the Top Sergeant's whistle blew, it was followed by a command to sling packs and fall in.



One Week a Soldier

CHAPTER IV

MESS FUNDS

Just inside the barracks door at Camp Devens was a prune box nailed to the wall. A sign tacked over PRUNES said, "TIN FOIL".

I was tall enough to stand on my toes and look in. Pieces of tin foil, flat, rolled, coiled, torn, crumpled, candy wrappings, cigar jackets, cigarette packs and gum wrappings could be identified in one glance. The whole collection resembled the sweepings after a poker game which the incinerator should have devoured long ago.

My curiosity caused me to inquire.

"We save our tin foil and sell it. The money goes into our mess fund."

I was told.

"I see, but what is the mess fund?"

"The government," replied my informant, "allows the mess sergeant a certain amount each day to feed a soldier; it's barely enough to get along on. If we want any extras, we have to pay for them ourselves unless we have a mess fund to draw from; so we do all we can to build up the mess fund."

I had no idea of the value of used tin foil but assumed that somebody knew what he was doing. I was expected to cooperate and there really was no reason why I shouldn't, so I saved what little foil I had and conscientiously tossed it into the box. Any idea that would give us better food was O.K. with me, but as events during the following months slowly but surely unwound, I had reason to wonder how much of a cash accumulation we had in this very secretive fund. Our meals in France were very poor. Certainly if we had been living within our budget back in the States, we must have been saving many dollars since then.

This continuous economy with hungry soldiers asking for good food was

the big pet peeve and gripe. Many times empty or poorly fed stomachs nearly caused mutiny. All the other outfits were getting better grub; so we knew it could be had.

The folks at home had patriotically cut down on their sugar and butter so that their soldiers would have plenty. We had none. Letters from home told me about "meatless days" to conserve for us. We reaped no benefits from their sacrifices. The only answer we could get was that we were building up our mess fund.

Naturally men suspected things. To what size had the mess fund grown and who had the money? We dared not insinuate and complaints of poor rations did us practically no good; so we carried the burden of hatred and mistrust in our hearts with no chance of the much desired outburst of our stored up thoughts.

It was not until Thanksgiving that part of our fund was spent. We had a good meal then and enjoyed it. Christmas, the second celebration. Certainly there could be no complaints then, but as far as I was concerned, that was the extent of my benefits from the mess fund.

After the Armistice, about the last week in January, 1919, orders came from General Headquarters that all mess funds must be exhausted before sailing for home. It was then that the Company started having very lavish menus, with chicken, pies and candy. Everything that money could buy was put before the men. They realized that there was no going home until it was spent; so our savings of twelve months of false economy were squandered in a few weeks, but I was not there to enjoy it. I held down a bed in the hospital with influenza.

It is not a pleasant thing to carry this feeling of mistrust on down through the years. I should know that officers would not dare misuse such funds. I should know that ample rations were at times difficult to secure

and certainly should know that after the Armistice, ships were leaving America empty except for food and clothing, and naturally there was an over abundance of food in ports, with positively no transportation problems at all. It was very natural that the government requested the funds be spent before sailing, otherwise how else could they properly be disposed of, and how else could the warehouses in America be emptied of their surplus with most of the soldiers at home already discharged.

But, the fact still remained, we did not have proper food. There was always the money to buy it, and with the exception of a few days we were never so far from the source of supply that it would have been even difficult to secure good rations. Why for two months after the Armistice did we continue to live on a diet far inferior to what we were entitled to, and why then did it take a general order from headquarters to make our Command open the purse strings?

Perhaps the rank and file was not entitled to an explanation. We felt we were. I have never changed this opinion, and this, and this alone has dwelled constantly with me. It was either pure neglect or intentional indifference on the part of one or more of our officers, and if any one thing made Army life hard to endure, it was this one thing that should have been no problem at all.

The officers never ate with us. They had their own mess. That was our misfortune.

Many times our convictions were unfounded, but as we believed, so did we live. Life is that way, and always will be. It can be no other way.

CHAPTER V

EASTWARD, FIRST STOP FRANCE

It was now Monday, February 25, 1918. The weather had turned warm at Camp Devens, and by noon the slush was ankle deep. We lined up in formation under full pack in front of the barracks. Roll was called, the command was, "Squads Right! March!" We were on our way at last, the glorious adventure lay just ahead. We were primed for events of the future. War produces hardships, mental and physical cripples, disease and death. We probably were going into it all, who cared? Hadn't we been waiting weeks for this day? Our Company was practically at War strength of 250 men. Only two were left in hospitals, and just one had deserted two days previous. The balance were anxious to carry out our boasts.

Our faces were stern and severe, there was no joking or laughing, we marched in perfect step, and except for the splash and squish of wet snow under heavy feet, there was no noise.

There could be no mistake. Those that watched us knew at a glance that our destination was France. Troops left their barracks to watch us pass and called and waved "goodbye". The whole Camp seemed to know that Companies D, E and F, and Headquarters of the 25th, were sailing, and yet we were supposed to be departing under a shroud of secrecy so that enemy spies would be unaware of our maneuvers. One would not give much credit to the German spy system for making this deduction, but none of us knew what railroad route or what port of debarkation was to be used. We only learned as the hours progressed, and the secret was unfolded.

At the Camp's railroad yards, our Company boarded the first section of trains made up of day coaches. At 1:52 P.M. we got under way for the port of

embarkation. Guards were posted at each end of the cars. We were not allowed to go from one coach to another or loiter on the platforms. We were commanded to pull down all the shades and to be quiet. No outsiders were to know that we were a troop train. This, we were told, was for our own protection against pro-German sympathizers or spies who might bomb or derail the train. The trip was tiresome and uneventful, but we could put up with anything now that we were actually taking our first step towards France.

The next day, Tuesday, February 26, 1918, Section 1 of the train arrived at Harlem River, New York, at 12:30 A.M. At 6:45 A.M. at Willis Avenue, Bronx, New York City, both sections detrained and were conveyed thence to point of embarkation, Hoboken, New Jersey, on the ferryboat "Ossinger". At the dock the regiment was served coffee and rolls by members of the Red Cross. At 10:15 A.M. we embarked on Army Transport No. 3, the U.S.S. America, formerly the interned German Steamship "Amerika".

On boarding ship, each member of the Regiment was presented with a copy of the rules and regulations to be observed on army transports and a copy of the censorship regulations governing correspondence, and each enlisted man on leaving the gangway was given a ticket assigning him to a bunk and to a mess. The bunks were built in sections of eighteen each, of canvas with iron piping for supports, six bunks from end to end, in tiers of three. Mess was served to the troops aboard in three sections, first, second, and third. The system aboard was noticeable. Soldiers were assigned to quarters with dispatch and facility so that within fifteen minutes after boarding the ship each man knew the exact place where he was to sleep and when and where he was to eat. There was no confusion or excitement except that necessarily incident to the constant movement of so large a number of men (4,500) in so small a space as that furnished even by a great transatlantic liner. The remainder of the day and night was spent aboard the ship, which remained at anchor.

RULES FOR TROOPS

The following rules are the result of experience in carrying troops. Strict observance is required and will result in mutual benefit to both you and the ship.

Only salt water can be supplied troops for bathing. Soap is supplied which will lather in salt water. It is quite possible to keep clean with salt water. Do not neglect to bathe. If you do not bathe you are liable to get buggy.

Showers are located in E3, F3, G4, F5, F6, F7 and D5.

Washrooms are located in E3, F3, G4, F5 and aft of E8.

Latrines are in F3, (one on Starboard side and one on Port side) and aft of E8.

The supply of fresh water is very limited and it must not be wasted. Any man finding a fresh water leak or drip should immediately report the fact to the Officer of the Day so the fault can be remedied.

No matches are allowed in your possession. The flare of a match at night can be seen under favorable conditions as much as a mile away. Get your light from the cigar lighters provided.

No smoking is permitted at any time in the berthing spaces or on outside decks at night.

All air ports must be securely covered at night. Remember that an exposed light may result in the discovery of the ship by an enemy.

No flashlights are to be in your possession or are they to be used on deck at night by anyone. They are the greatest menace to the safety of the ship, as their light can be seen several miles at night.

Remember your safety is directly concerned with that of the ship and all lights must be vigilantly guarded against.

No port hole in troop spaces is to be opened at any time except by sailors detailed for that duty.

Do not tamper with electric light switch boxes or lights. To do so is a grave offense and will be severely punished.

Do not throw rubbish into the latrines or the wash troughs. Tobacco bags and heavy paper will surely plug the drains and make much disagreeable work in clearing them. Cigarette butts and pieces of paper easily plug the urinal drains.

Do not spit on any deck, inside or outside. Do not throw papers or rubbish around outside decks or in your quarters. Doing so simply involves work on the part of some one else in cleaning up. Do your share toward keeping the ship clean, otherwise the canteen will be closed to lessen the amount of rubbish.

Throw nothing overboard. Floating articles may be sighted by a submarine which will wireless ahead and put another submarine on the look-out for us.

Place empty tins and rubbish in the receptacles provided. Do not mix articles which will not burn with those which will.

Do not touch drinking fountains with the lips. To do so may spread disease.

There are drinking fountains in E3, F4, F6 and aft of after messroom.

The buckets painted white and black are for sea sickness and spitting in only. Do not place rubbish in them. If you do, those who have to clean the buckets will not thank you.

Do not loiter in doors or on ladders. They are for the use of all. Keep a passage way clear along all decks at all times. Do not obstruct the crew in their work at any time.

When the "Call to Quarters" is sounded, go to your bunk and remain there until "Recall" is sounded.

Keep your life preserver with you all times while the ship is at sea. Leave it in your bunk when the ship is in port. Do not misuse the life preservers. Remember there are others to follow you who will have to use them.

The alarm is given by blowing the siren.

When an alarm is sounded, if you are in your berthing space, fall in with your life preserver and your canteen and you will be marched to your abandon ship station by your officers and non-commissioned officers. If elsewhere than in your berthing space, go to your abandon ship station by the most direct route, being careful not to crowd or interfere with units being marched to their stations. Give the crew the right of way at all times as they must go to their stations to get things ready for you.

(OVER)

In case of alarms of all kinds, the most important duty of each man is silence and calmness. The ship may be torpedoed and still not have to be abandoned.

Passing the word to "Abandon Ship" and sounding the "General", which may or may not be accompanied by the siren, is the signal to take stations for abandon ship. To actually abandon ship, the word will be passed by proper authority to "Lower Boats." In case of abandon ship, remember this ship will not sink quickly and the only way to get every one off is to be quiet and orderly and proceed as directed by your officers. To rush or crowd will cause confusion. The officers have positive orders to fire on anyone who does not obey orders.

Troops may use the following spaces for recreation:

1. Lower promenade (C) decks.
2. C Deck forward of deck house.
3. D Deck forward and aft.

You are forbidden to go on A or B Decks except on duty.

Do not go in spaces marked "Troops keep out."

It is positively forbidden for you to go in the spaces occupied by the crew, nor are they allowed in your spaces except on duty.

If you think there is any doubt about your being allowed in any place, keep out until you learn definitely one way or the other.

The canteen is aft on port side of D Deck. All sales are for cash.

Sick call is held near the entrance doors of mess rooms at 8:30 A. M. and 3:30 P. M.

The sick bay (hospital) entrance is on B Deck starboard side aft.

GENERAL MESSING ARRANGEMENTS

Remember where you are berthed. After coming on board stay in the immediate vicinity of your berthing space until you are sure you can find your way back to your bunk.

There are three sittings for each meal. Each man will answer the same call for every meal.

When your mess call is sounded, go to your bunk, get your mess-kit and fall in.

Follow specific mess directions posted in your berthing space and use the route outlined to get to your mess room. Noise will not be tolerated. Go quietly and avoid crowding.

Seat yourself as directed by the mess officer in charge of the mess room and take the same table for all subsequent meals.

After all are seated, the men detailed to do so will go to the serving room and obtain the food for each table. These same men will clean and return the food carriers to the serving rooms after the meal, and clean the tables and benches.

Save a small piece of bread to use in scrapping your mess-kit. When through eating, go to the mess-kit washing troughs and scrape your plate in the garbage cans. All liquid refuse must go in the sink provided. It is absolutely prohibited to put any liquid in the garbage cans. To do so only makes extra work for your police detail. All scraps must be off plates before washing them in the troughs. If you let scraps get in the troughs it plugs the drains and delays the game. Wash your kit, and get out of the mess room and on deck as quickly as possible. Then stow your kits.

Mess calls will be followed by 1, and 3 blasts to indicate the three sittings. Sittings are as follows:

First Call—Men in compartments E3, F2 and G4 mess in forward mess room. Men in compartments E7, E8, G8 and D5 mess in after mess room.

Second Call—Men in compartments F4 and G3 mess in forward mess room. Men in compartments F5, G6 and G7 mess in after mess rooms.

Third Call—Men in compartments F3, G2 and those berthed in forward mess room mess in forward messroom. Men in compartments F6, F7, F8 and those berthed in after mess room mess in after mess room.

Company non-commissioned officers will mess with their respective units. Details under the Army mess officers will clean mess rooms.

The commissioned officers and master engineers were assigned cabin quarters.

On Wednesday, the twenty-seventh of February, at 10:40 A.M., the "America" was towed down the bay, and at 7:45 P.M. the regiment sailed for Europe. I was put on KP that day we sailed and have often smiled to myself with the thought of that patriotic soldier, full of fight and adventure, on the most thrilling day of his life, sitting in the kitchen with bushels and bushels of potatoes and nothing to do but peel. If the folks at home could have only seen their pride and joy--what a shock! I did, however, sneak off and put my face up to the porthole for a few minutes to see the Statue of Liberty go by, but that was all. There had been no bands or fond farewells from devoted relatives; the gangplank had been raised, and the big ship had quietly slipped away from the wharf.

That night, our first at sea, was passed without any unusual happening although the crowded condition and poor air caused most of us to wake on Thursday with sick headaches, but we got on deck later and felt much better although the weather was cold and the sea rough. There were two more transports near us now to make up our convoy. We had been joined during the night by the U.S.S. "Mount Vernon" (formerly the Kronprinzessin Cecile), and the U.S.S. "Agememnon" (formerly the Kaiser Wilhelm II). In the afternoon we performed our first "abandon ship" drill. It was executed in an orderly fashion without any unnecessary commotion. When the siren sounded the alarm, we simply marched to our designated places on deck. The sailors took their posts at life boats. Everyone seemed happy, no one seemed to worry, and the day passed quite easily.

On Friday, the weather had moderated, but the sea was still very rough. The Convoy was joined by the U.S. Cruiser "Seattle" with the Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, and the Chief of Engineers aboard. We had a death on board this day, our first, a boy from New Hampshire, and a member of the 14th Engineers Regiment, who died in the hospital of pneumonia.

On Saturday, March 2, I spent the day on my bunk, seasick like many others in the outfit and didn't go near the mess hall for fear I might lose what I already had in my stomach.

On Sunday, March 3, religious services were held; Catholic Chaplain LeMay having Mass at 10:30, and Protestant Chaplain Robert Burns Street at 10:30 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. The services were largely attended and were impressive under the attendant conditions. At sunset, a burial at sea from the "Seattle" impressed me greatly. It was the first I had ever witnessed. I hoped that under no conditions would it ever be necessary to wrap me up and slide my body off a plank into that cold, cruel, lonesome water, but I was assured that soldiers were never buried at sea, and neither were sailors unless they requested it.

I was placed on guard duty that day down on one of the lower decks, that probably was below or just at water level. The ship was divided into troop spaces that may have been seventy-five to one hundred feet long. Separating these compartments were water-tight bulkheads with water-tight doors. I had only one special order that day, and it was to close that door in case the ship was torpedoed. There was nothing difficult about that job, but the ventilation was poor, and the air was bad from vomiting sea-sick men, and I hadn't completely recovered from the day before. Then too, there was plenty of time for me to consider the possibility of a torpedo striking the ship's side at about my location, and I had horrible visions of the guards on the doors at the other ends of these spaces slamming their doors shut and locking me in like a rat in a trap to be drowned. The usual twenty-four hour guard mount prevailed, two hours on and four off. I was on the third mount, 7 to 9 and 1 to 3. It was not until 3:00 o'clock P.M. Monday that I was relieved. I ate no breakfast or lunch that day. The sea was still high and I felt bum. Late that afternoon when I was on deck for air, a wave washed up and ran down the stairway, forming a beautiful cascade. Several of the men were knocked down, and many of them slightly injured. All I got was wet feet.

Tuesday passed with the water being less rough and the weather milder. By our second Wednesday, it was warm and the sea calm. I spent a great deal of the day watching the sailors mount a six-inch gun on each side of the ship and then take three shots each to try them out. The next day, I was put on KP again and carried supplies from the hold, while the four ships cut their speed way down and appeared to be stalling for time by making circles. The sailors told us we were a little ahead of the Convoy that was expected to meet us, and we feared to enter the submarine zone without their protection.

On Thursday, March 7, 1918, the weather was fair and warm, and the sea calm. In the afternoon troops performed "abandon ship" drill again. The submarine zone was not far distant, and the atmosphere aboard showed signs of anxiety.

On Friday, March 8, 1918, at 4:00 A.M., the Convoy entered the submarine zone with the ships making full steam ahead. Our canteens were filled with water and together with life belts were worn constantly during the day and kept close at hand at night. Smoking was not permitted aboard, above or below after 4:30 P.M., at which time all lights out. The only lights used below during the night were small purple ones, of extremely low visibility at any distance. At sunset, we had a submarine scare, and that broke up the monotony beautifully.

I was on the upper deck at the stern enjoying the last rays of the setting sun when suddenly the Seattle, which was ahead and on our starboard, turned sharp and without any apparent warning took three quick shots. Our starboard gun took one as our ship turned to avoid giving the sub a broad side target to shoot at. This threw the stern, where I was standing, within a few feet of the piece of drift wood that was floating perpendicularly and causing all the commotion. The machine gunners along side of me wanted to have a little fun also, so let go a hundred or so shots just to make it a little more interesting

and exciting for those who couldn't see what they were shooting at. At the moment when the Seattle and the America opened fire, the Mount Vernon and Agememnon changed direction and under full speed and in opposite directions from each other and from the America left the Convoy with great rapidity so that at the termination of the firing these two transports were far distant on the horizon.

The excitement over, the four ships pulled together again, and a rather tense seriousness settled over the troops. We realized that now we would soon meet the sub-chaser Convoy, and we anxiously waited to see them appear, but we were called to quarters for the night without seeing them arrive. That night I didn't even take off my shoes and kept my life belt on and my canteen filled with water on my belt.

At dawn on Saturday March 9, the fleet was joined by a Convoy of six destroyers and by three more later in the day, all heavily camouflaged. These tiny, speedy boats manouvered back and forth and around the fleet, completely encircling it at all times, exciting admiration and bringing a complete sense of security. It might have been possible for a submarine to have attacked a vessel of this fleet, but it is doubtful if it could have successfully accomplished an attack. At all events, it was felt that it would be at the cost of destruction of the submarine.

On Sunday, March 10, our twelfth day at sea, troops were ordered on deck at 5:45 A.M. in "abandon ship" formation with canteens and life preservers. This was before daylight. The morning star was so large as to be mistaken for a lighthouse, and an immense crescent moon arose immediately under it on the eastern horizon. It was quite apparent that we were now passing through the most dangerous zone of our entire voyage and apprehension was noticeable among the crew that stood at their stations to load and lower the life boats and rafts.

Certainly it was a relief when we sighted land at 8:34 A.M. and airplanes and dirigibles appeared and escorted the convoy into Brest Harbor, where the fleet anchored and the troops were allowed to leave our "abandon ship" position and go to the mess hall for breakfast and roam around the deck to obtain our first view of France.



Identification tags hung on a tape around our necks. There were two; one to be tacked on The White Cross and one to be sent to Headquarters.

CHAPTER VI

BREST FRANCE FOR MUMPS

French peasants came out in row-boats and pulled along side the "America" to beg money and food. Candy, cigarettes, and gum and a few pieces of small change were dropped to them along with a lot of foolish conversation. It was simple entertainment, but as it was the only thing to do for the moment, we took advantage of it.

The first platoon of my company was soon ordered to quarters and we were instructed to eat early as ^{we} were to go ashore immediately.

At noon, a small lighter came out from the docks and lashed along side, a rope ladder was thrown down to her, and we were ordered over the side to board her. This gave us the honor of being the first troops of the entire convoy to land, and we wondered what duties we would be privileged to fulfill, but we weren't kept in suspense long. We no sooner landed than we were told to unload mail and barracks bags from the tugboats that were bringing them in from the ships. The mail was left under some sheds on the wharfs, but the barracks bags were loaded into trucks and hauled a short distance inland and then piled under some roofs. When we had finished our work on the wharfs we were taken to the pile of barracks bags that were ready for sorting. Each bag was supposed to have the soldier's name, regiment, and company fastened to it. We sorted the bags according to regiment. Those that had no marking of identification were put aside. For a while it wasn't a bad job; we were glad to get some activity after about twelve days of comparative idleness. But long before 12:30 midnight, when we called it a day, with only Karo syrup and bread for supper, we were completely exhausted. The mail had been properly disposed of, and 4500 barracks bags were sorted and under an open shed to partially protect them from a mean, steady, soaking French rain, the first of hundreds, that I was to curse. After being called into formation and the roll

called, we were told that for the balance of the night we were to make ourselves as comfortable as possible on the pile of bags, but even this was a welcome relief. We were wet and tired; the limit of our endurance seemed to have been reached. The Captain asked for ten volunteers to guard the duffle while the others slept, and here is where I made my big mistake. I foolishly volunteered and drew the first mount with two others. So while the men arranged bags into beds and selected the driest locations in which to sleep, we stood guard in the rain. At 2:30 A.M. we were relieved of our duty but were told not to bother waking up our relief because the commanding officer didn't think that there was any danger of pilferage with so many men there asleep. Why he didn't think of that in the first place or why I didn't draw the second mount instead of the first, I don't know, but as I began to look for a place to sleep, I promised myself never to volunteer to do anything again unless it was something I would enjoy doing; never again would I be a martyr. My pals were sound asleep and fairly comfortable, having had time to make a resting place before the lights went out two hours before. I was in the dark with all the choice locations taken, but I made the best of a bad situation and curled up on some bags high enough under the shed so that only an occasional spray of rain reached me.

Reveille blew at 6:15 in the morning, I was far from refreshed after my few hours rest. My back was sore and my muscles ached, my neck was stiff and I was as dirty and wet as any veteran coming out of a campaign. I was miserable.

We had bread and Karo syrup and coffee for breakfast and went to work again, this time opening bags that had lost their identification and examining the contents in hope of getting the name or regiment of the owner.

At 3:30 in the afternoon, our job complete, we were taken back to the "America". This was a disappointment of course. We had seen enough of that old ship for awhile and were ready to go inland instead, but we went over her

sides again, looking forward at least to a good meal, but no such luck. We were too late for mess, but after a lot of squawking on our part, the ship's cooks handed us out some bread and jam, but that was all.

That night and the following day we remained on the ship and rested up while we waited with the balance of the Company for orders to move. The second morning reveille blew at 5:00 A.M., and at 9:30 under full pack, the entire Company boarded a lighter and again went to the wharfs.

With no idea of what our destination was to be, we marched in formation through the streets of the Commission district of Brest, while dozens of dirty foul-mouthed urchins that had learned a few swear words from troops that proceeded us, ran beside, and back and forth, begging cigarettes, money and gum. French peasants watched from windows and porches. The old men smiled, and women waved and called with glee, "Viva les Americains". The kids still followed and begged "Geev me-wan pen-nee".

We settled down to real work, and the sweat oozed from our brows as we marched up that never to be forgotten hill toward what turned out to be Pontanezen Barracks about three miles away.

We were called to a halt beside an old gray stone building, two stories high and perhaps 200 long, maybe 75 feet wide. There were several such buildings, and we were told later that they were built and used by Napoleon's men. Except for a high stone wall around a court that at one time was probably a parade ground and a few new frame buildings built by the Americans and used for officers' quarters, and hospital wards, and a Y.M.C.A. recreation hut, there was nothing of Camp Pontanezen except mud.

We got there at noon and were told to make the old stone building our quarters. My Company went to the second floor and noticed that around the outside of the one large room and through the center, ran wooden platforms about seven feet wide with one edge about six inches off from the floor, and

the other about one foot, this gave the effect of an incline and was used for the troops to sleep on. It allowed our heads to be six inches ^{above} our feet. When asleep, we were just a long row of soldiers lying side by side around the walls, and a double row through the center.

As we had eaten an early breakfast, by noon we were very hungry, but it was 4:30 in the afternoon before our kitchen was setup and operating. In the meantime, we went to the "Y" and bought some candy bars and exchanged our good U.S. money for French francs. The exchange at that time was about 5 F.80 per dollar, but I remember that we all just took what the "Y" Secretary gave us without attempting to count it as we had no idea of its value. Later on we all began to wonder if we had got all that was coming to us.

We hoped we could get some straw for bedding that night, but there was none to be had, so we again slept on the boards. Needless to say, we spent a very uncomfortable night, and by morning none of the men were in very good spirits. As for me, I felt terrible; so after breakfast I answered sick-call, and much to my surprise the doctor said I had mumps and had to be taken to the hospital, if you could call it that. I remember it very well, but in my diary I wrote:

"Some hospital. Just flat boards on wooden horses for beds, covered by dirty, hard mattress, no springs or sheets or pillow. One orderly, who assigned me to my cot, but I haven't seen a nurse or a doctor-- right jaw swollen up a bit, hurts to eat."

My company was preparing to leave Camp when I was taken to the hospital. None but the officers knew where to, and as I sat on my bunk in the ward with my elbows on my knees and my jaws in my hands, I was lonesome, disturbed, and annoyed, and cursed my tough luck. Thoughts flashed through my mind about the possibility of my never being with my old outfit again. It was a pretty good group of men, and I figured I would have just as good a break with them

as any outfit in the A.E.F., and I rather expected that they would see as much of France as any, with a good possibility of some real action. I had no idea what would happen to me now.

I had been anxious to get to France, but now that I was here I began to wonder exactly why. I had left a good home and bed, and three squares a day-- for hard labor, irregular hours, and poor food. The boys in the restaurant back near Devens had pretty good logic behind their ideas of guys that enlisted.

At the outbreak of the War in Europe in 1914, I was not any more informed of the true events leading up to War, and direct cause of War, than is the average American youth of today informed of the present World situation. I began to wonder if the war could not have got along very nicely without me, and me without it.

Sometime during the second day a nurse appeared, and the building took on an atmosphere similar to a hospital, and I felt better, but at no time was I very sick.

However, I had always been told that complete relaxation and rest was necessary for a patient with mumps. Nevertheless I was assigned to the detail that second day of food-carrier from the kitchen to the scarlet fever ward, and as I felt well enough to do it went ahead because this job was rewarded by the privilege of eating with the Medical Corps, and they had much better food than the patients.

On the fourth day, we had some difficulty with the stove and two or three patients volunteered to fix it--result; one roof fire. I joined the bucket-brigade and it was put out. By the next day I was satisfied that my case of mumps wasn't serious and I wanted to move along, but the nurse told me "no", I had to stay out my two weeks before I could be discharged from the hospital; so when I saw the doctor that afternoon I told him I had been there thirteen days and was feeling fine, and couldn't I leave soon. He said, "Sure, tomorrow".

I began looking over my clothes and collecting a few things, preparing for the next move. I decided it was time to change underwear because after all, I was still wearing the same undershirt and drawers I left Camp Devens in twenty-three days ago and had even slept in them each night. It was during this change that I discovered my first cootie, a beautiful specimen of the large variety, and upon further examination, I located two more. I killed them and kept the discovery a dark secret known only unto myself. I would have been mortified and ashamed if anyone had known it, but that was in the early days. If I had only known then what I knew later. Only three gray back cooties? No menagerie at all!

On the morning of the sixth day I went to the office and checked out, and at 2:00 P.M. boarded a truck with several others and went to the Casual Camp in Brest to wait travel instruction. The next three days were some of my most pleasant in France. The weather was warm and clear, and except for working one morning on a truck detail that went to the other side of town for supplies, I did no work. We were given passes each day and spent a great deal of time looking over the city and lolling around in the City park, striking up acquaintance with what French people we could meet. But as I had not bathed since my last salt water shower on board the "America" some twelve days previous, about the first thing I did was to go to the Y.M.C.A., and take a bath. I ate at the "Y" each evening although I could have returned to the camp and had some of the best Army meals that were ever served to troops, but I preferred to see and learn all I could about this new and curious land with its narrow cobbled streets, old buildings and dinky railroad engines and four wheel freight cars no longer than our army trucks with brakeman that wore smocks instead of overalls and used a mouth horn instead of their arms to signal the engineer while switching. I was impressed by the number of women in mourning and by the scarcity of able-bodied men, by shops with

their unusual display of merchandise and French signs hanging over the sidewalks, and by the peasants in their wooden shoes, the first I had ever seen.

It was an enjoyable few days, and I have always remembered it even through the terrible nightmare experiences I had in the same city ten months later while waiting with my regiment for evacuation. To us it was then the rainiest, muddiest, most desolate, unsanitary Hell hole in the world, but we were homesick by that time and didn't care to see any more sights, and we hit the town for late winter and spring rains, the most dreary and dull days on the Brittany coast.

CHAPTER VII

"COOTIES"

Call them what you please, "Cooties", Graybacks", "Totos", "Coddlers", "Pants Rabbits", or "Seam Squirrels". They are still body lice in any man's Army.

Practically all the men in the advance sectors were lousy, and while they knew it wasn't their fault that they were infected, they always felt somewhat ashamed of their state when first discovered, but as the weeks passed and cooties continued to inhabit their clothing and bodies in spite of all precautions, shame left, and cooties were taken for granted like wet feet and muddy puttees.

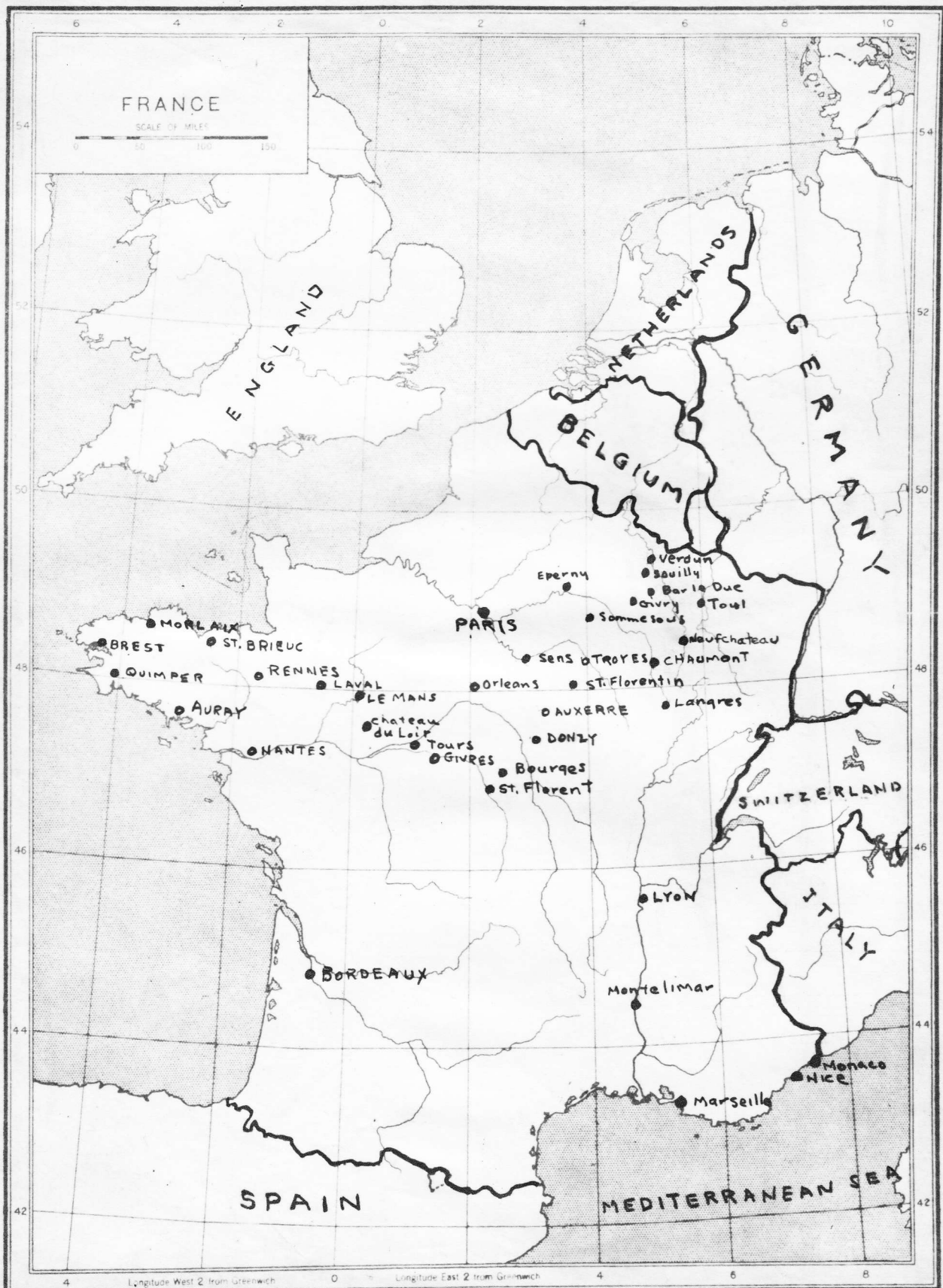
The well-fed cooties were about the size of an O in this type. They were wingless creatures with flattened bodies, hooked feet like those of a lobster or crab for holding to hairs, and a beak-like mouth that could pierce the skin and draw blood. We were told that their eggs hatch in six days, and in eighteen days more the young were capable of laying more eggs.

It was a pleasant pastime and great sport to draw a small ring on the barracks floor and have two men produce their best specimens from their shirt bands and enter them in fistic combat for a one franc purse, or to sit on the edge of a bunk while "reading your shirt", and to drop the pests to the floor while your buddy dripped hot candle tallow on them as they tried to make their escape.

We had only one sure way to rid our clothing of our brood, and that was to boil them. Our officers were always sympathetic with their cootie-ridden men and granted them a few hours off, any time it was possible, to "boil out."

The boiling equipment consisted of a large tomato or lard can over a fire in the open. The fussy unreasonable cooks wouldn't let us use the kitchen.

It was impossible to entirely rid all our clothing of this vermin, but with a little care and attention their population could be held to a minimum.



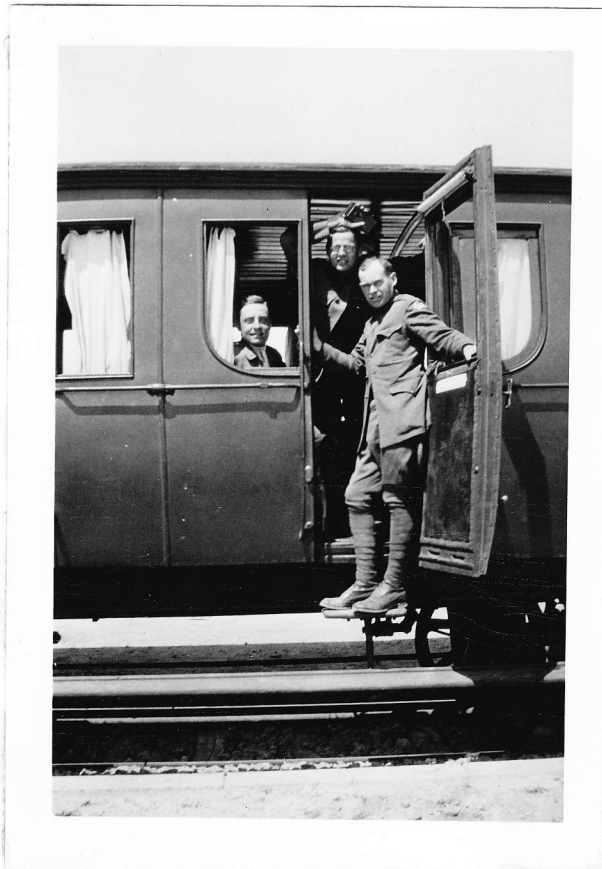
CHAPTER VIII

THIRD CLASS ACROSS FRANCE

On the third day I was given my travel orders "To proceed without delay to Gievres, reporting upon arrival to my commanding officer for duty". 17.80 francs (\$3.00) was given me for ration money with bread tickets good for "2000 grammes de Pain." I was told to go the Government Commissary and purchase my food for four meals enroute. I did the best I could but took their word for what was customarily taken on such trips--one can corned beef, canned tomatoes, canned pineapple, and beans, and one loaf of bread, and a pound of Lowney's chocolates. I was then given my railroad ticket; it was called an "Ordre de Transport pour Isole sans Bagages et sans Chevaux" issued for "Armee Americaine" by "Ministere de la Guerre" and a sheet written in pencil showing the time of arrival and departure at the six larger cities I would pass through, in three of which it would be necessary for me to change trains. I was to leave Brest at 14:10 o'clock and arrive at Quimperle at 17:00 o'clock, change cars and leave at 20:02 for Auray. I had a suspicion what these times meant but inquired to make sure. Because of possible misunderstandings, A.M. and P.M. were never used. Time started at one A.M., so one P.M. would be 13:00 o'clock and 14:10 was 2:10 P.M., 17:00 was 5:00 P.M. I was due to arrive in Gievres at 21:34 the second day. I figured that out to be 9:34 P.M.

This was all going to be a new experience to me, and I wondered how it would all work out but thoroughly enjoyed the prospects of something entirely different from anything I had ever done before. I had no idea of what was ahead of me but cared less, except that I bought a map of France in order to follow my route. There were several men leaving the same base section at the same time as I, but none going to my destination. I would have company

part way at least. The French coaches were quite a novelty to me with their steps running the full length on the outside of the car, and separate outside doors for each separate compartment that had wooden benches and held about ten people. Those trains had great privacy except at each stop someone would open your door and look in to see if there was room, if not, he would slam the door, walk along the step to the next and open it.



Outside doors for
each compartment

The group of us enjoyed every minute of the trip, especially the first afternoon going down the Brittany Coast. The quaint peasant costumes were picturesque garments, but I am afraid we were rude enough to laugh at them. The women's "sunbonnet type" headgear always gave us cause to chuckle, and we had great fun trying to speak to these folks at every railroad station. The natives of Brittany were supposed to be very serious minded and stern people. They didn't impress us that way, especially the women who seemed to enjoy having us talk to them and poke fun about their dress.

There were no toilets or washrooms on our third class coaches, and perhaps the greatest shock I ever got was when I first saw men and women using the same depot wash rooms. It was hard for us to understand it, but after we saw with what indifference and apathy these people regarded the opposite sex, it was more easily understood, but no American with our usual early training could feel comfortable in following their customs. But in Rome, do as the Romans do.

At 8:52 the next morning I was in Nantes. I had now traveled about 300 kilometers or 185 miles in eighteen hours, for an average of eighteen miles of traveling an hour. We had lost eight hours at transfer points. But time didn't mean anything--I was having fun and still had about 250 kilos. to go.

Our little group was getting smaller now. Most of the men I had started with had arrived at their destination or had left my route at transfer points. I traveled all that day until 10:00 P.M. and finally arrived at Gievres after making a total of about 350 miles.

I was alone and except for one single light in the Railroad Station, everything was dark. I walked in and was greeted by an American of the R.T.C. (Railroad Transportation Corps) who checked my travel orders and said, "As far as I know, Company E of the 25th Engineers is not here. However, I will direct you to headquarters Company of your Regiment, and they will take care of you."

Headquarters Company was located and I reported. "Only Company C is here," I was told, "and they are a couple of miles out, but it's too late to do anything about it tonight. You had better sleep in one of these empty barracks." He took a flash light and guided me to the building he had in mind. It was the usual size barracks, built to accommodate about sixty or seventy men but at the time seemed to be the largest I had ever seen. Except for about thirty double deck bunks it was entirely empty.

"I guess there's room for you here", he said with a grin. I unrolled my pack to get my blankets, took off my shoes and blouse and flopped on the wooden bunk slats for the night. I felt very much alone but was extremely tired and went to sleep.

The next morning I was awakened by the bugle. Up I got and rolled my pack. Another day--what was it to be. I had no idea. But one idea I always had was to get something to eat; so I got my mess kit and looked for a chow line and fell in. Nobody asks questions of a stranger in uniform. If it's time to eat, he is always welcome to share the grub for better or worse of his host outfit. After getting in line I found I was eating with Headquarters Company of my own regiment. I visited with a few of the men while eating and then reported to the office again for instructions. I was taken by automobile to Company C office and was temporarily attached there awaiting further orders.

These men had been in France for two months, having left the states before us, and as they were now eager for news from someone fresh from home, my problem of becoming acquainted was completely eliminated. I liked these men very much. Many of them were from the Twin Cities, but I was surprised to find that they already were becoming somewhat dissatisfied with their lot and were craving something more exciting although it appeared to me that they had a very interesting job, building the largest supply base in the A. E. F., building quartermaster supply houses, barracks, and the survey and construction of about fifty miles of standard railroad tracks in the camp. They were also installing camp telephone lines and equipment. There were details of carpenters and blacksmiths and some in charge of the camp water supply.

They told me that several days previous to my appearance, the captain, one day in formation, announced that all who would like to transfer into some other service could turn in their names at the orderly room. I was told that 125 men out of 250 asked to be transferred. The next day the Captain announced that no transfers would be made.

The next morning I was put to building a new latrine with the carpenter's gang, and proved to be so good a specialist that I went out with them the second day. But at 8:15 that night I was ordered to prepare at once to leave. Some of the boys helped me to roll my pack, and in a few minutes I was waiting for transportation to the railway station, two or three miles away; shortly a courier appeared and I climbed in his side car and down the road we went at what seemed to be a terrific speed on a pitch dark night with absolutely no lights. It was my first experience of night driving, and I marveled at the way that fellow kept on the road, when swish, crash, the motorcycle swirled, and then back on the road. The courier swore loudly, but we kept on traveling. One more foot to the left and we would have had a perfect head-on collision with the car that sideswiped us.

My first motorcycle ride, my first drive without lights, and my first collision; thank goodness they came to a satisfactory conclusion when I reached the station. Travel orders again and on the train at 9:30, east again to find my company, through the night and into the next day, through Bourges, Auxerre, Troyes, Chaumont, Neufchateau.

It was an interesting trip for me, and I enjoyed it immensely. I had learned by now the customs of the French people and something of the railroad transportation system. I relaxed without anxiety or worry as I was now an old hand at this traveling business and possessed the spirit of a vagabond.

It was a clear sunny day, and I thought rural France was magnificent, with its quaint villages and farm land. I saw a lot that day, far more than I can now remember, but I can never forget the hospital trains, and prisoners of war trains, returning from the front, and the trains of war supplies on sidings as our passenger went by. I seemed to sense now a slight tenseness and seriousness not noticed in Western France. The war was a little closer now; these folks seemed to be busier and in more of a hurry and perhaps seemed

more concerned over their predicament than their countrymen in the West. I talked to anybody I had a chance to visit with, English, French or American. I asked questions and learned a lot.

To me, the miles and miles of transportation canals were new and beautiful. We passed many and they intrigued me. Barges, some of them about 200 feet long, were drawn by horse power, sometimes singly but generally two in tandem. Along the narrow path paralleling the stream walked the driver behind his horses. At the stern of the craft sat a person at the rudder to keep the barge from scraping the bank.

The canals looked about thirty or forty feet wide, and, as we traveled along, I noticed quite frequently that there were locks to raise or lower the barge eight or ten feet.

Yes, the twenty-year-old boy got quite a kick out of that day.



To me the miles
and miles of
transportation
canals were
beautiful

My destination was Colombey LaBelle, and I was told I should arrive at ten P.M. the second night, but the train didn't stop at my town; it continued on a few miles further to the City of Toul.

I got out and reported to the R.T.O., and asked for instructions as to how to get to my company.

"It is pretty late now", he said. "Your car will be uncoupled and side-tracked in the yards until morning. You better get back on it and sleep for the balance of the night. Report here in the morning, and we'll see that you get some breakfast."

So, back to the car I went, and in a few minutes it was down the yards on a siding. I stretched out on the long wooden compartment seat to sleep. All was quiet, there were no lights, but from the battle front a few miles away came the boom-boom of the heavy artillery, the first cannon of the war for me, and only two months after I left home. But a lot had happened during those two months, and I was thrilled while trying to sleep that night of March 29th, with the at last realized dream that I was hearing the thunder of battle, but I was tired and went to sleep. Tomorrow would take care of itself.

"And the night shall be filled with Music
And the cares that infest the day,

Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

CHAPTER IX

A CLAM GUN WAS A SHOVEL

It was quite natural that a boy of my age should know practically nothing about the organizations that go to make up an army. At the time of my enlistment, the recruiting officer gave me a brief idea of what duties the 25th Engineers would be called upon to perform, but it was not until days of actual experiences began to pass that I gained actual knowledge of the importance of Army Engineers in the vast set-up to make a war machine.

I learned that many regiments of Engineers belonged to that tremendous army in the Service of Supply. It hadn't occurred to me that such a thing as the S. O. S. even existed, but now I was told that for every man on the firing line, four men were required to supply, equip and feed him. The Quartermaster Department must provide quarters, clothing and transportation; the Commissary to furnish food; and the Ordinance to supply guns and ammunition; and in addition to these, thousands must be men recruited from practically all trades and professions to make engineering regiments for water supply, highways, light railroads, Standard Gauge Railroads, Forestry, Quarrying, Surveying, Camouflage, Communication and General Construction. But this was not all the duties required of the Army engineer. There were regiments of engineers attached to every combat division, whose duties were to repair roads, build bridges and clear the passages for the advancing infantry and artillery that was to follow. Engineers assigned to this work must be a self-sufficient outfit so were issued rifles and bayonets and instructed in infantry drill, not for offensive fighting, but they had to be trained to protect themselves at all times against attacks while doing construction work.

I found myself in such an outfit but unattached to any particular division. Later in the summer when the First Army was organized by General Pershing, we

were known as "First Army Engineers, Unattached." We were always considered General Construction Engineers and subject to call for any duties the chief engineer saw fit to assign us. As a result we had our fingers into just about all the different types of engineering in France. That was to be expected because my regiment was not composed of men from only one branch of engineering. We covered practically everything, but to give an idea of what we had, the personnel of my company alone at the time of sailing was as follows:

Foundation Men	19	Pile Drivers	16
Bridgemen	24	Carpenters	54
Electricians	7	Masons	13
Painters	7	Plumbers	7
Plasterers	6	Roofers	6
Steam Fitters	9	Steel Workers	24
Auto men	13	Miscellaneous	46

How did I, a student, manage to suddenly qualify as an Army Engineer? I don't know, except you will notice that there were 46 men classified as "Miscellaneous". Well, I was one of them, and the real engineers and technical men of the outfit found plenty of work to keep an apprentice busy. There were lots of jobs that didn't require the knowledge of the great profession; so I went my stretch proudly displaying the Engineer's Ensigna on my collar but generally doing the unskilled labor. Only occasionally was I assigned a smattering of responsibility. After all, this was all I could hope for, but I did display some interest in life by wondering what detail I would be on tomorrow, but generally it required the use of a "Clam Gun."

Many times I considered my lot with that of others, but actually I was satisfied. The Infantry? The Artillery? No, certainly they were no improvement. Observation balloon, or Tank Corps was not my idea of fun. I had a chance to

transfer to a Tank Corps during the summer of 1918 but didn't lose much time considering it. Medical Corps or Ambulance driver? Certainly I ^{didn't} ~~didn't~~ want to be an orderly in a hospital, and the ambulance drivers had no cinch. Nobody wanted to stay back in the Service Of Supply with the Quartermaster or Ordinance; so I stuck with the technical men of the Army, the brains and the skill, the highest ranking Corps in uniform--The Engineers. A rather broad statement, but I can prove it. Ask any Army Engineer.

CHAPTER X

COLOMBEY LaBELLES AIR DEPOT

The next morning I left the car and with pack and barracks bag, walked down the track to the railroad station. There was a different man in the railroad transportation office, but he knew about me and said he had already sent word to my commanding officer that I was there.

"Leave your pack here", he said, "while you go to the Casual kitchen to eat." He directed me, and I had a good breakfast from the kitchen whose only purpose for existing was to take care of wanderers like me.

A few minutes after I returned to the R.T.O., one of our Company cars pulled up to take me ten or fifteen miles to our camp, and I reported to the captain at 8:30. He instructed one of the company clerks to show me my platoon's barracks and told me to take any vacant bunk but be ready for full pack and rifle inspection with the company at 2:00 P.M. I took an upper bunk. Upper bunks always appealed to me more than a lower if somebody was sleeping above, especially if I didn't know the habits and weaknesses of the man above. Then too, I was never bothered by men sitting on the edge of my bed when I wanted to rest or using my bunk for a stepladder to get to their bed, also the light was better if I wanted to read, and it gave me far more privacy and was above the eye level. Hence when inspecting officers came through, they were not apt to notice if my bed was not made up according to specifications.

The barracks and mess hall were scattered about at odd angles several hundred feet apart instead of regular order on a company street. The exterior of the buildings was covered with painted, camouflaged building paper, and the windows had shutters that swung from hinges at the top. These had to be closed at night to prevent candle light from being observed from enemy planes,

the roofs were covered with evergreen boughs to attempt to blend the building with the nearby woods. We were fifteen or twenty miles from the lines and subject to air raids; there had already been two raids in the community since the company arrived, and the men had taken to the woods for fear of bombing.

It was Saturday, March 30, the day I arrived, and the men were out at work. I was given my rifle, still packed in grease from the day we prepared them for shipment at Camp Devens.

I unpacked, got some straw for my tick, rerolled my pack for inspection, shaved and washed and got busy on the rifle. While in the midst of that job, Recall blew, and the men came stampeding into the barracks, grabbed their mess kits, and ran for the chow line. I was only noticed by a few of the men bunking near me, but all they said was, "Well, I'll be damned, look who's here. Get your mess kit, Tayler. Let's go." I picked up and hurried across the field to the mess hall with them to get the best possible position in the chow line; it was a distinct advantage to be served early as it made it quite possible to finish and get back in line for seconds.

I visited with a few of the men in line and at mess, but they were all in so much of a hurry to prepare for inspection that not much was said. After lots of fast work, we were ready when the bugle blew at 2:00 P.M. We fell in formation. My old place of number two man in the rear rank, Squad 5, was still open. I took it. We were called to attention, and the corporals reported by squads, and the Top Sergeant wheeled in a snappy about face and saluted the Captain--"All present or accounted for, sir." It started to rain hard. "Dismiss your Company, Sergeant, the inspection will be dispensed with." The Sergeant said, "Company dismissed." We ran jubilantly to the barracks.

The balance of the day was free, and I had plenty of time to renew old acquaintances, and swap stories of the past two weeks' experiences.

The next day was Easter Sunday, March 31--Our regiment chaplain was not with us; so there were no army church services. However, a few of the men went to the churches in nearby towns, but I spent my day quietly in the barracks, visiting with my friends, most of whom hadn't expected ever to see me again after I had been admitted to the hospital. It rained hard all that night and Monday morning. At noon I went out with a detail to work on a two mile railroad spur that they were running from the main line to a repair shop in the woods. My particular job was digging the drainage ditch along the right of way; it was a terribly muddy job and extremely hard work for me as I had done nothing much for exercise for over a month. By evening, I was glad we had only worked a half day. Taps blew at nine o'clock, and all candles had to be out.

We stayed in camp until May 8. Weather conditions were poor. We had almost constant rain and cool weather; our dry days were very rare. During that time, however, with the help of details from a ^{Ground} aviation company we completed our railroad spur, erected five hangars, fourteen storehouses, one hospital, (20 X 100), a Y.M.C.A. building, a headquarters building, two miles of narrow gauge railroad, and camouflaged the entire camp of thirty buildings, repaired four thousand feet of road that required grading by pick and shovel and surfacing by crushed rock that was hand made and hauled from the quarry on trucks after being broken by our men with sledge hammers.

It was April 3 when I got my first letters from home. I had heard nothing from St. Paul since leaving Camp Devens, and those letters I received this day were all written in early February and about 8 weeks old, but they were certainly welcome.

We had left the States with our stiff-rimmed campaign hats and canvas leggings--On April 5 we were issued oversea caps and spiral puttees. We were

glad to get them because with the old equipment we could be easily spotted as new arrivals from the States. With the new ones, we had the idea we could pass as seasoned veterans.

In being acclimated to the rainy climate of this section of France there was considerable sickness, and twenty-two men, our Captain, and one Lieutenant were sent to the hospital. Much of our illness and discomfort was caused by our constant wearing of wet clothing. Many times we would come in from a job soaking wet from shoes up and hurry into the chow lines and back to the barracks to sit around for an hour or two without being able to dry out our clothing. We had no stoves or floors in those barracks, and they were always damp and cold. In the morning, we put on the same old wet clothing from the day before. It was miserable to live under these conditions, and we did not have a clear sunny day for six successive weeks. However, my health remained good, but because of the continual rain, poor food, cold barracks, terrible working conditions, no mail from home or money to spend, our morale was very low, and there were a few heated arguments in the barracks with a couple of them developing into fist fights, but nothing very serious as they were generally stopped before they had gotten well started. With so much time on our hands because of the rainy weather and because we had no entertainment or any reading matter, it was a wonder our behavior was as good as it was.

As if in mockery to our complaining, we came in from work one noon and found our barracks in quarantine for scarlet fever. This didn't prevent us from working, but we were prohibited from associating with the balance of the company or leaving our barracks on off hours. At mess time, we were required to wait until the rest of the company had eaten and left the mess hall before we were allowed to go in. The quarantine lasted only about a week, but we had had enough of it.

We had a yellow pup adopt us when we moved into camp, and he made our kitchen his home; he was well-fed there, had shelter and a dry warm place to sleep. He knew when he was well off and consequently would never leave the immediate vicinity of the kitchen. Every day we coaxed and called him, but he would never leave. It was because he would never come when we wanted him that one of the men named him "Pay Day".

One noon as we fell in formation preparatory to going back on the job, "Pay Day" sat and watched us. When the command was given to march, we called him as usual, and much to our surprise "Pay Day" followed for the first time, stumbling and falling all over himself in typical puppy fashion to keep up with us. He stayed out with us all afternoon and then back again with us that evening.

At mess, it was announced that the "Pay-roll" had come into camp that afternoon, and immediately after dinner we would be paid. The pup had many friends from that day on. He was properly named.

I hadn't yet had a pay day, but now on April 12, almost three months after I had entered, my big day arrived--money from Uncle Sam. Payday in the Army is like any civilian payday--the outstanding day of the month. I was pretty happy because I had only 7.80 francs left of the money with which I started from home. We lined up alphabetically and after waiting several minutes to approach the paymaster, much to my sorrow I was informed I had not gotten back from the hospital in time for them to put my name on the payroll for this month. My 7.80 francs would have to last another month.

Gas masks were issued, both French and English, also steel helmets. We were put through the gas house again to test our masks.

Our officers noticing the poor morale of the men, attempted to find some sort of recreation, so each Sunday issued twenty passes to men of good behavior

and loaded them on the truck and sent them to Toul for the day. I got my trip on April 21, and even though I was broke, I had a good day looking over the town that was then one of the German objectives but which was never captured.



I tried on my
helmet and
gas mask.

I had a good dinner with Corporal O'Brien of St. Paul in the hotel on his money, saw the sights of the town, and got on the truck again for camp at five in the afternoon, feeling as if I had had a real vacation.

As the weather became a little warmer a great many of us had our hair clipped close to the scalp; we looked rather foolish, but I thoroughly enjoyed not having any hair to comb or keep clean, and I recommend this type of hair-dress to anyone in similar circumstances.

I was on guard duty twice while stationed here, both times in the pouring rain. On the first, I had the post around the hangars and was on second relief which gave me the twelve to two watch during the night, but at two o'clock my relief didn't show up, and I was in a quandary as to what to do. I knew I shouldn't leave my post until relieved, but was positive there was something in the general orders to cover a situation like this, but for the life of me I couldn't remember what the call was, and for fear of making a mistake I waited. At three o'clock the Corporal of the guard brought my relief and apologized for the error. My relief had remained asleep when the others were called at two o'clock, and the Corporal hadn't missed him and had overlooked me while posting the guard. He asked me to please not mention it to anyone for fear of the consequences. I kept his faith, but I am not sure but that it was because I didn't care to have my friends know I was foolish enough to stay out there in the rain an extra hour without letting my predicament be known.

My second time on guard duty took me to the railroad tracks that we had laid into the woods. The empty, partly completed repair shop hid back there in the forest seemed to need somebody to watch over it and keep it company during those long dark rainy hours. It was as dark as a pocket--I couldn't see my hand before my eyes. How I ever could have seen an enemy walking around was a mystery to me. Except for the falling of one of those soaking French drizzlers, it was all as silent as death.

While moving around a little I kicked against one of the railroad ties or a plank and made a noise; something bounded in front of me, and it made a terrible commotion as it ran through the woods. It was so startling I was paralyzed for a few seconds; nothing could have happened to scare me more. When I collected myself, I realized it must have been an animal, and the only

animal I had ever seen in that vicinity was a wild boar; so I was satisfied that that's what it was. Never was I so glad to hear my relief coming as I was after that mount, but I made no mention of being scared by a wild boar.

The Y.M.C.A building was about the last job completed before we left that camp for another location, and quite a number of us were put to work on it the last day or so to finish it up in a hurry because The Five Heron Sisters were coming to entertain us. The show went on as scheduled. The only trouble was that it started to rain hard during their act, and the roof leaked like a sieve and pretty nearly ruined the performance. We of the roofing crew certainly were subjected to much unmerciful ridicule by the balance of the audience. But in a day or so we packed our barracks bags and loaded into French box cars and started by slow freight to the city of Langres. Our work at the first air depot in Colombey La Belles was completed.

CHAPTER XI

SONGS

Most of the songs we sang were never published, and practically all the published songs had different words by the time we learned them, but it takes a war to really get the best from the song writers. No era can ever produce such songs of lasting quality as the years from 1914 to 1918.

"Long, Long Trail" came out in 1914 and lasted as one of the favorites for the duration, particularly so for those who had a tendency to lean frequently towards a melancholy mood. Then there was "Keep the Home Fires Burning". That swept the nation after having been a big favorite in England since 1915. "Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag" had English origin and was copyrighted in all countries in 1915.

But there was "Mademoiselle from Armentieres", the one that ended each verse by singing, "Hinkey, dinky, parley voo". I don't know who wrote the original, but it was a song with 10,000 verses, most of which originated on the march. Every outfit in France wrote several. No publisher has dared print them, but they were easy to learn. We used to sing, "You're in the Army Now", but it was several years after the war that I found the last line should have been--"You'll never get rich on the salary which you get in the Army now."

Another song I learned incorrectly was "All we do is sign the payroll". It should have finished like this--"All we do is sign the payroll, and we never get a gosh darned cent." But that ruins a perfectly good song.

Most of the inspirational marching songs couldn't be improved much to give a company the desired pep. Every once in a while we would do pretty well with "Over There" and then flatter ourselves a little by singing,

"Goodbye, Broadway, Hello, France, We're ten million strong", and "It's a long way to Berlin, but we'll get there, Uncle Sam will show the way."

"Keep your head down, Fritzie Boy", and "I don't know where I'm going, but I'm on my way" were sung a lot, but none of us knew the correct words, but we didn't mind. Our own were pretty good. "Where do we go from here?" was a great marching tune. We used it often at Camp Devens. Originally it had only three verses; several pretty raw ones were added. Some of our men were masters of the crudest slang imaginable.

Many songs we never attempted to sing. They were the ones that used to tug a trifle on the heart strings, but most of us thoroughly enjoyed hearing professionals sing them at entertainments. "Roses of Picardy" and the "Rose of No Man's Land", "Till We Meet Again", "Dear Old Pal of Mine", "I'm always Chasing Rainbows" were probably the favorites in this category.

Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, said, "The soldiers of every war create and sing certain songs. Our Army in France found its spiritual unity in a group of rollicking airs, sometimes with grave words and sometimes with light, but all of them having implications of the cause and comradeship."

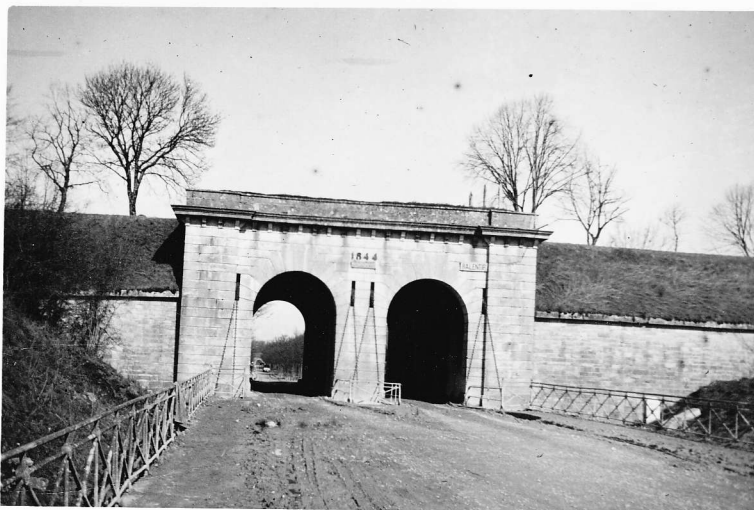
It's true we all liked songs. They helped pass the time and kept up the morale. One hundred or so songs were written during the war time, and I guess we sang them all, but where they came from and how they got to us, I don't know. ~~I didn't see a sheet of music all the time I was in the Army.~~ I guess we just heard 'em and learned 'em.

CHAPTER XII

LANGRES

We had a very pleasant trip that day; it was warm and sunny, and for the greater part of the time we rode on the roofs of the boxcars rather than on the inside; this gave us a better view of the country and allowed us to see on both sides of the tracks as we went through the towns, but the trains were slow, so slow that we had no trouble in lighting our pipes and cigarettes while sitting on the roofs. We made frequent long stops and had plenty of time to walk around the station and railroad yards. Travel rations of corned beef, hard tack and canned tomatoes were given us at noon; we were happy, contented, and carefree, the responsibility of winning the War certainly didn't rest on our shoulders that day. We were glad to be on the move again, where to didn't make any difference, we always expected something better than we had been having. At seven P.M. we arrived at our destination after traveling the unbelievable distance of seventy miles.

The city of Langres had a population of about seven thousand and stood on a hill 1500 feet over the table lands below. From the cathedral tower and the ramparts which surround the town, I was told, there was an intensive view over the Valley of the Marne and the Vosges, and that on a clear day Mt. Blanc, 160 miles distant could be seen.



The entrances
were over
drawbridges

There were only four entrances to the city proper and these through gates in the ramparts. Outside of the ramparts were moats that seemed to me to be about 100 feet wide and almost ^{half} as deep. These moats narrowed down considerably at the entrances so that the drawbridge crossing them could be raised and used as a door or gate to close up the town in the event of invading enemy. The ramparts were protected by several towers so that the whole view was just as I had seen in pictures and imagined when I studied about the Gauls and Roman gladiators in school. The whole set-up fascinated me immensely, and I wished there was some source by which I could get the history of the city. Right now it was an officers' training school, just another factory to turn out ninety day wonders to stand around and look wise and generally molest the enlisted men.

If I disliked these "Shave tails" when I went into that city, I hated them as I came out. We couldn't see the sights of the town for saluting officers. True, they had to return the salute, but they were in school and needed the practice, and we were having a few hours off for fun, not to walk around and flatter them with our respect for their office.

We were camped outside of the city and down the hill on flat country; so we were not bothered by officers during our work which was primarily to construct hospitals, barracks, grade and gravel two thousand feet of road, and excavate and backfill about a mile of trench for a six inch water line.

The morning after we arrived, I was assigned to the stone quarry detail and boarded one of our trucks with the gang for a ride up the hill over the drawbridge and through the town. I had never seen a stone quarry, let alone work in one, but I soon knew all there was to know. As no machinery was available, all the crushing had to be done by hand like it was at our previous camp. We were given hammers and told to make little ones out of big ones.

Cartoons
I had seen pictures of this being done, but the men wore striped suits instead of blue denim and had chains attached to one ankle with a steel ball on the other end with guards standing around with rifles on their shoulders, but we were lucky. We got \$33.00 a month for doing the same work and only had unarmed, loud-mouthed sergeants to stand around and watch us.

Two days was all I spent on this job because I proved too valuable a man for such common labor so was assigned to a more brainy job and spent three days with the water line crew, backfilling after the pipes had been laid; this was a back-breaking, muddy job and would have been very tiring if we had not taken a deserved rest between each shovel full. The W.P.A. gait was born on this job. Material began to arrive for our hospital, and I was taken from backfilling and put to unloading building material from box cars and loading it onto trucks. Only two days of this and at retreat that night, my name with several others was called. We had been promoted to first class privates with a \$3.00 a month increase in pay. I was glad to get it and for a short time really believed I was getting somewhere in this man's army. I could now wear a felt castle on my left arm to designate my rank and was quite proud to outrank about two-thirds of the company.

However, I had two surprises that evening, and the second one pleased me even more than the first. I was included in a detail consisting of fifty-seven men and a lieutenant that were to leave immediately on detached service for general construction work at Haussimont. I didn't know where this place was located but was ready for a change as it was now nearly the middle of May, and I was anxious to find a nice, quiet, restful place for the summer.

We had to celebrate our good fortune and at the same time clean up a bit to make a good impression on our anticipated train ride; so eight of us hiked a half mile to the Marne transportation canal for our first swim, which turned out to be our only swim in France.

The canal was a slow moving stream about fifty feet wide and ten feet deep, and it looked beautifully clean and cool; it was the most inviting spot I have ever seen for a birthday suit swim. We undressed on the banks just above the locks and dived in off the edge. It was icy cold on our hot sweaty bodies that were accustomed to heavy woolen underwear (we had not yet been issued cotton for the summer), but it was a very refreshing and invigorating swim, and we enjoyed it immensely for the few minutes we were in. We climbed up the steep bank and sat down to dry off a little in the rays of the setting sun. This was the first time that we had really taken the opportunity to look around, and as I glanced across the locks to the caretaker's home, I saw two women sitting on their little porch, sewing and chatting, and apparently enjoying our performance. I pointed them out to the unobserving eyes of my seven swimming partners as I dashed for the cover of some trees. I doubt if these elderly women would have even bothered looking up from their embroidery work except for the confusion of eight men scampering into the bushes like so many startled rabbits; but from the noise of the hearty laughs across the canal, we must have amused them considerably, and as we dressed, we laughed with them and carried on a cheery conversation across stream, but except for the laugh, neither of us understood what the other was saying. Laughter is the same in any language. Many times I have thought of that swim and wondered how many soldiers from that camp went down to that very spot as we did to refresh themselves in that cool, clean, lazy Marne canal after a hard day's work, or whether the lock tender finally put up a sign, "No Swimming Allowed."

We went back to camp, and I hurried towards town to get my washing that I had left a few days before with a woman that lived half way up the hill by the bend of the road.

I knocked on the back door, but no answer came although I could hear conversation. Apparently they were disregarding my demand for attention; so

I rapped again, this time more commanding, and the woman came and bade me enter. Putting her finger to her lips to designate quiet, she beckoned me to follow. To solve the great mystery, I did, and there in the front room I barged right into a wedding ceremony. I stood quietly for a few moments until the vows had been repeated and the couple joined in wedlock. I, with the others congratulated the groom, and wished the bride happiness; they didn't know what I was saying but must have been sure I was extending them my best wishes because they both said, "Merci beaucoup, Monsier", and smiled graciously. The old lady said something that sounded like laundry and escorted me to the kitchen again. I took my bundle, paid her, and attempted to tell her I was being transferred and wouldn't see her again, but she couldn't understand high school French; so after only one attempt I bade her "Au revoir", "Madam, merci beaucoup", and hurried on down the hill.

A storm was coming towards us rapidly, and I got into the barracks just before it broke. I put my bundle down and went to the doorway to watch the electrical display, but I almost got too close to it. A bolt of lightning hit the ridge of the barracks next to mine and ran down the door-frame and knocked over a man that was standing there doing the same as I. I ran over, but he was not hurt; neither did the building catch fire, but I have always felt we were both lucky and as close as ever I care to be to the business end of a bolt of lightning.

I went to bed that night thankful, happy, contented, and grateful for the pleasant things and good fortune that had befallen me that day, but as usual lonesome and homesick.

It got to be May 20, and the detachment received orders to be ready to leave for our new camp at noon. We didn't work that morning but instead stayed in the barracks and packed up. We were fed our noon meal at eleven o'clock

and went back to our bunks preparatory to leaving, but we were notified that we wouldn't leave until 3:30, but it was all right with me because the first mail in over a month had just arrived, and I had several letters to read before I cared to move.

Shortly before 3:30, the payroll came in from the quartermaster's office, and we of the detachment were paid off immediately.

This was my first pay day; so I got "beaucoup francs" for part of January, and all of February, March and April. As soldiers go, I was down right wealthy.

CHAPTER XIII

MAIL

After writing a letter, we "Mailed" it unsealed in a box near the orderly room door. It had to be left unsealed because all our outgoing mail was censored by one of our officers. After reading it, he put his name on the last page and sealed it; then in the lower left hand corner of the envelope he again signed his name, organization, and rank. What happened to it after that I don't know, but in course of time, four to eight weeks, it reached its destination.

Our return address in the upper left corner had to be plainly written. It was simply our name and U.S.Army. I doubt if an undelivered letter would have found its way back to the writer.

We paid no postage; our letters were carried free if in place of a stamp we wrote, "Soldier's Mail."

Mail from home was not censored. They used the regular postage of three cents to carry it to France. My address was Pvt. 1 cl. Howard Tayler, Co. E. 25th Engineers, A.E.F.

There were occasions when we had personal matters to write home about, matters that we did not care to have our officer informed on; so we were allowed the privilege of securing a "Base Censor" or "Blue" envelope from the orderly room; then after writing our letter and addressing it as usual, we put the envelope and all in the "Base Censor" envelope, addressed it again and sealed it. Our officers then did not read the letter but passed it on to the Base Censor which office had the privilege of reading it over, throwing away the "Base Censor" envelope and sending it on its way in the original envelope or simply letting it go through without censor.

I believe most of it passed through them without censorship as I doubt whether a soldier would attempt to reveal any military secrets through these channels. It would have been far too dangerous, and the censors must have got^{ten} pretty sick and tired of reading about family troubles and love affairs. It seems to me that if I were in their place I would have pushed 99% of them through and gone on with my cribbage or checker game.

I spent most of my leisure time writing. I always sent two letters a week to Martha and two home, but I wrote many others. I enjoyed receiving letters, and I had them coming in from many sources, but I never neglected to answer them all.

Censorship confined us to writing very general letters, details of location and activities were not permitted, but I told "all the law would allow". Otherwise my letters would have been of very little interest to the recipient. Only two of my letters that I know of had parts cut out before reaching their destination, but once I was called into the orderly room by one of the officers. He handed me back my letter. "How do you expect me to O.K. a letter like that and keep out of Leavenworth?" Write it over again and leave out all that stuff about troop movements. You know better than that." From then on I was more careful and left real hot news to the war correspondents.

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

Blue Envelope Authorized by
Paragraph 10, G.O. No. 13

Must not be used for money or valuables. Cannot be registered. Not to be censored regimentally but liable to censorship at the Base.

SOLDIER'S LETTER.

More than one letter may be sent in this envelope. In this case, it should be addressed, "Base Censor."

I certify that the enclosed letter or letters refer to personal or family matters only, and that they contain no reference to military or other matters forbidden by censorship regulations.

(Name) _____

Rank _____

Countersigned: _____

Rank _____

H.C. 116 b.

Address only.

Port Howard Taylor
U.S. Army.



**SOLDIERS
MAIL**

Mr. W.S. Taylor
#616 N.P. Ry Bldg.
St. Paul, Minn.
U.S.A.



Edward B. Taylor
1st Lt. E.E.

CHAPTER XIV

HOUSEMONT ARTILLERY CAMP

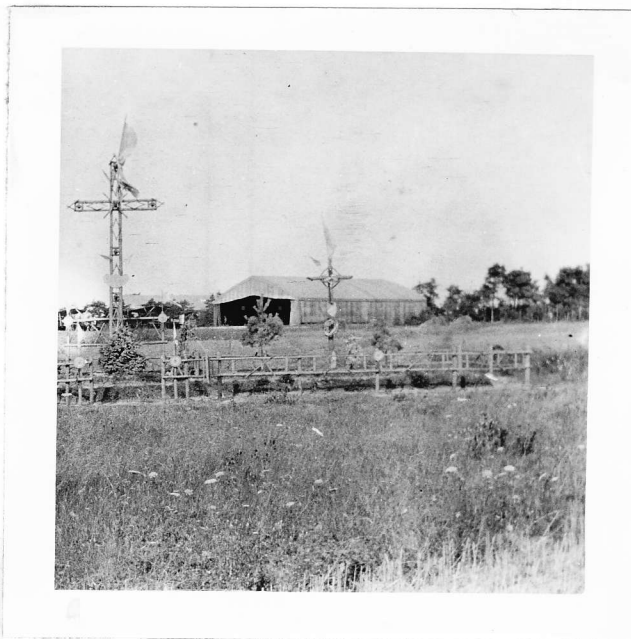
It was a warm day, but we marched up that hill, passed the wash woman's home, over the drawbridge and through town under full pack. We were still wearing woolen underwear and carrying mackinaws under our arm and rifles slung over our shoulders. We cursed any army regulation that would make us go through that torture when all we needed was one truck for thirty minutes to haul our equipment for us.

Well, it was six in the evening before we finally boarded the train and took seats in a third-class passenger coach. Travel rations for dinner were issued, canned corned beef, hard tack and canned tomatoes. At eleven P.M. we arrived in Troyes and changed trains for Sommesous arriving there at 3:30 the next morning. We unloaded and put all our stuff on a truck that met us and then proceeded to march about one and one-half miles to the artillery camp at Housemont. Barracks were ready for us, and we unpacked and settled ourselves in our new home. The cooks got the kitchen set up and gave us a fairly decent breakfast at eight o'clock.

At that time we were told to get our bunks in order, take a bath, and clean up, and use the balance of the day in any way we pleased but not to leave camp. Some of the men took these orders seriously, but we swimmers thought we were clean enough so skipped the bath and set out to see the camp by looking for the commissary and the Y.M.C.A. After making our purchases we started to explore. We were now up on the battle fields of the first battle of the Marne. In 1914, the Germans had possession of this territory. It was fairly open, flat country but spotted with reforested plots of young timber that had been planted in rows like so much corn. The woods were immaculate. No tall weeds or twigs on the ground, the trees all pruned, the slashing carefully preserved for fire wood. The French wasted nothing--so different ^{than} that I had

been accustomed to in Minnesota.

In these woods were breastworks of dirt and semblances of trenches that were used in 1914 to give the French some protection while delaying the advancing Huns. Soldier's graves were scattered in a hit-and-miss fashion in no particular order, but all carefully cared for and generally marked by a neat ornamental fence made of young pine or spruce. There were very few single graves, most held ten to one hundred bodies of either French or Germans, only occasionally were they marked with the individual's names to identify them but generally identified, such as "1 Sous officer, 27 Soldats Francais des 66 et 93 d'Infanterie." There were graves just across the road from our barracks and an English ^hanger^a and landing field beyond them.



Graves and Hanger^a
across the road
from us.

We were all very happy to be situated as we were. Certainly we were the envy of the balance of the company that had been left behind. We looked forward to agreeable work and pleasant weather conditions, with discipline a little lax because of the small number of men. And so it turned out to be that the following four months were just about as pleasant and happy as anyone could expect. We worked hard, had a lot of fun, fair food, and plenty of excitement.

Our first assignment started at 7:30 the next morning. It was to construct a large steel repair shop for railroad artillery. Most of the steel was there on the grounds, and the steel construction men took hold of the job as if they loved their work, and within a few minutes the 130 X 150 foot building was under construction. It was the first time I had ever worked on a structural steel job and was perfectly willing to do the common labor of the job and make myself as useful as possible after being told what to do. I found it rather interesting watching the building take form, but after only a week on the job I was put over to assist in the supply room, checking tools in and out and assembling wheelbarrows as I had time, and watching for cars of material, then supervising the unloading and checking the receipts.

On Memorial Day we went to work as usual with all of us complaining because we didn't get the day off, but at ten o'clock we were called back to the barracks to be dismissed for the day. I got two men to go to Fere Champenoise with me to get some Kodak supplies because I had an opportunity to develop and print my own pictures in a dark room that was located in one corner of the tool room, used principally by an artillery officer who did a lot of government work, but he gave me permission to use it.

Cameras were prohibited in France. A general order had been issued to surrender our kodaks to our commanding officer, but our officer didn't follow up the order by inquiring whether any of us had cameras, and consequently we did nothing except to be careful we didn't embarrass him by exposing our cameras to his view. I carried mine on my belt and my blouse covered it, and except for a little discretion in my picture taking, I used it pretty much as I pleased.

We had been told that we probably would be issued cotton underwear soon, but that heavy woolen stuff was too warm for me to wait until our summer issues came in; so I was anxious to get to a town where I could buy it, and this seemed like an opportunity to buy a suit, so I did.

Fere Champenoise was about seven miles away. We hiked the distance going but got a ride on a truck coming back. It was after dark when we got to camp, about nine P.M. It was a great day we had, looking over new territory and seeing the ruins caused by the towns bombardment of September seventh, eighth, and ninth, 1914, and looking at graves along the roadway. While in town, we met an ambulance corps that stopped for lunch. It was the same corps that was recruited at home several months before from Hamline University students. I knew a few of the men; it certainly was a pleasant surprise.

The following day the camp was very restless and a bit excited. Word had been received that the Germans had broken through our lines and had advanced about ten miles. It was rumored that our troops were in retreat, and if the Germans were not stopped immediately, they would be in our camp in a few hours. We worked in the morning, but at noon we were issued fifty rounds of ammunition and got orders to pack our barracks bags and stay near the barracks to be prepared to evacuate on a moment's notice. I collected my belongings and went to the supply room to pack tools and equipment. I noticed then that the entire camp of about five thousand artillery men had also prepared to evacuate and plans for the destruction of the entire camp were complete; so when the enemy did arrive, there would be nothing of value left--nothing but smoldering ruins. By the next day the possible need of evacuation had subsided, and we went about our work as usual.

Later in the week, the truth of what really happened began to seep through to us. On May 27, the Germans had opened their third terrific offensive against the French, they had struck to the northwest of us and captured Soissons, and had advanced to the Marne River. In three days they had driven the French back fifty kilometers, but then the French defense held splendidly and the German blow had spent its strength and the battle became equal. Actually, the lines were very little closer to us than previously because the advance

had all been to our west. We were about twenty-five or thirty miles from the fighting, but of course many of our big guns were quite close to us.

For the next six weeks I had the softest job in the whole army. Lumber had been coming in faster than we used it, and the pile was becoming somewhat sizeable. However, anyone wanting wood just helped himself; so I was assigned to watch the lumber and allow no one except our own men to move lumber without a requisition from the camp engineer. No one could get a requisition; so I had nothing to do but sit and write letters, read, and watch the movement of troops, mostly English and French, travel the road to and from the front. It was most interesting for me to watch these troop movements, the tired, weary, dirty, happy men going back to a rest camp, and the fresh, strong, serious-minded men going into the lines.

On the railroad track by the lumber pile were some English ammunition cars guarded by three Englishmen. These cars would come and go, but the "Liméies" had a permanent job. They had their own little camp there and cooked their meals, poor as they were, over the camp fire. Everyday at three in the afternoon they would have their pot of hot tea, and every day I would get the same invitation. "Oh, Yank, Oh, Yank, will ye have a little pot of tea." I had afternoon tea with them on several occasions and had many interesting hours of visiting with them. While I believe they enjoyed the visit as much as I did, I realized that I was getting the tea mostly because they felt I was being abused by my officers who had made no provisions for my afternoon tea. They just couldn't imagine anyone going all afternoon without his tea. They felt sorry for me; so I discouraged the habit and stayed on my woodpile where I belonged. I would have lost that soft job if I had been caught sipping afternoon tea with the English while the rest of my outfit worked.

Things were going along fine as far as I was concerned, but not so good for the lumber. It was being stolen, and I knew it, but not while I was on

the job. However I was guarding it only from seven until five, with an hour off for lunch. Nobody wanted lumber during working hours, but at night it sometimes became cool, and the boys liked a little fire in the barracks stoves. I don't know how many of those artillery barracks were heated by our Swiss lumber, but I don't believe many of them stayed chilly very long with that pile of lumber a short distance away. Army men just don't operate that way. It's a cinch my English friends didn't go out in the woods looking for camp fire fuel either even if they didn't have anything else to do. But what was the difference? The little bit of lumber used that way was so insignificant it wasn't worth bothering about, especially after I had seen my own men, that were not conveniently located to the lumber, steal hay from the Artillery men and burn that in the stoves. The government ^{probably} paid \$40.00 a ton for that hay, but a ton would radiate considerable heat; we wanted heat, not hay.

But, as I said, this job lasted only six weeks. I never did lose it, but the job was abolished. Somebody figured out that it wasn't necessary to have a woodpile at all. The lumber could be unloaded directly from the cars and put on trucks and hauled about half a mile to our mill. It could be piled there, and we wouldn't need a guard. So the lumber was to be moved. Artillery men learning to drive their four wheel drive, steel sided ammunition trucks were assigned to the job. I had a crew of ten to twenty Negro troops from the 415 Engineers load the trucks, and then a Lieutenant of Artillery instructed his men on driving. This idea was intended to kill two birds with one stone, but as it worked out, my crew wasted too much time waiting for the drivers to get their driving lessons and bring the empty trucks back, and then the artillery men wasted too much of their instruction time waiting for us to load the trucks. If one of the engineer officers came along and saw my Negro boys sitting down waiting for trucks, he jerked half the crew away to another job, figuring I had too many men, and then if an artillery officer saw the trucks

lined up waiting to be loaded, he figured he had too many trucks so took some of them away. So it went on for several days--I, a private, who had been taught to obey orders instead of thinking, watching the most inefficient crew in the world do a job that should have been cleaned up in a few hours. Finally the Camp Engineer Officer came to me and wanted to know why the lumber pile hadn't been moved. That question was a command; so I told him the lumber was coming in and being unloaded from box cars faster than it was being hauled away. "That's obvious", he said, "but, why?" I told him, and the next day we had practically every artillery truck in camp, with drivers that didn't need instruction, on the job. I had a crew of Negro boys large enough to keep them moving, and by night the lumber pile was a thing of the past. My crew and I went on a different job grading up around the new barracks and only went back to the tracks occasionally to unload a few cars that straggled in,

While all this was going on our steel workers were completing the steel artillery repair shop, and the carpenters had built their mill and installed two power saws to make panels for the walls and roofs and to cut joist and rafters for the new barracks. We had a perfect set-up of division of labor, every man had his particular job, and did it. Barracks were going up at the rate of two a day. We were proud of our accomplishment, worked hard, and loved it.



The lumber was unloaded and hauled to the mill.

After mess in the evening we always had a softball game to wear off any possible energy still lurking in our bones. There were enough of us from St. Paul to make a team, so we always challenged the rest of the United States to a game. We bragged a good deal about how good we were and fortunately won most of our games. The result was that the rest of the detachment was always trying to put us conceited pups in our place, which was what we wanted. It got us in the ball game each night, while most of them had to sit on the sidelines because of their excessive number. But just after we had gotten our ball team well organized, an inconsiderate officer ordered twenty of our men to go to Epernay to dismantle some valuable machinery and motors that were apt to be ruined by enemy gun fire. These men were gone about two weeks and worked continually in the most hazardous circumstances, being constantly under shell fire. By the time they got back, they were ready to take life a little easier, and baseball didn't interest them much although we continued to have scrub games as long as the evenings permitted a few innings of play before dark.

Late in June we had frequent visits from German planes that apparently were taking observations of construction and troop movements. The anti-aircraft guns, which were generally French 75's, had a lot of sport shooting at them. Our camp and the entire vicinity was surrounded by these guns so that at times it was very interesting to watch them work and then to see the puff of white smoke in the air from the shrapnel explosion. On a quiet day, many hundred of these puff balls could be seen against the blue, but I never was fortunate enough to see a direct hit made. I expect, like duck hunters, every gun within ten miles would have claimed it if a hit had been made.

Generally speaking, the days were uneventful but rather pleasant although we were all beginning to wonder how soon the War would be over. Everyone was homesick at times, but no one would ever admit it except to say he wished to hell he could get out of this damned army and go home.

In the morning, first call was at 5:45, and the artillery band would go down the company street playing the National Emblem March, Washington Post March, the Stars and Stripes Forever, or something just as appropriate for the occasion. Roll call was at six, followed by breakfast, and we were on the job by seven. On Sundays, we slept until 8:45, with breakfast a little after nine, and dinner at 4:00 o'clock. This was a day of rest for us, and we frequently hiked to one of the nearby towns for diversion, and had dinner at some farm house along the road. This meal generally consisted of four scrambled eggs, french fried potatoes, rye bread, cheese and coffee. 2 F 50, or about 50¢ was the usual charge. Even though I always carried an English-French dictionary with me, we had considerable trouble in explaining to the madame what we wanted. I could say "Oeufs et pomme de terre" until I was blue in the face, but they could never seem to get the meaning until I opened the dictionary and pointed to it, and then she would respond, "Oui, Oui" very jubilantly, "Monsier, oui, oui", and then start off on a great chatter that we couldn't understand. We always supposed she was asking us how many dozen, and have you anything to carry them in, or do you want them scrambled, boiled, poached, or fried? So I would look up scrambled--"Oui, Oui, Monsier, Oh, Oui, Oui, Oeufs broilles."

The French peasants were a very friendly people, and after we had chatted for a few minutes, each laughing at the other's blunders, we would become great friends. We were invited in, and then quite frequently we would point out what we wanted to eat and how to cook it. But you can be sure that if it was possible, the men went back to the same house next time instead of doing it all over again with a stranger.

Frequently, a big dinner party was prearranged and an especially big dinner of pork or chicken was prepared by the madame, but these were too costly to enjoy often.

At any rate our particular barracks were very quiet Sunday afternoons,

and very few were there for the four o'clock dinner, but those that did appear got a good meal as the cook was allowed rations for the entire detachment, and with only about 25% of us there, we had all we wanted to eat without hurrying through to get seconds.

The folks at home asked me to tell them what the food was like; so during the week of June tenth, I wrote down our menu after each meal. It was typical of our food for the entire summer, but we each chipped in three francs every two weeks to get the sugar and canned milk, and oleomargerine.

Monday, June 10

A.M.	Cornmeal mush and karo syrup
	Bacon
	Coffee and sugar
	Bread
Noon	Beef stew
	Hardtack
	Coffee and sugar
P.M.	Red beans
	Bread and oleo
	Coffee and sugar and canned milk

Tuesday

A.M.	Cornmeal mush and canned milk
	Bacon
	Coffee and sugar
	Bread
Noon	Canned cold salmon
	Mashed potatoes and creamed gravy
	Rice with raisins
	Bread and oleo
	Coffee and sugar

P.M. Beef stew
Gooseberry pie
Coffee and sugar
Bread and oleo

Wednesday

A.M. Boiled potatoes in jackets
Bacon
Bread and oleo
Coffee and sugar

Noon Red beans
Mashed potatoes
Bread and oleo
Coffee and sugar

P.M. Beef stew
Boiled rice and raisins
Bread and oleo
Coffee and sugar

Thursday

A.M. Beef hash
Boiled prunes
Boiled potatoes in jackets
Bread, coffee, and sugar

Noon Beef stew
Mashed potatoes
Bread pudding
Coffee, sugar and bread

P.M. Roast beef and gravy
 Bread
 Coffee and sugar
 Boiled potatoes

Friday

A.M. Boiled potatoes in jackets
 Boiled figs
 Bacon
 Coffee and sugar
 Bread and oleo
Noon Beef stew
 Bread
 Rice and raisins
 Coffee and sugar
P.M. White beans (first in France)
 Tomatoes (canned)
 Mashed potatoes
 Coffee and sugar and bread

Saturday

A.M. Beef hash
 Boiled potatoes in jackets
 Toast and oleo
 Karo syrup
Noon Beef stew
 Bread pudding
 Coffee, and sugar, and bread

P.M. Roast beef
 Boiled potatoes
 Chocolate pudding
 Bread, coffee and sugar

Sunday

A.M. Bacon
 Fried potatoes
 Prunes
 Coffee, sugar and bread

P.M. Beef stew
 Boiled rice
 Bread, coffee and sugar

During the early dark hours of July 15th, the Germans opened their fifth major offensive, cannons roared out of the North, and the second battle of the Marne was under way. They made some progress for a day or so but had the everlasting devil knocked out of them in a counter offensive by American troops, and while we didn't know it at the time, this was the turning point of the War. While the German offensive was at its height and the enemy was closer to us than ever before, the noise on the front was extremely heavy, and the rockets and star shells combined with the flashing of guns and the bursting shrapnel shells made a pretty sight and well worth losing a little sleep to watch.

At eleven o'clock P.M. on the fourteenth, I was awakened by three or four loud explosions that seemed to be at the back door of the barracks and rattled the whole building. I, with the others, ran out to see what had happened, and there in the heavens was the most wonderful display of fireworks imaginable. Boche bombers were above us flying so low that the vibrant droning of their

motors could be heard distinctly above the thundering barrage fire of all the anti-aircraft in the district. Bursting directly above us, the shrapnel projectiles were showering down like hail upon our barracks roof. For many nights our quarters had lain dark and silent under the threat of an air raid. At last it had come. It was the first time I had heard the peculiar, whizzing sound of a projectile as it went through the air with its message of death and the first time I had witnessed the powerful beams from search lights. It was glorious, and we stood out there that summer night for over an hour in our underwear enjoying every minute of it, with our eyes and necks strained so we might miss nothing, yet fully realizing that perhaps the next bomb might have our name on it.

The next morning, we found that the first explosion that had awakened us so abruptly was caused by bombs dropped ten kilometers away, and not our company street as our inexperienced selves had reason to believe.

Following this first raid, we were instructed in what to do and not to do during air raids. It seemed that the Officers were not particularly pleased that we had made so light of such a serious matter; so we were put to work digging V shaped trenches between the barracks and told to use them during the next raid.

For ten nights straight, we were awakened by the Camp bugler blowing "Alert" informing us that German planes were overhead or coming our way. We would jump out of bed, put on a few clothes and either get into the trenches or run for the woods or the open fields. I never felt very safe in those trenches for fear of the barracks being bombed and fired. If they were, I would be caught in an area that was lighted up and would be an easy target for the machine gunner or be roasted to a turn by the fire's intense heat; so I always took to the open fields or woods.

It was a thrilling exciting ten days, and long before it was over I was dead tired for loss of sleep and completely fed up on the air raids. The splendor of the spectacle was a thing of the past. We had lost one to three hours' sleep each night, and hardly dared take off our shoes when we did get into bed for fear of being called out again within a few minutes. After the first raid, the Negro boys next door started revival meeting and sang all the good old Negro spirituals, such as "The Lord put His Hand on Me" and "Lord, I Want To Be a Christian", "Down by the River Side" and "Standing in the Need of Prayer". They added all the necessary hallelujahs, amens, prayers, and chants. These would start immediately after evening mess and continue until taps. We enjoyed hearing them for a couple of nights, but it got on our nerves later, particularly since it apparently was having no influence with the Lord.

On the eleventh night it started to rain, and the colored boys figured their prayers had been answered so didn't think it was necessary to ask for more favors. They shot crap and played a card game called "Cheatum" that I never could get the idea of except the dealer or his cohorts would say "Cheatum" and pick up all of the money. Rain, gambling, and sleep continued for three nights and then all Hell broke loose again, and the colored boys called again to the Lord for help.

The bugle blew at ten o'clock, and at 10:15 the first three bombs were dropped. From then until twelve midnight, there were forty bombs dropped in the locality, and the French airdrome at Sommesous was completely destroyed.

Fifty French planes were burned, and the illumination from this fire lit up the entire camp, exposing us to the mercy of the Boche aviators. The anti-aircraft guns for miles around were shooting again, and jagged bits of steel shrapnel spattered around us. In another minute, six more bombs dropped less than a quarter mile from us. The target was our new artillery repair shop.

I ran for one particular little patch of woods that I had frequented many times before, but as I was crossing the four or five hundred yards of open fields to get there, I noticed there was an anti-aircraft gun, that must have been moved in that day, shooting from my pet hiding place. As I ran, I debated the pros and cons of taking cover with the gun crew or going to a different place. I reached my decision at about the halfway mark when boom and a terrific flash went up before me. The Germans had dropped a bomb at the gun crew. But the gun kept on working; so I knew it was a miss, but why should I go over there with the Huns probably making a turn now preparatory to trying a second time? Not me! So I started across country to another patch of woods. I could hear a plane coming my way, certainly only a few hundred feet up; I couldn't see him, but the roar of his motor was deafening. I stopped not knowing exactly what to do. When presto-chango the entire country was lighted up like day. He had dropped a parachute flare, and I dropped my carcass flat on the dirt, thinking perhaps in the excitement that I was being singled out to take a shot at. I was scared but lay there until the light landed and went out. Then I ran over to the woods and stayed until the bugle call at 12:15 o'clock. It was a bad night for us, but no one in the immediate camp was hurt, not even the Negro that fell down the newly-dug latrine hole in back of the barracks. These latrines were eight-holers, and we were building thirty-four of them - 6 x 16 with 25 foot pits. Some had been completed, some still under construction, and some with only the pits dug or partially dug. To get to the woods, we had to run between this line of buildings, but this poor devil didn't notice the pit that had been dug that day and ran right into it--twenty-five feet to the bottem. What a scare that must have been.

He was pulled out by the windlass that was used to haul up buckets of dirt. The next morning, we went to examine our repair shop--not even a window broken. We found four bomb craters and got steel fragments for souvenirs from

one of them. The closest bomb missed by about three hundred feet. That afternoon, we quit work at 4:30, had dinner a little early, rolled our packs and marched for the woods a half mile away, to pitch our pup tents and spend the night. The entire camp was evacuated that night, and off in a neighboring patch of woods came the familiar chants of Negro spirituals. For three nights orders came to evacuate, leaving only one man in each barracks to watch our equipment, not a single plane came over, or if it did, there was no alarm sounded as we had 5,000 men scattered over a two mile area, all sleeping in pup tents.

I don't know how many nights we would have stayed in the woods, but the weather turned cool, and it rained again for five days, that slow misty drizzle again, but an invitation to sleep in our own bunks. We had plenty of rest and felt fine, but we had run out of lumber, and there was very little to do except putter around on this and that just to keep busy. This was real soldiering, but when the rain quit, everything else started. Five cars of lumber came in. I worked a big gang and moved it all to the mill in one day.

That night the Boche came over again. They too had had a rest and now were ready to go back to work. We were given the alarm at 10:30, and it was 2:30 A.M. before recall blew. Bombs were dropped on Sommesous again, and we had a bad night wondering if we were next.

For the following sixteen nights, alert blew at least once during eleven of them, several nights two or three times, but no damage was done in our vicinity, except to cause ^{us} loss of sleep. Our roofing paper was cut with fragments of falling anti-aircraft projectiles. They certainly did rain down on us at times. However I soon got tired of this Heinie monkeybusiness and got permission to go back to the woods again to sleep. I was told we must be back in Camp at 6:00 A.M. for reveille, so only two of us decided to take the chance. We just got to the woods when "Alert" blew. In a few minutes, five

more of our men came down the road with pup tents and blankets to join us. They too had come to the conclusion that if they wanted to sleep, it had to be in the woods.

I awakened early enough in the morning to arouse our little camp, and get back at six o'clock. In fact, it proved so successful we tried it each successive night. The plan worked wonderfully well and the men came to have as much faith in me as an alarm clock so that each night my party grew until I had a dozen or fifteen. My success proved so great that a rival party was organized, one first class sergeant, one sergeant, a corporal, and five privates, went out on their own. Just to be a little independent, they camped a couple of hundred yards from us. In the morning, I awakened my crowd, and we very quietly rolled our packs and started for the barracks, leaving them asleep in the woods. They were thirty minutes late for roll call, and on Saturday when we quit work at 3:00 P.M. they dug trenches until five o'clock, much to the amusement of the other men.



They dug
trenches until
five o'clock

The first sergeant couldn't take it very well, I guess, because the next morning, Sunday, at Reveille he picked out six men who supposedly didn't have their shoes oiled and gave them one hour in the trenches for punishment. Quite a coincidence, these six were yesterday's heartiest laughers. The balance of

the summer slipped by, day after day. We worked and waited for the final day of the War which I was optimistically confident would come that year. So much faith and confidence I had in the Yankee troops and the inability of the Germans to hold out, that one night during a heated argument with the pessimists, I bet 50 francs that the War would be over by Christmas. This happened on July 30 when we were evacuating camp each night. I could have cleaned up a fortune on this kind of a bet if I had had the money; as the morale of the men was low after losing so much sleep. The food was not particularly good, the days were warm, and the novelty of new surroundings was beginning to wear off. We were ready for something different, but mostly we wanted to get out of the Army and get home. Everything ahead looked dark and disagreeable. Very few letters came from home, sometimes weeks apart and then four to six weeks old when received. The men became anxious about their folks at home. Those without faith and hope gradually became more and more unhappy. Our comradeship became less, each thinking more of himself and keeping more to himself his personal worries and feelings. There was far less joking, fewer entertaining stories. It was much different than it had been a few months perviously. Every two weeks or so, I would get a half sack of newspapers and magazines from home. I used to be kidded some about receiving all this reading matter, but the men anxiously waited for my mail. They were content to lie on their bunks and read. My newspapers and magazines always made the complete rounds of the barracks, and all papers, except the one I got first, were read by one to thirty men before I saw them.

I noticed that the men were drinking more than previously, and I hated to see Sunday night come when the drunks would come back into the barracks from a day visit to the surrounding towns. However, I never annoyed them or even spoke to them if I could help it. I took some interest in studying the reactions

of liquor on different types of individuals. It was amusing to see the same men, week after week, do the same thing. For instance, one man always came in reciting Robert Service's poems, and he would keep it up long after he had turned in. He knew dozens of them, and he was really good, but it took liquor to bring it out. We had the fighters that came in battling with a chip on their shoulders, arguing and scrapping with anyone who would so much as look at them. Then there were the singers, and barber shop harmony reigned supreme. The criers wept on your shoulder and wanted to tell you all about their troubles. Tears would roll down their cheeks as they told you how hard they tried to do their best and nobody appreciated them. They sobbed themselves to sleep.

Then there was the boy from Kentucky, that talked to no one except himself, and he said one sentence over and over until his voice became weaker and weaker, and finally vanished in sleep--but I can hear him yet, "I'm from Bowling Green, Kentucky, and I don't give a good God Damn." "I'm from Bowling Green, Kentucky, and I don't give a good God Damn." The men that came in sick always came in sick. They never failed.

Those that couldn't come in under their own power, who preferred to lie down anywhere and go to sleep, came in every Sunday supported by friends. They never disappointed us, and those of us that did no drinking except an occasional French beer (it wasn't any good) had quite a lesson in psychology watching for the same reactions of liquor on the same man week in and week out. The combination of singers, fighters, and reciters, sprinkled with sobbers and garnished with Bowling Green made a terrible dish and generally kept me awake much later than was good for me, but I listened to it every Sunday night.

The Camp Commissary sold stuff at reasonable prices, but we had to have an order from our commanding officer to get it and then nine times out of ten, they didn't have in stock what we wanted. We always figured the officers got there first, and I don't believe we were far wrong. The Y didn't have tobacco

for over a month, and the hard smokers found life rather disagreeable. Tailor made cigarettes were at a premium and the height of luxury. Even "Sweet Caprals" were cherished with pride. If there were ever cigarettes given away that were paid for by popular subscription at home, we never saw them. We did get two sacks of Bull Durham issued to us every ten days. That was something anyway, but I sold mine to the Frenchmen. We couldn't buy candy or gum. There wasn't any at any price. But we always had writing paper although the Y got pretty short of it for a while and only gave out one sheet at a time.

Oh, we had lots of troubles during the last few weeks of summer. Nothing seemed to suit us, but that was because we were tired and badly in need of uninterrupted sleep. The horrors of moonlight nights got on our nerves, and our troubles were magnified ten-fold. I was homesick, but quite contented. Recently I had been put in charge of our new toolroom by the mill. I really liked the job. Personally, I was optimistic about an early end to the War but like the others was very anxious to get into real action.

I always had plenty of money, but never too much. My salary was \$36.00 a month, \$15.00 of which the government retained at my request and sent home as an allotment. My father put it in the bank for me. The \$10,000 government life insurance that I carried cost \$6.40 per month, and that left me a balance of \$14.60 to spend which was plenty.

The folks at home wrote to me regularly so when mail came in every ten days or two weeks, I would have several letters--sometimes twelve or fifteen. It took weeks to write home and get an answer, the best time we ever made for a round trip was from July 21 to September 3. I enjoyed my mail from home. It's easy to keep going when you know the folks at home are plugging for you.



I enjoyed my
letters from
home

My Uncle Fred in Chicago wrote me a letter that I have always saved,
not only because I liked it, but also because it was his last.

"Chicago, Illinois

July 1, 1918

"Dear Howard:

"Your letter of June 4 reached me today and believe me I was glad to get it,
if only to let me know you are still alive. We read that the Huns sent gas
back of the lines by shells so they might get you that way. Well, I can stop
looking for the name of Tayler in the "Killed in Action" list in the daily
paper. If they ever do get you, Buddy, I'll come over and take your place,
if I have to swim across, or else beat my way through the tunnel. We read
that the Hun soldiers are told there are only about 75,000 Yankees in France
as American harbors are bottled up by the subs. Maybe they are properly
informed, but just the same, they are getting out of here some way. Perhaps
there is a tunnel under the sea, but in any event there are more than a million

already across, and still going at the rate of 50,000 a week, sleeping on the boats in twelve hour shifts.

"We are away ahead of our schedules in everything unless airplanes be excepted, and they are being turned out now very rapidly. As for ships, there will be more than ninety launched on July 4, and not one that is ready for launching before then will be held over to swell the total.

"I tell you what, old pal, it makes the blood race through one's veins to follow the great doings going on over here and over there. We don't want the baby killers to make peace. When the time comes for peace, this country and the allies will tell them what they can have. We get great reports of the bravery of our boys over there, and it makes the throat swell and the heart quicken its beat to know the good old strain hasn't died out. You are doing your part by just sticking to it, and tears come to my eyes nearly every time I think of you over there, and me with no chance to get in it. I know you are homesick, boy, but as you said, you'll stick it out till the brutes are licked.

"I'm sorry you had to lose part of your schooling, also perhaps a little money-earning time, but as for the latter, I hope you will inherit more from me than you would probably save by the time you are my age. If the War lasts much longer, I'll have a few bonds for they keep a pressure on our crowd that keeps you digging all the time. I'm getting a few dollars together again, so while the getting is good, I'll ask you to tell me in your next letter what it would cost you for a couple of days seeing Paris. You may get a few day's leave after the season's fighting is over and if the expense will not be too great, I may be able to stake you for such a trip. I've always wanted to see it myself, but so far no change--probably you can tell me about it if you go. After this summer and winter, there will probably be little chance as you will be handier to Berlin.

"I have seen nearly all the War movies that are out, and they are thrillers. You can see our fellows in the dugouts and trenches writing farewell letters home before going over the top, and then over they go, dropping here and there, but always winning out, of course. They are only pictures taken probably in California, and you know it but it gets you sometime. I feel my toenails raise upon end but, oh kid, I can't get into the real game and it hurts.

"Last Sunday I went to the Great Lakes Training School. It is half-way to Milwaukee. There were 36,000 jackies there and it was filled to capacity. It will be enlarged to take care of 50,000.

"On July 3 I start on my vacation, lasting until August 2. Will probably stay around home except for a week over in Michigan, fishing in the Saugatuck River, a few miles back of where it empties into Lake Michigan. I am told the bass and pike fishing is very good there. I think I'll buy some of those artificial baits such as you used at Center City that day. As far as I've seen, they are the best of any of them. I wish we could have that day at Center City over again for I certainly enjoyed it. We'll get together again some day. I don't believe the War will last over next year anyway, and then you will come home, and what a welcome you fellows will receive here when that good day comes. It is tough on all the fellows to have to be away so long from all those they love, but what an honor it will be all through your life to say "I was there." I'm like you were at school, I can't keep my mind off it and I suppose you would rather hear about the folks over here, but I hear very little myself. If anything happens, we will both hear of it pretty quick. Every fellow under thirty-one will be over where you are anyway before long, and only us gray-headed old coots will be left over here.

"You write very interesting letters, but as you say you have a job on your hands, so write only when you feel like it, but let us know you are safe as often as you can. I can eat that kind of stuff."

Aff.

Fred

"P.S. Congratulations on the raise. Go to it and you'll come home with straps on your shoulder."

But while our real and imaginary troubles were at their worst, things began to pick up. A large naval railroad gun manned by sailors pulled into the yards, troops began to march, refugees came back, ammunition trucks left camp, the artillery left for somewhere, all was astir, the tenseness was apparent, the camp was a brew of excitement. There was something new in the air, we knew it was there and we anxiously waited developments.

At 1:00 A.M., September 12, the cannons roared in the northwest, the din was terrific, the sky was lighted up with constant flashes, trucks and troops continued to pass, the Americans had opened their St. Mihiel offensive. That day we were put through gas drills, our work was rushed, we had inspection of our entire equipment to see that we had everything and that our clothes were in good condition.

Each morning for the next few days, we were required to wear our gas masks at "alert" position at reveille, and immediately after roll call practice putting on the mask until we could adjust it and breathe through it to the count of five. We were required to wear it while marching to and from the job, four trips a day, and then after mess we wore it another twenty minutes for good measure. The suspense was fierce, the men were chafing at the bit, something was up, latrine rumors fell fast.

Get this job cleaned up, check up the tools, put these away, inspection of packs, tomorrow's the day, no we won't sleep here tonight, dispose of all excess equipment, chuck your souvenirs or mail them home. We nervously waited, writing letters home, these may be our last, who knows?

So, on September 19, we were suddenly called off the job and ordered to line up for instructions. We were to have final inspection of equipment at 4:30,

oil our shoes, clean our rifles, and roll packs, everything must be in readiness. We had orders to leave within twenty-four hours to join our company. Our regiment had been chosen because of its fine standing and excellent work to do engineering work at the front, in preference to those who had been in France longer.

We were a happy crowd; at last our dreams were coming true, a chance to do real jobs under real gun fire. The next afternoon, we marched to the railroad station at Sommesous, getting there at 3:30, and while we waited for a late train, we bought a couple of bottles of champagne to celebrate our good fortune. It was six o'clock when we boarded third class coaches and started south to St. Floreine to meet the rest of our company from which we had been separated for four months.

CHAPTER XV

INTO THE MEUSE--ARGONNE

We should have changed trains at Troyes about 6 P.M., but we didn't pull in there until 8:15 P.M. so missed our connections and had to spend the night in a shed that had been constructed for quartering troops enroute.

We were up at 4:45 the next morning, tired after a night on boards with no straw, got some breakfast of hard tack, and warmed up corned beef and coffee. At six we were on a train again and arrived at Sens at 9:30 where we marched to a Court, threw off our packs, and established guards to watch them where they were placed under a shed. The balance of us were dismissed.



We had six
hours in Sens

Sens was a nice little town of about 13,000 inhabitants, situated 71 miles southeast of Paris, but there wasn't much in it to see except its unusually narrow streets and the Vanne River. We visited St. Etienne Cathedral, which was started in 1140 and not completed until early in the 16th century, but I didn't appreciate early Gothic architecture, so started to look for the museum which was supposed to be worth seeing, but we passed the Hotel restaurant Des

Deux Ponts on the way and decided to eat instead. It cost me \$1.35 for a very simple lunch of scrambled eggs and French fried potatoes, far too much money for my \$36.00 a month soldier's pay. We squawked and complained, but as usual I paid the bill before we left. We should have known better than to eat without asking the price first. Some of those darn Frenchmen were quick to take advantage of the American troops. We got taken and knew it.

We walked on some of their fine promenades and looked at some of their statues but only talked about one thing, those damn French that bring us over here to fight their War and then make us pay for it. At six in the evening we again boarded the Paris-Lyon-Mediterranean railway and again had to change trains, this time at Montargis at 11:00 P.M.

I don't remember anything about that town, nor do I remember where we slept, but in all probability we didn't leave our car but tossed around on the wooden seats until we hooked on to another train at 5:30 in the morning. Travel rations of hard tack, canned tomatoes and corned beef for breakfast and then another two hours lay over in Orleans from 8:45 A.M.

Orleans is a city of fifty or sixty thousand people on the Loire River. It has a beautiful massive cathedral, lots of public buildings, and like every other town, a statue of Joan of Arc. It has quite a history, but I didn't even buy souvenir post cards, and certainly nothing to eat.

We now got the Paris and Orleans Railroad and arrived in Bourges at 3:00 P.M. I had been through Bourges last April after I had left Company C at Gievres to join Company E at Colombey la Belles, but it was quite late at night then, and we only made a short stop; so I didn't see anything of the town. But now we had a two hour lay-over and had a chance to look at the place. We boarded a train again and went southwest to St. Florent, detrained in a pouring rain and marched a kilometer or so to the Company's Camp.

They had finished evening mess when we got there, but there were a few

scraps left, and this complemented with some white Karo Syrup and bread with coffee constituted our meal. But before we ate, we pitched our pup tents. It was still raining, and the ground was saturated. We envied the balance of the company that were billeted in some old barns. After mess we made the rounds and greeted our friends we left last spring. There was some mail waiting for us. I read mine and crawled into the pup tent with big Sergeant Larson from Milwaukee. It rained, we got wet, we slept.

When first call blew at 6:15 the following morning and we rolled out, the rain had stopped, and the sun was shining warm and invigorating, not a cloud in the sky, and our long row of twenty-eight pup tents was in perfect formation. A surveyor's transit could not have found a variation of a fraction of an inch out of line. How we did so well in last night's rain, I do not know. I took a picture of the scene. This surely was sunny France.



My tent was
third in line

I pitied the men that had slept in those dark, damp barn billets last night.

We answered roll call and ran for the chow line forming at the company kitchen shed. Clouds were beginning to gather. Breakfast was not finished

when the first drop fell, and we hurried back to our tents for shelter. We were ordered to clean up our rifles, and the officers checked our entire ordinance. Orders were to move tomorrow. We spent the day preparing and went to sleep again in the tents and again in the rain.

Reveille sounded at 5:00 A.M. The equipment was packed and loaded onto trucks and hauled to the railroad yards where our French freight cars were waiting. We were all set to go at 9:30. Everything was in readiness except a locomotive to pull us, and it was not until 2:00 in the afternoon before we finally got rolling. Pretty tough on the morale to be called an hour early in the morning, hurried through breakfast, and then driven hard to break camp, and then sit and wait for four and one-half hours for some darn old Frog engine to couple on.

We went through Bourges again and to Sens, the old familiar route, and sure enough the Cathedral tower of Troyes appeared on the skyline. Five days ago we had been here. We had been on the move ever since. Our net gain was nothing. Certainly a great engineering feat and careful planning was showing results, with work to be done and a War to be won, we went sight-seeing.

We traveled on, sleeping very comfortably on the floor of the boxcars with only eighteen men to the car. This allowed us sufficient room to lie down and stretch out. Forty men was the maximum load, but they have to lie all over each other traveling that way. Maybe our officers ordered twice as many cars as were needed so that they would get enough and by mistake got what they asked for.

We were tired and slept. When we awoke, we were in St. Dizier, a few miles west of Verdun. Our barracks bags were unloaded from our baggage car and given to us with orders to take out only the necessary things that we needed for from now on our complete equipment would be carried in our packs. The bags were to be left here for an indefinite period.

At noon we were marched up to the rest camp. We had hot food and hung around until midnight. We boarded a train again - this time passenger coaches.

Morning arrived with its usual rain and mist. It was a horrid raw day as we pulled into the yards at Clermont on what we were told was the first train in four years. The Meuse Argonne offensive had opened the day before; the bombardment and cannon roar was terrific. It seemed very close at hand and our larger guns were. There was a little delay getting into the yards, and in the meantime we were ordered out of the cars for fear of being shelled, but we weren't. We were marched through town and ordered to pitch camp in some woods on the side of a hill that was filled with shell holes, most of them from the night before. But we no more than got our tents up when orders came to pack up. We marched north to Aubreville pulling in there after five o'clock. It was not an especially tough march, but we were tired before we started, especially our original detachment of fifty-six men who had now been on the move for seven days. But it was interesting and exciting to me, airplanes overhead, observation balloons on all sides of us, and cannons with their crews firing at the enemy from their well camouflaged spots near the road. Several dead horses were still unburied in the fields, the roads were in bad shape, and several disabled trucks and tanks had been discarded. Ambulances were on their way back with the wounded.

We pitched our pup tents on the top of a hill overlooking the valley below. The railroad tracks hadn't been used since the War started, but the road was alive with troops and trucks. Our tents were purposely put up in irregular order to make them less visible from the air. I hoped to get some rest when this job was completed, but instead was called with seven others to put up the officers' tents. By this time the kitchen crew had set the rolling kitchen, and chow was ready. Roll call followed mess, and general

orders were issued. "Positively no light, have gas masks ready in event of alarm, etc." The names of men on guard mount were read out - only twelve were needed, four at a time to cover the four sides of the camp. I was put on the first Mount. It was a tough break for me. I was dead on my feet. I would have given anything for a few hours sleep, but at 7:30 I took post two to the rear of the camp. American heavy artillery was shooting over our heads, but it was misting and cold, and the men crawled in and went to sleep early. By 8:30 it was all quiet and pitch dark. I had walked my post religiously for one hour, half my job was done. I leaned against a tree to rest a moment--it was only seconds before I was sound asleep standing up. How long I slept I do not know, but a gas alarm was sounded from the valley below by hitting an empty shell with a piece of iron. I awoke with a start and carried out my special orders by calling "GAS" to wake the sleeping men. I vowed I would never breathe a word to anyone about going to sleep on guard duty. I hadn't any idea of what penalty would go with this serious lack of duty in the zone of advance--whether it was to be shot at sunrise or only ten years at Leavenworth--but I didn't care to inquire. No harm had been done, and no one knew the difference, so I kept a closed mouth even to my closest friends.

The next morning my platoon left with a second lieutenant to do some narrow gauge and road work at the front. I felt bad about losing out on this but was left behind because I was on guard duty. The balance of the company started work on two 1000 feet unloading platforms built of crushed rock--I believe the technical name was Telford Driveways. The following day I started on the job with them from seven in the morning until 5:30 P.M. It was a long, hard day in cold, wet, disagreeable weather, and by night I was physically exhausted. But there was nothing to do evenings, not even a

card game because of our "no lights" order; so the camp was quiet early and we had plenty of sleep. By noon of the sixth day our job was practically completed, and we had a half day off to wash clothes and take a bath--my first in about three weeks. There was a spring in the valley which was the only available water. It was icy cold and so was the air for that matter. We had our first frost the night before, but we got freshened up anyway and boiled our underwear and shirts in old lard cans over an open fire. The cooties had been giving me considerable annoyance lately, and it was a lot of satisfaction boiling the little devils. They got in the seams of our shirts and underwear, so "reading my shirt" only got rid of a few of them, but to boil them out was to clean house, babies and all.

The next day a freight train pulled in and unloaded war machinery on the new platform, and the first platoon came back from the front. No casualties, but all worn out. They had a tough week, having been at Montzeville constructing ammunition platforms and from there to Renes and later to Malancourt, where they built ammunition dumps and repaired light railways. They were working under shell fire a good portion of the time, and it was especially severe while they were building a narrow gauge road into Montfaucon.

They were all glad to get back, and as my tent partner said, "You sure can get a belly full of this man's war in a week." However, we had an interesting week ourselves. The whole War passed by our front door each day. Troops by the thousands, incoming and outgoing, trucks, ammunition and cannons, broken dismantled airplanes, and an observation balloon nearly in our backyard that rose up three-fourths of a mile over its crew to observe troop movements and our artillery range. It attracted considerable attention from the enemy, and it was a thriller to watch the anti-aircraft guns try to keep the Hun planes from plugging her as the men below wound up the cable to pull down the balloon

to comparative safety or the observer leaped to safety in a parachute as the balloon burst into flames.

We saw several "dog fights" in the air only a few hundred feet up. If we got a thrill out of them, it must have been really something for the participants. One crippled American plane made a forced landing about a quarter mile from us, but we were ordered to stay on the job.

Our artillery fire was very heavy for the first day or two, but the enemy was retreating fast and had no time to retaliate; so we were in no danger. Even our guns ceased firing while they moved up closer to the fleeing Germans. Before the week was up, the war had moved away from us. Things apparently were progressing very satisfactorily for the Allies, and our men seemed to gather the impression that we weren't quite sure just what to do next as the falling back of the Germans in such haste had upset our carefully laid plans.

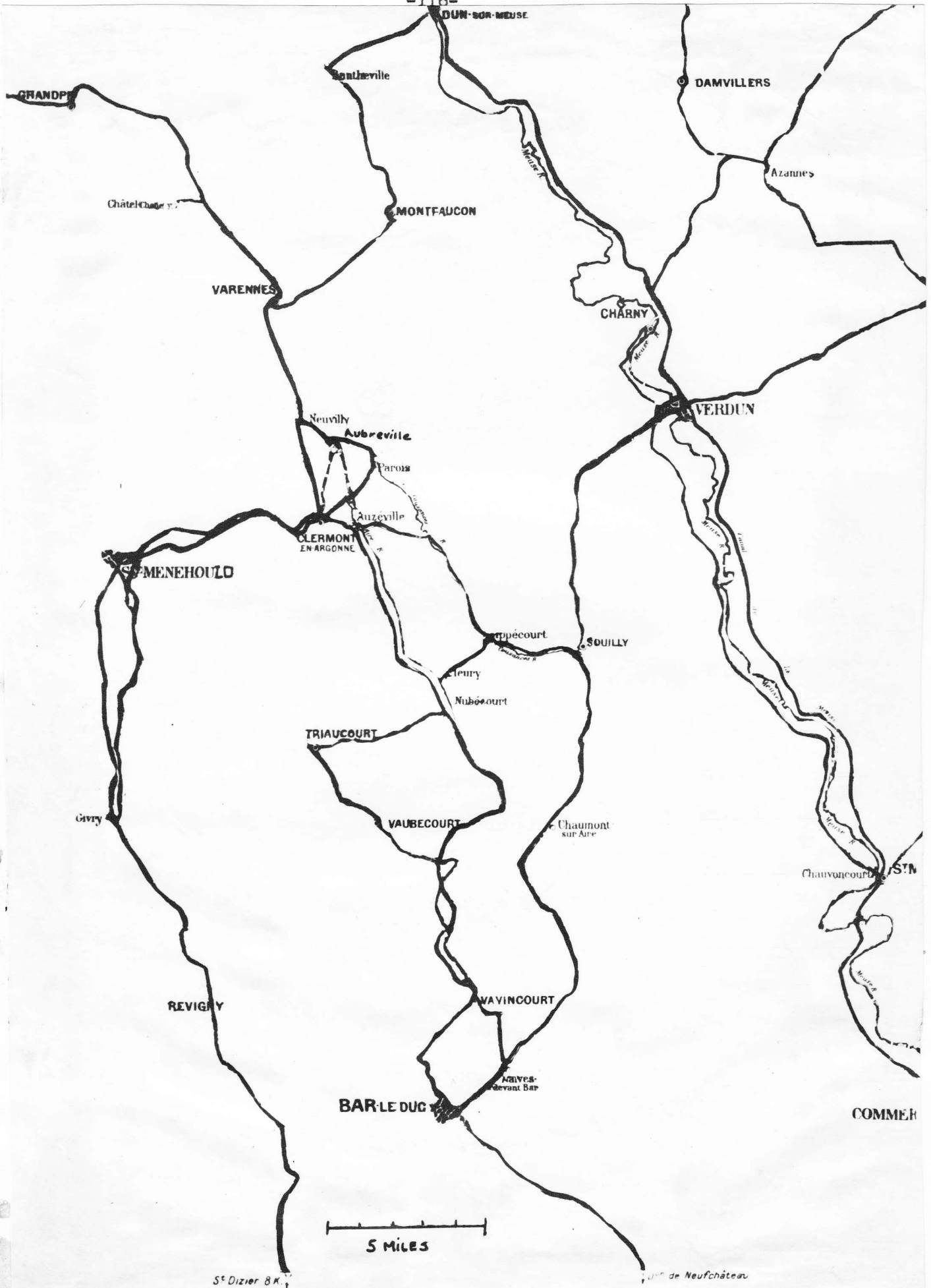
We were given a couple of half-days off and visited the Y.M.C.A. canteen and Salvation Army, which was only a few kilometers away, and got something to eat and bought some newspapers to see how the war was progressing, and then wandered around to see the sights and take some pictures, three rolls of which got wet and spoiled before I got them developed.

It was about October 1st when each man in the outfit was given an official coupon to be used by the folks at home to paste on our Christmas package. During the summer, a ban was put on sending packages to soldiers in the A.E.F., because the mail got so heavy the ships were carrying presents instead of war supplies. Each soldier was allowed to have one Christmas package sent him, provided it carried the official seal. The box was not to be heavier than three pounds and not larger than 9 by 4 by 3 inches. Packages not conforming to these standards would not be accepted. I, of course, followed instructions

by printing my name and address on the form, and mailed it home, telling the folks what I wanted for Christmas, nothing but chocolate candy, preferably Hershey bars.

As can be seen from the following cut, the folks at home did some of their Christmas shopping early and started my package East on November 15.





(This page left blank in error)

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE BUM

On October 8, we broke camp at Aubreville and marched six or seven kilometers back to Auzeville and entrained at noon on a meter-gauge railroad for Bar-le-Duc, reaching there at 3:00 P.M., and marched again for about five kilometers to Naives-devant-Bar, where we secured billets in vacant barns and buildings. My memories of Naives are rather vague, but the following letter I wrote to my father from there serves to recall a few of the events during my short stay there:

"Pvt. Howard Tayler
Co. E 25 Engr's.

October 10, 1918
France

"Dear Dad:

We are in a new camp again, making the fourth in twenty days.

"We have gone south and are a good deal farther from the lines than we were last week, but still within hearing distance of the big battle.

"This is undoubtedly the most beautiful part of France we have been in. If one was here to see scenery and wonderful landscapes he would not have to go farther than these hills. Perhaps if it had been raining and we had miserable weather as is customary for France this time of the year I would not have seen the bright spots of this sleepy, peasant village, but the last two days have been ideal. The sun is warm but not hot and the nights frosty. Today is Thursday. We hiked in here on Tuesday afternoon, and have had no ~~work~~ no work to do for the two days, except a few odd jobs getting camp in shape and caring for the upkeep. Of course the boys have been delighted, and we have been taking advantage of a much needed rest because the last couple of weeks have been harder on us than we are used to, and the water in France, as you know, is bad, and some of the boys feel kind of poor as the result of all kinds of water we had to drink in our travels. As soon as material arrives, I expect

we will start work making a "coop" for German prisoners. This afternoon we took a two hour hike under arms. I guess this was to keep us from getting lazy and doggy.

"There is not a great deal I can tell you about, but we hope to finish this work very shortly and get back to our place on the front. The boys feel pretty good to be able to have a week of work under shell fire and seeing so much that you people have to be satisfied with reading about.

"I am feeling great, and the Allies are giving "em snuss."

Love--Howard."

The men felt rather "poor" all right. I don't believe there was one of us who wasn't terribly sick with dysentery. It was the worst attack any of us had ever had; some of the men didn't get over the effects of it for several weeks.

Our billets were mostly barns, and the Company was scattered over quite an area. I was in what at one time was a hayloft and slept on the floor on old straw that had probably been there for months or maybe for years. Troops had used it many times before us, it was filthy and lousy, and after the first night all of us had fresh cooties; maybe they were hatchings of our "regulars", but at any rate we blamed it on to the billets. Most of us took time out again for temporary relief, and boiled out.

Friday and Saturday of that week we started digging postholes for the new prison cage. Sunday was a free day, and in the afternoon we all got passes and went to Bar-le-Duc. I found a public bathhouse, and for a franc I got my first tub bath since leaving home. I really enjoyed that thorough cleaning. Certainly I was a less fertile field for the cooties for a few days at least.

Bar-le-Duc was a town of about 15,000 and was divided into two parts by a transportation canal running from the Marne River to the Rhine. The town had been shelled and bombed and a few of the buildings were in ruins.

During the week we set most of the posts for the first strings of barbwire around the prison stockade and ran some of the wire, but by the middle of the week our prisoners arrived and we put them to work.



Some German
prisoners
arrived

They put in the second row of posts around the square and strung the wire to complete the job. We had a few guards from a Military Police Company with fixed bayonets and loaded rifles on the grounds during the construction, but it wasn't necessary to have them. Those Huns were contented with their predicament and couldn't be driven away. The War was over as far as they were concerned, and they had gotten out of it alive and didn't care to get back into it. They only worked nine hours a day and got identical rations to us, even to tabacco. We felt as if we were entirely too considerate for them. At times they seemed to have a better break than we although we didn't care to exchange places with them.

The stockade was about 200 feet square, enclosed by two rows of barb wire strung on ten foot posts, the wires being about four inches apart making it impossible for a man to escape through them. Guards were stationed at each

corner of the stockade between the row of wires. Each had a clear vision in two directions, and they never allowed the prisoners to even touch the inside wires, thus preventing any possible wire clipping. After the Huns finished building their own prison camp, they were taken out each day to do road work or other labors and then brought back again at night.

We left Naives before the prisoners had built their barracks. At the time, they were sleeping under a lean-to made of boughs with a roof of branches, boards, tin, or any piece of canvas or building paper we could get for them. I never came back to see the completed job.

Supervision of this stockade construction didn't require many of our own men. Half the Company was sent to St. Aubin-sur-Aire for similar work, and on October 20, the balance of us left by truck for Souilly, and it poured rain all day. Immediately upon arrival we set to work building a barracks for ourselves in the mud and cold rain, but by five o'clock we didn't have it erected so found a place to sleep on the floor of a French barracks. It has been a terrible day, working in rain coats and rubber boots. We were wet and dirty but slept well. First call blew at 5:45 the next day, and I spent the morning digging a drainage ditch around our new barracks and in the afternoon helped put up the orderly room tent. That night we slept on the floor of our new barracks. By the following night we had some straw to spread on the floor that made us a little more comfortable.

The fourth day my squad, the fifth, got orders to pack up immediately. We left for Fleury by truck and had noon mess at a Casual Camp there, then started work erecting two steel barracks with the help of about sixty-five quartermaster men who had just come to France. We also started a prison pen with about fifty or sixty German prisoners doing the labor. We had no place to sleep that night so made a shelter of paneling that was to be used for barracks. The weather was clear, so it was quite comfortable. The next day our crew finished the barracks, and we moved in for the night.

We had a lot of fun with those new quartermaster troops. Everything was so new and strange to them, and because they had only been over for two weeks, and we had been there for eight months, we certainly handed them a line of bull that would make Paul Bunyan sit back and gasp. They marveled how we were out there unattached to show them how to construct barracks and boss German prisoners and then go over to a casual kitchen for grub and sleep anywhere that we could get cover--no officers to boss us, no roll call, no inspections, just eight free soldiers of fortune, dirty and lousy.

The next day, we were told that their Major was coming, and because these were officers' quarters that we had built, we would have to get out and let them in. So we pitched our pup tents and went over to the lumber pile and got some of those panels for a floor. We had a peach of a camp set up, four pup tents with wooden floors; nothing like it had ever been seen in the A.E.F. before, nor perhaps after.

The Major did come to town. He inspected our barracks job, he looked over the stockade, and German prisoners while we stood by with proper respect to a high ranking officer and waited for the compliments that were bound to be uttered from so appreciative and wise man as he. But old Stone Face only turned and growled, "Where are you men sleeping?" "Over there, sir, in those pup tents." "Let's see them."

We walked over.

"Who in Hell ever told you to use barrack panels for floors in a pup tent? Pull them out of there and put them back on that pile."

"Yes sir!!" I argued.

We sized him up as an opioniated, conceited block head that had brought his militarism with him from the States only two weeks ago and just had to have something to criticize to show authority. We decided to really give him

something to complain about so moved back into the barracks, hoping that he would come back later and kick us out of there, but much to our disappointment the officers didn't move in, and we slept unmolested all night.

Orders came the next day for six of us to pack up. Our Company Ford called for our packs after lunch, and we were told to start hiking towards Triaucourt where we would start in a new prison pen. We bummed a ride on a truck to Nebecourt and walked the rest of the way, getting there about 3:00 P.M. We located some nice billets in a vacant building and ate with a Military Police Company.

The best news we got that night was that the M.P.'s didn't have breakfast until 7:30; so we would have to wait for them. The next morning it was 8:15 before we started digging post holes. By three o'clock we decided we were doing prisoners'-of-war work and besides we needed a bath, so knocked off and inquired from the M.P.'s as to when we could clean up. They sent us over to a French bathhouse. That took care of that day.

We expected the P.W.'s in the next day, but neither they nor the material showed up whereupon we went to digging post holes again and finished at 2:30 and then decided we should "boil out" again. This done, we looked for amusement. The weather was beautiful, warm and clear. We strolled around a bit and located some apple and pear trees with a little fruit left on them; so we threw sticks and climbed trees for the rest of the afternoon.

For the next two days we waited for material and the P.W.'s, but kept our fingers crossed in hopes that they wouldn't show up. One of our lieutenants paid us a visit and brought our month's pay. He got a big laugh at us sitting around and pretending we wanted work but only said that perhaps we had a few days rest coming to us. It was about dinner time, and he wanted to eat before he left. We showed him the mess hall, and he invited us all to sit down at

the table with him. This was most unusual for enlisted men to eat with an officer. It was the only occasion in my army experience that it happened. I always respected that man who figured it wasn't much beneath his dignity to associate a little more closely with the men in his command, who after all were sacrificing just as much as he in serving their country and who in civil life might easily be his superior.

At ten the next morning a truck came and picked us up to take us back to Souilly, and we spent the rest of the day until 7:45 in the evening riding across the country-side, picking up detachments of our Company who had been out on assignments similar to ours.

It was now October 31; the Huns were retreating fast. We knew the War could not last much longer. Perhaps this was the reason for our being recalled and our prison camp work stopped.

For a few days we half-heartedly worked on building barracks but were given time off for baths and boiling out cooties. Apparently the camp engineer was not quite sure whether to continue building this camp as we were a little too far behind the lines now for a practical location of the First Army Headquarters.

CHAPTER XVII

CHATEL CHEHERY AND RETURN

Orders came to us on November 4 to suspend all work on the camp at Souilly and wait for further instructions. While waiting we cleaned up the barracks and policed the grounds and then were given commands to take a bath in the camp shower building and boil out. It seems incredible, but each corporal was held responsible for his squad getting a bath. Some of the men didn't seem to care whether they ever got clean, and it took somebody to force them to it. They had so many weeks of dirt and filth that they were afraid they wouldn't be comfortable if not coated with grime.

By November sixth, at 7:00 A.M. we were all set to go, but it was 9:30 before a French truck train of ten cars pulled up, and we loaded in--twenty-five men to a truck.

We headed northwest, our destination, Chatel Chehery, to construct a new First Army headquarters. That trip was a wonder to me, single file at a snail's pace, past fields filled with shell-holes and barbwire entanglements, trenches and dugouts, villages that were crumbled to dust and bridges that were blown to bits and replaced with temporary wooden structures. Along the Cousances River through Ippecourt, and then across the Aire River to Auzeville and Clermont. We were now back in the territory we worked in a month ago, continuing northwest along the River to Varennes and finally to Chatel Chehery, a town that the Americans cleared October 9, the day after we had gone south to Naives.

The whole trip was only about thirty-five or forty miles; yet it was three o'clock in the afternoon before we finally arrived. The traffic had been terrific; the narrow shell-torn roads were loaded with a never-ending line of troops and artillery. This was War, the final drive was on, the

thundering cannonading a few miles north was terrific; there was to be no time for the Germans to rest. The Americans were advancing as if one man; the whole Western front was moving, driving, pushing; the Huns were on a disorderly, panicky retreat. Surely they could not last long.

I was thrilled with pride to be one of the Yanks in this great victory drive.

Had the Kaiser changed his mind about "Might Makes Right?" And was he still saying, "Me and God?" We would soon know.

My fifty franc bet of last summer was a cinch.

The day had been clear and bright, but we had been on a bumpy, dusty, tiresome trip without any noon meal; we were tired, thirsty, and hungry. Soon the cooks took care of the hunger and thirst, but the early November sun was sinking in the southwest when we started making a serious exploration trip for a place to sleep.

There behind the beautiful massive French Chateau that German officers had used for quarters and office for nearly four years and by the grace of God had been spared from complete ruin, were German soldier barracks. We examined them. They were wooden, double-deck bunks, the straw still in them. On each bunk was the soldier's name. We looked them over and selected the name that met our fancy. We had driven the Heinies out; they were on the retreat--now to take their beds.

The top sergeant's whistle blew--"Attention, Men!" You are not to sleep in these quarters but instead to unroll your packs and flop on the first floor of the Chateau! As you were!"

"Hardwood floors instead of straw--what was the idea? Maybe because it's clean and not lousy. Those damn officers made us take a bath and boil out yesterday. Now we have to keep nice and clean like good boys."

First call was at 5:45 the next morning, and we worked arranging supplies

and tools. The barracks were cleaned out, and the straw burned. Everything was in good shape, but--a courier pulled up on his motorcycle, "Where's the Captain?"

He was directed to the chateau.

In a few moments the Top Kick's whistle blew. "Attention Men!" "Orders from headquarters! Pack your tools and equipment; we are going back to Souilly."

We packed and waited. Rumors about an Armistice being signed were circulated. Evening came. The north again lighted up with its golden red hew, and flares lit the skyline as if in compliment to the big guns' roar.

"Unroll packs. We will sleep here tonight."

"Nuts! Where is the guy that said the War was over."

The following morning--roll call, mess, orders for the day!

"Roll your packs and wait for transportation!"

We waited. Some of us went over to the ammunition dump and took some one-pounders apart, dumped out the powder, exploded the caps---good souvenirs.

Seven P.M. came--

"Unroll your packs--we sleep here tonight!"

At eleven the next day we finally piled into trucks for the return trip. We got to Souilly at four--nothing to eat at noon and no dinner until 6:30 and then only canned corned-beef, bread and coffee. Most of us were entirely disgusted with our kitchen by this time. Nothing but corned-beef for four days. Some of us went over to another outfit and got in the mess line and had a good feed.

When we came back, we didn't hesitate to tell the rest of the gang what we had done and what we had to eat. This made them madder than ever, and there was so much growling around the barracks that the sergeants got their heads together and reported the incident to the Captain who in turn got after the cooks. The company was threatening mutiny that night, but it was averted with

promises of better grub.

The next day was Sunday, November 10, and we all felt a little better after the announcement at reveille that there were to be no duties except the usual routine and that most of us could have the day off.

The real joy came with the A.E. F. editions of the New York Herald and Chicago Tribune officially announcing that an Armistice had been signed and that hostilities would cease at 11:00 A.M. tomorrow.

First call was as usual that morning at 5:45. The usual heavy artillery fire continued on the north of us, and we went to work to complete some unfinished barracks we left last week. Sharp at eleven A.M. the firing ceased. There was dead silence. We all stopped work for a moment and looked in the direction of the lines, then looked at each other. Yes, it was true. The War was over.

I believe they all felt as I did. Happy, but a queer, sad feeling came over me. We had won, I had lived through it, we would be home soon, and visions of home ran through my mind. Victory--I was there to witness the closing of the world's greatest War. I was part of it. The folks at home must be very happy. I wished they knew for sure that I was all right. They would be relieved and could really celebrate.

"Come on, you birds! Are you going to stand there all day? What the hell is the matter with you. We got barracks to build. We ain't through just because them guns stopped." The big burly sergeant that yelled that out felt just as we did but had to say something to overcome his emotion and pretend that he was tough enough to disregard what had just transpired.

He didn't fool us any, but we went back to work.

That night the officers gave a party and dance in town and invited the nurses and civilian telephone operators. We were not only excluded but were told to stay in camp and keep out of town.

Again we were sore, and the things that were said about officers and army regulations was sufficient to warrant a wholesale shooting at sunrise, but as usual we took it. After all, we wanted to go home, not to the guard house.

One of our men had to celebrate a little so opened the door and fired a flare gun; it lighted up the whole vicinity beautifully, but before it had hardly settled to earth, an officer that was a stranger to us pounced in the rear door.

Somebody called "Attention."

We stood where we were, erect and rigid.

"Who fired that flare gun?"

No answer.

"Who is the sergeant in charge of this barracks?"

"He is not here, sir, " answered a line sergeant.

"Where is he?" came back the officer.

"In the latrine, sir!"

"Tell me who fired that gun, or I will put the whole barracks under arrest."

"I am sorry, sir, I don't know."

"You're a liar!"

This seemed to settle the argument, but not the lies. He walked the full length of the barracks and asked each man, "Do you know who fired that gun?"

All the answers were the same, "No, sir!"

Upon reaching the other end of the building, he wheeled around.

"You're a damn bunch of lying engineers. You are under arrest. No one is to leave this barracks."

The door slammed and out he went.

From under a blanket came the gun, and into a barracks bag for safekeeping.

We all laughed.

Liars all? Yes, and all for one.

The incident was closed. Our Armistice Day celebration was over. Soon taps blew and we quieted down.

"We ought to be home soon. God bless civilian life. When I get my discharge, I sure as hell will tell the world what I think of the army."

Sleep finally came after hours of beautiful visions of home and a happy life to come--only a few weeks and 3000 miles to go.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTER THE ARMISTICE

We stayed at First Army Headquarters in Souilly until December 8. All unnecessary construction was stopped; however we always managed to putter away at something. I spent a few days working ⁱⁿ the cemetery behind the evacuation hospital. Up to this time, there had been very little opportunity for such jobs, but now we made a nice walk around it and put up a flagpole, made several new white crosses and fenced it all in. It was really very nice looking when our work was completed.

I was very happily surprised at noon Sunday, November 17, when my brother Bill walked in unexpectedly. I knew that he was with the Red Cross and in France. He had written to me from Neufchateau on October 1. I received this on the 24th and answered it immediately. My letter reached him, he told me, on November 12. Censorship on my letters was still very strict at the time of my writing. It was impossible for me to get information to him regarding our location. He had told me where he was. That was permissible because he was not in the Zone of Advance. So in reply to him, I simply said, "I am 80 kilometers by air north by northeast from you on the road to Verdun. If you can get away, come by way of Bar-le-duc." This didn't reveal any military secrets, but with those directions, he couldn't possibly miss, but for fear he might waste too much time asking questions after he got up in my vicinity, I went ahead telling about what we were doing and described the peculiar round roof metal barracks we were constructing. This made it comparatively easy although he spent most of the morning driving one hundred kilometers in that Model T. Ford touring car looking for me.

It was noon when he arrived, and we walked out to his car and got his mess kit and he ate with us.

He had a package for me from home and also had two cartons of cigarettes he had saved for me. Two packages a week were rationed to him, and not being a smoker he put them aside until the day he found me. I certainly was glad to get them and was especially careful not to let any of the other men see them. I slipped them in my pack unnoticed.

I went to the orderly room and got a pass for the afternoon so that I could leave camp. The two of us took the car and drove north to Dun-Sur-Meuse. We traveled over secondary roads running through the Argonne forest. Dun is about twenty miles northwest of Verdun and was recaptured by the Americans a few days before the Armistice. This was truly a sight-seeing trip for me and one that few men have taken for pleasure. The litter of battle lay untouched as salvage troops had not yet had the time to go through and gather the discarded equipment and ordinance, rifles, gas-masks, shells, smashed cannon and tanks of both armies lay in the fields, barbed wire entanglements smashed and snarled, shell holes and mud, remains of trenches and forests. These were the battlefields of six days ago--a sight that will always remain vivid in my memory. In Dun, we met the 151st Artillery, a Minnesota National Guard outfit of the Rainbow Division, on the way back. Tired and weary, but happy--they had done a good job.

We were like kids turned loose in Grandma's attic and so had taken a lot of time in reaching Dun. It was dusk when we pulled into the deserted town. On the way home we took the main highway along the east bank of the Meuse River. How different it was from the highways of a few days ago. No troops on forced marches now. No line of ammunition trucks or ambulances. The roads were dark and lifeless. Village after village we passed in the black of early ^{evening} eaving, our magnet^o headlights glaring brightly on the down grades and dimming to near extinction on the hills; yet until this week the road had seen no headlights at all for over four years. I had not seen

one myself for eight months. It seemed strange and difficult to believe that headlights were again permissible.

We were without maps, and a good portion of our driving was guess-work. We came to what seemed several kilometers of camouflaged road with green burlap strung across the highway on wires about twenty feet above the earth. From a short distance away this completely obscured the road and made perfect cover for the marching troops and vehicles. After passing under this, we came to the ruins of a larger town, one lone soldier walked the roadside.

"Where are we, Buddy?" I asked.

"Verdun", he called back.

"Bill", I said, "this is what is left of the city that has been sieged for four years but never taken. What a pity it isn't daylight."

We crossed the Meuse River again and continued south to Souilly. It had been a delightful day. I got a bunk for Bill in our barracks and put him up for the night.

After breakfast the next morning we jacked up the rear wheel of the Ford and spun the crank. The nights were cold now and below freezing. Past experience had taught us that this was the simplest way to get the cold motor into action. At 7:30 he was on his way, but before going I had agreed to attempt to get my discharge in France, and he and I would go home together by circling the globe.

Latrine rumors were circulating fast now as to what our company would do. Everything imaginable happened to us by the great dreaming master minds that were supposedly in the know.

Our barracks bags were returned to us; we had left them, you remember, in St. Dezier on September 26. Now we were to salvage all equipment that was not in A condition or that was extra and not needed.

Following this we were called into formation and told that thirty-five men from each of our seven companies in the regiment would go to make up an engineering company to be sent into Germany.

The names were called. I was thankful mine was not among them. I wanted to go around the world with Bill, or else directly home--but not hidden away for possibly months to come in Germany.

For a week, we did light drill, had inspections, and got all set for something--nobody knew what. The awaited announcement came officially from the officers, "Any trip to Germany has been given up. We expect to leave for home soon."

Thanksgiving Day arrived. It was the first that I had ever spent away from home, and with the rainy raw day with nothing to do to kill time, it was very lonesome. There was no use trying to kid myself, I was homesick. Memories of happy family gatherings at home ran through my mind--there had been many of them in the past. I appreciated them now. Turkey, cider, plum pudding used to be taken for granted. What I wouldn't give to be home again, if only for the day.

The Mess Sergeant splurged for noon dinner and dug into that much coveted mess fund and bought lamb. We had mashed potatoes and gravy, canned peas and corn, with bread and jam to go with it, apple pie and cheese to top it off. It was a fine feed for the army, and we had all we wanted to eat, but it lacked the finishing touches and all the nice extras that my sister Gladys or Mother could have added to it to make it a feast. However, we were all pleased and happy with what we had. No supper was served--no turkey bones to pick on or left-over salted nuts or candy mints.

This day was officially set aside as Dad's Christmas letter day. All censorship was off, and we were all urged to write home to Dad and tell him

all about it. I wrote mine, starting from the voyage over up to date. This was the first time in nine months overseas that I could tell him what town I was in or where we had been, for troops in the advance sector were shielded by strict censorship. The troops in central or southern France in the "Service of Supply" had no secrets as to location to keep from the enemy so could write in detail without fear of censorship. Some of them, not being particularly proud of their predicament, wrote thrilling letters home about their recent battle, not realizing that there was a censorship in the advance zone, and if they had been in an engagement, they couldn't have told about it. For the folks at home, it was a dead give-away, and they knew that actually their boy was safe from harm in the S.O.S.

We became restless and irritable. We didn't seem to be getting anywhere with light fatigue, marches, and drills. The officers were undoubtedly becoming a little nervous for fear their idle or practically idle men would make trouble, so they did all that was possible to keep us contented. Trips to Verdun and the battlefields were arranged for us--half the company went one day and half the next day. I enjoyed it immensely. We went through the ruins of the Cathedral and walked the streets of the town, then got back in our trucks and went a few miles out to the trenches. We were allowed plenty of time to wander through them and gain first-hand information of their construction, the trenches that were manned by spirited Frenchmen that for four years used as their battle cry, "They shall not pass."

The next week Sunday, December 1, four of us got a pass to go to Bar-le-Duc. We got the narrow gauge railroad at 6:00 A.M. and arrived there at 9:00. Later in the morning our company truck left Souilly with about fifteen men for the same trip. We met them at 7:00 P.M. and came back to camp with them.

We moved into the new barracks we had just completed. They were much larger and more comfortable than the old ones--then, too, it took our minds

off the great desire to go home. We at least moved. We were a little more in the center of activity now, the Commissary nearby and the Y.M.C.A. next door. By the end of two days we were all settled and had partitioned off rooms in the officers quarters and built them a latrine anyone would be proud to own.

For some reason our morale fell pretty low that evening. Perhaps we felt as if things were being built entirely too permanent and prospects of getting home soon were bad. The Y.M.C.A. was having some sort of entertainment for a special group, I have forgotten what the occasion was, but at any rate we were not invited; so we lay around on our bunks talking over the whole disheartening conditions, getting more upset and unhappy all the while. The merriment next door was annoying and gave our agitators more ammunition to prove that we were being mistreated and abused.

Just about the time we reached an all time low, one of our men ran in from outside. "Do you guys know what that G.D. Y.M.C.A. is doing?"

"They got some Boche prisoners over there entertaining that crowd. That's them singing now. Did you hear the hand the dirty pups got on their last song? On top of that, the Y is feeding 'um cookies and chocolate bars and gave them each a package of cigarettes. We've been in this God-forsaken country for nine months on 'count of them damn Heinies and now the Y is feeding 'em for nothing and they never gave us anything free yet. We ought to blow the dump up. Let's do some applauding ourselves."

With that the entire barracks set up a terrible racket of boos and cat calls. You could have heard it a kilometer away. What effect it had on the party next door I don't know, but it was only a matter of two or three minutes before a strange lieutenant charged through the door. Everyone saw him, but no one called "Attention!" He had to do that himself. He got it and started

in on a masterly lecture, first for not showing proper respect for an officer and then about our rudeness and poor sportsmanship and how these prisoners of war had been ordered to do this entertaining. He talked for a couple of minutes. He couldn't have done better if he had rehearsed this whole thing. I had to agree with him in general, but his trouble was that he had lost his temper and didn't know that what we were really sore about was ^{that} the "Y" had given something to eat to Germans when we had never gotten anything but writing paper in all our months in France.

He ended up by saying, "One more disrespectful noise out of here and I will report you all to your captain. That's all. At ease." He turned to go out, but just before the door closed behind him someone yelled, "Nuts to you, you shave tail!"

He swung back like a bullet, "Who said that?" "I demand to know who said that."

All was quiet.

"If the man who said that has got a gut in his body, he will step forward."

Maybe he didn't have any guts, but he had some brains anyway. No one stepped forward.

"Your commanding officer will handle this", were his final remarks, and he went out.

From then on we showed no disrespect. If that stuff next door was amusing those folks, it was O.K. with us, and after all if anybody could get something for nothing out of the Y, then more power to 'em. We couldn't do it. We sang a few of our good songs with dirty verses, just to show the Y.M.C.A. that their influence hadn't done us any good. We didn't get any complaints, so got disgusted and went to bed.

When reveille blew the next morning and we lined up on the company street for roll call, a sign was on the Y.M.C.A.'s closed door

German Prisoners

We bid you welcome

Hot chocolate--cookies

and cigarettes free

American Y.M.C.A

It stayed there until the Y opened at nine. No one asked questions. No one admitted anything. Nothing about the night before was mentioned by our officers--the incident was closed--we had smart officers.

The following day the Colonel dropped into town from somewhere. We wondered if he knew about what had happened night before last. We hadn't seen him for months. Why today? But if it had been reported to him, he didn't mention it to us. He only called for a full inspection at ten o'clock and then had it announced that we were leaving tomorrow for Givry-en-Argonne fifteen or twenty miles southeast to join the other six companies of the regiment. Stock soared up--latrine rumors flew fast--boys, we are on our way home this time for sure.

At 7:30 in the evening Bill surprised me again by driving in from Neufchateau. He was on his way to Varennes to see Monroe Seversen from home who was stationed there with the 301st Tank Corps Company A and wanted me to go along in the morning. The whole thing looked hopeless to me because of our moving the next day; but we carefully thought out what I was to tell the captain in order to get a pass. I went to the orderly room and took Bill with me. We got to see the captain, and after saluting, I introduced him to Bill and told my story.

"Tayler, we are moving to Givry tomorrow, you know that."

"Yes, sir. I will pack and put all my equipment in the Ford and report to you at Givry tomorrow night before taps."

"Is that a promise?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I don't recall ever having any trouble with you," he said. "I'm going to try something. Come in the morning and get a pass for the day. Hope you two boys and your friend have a good time."

We went back to the barracks and visited until taps. Bill took the vacant lower bunk under me.

After roll call and breakfast we threw my pack on the back seat and left. We found Severson at ten A.M. just as he was coming off guard duty. We looked over his tanks with him and took some pictures.



I posed for a
picture at
Varennnes

Luckily he was able to get a pass out of camp for the four hours between guard mounts, and the three of us started out on another sightseeing tour through miles of battlefields to Montfaucon. Here we spent a great deal of time taking pictures and exploring ruins. The town was leveled off, not even a wall of a building standing.



Bill and I
found a German
machine gun
at Montfaucon

We got Severson back at two o'clock all right but stayed there until 3:30. Bill and I drove back through Clermont, St. Menehould, and then to Givry. It was 5:00 P.M. when we pulled into town. I located the company without difficulty and found the captain. The usual click of the heels and a snappy salute, "Sir, Private Tayler reports for duty."

He looked at me with an expression of great relief, and yet I couldn't help but notice that certain something that showed he was proud of his good judgment.

"My God, back ahead of time and sober as a judge. I knew that's what would happen. Did you see your friend from home and did you have a good time?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you and your brother eaten yet?"

"No, sir."

"The two of you get in the mess line if it isn't too late; if it is, tell the kitchen I said to feed you."

We ate, and Bill went on his way to Neufchateau.

There were some wonderfully happy days in the Army. I wouldn't have missed them for anything.

CHAPTER XIX

WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS

There were several welfare organizations serving American troops in France. I never knew how many, but any of them were good to contact, and we all felt free to use the facilities of any of them. They all did grand service, but, of course, most of us were more familiar with the Y.M.C.A. than any other organization except, perhaps, the Red Cross. The Y., I have since learned from authentic sources, had 5,861 workers serving them and the Red Cross 5,500. The Knights of Columbus 800 and the Salvation Army 200, the Y.W.C.A. with 136. The Jewish Welfare Board with 68 and the American Library Association with 20.

There was no question but what the Y.M.C.A. was the "Goat" organization of the entire group. Much deserved and undeserved criticism was heaped upon it, but a large percentage of that was because the men in the army did not know that the work of all organizations was distributed to prevent duplication of effort overseas. The Red Cross was concerned primarily with the wounded, the ill, and transients, while the Y.M.C.A.'s contacts were mostly with the well in camps. This prevented duplication at one point and neglect in another, but very few soldiers knew this and as a result the Y. got a lot of "heat" for not visiting the hospitals and feeding stray men. I did my share of complaining and bellyaching about the Y., but at the same time it would have been a tough war without them. However, they made several serious mistakes. The worst was when they accepted General Pershing's request to operate the Canteens. This gave them nothing but grief and unpopularity. Getting supplies was difficult, and to get them in sufficient quantities was impossible, and to sell them at their delivered cost naturally boosted the selling price to a point where we believed they were profiteering. They were about as popular

as a store that never has what you want and limits your purchases to one or two when you want a dozen and then soaks you on the price because of the scarcity.

Their unpleasant reputation also came from the poor management of the Canteens at certain places. The selection of secretaries in some instances were very unfortunate, the men in charge may have been willing and honest but certainly were not qualified for a job that required the necessity of dealing with large groups of soldiers. It was unfortunate for the Y. that more consideration could not have been given to their personnel. Perhaps some of these secretaries also practiced too much care for the moral welfare of the soldiers.

The crowning blow-up came when gift cigarettes were sold in the Canteens. This later developed to be the fault of the quartermaster ^{OR} of factory but not the Y. The New York Sun and the Chicago Tribune raised funds by popular subscription in their respective territories to buy cigarettes for the boys in France. The cigarettes were purchased, and in each package was a note saying it was distributed free by the newspaper readers, then shipped in care of the Quartermasters in France. It was claimed that there was no identification mark on the outside case of the cartons; so when the Y. purchased cigarettes from the Quartermaster, the order was filled with those that were intended for free distribution. When the package was opened by the soldiers and they found evidence that they were intended for a gift, they very naturally said uncomplimentary things about the Y.M.C.A. In a few days the explanation came out, but the damage was done even though the Y. offered to give a free package to anyone who claimed to have purchased a gift package. But in spite of everything that we could complain about, I appreciated all the comforts and help that I accepted from them. I enjoyed their writing and reading rooms and entertainment in their auditoriums and the diversion and rest in their huts during many lonesome

evenings and free days. Certainly I am not prone to condemn any one organization because of the actions of a few of its members.

We all, at one time or another, enjoyed the benefits of the Welfare Organizations. All of them were for Service to all with entire disregard for religious faith or creed. Surely I am safe in saying that all the men of the A.E.F. appreciated greatly the efforts and untiring energy supplied by the men and women of our group of Welfare Organizations; they were fine folks and had a real place with the A.E.F. but if the need ever arises again, I hope that it will be possible for a vast improvement in Canteen Service. I appreciate that war supplies must have preference over cigarettes and candy bars, but nevertheless Wars cannot be won by a morale busted Army. We must make every possible effort to keep the Canteen shelves properly filled. Soldiers are perfectly willing to pay the customary price for anything they desire, but our difficulty was getting things at any price. If we are to keep our troops happy, we must make a few of these luxuries, that become almost necessities, available, even if the civilians at home must go without, or substitute.

You have heard it said that, "An Army travels on its stomach", but Robert Service had something when he wrote,

"Be sure that a bloke

Has plenty to smoke

If you want him to fight your Wars!"

CHAPTER XX

CHRISTMAS IN GIVRY-EN-ARGONNE

We were firmly convinced that our move to Givry was a move towards home. Certainly there could be no more work for an Engineer Corps in France, and if there was, it seemed reasonable that the outfits that had been over only a few months would do it, and we could sail. Our job surely was done. All companies of the regiment, except A and B, were in Givry, and they would be with us in a few days just as soon as they completed some work in Bar-Sur-Aube; then we would de-louse, receive new equipment, and start for home. We expected that in a week's time we would be on the move.

Stock soared so high that I could easily dope it out that we would, conservatively speaking, be on the high seas in three weeks, and possibly be in New York on New Years Eve. And, why shouldn't we? Captain Diehl had announced that our work in France was completed, and the balance of our time over there would be in drill, preparatory to sailing. The first week passed. We drilled every day just as we did back in Devens. It rained every day, and we got wet; our rain coats, which we claimed were made of window-shade material, leaked. We were wet and cold all the time. We hated drill, our food was not anything to brag about. Darkness came early, and the evenings were long, but the mirage that distinctly showed a transport sailing west with us aboard held up our spirits for the time being.

Givry wouldn't have been a bad place for a short stop. The Germans had left all the buildings intact when they retreated out of there in 1914. The town was small and not populated by nearly the number of inhabitants it originally housed, but now our 1100 men required every available building. barn, and stable for billets. I was quartered with about a dozen men on the ground floor of a stone barn.

There was a "Foyer du Soldat" in town, but no staff in charge so consequently, no canteen, but the building proved acceptable as a clubhouse. Our Chaplain, Rev. Muston, showed several movies and held services on Sunday. Several boxing matches were held in the evening when we put on a "home talent" show.



The town
square of
Givry

There was no Y.M.C.A. or Red Cross hut, but we didn't deserve a Y.M.C.A. after all the cussing we had given them in the past few months. Just the same, we now realized that maybe they weren't so bad after all.

Bill dropped in on the night of December 10 just as we were feeding. I was on K.P. dishing out food so told him to get in the chow line. He was on his way to Neufchateau from Bar-le-Duc, and as he didn't have to report until morning, decided to spend the night with me, but we didn't have an extra bunk, so he had to unroll his bed roll on the cement floor along side my bunk.

We had a nice visit that evening, and I told him of our expected plans - that I couldn't get my discharge in France so would get home long before him, as he had to stay until July to complete his year enlistment period. This

would undoubtedly be our last time together in France, and I wouldn't see him again until he go home in about six months.

The two of us got up a little early the next morning and dressed by candlelight in that damp French billet; then I got him something to eat in the kitchen and saw him off at 6:30 just as first call blew.

More days passed, more rain, more drill. The morale gradually was slipping as "official" latrine rumors spread throughout the regiment. The story that was most generally accepted was that through some mistake we had come to Givry instead of to Brest, that our sailing date had been set but that we had lost out on it because we didn't show up. We would have been nearly home now if our command hadn't bungled things. As it is, we will have to get another date which will be at least two months from now.

The men were starving for news and swallowed almost anything that circulated. It was kind of fun but cruel to start your own story and see in what distorted condition it got back a few hours later.

Well, we couldn't drill forever. We knew our stuff plenty well to get by if we had to parade in New York or some other place, and that's all we wanted to know; after all, the War was over. This was no time to be drilling; we were going back to civilian life; but 1100 men can't be idle; so do you know what we did? We drilled on a competitive basis.

Some ingenious officer, maybe the Colonel himself, decided to have the companies prepare for a regimental review before him a week hence, and "all our men in each company should do his best to uphold the high standard of his respective company because the best-drilled company after one week would not only lead the regiment in review before the Colonel but should also be honored and privileged to carry the colors!"

We took to it with about as much enthusiasm as a farm horse to the plow; but we entered the competition whether we wanted to or not and were terribly

humiliated at the end of the week when it was announced that our Company had won; but we had some hope of redeeming ourselves when it was further announced that the other companies should not become discouraged but should go out with more determination than ever now to win because next week we will have another competitive drill, and the winner will again be the escort company for the regiment.

We lost our privilege, reputation, and title in one week and never regained it. Company F took the honors. It was fine with us. We didn't want to be best in anything.

To add to the spirit of competition, six men were to be selected from each company by its captain. These men were to go into a Manual of Arms competitive drill with the best from the other companies. I was selected as one of the six from Company E and we started to practice. I don't remember that anything developed from this brain-child; I doubt if we ever had the competitive drill because of other things to do. The idea of course was just a time killer, and if it did that, it had accomplished its purpose.

For the first few days the regiment maintained the Military Police detail in the town, but this was displaced by a "Regimental Guard" which entered upon its duties each day with a formal guard mount held in the village square in front of the Church. Each company took turns in supplying the daily guard.

We put electric lights in the village streets, the current being supplied by two salvaged generators. I don't know how, when, or where we salvaged them, but we had them. That was the important thing.

It was getting near Christmas now, and our morale had sunk to deepest low. We had not seen the sun for two weeks. We were always damp and cold; and with rain most of the time, our clothes practically mildewed on us. The weather was miserable; we were discouraged and blue; all were homesick and terribly

tired and weary of the whole mess. The War was over; our job was done. We had been among the first to arrive in France - surely we deserved consideration. But there wasn't anything we could do except bitch about it, and believe me, my outfit knew how to do that.

It snowed on the day before Christmas. The first I had ever seen in France, but it melted rapidly, for along in the afternoon the sun came out for the first time in December.

Christmas Eve mail came in, and most of us got our Christmas boxes from home with some letters. This naturally brightened things up for a while. The boxes, I am sure, had been in Camp for several days, but were kept from us until Christmas Eve, a nice thing to do, and I'm glad it was done because we were especially down-hearted at the time. You see it was at retreat that night that it was announced the Colonel wanted a review - a big Christmas review - before him at 8:30 the next morning.

Right after breakfast on Christmas day, my pal Bentley from Chicago and I went to the orderly room and asked for a pass out of town for the morning. Much to our surprise we got it and hurried back to the billets to tell the others how to get out of the review, and as we left on a dog trot down the road, a long line formed at the orderly room door.

When we got back for dinner at noon, we learned that our captain had issued passes to about three-fourths of the Company before he finally quit with the remark, "Holy smoke! Somebody has to represent Company E in the review."

For dinner, we had pork, canned corn, mashed potatoes, carrots, turtle soup, two chocolate bars, two packages of cigarettes each, and thirty gallons of beer. Not a bad dinner but it was a poor excuse for a Christmas, stationed there in a small village, almost deserted, with absolutely nothing to do or

read. If we even had had a Y.M.C.A. or Red Cross hut to visit, we should have been quite content, but you can take my word for it, we were all as homesick as is humanly possible. It was a frightful, lonely day. A church service would have given me a lift, but I hadn't been to a religious service since last February on the transport. I don't know where our chaplain was that day.

In a day or two we had something new to talk about. It was announced that 250 new Gillette razors had been stolen out of the Supply Sergeant's quarters. There was a new razor for every man in the Company, but they had somehow disappeared. The mystery of the missing razors was never unraveled. No one knew anything about them until years later at a reunion in Minneapolis when it was brought up again. "Who stole those razors?" One of the men stood up. "Listen fellows," he said, "I stole the razors back in Givry, 250 of them, and I swapped them with a Frog for two gallons of wine. It was an inside single-handed job, and I drank all the wine myself."

Fresh rumors again started to circulate - something must be behind them. Then followed pack and rifle inspections, equipment check-up, and then I was put on a detail of about twenty men to build bunks down on the railroad loading platforms to be installed in boxcars. At 5:00 P.M. all the men except me were sent back to their billets, but I was left on guard duty until seven o'clock watching our tools, equipment and new bunks. When my relief arrived, I, too, went back to the old barn to sleep after first raiding the kitchen.

We were all ready again at seven the next morning to install the bunks, but it was two in the afternoon before the railroad cars came in. We hurried to set up the bunks, two three deckers at each end allowing sleeping accommodations for twelve at a time. Forty men were to be assigned to a car; so by sleeping in three eight-hour shifts, we would nearly make it.

It was still raining hard at five o'clock, December 30, when we finally left Givry-on-Argonne, soaking wet and weary, but happy that at last we were on our way. Companies A and B would board the train in a couple of hours at Bar-sur-Aube.

Thirty-six American freight cars and one French and one German compartment car for the officers, pulled by an American locomotive and driven by an American train crew, left the yards. Our generators had been installed, so that each car was lighted by electricity. Givry was left in darkness. A stove was also set up in each car for heat, and one car was equipped for the kitchen. We were set up to travel in comfort, and we did travel comfortably all night. I had laid claim to one of the bunks long before we pulled out and slept soundly. I was dead tired, and thoughts of home made me contented to crawl off by myself and sleep rather than listen to the idle chatter of fatigued, war-weary, homesick men, 1500 of them on that train representing every state in the union, every nationality, every religion, and every walk of life, but all with the same hope and prayer: "Dear Lord, may we march directly from the train to the transport."

CHAPTER XXI

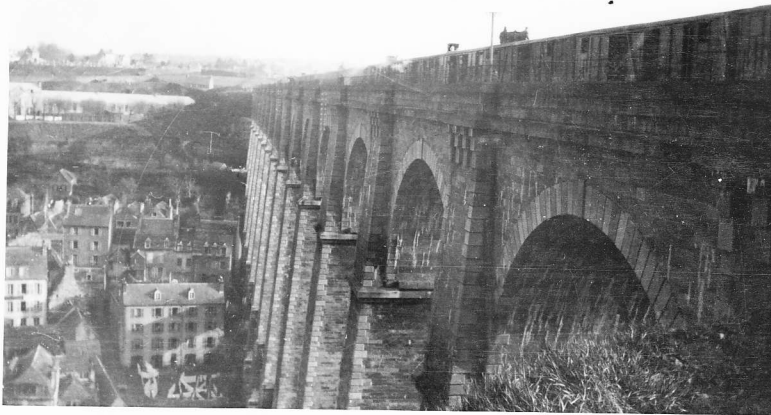
BREST AGAIN

The last day of 1918 was spent traveling through beautiful rolling country and passing through many quaint villages. Breakfast had been served at St. Florentine, and all day we traveled on that meal. In the evening the train stopped at Donzy, and we had dinner--a terrible disappointment, not nearly enough to eat; and as the train pulled out and we were forced to climb back into our cars, our appetites were far from satisfied. The train started so suddenly that twenty-four men from Company F didn't have time to get aboard. Later a Railroad Transportation Officer saw that they got dinner and put them on a passenger train for Bourges. Here they had an opportunity to attend New Year's services in the Cathedral. They didn't arrive in Brest until two days after us and had a great time. They were still sticking to their story that it was purely accidental that they got left to Donzy.

At midnight, our "Special" had traveled as far as Vierxon, where a French military band was playing the Marseillaise. Before morning, we passed Gievres, and early in the morning we went through Tours. At Chateau-du-Loir we stopped for breakfast. A two hour stop was made at Le Mans at noon. At midnight, St. Breiue was passed, and at noon of the second day we made a stop on the stone viaduct which spans the deep valley in which lies the town of Morlaix.

During these two days we were really very hungry. We hand't had enough to eat. We all complained, of course, but some of the men took action. As the train went slowly through towns that had government army ration piles, forty or fifty men would jump off the train, grab whatever was convenient, and throw it into the cars, where waiting hands would catch it. I never hope to see anything like it again in my life, especially when we passed bread

piled like cord wood near the tracks and ready for shipment. At least one man from each of our thirty-six cars ran parallel to the train, snatching bread from the pile and in one motion threw it into his car. My car picked up about thirty loaves in as many seconds. If all cars did as well, we must have pulled something over a thousand loaves of bread off that pile. Men are hungry when they steal bread, but we picked up a sack of potatoes somewhere also. Someone was always frying potatoes from then until we reached Brest. This idea of stealing got to grow on us. It was a great idea; so when we stopped at a station for a few moments while the train men got orders, the boys would walk around the platform and size up the express.



Our troop train
stopped on the
Morlaix viaduct

After they decided what was food, they would casually stand by it, and as the train started, grab it and run for their car. This gave us plenty of food but not a very balanced diet. Our car got a whole clothes basket filled with summer sausage. We swapped part of it with the fellows that got all jam and more of it to a car with three cases of eggs. Let there be no misunderstanding, we would have been hungry, very hungry, if it had not been

for the nimble fingers of our providers. Well-fed soldiers will not steal food, but you can bet your bottom dollar that hungry ones will eat if they know where food is.

After three nights and days, we arrived in Brest on January 2 at 3:00 P.M. Most of us thought that we might march right to the transport wharfs, but instead we were handed cold corned beef by our cooks for dinner, and the Red Cross gave us each a cup of hot chocolate. That was all for that day as far as food was concerned because after some delay we were ordered into Company formation and preceded by the band and the regimental colors, marched three miles through the pouring rain to Camp Pontanezen.

We were surprised at the immensity of the camp. When we had left it last March, it consisted practically of only its nucleus, the old stone barracks built by Napoleon. Now it was a beehive of activity. Hundreds of barracks had been built, a large hospital had been constructed, troop kitchens were built, traffic was heavy, roads were in terrible condition, and duck board walks were in process of being laid to keep marching troops out of the ankle deep mud.

We were assigned to barracks. Except for leaky roofs they were as good as we could have built ourselves.

On the morning of January 3, we got our first bird's eye view of the real conditions at Camp Pontanezen and found it anything but a cheerful prospect. The camp had been started in October to provide a receiving camp with a capacity of 100,000 men to be able to handle the large number of men arriving there from the States. The work had been delayed and handicapped by the shortage of transportation, equipment, and material due to the fact that soon after the beginning of the Allied Offensive, all available trucks, tools, equipment, etc., were sent to the front from all parts of the S.O.S. After the signing of the

Armistice, the camp was needed even more urgently for the flow of troops in the opposite direction, and all available troops were being used to complete it. Roads were fast becoming impassable. The water supply, the sewer system, lighting, drainage, walks, mess halls, kitchens, and a meter gauge railroad had all been started, but none was ready for use. Thousands of men were working day and night to provide quarters for the hundreds of thousands who were to come after them. In the constant January rains and the tramping of so many men, the whole camp became a sea of mud, and it was in the midst of this we found ourselves that morning. Prospects of going immediately home vanished; we were stuck in Brest and knew it.

Détails were put to work on all conceivable work. I was sent with one to report at the unloading platform, but the lieutenant we were to report to didn't show up, and we didn't look for him, but instead we spent the morning eating to our heart's content from the ration salvage piles and came back at noon with our pockets bulging with chocolate, condensed milk, and jam. After noon, we were put to work on Regimental headquarters, building a guard house and infirmary. We finished that job the next day.

Sunday was the day following and it rained all day, and I carried lumber for the new camp mess-hall. By night I was tired and disgusted and wrote a letter home:

"If there was ever a Hell on earth this is the place. At a formation, one of our lieutenants said he did not expect us to smile, but pleaded with us to set our jaws tight and take whatever was handed us until that day, that glorious day when we return to civilian life. My life is the most miserable it has ever been, the rain continues to fall, and the mud is over our shoe-tops, and yet we are working every day, Sundays and all. We are always soaking wet, and when I go to bed at night, I wear everything I own to keep warm, woolen

underwear, O.D. breeches, and shirt, woolen socks and sleeveless sweater, and my heavy maroon sweater on top of it all. During the last four weeks, we have only had fresh meat three times and bread only about one meal in four. *We* *you* can't possibly understand conditions, and neither can anybody else except an enlisted man who has passed time in this camp waiting for embarkation. We will just have to wait until I am able to tell about it; in the meantime I ask, hope, and pray that the American people see to it that their troops are taken home immediately because this country will drive a man mad unless he can get out of it soon."

It was generally understood that we were to have a two weeks' furlough every six months of service. Many of the men had already had leave, but during the late summer and fall campaigns, all "leave" privileges were cancelled to keep our regiments at war strength. There was no time for play or a vacation during those strenuous days, but immediately following the Armistice, the fourteen day leave was again restored. Only twenty men were permitted to be on leave from a Company of 250 at one time. I was not sure how these twenty were selected, but I began to wonder if I would ever get the opportunity to get away.

Perhaps you can understand how happy I was when after only three days in Brest, "the city that according to our official newspaper of the A.E.F. 'The Stars and Stripes' had 330 days of rain in 1918", I was informed that I was to go on leave for two weeks and be prepared to leave in a few days.

There were seven "leave areas" in France; the most recent was the French Riviera opened December 1. Men going on leave were supposed to go at no expense to themselves but were expected to visit the areas closest to their location, but we were told that if we had the money to pay our railroad fare we would be permitted to go to Nice and the Riviera. I had \$60.00 or about 275 Francs so easily qualified. In two days more I was told to appear for a physical

examination preparatory to leaving. Following that, I put my comb, toothbrush, and razor in my pocket, and with nineteen others left for the Brest railroad station, and bought a ticket for Paris. 10 F.50. At 5:40, we were on our way to Nice, the city that counted only 38 rainy days and was warm all winter.

My guardian angel had led me out of the ^{mud} hell-hole of the A.E.F. and was taking me to one of the World's finest winter resorts. Nothing surely could be more wonderful.

CHAPTER XXII

ON LEAVE

Countermanded orders, delays, and disappointments had been very prevalent during these months of army life, and we were on pins and needles from the time we were told we were to go on leave. By train time, I was very nervous. So long I had looked forward to this vacation that it would have been a calamity if anything had happened to cancel it, or even to postpone it. It was a great relief when the train men finally completed their preliminaries, and the late comers got aboard, and the train ^{wound} its way out of the yards. After we had gained some speed and the city of Brest disappeared from view, I stopped my pacing the floor and sprawled out on one of the third class benches and went to sleep, satisfied that I was on my way and thankful to God who had made it possible.

A few minutes before seven the next morning, the Eiffel Tower appeared on the horizon; a few moments later the skyline of Paris; and then the railroad yards, and the train pulled up to a stop.



The
Eiffel
Tower

At last the day had arrived when my great desire, like every other soldier's in France, was a reality. On leave in Paris!

Our first duty was to present our passes to the Provost Marshall, to get them stamped for permission to stop over in Paris for as long a stay as possible. Twenty-four hours was the best we could get. We took it and were thankful we were there instead of preparing to do another day of labor in the mud of Brest.

Walking aimlessly up the street, we inquired from the first Military Police where we could get breakfast. He directed us to the Y.M.C.A. at St. Denis. We had a very satisfactory meal for a franc and arranged with them for a room for the night. After getting located and leaving my toothbrush, comb and razor^R on the dresser, we started out to see the town.

The old saying--"You haven't seen France until you have seen Paris" certainly proved true. Up to this time, my contact with the French people had been practically all with the peasants and with small-town people, folks that were poorly dressed and slow in action, people that had worked hard all their lives to eke out an existence on little plots of land or in small shops.

Now, I was in an entirely different world--a business world where everyone was moving briskly along the streets, where the ladies and gentlemen were well groomed, where automobiles, taxicabs, and trucks honked their way through an almost regulationless, crazy-quilt of traffic. It seemed that every vehicle on the busy streets was concerned only with itself, with no regard for others, and the old hand air horns bulldozed their way through with commanding honks - down the right side, or down the left, passing anywhere there was room. U turns or stops - it made no difference; it was every man for himself. As a pedestrian, this fact was impressed on me during my first few minutes in the city. I felt like a small country boy in this big city, admiring, gawking at the wonders and fearful of the murderous confusion of traffic. This was Paris! I had

never seen so many beautiful women before, and for almost a year I had seen none. To me they added materially to the charm of the city. I do not know where we went or what we saw, but I thoroughly enjoyed the sight of clean people, large buildings, and the hustle and bustle of traffic.

We would have liked to stop at one of the beautiful cafes for lunch, but we were afraid we couldn't afford it, and then too, we felt we wouldn't fit into the picture. After all, we were only twenty hours out of the mud; so we found our way back to the Y for lunch. It was there that I met a Y secretary who asked me if I would like to accompany him during the afternoon while he made some business calls in a Ford touring car. I was delighted to accept, and during the trip he pointed out many buildings, famous streets, and points of interest. I asked him to take me to the telegraph office, and he waited while I sent a wire to my brother in Neufchateau:

"AM ON MY WAY FROM BREST TO NICE FOR 7 DAY LEAVE. CAN YOU GET LEAVE ALSO?"

A ridiculous thing to suggest, but at least Bill would know I hadn't sailed for the States yet, and he would be happy to hear the good news that I was at last to have a much-needed rest; then too, if anyone could tear down the great cob-web of impossibilities, he was the boy that could do it. Maybe I would see him.

We enjoyed the gaiety and confusion of the Paris streets that night. Surely there was nothing in the world like Paris immediately following the War. Men in uniform from all the allied nations, blowing in all their hard-earned money for a few hours of merriment--drinking, laughter, and girls! Past sorrows and hardships forgotten, the whole city seemed to be living for that one night alone. What a contrast to what I had just been through!

We were up at 5:30 the next morning to eat breakfast and to catch the early train for Lyons. We didn't see the conductor all day and didn't care to look for him, so got by without paying the fare. Southeast we went through Sens and Dijon, and then directly south to Lyons, the city of silks. The weather was mild and warm now, and Fleming, Gillfillan, Spencer, and I decided we should see the city, so bade the others goodbye and left the train. We would see them in Nice later on. Right now, there was the city of Lyons to visit, and we needed a good meal. We saw the city and got our meal, after being reprimanded by the Provost Marshall for leaving the train. We were told to leave town on the first train in the morning, and our passes were okayed for twelve hours. We put up at the Verdun Hotel for the night, but left a call for 5:00 A.M. as it was a case of catching the early train out or being picked up by the M.P.'s. The train happened to be the P.L.M. Express, one of France's finest from Paris to Marseilles. We barged our way into the first class coaches and presented our third class tickets to the conductor. We knew what he was talking about when he said, "Pas Bonne", but we pretended to "Non-compris". The argument lasted several minutes, he talking in French and we in English. We stuck to our post. We had never been in first class coaches before, and now that we had gotten this far, we intended to stay unless an American officer should take the part of the conductor and order us out, but the argument was apparently too amusing for a disinterested outsider to stop. The French passengers understood the conductor; the English and Americans understood us. The whole car was in an uproar, especially as he threw both arms in the air and shook his head as he left the car shouting something that we didn't catch except "Americains--Mon Dieu."

We enjoyed the trip to Marseilles, traveling with the well-to-do of France and with American officers. A French girl who had been to school in

England during the War, now traveling with her mother, stopped and looked in at our compartment, and with her limited command of English said:

"Mama says, 'No wonder you men whipped the Huns. 'Get out or I will throw you out' doesn't scare you one bit".

The train pulled into Marseilles at noon and the Provost Marshall gave us only until the 5:45 train to see the city and get on our way. We understood English and knew the consequences if we tried to pull any funny stuff with him; so we all saw what we could and got back to the train on time, hoping to have a better look on our way back. We accepted third class accomodations to Nice without argument and arrived there at 3:15 A.M. and checked into the railroad transport office immediately and then sat around on the curb stone in front of the office until 5:00 A.M., when we were assigned to Hotel Empereurs, 34 Boulevard Dubauchage.



Hotel Empereurs

The four of us had one large room, 12 x 14, with two double beds and bath. It was marvelous, and if there were four happy soldiers in France that day, we were those four.

"Sorry about our comrades back in Brest. We got a break; that's all." I climbed into bed for a little sleep, but somehow sleeping in underwear didn't seem to fit into the picture. Certainly it didn't show refinement; so I got up and took it off and then slept until eight and leisurely took my bath and dried with a freshly laundered towel.



We had a
nice room

Breakfast was served in the dining room by men waiters. We selected our choice from the menu, as if accustomed to it. We ate all we cared to - Uncle Sam was footing the bill.

After breakfast, we walked around and acquainted ourselves with the city. After lunch in the hotel, we went to the railroad transportation office and arranged for transportation back to Brest on the nineteenth. With this unpleasant task done, we visited the Promenade on the Mediterranean Beach, and the Casino which was leased by the Y.M.C.A.

The Promenade des Anglais stretches about seven kilometers along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and is the finest promenade in Nice. It is the chosen meeting place of the colony of foreigners and of the high society of Nice although at this time it was completely dominated by American soldiers and pretty French mademoiselles--but not enough mademoiselles for all of us.

The municipal Casino was built on piling on the beautiful sandy beach. It was ornamented by arcades all around, and one could sit and stare over the sea and listen to the waves wash over the sand or on a windy day watch them burst with spray and then hit the sea wall that the promenade was built on. It was delightful, but most delightful of all were the restrictions--"No officers permitted on the premises."



Enjoying the
Municipal
Casino

It was strictly an enlisted man's club. In it were reading and writing rooms and a large cinema that seated a thousand, and a large hall where there was dancing each evening with the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. ladies acting as hostesses.

We loafed around for a long while and bought some ice cream, my first since leaving home. I wrote a letter home and purchased souvenir postal cards

and then with a couple of chocolate bars in my pocket started back for the hotel, window shopping as we went. I did, however, buy a guide book of Nice and the Riviera for 1 F.50, and that night we made plans for a systematic tour of the sights.

We slept late next morning but in the afternoon walked to Mount Boreon about three kilometers down the beach. The weather on this twelfth day of January was warm and balmy; orange trees were laden with ripened fruit, the first I had ever seen. We rested a while on the beach. I took off my shoes and socks and pulled up my breeches and went wading in the Mediterranean Sea for no reason at all except to say I had been in the water.

Mount Baron had quite an altitude over the sea and gave us a beautiful panorama of Nice. We rode the tramway back.

Getting back to our room, we no sooner flopped on the bed for a rest when one of the hotel men knocked at the door.

"Come in", I called.

"Is one of you men Mr. Tayler," he asked in broken English.

"I am".

"Your brother is in Nice for a holiday. He has left the Hotel for a while but asked me to have you wait for him. He will be back presently."

Shortly, Bill walked in. I was certainly happy to see him, and after introducing him to my room-mates couldn't help but congratulate myself for having the rare good judgment for sending that telegram as it just happened to reach him at the best possible time for taking a week's leave. I had won on a thousand to one chance.

Gosh! We both felt wonderful that night as we sat there in our easy chairs going over my guide book and discussing our plans for trips together. One forgets bitterness very quickly. Army life was not so bad. We went to sleep as we had done many times before in our boyhood, contented, well-fed,

carefree and irresponsible with great anticipation for the happy hours that would be ours with the sunrise.

We were called at 5:45, had breakfast, and met the Y.M.C.A. tour for Monte Carlo, traveling on the tram twenty kilometers along the beach of the Mediterranean Sea to our first stop in the Principality of Monaco, the city of Monaco. The natural setting of the Principality was delightful. Built on high bluffs of the Mediterranean with mountains in the background, they charmed as well as fascinated the visitor. This state was the smallest in Europe, only comprising eight square miles and consisting of three towns, Monaco, La Condamine, and Monte Carlo, with a total population of 25,000 people. We walked through the street and up the incline to the Prince's Palace and from there, leaning on the stone wall, viewed the entire principality. It was a beautiful sight, so impressive that during all these years I have carried a great desire to visit it again.



The Principality
of Monaco

We went through the Prince's Oceanographic Museum and the Prince's Palace and then walked down the hill and around the Bay to Monte Carlo.

Monte Carlo was quite a town with its hotels, and cafes, and the gambling Casino.



Monte Carlo
Casino

We went through the Casino, but of course there was no gambling going on there at the time. Men in uniform were not allowed to visit during gambling hours.

After lunch, we boarded the tram again and went to Menton, the last town in France. From there we walked across the bridge into Italy. Italian guards were placed there, so we were only able to take a few steps on Italian soil to buy a postal card and stamp. I sent my cards home and then picked a wildflower by the road for a souvenir. I pressed it and mailed it to Martha. She still had it when I got home.

The weather was ideal. It was a beautiful day with the temperature about 70, and that trip put January 13, 1919, down as one of the most pleasant days of my life. I shall never forget it, probably because of its contrast under which I had been living for the past year, but I know I will thoroughly enjoy that same trip again some day.

We stayed in Nice the next day, January 14, 1919, and allowed a photographer to take our pictures in front of the hotel. They turned out pretty well, and we each bought several.



Bill and I sat
for a picture

The following day, January 15, we left at 9:00 o'clock with a Y.M.C.A. tour to Cimiez and Saint Pons. We saw the remnants of the Arena, supposed to be 1800 years old, with a seating capacity of 8,000 people. We visited the old Convent des Recollets and the church built in the 9th Century. In Cimiez, we saw where Queen Victoria of England delighted in spending much time during the last few years of her life. After visiting St. Pond's Church, we boarded the tram for Nice.

Showers fell the next morning, and Bill and I loafed around the hotel enjoying the leisure and visiting before he had to leave for Paris. After accompanying him to the train and bidding him good fortune, I went back and met my roommates and took a hike to Old Nice and the Chateau. Our leave was nearly at an end now; we had only about one full day left. I bought a few presents and mailed them home and got all set to pull out at 7:30 A.M. the next day, Sunday, January 19. The last train we could leave on was at 1:00 P.M., the same train Bill had taken, but we wanted a few hours in Marseilles, so planned to take the earlier train.

It was pretty rough to have to surrender all this luxury and idleness in exchange for hard work, poor food and generally miserable life that we knew was waiting for us in Brest, but early the next morning the four of us plus the other men of our leave group were on the train bound for Marseilles on the first leg of our journey back to camp.

We checked in at the RTO office in Marseilles and managed to secure twenty hour passes and because our Francs were getting pretty low, we inquired about a second class hotel for the night. We registered in, and started seeing the city but found it heavily patrolled by our military police--it seemed that there were far more places "off limits" than there were "open".

The next day, January 20, 1919, I was 21 years old. That sounds wonderful, to be able to spend your 21st birthday in Marseilles, France, but actually we didn't find much to do.

My interests centered around the wharves, but I was disappointed to find that if we wanted to visit the docks we had to confine our sightseeing to the American Section. The MP's wouldn't let us get very close to the French docks where there were ships from all over the world. This would have been interesting, but as I look back at it I can more easily understand why it was off limits.

I doubt if there was a tougher, rougher and more lousy place in the world than the French wharves at Marseilles at that particular time, but we covered the sights pretty well before we boarded the train at noon.

Hating to see the leave coming to an end, I suggested that maybe the four of us, Fleming, Gillfillan, Spencer and me, could get off the train at a good town and let it pull away and leave us stranded. The most likely looking place was Monte Limar, due at 4:30. When the cars came to a stop, we leisurely stepped to the platform as if for a short walk and wandered into the station. The train pulled out and left us stranded as planned. In a case like this, there is nothing to do but report to the R.T.O. for instructions, but we couldn't find any Americans anywhere. It was the only French town I ever saw without some American soldiers in it. So we put up at the hotel, Grand Hotel des Princes, for a cost of six francs (\$1.20) for a double bed room, and I set the four of us up to a birthday dinner costing five francs each, a six course dinner--soup, fish, spinach, steak, cheese, fruit, two quarts of red wine instead of water.

We went to bed early and slept until eleven A.M., not only to rest but to save the price of breakfast. After the noon meal, we saw the town until train time. We boarded the same train we got off yesterday. During our twenty-four hours in Monte Limar, we had seen no American soldiers. If we had money, I believe we could have stayed on indefinitely.

We passed through Lyon about eight P.M. but were too short of money to stop, so went on to Paris, arriving the next day at eight A.M., and got passes until 7:30 P.M. The other three men were now flat broke, but I had seven or eight francs, so reserved a seat on the Y.M.C.A. sightseeing bus, and left them to see the city. Starting from the Y, at St. Denis we covered the points of interest, stopping at Notre Dame Cathedral, St. Severin, St. Etienne du Mont, the Partheon, Eiffel Tower, Les Invalides, Arc de Triomphe, and

the Opera. The tour was the dying breath of my leave and after its completion I met my pals, had something to eat, checked out, and got the train for Brest with a franc and a half in my money belt. That was about two bits in American money.

CHAPTER XXIII
IN THE HOSPITAL AGAIN

It was only partly cloudy that morning in Brest after we had gotten off the train, and we wondered whether it had been this way since we left. We spotted a few of our Company men working across the tracks and walked over to talk to them to get the latest dope before reporting to camp.

"We have been wondering," they said, "where you four guys have been. All the other men in your leave group got in yesterday. They didn't know where you were, except that you were all on the same train leaving Marseilles."

"Yes", I answered, "we got sick from some bum oysters we ate in a fish house just before we left and went to the infirmary in a little burg a few miles north of Marseilles. What's the dope on sailing?"

"None, those damn officers of ours got the best job they ever had in their lives. They are the birds that are keeping us here."

"How about the weather? Been like this all the time?"

"Hell, no, rained every day since you left, except today."

"Well, guess we better start hiking. Gotta check in."

"Damn right, you better. You'll probably get the guard house for over-staying your leave."

"So Long."

"So Long. Bum oysters, my eye!"

By 11:30 we reached the orderly room and checked in.

"You men must have gotten lost or something," said the captain, "but I don't suppose you worried much, did you? Must have had a good time, though. I suppose you are tired. Better take the afternoon to rest up."

That evening we were cross-examined by the rest of our leave group. They were terribly curious to know where we had been, but we stuck to our original story about the oysters. They never did get the truth out of us, and they knew it.

The next morning the sun shone again for the second consecutive day, and I was put to work building shoe shelves beside the bunks in the barracks. In the afternoon I toted lumber for the camp mess hall, but while we were away, the men had built a narrow gauge railroad so that all we had to do now was to load the little cars and push them to the job.

It was one year in the Army for me that day, and at retreat it was announced that General Pershing would inspect the Camp tomorrow; so we would only work a half day. However, in order to make a good showing for the General, we were to scrape the mud off the duck board walks around our buildings that morning and drain as many of the mud holes as possible.

We thought we knew the reason for this inspection by the General. There had been no censorship of letters since Thanksgiving, and some of the men had been writing home telling of the deplorable conditions of the camp. Some of these letters had gotten into the hands of Senators and Representatives in the States, and from news reports we had received, the fur had started to fly in Congress. An investigation committee had been appointed and the Camp officers undoubtedly wanted our statements proved unfounded; so we were ordered to clean up the camp. You may be sure that no one went at it with any amount of enthusiasm.

We were sent back to our barracks a few minutes early at noon to have time to change our uniforms and clean up. We were to look clean and fresh for the reception. A half holiday had been declared..

We ate lunch, but a few minutes after were called into formation.

"General Pershing will not inspect the camp this afternoon. We will work as usual."

The next day was Sunday, and we had the full day off and used it to sit around the barracks and abuse the whole of France, our officers, our mess, our Army, the General, and Congress and the Senate, and we were disgusted with the whole layout.

On Monday, I pushed lumber again in the rain and mud, wearing raincoat and hat, with hip boots, all day.

That evening I was especially fatigued, and my tiredness seemed to be of a different variety than I had experienced dozens of times before. My whole body ached, and I felt feverish; so I hit the hay early.

The next morning, January 28, I dressed with the others following first call, answered roll call, had breakfast, but then reported to sick call. I definitely had a bad cough and cold, and the Medical Officer marked me for light duty. I was detailed for barracks police for the day with duties that consisted only of seeing that the barracks were in order and of guarding it from prowlers while the men were out. I went to bed early again feeling very poorly.

The following morning I thought I was able to assume my regular duties, so went out with the Company, but by noon I could scarcely drag myself back to the barracks so reported immediately to the Infirmary. The Medics sent me back to my bunk for the afternoon and asked me to report to them again at 6 P.M.

I ate nothing for dinner that night and saw the doctor again.

"Your temperature is only 101," he said, "but I am afraid to take a chance. I am going to call the ambulance and send you to the hospital."

I was admitted at 7:30 P.M. and diagnosed as influenza and chronic bronchitis. Strangely enough, I was delighted. I would far rather be mildly sick in the hospital than well and working in that never-ending rain and mud. I considered it another good break.



The wards on the left. Nurse quarters in the stone building.

The ward I was assigned to was the usual hospital type used for American troops in base hospital centers, of frame construction with wooden floors and stove near each end, one lavatory at the extreme end, and at the other the nurses' office and across from it the diet kitchen. The building was perhaps 150 feet long and wide enough for two cots to be arranged on each side so that the patient's head was near the wall and his feet towards an aisle that ran between the rows from one end to the other. Between cots was a small table and clothes hooks on the wall. Each ward had fifty beds, equipped with springs, mattress, blankets, sheets, and pillows and was electrically lighted. Two nurses were in charge. It certainly was a far different hospital than I was in last spring.

Some of the convalescent patients were still up when I came in, but most of the men were in bed, and except for a card game at the far end, all was quiet. Curiosity as to what the new patient looked like caused all who were able to rise up on an elbow to take a look, but none spoke. Except for some bewilderment and general feeling of loneliness among so many strangers, I was delighted with the thought that this clean, dry building was to be my home for a week or so. I could eat and sleep now and keep warm and dry.

I was assigned to my cot. It was sixth or seventh from the nurses' quarters and only three or four from the stove. One of the nurses handed me some pajamas and told me to undress. In a moment, she returned with an enamel wash basin of warm water, some soap, and a towel.

"You are to bathe before going to bed," she said and walked away.

I undressed slowly to give me time to try to figure out just how I was to take a bath in a hand basin and concluded that if I washed my feet that would be all that was expected of me because after all I didn't care to take a bath with forty-nine men and two nurses watching me. I had almost completed the job when the nurse returned.

"Is that the way you usually take a bath?"

"No, mam," I answered, "I usually take a shower."

"I don't mean that," she said, "washing feet first is an unusual way, but it is okay if you wish to do it that way."

She busied herself with a patient that needed some attention. I dried my feet and got into bed. The heck with this bath stuff. I had a peach of a tub bath in Nice, only eleven days before, and after all there was no sense in carrying this cleanliness thing too far tonight. Certainly they would allow me to use the camp bathroom for a shower just as soon as I was able. The nurse didn't mention the matter again. She simply picked up the basin, took my temperature, gave me two aspirins and a glass of whiskey. In a few minutes the lights were turned off, and all was quiet.

I slept soundly that night and was awakened in the morning by the thermometer and the gentle voice of the nurse. A soldier brought me my light-diet breakfast which I ate in bed. Those able to do so sat on their cots in bathrobes and ate from their tables. General activity then started, and I learned that the convalescents did much of the work around the ward, some carried in the wood,^{five}

others carried out dishes and washed the tables, two men mopped the floor, and each nurse had a man helping her change beds. With their work for the day done, some of the men sat beside the stove, but most went to the other end of the building where they played poker or watched the game on an empty cot. Not a bad life to live, thirty minutes work for three squares and a bed.

Later on the doctor came in to examine me. "What's the temperature?" he asked the nurse. "101.6, sir."

"He is in fair condition, lungs fairly clear, the usual treatment. Keep a chart on him", he told the nurse as they left me.

I was happy now, for I knew for sure that I was to be kept for a while and wouldn't have to go out in that damnable morale busting rain to tote lumber or dig drainage ditches.

On February 3, I wrote my first letter home from the hospital.

"You will have to leave it to me for living in style--I am right here with the best of them in the hospital with influenza. Can you imagine that? Well, don't try to, because you might think I was sick, and as it really is, I am about all well as you might know, or I wouldn't be sitting up in bed writing to you.

"I was never very sick, but at any rate I am better now. The hospital is so much better now than it was eleven months ago that it is almost a pleasure to stay here and keep away from hard work and mud. We have nice spring beds now with sheets and pillows. Get pretty fair meals, but it's the same old Army rations with the same old Army cooking, but each morning I get a cup of fresh milk, and in the afternoon some lemonade. This is the first of either of these I have had since leaving home.

"But what concerns me most is when am I going back to the U.S.A. I am awfully tired and lonesome from my year over here. Gee, how I wish I could get back. I may be held here for a couple of weeks longer. If the regiment

leaves during that time, I will be sent back as a casual, or if they are not ready to go when I am, I probably will leave them here because I understand a man does not go back to regular duty until two months after being discharged from the hospital following flu. So I will report back to the Company only if they have their sailing orders. I don't care how I get home, just so I get there. Being in the hospital gives a fellow plenty of time to get lonesome."

On February 6, I wrote:

"Today makes eight days in bed for me with the flu and a bad case of bronchitis. I still have hopes of sailing on a hospital ship instead of being sent back to the Company, and it looks a little better than a 50-50 chance I will. If I am able to do it, I probably will leave here in ten days or two weeks at the earliest so that the best I could do would be to land in New York on March 1. On arriving there as a patient I probably would be sent to Fort Dodge or Fort Snelling to await my discharge.

"I asked the nurse what would be done with me, and she said most likely I would sail as a patient because of all the sickness I had as a child, and now the flu with severe bronchitis puts me in a condition that is not favored by this climate."

For a week I was kept in bed, and except for a cough that developed I was very comfortable and contented. During that time some of the men from the Company came over to see me. On Sunday, they brought me some candy, cold chicken and doughnuts left from dinner. I was surprised, of course, when they told me the grand meals they were having, and they explained that orders were to spend all the money in the mess fund before leaving for the States, and boy, they were doing it! If mess funds had to be depleted before they sailed, they were going to see to it that they weren't detained for that reason.

The mail orderly brought my mail over to me, and Lt. Kehnen, who had been promoted from the ranks in Souilly, paid me a visit and checked up on the

clothing I had with me. It was gratifying to know that my buddies of the past year cared enough about me to call regularly to pay me a visit.

During the days in bed I had made several observations. No one in that ward died, but several were taken out on stretchers to the ward next to us. That building, I discovered, was the "dying ward." Each morning, I would watch for the stretcher bearers to carry out a fatal pneumonia case. I knew that as long as I was left in my present ward that my case was satisfactory.

Everyone that was well enough helped the nurses. I wondered what would happen if one of the men refused. Well, there was such a man, and the nurses reported him to the Ward Medical officer, who put him on a bread and water diet. Word got back to his Company about his plight, and one of his officers came over to defend him. There was a great argument--the officers left-- the man stayed on bread and water, but the next day he was discharged from the hospital. While all of this was going on, the rest of the patients said nothing. I believed the punishment was too severe although I had little sympathy for him because all the other men were more than happy to help all they could, and we were never asked to do but a few minutes work a day. It was a case of bull-headedness poorly handled.

As I lay on the bed, I watched the man next to me, who was helping in the diet kitchen, put eggs in his overcoat pockets. I watched his friends come in to buy these eggs from him, and then I realized that some poor sick fellow that was supposed to get fresh eggs wasn't getting them. It troubled me a great deal. I hardly knew what to do but concluded that it was up to me to report the incident. So one day I finally asked one of the nurses to put her hand in the overcoat pocket.

"Why should I," she asked.

"Just do it and see what's there."

When she found the eggs, she asked me how they got there. I told her to ask the man that owned the overcoat.

He was taken out of the diet kitchen and dismissed from the hospital.

Along about the tenth day I felt pretty strong and well, so when the doctor came in on his morning call, I asked him if I couldn't get up.

"Sure," he said.

"For how long a time", I asked.

"Just as long as you like", he replied as he moved on to the next cot.

After the nurse had made her rounds with him and he had left, she brought me a bathrobe and a pair of slippers and told me I could sit over ^{Near} never the stove. I started out as big as life but was surprised to find I had to hold on to the beds as I walked along. I was very weak and was exhausted when I finally reached the chair.

After about five minutes, I concluded it was too tough to sit up and asked a couple of the men to help me back to bed. The next day I was a great deal stronger and sat up much of the time. By the third day I was sitting at my table writing letters home.

Feb. 9, Sunday

"Dear Dad:

"Received your letter of January 23 a few days ago. It only took a day or so over a couple of weeks to get here.

"I am still in the hospital but feeling fine; got out of bed last Thursday afternoon. I am hoping that I can be discharged from here sometime during this week and sent home as a Class B man and convalescent. But it is kind of doubtful. It would be a shame for a man to spend a couple of weeks in a nice place like this, and then have to go back to laboring again in the mud. I am hardly fit to go back to the work I left. Although I am feeling pretty well, I am terribly weak after eight days on my back."

The following day, I was told, was to be pay day; so I got completely dressed in the afternoon and walked over to the Company to get mine. While there I had dinner with themen. I knew I wasn't in any physical condition to do this, but there were three men that owed me a total of 100 francs, and because I felt rather certain that I would never be put back into active duty again, this would be, in all probability, my last chance to collect my debts, so I stood by the paymaster's table as these men approached, and I dunned them.

The balance of the month of February passed by, one day at a time, just like any hospital days pass for anyone. I read a lot, just generally loafed, and rested while I convalesced.

On the 27th, the doctor recommended thirty-six of us for classification for return to U.S.A. Naturally we felt very happy and thought surely now it was only a matter of hours. So the next day I visited the Company barracks again and collected my personal things and barracks bag, said goodbye to my friends and went back to the hospital.

The next day, Saturday, March 1, I was called into the X ray laboratory for chest X rays. I had previously called the doctor's attention to my right elbow that had for the past four or five months given me considerable discomfort with constant aching. I hadn't cared to speak of it before because I wanted to stay with the Company during the closing days of the War, and immediately after the Armistice I figured we would be getting home any day and was afraid I might be left behind in a hospital. But now that I was in the hospital anyway, I thought it a good time to see if anything could be done for it, and also perhaps strengthen my case somewhat and probably swing the balance to going home.

So while I was in this X ray room, the doctors looked at my arm and x-rayed it. All patients with lung and chest trouble were X rayed before

being discharged from the hospital. The findings had a great deal to do with the final disposition. I naturally hoped they would find no permanent lung impairment, but on the other hand I certainly didn't want them to appear so good that I might be sent back to my Company. All thirty-six of us that were classified to go home had X ray examinations. I worried for the worst and prayed for the best. The next day I asked the nurse if she had any report on the X ray findings.

"Yes," she said, "they are on my desk now ready for the doctor when he comes in."

"Do you remember what mine said?"

"No, but I wouldn't be allowed to tell if I did. I will be busy at the other end of the ward for a while. Will you please watch my office for a few minutes? If the doctor comes in while you are there, come and get me."

Smart little girl that nurse. I liked her. My field medical card and clinical record with the X ray reports were there, and I read them carefully.

"X ray shows increased Hilus shadow, both sides, peri bronchial markings extending inwards, spaces and angles clear, chronic bronchitis following flu. X ray of elbow shows fracture of medial condyle with fragment thrown out."

I didn't know very much about what all this said, but it sounded good to me. Something had to be wrong. These words meant something, and my anxiety was greatly relieved.

Later we were told officially, thirteen of the thirty-six were sent back to duty; the rest of us were going home.

The next day I sent a telegram to my brother Bill, informing him that I was leaving this week as a convalescent. I expected to leave any moment on the fourth, but no such luck. The fifth was pay day again, so I went back to

the Company, had dinner with the men, and said goodbye all over again. The sixth came and went with nothing done. But on the seventh, three men left the ward for the States, and the Major okeyed my classification as B-2 convalescent, return to the U.S.A.

The nurses asked me if I would take charge of the diet kitchen until I was discharged. The diet kitchen job was a peach. That was where the sick men on light-diet had their food prepared for them. It was where the egg-nogs were made--where the milk and lemonade came from, and where all the little dainties that go to make special menus were prepared for invalids. I enjoyed doing that, just handling good food was fun. The nurses used to order a few things occasionally that weren't needed for the patients, extra eggs or milk, or maybe a half dozen lemons too many, and on one occasion three porterhouse steaks, one each for the nurses and one for the chef. That job helped pass the day very nicely. I enjoyed making nice things to eat and drink for my sick patients and was pleased to watch them relish them, but delighted if they didn't care for quite as much as I had prepared for them. I wasted no food.

I had been so sure that I would leave any day that I neglected to write home, and now that I was still there I was afraid the folks would become anxious about my condition. So I sent a cable home on the tenth.

"Sailing, twentieth Convalescent."

I was just guessing when I said the 20th, but I allowed myself ten days which certainly was more than enough.

Four more days passed, so I wrote to Bill to tell him I hadn't left yet, and also wrote home as follows:

Camp Hospital #33

Pontanezen Barracks

March 14, 1919

"Dear Dad:

And still another letter comes to you from France. Gee whiz, it is one disappointment after another. Here it is 45 days today in the hospital, and I am still waiting to be sent home. I do not dare leave the ward for fear they will come for me, and I will miss my chance of going.

The time goes awfully slow, and the monotony is fierce. I have never been so lonesome and homesick as I have the last few weeks.

All during the war the time went more or less swiftly, but right now I am on the toughest battle of them all. But I will sail sometime anyway, and if we just wait long enough, I will eventually get home. I have put on several pounds since I have been in the hospital and feel pretty well and healthy now. I thought I had a hard time getting into the Army, but it is a whole lot harder getting out."

During the time I was kept in bed, I was given whiskey and aspirin tablets as medicine. That was practically all that was used for influenza patients. I don't recall getting anything else, but as soon as my fever had broken, this cure--all naturally was dispensed with.

Both of my nurses were very fine girls, I liked them very much but was particularly fond of the Swede girl, a graduate of St. Marys Hospital of Duluth and the Senior nurse of the Ward.

She had night duty all the while I was there and had the happy faculty of being able to break up the poker game and have the men throw away their cigarettes about ten minutes before taking their temperatures, and then getting them all to bed and the lights out by 8:30.

After the click of the lights for the night she would start her tour of

inspection through the ward. Quietly she tiptoed from cot to cot to see that all her children were tucked in and comfortable. Each night as she came to me, she set a glass of whiskey on my table, but said nothing. On her return trip, she picked up the empty glass. This went on for nearly two months. Never once did I thank her or even speak to her, and never once did she speak to me. I wasn't foolish enough to ask questions, I had been trained not to, it was a purely "Off the record" act.

Shortly before I left the hospital, I got the nurses to lend me the doctor's white gown and his stethescope and had one of the men take our picture with me, holding a small pick axe, and with them, a butcher knife and hand axe.



Two week's
confinement
for this.

It was all in fun, but an officer on horse back sat and watched the whole procedure unnoticed by us until after the picture was taken.

That evening the nurses were informed that "For showing disrespect to an officer, making light of the medical profession and associating with an enlisted man", they were to be confined to quarters for two weeks.

Naturally I felt the responsibility for getting them into trouble and was very sorry about it. They laughed it off and told me to forget it because

they were so tired when they got back to the nurses' quarters after duty that they couldn't go out anyway, even if there was a place to go.

Finally, one day the classification cards came in, and I with fourteen others was transferred to the evacuation ward.

The following day we got all new clothing and salvaged all unnecessaries; the next day, Sunday, the 16th, four of the fifteen were sent back to their Companies, leaving only eleven to sit and worry about what would happen next. On Thursday, an officer announced that all who had not been paid for February would please sign the payroll. Four of the eleven had not been paid, and they couldn't leave France until their pay books were brought up to date. The seven of us were taken to Karhoun Hospital up the Bay to prepare some more for evacuation. That afternoon the head surgeon inspected our equipment, and we were supplied with what was necessary to complete our outfit.

The next day the commanding surgeon inspected our equipment, and gave us a belly and throat examination.

Our Ward building was close to the shore line, a few miles out of Brest proper. We could look over the water and see the ships in the harbor. On the third day we were there, the Leviathan dropped anchor at noon. That was March 22nd. On the 24th, we were told that we were to sail home on her and would leave tomorrow. The doctors gave us another throat and belly inspection.

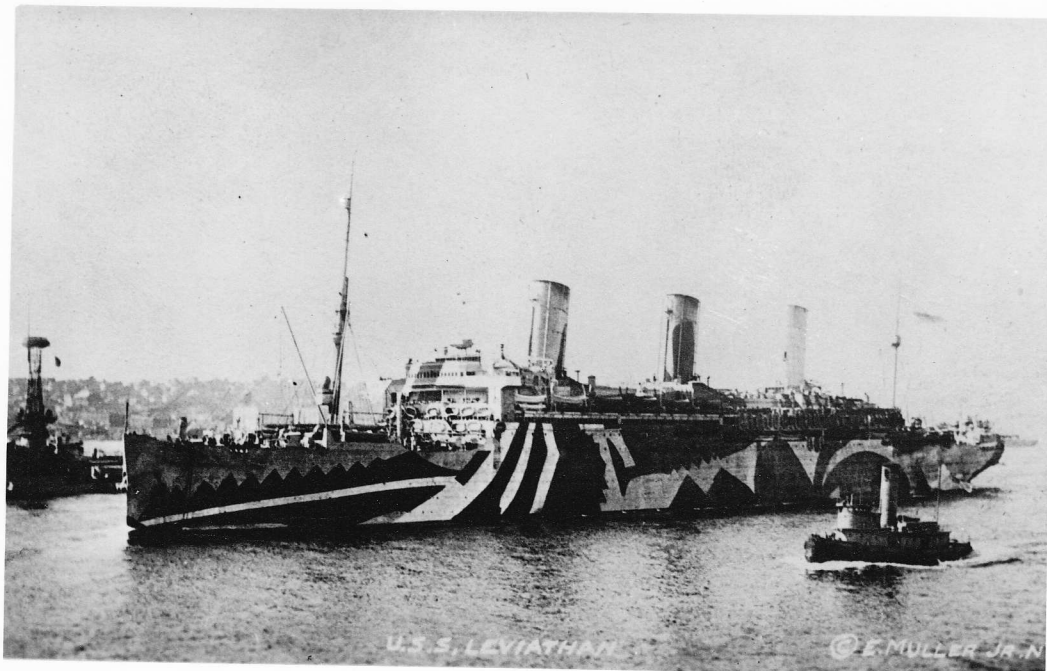
These examinations in themselves didn't amount to anything, but when we stopped to think what a calamity it would be for one of us to come down with measles or scarlet fever at this last moment, it made us terrified. All we needed was just to be exposed to measles, and our trip would be delayed weeks.

CHAPTER XXIV

U.S.S. LEVIATHAN

The Leviathan's record for carrying human beings across the ocean has never been approached by any other vessel in the history of the world. She transported 98,666 soldiers to Europe in ten voyages, an average of 9866 a trip. Following the War she brought 80,606 of the boys home in nine trips.

Originally built as the Vaterland by Blohm and Voss of Hamburg, Germany, the Leviathan was completed in 1914, in time to make only three voyages across the Atlantic under the German flag before she was interned by us with other German ships in New York for the War duration.



The Leviathan in War Paint

On April 6, 1917, after declaring a state of War existed with Germany, the United States seized the Vaterland with ninety other German ships in several ports of this country, and their officers and crews were taken to Ellis Island for distribution to Federal prisons as prisoners of war.

At this time, she was the world's largest ship, being $907\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, and from the top of the smoke stack to the water line was 146 feet. When manned by the Americans, she carried a total crew of 2240 men, including her gun crews.

On her third westward trip after the Armistice, leaving Brest, March 26, 1919, I was one of the 11,441 troops aboard. Her passenger list included officers and nurses and eleven civilians, and with her crew of 2217, there was a total of 14,277 souls on board, the largest man cargo to cross the Atlantic ever.

After she had completed her military usefulness, she was sold to the United States Lines for \$6,782,000.00 and was reconditioned for passenger service at a cost of \$8,000,000.00.

On July 4, 1923, she was placed in regular service on the Atlantic, where she operated until she docked in Hoboken on September 20, 1934, never to sail as a passenger or transport ship again. She had been outmoded by the Queen Mary and the Normandie. The United States Lines could no longer operate her profitably. January 26, 1938, she sailed on her final voyage under her own power with a skeleton crew. She had been sold for scrap iron to the British for \$755,000.00.

We, who knew old "Levi", could not help but feel a lump in our throats as news of her passing was announced to the world. One way trips always leave sorrowful friends at home.

CHAPTER XXV

GOODBYE TO FRANCE

For many months I had looked forward to this day. Anxiety grew intense as the moments dragged by. It was March 25, 1919, and from the time we were called at 5:30 A.M., a nervous perspiration oozed from my brow. It wasn't too late even now for somebody to change his mind about my going home. Maybe one of the men in the barracks might wake up with measles or mumps and put us all in quarantine, or maybe there were not accommodations for all of us, or maybe, oh, there were hundreds of things that could happen at the last moment. I had seen it happen too many times to feel at ease during the last few hours.

Breakfast was served, and at eight o'clock I listened to the first names called and watched them load into ambulances and wave goodbye; then the second group; and the third; still I waited. It was 9:30 when the officers sang out "143 Depot Brigade". Oh! Boy! That was my detachment. "Report to the receiving ward and prepare to check out." We joyously followed orders, and in a few moments I too put my foot on the loading step of the ambulance and sprang in. One more obstacle had been hurdled, and I was that much nearer to home.

Our first stop was at the wharfs in Brest. We fell into formation; the roll was called. All present.

The harbor at Brest was not deep enough for large vessels to pull up to the wharf. The "Leviathan" lay at anchor well out in the harbor. The lighter was there; maybe the same one I rode on one year and fifteen days ago, but before we boarded her this time, the Red Cross presented us with a khaki bag

of something and a slap on the back with a "Thanks for a good job well done," and wishes for a "Bon Voyage and a happy, prosperous civilian life." On the lighter I looked into my khaki cloth bag; there was a new pair of hand knitted socks, three bars of American chocolate, a handkerchief, a deck of cards, one package of cookies, some gum, and a tin of jam. But not only that, two of the Red Cross ladies were on the lighter with us and served coffee and buns on the way out.

The Red Cross was wonderful in France. They did so much for the men. Surely anyone that ever came in contact with them during the war would gladly respond to their annual Roll Call in civilian life and remember the day "Way back when." They were a great organization and gave me more attention than all the other organizations combined. I will never forget them.

As we boarded the Leviathan at 12:30, we were handed a card that told what bunk space had been assigned to us. Mine was No. 281, located on E deck, amidship in Compartment E.R.S.2. We had no difficulty in getting our location as all the men near me had bunks in the same section, and the sailors kept us in line and saw that we got down the proper hallways.

The bunks were similar to those going over on the "America" only we as patients were privileged to have a felt pad over the canvas of our bunks. This made them far more comfortable to sleep on.

At 2 P.M., we were given dinner, and at five o'clock we were called again for supper.

The ship lay in the harbor all night with troops continuously filing on, and the sailor coal crews shoveling in coal from barges.

I awoke at 6:00 the next morning and got up and went to the wash room, and cleaned up. First call was not until half an hour later, but I felt bum with a headache due to crowded sleeping quarters. Breakfast was at seven, and as we were to have only two meals a day while on board, dinner call was at four in the afternoon.

All day the sailors coaled the ship, all day troops boarded her, and all day I wandered over the decks and watched the beehive of activity. Just before we weighed anchor shortly after 6:00 P.M., the stretcher cases were brought aboard and taken to the ship's hospital.

Once under way we moved out to Sea fast. It was only minutes before the city of Brest was just a shore line. 791,000 soldiers had shouted with glee at this sight of land during the War; it was a great comfort then. Now I was leaving it.

In a moment, France would only be a fond memory. The old camps, the towns, buildings I had helped build, the funny railroad cars, and many wonderful friends who had stuck with me through trials and tribulations, I was leaving it all. Maybe some day I could return and trace my soldier footsteps with those of a civilian. I would like to do that, but now the War was over for me. I was through.

Maybe you can understand why a few tears trickled down my cheeks, and maybe you can't, but nevertheless they did, and I hoped no one had noticed. I turned my back and walked a few paces towards the bow, then swung around again for one last look at France. It was too late, she had gone. I squinted and stared for just one last glimpse of the hills of Brest, but it was of no use.

We were on the high seas now, America, my home, was just over the horizon; all we had to do now was to sail over that hump out ahead, and I would be home. My sentimental mood vanished. It was wonderful, and I was very happy.

I went to my bunk early to be by myself and dream plans of the beautiful years to follow. I was grateful to God that night. He had cared for me tenderly during that year when I was changed from a boy to a man.

I slept well; all tension and eagerness had left. I was completely relaxed.

Surely, I was homeward bound now, and regardless of whether or not I was exposed to measles, scarlet fever, or anything else that was carried on board I wouldn't be kept in France in quarantine. America was the next stop, dead or alive. It was too late now for anybody to change his mind and keep me in Europe. It was a grand comforting feeling to have. Not even submarines to annoy us. White lights in the bunk rooms and port holes open with good fresh air coming in. What a trip.

The bugle woke me in the morning, and with my mess kit, I formed in the chow line, passed the kitchen and into the long dining room with row upon row of long high tables with no seats. We stood to eat, and ate fast to make room for the thousands that were to come.

Up on the deck I went after mess to enjoy a leisure promenade, and a look out over the sea. I began to realize that I was alone among 12,000 men; not a familiar face I saw among the hundreds I looked at. The benches up against the walls were lined with men; the railings on the sides supported hundreds of others, all happy and visiting. It didn't seem possible that there wasn't an old familiar face there. I walked on.

"Hey, Howard!" came from somewhere. I stopped. There coming to me was an old boyhood pal, Harold Hillman, from Boy Scout days. I hadn't seen him for years. We had been great chums back in 1910 and 1911 but had wandered apart when high school girls became more interesting than scouting.

"My gosh, boy, I'm glad to see you. No need asking where you have been Harold, or where you are going. How are you anyway?"

"O.K., going home as a casual though."

"That's tough Hillman. What's the matter?"

"T.B., they say. Are you with your outfit?"

"Nope, I'm a casual too, influenza. Let's get out of the crowd. You're a Marine, huh?"

We spent the balance of the day together and went to the Ship movie show in the evening. It was great to be with an old friend from home.

Neither of us knew he had only a few months to live. While waiting for Hillman the next morning at a designated spot, I was surprised to see one of my old lieutenants walk by. I spoke to him as he passed. Perhaps he did not hear me, he didn't speak, but I damned army regulations that trained an officer to be so superior to his men that sociability was out of the questions. I would have thoroughly enjoyed a visit with him to talk things over, but he only walked on. I knew he was not well, or he wouldn't have been leaving ahead of the outfit. I never saw him again. A few years later word reached me that he had left this world over the same route as my old friend, Hillman.

After seeing the lieutenant, I decided to take a brisk walk around the deck on the opposite side. It was on this jaunt that I spotted another old boyhood pal and schoolmate, Norton Risedorph of the 151 Field Artillery, Rainbow Division. He left in the fall of 1917. I hadn't seen him since.

"Hey, Nortie."

A look of astonishment, "My Gosh, How!"

"How yea been Nortie."

"O.K. now."

"Been sick?"

"No! Shrapnel in knee, going home casual, how ya been?"

"Oh, O.K., had the flu. Pretty lucky, huh? I'm going casual too. The outfit's stuck in Brest. Seen Hillman?"

"Hillman? No, where's he?"

"On the other side, Nortie, waiting for me. If you're not too busy, let's walk around."

We had a great reunion. Three boyhood pals, who grew up in the same neighborhood, have a great deal in common. The war had now added materially to our great store of accomplishments. Here we were all from different branches of the Service, all casualties from different ailments, coming home on the same ship after months of total separation.

We spent most of our time together for the rest of the voyage. One day we climbed out on one of the lifeboats to have our picture taken while the sailor police frantically yelled, "You can't sit there, soldier."



We sat on a
life boat

So, we took a walk and ducked under the ropes on to the officer's deck for another picture before getting chased off.



The decks were crowded

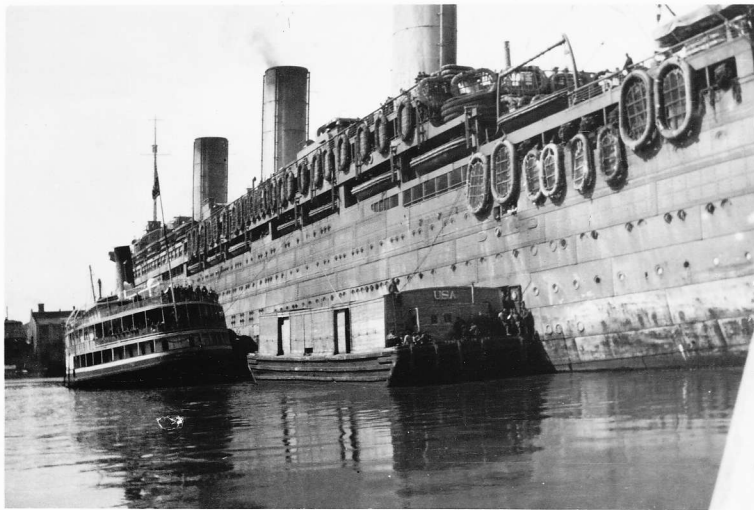


On the Officer's Deck

The crowds on the troop decks were so great it was almost impossible to take our pictures, but I got a good one of the crowd.

The morning of the 7th day was April 2, 1919. Breakfast was an hour earlier; so I was able to be on deck about 6:30 and among the first to sight land through the haze.

I stayed there until 10:00 A.M. and watched the mayor's reception committee pull along side with flags waving and bands playing. They had a boat of their own and certainly gave us a grand welcome as the harbor tugs tooted and lashed on for the tow up the bay and East River. The Statue of Liberty was most beautiful that morning; even she seemed to wave to us. It was a joyous occasion. As the great ship lashed to her mooring at her pier in Hoboken, we were ordered below to prepare to disembark. Troops filed off in orderly fashion down the gang plank, and on the other side, a ferry boat took on the casualties to transport us to New York.



A Ferry boat
took the casualties

There we were put into ambulances and taken to U. S. Debarkation Hospital, number three at 6th Avenue and 18th Street, known as Greenhuts Hospital. That short trip was lots of fun for us. The ambulances, of course, were for "walking" cases and seated 10 or 12. I had the last seat near the open rear end. The people of New York were grand to us, word had spread that the Leviathan had landed, and they were set to receive us. As the ambulances went through the streets, many people shouted cheery words and tossed us candy bars and gum. It was a reception for conquering heroes that you read about. We entered into it and acknowledged it by waving and shouting back. I liked it.

In the hospital receiving room, we were checked in and hustled down a hallway and into a large room for cootie inspection. No soldier was supposed to get into this country without first going through the delouser.

We took off our overcoats and outer clothing, tagged them with our name, and threw them into a pile, after removing all money and valuables and checking them. An examiner looked at our undershirts as we took them off and then threw them in a pile; our drawers went into another pile; our barracks bags were inspected, and all woolens taken from us. At the other end of the line were shower baths. We were allowed five minutes under them to clean up; towels were handed us, then pajamas, and slippers; and we were escorted to our wards and cots. It was 5:00 P.M. when I had completed my day. The folks at home didn't know that I had arrived in the States yet, so when the Red Cross representative came through, I wrote a telegram home, and as I had no money, sent it collect.

"Arrived Greenhuts Hospital Well tell Martha."

I had dinner and wrote letters home to tell them of all my good fortune and to let them know that I would soon be discharged and home. No one in the world was happier than I.

We expected to get our clothes back the next day, but it was not until 11:30 A.M. on April 4th, after standing in line several hours that we reclaimed them. I had hoped to get a pass to see New York that night, but my blouse had shrunk so during the delousing process that I couldn't wear it, so had to wait to exchange it. Perhaps I could have put my overcoat over my shirt, but I didn't have any overcoat either. It hadn't been pressed yet. Then too, we were told to hang around because we would be paid. However, we weren't; so after evening mess, I borrowed an overcoat from an acquaintance who had both uniform coat and overcoat. Both of us got passes and went out. We visited the Hall of States that had a representative there from every State in the Union to give the glad hand of welcome to their Native sons. The Minnesota man was Mr. Forsell from St. Paul, the father of one of my classmates at Central High School. We had a nice visit, and he introduced me to a charming young lady from North Dakota. Her home was nine miles out of Beach on the N.P. Ry. spur line from Beach to Ollie, Mont. It so happened that I worked as a chainman with the surveyors when that line was put through during the summer of 1915. We had a great visit until some North Dakota boys came in.

From there, my friend and I walked down 5th Avenue. It was magnificent, English signs that I could read and a language I could understand. For fourteen months I had seen nothing like it. I reveled in the glory of America.

The next morning, April 5th, I took all morning to exchange my clothes for something that would fit, and after lunch we were paid, and I really set out to see the town. I bought a couple of cigars and boarded a 5th Avenue bus to Central Park. In the evening I went to the N.Y. Hippodrome to see "Everything."

On Sunday, April 6th, my new friend, Blakelee, and I went to the Patients' House of War Work Community Service for a chicken dinner and then got on the elevated to Bronx Park and came back by the "L" and subway to Times Square, had ^{supper} dinner and went to another show.

The next morning passed by taking a long walk down 6th Avenue, looking into shop windows. In the afternoon one of the theaters turned over the house to us and ran a special show for the hospital patients. We saw "Come on, Charlie". I stayed in that night and wrote letters. Of course, I had hoped to be evacuated by this time and continue on my way home, but while I was terribly anxious to move on, I knew this was undoubtedly the finest place, outside of home, to be.

Tuesday, April 8th, we were invited to take a sight seeing tour of the city as the guests of the Knights of Columbus. I was delighted to accept, and at 2:00 P.M. the buses called for us; our guides pointed out the important buildings and we went to Wall Street, Columbia U., and Chinatown. We were treated to all the cigarettes and candy we wanted and had ice cream and cake. It was a splendid thing for the K.C.'s to do; we appreciated it.

In the evening, I went alone to the Shubert Theater to see "Good Morning Judge", and got official notice, when I returned, that I was to be ready to leave tomorrow at 12:30 for Camp Dodge, Iowa.

At 1:00 P.M., I left with 125 others in ambulances for the train. It was a happy surprise. Instead of the regular day coach troop train, there were army cots set end to end, sixteen on each side, with sheets, blankets and pillows. It was the most comfortable looking car I had ever seen. We went through Cleveland and Toledo the next day and Chicago at 9:30 P.M. At each of these stops, the Red Cross ladies came through the cars with an assortment of free food and candy, handkerchiefs, socks, toothbrushes or whatever we desired.

The morning of the third day we pulled into Camp Dodge, Iowa, at 9:30 ~~A.M.~~ and spent the balance of the day being examined and checked over generally and finally being sent to be quartered in the evacuation center in barracks.

The next morning at 8:30 I started through the examinations again and was marked as a casual ready for discharge. I was then put on K.P., the first work I had done since I left the diet kitchen back in the hospital in Brest.

I was terribly anxious to get home now, but another Sunday had arrived with nothing to do. So I passed it by a walk out in the country and saw the K.C. free movies in the evening.

On Monday, April 14, I filled out my service blanks and temporary service record, and then the officer asked me to work with six other men to write out service records for the rest of the men. By noon, we had completed our work, and after lunch we went through another complete physical examination, fully as rigid as the one I took when entering the service.

I worked in the office again the following day until late at night completing all the paper work necessary to discharge us the next morning.

On April 17th at 1:30 in the afternoon I received my honorable discharge and \$92.50, of which \$60.00 was bonus for civilian clothes. The balance was mileage to St. Paul and 17 days pay.

As quickly as possible I got my barracks bag and ^{boarded} got the bus for town to take the first train home.

Honorable Discharge from The United States Army



TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to Certify, That* Howard Payler
†1670650 Pvt 16 Casual Det 288 163 D B Last Assigned
Co. E 25th Engrs
THE UNITED STATES ARMY, as a TESTIMONIAL OF HONEST AND FAITHFUL

SERVICE, is hereby HONORABLY DISCHARGED from the military service of the
UNITED STATES by reason of Fel Auth WD Nov-15 and A. H. Sta
Said Howard Payler Nov-30-1918 was born
in St. Louis, in the State of Missouri

When enlisted he was 20 years of age and by occupation a student
He had dark eyes, dark hair, ruddy complexion, and
was 5 feet 10 inches in height.

Given under my hand at Camp Dodge, Iowa this
17 day of April, one thousand nine hundred and nineteen

Louis Cassel

MAJOR SIGNAL CORPS, U. S. A.

Commanding.

ENLISTMENT RECORD.

Forwarded 1/27/21. approved by C. J. Dockler, 1st Lt. av.
for Victory Medal With clasp.

Name: Howard Taylor #1670650 Grade: Private 1 C

Enlisted, or Inducted, Jan 24, 1918, at St Paul, Minn.

Serving in first enlistment period at date of discharge.

Prior service: * None

Noncommissioned officer: Never

Marksmanship, gunner qualification or rating: † Not qualified

Horsemanship: Not mounted

Battles, engagements, skirmishes, expeditions: A. E. F. Meuse-Argonne

Knowledge of any vocation: Student

Wounds received in service: None

Physical condition when discharged: Good

Typhoid prophylaxis completed Feb. 1918

Paratyphoid prophylaxis completed

Married or single: Single

Character: Excellent

Remarks: No A.M.O.L. or absence under S.O. 31 and 45. Entitled travel pay. Left U.S. for France Feb. 27, 1918. Returned U.S. Apr. 2, 1919.

Signature of soldier: Howard Taylor

CAMP DODGE, IOWA

APR 17 1919

Paid in Full Including

Bonus. \$ 92.54

A. A. Padmore

Capt. Quartermaster, U. S. A.

W. H. [Signature]

U. S. A.

Commanding

Cas. Det No. 288, 162nd D. R.

* Give company and regiment or corps or department, with inclusive dates of service in each enlistment.
† Give date of qualification or rating and number, date, and source of order announcing same.

I got off the train in Minneapolis the next morning and phoned home. My sister Gladys answered the telephone and was very happy to know that at last I was discharged and would be home in a few minutes.

"Dad," she said, "is at the office. We didn't know you were coming today, but I will phone him."

I took the interurban car and transferred ^{at} to Prior and University ^{Avenue} to the Merriam Park line, and as I came to Carroll Avenue, I saw Dad running to meet the car. I waved to him, and he waved to me, and by the time the streetcar came to a stop he was nearly there.

With tears in his eyes, he patted me on the back and tried to talk. "My boy, my boy, thank God you're home."

"Let me help you with your pack, son. Lord, but I am proud to be walking with you."

"No thanks, Dad. No one has helped me with a pack since I left home. Let me finish the job."

The weather-beaten American flag still hung over the doorway, and in the front window hung the red and white service flag with two stars in the center.

That afternoon my sister removed one of them and replaced the flag to await the return of Bill, and I called on Martha to make plans for the wonderful years to follow.