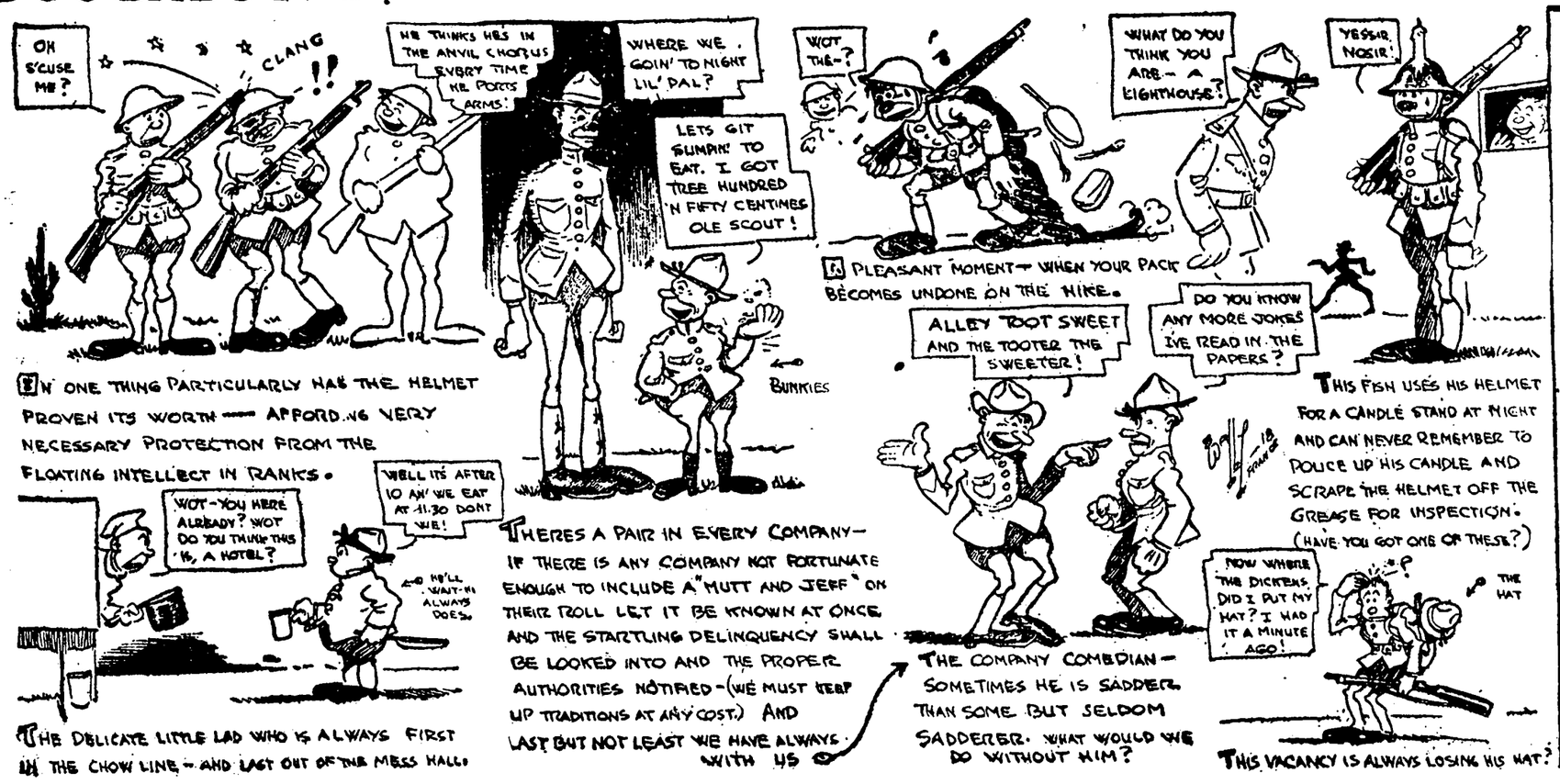
DOUGHBOY STUFF FROM THE INSIDE

—By WALLGREN



ARMY MOVIE MEN ARE THE BRADYS OF 1918

War Diaries on Motion Picture Films Portray Our Troops Behind the Lines and in Action

Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r!

The American soldier, standing in the village square, looked up in a startled sort of way. Machine-guns it sounded like, that br-r-r-r-r—and machine-guns not very far away. Machine-guns before this have fired down on unsuspecting troops from innocent appearing housetops, as the American, who had been at Vera Cruz and way stations, very well knew.

He cast a hurried glance up above him. Sure enough, there was a muzzle of something sticking out from behind that shutter. Instinctively he clutched for his Gat, and then——

"Don't be alarmed, Buddy," a cheery voice, emanating from back of the muzzle sang out to him. "Carry on, just as you are. You're the first specimen I've seen of an Amex man taking things easy, and I've got orders to film everything unusual in connection with Uncle Sam's army. Just stroll around a bit, will you? Thanks. Now try to make friends with that little six-year-old French girl (I guess she's about six) toddling along there with the doll. That's fine—Bully! Lift her up on your shoulder now, and walk along this way. Oh, don't handle her as if she were a basket of eggs! Cuddle her right up there, she may shy from your beard a bit, but I doubt it. Aw, man! You don't know how to handle a kid! Act as if you liked it. Kindness, man, register kindness; paternal love—that's it!—register paternal love!"

The soldier, wondering if he was stealing a leaf out of Jeanne d'Arc's book, hearing strange voices and seeing visions, blunderingly obeyed. The little French girl acted her part admirably, waving her hand up toward the wicked looking muzzle of the movie camera and blowing a kiss to the possessor of the cheery voice—who had just stuck out his head—as he directed the "scene." The action over, she clambered down, and scampered away.

Snapping From Ambush

The soldier, still dumbfounded, stood gazing at the window from which the muzzle had disappeared. Out of the house which had given shelter to the camera and its operator emerged the cranker, wearing upon his Oversea cap the insignia of his lieutenancy in the Signal Corps. The soldier saluted.

"Much obliged for your 'suping' for me," grinned the movie-officer, returning the salute. "Where you had it on some of the other fellows was that you knew you were being snapped, and had time to straighten out the kinks in your hat, and so forth. Some of them we take at drill and on the hike and so forth don't know what's happening until their mothers or best girls, or both, back in the States, write to them and ask them since when they have given up the army and gone into acting for the movies."

"You're not—the lieutenant isn't going to send my picture back to the States?" queried the soldier, in dismay.

"Sure. Why not?" the genial gentleman replied. "You didn't give away any military information by posing with that little French kid. That human-interest stuff will, as they say in the trade, 'get over big' back home. Lucky for you I didn't ask you to pose with a French girl a little bit older than that. Then if your girl saw it in the movies you'd have a fine time explaining things, wouldn't you?"

And acknowledging the salute of the still bewildered soldier, the lieutenant tucked his camera under his arm and walked away.

Like Another "Brady" Series

This isn't a fake yarn just to kill space. It's merely a glimpse of the work the photographic section of Signal Corps is doing here in France with movies and "still" cameras, in collecting what is proposed to be "a complete photographic history" of American participation in the war—such as Brady made with "stills" of the Civil War. "Scenes" such as the one just described, scenes of training of embarkation—yes, of actual combat—all are to be photographed. Some, including those of specialized training, will be reserved for official use, while the others will be distributed in the United States to give the people at home the one thing they crave: The sight of their soldiers at work and at play, amid the strange surroundings of the Old World.

There is one movie-officer at present assigned to every division in the A.E.F.—one might call him the commander of the camera battery, if one wanted to be really military about it. Under him is a squad of expert photographers—some movie men, some "still" snappers. From the time when the sun finally decides that he might as well hobble up in the sky and do part of a day's work—which isn't often, in this region—until the time that the aged decrepit old solar luminary decides again, about the middle of the afternoon, that he's done all he's going to do while the calendar is fixed the way it is, the camera battery is up and around, taking pot-shots at everything in sight. The battery—or rather, squad—goes out on "news tips," just as newspaper photographers and operators for "news weeklies" go out in the States. They may be "covering" a review, a series of field manœuers, a march "up front"—or merely Blank Company's wash-day at the village fountain. But always, when the sun is shining, they are at it.

"Light conditions here in France," says one of the divisional movie-magnates, "are worse than they are anywhere else in the world. Our working day for picture taking lasts only from about 9:30 in the morning to 3 o'clock in the afternoon. But it takes us a good deal of time to get around to the things we want to film, so our actual working day is much longer, of course. At that, even with the sunshine we do get, the only color that seems to come out is yellow—a yellowish mud color. It's fierce!"

The "film flight-commander" in question certainly ought to know. He has taken travel pictures in the Arctic, in the Sahara Desert, in the wilds of New York's East Side, in—and this is not a real-estate ad—sunny California.

Shrapnel Spoils His Plates

"No, sir," he will tell you, "if I had had my way, sir, this war would have been staged in a tropical climate. You can really do something with a camera then. Besides, we have trouble here with a very disobliging enemy. Down in Mexico, in the good old days when Villa was scrapping with Obregon, and Carranza with both of them, and all of them at once with Diaz, or however it went, they never used to start their battles until the movie man arrived on the scene. They would as soon think of fighting without movies as they would of living without cigarets and pulque. But the Boches? Drat 'em! They've spoiled some mighty good plates for us with their cussed shrapnel. It spatters the mud around so you can't get a good exposure.

"Then, too, the style of warfare they play over here doesn't lend itself very well to movie work. You can't very well go out into No Man's Land and take a picture of both lines of trenches—that is, and get back with your film—or your hide—in condition to be shown anywhere again. Down in good old Mexico, though—those were the battles to film! Real, rip-roaring charges and open-field fighting—all this Dustin Farnum wild west horseback stuff, where you could get close-ups. Half of the engagements you try to get over here look like just so much peaceful landscape, with here and there a little smoke coming out."

"How does the American soldier size up as a movie actor?" another of the army's Thomas H. Inces was asked.

Doughboys and Stars

"Fine!" was the reply. "He's as cheerful as Douglas Fairbanks, all the time, and he's doing just about as many difficult stunts over here, Heaven knows! He registers pleasure more than anything else; you never film him but he's smiling. By long training he's learned to keep his feet in much better control than Charlie Chaplin does, and the work they give him doesn't let him develop into much of a Fatty Arbuckle about the waist. He may not always be as handsome as the Farnum boys, or as cute as little Mary, but, in spite of all they say about the Q.M.'s department, he wears more clothes than Theda Bara!

"Yes, sir, I've seen and filmed the doughboy—and his friend the leatherneck—all over France, and from what I've seen of the Yank fighting man he's always a gentlemen. When he isn't standing at attention, he's always at his ease—graceful. He never poses for the camera, even when he knows we've got one trained right on him. He just goes ahead and does his work, and never minds the gallery. Of course, he doesn't get paid as much as some of the screen stars back home, but at that he's much easier on the director's nerves, and on the nerves of the 'other members of the cast.'

"The French? Yes, they love to be filmed, particularly the children. They just itch to get a chance to dance in front of an American camera. Out in some of the country districts where we went, the people had never seen pictures being taken, and crowded around at a great rate. I rather imagine we gave them quite a treat."

No Custard Pie Comedy

The films all go to a central office in Paris, where they are developed, censored—not even the movies escape it!—separated into "official" and "general." The "general" ones usually find their way back to the States, but the chaplains and the Y.M.C.A. authorities hope to have some of them shown over here, in the huts, for the A.E.F. to see.

"Take it as a whole," the lieutenant in charge was asked, "you get all lines in the movie business—comedy, tragedy, scientific, travel and the rest—in your work over here, don't you?"

"Yes," he replied, "everything but the custard pie comedy. Pastry flour is too expensive, and American pies are too scarce in this country to allow us to film that. Tell you what, though; just stand over there! Now, start to take notes—look serious—Good! I've got about fifty feet of the first U.S. Army newspaper reporter in France, caught in the act of working. In just a minute it you'll turn your head——"

But the reporter, who (like all of his kind) dreads personal publicity, had already vanished around the corner.

FEARS FOR DELICATE SON

Washington, Jan. 30.—Out of maternal solicitude that the rigors of warfare might be too much for her "delicate" son, a woman living in Fresno, Cal., has written to United States Marine Corps headquarters here, asking that the young man be discharged.

"He is too weak and delicate to be in the service," she wrote. "He is a blacksmith's helper by trade, and I would prefer him to stay at his last job."

The mother was informed that, for the time being, her son must remain a Marine.

"—FOR SHE HAS SAVED THE SOUL OF THE WORLD"

"France embodies all of loveliness and all valor. Beauty is her handmaiden, and strength her shield bearer, and the shining courage of her daughters has matched the courage of her dauntless sons. For three and a half terrible years she has walked, high of heart, through the valley of the shadow. Her body is in torture, but her forehead is alight with the beauty of the morning. Never in all history has there been such steadfast loyalty in the doing of dangerous duty, such devotion to country, such splendor of service and of sacrifice and great shall be her reward—for she has saved the soul of the world"—*From an address by Theodore Roosevelt at the annual dinner of the Pennsylvania Society of New York.*

PEOPLE WE'D LIKE TO MEET

The composer who wrote the Reveille call.

The contractor who made those field shoes.

The packer who concocted that "canned Willy."

The dealer who supplied that storage battery for our non-lightable flashlight.

The underwear manufacturer who left the sheep burrs in those pants.

The outfitter who tied those knots in the toes of those socks.

The rubber goods dealer who used a sleve instead of a sole for those boots.

The hat maker who made all those new chapeaux of the uniform size of 9.

The button manufacturer who made all those buttons out of pasteboard.

The uniform maker who sewed all those buttons on with invisible thread.

The guy who told us that "dubbin" was good for shoes.

The girl who told us we'd never stand any chance with her unless we enlisted.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN

There was a young Hun of Berlin
Who picked up a bomb with the pin;
When he took the pin out he was sent
with a clout
To the place all Huns should be in.

—*Aussie*, the Australian Soldiers' Magazine.

FROM CHEVRONS TO GOLD BARS

While waiting for his whipcord suit to arrive, he slices the chevrons off his blouse, adjusts the very new insignia to his collar and takes a full hour pinning in the two gold shoulder-bars before he is satisfied that they are parallel. (At that he doesn't get them parallel at all.) Then he gets his Sam Browne belt so tight that it clamps him every time he takes an extra deep drag at a cigaret. Next he gets it so loose that it flaps and makes a rattling noise against his breastbone when he takes his platoon out on the double-time. Finally he becomes so disgusted with it that he covers it with his overcoat—for which the slender sleeve-braid has not yet arrived—so as to hide his inability to fix it.

But the overcoat presents difficulties, too. The places over his vaccination and "bing" spots, once covered by his chevrons, are so much cleaner than the rest of the fabric. Those two tell-tale patches make all the difference in the world. "What's the matter, Jimmy?" allegedly-sympathizing ex-comrades keep coming up and saying, "Been Busted?" Then—pretending to see his black-and-gold hat-cord for the first time—"Oh, beg pardon, Sir!" they exclaim, salute, and walk away—with a snicker that is not entirely lost on the victim.

The worst part of all comes in saluting. The new "second" sees a group of men put their hands up, and looks hurriedly around to see whom he has missed greeting. When he discovers that he is the only "it" in sight, he is covered with confusion, hurriedly snaps off a very poor salute—usually after the men who saluted him have passed—and mumbles to himself that he will do better next time. But next time he salutes too soon—generally thus honoring a buck private!

Of course, the older officers are as kind as can be to him, and congratulate him, and say they knew he'd make good at the training school, but they can't be blamed for laughing when, at the conclusion of mess, he picks up the china plate in front of him and starts outdoors to wash it. Nor, for that matter, can his platoon be blamed for an inward rumble of mirth when his first "Squads—left—HRRCH!" dwindles off into the faintest of falsettos. The climax comes, though, when he takes his first trick as officer of the day and inspects his guard between midnight and reveille. The things he runs into then may safely be left to the imagination.

Everybody's hunching for him, though; the sergeants will pull him out of a hole every time they can, by changing the guide so that his column won't go entirely in the ditch, and in lots of other ways. By the time his real uniform arrives, and its newness has worn off a bit, and his voice gets under control, and he is on the look-out to return salutes, he is very much "The Goods." The outfit is proud of him for having collected those bars, and the "oldsters" with two shoulder-straps and oak leaves and eagles envy him his youth—and his chance.

PROVOKING

(Extract from Order No.—"Officers on trench duty will count all shells, etc., passing over their sector.")

Officer on fire step: "Five hundred and seventy-one, five hundred and seventy-two, five hun——"

Relief: "Here we are Mr. Hig—"

Officer on fire step: "SHUT UP, you idiot! Five hundred and seventy-er-er—. Now I've lost count!"—*Aussie*, the Australian Soldiers' Magazine.

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