

BASE PORT SOJERS FIGHT IN DUNGAREES

And the Jobs They Do Make War Just One Thing After Another

MEETING PLACE OF RACES

Q.M. Stove Looks Good After Day of "Workin' on de Railroad"

Life in a base port in France is not all a fighting man's fancy. He may be called upon to do much work not strictly in the line of military duty, shouldering pick or shovel instead of a rifle, handling cargo stuffs instead of sand bags, standing guard as a crossing cop instead of as a sentry. But though he may not particularly relish the job at the time, he usually looks back upon it afterward without bitterness. His work isn't easy, but it has its compensations; and after the war certain glimpses of those days spent in a French support will be found among his treasured memories.

The hardest blow—such as it is—falls when the news is broken to the Old Regiment that for a time it must put by its rifles and bayonets.

With colors unfurled and the band playing, the outfit marches away to its new camp. It is just such a glorious day as we had dreamed of back in the boot camp; sun shining, band blaring, colors flying in the breeze, new world troops on the march through the quiet, wooded streets of a picture town, and everybody jubilant. People on the sidewalks cheer and wave, umbrellas in hand—meadows of horizon blue seaport beside the bandstand, and old women—there must be thousands of these Barbara Fritchie-like in France beam down upon us from second story windows.

Knockout Blow for Romance

Then the blow falls. The camp quartermaster comes striding down an avenue of noble shade trees (our Main Street), salutes our colonel and breaks the news that Monday morning the regiment must turn to at dock and railway work—pending the arrival of an outfit of negro sevelovers.

Monday morning the first working detail forms in the company street. Roll call over, the head of the column swings down the tree-lined avenue, marches at attention through a nearby village and then strikes out along a water-side road for the docks and railway yards.

The harbor is full of merchant ships and small war craft. The "Triolor," the United Jack, the Stars and Stripes, Norway's red, white and blue, Sweden's gold and blue, Denmark's crimson and white are flying. A trim little Spanish schooner, silver grey, has a berth beside an old looking Greek bulk which sports a frieze of decoration as truly artistic as any that ever adorned a ship's side. An American destroyer, camouflaged like a circus band wagon, darts up channel. A huge lumber-hued liner, in the tow of four tugboats, creeps behind.

Funny Men Get a Chance

The working party's column on the water-side highways leads into route step and sings: "Oh, Boy, Oh, Joy, Where Do We Go From Here?" It streams past a long facade of grimy grey old world stone houses and brings up at last at a cross roads.

A major of railway engineers takes charge. He details one platoon to march on up the line to unload rails, another to dock work, a third to pick and shovel fatigue on a railway grade, a fourth to laying and spiking rails.

Most of the men are now to the job and in consequence the company humorists have an inning. At that, the progress made is surprising. So long as it is a novelty, fatigue duty of this sort becomes a chance from "squads right" and the mutual of arms.

At midday the cautions come down with hot food and coffee, and the chow line forms beside the docks while an interested gallery of poilus and urachus looks on. The urachus are more useful than ornamental. As messengers, on a commission basis of one checker a purchase, they fare forth to the stores to buy butter, coffee and cheese. Experience has taught the American in this particular locality that money given to a small French boy has twice the buying value of the same amount tendered in person by a uniformed stranger.

Tom Sawyer in Sad Straits

It is about this time that Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer put in an appearance. They are a ragged pair of war orphans, about 14 or 15 years old, who live around the docks and yards on "System D" and trust to *les Américains* for a supply of small change. After chow at about the time the smoking lamp is lit, Tom and Huck stage a wrestling match. It may be framed, but it's a good show none the less, and pulled off strictly under the rules, with no hacking allowed and the struggle held barred.

Tom, the victor, empties his pockets to show that he is financially on the rocks. In the process he divulges a French version of Nick Carter, a broken jackknife, and (odd contrasts of the transition age!) some plug tobacco and a top.

The afternoon goes by more slowly. With the grandeur pioneering, the tie and the rail layers at their heels, and the spikers bringing up the rear, the track moves snakelike forward across the dock yards. Another gang straightens out the kinks in the line later on. Just as time to knock off for the day arrives, the construction crew has the solid satisfaction of watching a little switch engine rather glugly feel its way for a short distance down the new stretch of track.

The platoons begin to reassemble. In ten minutes the command is given to shove off for camp. Away goes the column at route step, and a song strikes up again. The water-side highways are more crowded than it was on the march, and the cosmopolitanism of its sights is almost bewildering. One might well doubt if anywhere else in the world is to be found another such medley of races and uniforms. The Americans let their song die down, they have so much to distract their attention.

Where Every Race Is Gathered

Can you imagine watching a construction gang from the Tower of Babel go past you on the way home from work? The sight here is something along that order. Little fellows with yellow skins and slant eyes—they are from France-in-China and answered the call to war from the underside of the world. Big coal-black fellows with zouave uniforms and crimson fezzes—they are from

BALLAD OF OFFICERS' MESS

The officers' mess
Was wont to guess
What kind of meat
They had to eat.
It might be beef,
It might be mutton,
Just what the dunnce
Was on that plate,
'Midst all the juice.

It might be pork,
It might be stork,
Or alligator,
Or organic skate,
Frog, ape or man,
None cared a fig;
When hungry, one
Just starts to dig.

The colonel swore
'Twas deadly bore;
The major swore
He's tasted bore;
We second lieuts
Could sure have told,
But we ate last,
The sent was cold.

Our wagers rough
On meat so tough
All come to naught,
As well they ought.
Here ends my yarn—
No bet was through;
It wasn't fair—
They had a zoo!

France-in-Africa. These other blacks who wear blue overcoats with bright brass buttons are stevedores from our "Southern" port. Their perpetual wonder is that other men of their own color can't speak the English language.

The giant white man, striding along alone, pensive and solemn, is a Russian officer. Here comes an American blue-jacket from a torpedo boat, arm in arm with a sailor from a French cruiser. The small boy in a cut-down suit of O.D. is mascot of a regiment of American railway engineers. A squad of German prisoners passes, in charge of two poilus. American troops of all services crowd the streets of the town: aviators, marines, doughboys, machine gunners, quartermasters, cavalrymen, engineers—every color of hat and uniform to our services. A marine acting as crossing cop keeps the stream of pedestrians, camions, side cars, cars and bicycles moving through the square.

The working detail marches at attention again through the town and out to camp. Every one is tired, but few are really worn out.

At home marching back at twilight after a good day's work for Uncle Sam, and then in the evening to sit around the Q.M. stove in a happy coma, smoking and telling stories after all, the day has its reward.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER

"Yes, my dear, I simply can't do anything with John. When I wake him up in the morning, he always yawns and says, 'Oh, damn that bugler!' and proceeds to light up a cigarette. I think of a man who smokes before breakfast!"

"Then he rushes and dresses in a frightful hurry and goes out in the hall and puts on his overcoat and hat and comes around, and finally exclaims, 'Well, you blankety-blank bugle-tooting blankety-blank, how long are you going to keep me out here freezing before you start your smokes before breakfast?'"

"Finally, when I've rained him down somewhat by telling him his breakfast is ready, he mumbles, 'Well, it's about time that mess sergeant got on to his job, blank-blank his eyes!' and comes in and eats."

"Then he rushes off to the office without saying a word to me, muttering something about having to get there before first call, and that's the last I see of him until night. If I've been sewing in the living room, and there are threads around on the floor, he comes in without a word and starts picking them up."

"That would be new if he only used blue ink; but he always makes a frightful fuss over it, talking to himself about how it's a pity some of the other blankety-blank blanks-of-blanks in this billet can't police it once in a while instead of leaving it all to me, and then goes into a corner of the room, changes his shoes to another whether they're wet or not, and starts to smoke that horrid pipe of his."

"He eats his dinner in a frightful hurry, and insists on washing his own dishes. At night, he gets up every four hours and paces the floor for two hours, numbing to himself. When in bed is that cussed relief of mine coming along? Are they going to leave me out here to freeze?" and then goes back to bed, still grumbling. Really, I don't know what to make of him."

"Truly, Maria, that is a pitiful case! What do you suppose makes him carry on like that?"

"Why, Henrietta, I'm sure I don't know, unless—well, it's because he's mixed with the A.E.F. in the Great War."

THE GREAT HEARSE MYSTERY

NEW YORK, April 4. The great Williamsburg mystery of the past winter has just been solved.

All during the frigid season Williamsburg has been dutifully doling its collective hat and bowing its collective head as a sander hearse from the New York morgue made its daily trip through the town to a suburb. Many of the dollars and bowlers have even gone so far as to utter inward prayers for the soul that had, as it seemed, just passed away.

Everybody who kept tabs on the hearse finally came to the conclusion that the suburb to which all those remains were brought back must be a hard place to die in. If the people had to go away to the New York morgue over the bridge, to do their duty, hustling real estate operations hastened to capitalize on the impression thus created.

But, it seems, all that sympathy, all that reverence was in vain. It has come to light that a former superintendent of the morgue used the hearse not for the things of death, but for those of life. The sander-draped equipage was merely carrying groceries and coal back to his house.

And, now that it is all over, Williamsburg doesn't know which item in the cargo list to be madder about—the groceries or the coal.

ANOTHER WAR MYSTERY

An infantryman was discussing the tribulations of army life with a member of one of the negro work battalions which recently had arrived.

"How many men were there on the transport that you came on?" he asked.

"No body knows, nobody knows," said the colored one. "Dat's what de Wah Department is tryin' to find out now—how many niggars der was on that ship."

CERTAINLY, GENERAL KNOWS C CO.'S COOK

Good Fellowship the Rule Between Officers and Men of A.E.F.

MESS ARTIST'S GOOD LUCK

Moonshiner and Cowpuncher Also Glad to Be Along, Not to Men- tion Millionaire Major

By HERBERT COREY
Correspondent of the Associated Newspapers

Six men unknowingly contributed to this story in the course of a night's ramble along the lines. They were a general, a colonel, a millionaire major, a captain, a cowpuncher and a moonshiner.

In thinking it over later on, I was struck by the extraordinary good fellowship that exists in the American Army, as revealed by their talks. I do not mean it is extraordinary that good fellowship exists—we rather take that for granted—but by its quality. The relationship between the American officer and the American private is quite unlike that between officer and soldier in any other army of which I have knowledge. In this Army they are really friends.

The general had just been saying that he accounted himself extremely lucky to be able to take part in this great adventure on which the American Army is engaged.

"To cross the sea in this way to fight for freedom is one of the most romantic bits in all history," said he. "It compares with the epic deeds of the past—with the Crusades. The magnificent color and swing and music of it fairly carries me away. The man who is not a part of it has lost the best thing the world can offer." Then he turned to the colonel:

"You know, Williams, don't you?" said he. "Company C's cook?"

Yes, They Know a Cook

Imagine a general and a colonel in any other army knowing a company cook! The general told of a talk he had had with Williams, in the course of one of his inquiries into how the men are getting along. Williams had been particularly happy that day. He was whistling at his work and as the general approached the cook, which he saw in a book doing a few steps of a break-down:

"I got a letter from home," he explained.

"The general hoped it contained good news."

"Certainly did, sir," said he. "My letter, he fell out of a buggy and broke his leg."

"The general said that did not sound like good news."

"It mighta been me," said Williams. "Wouldn't it be hard luck to have to stay at home and miss all this—and then break a leg?"

"The colonel was full of some horse stunts in the artillery line he had been putting over. No use saying what they are, but they have appreciably speeded up the time in which he can get his baggage going. Thanks to the new idea, he dropped a barrage on the Boche the other day just 20 seconds before Jerry started over the top."

"That little plan of his went to pot right there."

He went on to talk of his men. He had been forced to work them pretty hard lately, building roads and what-not. After the day's work was done, they handled their ammunition for the next day's firing. "There was a week or more when they put in 10 to 18 hours every day."

"And not a whimper," the colonel said. "They are the best I have ever seen. I don't think there is a grouch in the regiment. Now that they are fighting, I believe the regiment is absolutely happy."

Millionaire Major in Dugout

The millionaire major was in bed when we called. It being after midnight of a cold night—with a little fire burning in his dugout and his telephone hooked on his bed rail.

He had just returned from a round of his positions. The Boche had gassed pretty heavily during the fore part of the night and the sweetish odor still hung about in the hollow of the hand. He had found his gun crews on night duty in their splinter proof dugouts.

"And they were all singing," said he. "You can't beat men like that." The captain and his lieutenants were

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all youngsters. Not more than twenty-three or four years old, any one of them. Supper in their shack was more like a college "frat" dinner by some alchemy transposed to the woods than anything I could think of. A Boche rambled overhead and dropped a bomb so near that the windows rattled, but the lively talk did not even pause. They are almost veterans, for they have been in the front line and men have been killed in their ranks and they firmly believe they have accounted for some of the enemy. After supper the captain walked with us to the car.

"I did not know that men could be so fine," he said, with deep feeling in his voice. "I am just a kid"—apologetically—"and had not had very much experience. I did not know that our people are so clean and straight and square. I—I don't like to pull what may seem like soft stuff, but I tell you on the level that I love every man of them, and they love me. They're so—so damn fine."

The cowpuncher used to ride for the Box E ranch in Wyoming. He was a "swig" with the guitar and after supper had sung some of the classics of the range—"The Dying Cowboy's Lament" and "The Little Black Bull." He had a really fine tenor voice, the captain was likewise gifted, and several of the others came in strong on the choruses. The smoky rafters of the little shack fairly hummed and the candles shook in the bottle nocks when they harmoniously alleged that:

"They couldn't lick the infant-ree in a hundred million years." I asked the cowpuncher how he liked it.

"Of course," said he, "a white man just naturally had to join this war—but gee! I never thought I'd like it!"

And the moonshiner put the cap sheaf on the round of talk.

"I had to go somewhere," said he, "and go quick because the revenues were after me. So I give mah mools to mah sista and tole the niggals to do what they could with the fahm. I'm goin' to stay with the almy."

PILE DRIVERS IN CONTEST

(BY CABLE TO THE STARS AND STRIPES.)

NEW YORK, April 4.—Thrilling contests for records are taking place all over the country between pile-driving gangs in the new shipyards. At present writing, the teams from the Newark and Hog Island yards are engaged in a bitter wrangle over the championship.

Anxious patriots and Old Subscriber clamoring for a government-chaperoned tournament in the new sport, with championship rules and all the other red tape of the athletic world. The net contest of a patriotic nature will undoubtedly be a national war-bread eating tournament, with millionaires as the only scratch entries.

THE DIFFERENCE

"The United States Army, like the United States Senate, is a body of continuous existence"—TIDE STARS AND STRIPES.

With this difference: The Army walks and the Senate talks.

PILLANTHROPY

Syl (at the hospital): That little nurse kinda likes me.

Bill (next bed): Why so?

Syl: She gave the others one calomel pill, and she gave me a couple.

FREE ADVICE FOR LOVELORN LADS

By MISS INFORMATION
Conducted for Suffering Doughboys Far Removed from Their Affinities

Q.Z.—When you write a letter to The Girl, take it to be censored—quick—and then mail it. Don't keep it in your pocket for three or four days and have it get souked with the smell of tobacco. Not all the perfumes of Arabia or all the salt sea breezes of the Atlantic will be able to rescue it if you let it ride along besides that plug of long cut.

R.W.—You say she writes you that she's taking a course in Domestic Science, and still you wonder if she means business? Of course she does, you poor cheese!

V.V.—What if she can't spell? She may love you just as much, and be in such a hurry to get her letters off to you that she hasn't time to correct them. Besides, who are you to say what's correct spelling and what isn't? Don't you know the fashions in spelling may have changed since you left the States, you highbrow, you?

A.D.—You say that you expected the picture she was going to send you would be the snapshot kind, such as you could put into a locket and wear 'round your neck; and that instead she sent a great big one that won't go into a pocket, and that you don't want to roll it up with your blankets. Um. Well, why don't you wear it on your back, between your O.D. shirt and your other one, pinned on? That would be one way to keep the Boche from seeing it, wouldn't it?

E.E.—No, it is not wise to try and compete with a sailor, if he gets liberty to go and see her every week or so, and you are 3,000 miles away where there isn't no liberty. Besides, you lack the necessary facilities to tattoo yourself; and you know darn well that it's the hearts and anchors and stars and jelly-fish they doll themselves up with that gets 'em. And don't, when you write, refer to her sailor-friend as a "gob." She won't understand that it's a term of affection, and will probably get sore and marry the son-of-a-gun out of spite. Just lay it on a little thicker in your letters, and trust to luck that the sailor will fuzzle his chances. Sailors have done it before.

The A.E.F. postal authorities aren't falling asleep on the job. A letter reached France the other day addressed to "American Fighting Trenches, Paris," and the right man got it.

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