The Stars and Stripes

The official publication of the American Expeditionary Forces; authorized by the Commander-in-Chief, A.E.F.

Published every Friday by and for the men of the A.E.F., all profits to accrue to subscriber's company funds.

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Advertising Director for the United States and Canada: A. W. Erickson, 381 Fourth Avenue, New York City.

General Advertising Agents for Great Britain: The Dorland Agency Ltd., 16 Regent Street, London, S.W.1.

Fifty centimes a copy. Subscription price to soldiers, 8 francs for six months; to civilians, 10 francs for six months. Local French paper money not accepted in payment. In England, to soldiers 6s. 6d. for six months, to civilians 8s. Civilian subscriptions from the United States $2 for six months. Advertising rates on application.

THE STARS AND STRIPES, G 2, A.E.F., 1 Rue des Italiens, Paris, France. Telephone, Gutenberg 12.95.

FRIDAY, JULY 5, 1918

JUNE 23, 1918

It may be that when the summer of 1918 recedes into the perspective of history, we shall realise that its turning-point was the third week in June and its great day the memorable Sunday when the news was flashed over the wires to the waiting capitals that the majestically planned Austrian offensive had turned into a ringing Italian victory. The tidings went forth from Rome in one of the briefest, most vivid, most electric communiqués of the war:—

"From the Montello to the sea the Austrians, defeated and closely pursued by our brave troops, are retreating across the Piave."

Such a blow, measured now by Austrian losses estimated at 150,000, is a blow struck for us all, one felt as fully in Berlin as in Vienna, in Flanders as in the Venetian plain. To appreciate its force, you have only to conjure up with what a sinking of the heart we should have read the news that the Austrian plan had carried, a plan that contemplated the capture and humiliation of Venice, the seizure of the northern end of the peninsula and all its rich food stores, the striking of Italy from the ranks of the Allies.

The victory of June 23 seems all the greater because the outcome of the Austrian offensive was watched by minds filled with anxious memories of Caporetto. It was a victory which restored with a vengeance the prestige of Italian arms. Whatever may be the place of the Battle of the Piave in world history, its place in Italian chronicles is sure. As England recalls the wreck of the Spanish Armada like the passing of a nightmare, as we look back at Gettysburg, as France remembers and always will remember the Battle of the Marne, so through the ages will Italy mark red in her calendar the 23rd of June, 1918.

SAM BROWNE

Recently it was rather pointedly suggested in these columns that the enlisted man would be much less bewildered and the outward symbols of discipline be much clarified, if the Sam Browne belt were restricted to those entitled to the salute—the commissioned officers of the Army.

This suggestion, while it has met with some criticism from individuals whom it would deprive of the coveted adornment, has been loudly applauded in the Army.

We are therefore encouraged to repeat it, pointing out that we make it in the interests of the private, to serve whom, when you come to think of it, all other ranks are created, and to whom, from first to last, this newspaper is dedicated.

THE SINS OF THE SOLDIER

Cowardice, selfishness, stinginess, bragging—these are the four cardinal sins of the soldier, the four most to be avoided, the four unforgivable failings, according to the results of a questionnaire recently held by a certain self-appointed investigator.

They came in from the men of the A. E.F. in just that order—just as we might have known all along that they would; for what man, in the Army particularly, has any use for a coward, a tightwad, a hard-boiled egg or a blowhard?

But the investigator evidently thought otherwise, thought that other (perhaps unprintable) sins would have popped up to the fore. "The answers surprised me," he exclaimed. "They weren't the answers I expected."

Not the answers he expected? Didn't he know his A.E.F.? Didn't he know his American contemporaries? Didn't he know the spirit of the soldier of every Christian nation? In the words of the Sage of the Stockyards, "What and the hell did he expect?"

THEIR CHANCE WILL COME

An enlisted man in the Air Service, piqued by the fact that none but commissioned officers and cadets are allowed to fly, surreptitiously took an airplane the other day and made a successful two hour flight. He is one of thousands of enlisted men in the Air Service who are intensely eager to get into the flying end of the air game. He acted while the others merely pined.

This enlisted man is in the guard house now. It is where he ought to be. We admire his nerve, his daring, his willingness to increase his own personal hazards for the sake of his country, but——

He violated an order. His motive does not mitigate the offense.

After the United States entered the war, the Army recruited a certain number of men to train as aviators. These were selected after extremely rigid physical and psychological tests. They are picked soldiers drawn from civilian life, the only field which the Army then had to draw upon. Until they are trained, no other students can be handled. The reason, then, for the rule against enlisted men's flying is obvious.

When all the cadets and officers are trained, it is logical to assume that enlisted men of the Air Service will be selected for flyers. Their experience will have made them good material. Then the enlisted man in the guard house and the others with similar ambitions will have their opportunity. And they'll make good, too.

SHIPS

History in future centuries will record the Fourth of July, 1918, as the day upon which the United States won its first triumph in the great world war of 1914-19-what?

Yesterday the United States launched 90-odd ships of a total tonnage which, in pre-war days, would have been considered remarkable production for a year. A year's average output, and more, was unleashed from the ways in one day!

The Kaiser said that the United States could not put an army in France, and could not support it if it did—that we didn't have the ships and couldn't get or build them. The United States has put an army in France, thereby disproving the first part of this assertion. It is disproving the second part now with ships—ships—ships.

Yesterday's launchings were but a beginning. Their great import is that our shipbuilding program is under way, the program which has no other limit than that set by the tonnage necessary to maintain in France an army great enough to overthrow Prussianism.

We can hardly call it a victory over the submarine. It is doubtful if we can claim a victory over the submarine until the U-boat is driven entirely from the seas. But we have proved that the Kaiser is wrong—once more—that we can put an army in France and maintain it, and that we can build more ships than the U-boats can sink. And this is certainly a triumph.

GUNS

The American people, through their duly constituted representatives in Congress, have come forward with the largest Appropriation Bill in American history for artillery and artillery ammunition. That Bill provides for an expenditure of $5,435,000,000—more than the amount raised during the campaign for the Third, and greatest Liberty Loan.

The American people have not sponsored such a Bill in a spirit of brag. There is no bluff about it. Coolly they have come to the conclusion that, cost what it may, they are going to see this thing through. They know how essential are guns, and the things they carry, to seeing it through. Therefore, they are going to vote a smashing amount of their money to guns and the stuff that's shot from them—for the one purpose of backing us up.

Guns, guns, guns! The nation is going to get them. We are going to get them behind us, to blaze the way for us. The Hun is going to get their deadly product right where he wants it the least. We have them now in plenty, but we're going to have more, ample for all future needs, enough to replace any and all losses.

Our people have decreed that we are to have them. Our people will see to it that we get them. And when we get them, it will be up to us to see that those guns carry the message that our people intend they shall convey—the death of Kaiserism.

MEN

Speaking in Edinburgh on May 24, Lloyd George said:—

"Both for the Germans and for us the coming weeks will see a race between Hindenburg and President Wilson, and the enemy is making an extreme effort to reach the post before the Allies can benefit by America's aid."

Just one month later, on the same day that brought the news of more than 800,000 American soldiers in France, Lloyd George gave tidings of that race in the House of Commons.

"The organization which has enabled us since March 21 to send to France a considerable number of American troops of first rate fighting value has accomplished a surprising feat," he said. "It is impossible to state the exact number of soldiers. All that I can say is that it is sufficient to encourage our Allies and bring about the final defeat of our enemies."

It is the substance of this speech, the substance of all the recent utterances in the Allied capitals, that Germany, reinforced by the divisions she was enabled to withdraw from the Russian front, is striving recklessly to win the decision before the Americans can give her enemies numerical superiority—that to America, coming late and fresh and young and strong into the war, falls the task and the privilege of assuring the victory.

If every one of that 800,000 in France, if every one in the larger army on its way, if all of us to whom America is not only a home but a faith, will throw self to the winds and run the great race with all our hearts, that victory must follow as the night the day, and the dear country that bred us will stand proud among the peoples of the world.

THE SECOND SUMMER

It was summer when the first of us came to France. And all through the round of the seasons we have kept coming, some of us in a fair lingering fall, some in a tolerably hard winter, some in a tardy spring. And now comes the second summer, and the cycle of the year is complete.

"And we came to the Bounteous Isles, where the heavens lie low on the lands." Could we have spent a year in a fairer land, under a fairer sky, be it in "le beau pays de la Touraine," or among the grass-clad foothills of the Vosges?

Yes, of course, in America. But in the days to be, when old familiar scenes greet us once more, when we return to find unchanged our own Berkshires, our Pocono Hills, our Ozarks, or our Sierra Nevada, who among us will not look back and reflect, with full heart, that, for her ideals, for her people, for her very trees and rocks and soil, la France has won his love?

The Army's Poets

A PRAYER FROM THE RANKS

(France, January, 1918)

Silent, the snowy mountain tops
 Keep watch through the starlit night;
Safe in her valley the village sleeps,
 Wrapped in her mantle of white.
Can this be France of the cannon's roar
 And the shell-torn battlefield—
France of a thousand thousand graves
 And war's grim harvest yield?

In the gently swaying tree-top there
 A withered leaf still clings,
And, venturous harbinger of spring,
 A lone little songbird swings;
Yet why are the young men seen no more,
 And why do the women wear black?
Ask of that distant muttering roar
 Which the hilltops echo back.

Maker of Earth! Can They children be blamed
 If they fling up their question to Thee,
When the husbandman sleeps 'neath the soil he should till,
 Why should things as these must be?
Yet lo! we have come o'er a long, weary way
 To slay with the sword and be slain,
Men's feet to restore to the pathway of peace,
 Though we never tread them again.

Grant us this prayer: that the toll that we pay
 Shall not have been levied in vain;
That when it is sheathed, the sword of the world
 May never see sunlight again.
When the roses shall climb o'er the crumbling trench
 And the guns are all silenced in rust,
May War find a grave where none shall disturb
 Through the ages his mouldering dust!

John Fletcher Hall, Sgt., Co. A., — Inf.

TRENCH POEMS
II.—Trench Mud

We have heard of Texas gumbo
 And the mud in the Philippines,
Where, if we had legs like Jumbo,
 The mud would cover our jeans.
But never did we get a chance
To feel real mud till we hit France.

Our shoes are deep in it
We often sleep in it,
We almost weep in it—
 It's everywhere;
We have to fight in it,
And vent our spite in it,
We look a sight in it,
 But we don't care!

The mud that lies in No Man's Land
 Is as thick on the other side,
And where the Germans make their stand
 Is where we'll make them slide,
For our hob-nailed shoes will force a way,
And we'll knock them cold—for the U.S.A.

Though we must eat in it,
 Wash our feet in it,
 Try to look neat in it,
  This mud and slime;
 Though we get sore at it,
 Grumble and roar in it,
 We'll win the war in it
  In our good time!

Sgt. John J. Curtin.

I LOVE CORNED BEEF

I LOVE corned beef—I never knew
How good the stuff COULD taste in stew!
I love it WET, I love it DRY,
I love it baked and called MEAT PIE.
I love it camoflaged in HASH—
A hundred bucks I'd give—in CASH
To have a BARREL of such chow
A standing here before me now.
I say "YUM YUM" when "soupie" blows,
I SNIFF and raise aloft my nose:
CORNED WILLIE! Ha! Oh, BOY, that's FINE!
Can hardly keep my place in LINE.
I kick my heels and wildly yell:
"Old Sherman said that 'WAR IN HELL.'
But GLADLY would I hear the heat
If corned beef I could get to eat!
I love it HOT—I love it COLD,
Corned Willie never WILL grow old.
I love it—now PAUSE—Listen, friend;
When to this war there comes an end,
And PEACE upon the earth shall reign,
I'll hop a boat for HOME again.
Then to a RESTAURANT I'll speed—
No dainty MANNERS will I heed—
But to the waiter I will cry:
"Bring me, well, make it corned beef PIE!
And—better bring some corned beef STEW,
And corned beef COLD—I'll take that, too.
And—now, don't think I'm CRAZY man,
But could you bring a corned beef CAN?
And—WAIT!—I'm not through ORDERING yet—
I want a SIRLOIN STEAK—you BET,
With hash-browned SPUDS—now, LISTEN friend,
I've got the CASH—you may depend—
Right HERE it is—Let's see, I'll try—
Oh, better a piece of hot MINCE PIE
And ALL this stuff that's printed here;
My appetite is HUGE, I fear."

Then, when he's filled my festive board
With all these eats, I'll thank the Lord.
(For that's the PROPER thing to do),
And then I'll take the corned beef STEW,
The corned beef PIE and corned beef COLD,
The corned beef CAN I'll then take hold
And RAM the whole WORKS into it
And say: "NOW, damn you, THERE you'll sit!
You've haunted every DREAM I've had—
You don't know what shame IS, egad!
Now SIT there, Bo—See how you FEEL,—
And watch me eat a REG'LAR meal!"

A. F. B.

THE N.A. MAN

We didn't volunteer,
But, God knows, it wasn't fear;
We were those who long before
Formed the mass that hated war.

It took the Hun of Potsdam
To show us where we stood;
Now we're in it to the finish,
 And the finish will be good.

We didn't volunteer,
But, God knows, it wasn't fear;
We'd have gone in later, anyhow—
Well, anyhow, we're here!

We hate those Huns, the Germans,
 For all the things they've done,
And of the things we hate them for,
 Our being here is one.

We didn't volunteer,
But, God knows, it wasn't fear;
The flag we carry won't be furled
Till Uncle Sam un-Huns the world!

M. G.

DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY?

One hears at sound of reveille,
 Straight through till taps is blown,
"Gimme, lemme take yer razor,"
 "Have you got a sou to loan?"
Or maybe, "Gosh, I lost my towel,
 Lemme take yours, will you, Bill?"
"Have you got some extra 'Sunkums'?"
 "I wanna wet me gill."

All through the day it's e'er the same,
 Week in, week out, "Say, Bo,
I'm just a few francs shy today,
 Wot's chances for a throw?
You know me, Al, me woid's me bond,
 I've never stuck a pal,
But I simply gotta keep that date,
 Or hunt another gal."

"Have you got an extra undershirt?
 The Major's gonna see
What makes the men so nervous like,
 And scratch so frequently."
"I'm gonna promenade ce soir,
 Lemme take yer new puttees.
Aw, mine's been muddy for a week,
 Loose up, yuh tight ol' cheese."

"I don't know where me money goes,
 It takes the prize for speed,
The next day after we've been paid,
 Can't buy a punk French weed.
Next month I'll have to slacken up,
 Or jump into the lake"—
But till that old ghost walks agan,
 It's gimme, lemme take!

Pvt. Frank Eisenberg, — Tel. Bn.

SPRING

It's Spring at home; I know the signs—
The buds are bursting on the vines,
The birds speed high with happier wings,
The heart of youth is glad, and sings.

It's Spring in France; I know the signs—
 The mass of reserves behind the lines;
 The heart of youth burgeons once more
 To manhood, and resurgent war!

F.M.H.D., F.A.

ONLY A SMOKE

THE SALUTE AGAIN

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

With reference to your recent editorial regarding American service uniforms and the saluting of officers. I wish to give you the benefit of my personal observations and experiences, which may help to portray the uncertainty of both officers and enlisted men.

About six weeks ago I was approached by a non-commissioned officer in a Paris Metro station who had just inadvertently saluted an officer for wearing a Sam Browne belt, who asked me if I knew some way in which commissioned officers could be identified, as he understood that only commissioned officers were permitted to wear shoulder-loop belts. I suggested that he consult his superior officers.

Last Sunday I noticed four enlisted men walking together salute two Red Cross captains, and later they evidenced the fact, in no uncertain terms, that they had been confused by the Sam Browne belt and other Army insignia.

I afterwards questioned two sergeants as to their understanding of the regulations and at first they were positive that they were obliged to salute uniformed officers wearing Sam Browne belts, which opinion after further questioning they admitted to be based solely on barracks gossip. These men, as well as many others, including officers, are very anxious to be set straight in this matter, and I believe that some regulations and printed notice thereof would be of invaluable aid in improving the situation as regards the saluting of their superior officers by both the enlisted and commissioned personnel of the Army and Navy.

I have been informed by an English officer that the British Army has been officially advised that the Sam Browne belt, with one or two shoulder loops, is the insignia of a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army.

One of the reasons I address you regarding this matter is due to the article you published some weeks ago in which an old Army sergeant explained that the salute meant a tribute to our President, through the commissioned officer, and if our men so understand it and are able to distinguish the man who bears a commission from the President or his representative, there will be an immediate improvement of conditions, which are at present subject to criticism and complaint by both officers and enlisted men.

Yours truly,
R. C. Captain.

HOW TO WRITE HER

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

I want to write to a young lady friend in America. Is it better for a soldier to write military style, like this:

From: William Hunter, Private.
To: Miss Katie Cullin.
Subject: Regards.

1. Attention is called to the fact that since my arrival in France my feelings have undergone no change. I am still yours.
2. Answer, by indorsement, at once, if my photo is still on your bureau.
3. I hope George Goldfish is drafted.

William Hunter, Private.

A reply in your paper will help many of us.
William Hunter.

[If you really have serious intentions, don't. The military method of correspondence is fine form and all that, but our feeling is that they would not appreciate its merits. In all matters of the heart, the ancient free and easy—or natural—style still remains the best and most effective—Editor.]

FOR A SOLDIER'S DAY

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

It was with great pleasure that I followed closely the program of the wonderful movement set on foot by your paper and the beautiful sentiment expressed thereby in having every soldier write home to his mother on Mother's Day. I want to say right here that I not only did that little stunt, but with me it was a Father's Day, a Sister's Day, and a Brother's Day, and they all went off with those magic words, "Mother's Letter," in the upper right-hand corner.

But how about the mail of us guys over here? How about starting a Soldier's Day back in the States, and having all the folks write us once in a while? Great stress is laid upon the fact that it conduces to the peace of mind of the folks at home to receive letters. Will anybody deny that the same applies to us fellows, even thought we are S.O.S.?

I have not had any mail since Hector had pups, and my peace of mind is just like the American Army—there ain't no peace, it's on the warpath. I know that my folks at home are writing me, and I know that they have my correct address, yet I am not receiving any mail.

Now for handing a bouquet to your paper. Every Friday with me is a red-letter day, because your paper comes around as regular as clockwork, and every item is read, from the title down to the advertisement of Wrigley's Chewing Gum, and, believe me, if we did not have this breath of home to cheer us up once in a while we would be a sad bunch indeed, what with not receiving any mail and being shoved into the S.O.S.

Keep up the good work, as your work to us fellows is just as essential as the work of the Red Cross is to our boys in the line. I am making a careful collection of every number of your paper, and in years to come it will afford many pleasant reminiscences of days gone by, when we can point out to our grandchildren all the various items of interest and explain them in detail from personal contact.

Just imagine the value of a paper such as yours devoted to the soldiers of the North and the South during the Civil War. More strength to you and to your wonderful organization.

J. A. Purcell,
1st Lt., A.G.D., S.D.

PAPERS OR PACKAGES?

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

In your last issue I read a letter from a man in the Central Medical Laboratory suggesting that we cancel all subscriptions to home papers, since the news is old when received, and thus make way for packages. I want to protest against anything like this most vigorously.

The gentleman who wrote that letter is no doubt comfortably situated where he can obtain the current newspapers. He is probably in touch with the Y.M.C.A. or other places where reading matter can be had; hence he is, and should be, satisfied. With us here, however, it is different.

I am one of a detail of five radio men who have spent the larger part of the last three months on the front. We are generally out of touch with the Y.M.C.A., mails are infrequent, and reading matter at a premium. One man is on duty all the time, and during the long hours of the night, when little outside of test calls is to be heard, duty becomes tedious without something to help pass the time. Here is where the newspaper comes in, even the advertisements furnishing enjoyment.

There is another phase of the question, to me, at least. It seems as if the city in which I live is writing me a personal letter through the medium of the newspaper. What do we care for the war news? It is the little personal notes, bringing to mind people or places that one's parents or friends might not know of or mention. It helps to bring close the atmosphere of home and forms a bond with home nearly as strong as that formed by home letters.

So I am, I believe, voicing the sentiments of many men when I say, "Rather the papers than the packages." I know that at least 50 of my associates agree with me, for we discussed the question.

Pvt. Peter M. Walsh, F.A.

CONSIDER THE LADIES

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

In the June 7 issue of THE STARS AND STRIPES is a letter from an Army Field Clerk decidedly apropos.

Will you please ask the J.A.G. to consider the secretaries of the A.E.F. hospitals and offices also for the Service Stripe? As the nurses are to have them, why not the secretaries? Why make a distinction between those who live and work together, under the same conditions, because one takes the path to the wards while the other takes the path to the offices? Those who have the grit necessary to stick to "paper work" when they are so many more interesting ways open of serving their country, are surely deserving of the visible thanks of the Government—the Service Stripe.

The Chief Surgeon says the women secretaries of the A.E.F. have the same status as nurses, but somehow, as in this instance, they are apt to be forgotten; so won't you please help us to remind the powers that be that we too, are over here?

Secretaries of U.S.A. Base Hospital —

PROMOTION

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

Much is heard about this matter of promotion. It is a lamentable fact that to some service in the Army means a series of jumps from one position to another—always up. In such persons this is a spirit akin to that grasping commercialism of which the German Government in some of its mad rantings has accused us as a nation.

Zest for recognition, pre-eminence and power is a natural result of our universally inherent aspirations to make something of and for ourselves. In its place, nothing is more creditable. Legitimate ambition is the driving power of all progressive institutions. But this same mighty and indispensable asset towards success is not without its possibility of perversion, and thereby hangs a tale.

The other day I overheard two men discussing the subject, one of whom had made several steps up in rank. The other, who was where he had started, was complaining of his "luck."

"Why don't you try to work it as I have?" said the non-com, whereupon he outlined the policies which he had followed and to which he attributed his rapid rise.

There were many details not necessary to mention here. It all went to prove that this man must have been constantly contriving and planning, the while neglecting woefully his then present duties. That man was not worthy to wear the uniform. He was serving himself and not his country.

The spirit of the Army is autocratic—necessarily so. And because of this, our individualities, which most of us cherish so highly, must, to a great extent, be sacrificed. But the essence of self is one of the noblest things a man can give to his country.

We are not enlisted to make individual success of ourselves. But that does not mean that promotion, when it comes, is to be undervalued or spurned. Promotion is a necessary part of the system, but no matter how legitimate its course, it should be, in itself and in the strictest sense, no more than happily incidental.

First of all, it means a bigger job, and as such it tests whether or not you are a bigger man. If it comes through devotion to duty for duty's sake, promotion ought to mean everything; accomplished by politics or scheming, it means in the long run about nothing.

Whenever an opportunity offers for bettering yourself in a wider and more valuable field of service according to your merits and ability, take it—even if it means a reduction. Does that seem extreme and unreasonable? Yet is there any more conscientious service or one more valuable?

Our present duty well done first;—a satisfaction in doing it wherever we may be—not what we are worth to ourselves, but what we are worth to our country, whose servants we are.

Private D. E. V.

MYTHICAL CHEVRONS

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

Will you kindly print in the columns of your paper information as listed in questions below regarding the wearing of the silver or white chevrons with star by members of the A.E.F. in the Zone of Advance.

1. What does the wearing of the chevron signify?
2. What does the wearing of chevron with star signify?
3. A description of both star and chevron.
4. Is there a gold star worn with gold chevron, and if so what does it signify?
5. Is there an official order in the A.E.F. authorizing the wearing of silver chevron and star?

C. A. Buettner, Pvt., 1st Cl., D.G.T.

[No silver or white chevron is authorized for anyone in the A.E.F. The much-disputed question of the star was answered in the last issue of this newspaper. The answer to each of your five questions is, therefore, that there ain't no such animal.—Editor.]

ONE INSERTION ONLY

To the Editor of THE STARS AND STRIPES:—

I am anxious to find out the way to figure the gender of French nouns. In other words, I want to know, whenever I see a noun designated as neuter in English, how to find out what it is going to register on a French sexometer.

Young Philadelphia Gentleman.

[We decline to bite.—Editor.]