

SLOGGING ALONG, SINGING OUR SONG

The roads are thick with winter mud. Or deathly dry with summer dust. But music pulses through our blood— We'll conquer or we'll bust.

The Army's Poets

The Army's Poets are its true interpreters. Through verse reaches the office of THE STARS AND STRIPES every week to fill a volume as thick as Browning's Complete Works. All of it can't be used, not even all of the best. The best simply has not been skinned. By the best is meant not the most rhetorical, the most polished, the most felicitously phrased verses. Many a poem printed in these recent tumultuous weeks has limped along on crutches and been linked together with highly questionable rhymes. Sometimes the little bits of accuracy before being printed, have been unavenged as well as might be without hurting the sentiment. Sometimes they have been allowed to stand. For the sentiment must not be touched. And it is sentiment—heart, if you care to call it that—but all of it, every passage as verse seldom possessed it before. The Army's Poets are the spokesmen of the Army's soul. That soul speaks the same message whether it comes from base port or front line. It speaks the Army's longing and love for things and friends across the sea, of slum and city and mud; it speaks the Army's determination to see this thing through, to keep at this bitter and glorious business of war until the high aims for which it is fighting are achieved, when the Army's Poets in unison shall interpret the Army's soul in a poem of victory.

THE FIELDS OF THE MARNE

The fields of the Marne are growing green. The river murmurs on and on. No more the hail of mitrailleuse. The cannon from the hills are gone. The herds leads the sheep abed. Where grasses grow or broken blades. And tall-worn women till the soil. O'er human mold in sunny glade. The splintered shell and bayonet. Are laid in crumbling village walls. No soldier sees the rim of hills. No sentry hears the night bird call. From blood-wet soil and smoken trench. The flowers bloom in summer light. And farther down the vale beyond. The peasant smiles are sad, yet bright. The wounded Marne is growing green. The gash of Hun no longer smart. Democracy is born again. But what about the abandoned heart? (Written while lying wounded in hospital; died August, 1918.)

IN OUR COMPANY KITCHEN

Don't sound to me the praises of Sousa's famous band. "Gala-Care" or such others in the land. No matter how much homage to these authors you bring. They can't hold a candle to our cooks when they begin to sing. In our company kitchen. Why, I couldn't sit through a concert in the big Aeolian Hall. Or listen to a harp trio at a famous Bill-more ball. For when it comes to harmony, the kind for "buck and wick." They're all back numbers compared to our cooks when they begin to sing. In our company kitchen. About a half-hour after mess when the line has just gone through. And they're cooking up some more chow, which is sure to be some stew. Amid the chatter of the phone, it's "Tip-teary" that's the thing; Or "The Long, Long Trail" and it's harmony, when our cooks begin to sing. In our company kitchen.

ALLIES!

The French, the British, and the Portuguese, Captain or colonel, or king though he be, Give a salute in response to me. Back private in Uncle Sam's Infantry. There's much that a soldier's salute implies. But it means the most when it means "We're Allies." In Belgium and France and Italy. They talk in ways that are Greek to me. But the speech of soldiers' courtesy Is a lingua franca wherever you be. With a single gesture, I recognize That I am one of the Twenty Allies. I never could tell just why it should be That the first salute should be up to me. In this queer new army of democracy. But every commander must answer me, British, or French, or Indo-Chinese, Captain, or colonel, or king though he be. There's much that a soldier's salute implies. But it means the most when it means "We're Allies." (McMurry V. Higgins, Pvt. Inf.)

NGUOI ANNAM

He is leading his men over bushes and hills. He is banking the dirt fly, somewhere in France. It may be a day and a half to the front. Though it might be wherever it happened to chance. An army of coolies, with backs bending fast. Who chatter to music of cat, low, and bang. Like water from bottles now gurgling a tune. And the uniforms glitter like part of the song. The brown, little, black-haired Annamites. A stub of a nose and a slit for an eye. But a hand that can tilt with a valley or hill. Though hardly a one is a soldier high. Ouh di dau, with your teeth stained black. Your wrinkled old faces that judder so fast. Toi si lau, with your puff of tabac. That makes you go lopping, drumming-gingling, past. The corporal struts, in his miniature pride. Nguoi Annam is a colonel, at least. By his vagabond costume assembled from scraps of France that have long been deceased. Of horizon blue are his leggings and blouse. The horizon, that day, was a glorious view! His breeches are khaki, his stripes without end. And his conical hat is of native bamboo. But he's leading his men over bushes and hills. Constructing a camp for the U.S.A.: With the lifting of shovels, the jingling of picks. The little brown army is fighting today. Ouh di dau, with your shovels and picks. You're volunteers, at a frane a day. That's no lie, your pipeful's a pinch. O loo, long puff and you hop away. (Pvt. CHARLES DIVISE.)

OPEN WARFARE

Oh, I like to loaf at the evenings. Resting me back 'tween a tree. Surveying with critical pleasure Bombardments that ain't meant for me. Those curly-whisked cloudlets of shrapnel. Like the sign of the cross. They say one in ten thousand gets you—I'm due to see six thousand more. Am I that a mule expressing Lamonts on his dolorous lot? Whee-ee bang! There's no mule, I'm guessin'. Can kick like a whizzbang shot. An' here comes a subway express train. An' it runs off its rails with a thump. An' a fountain of dust, dirt and debris Is all that remains to our dump. An' there goes a shot over an over And a left on Battery C— I'm glad we are encouraging pretty. So the Hun doesn't hole in the highway Where lately skerdaddled a truck— What's that—woo-woo-oo-whung! Oh, hell! I'm going to F. M. H. D., F.A.

"RETREAT" IN FRANCE

The bugle notes have thrilled the air and passed— A moment's pause, and then upon the blast The shrill defiance of the "Marsellaise." With screaming call, "To Arms!" That wakes in every freeman's breast A will to dare— Nor fall not in the awful test Of war's alarms. The very clash of steel rings in these notes. The clear-cut challenge of ten million throats. The grim determination of a race To do or nobly die! The stirring notes have ceased, and silence reigns. Then bursts upon the air the mighty strains. The national anthem of Columbia. For-telling Victory! That bids the freeman to observe the stars. To sing the gauge. To stem the rage Of foeman arrogant, who mars The fields of France. The dignity of peace when all are free. Voice of the glorious triumph of the right— The knell of Tyranny!" (C. R. T. Engineer (Ist.))

YES—WE—WILL

When this old war is finished. And the hosts of each diminished. When the Kaiser and his roughnecks are but visions of the past. When underneath the Linden They huddle-shake on Hinden. We'll all shed tears of sorrow that the Kaiser didn't last. LISTEN We'll all shed tears of sorrow If we're ordered home tomorrow. Yes, we will—YES WE—WILL. When you see the Bright Lights shining Of the town for which you're pining. When your Main Street's just the same as ever 'twas before. You'll say, "It's not a pity To see this good old city." And wonder why they couldn't have prolonged this awful war. LISTEN You'd wonder why it's over. WHY they MAKE you live in clover. Yes, you will YES—YOU—WILL. When you get the Boche retreating. After handing them a beating. We'll tell them, "We are sorry—forgive. We'll tell them, 'We are sorry—forgive. For we really love the Kaiser. The crooked, sinful miser. We'll cheer for him in Berlin, when WE go marching through."

LET ME TELL YOU

We'll hand him boucannon money. And all kinds of milk and honey. Yes, we will—LET ME TELL YOU. (Corp. JACK N. CARROLL, P. A.)

THE MULESKINNER

He litters up when the day is fading. Two miles to a go-cart, which runs on two wheels. He loads on the rations, and off he goes leaving. To the boys in the trenches; through the darkness he steals. He can handle a mule like one who's a master. Of animals stubborn, ferocious, untamed. He can get his mule into any old corner; He's just a mule-skinner, for such is he named. He can talk to his mules in a voice that's commanding; Not fascinating, sweet, mellow or low; But his mule is the law; and the mules, understanding. Just throw up their ears and off they will go. Two hours or more he jogs 'long the high-ways. O'er shell holes, and rocks, and shrapnel gallop; Through the hell-fire and gas he's on the job 'til dawn; He's up and going and looking for more. Once o'er a road, he can always remember its bad spots, and puddles, and dangerous turns. He can tell in a jiffy the course of a whizzing bullet. For there's no one who faster than a mule-skinner learns. The roads are the favorite spots for the mines. To aight in the hope of getting our boys. And one who is skittish will sure get the jimmies. From the bursting of shrapnel and deafening noise. Then in the blackness he hurls at the entrance Of camouflaged dugout, deep in the ground. They in the hole know not of his presence. For even the mules let out no sound. Here he waits for a carrying party. They come from their shelters and take off the load. He greets them with words kind and hearty; Once again he starts over the road. There he sits, cool and collected. Directing his path with a touch of a rein; Back to his station the mules are directed— And in the corral he rewards them with grain. Then, of himself—for Nature compels it— He thinks, for the first time in all these hours. Sleepy and tired, he crawls in his blanket under a shelter, protected from showers. Heigh ho! Another night passing! Somehow to him they all seem the same. Daylight comes creeping as he gets to sleeping— The mule-skinner rests—to do it again. (Sgt. ANDREW LAVANER GRINK.)

NEW ENGLAND AMBITIONS

The German hordes are coming on. Us Rubes will meet the Boche. And ere another day has gone. They'll know we're here, 't'gosh! For though they number pretty strong. We hope they will all come. For this this scrap won't last so long. We'll chew 'em up, 't'gosh! We'll show 'em that this gang of Rubes Will not give in to speck; We'll mix it with those German boobies. Then goodbye, Boche, by heck! Then when at last the peace is made. They'll know that we're the ginks That put the Kaiser in the shade. New England guys, by jinks! (Edward L. Moore, 2nd Lt. Engrs.)

THE WOODS CALLED ROUGE-BOUQUET

Dedicated to the memory of 19 members of Co. E, — Infantry, who made the supreme sacrifice at Rouge-Bouquet, Forest of Parroy, France, March 7, read by the chaplain at the funeral, the refrain echoing the music of taps from a distant grove; written by Sergeant Joyce Kilmer, poet and newspaper man, killed in action near the Ourcq July 30. Sergeant Kilmer had volunteered his services to the major of the foremost battalion because his own battalion would not be in the lead that day.

I. In the woods they call Rouge-Bouquet There is a new-made grave today. Built by never a spade or pick. Yet covered by earth ten meters thick.

There lie many fighting men. Dead in their youthful prime. Never to laugh or live again. Or taste of the summer time;

For death came flying through the air And stopped his flight at the dugout stair. Touched his prey— And left them there— Clay to clay. He hid their bodies stealthily In the soil of the land they sought to free. And fled away.

Now over the grave abrupt and clear, Three valleys ring, "To Arms!" That wakes in every freeman's breast A will to dare— Nor fall not in the awful test Of war's alarms.

The very clash of steel rings in these notes. The clear-cut challenge of ten million throats. The grim determination of a race To do or nobly die!

The stirring notes have ceased, and silence reigns. Then bursts upon the air the mighty strains. The national anthem of Columbia. For-telling Victory! That bids the freeman to observe the stars. To sing the gauge. To stem the rage Of foeman arrogant, who mars The fields of France.

The dignity of peace when all are free. Voice of the glorious triumph of the right— The knell of Tyranny!" (C. R. T. Engineer (Ist.))

THE WOODS CALLED ROUGE-BOUQUET (Continued in distance.)

II. There is on earth no worthier grave To hold the bodies of the brave. Than this spot of pain and pride. Where they nobly fought and nobly died.

Never fear but in the skies Saints and angels stand. Smiling with their holy eyes On this new-come band.

St. Michael's sword darts through the air And touches the arrival on his hair. And he sees them stand saluting there. His stalwart sons; And Patrick, Bridget and Columbkille Rejoice that in veins of warriors still The Gael's blood runs.

And up to Heaven's doorway floats. From the woods called Rouge-Bouquet. A delicate sound of bugle notes. That softly say: Farewell— (Taps sounding in distance.)

LE'NGVOI. Comrade true, Born anew, Peace to you; For your soul shall be where the heroes are. And your memory shine like the morning star. Brave and dear, Shield us here— Farewell! (JOYCE KILMER, Killed July 30, 1918.)

SEA STUFF

Now I'm a soldier, so I ain't No hand at art, but say, Their things at sea I'd like to paint Before I tucked away. A cruiser on the sunrise track. Alert to find the morn. With every funnel belching black Into the red, gold dawn:

A line o' transports, crazy lined. On blue-green waves afloat. That slick their bows, all spray an' dewed. Hello! hello! in for France!

A man-of-war peep'n out to port As 'evening shadows close; Beyond a ship shined up an' caught Against a cloud o' rose:

A crow's nest loomin' from below Across the Milt Way's bars. Just like a cradle rockin' slow. An' snug to by the stars.

No, I can't paint the things I've seen While we were passin' by. But, all the same, they sure have been Worth lookin' at, say I. (Pvt. SHERMAN MARKER EMERY, Co. A, — M.P.)

THE PRAYER OF THE THIRD PLATOON

The Third Platoon is a good one. And we thanked our lucky stars That we had the best little lieutenant Who ever put on the bars.

The boys were of gold when he joined us. But he was so game and so bold. That the high command ever he earned it. And traded him silver for gold.

He was smaller than most of the small ones. And 'tho' true he looked pretty young. But he showed his worth and his valor. Wherefore his praises are sung.

He was with us when we were rookies. He trained us to do squads right. And later, in this strange country. He led us into the light.

He was with us on post in the trenches. He led the battalion patrol. Charged with us across the Ourcq leaving. When we made the Boche hunt his hole.

He came the first Sunday of August To bid the platoon goodbye. And said, "Men, 'tis other duties." And there was something like a tear in his eye.

Of course, we are all down-hearted. For we loved our Jonsie well. And as long as he was with us. We would have chased the Boche through hell.

But we've fought quite a bit for our country— Some gave all a soldier owns— And now we don't ask for much, dear colonel.

But please, sir, send us our Teddy Jones. Third Platoon, Co. L, — Inf. (Pvt. I. D. B.)

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MOTHER

And here's a line to Mother. The best of all the lot. With a simple little message. Just a sweet-forget-me-not. It's sent to her from some one. Sealed with a kiss of love. To wish her joy and comfort And blessings from above.

May it find her well and happy As the morn I went away. May it make her burden lighter As she works from day to day. May it chase away the wrinkles From her apt-to-worry brow. And keep that smile smiling Till we've finished up this row.

There's a brighter day coming! For us, and those back home; There's to ships be joy and happiness To sail us o'er the foam. And sights will be most wonderful As loved ones greet each other. But none will be so tenderly When Sonny meets his Mother. (R. V. BRADY.)

OVER THE TOP

The other day when we went over. Over the top and the hill. We rushed through a field of wheat and clover. Where German guns did their best to kill.

'Twas broad daylight when we got orders To shove Fritz back toward his own borders. Our batteries stormed with shot and shell. And over we went with a mighty yell.

When the Huns saw us coming, they beat it quick. Except the machine guns, which were very thick. Some of the men on them couldn't run. Because they were chained to their guns to stay.

'I was great to see the boys go through— The Boche barrage got one or two— But no man faltered in his steady gait. And each one kept in touch with his mate.

Many of the Boche seemed very glad To surrender, and shouted "Kamerad!" Each man raised his hands over his head. And seemed surprised he wasn't shot dead.

Now that we've been over the top. We'll keep on going and never stop. We'll try to make Fritz pay his debts. For he can't face Yanks with bayonets.

'I was slightly wounded short time ago," wrote Sergeant Curtin in the letter accompanying this poem.

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EVENING

Dusk is falling. 'Tis time to rest—your work is through; Dreaming alone, Far from home, Where some one longs for you.

Sun is sinking— 'Thinking'— Moments, hopes and love— Life is worth while. You're happy—smile— Youth and the stars above. (MELVYN RYDER.)

A NURSE'S PRAYER

O Lord, I must not cry. And yet my eyes contain Such floods of scalding tears 'That I can't see my way. Descending soft as rain. Through all the coming years.

O Jesu, I must weep. When I behold the sight: These men who fought and bled. Who moan and cannot sleep. Their souls are agony while The wounded and the dead. (Chaplain THOMAS F. COAKLEY.)

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