

On the Edge of the Storm

The Story of a Year in France

By
SHEPHERD KNAPP



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PREFACE

This is not a war story in the ordinary sense. It contains no descriptions of battles and front-line trenches. The War forms its background only; and the boys in khaki who figure in it appear in their human and personal capacity, rather than as units in the fighting machine. For it was when they had a chance to rest and play, time to talk and laugh and smoke and eat, that they came to the Y.

The letters from which the narrative is taken were, with a few self-evident exceptions, written to my family and the people of my church.

SHEPHERD KNAPP

Worcester, Mass.

November 11, 1921

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I. AT ST. NAZAIRE, THE PORT OF ENTRY

BEGINNING WORK

August 18, 1917. Here I am at the Y tent after my first day of active service, certainly a most eventful day. Of course, I am not permitted to say where I am, except that it is at the American camp known as Base No. 1. You can hardly imagine the strangeness and interest of this adventure, to me so entirely new: the military background; the being a part—though so small a one—of the military system; to wear khaki in a world where all is khaki; to be subject to military regulations. That is all curious; but the really interesting thing is the contact with the men. I have already had opportunity to get into touch with any number of Uncle Sam's boys, and that does seem worth while from the start. They are a fine-looking set of fellows; you would be proud of them.

I got here early yesterday morning, and breakfasted with the District Secretary. Later I saw the six or seven others. We had dinner in one of the Y tents in the town, the food being brought from the army mess, my first experience of that. Supper I got from the soldiers' mess myself, here at the camp, using my mess-kit. Breakfast the same this morning. That, as much as anything, makes me feel like a part of the Army. Another thing that seems funny enough is the saluting, trying to keep my right hand free so as to salute all officers, American and French.

All the afternoon I was behind the counter in the canteen, selling chocolate and candy and cigarettes to the boys, and having chats with a lot of them. It was great!

IN CHARGE AT THE CAMP

August 26. It seems to be settled that I take the position of Senior Secretary here at the camp, and I am working hard at the task of organizing the work for the eight of us who now make up the staff. It is particularly puzzling, because, until we get into our splendid hut, now nearing completion, every-

thing has to be done as best may be. Working in a tent makes special problems. From every point of view the canteen is the great difficulty. But if you could see the way the men throng it, you would agree that the time and effort are well spent. . . . The great event of the week has been the arrival of three American women, to work in the canteen. Two of them are from Boston and vicinity. This is a scheme that the English Y has used with great success. These girls are evidently game and indefatigable, and are already the greatest possible help.

August 27. Yesterday we were so rushed that we had no time to go to the mess ourselves for our dinner and supper, but just took a hasty bite back of the tent, potatoes on a fork and a hunk of meat in our fingers. At nine-thirty we were quite ready to roll into bed. I, by the way, am sleeping in the same sleeping-bag that has travelled with me to the Canadian Rockies so often, so that I am assured of pleasant dreams, if ever I dream at all; which isn't likely, for after a strenuous day like yesterday, one sleeps like a log. Everybody keeps in a glorious good humor, so that nothing matters.

As Senior Secretary here it is my part to see that the programmes for the afternoon and evening are carried out—social, athletic, religious, educational, and that the workers take their turns of duty at the canteen. Also, I have the interesting task of trotting around to the various army headquarters, and finding out who among the officers and men are able and willing to help us out with our programmes. The variety of talent which one unearths in such a round of visits is worthy of a democratic army like ours—all the way from scientific lectures to vaudeville acts and cowboy stunts. The performances that result are sometimes excruciatingly funny, often extraordinarily good.

AN ENFORCED MOVE

August 30. Our most thrilling experiences are usually of a sort that the censor would not allow us to write about, but we had one recently which I think will get through, as it wholly concerned the Y. As I have told you, our work, when

I arrived here, was carried on in a large tent, our hut being far from finished. This, of course, made the work difficult in many ways; and we have eagerly looked forward to the time when we could get into our hut, which is composed of two main buildings of generous dimensions and several smaller wings.

Well, a few days ago we had a severe storm, which toward evening culminated in a high wind. It was my turn to sleep in the tent that night, on guard, and I and another of the secretaries were just trying to settle down to some sort of rest—all our clothes on—when rip, tear, crack, the wind burst in at the farther end, and we with the use of our ever-ready light could see the whole thing apparently curving in and coming our way. It did not take us long to get out, you may believe. As we had, earlier in the evening, taken all the precautions I could think of in the way of driving stakes in tighter and adjusting the ropes, there was nothing for it but to let the elements do what they would; and by this time the storm of wind and rain was as bad as ever I saw. Having all the responsibility on my shoulders, you can imagine what an anxious night I spent, listening to the flapping of the half-demolished tent, and the rattling and crashing of its blown-about contents.

At the first streak of dawn I was up, and soon, by the Major's orders, had all the help I needed. To my great relief I found that our canteen stores (hundreds of francs' worth) had not yet been exposed to the rain, and that the breakage was confined almost entirely to bottles and a few chairs. We got permission to store in an empty barracks nearby the stuff saved from the wreck; and at once we began to consider what do to. It did not take us long to decide that we must move into part of the new hut, unfinished as it was. All set to work with a will, and at 2.30 P. M. we opened the building to the boys and were selling chocolate, crackers, cigarettes, soap, French dictionaries, pencils, shaving-soap, and all the rest of our usual stock, over the counter of the canteen. Last evening we had a band concert and a vaudeville show with such an audience as we could never have gotten into the tent. . . .

This is a busy life: up soon after 6, breakfast (from the men's mess) over by 7.15, and then steadily on the job till 10 at night, with not more than half an hour out for dinner and supper. We sometimes sell a thousand francs' worth of goods in a day, and that means *some* hustling. The result is that the days go by like lightning, and I am having the time of my life.

CANTEEN PROBLEMS

September 3. It certainly was a great piece of good fortune that the move from the tent to the hut was forced upon us, for even in our unfinished state, with carpenters hammering all about us, with no glass as yet in our windows, and with a roof that still lacks its protective covering, we are much better off than we were in the tent. . . .

We now have five women working in the canteen, which makes the schedule for the men a good deal easier; for I have arranged it so that there are always two or three women on duty, and except in the rush hours it is not necessary to have more than one man in addition. This frees the men for their other tasks, which have been much interfered with by long canteen hours. Surbeck can now devote himself to organizing football games, and McMahan has time to practice close harmony with the other members of his improvised quartette, and prepare his stunts of various sorts for the evening's programme.

We are also working out a system of canteen tickets, which we hope will greatly simplify the money problem. One of our difficulties has been to keep on hand a sufficiently large supply of small change; so much so that copper *sous* have haunted our dreams. Moreover, to have a man hand in a twenty-dollar bill, in purchasing fifteen cents' worth of chocolate, and ask for the change in French money, makes a rather knotty problem for our amateur counter-jumpers. Probably the Y Headquarters at Paris will in time devise a system for all our canteens; but we have made up our minds that we cannot wait any longer, and yesterday I went into town with our canteen manager and, after getting permission

from the District Secretary, struggled for an hour at the printer's office to reach a mutual understanding through the sole medium of French. As I was elected spokesman, you can imagine the agonies we went through. However, we managed to make quite a lark of the expedition, the culminating feature being a delightful little supper served to us in the back parlor of a sort of grocery, a delicious omelette with cheese being the *pièce de résistance*. Except for an hour's walk last Sunday, this was my first outing since I took charge here.

IN THE HOSPITAL

Dear ——,

September 13, 1917.

Don't tell what follows to anyone whatever, for, as you will see, it is something I don't want to have reach my family or the church just yet. It's nothing serious, just trying, but it might look a good deal worse at that end, with imperfect information. The fact is that I've been on the sick list for a week or so. I am sure I know what is the matter, and I am making steady improvement; so you see there is nothing to worry about. I was in bed up at the camp, when I wrote you last, and was feeling "rotten, thank you." I won't go into detail, but just say that the root of the thing seems to be rheumatic—an old enemy of mine, as I may have mentioned to you some time. Well, my experience during last Saturday night proved to me that, even if I could stick it out longer myself, with just having an army doctor come in to see me once a day, I was too big a burden for the other Y men, who did everything possible to make me comfortable, and in consequence were losing too much sleep. So Sunday afternoon, while a big concert (operatic soprano) was in full swing in the hut, I got them to take me out to the ambulance, and bring me to Uncle Sam's Base Hospital. It certainly is a most comfortable feeling to know that over here, when things don't go just right with you, the Government is going to step in and take charge, even of us Y people. The hospital is fine; good doctors and nurses, and the nicest boys imaginable for orderlies. . . . Spite of aches and pains, I've been having a wonderful time; and if only I can be back at work soon, I sha'n't regret it. Of course, the men here, up and down the wards, are just the same as the boys at camp, and here we have lots of time. Such interesting long talks! They, however, do most of the talking, for sometimes I have not felt like doing more than ask questions and throw in a remark now and then. That is because they are most apt to get talking toward dark,

while I am freshest in the middle of the day. So you see, if anyone asks, "Are we downhearted?" the answer is a thundering, "NO!" Indeed, I am only waiting till my discharge from the hospital to begin to prepare the church people and my family for the idea that I must stay here at least all winter instead of the two months I originally contracted for.

CENSORED NEWS

September 15. Have I told you of our great concert last Sunday? A French soprano, a genuine professional, came with her own baritone and violinist, and gave the boys a big time. They did the same for her; the applause was "tumultuous." Madame, her mother, had come out to camp a few days before, and entrusted to me a portfolio of clippings and puffs (to serve as a basis for my announcements, I suppose), many of them copied out in long hand; yet Madame's absolutely French manner and get-up made it hard for me to realize that underneath she was, as this evidence indicated, just a proud mother after all.

It gets harder to write than it was at first, with the censorship forbidding mention of all the real things. Just now it seems to be particularly difficult, so except for saying that our hut is really very near completion (window-glass the main lack now) I won't try to be newsy, but use this letter in catching up with personal matters. . . .

REPORT OF PROGRESS

Dear ——,

September 21, 1917.

I am ever so much better. The acute part of the rheumatism has cleared up, and to-day, a sunny day after several damp or rainy ones, I am not nearly so stiff. Last night I had about three hours of natural restful sleep, from which I woke up about midnight, clear in mind and refreshed. This marks a great gain on what has been. . . . Through it all I have never been really discouraged, day or night; and indeed have had a wonderfully interesting time. I've seen life and death from some new angles, gotten into closer touch with the enlisted men than I ever would have in any other way, and gathered much useful information about hospitals, human nature, and the Army. . . . I can't get out of the doctor any word about when I may hope to be fit for work. He says I am doing better than he expected, but is a perfect sphinx for silence, when it comes to setting a date.

THE HUT OPENED

September 27: Great doings since I wrote you last! Our hut is finished, or near enough so to enable us to call it complete, and give a formal opening. That took place last night, and, as all who were there agreed, it was *some* show. The hut, the first American Y. M. C. A. hut to be dedicated in France, is double; two long narrow buildings side by side, with connecting passage ways. One side includes the big auditorium and the "quiet room." The other holds canteen, writing-room, lounge (all this in one undivided room), besides office, storeroom, and quarters for the staff. Pool-room and kitchen form still further additions. The crowd at the dedication exercises was beyond description. You may think you know something about crowds, but wait till you once see a really crowded Y hut. It's a great sight. We had a General present for the chief lion, and some very good speaking by officers, enlisted men, and Y representatives. Also a professional violinist. But, after all, the real show was the audience. . . .

The days have been so rushed lately that the men have barely had time to eat and sleep, and this in spite of the fact that we have several new workers. But this addition to the force hasn't affected the hut any, for the old tent has been erected again in another part of the camp, and the new men are running that.

UPS AND DOWNS

Dear ——,

September 30, 1917.

The last day of the month, and a wonderful warm sunny day, more like August. I'm sitting up in a wheel chair, and have just returned from an expedition in it the whole length of the long sunny corridor where my bed is, and back again. I've been allowed to put on my clothes for three days now. To-day I took two or three steps without feeling as though I were going to take an instant header. So you see I have been making real progress since I last wrote. However, I can see that it will be a good long time before my left side gets back to normal use. But the right side seems practically as good as ever; and I expect to be able to do most of my work long before the last kinks get out of my joints and tendons. . . .

October 3. My writing in pencil doesn't mean anything except that my pen is dry, and I can't get it filled just now. Well, how is the sick man? No worse, and not much better. I got up and dressed and hobbled around for several days; but as my temperature still insisted on going up every afternoon, the doctor ordered me back to bed, and there I am. Yet I feel fine, and the rheumatism seems to linger in just one hip, except when we have a damp or rainy day, and then most of the joints in my legs and feet stiffen up. But a few hours of sunshine remedy that.

By the way (prepare to be horrified), I've had no haircut since I left Worcester ten weeks ago! I must have needed one badly before I came down sick, but never thought about it. In the hospital—now nearly a month—there has been no chance; so you can imagine how I look, mostly hair.

I tried to send a cable to the church on Sunday, asking them to extend my leave of absence till September, 1918. I learn to-day that it did not get off, as the wires were so crowded with official business that other messages could not be taken. I hope to get it off to-day or soon. . . . As things look now, I am likely to be shifted from here, when I am able to move.

CONFESSING THE CRIME

October 9. By the time this reaches you, you will already have heard from O——, who starts for home to-day, that I have been foolish enough to indulge in some of my old antics in the rheumatic line. I am sure that he will have made you believe at the same time that there really has been nothing serious about it—just tedious and beyond words annoying, and that I am now far on the road toward recovery. My chief feeling is that of shame, to spend so long a time in bed, when so much work was at hand to do.

Several of the letters I have written to you were written here in my bed in Ward 11 of the American Army Base Hospital No. 101, and the reason why I haven't written so much lately has been because the doctor has prescribed as complete idleness as possible.

I hated to confess to you that I was sick, and hoped at first that it would be only a matter of a week or so; though if I had used my wits, I might have realized that even a rather light case of rheumatic fever would mean a slow cure. I have been splendidly taken care of by the best of American

doctors and nurses. Fortunately, through it all I have kept in wonderfully good spirits.

I confess that sometimes, especially at the beginning, I got fairly furious at the thought of plans stopped in the middle and work left half finished or barely begun. One thing that particularly distressed me was the fear that some of my Central Church boys would arrive here, while I was laid up, and I should fail to see them. As it has turned out, that fear was unnecessary. To be sure, the first of Central Church's representatives in the Army have arrived, but I haven't missed seeing them. The only difference from what I had hoped has been that, instead of my looking them up, they have looked me up. When they arrived, one of the Y secretaries went along the wharf, calling out an enquiry for Worcester men, and then telling those who knew me where I was. The result was that at the very first chance Neils Forsthalm came up to the hospital to see me. You can imagine the delight with which I greeted him and the two friends he brought with him, both Worcester boys. I certainly thought it was fine of them to use their first free time in France in coming to see the home parson in the hospital. We had a splendid long talk about the two great subjects of perennial interest, Home and the Army. The same pleasure was repeated last evening. It was dim out in the corridor where my bed is—just the light that shone through the window from the adjoining ward—and I had dozed off for a moment, when I heard some one say, "He's asleep," and there was Edward Anderson in his uniform and army overcoat. He, also, had brought a friend with him; and we had a grand old talk, the three of us, till just before hospital closing-time. It was a dreadful rainy windy night, and I'm afraid the boys must have gotten soaked walking back to camp.

HOSPITAL LIFE

October 13. Last night was a wild one, a regular sea storm with a gale of wind. I had plenty of bed clothes, and quite enjoyed it, even when it broke through the window opposite my bed. There was a great scurrying around of

orderlies and nurses; and those night flurries are always picturesque, for they use candles, and the nurses wear their scarlet-lined Red Cross capes. I accuse them of carefully arranging this becoming combination.

I wish I could give you some idea of our little hospital world, and of some of the boys who are here, or have been here, for I have outstayed several generations. Of course, many of them were just parts of the scenery, like the old darkey whose cane I could hear tap-tapping along the stone floor, coming from behind me, the first thing every morning before daybreak, and who always told me whether his shoulders were better or worse—usually better, according to his report. Then there was the sergeant who had been ordered back to the States, but whose departure was for some reason long delayed. He looked exactly like the Kaiser at thirty-five, and evidently did what he could to aid the likeness by his way of wearing his moustache. His usual remark, as he passed me, was, "Can you beat it?" apropos of some new delay. But he did go at length. And there is McMullen, who came in here for a cough; but as it has been discovered that he is an expert pastry cook and very useful in the kitchen, I fancy that the hospital authorities will be a long time in pronouncing that cough cured. I used to see him quite often in the days when I didn't sleep very well; for his baking is done at night, and he comes strolling along in the wee small hours, a ghostly figure, white cook's cap and apron over his army uniform. I used to learn from him whether the next day's special delicacy was to be corn bread for breakfast or perhaps even squash pie for dinner.

Lately I've had quite a wide geographical outlook. O'Brien comes from New Orleans, and went to college in Ohio. He has just gone back to duty—a very nice fellow with whom I had a number of interesting talks on war topics, the only trouble being that they were apt to get too interesting, producing a rise in temperature, so that I had to allow myself only brief periods. Smith is from Wisconsin, a region of rough timber land. At first, when he got to talking about his folks and the pioneer life and the log-houses and the little

school-house, where everything outside of home-life centres, I couldn't make out why it all seemed so familiar. Then I remembered the early chapters of Dr. Anna Shaw's life, which I read last spring. Strange to think of almost the same conditions existing to-day as before the Civil War—all but the wolves, of which I hear no mention. (Yes, they have the wolves, too, a few of them; I've just asked him.) This boy is of German parentage, his uncles fighting for the Kaiser, but "I belong to Uncle Sam," says he. His younger brothers have always been crazy on the subject of warships, and have carved diminutive ones out of blocks of wood for toys, copying such magazine pictures of them as came to hand. In the early days of the European War these little vessels all had German names, "Kaiser Wilhelm," "Deutschland," etc., for their owners thought that they ought of course to side with Germany; but as soon as the United States broke with the Central Powers, the names were all changed at once, and are now the "Columbia," the "Yankee," the "Wisconsin," and the like—a rather suggestive little incident of the sort that Germany fails so utterly to understand and foresee. This Wisconsin boy has been laid up with rheumatism like myself, only very much worse, and is being sent back to the States, a great disappointment to him. There are, of course, a few slackers here, who hail their sicknesses as a quick safe way of getting back home, but this boy is not of their sort.

Neither is the cowboy from New Mexico, who has a touch of T. B., and is told to go home and get well, whereas he just wants to *be* well, and go on with his job in the Army. He is an artilleryman. His bed is next to mine, and we have had some fine old talks (especially in the evenings, when we have quite a while between dark and sleep-time) about cayuses and tepees and round-ups and camp-fires.

A large amount of amusement has come from a six-foot kid named Sanderson, a marine, of Scotch blood, from near Philadelphia. He is that rare combination, an irrepressible who isn't fresh. The nurses, especially the night nurses, make a lot of him; he half resents and half likes it. You should have seen the way he shot out of his bed and over onto

mine, when he received a copy of his first letter home to his mother, printed in full in "The Ardmore Chronicle." A very nice letter it was, too. The poor lad is here for mastoid, and I fear has an operation ahead of him.

I must not omit to mention two of the French women who come in to do the chores, and go by my bed scores of times each day with pails and mops. They are mother and daughter. The daughter arrived late the other day, and was told to go and report to the adjutant: for military discipline extends even to the char-women. He gave her a sound scolding, not only for tardiness, but also for alleged removal of food from the premises; and threatened to reduce her pay. She listened unmoved, and her only reply was, "I shall have to have two extra holidays next month." The mother is a stocky little old Frenchwoman with jet black hair and a close-fitting white lace cap. She and I exchange smiles every time she passes, with appropriate salutations night and morning, and brief remarks on weather, temperature, and the like. She can never get used to my evident enjoyment of the sunlight, which pours in upon my bed through the glazed front of the corridor; and with distressed exclamations of "*trop chaud*" and "*très mauvais*," she draws imaginary curtains to protect me from the baleful "*soleil*."

CHANGES AT THE CAMP

October 17. I am somewhat at a loss for material for my letters, for the routine life of the hospital does not vary much from day to day. Perhaps you would like to hear a little about the changes which have taken place, during my sickness, out at the camp where I was working. At first no one in the Y realized, apparently, any more than I did myself, that I should be laid up for so long a time; and the rest of the staff at the camp tried to get along without a head, following out the general plan already outlined. But that is a very unsatisfactory state of things in work which undergoes such great and constant changes as the work at our hut, where there are not only tremendous variations in the numbers of men we work for, but also many changes in the staff itself

which call for frequent readjustments. Toward the end of my second week in the hospital (though even then I was far from realizing how much longer I was to be here) I told West, the District Secretary, that I thought he must soon put someone else in my place, or the work would suffer seriously; and not long after he did so.

I need not say that it was a great disappointment to me not to have been able to continue on the job there long enough to feel that I had really gotten it organized and in working order. The time when I hoped to bring things to a head was when we took possession of the whole hut, and thus had passed from the period of temporary makeshifts to something like permanence; but when that time came, I was flat on my back here. Until my successor was appointed, I had worried a good deal about the way things were going, for the reports of the individual workers, when they came to see me, were anything but reassuring. But since the responsibility was rolled from my shoulders, while I have not ceased to regret that I had to leave the job in the middle, I haven't had to worry about it any more. At just about that same time our Paris office, unaware of my sickness, telegraphed me to leave here, and go to the camp at the American Army Headquarters, to take charge there. Of course, owing to my sickness, nothing came of that, but it shows that in any case I should have had to leave my work here unfinished.

So many other changes of personnel have taken place, that Surbeck, the Athletic Director, is the only man left of those who were working at the hut when I dropped out. There have been changes among the women workers, too. On the other hand, owing to the growth of the camp, a second double hut is being erected in another part of it. Do you wonder that I feel like a back number?

SENT BACK TO DUTY

October 25. I am out of the hospital! Yesterday, after the doctor had given me my discharge, I was as restless as a caged bear all the morning, wondering whether they would send the car for me. It is comparatively easy to be patient

and relaxed, when you know that nothing is going to happen; but as soon as you know there is a chance that something *will* happen, it is very hard to wait unconcerned for the event. I was lying on the bed with my overcoat spread over me, taking a good long rest after dinner, when Gates, one of the Y men, appeared. He thought, though he was not yet sure, that I might be taken care of at our Officers' Club in the city, which includes a score of bedrooms, a new institution of the Y since I went to the hospital. It is indeed the only really good place in town, far better than any of the hotels. If by chance there were a place for me there, I should be in luck.

Then came the leave-takings; and, would you believe it? I seemed to feel almost as bad about leaving that hospital and the people in it as though saying good-bye to home or life-long friends. There were not only the up-patients, whom I had known a long time from their frequent passing along the corridor, and the boys in my own Ward 11, into which I could look through the window beside my bed, and the nurses and ward-masters and doctors, but also, since I had been walking up and down the corridor myself, I had made new friends among the boys who were in bed there, pathetically sick, some of them, but all so plucky and responsive to a smile or a word.

There was, for example, a little New York East Side Jew—born on Avenue B, he told me—whom the other people about didn't like much, because they said he was always complaining. But I didn't find him so. On the contrary, he always asked me first how *I* was, and seemed as much concerned about me as about himself. The first time I got down to where his bed stood, at the far end of the long corridor, and stopped to speak to him, his opening words were, "Oh, go back to bed, go back to bed." He could see that I was rather unsteady, and it seems that he had had a bad relapse from getting up too soon; he wanted to save me from a like mishap. It was humorous and pathetic to see how his face brightened up, when I told him that I too was New York born and bred; I could see that it seemed homelike to him, poor lad, to talk to someone from his "home town." On his bed, when I now

went to say good-bye to him, was one of my copies of "The New York Times" that I had started on its rounds a week before.

Well, not to be too long in telling it, there were all these new "parishioners" of mine to say my sudden good-bye to. Coming back down the corridor, I met the great husky-looking fair-haired Northwesterner, whom I've gotten to know recently, a fellow who looks to be as strong as an ox, has done hard work "all his life," he says (he is now twenty-two); has stood up with the best of them in the harvesting up in North Dakota. And here he is being sent home with T. B. He doesn't know what to make of it; almost doubts whether the doctors can be right. He talked to me an hour or more the other evening, in that dark period between supper and nine o'clock, which has been so prolific of confidential talks. Good-bye to him meant: "Keep your courage up, old man. Back in the good old Northwest you're going to get rid of this, and be as good as new."

A little farther on, standing by a window, and looking a bit downhearted, is the chap sent down recently from his regiment with some bad skin infection, due, he thinks, to the dreadful vermin of all sorts in the old French barracks that they have been using and in the cook's shack where he has been working. But the doctors are puzzled, and are making a blood test and studying him in other ways; and he, poor fellow, wanders around, wondering what *is* the matter with him. What can I say in the last five minutes to put hope into *him*?

So I go along. I hadn't realized how many friends I had made. The half-well ones in their wrappers (pink, blue, or lavender, a literal "Rainbow Division") scramble off from their beds to say good-bye. The really sick ones sit up in bed, or just reach out a hand from under the bed clothes drawn up under their chins. The almost-cured, who are up and dressed, leave their cards and checkers. Do you wonder that it takes me an hour or more to get away? Some of them ask me to write to them, and we exchange addresses.

Last of all comes my friend Hand, the cowboy from New Mexico, who has been my next-door neighbor for almost a

full month. Our beds have been head to head, so that we have had our backs to one another, and often, when we were talking, each shouting his words off into space down the corridor, necessarily talking a little loud so as to be heard by the other man behind him, people coming toward us have supposed we were talking to them or else to ourselves, and in either case have looked as though they suspected us of being feverish or "nutty." Hand, as I have told you, is another of the fellows who have had the horrid surprise of coming down with tuberculosis. He seems to have gotten much better since he came here; he has long been up and dressed, and hardly coughs at all. But a little extra effort starts up pains in his chest, and at such times I can see that he gets pretty blue and discouraged. He is now expecting word to come that he is to sail for America, and he realizes that over there he will be sent somewhere to a sanatorium for treatment; for Uncle Sam wants, if possible, not to discharge such cases till they are "cured." So he doesn't hope to get back to the ranch and the horses and the folks he knows till "January at the earliest," he says. I think he has selected that date so as not even to think about being home by Christmas. He's only twenty-two or three, by the way. He has been "riding" since he was twelve.

At last my good-byes are said. Joe, the Italian boy in the Engineers' Corps, who has made such a marvellously complete recovery from spinal meningitis, insists on going down to the door with me, and wants to carry my suitcase; but Gates has it, so he just trails along in a friendly way. God forgive me! He used to bore me a little sometimes, when he was first moved up to our floor, and would stop by my bed and talk about his remaining ailments. Sometimes I played tired, and shut my eyes, to get rid of him. Well, he hasn't laid it up against me.

Now to the hospital canteen, where I buy a cake of the Pears soap, which I have heard is for sale there, and also some candy and chocolate as a parting gift to the boys in Ward 11. Next, to the Sergeant Major's office to settle my account. Finally, a stop at the office of the Commanding Officer to pay him my parting respects, the genial Major who has so

often joked me about being so lazy, shamming sick, etc., and who carries it out almost to the end by saying now: "At last you're going, are you? I hope you won't be coming back again. Only," he adds, "if you do have to go to the hospital again, be sure you don't go anywhere but here."

And now I am out at the gate, and into that out-of-door world which always looks so queer and new and large to the man making his first excursion into it, after a long stay in the tiny world in which the sick man lives. The automobile starts with awful groans, for the cars we use (and abuse) here are simply fiendish—and fool that I am, I have actually a big lump in my throat as I am driven away.

I must divide this letter; it is getting too long. I have still to tell of my reception into the world of well men, a less important but rather pleasing part of the story.

THE FIRST DAY OUT

October 26. As we drove away from the hospital, my first discovery of changes during my stay there was the fact that the Marines, who have always had the policing of the place, are now acting also as traffic cops. The boy who turned us around our first corner smiled and nodded and said, "How are you, Mr. Knapp?" He may have been a patient at the hospital, or have visited a friend there, or possibly he remembered me from the long-ago period when I was selling chocolate and cigarettes in the canteen at camp.

When we reached the Officers' Club, I sat out in the car, while Gates went in to see what the chances were of taking care of me there. This Club is a fine thing. The very best building in the town for this purpose, formerly a private hospital for children, has been rented by the Y. Twenty or more good bedrooms are offered for rent, with good toilet and bath facilities. Breakfast and afternoon tea are served; and the commodious parlors are open freely at all times to all officers of the Army and Navy.

Soon Gates came out to tell me that I was in luck, that there happened to be three vacant rooms, and I could have one of them temporarily without interfering with the real

purpose of the Club. Larkin, who was one of the secretaries at the camp "in my day," and is now manager of the Club, was at the door to greet me; and you can imagine my feeling of having suddenly returned to civilization, when I was ushered into a drawing-room with rugs and upholstery and window-hangings and vases and bronze statuary. More important than all this was the fire-place, in which at once for my sake a diminutive coal fire was laid and lighted by Albert, the steward, or *chef*, or *garçon*, or whatever he should be called. Soon in comes Mrs. King, one of the older Y women, who arrived so nearly at the time of my taking sick that I had seen her but once, and who now looks after the housekeeping end of the Club, among other duties. She, if you please, has ordered tea, and shortly afterwards Albert brings it in. Never did anything taste so good; but the most important thing was the homelike air of it all.

While we were having tea, some officers dropped in, and ordered the same for themselves, which was served to them on one of several little tables in the big bow window. I lay back in a Morris chair, and rested till nearly six, which is the hour at which the secretaries here in town have their mess, served in the basement of this building. I had expected to go down to it; but just before the time, Larkin came up to say that the menu for that night was not suited to a rheumatic, so he had ordered a special meal of eggs and toast and cocoa, and had run out himself and bought the eggs and a loaf of French war bread for the purpose. Also he said the mess-room was too cold, so he was giving me my supper in a warmer place, no other than the kitchen. There, when I went down to it, were Albert and a French soldier in uniform, seated on opposite sides of the table, shelling chest-nuts.

As I was finishing my supper, Larkin came in with the Paris newspapers, just arrived, and we read the report of the fine two-mile advance of the French on the Aisne. Then with Larkin's assistance I mounted the long winding staircase to my room on the third story. I lost no time in getting into bed, very weary as you may imagine, and somewhat

fearful of the effects of this most strenuous day. I did have some temperature, I think, but I slept well, and by morning was feeling all right.

BORROWINGS

October 30. By degrees I have been collecting my possessions, which have been pretty well scattered during my absence at the hospital. In spite of my laying it on one of my colleagues as a sacred charge, to assemble and keep together all my things, left wofully unprotected when I was hustled away from camp in the ambulance, I found on my emerging that most of my usable articles were in use. One man was finding my rubber boots very convenient on muddy days. Another told me that he never *could* have kept warm if it hadn't been for that splendid sleeping-bag of mine. A third was enjoying the use of my steamer rug. A fourth had made regular use of my mess-kit, and had distributed the pieces all over the place. A fifth, down here in the city, was getting good use out of my rain coat. Besides these articles which were in current use, I had to dig out from various hiding-places my best pair of shoes, my leather puttees, my folding rubber bathtub (when I asked for this, I found that one of the men had been "keeping it safe" under his cot), my private supply of writing-paper, and various other small items. Even the women, dear creatures, had appropriated—innocently, I am sure—my beloved little flag, which has flown over my tent and tepee in so many camps. I found it gracefully tacked up in their rest-room. So you see I have had considerable occupation along these lines. I have found everything now, I think, except a bundle containing my supply of shirts. I had rolled them up in a cloth to make a pillow for my bed, which was the reason why they were not in my trunk.

You must not for a moment think that this implies a low grade of honesty among my colleagues. It is simply illustrative of a universal army condition. Among army people the practise seems to be generally adopted of "borrowing" whatever comes to hand, and even we, who are merely

“militarized,” seem easily to drift into the same method of supplying our necessities.

A NEW JOB

November 2. In the ten days since I left the hospital I have improved so much that I feel almost like a different person, and I fancy that I look and act like one. I am still lame, and probably shall be for some time to come. It will not be many days now, I think, before I can report again for active service, and I expect to go soon to Paris for that purpose. All that I have attempted as yet is to give a little help to the manager of our Officers' Club, where I am staying. When he goes out, I take charge, to greet, and, in a mild way, entertain the officers who drop in here; and if any of them want to rent rooms, offer to them those that are vacant. Albert, the French steward, if he is available, goes about with prospective room-renters; but he has often been out or otherwise employed during my times of service, so that to my experiences as host and desk clerk I have added that of bell-boy. This Y work is certainly varied if nothing else. Even when the manager is in, there are at times so many officers coming and going that both of us are fully occupied doing the honors.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Paris, November 17. For the past week, by way of trying out my physical powers, I have been acting as general utility man in the office of the hotel, which the Y runs for American officers who have occasion to come to Paris. One really courageous duty that has fallen to me in this service has been sending telephone messages. It is no easy task with a French operator at the other end. It takes all my nerve to give a four-figure number in French, but I do succeed in getting—sometimes—the person I want. I even answer the 'phone, but in the hope that when I put the receiver to my ear, I shall be greeted by my dear native tongue. When, on the contrary, it is a torrent of French, I hastily turn it over to one of the French employees, fortunately within reach.

Yesterday I spent an hour in the unusual task of translating from French to English complete detailed instructions for running the steam plant and the hot-water heater in the cellar of the hotel. As we have an American darkey trying to run two very French pieces of apparatus, it was quite necessary to bridge the linguistic gulf, which I, dictionary in hand, attempted; and I only hope that no explosion will result from my misunderstanding of some idiom.

I am glad to say that I have announced my readiness to go back to active service next week. I think my health now quite warrants it. The slight lameness that remains will not interfere, I think, nor prove too great a handicap. I have been walking to and from my work here all this week (for I am rooming at another hotel a mile or so away), and I find that the exercise is only beneficial. So I hope that when I write again it will be with a new story to tell, of which, however, I may be allowed by the censor to tell you but little. I shall again be "Somewhere in France."

November 21. I am off to-morrow for active service once more, and am, as you may imagine, rejoicing at the prospect. I am to have charge of our work at the American Army Headquarters. Our first hut there is nearly completed, and there will be one or more others later, besides other smaller enterprises. There are some specially interesting features in this job; and while it is on a somewhat larger scale than what I have attempted here before, I hope to be able to make good.

II. AT CHAUMONT, THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS

THE Y'S FIELD AT G. H. Q.

November 23, 1917. I arrived at my new field of work yesterday at noon, and find an immensely interesting task before me. Of course, it bristles with problems; but there is good hope of finding solutions for them, and certainly the work is important and worth while. The task nearest at hand is the opening of the hut, which is nearing completion. In fact, by a curious coincidence, it is just about as far on as the other one was, when I was forced to leave it and go to the hospital. But in this case no activities are as yet being conducted in the unfinished hut. . . .

There are three other men here now, or four counting the one whose whole work is superintending the hut's construction. But one of these, the one who has been in charge till now, and of whom the boys speak in the warmest terms, leaves for his new field on Friday, leaving but two other men to share the general work with me. Even for the hut alone, that would be a small enough force, but besides that there are other centres of work to open up, for groups of soldiers encamped in the surrounding country; and we are also very anxious to start an officers' hotel or club here in town. The difficulty is to secure any suitable place; for the town is already very well taken up. Fortunately two women workers arrive to-morrow. I have met them, and think they are of the very best sort.

I feel well, and expect to be well here. Several times since I came I have walked with barely any feeling of lameness at all, which I regard as a particularly good record, considering that the sun has hardly shown itself since my arrival.

November 25. I have this afternoon made my first visit to two of the outlying stations, and had there my first experience of what mud means to the soldiers in France, a mild experience of it, to be sure, compared with conditions in the trenches, but enough to awaken in me a new sense of what a privilege it is to be trying to bring from the people

in the States some comfort and help to our boys, which will not reach them so quickly in any other way.

GETTING STARTED

December 2. We informally opened the hut to the boys on Thanksgiving Day, using one side of the building. It had been quite a job to clear and prepare it; stoves to erect, fire wood to be procured, lamps to be installed (for we have not yet electric lights), canteen supplies to be opened and arranged. The lamps, for instance, were not in place on the day of the opening, till just as it was growing too dark to see without them. We had a short Thanksgiving Day Service at 4 and a concert in the evening by a capital man sent from Paris. Also we gave a free feed of coffee, sandwiches, salmon salad, apples, and nuts, both afternoon and evening. The men warmed our hearts by their appreciation. "Best time since I left the States," said one.

Since then we have been open daily 9 A. M. to 9.30 P. M. with canteen open from 12 to 2 and from 5 on. To-day, Sunday, has been our busiest day, as the men are much freer, so we have had the canteen open right through from 12 to the hour of Service this evening. The hut was full for the Service, the singing splendid, and the boys very responsive.

We are promised a new man to-morrow. I don't know his name, but Mr. Carter (who was here yesterday) says he is regarded as the strongest man in the group of nineteen just arrived. I expect to have him take charge of the activities in the hut, exclusive of the canteen. Also my strong appeal for a chauffeur was honored at once. The rapidity even startled Mr. Carter, who had seconded my request. He arrived yesterday, Conly by name, and will have complete charge of the car and motor-cycle, keeping them in order and driving them. This avoids the constant calling away from their proper jobs of the other men, besides being much better for the machines. For the abundant shopping, now necessary in fitting up the hut, the free use of the car is a tremendous time-saver; and later it will enable me to go from point to point of our growing field with freedom. . . .

December 11. My days are made up of an extraordinary miscellany of interests, many of them of a very humdrum order, such as problems of carpentry and paint and plumbing; for our hut is still incomplete; and indeed roof, walls, floor, and windows were all that existed when we opened the doors to our soldier public. My task is not the actual labor, of course, but that of keeping things moving by planning the day's work, assigning the tasks, advising, encouraging, and praising, or (as tactfully as I can) correcting mistakes. Besides all this, there are, of course, special parts of the work that I have to execute as well as plan, largely of a diplomatic character, consultation with the army authorities, securing of permissions for every material change or extension of our work, correspondence with our own Y officials or personal conferences with them.

This afternoon I made a little journey to carry out a victrola, records, stationery, magazines, and books to a small group of our soldiers camped in the forest eight miles away. The young officer in charge came to us one day last week to beg for a victrola for his men, and fortunately we had one for them, which I took the earliest opportunity to carry to their camp. It was fine to see how this young Lieutenant is aiming to combine proper military discipline with a keen personal interest in the welfare of his men. We were glad to be able to co-operate with him, and I am happy to-night thinking how the seven records we took with the victrola are adding a new bit of cheer to the boys in that camp.

FUN AT THE HUT

December 16. The outstanding event of the week has been two nights of musical entertainment at the hut, given by three musicians sent down to us from Paris by our Y Entertainment Bureau. There was some fine violin and piano music, a truly classical programme, and interspersed with these numbers were French ballads, wonderfully sung by a little French lady, whose skill of interpretation was so great that she could have been fairly well understood even without the explanation in English which preceded each

ballad, given by one of the other performers. You should have seen how the boys enjoyed it all. It would have made you appreciate how hungry they get for entertainment, and I am sure you would have envied the performers their opportunity to give so much pleasure to such a crowded roomful of applauding men. Our having them for a second night was an unexpected treat, due to the fact that they had a day without an engagement and a short journey to their next place. The boys took advantage of their second appearance, to prepare a letter of appreciation and thanks, which, neatly typewritten and signed by representatives of as many companies as could be reached in the short time, was presented in the middle of the performance by "Private Brown of the Quartermaster Corps," whom I called forward for that purpose.

Sometimes I go back to the hut in the evening, sometimes not. There is a hut leader, and I am not responsible for the details of things there. So if there is nothing special on, I often get into bed early, and there write or read. In that way I manage to keep physically and nervously ahead of the game. . . . The week has been busy with a hundred little things—tasks and worries of all sorts. The worst thing is that for one reason or another our workers go as fast as they come. This is, of course, the fortune of war, but none the less trying; for naturally it necessitates much rearrangement of tasks, and makes it hard to carry on a definite policy or plan.

CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS

December 23. For the last three or four days I have had the special pleasure of carrying out bags and boxes of Christmas presents for the soldiers in the outlying camps for which we are responsible. Many of these were gifts sent direct to General Pershing, to be given to "some soldier." He has turned them over to the Y to distribute. We had, too, boxes of Christmas tree decorations, so that each camp could carry out that part of the celebration, and a plentiful supply of Christmas carols.

So over the snowy roads and under leaden skies that seem perpetually to be threatening more snow, I have gone speedily in our little Ford to the different camps. It was great fun to play Santa Claus in such realistic fashion. Some of the things, as I said, were in bags, which I found myself naturally swinging over my shoulder as Santa Claus, of course, naturally would.

I wish you could see the preparations being made in some of the camps by the officers and men: the tree being carried in by two soldiers, as I saw it at one place to-day: Christmas greens and lots of mistletoe—which is very plentiful hereabouts—being arranged with an effectiveness that you would hardly have expected where there is no woman about to give it the proper touch: elaborate programmes of home talent for Christmas eve and Christmas day—athletic, musical, and dramatic.

Let me give you an outline of my day to-day. Arriving at the hut, I find things still in a good deal of a mess from the crowd of the night before—the Saturday night crowd, augmented by the fact that Bishop Brent of the Philippines spoke. As I say, the hut when I reached it this morning looked like anything but Sunday and church, so I joined the broom squad for a while. Then came a Communion Service at which Bishop Brent officiated, attended by a good number of men and officers. The rest of the morning was spent in assembling Christmas gifts and carrying them to the hospital for the orderlies (the Red Cross takes care of the patients) and to the most distant of our outlying camps. As we poured out our bagfuls of tobacco, games, and packages in paper and ribbon from friends of the soldiers at home, the sergeant standing by exclaimed, “I guess we’re not going to have such a bad Christmas after all.”

I got back a little after noon, and lunched, and then took the Bishop out to another camp where we have a tent, in which he conducted a service for the men, and gave them a fine talk. There, also, I left Christmas gifts and at the same time made arrangements to take out to them some entertainers from Paris on Christmas night. They (the enter-

tainers) are to be here two days, and we are spreading them as far as they will go.

Back then to town and the hut, where a children's party is in progress, not given by us, but by some of the army people, we merely providing the place. It is for the children of the town, and streams of children from all quarters are converging at the hut; the Mayor of the city is there and the American Commandant.

I expected to stay for it myself; but as I enter, I get the upsetting report that we are quite out of wood for our stoves. So I climb into the Ford again, and off we go in the twilight to the wood-cutters' camp eight miles away and partly through the forest. For luckily we have an order for six *steres* of wood, but have to transport it ourselves. The boys who help us to load it into the car tell us that everything is "coming on fine" for Christmas; and as we separate we give one another advance wishes for Merry Christmas, just as you are doing at home as I write, in the case of people whom you are not likely to see on the day itself.

When I get back to the hut with the wood, I find that there has been a perfect mob of children accompanied by their relatives to the third and fourth generations (reckoned backwards), and the place looks it. So everyone turns to with the brooms again; and in half an hour order is restored and the chairs are set for Evening Service, when one of the Chaplains is to speak. As I had been to church twice already and had had three long auto rides in cold that made one's ears and cheeks tingle, I didn't stay for the Evening Service, but am writing to you instead.

Most of my days are made up of a queer miscellany of occupations. Some of the things that I happen to call to mind from the doings of this past week, for instance, are, conferring with the Quartermaster about that wood for our stoves, and with the chief engineer about the electric lights, and several times with the Commandant and the Mayor about a building for our Officers' Club: arranging with a sergeant in the barracks nearby to help us in the disposal of our swill: shopping in the town for lamps, and grates for the stoves,

and mats: writing and telegraphing to Paris for more workers and another automobile: planning the work of a new worker who did arrive and rearranging the work of the others in consequence: hiring two rooms where the many officers and Y secretaries who turn up here can get a bed for the night when all the hotels are full, as often happens: drawing cheques and paying bills. Oh, how simple life in Worcester seems as I look back on it, where the people in the stores talk English, and the plumber comes with reasonable promptness when you send for him, and the main part of the minor machinery of life seems to run itself. Some days here it seems as though we had to create the whole universe over again from the beginning, before we could get a dinner cooked or perform any other ordinary occupation of daily life. Even the mailing of a letter means taking it to one particular place and climbing several flights of stairs to the room where it is given to the censor. And then the long-suffering censor has his troubles. I can imagine what he thinks of me when he notes that this is now the tenth page of this letter. But when he knows that this one is an answer to more than a dozen from different ones of you received this past week, I hope he will forgive me.

“NOEL! NOEL!”

December 26. Here begins the account of my Christmas day spent with the Army in France. In the first place, it looked like Christmas. The snow of several earlier storms—none of them of any size, however, as a New Englander counts such things—was still on the ground, and in the night we had had a fresh fall. When I started for the hut, which is at quite the other end of town from my room, the winding street looked like a picture on a Christmas card. I called out “Merry Christmas” to every American I passed, officers and all, and no matter how high their rank. For that one day a friendly greeting must take the place of the usual military salute. And you should have seen how the solemnest faces broke into a smile at that challenge. Colonels called back a cheery, “Same to you,” just like the privates.

There was a service announced to be held in the hut in the middle of the morning, to be conducted by one of the Chaplains, and I had expected to attend that, and to spend the rest of the morning helping in the preparations at the hut for the tree in the evening. But, as almost always happens in this life over here, I was side-tracked from what I expected, and set at something entirely different.

We had with us over Christmas five entertainers, musical and humorous, Americans all of them, two women and three men, all in Y uniform (for the women have a uniform, you know, as well as the men, though not of a military sort—its green and light blue make a pleasant contrast with the prevailing khaki that surrounds them). I had scheduled these five for one of the outlying camps for Christmas night, but when I told them about it, I was careful to tell them at the same time about a second camp only two miles farther on, where the boys were just aching for entertainment; and the five promptly rose to my bait, or, to be accurate, one of the women led and the others followed, declaring that they would sing at both camps. So part of my Christmas morning must be spent in going out to carry this good news, and make sure that the necessary preparations were made. Added to this was the news which greeted me, on my arrival at the hut, that as usual the wood supply was nearly exhausted: so I must continue my country ride to still a third camp, that of the wood-cutters, to get a load of wood. There, then, was the better part of a morning's occupation cut out for me. I put on with delight some extra "woolies" that had arrived just in time for Christmas and this cold ride out into the snow-covered countryside, gloves, sweater, and a marvellous woolen helmet. In fact, you would laugh if I should describe to you all the layers of clothes I had on; and one of them, by the way, was that chamois shirt that some of you have seen in my Rocky Mountain camping pictures, with the bead work still on it made by the Camp-fire girls of Central Church. But, of course, that was well down under my uniform and army overcoat, in company with that new Christmas sleeveless sweater I've told you about.

My visits to the first two camps were not especially eventful, though they gave a chance for many more Christmas greetings. At the second one the boys were receiving their Christmas presents in the fine little Y hut that the officers have given to them there (a building erected for the officers' own quarters). The place was trimmed with greens, and a decorated tree stood in the middle. As the decorations on the tree and many of the presents being given out had been provided by the Y, and we were now bringing news of a "show" in the evening, you can imagine that we were not unwelcome visitors. I wish I might pass on the impression of the grateful and friendly faces to you people at home whose money and other gifts made it possible for the Y over here to give the boys a Christmas something like the ones at home, for, of course, we workers are merely bringing to them what you send.

We reached the wood-cutters' camp at about half past ten and found them in the midst of the out-door Christmas sports which their Lieutenant had arranged for them, and which he was personally conducting. We could not very well ask them to stop their sports in order to supply our need of wood, so there was nothing for it but for us to do what we decidedly wanted to do, namely, stand by and watch the fun. They had made us welcome from the start, for as we appeared they made quick preparations to greet us in the manner appropriate to the day; and I had barely sung out my own "Merry Christmas" to them, when there came back in a hearty chorus, "Merry Christmas, Y. M. C. A."

They were "chinning up" on a bar tied between two trees when we arrived—for you realize, of course, that their camp is right out in the forest; and the trees all about and the tents they live in made me think more of camping at home than of war in France. The next event was the standing broad jump, made difficult by the snow and the icy ground, which gave but a poor toe-hold. Then came a rope-pull, and again the snow under foot added some special features. All this time a boxing bout had been going on as a sort of side show. And last of all, as a grand finish, there was a four-mile cross-country

or through-the-woods race. The prizes for these sports, by the way, as well as Christmas presents for all, had been carried out by us several days before, and again the decorations on the tree were of our providing. So we did not feel like mere intruders, and we certainly were not treated as though we were.

By the time the sports were over and our Ford had been filled with wood in no time by all the athletes, it was almost noon; and nothing would do but we must stay to dinner. Now to say that we tried very hard to decline would not be true. On the contrary, I was very careful indeed, I assure you, while politely saying that perhaps we ought not to stay, to show the hospitable Lieutenant that to stay for that dinner was just what we longed to do. As soon as he had swept my faint words of polite reluctance out of the way, assuring us that there was plenty for two more, and that, of course, we were going to share their Christmas dinner, we graciously succumbed. While we were waiting in his tent for the food to be brought over from the mess tent, he showed us, with evident pride and pleasure, the presents—three of them—which his men had clubbed together to buy for his Christmas, beautiful things which they had tramped way into town to buy, and had selected with the greatest thought and care.

Then came the dinner, and Uncle Sam certainly does spread himself to give his boys the right sort of "eats," when the big days come around. I've had no such meal since I came to France. Oh, that turkey! and ah, that turkey-stuffing! and the splendid pumpkin pie that topped off the meal! with all kinds of fixings and extras which I shall not take space to describe. We had to rush away as soon as we had finished, but not before we had paid a visit to the kitchen, and told the cooks in person what we thought about it all.

I had just half an hour after getting back to town, before I started off on the second stage of my Christmas day experience. This consisted in taking our five entertainers to the Big Base Hospital, and dividing them up into small pieces, as it were, so that all the men in all the wards might receive at least a tiny bit of Christmas cheer from their songs

and stories. Twelve separate times those indefatigable people sang their carols and songs and gave their capital recitations in verse and prose. At each stopping-place, while the little portable organ was being set up and the performers were discussing, "What shall we do first?" I would go along the corridor and open the doors of the wards, calling out a loud "Merry Christmas, boys," if all the patients there seemed to be up and about, or saying it more quietly if some of them were lying very still in bed. And when I added, "We've got some music for you: shall I leave the door open, so that you can hear it?" there would come back a decidedly American "Sure thing" or "You bet," though often with a Swedish or Italian or even a German accent. Then the up-patients would come flocking out into the corridor, in pajamas covered by army overcoats, or else in those gay-colored wrappers which I remembered so well from my own hospital experience. How the boys did seem to enjoy it, especially the funny stories and the singing of the women: and how those five who gave all this pleasure enjoyed it themselves. To two whole buildings full of American soldiers and one of French they brought Christmas in that way. I shall always remember Miss Horisberg's singing of "My little gray home in the west" and Dr. Emerson's recitation of "Your flag and my flag," when we all instinctively stood at attention, just as though the flag were visibly passing before us. When we left, it was already dark, and I hurried the five away for a little rest and supper before their full evening programme.

I sent them off to that in due time in charge of another secretary, and went myself to the hut, where I knew help would be needed. And it certainly was. We had a perfect throng of men there, so that though the auditorium was packed with those who were listening to a fine military band concert, there was still a steady stream of purchasers at the canteen. Then in the middle of the evening we gave each man for his Christmas present a package of one of his favorite "smokes," we men bringing up the ammunition from behind while our women workers handed out the little packages with a personal greeting to each man. One boy

afterwards, when I was walking about in the crowd at the back of the hall, said, showing me his package still unopened in his hand, "This is the only present I've had to-day, and it means more to me over here than an automobile would at home."

When I reached my room in the hotel at a little after ten, I began to realize that except for meal times I had been on the go steadily the whole day long. Bed looked pretty good to me, and I was starting to get ready for it, when I heard from down-stairs the sound of soprano singing. "There can't be two voices like that in town to-night," I thought. And sure enough those entertainers of ours, after their long afternoon in the hospital and the two concerts at the outside camps in the evening, had found at the hotel, on their return, a roomful of home-sick officers trying to make a Merry Christmas with very few of the proper ingredients, and had turned to and given a concert to them. No wonder the Captain, in making his neat little speech of thanks, said that those voices from home had done more than anything else to bring them the real Christmas spirit. It was half past eleven before we finally all went to bed, for of course we had to stand around and talk it all over for awhile in the hall upstairs, before we finally separated and went, weary but happy, to our beds. I think it was one of the women who said, what I am sure we were all thinking, "I suppose the people at home are feeling sorry for us because we are spending our Christmas so far from home, whereas the fact is that it has been a wonderful Christmas, one that we shall never forget."

HOUSE-HUNTING

December 30. Since Christmas Day my time has been chiefly spent in further attempts to find and rent buildings for our various needs. The results are meagre, but you have no idea how much time these negotiations take: the French ways of doing business are so entirely different from ours. Imagine me, for instance, entering the office of a leading notary, who is trying to find quarters for our Officers' Club. The outer office is like a picture from Dickens—the shelves

piled with dusty labelled papers, the quaint clerks at their desks, the bright-eyed little boy who is very busy doing nothing in particular at a table in the corner, but who at intervals gives signs of real usefulness in tending the stove. And the whole place is so small that the three desks and the table nearly fill it. Here we wait for a moment, I and my interpreter, for my French is not equal to complicated negotiations, and I have brought with me Mrs. Hall, one of our Y women, who is more expert. The notary is away, but his assistant receives us in the inner office, and the conversation begins. It is all that we can do to hold it to the main line of progress which Mrs. Hall and I have agreed upon between us in advance, and soon I find myself talking English at the same time that Monsieur is talking French; otherwise I could never make any headway at all. That is evidently the reason why French people among themselves seem all to talk at once: it is that or an endless monologue by the one who happened to start first. But by butting in—of course with elaborate apologies—we manage to get on, until something draws out the fact that Monsieur is a refugee from a part of northern France still in possession of the Germans; then one hadn't the heart to stop him. What would I not have given to be able to follow the whole story. But from what I could catch with my scanty knowledge of French and by reading the expression of Mrs. Hall's face as the story proceeded, I could get enough to be swept away on the stream of sympathy, and to forget for the time that this was indeed to be a business appointment. Truly, we do not know what war really means as long as our homes are unthreatened; but to have everything that one holds dear destroyed, and often with utter ruthlessness, as it appears—how do people go on living their everyday lives after that? How does this little Frenchman, transplanted to this distant place, with his heart full of such bitter reflections, go on with the ordinary transactions of business—real estate, wills, lawsuits, taxes?

Another little episode, one that would have amused you, could you have watched me in it, took place yesterday when we went through a little furnished house (which I hope to

rent for our business office) in order to check up the inventory. It was like taking a French lesson on the words for household equipment. Even my interpreter had frequently to ask "What does that mean?" when we came to some obscure term, which, likely as not, would turn out to be nothing more unusual than a washboard or a frying-pan. The house itself is the quaintest little place, with passages so low that even I have to stoop in passing through. The whole thing seemed more like a plaything than reality. The cellar stairway, all of stone and well worn, was so cramped that the only way to get down it was by going backwards. It was worth the trouble, however, to discover there a small supply of anthracite coal, which is about as precious as gold over here nowadays. Under the first cellar was a second, roofed over with brick arches, a very useful apartment to have at your disposal in case of a bombardment, as the real estate agent takes pains to point out to you.

These house-hunting expeditions have given us some interesting views of the old city and its buildings. For real sight-seeing I haven't any heart at this time; but it certainly is delightful, as one goes about one's appointed task, to see here a tower that suggests the middle ages, here a quaint doorway, there a fine old church, with bits of exquisite carving or a perfect menagerie of gargoyles. And with snow on all the roofs, and in streets, which for the most part are used by foot-passengers only, so that the snow in them lies clean and white for days, the picturesque element is still further emphasized. One comes back with a dreadful shock to the realization that this horrible War is going on all the time, and that behind many of these very house walls, which look so picturesque, the tragedies of the War are embittering human lives. And America must more and more enter into the bitterness of this experience. The one thing that makes that thought any way endurable is the knowledge that America's sole purpose in taking up arms is to help to put a sure and complete end to all this horror and wickedness.

Forgive me that I have gotten to talking about the War, instead of sticking to my story. We try not to let our minds

dwell on the miseries and sorrows of it all, but sometimes it is impossible to escape them.

TRANSFERRED

January 11, 1918. My life over here proceeds in rather distinct chapters, like a book. Since I wrote you last, I have finished one chapter, and am preparing to enter on another. I am feeling extremely happy over the work that I am now to be assigned to. The plan is that I shall go to the place to which all the American soldiers will be sent for their leave: it sounds to me like a big opportunity. It is not absolutely settled, because it depends on certain decisions and actions of the Army, which may yet quite change the Y's programme; but I think it is likely to go through. It will give me just the sort of work that I like best and feel best fitted for; for it will, I hope, bring me again into close personal touch with the boys, and that, as you have probably discovered from my letters, was almost entirely barred out in the work in which I have recently been engaged. Mr. Carter said some nice things about my work at G. H. Q., in particular about the special thing I was originally sent there to accomplish, a sort of diplomatic task. And in general I think progress was made, though by no means as much as I should have liked to see. Gethman, the new man, who has both the technical experience and the physical vitality that I was short on, will be able to make the structure rise rapidly on the foundations that have been laid.

III. AT AIX-LES-BAINS, THE FIRST LEAVE AREA

SPYING OUT THE LAND

January 24, 1918.* I feel as though I were on leave myself, my chief duty here at present being to acquaint myself with all the attractions and interests of the place, so as to be able to inform the other secretaries, when they come, and the boys themselves, when they begin to arrive. You can imagine how agreeably I spend my days. I have taken several delightful walks. Twice I have started before ten, with my lunch slung on my back in the case that ordinarily holds my mess-kit, and have been on the road for four or five hours. It is doing me a lot of good, I think, and especially is strengthening my left leg, where the worst of the trouble has been. I took shorter walks at first, working up gradually to these longer ones, so as not to overdo. When I get home, my leg is good and tired, but soon gets rested.

I find that there are good bicycle roads in all directions, which the boys will enjoy immensely, I think, after the close routine of army life; and the scenery all about is delightful. My walk to-day began in thick mist, which meant that the clouds were trailing through the valley bottoms. At first the sun tried vainly to break through; but just as I arrived at the little town which was my destination, the lower clouds lifted and dissolved, and there were the ranges of mountains to right and left, each with a band of white cloud across the face of it, and, below, the lake, its shores dotted with farm-houses and little towns. I have found several good objectives for excursions and a few cafés where "eats" of the modest sort allowable in war time may be obtained. As for hikes and climbs, there seems to be a wide variety. Yesterday, for instance, I climbed up a mountain behind the town, from the top of which I had a glorious view of Mt. Blanc and the high Alps. I had to make the trip on foot and part of the way

*Letters sent about a week earlier than this, describing the arrival at Aix and first impressions, and stating in more detail the plans for the Leave Area, were never received.

through the snow, but there is a cog-railway which we hope may later be available for the boys. It will make a splendid trip.

THE TWO CHURCHES

January 25. You would be pleased to see the interest and cordiality expressed by the French people here with regard to the coming of the American soldiers. Of course, they hope to find it profitable, too; but, besides that, there is no mistaking the note of personal welcome in all they say and do. They have responded with great warmth and kindness to the reminder that our boys cannot, like the French *poilus*, go home for their leave, and that therefore we want to make them feel as much "at home" here as is possible. I am sure that the residents of the place will do all in their power to accomplish that.

For instance, there is the Roman Catholic *Curé*, upon whom I called yesterday. I attended mass at the Roman Catholic Church last Sunday morning, as there was no Protestant Service till afternoon, and naturally did not feel very much at home there, both because the Service with its unfamiliar ceremonial was in a foreign language in more senses than one, and because the church was like an ice-box in temperature, so that during the hour I was there I could feel the chill from the stone pavement creeping gradually up my body. But the call on the *Curé* was quite different. I went with Dr. Françon, a leading local physician, who has helped us in every possible way, and who acted as my interpreter. We were ushered in, through several halls and rooms, to an inner apartment where a blazing fire sent out welcome warmth from the fire-place, and a circle of chairs invited us to sit down in social fashion and enjoy it. The *Curé* has a genial face and pleasant manner, and received us with great friendliness. I explained that the Y was always deeply concerned to strengthen in every way the religious influences around our boys, and that I had come to ask for his co-operation in serving the Roman Catholics among them. He promised to do everything in his power, said he would try at once to secure a priest who speaks English, will see that our boys are personally welcomed when they come to church, and in particular

will call into service everyone in the parish who speaks English, for this purpose. He knew, of course, that I was a Protestant, and I was glad to make plain to him how loyally and heartily we sought to co-operate for the deepest welfare of the soldiers, without respect to difference of creed.

The French Protestant Service I attended on Sunday afternoon; though I nearly missed it, for when I arrived, I found the little auditorium absolutely empty. It was also very cold, as cold as the Roman Catholic Church had been in the morning, and I was glad that when dressing that morning I had fortunately realized the possibility of cold in the churches, and had put on extra garments to counteract it. I waited a few moments for someone to arrive, noting meanwhile the severe Protestant plainness and simplicity of the interior, and the great open Bible on the Communion table, where any casual visitor could read for himself, in the vernacular, the life-giving Word. No one else arrived, however; so I went out and walked a short distance along the street and back again, thinking that perhaps the hour of Service was later than I had supposed. The fact was that it was earlier, and also that the worshippers had adjourned, before I arrived, from the cold church to a smaller and warmer room. Fortunately they were singing a hymn, as I again reached the church, and I followed the sound of their voices till I found them. They were about twenty in all, men, women, and children, and their leader, as I noticed with surprise and pleasure, was in the uniform of a French *poilu*. The hymn they were singing was heroic in its sentiment, and the little congregation was singing it with fervor. Then followed a prayer, and the soldier-leader spoke it so simply and slowly that I could follow it all. Nothing, I think, has made me feel more deeply the suffering and devotion of France in this terrible War, than that prayer did in this little Church of the Open Book.

GETTING READY FOR THE CROWD

February 5. I am taking a few moments while waiting for Dr. Françon, one of our best friends and greatest helpers

here, who is devoting the greater part of his time to our interests. He speaks English fluently, and understands Americans, having known many of them personally and professionally. I am waiting at his house till he comes in, to ask him to go with me on an errand in which I need, not only his facility in French, but also his persuasive powers.

Things are moving rapidly here now, or at least a great deal of work is going on; for the time of opening is now near, and there is a tremendous amount to be done. You see, active preparations in detail could not be started, till the necessary technical and business arrangements, local and military, had been completed. Now, however, the Y has signed its contracts for leasing buildings and hiring labor and artistic talent; and the big enterprise is under way. Big it certainly is, the biggest thing by a good deal that the Y has yet attempted over here, and a brand new task, too, for the American Army, I believe, is the first to attempt such elaborate provision for its men on leave. It involves the taking over of almost the whole hotel accommodations and amusement facilities of two large cities and another smaller community. You probably know the region in which this work is situated and the names of the cities, for I understand that the censor has allowed these facts to be announced in the press at home and in Paris; but we ourselves here have not yet received any official notice that the usual rule to mention no names of places has been changed in this instance, so I am not at liberty to depart from the customary "somewhere." As an indication of the scale on which we are preparing, I may mention that in one building which the Y will use here, it is planned to have three entertainments going simultaneously every week-night, movies, theatre, and either a concert or a lecture. And we calculate that this will be necessary in order to provide for the number of men expected.

We have now a force of ten or twelve Y workers here, men and women, all of whom are very busy; and whenever we are not at work on our own particular jobs, or helping the workers in some other department, we are in conference. For

with several departments working side by side for the same group of men, and forced to create the whole scheme in a brief space of time, it is very necessary to submit our individual plans frequently to the whole group, to be sure that each part dovetails into all the others. At the same time, we have to keep close watch of public sentiment here, so as to preserve the fine feeling which has thus far marked all our relations with these cordial French people.

As one of the longest on the field, I have had the special privilege of aiding a good deal in the dealings with the French, and have been brought into close relation with two or three individuals for whom I have come to feel a very real friendship. My progress in speaking French has been noticeable, too, and still more in understanding it. I think I have learned more in the last three weeks than in the three months preceding. I surprise myself by carrying on long conversations; and although I have a pitifully small vocabulary, almost without verbs, I do manage to get along fairly well. Of course, I get on best in performing certain tasks that have to be frequently repeated; as, for instance, for several days I have been doing a good deal of the work of inspecting the hotels offered for our soldiers, and classifying them on the basis of convenience, cleanliness, location, etc. You should hear me lecturing French landladies on the subject of cleanliness and proper sanitation. One who did not know that I had repeated my lecture some dozens of times, in houses where conditions seemed to call for it, might think that I was quite a fluent French scholar. My guide in these real estate excursions is Dr. Françon, who sometimes arranges our itinerary so as to take in also a visit to one of his patients. Then, while he is inside, I converse with the neighbors. To-day, for instance, it was with a smiling rosy-cheeked young fellow of barely twenty, who has nevertheless had time to serve nine months in the war and lose his right arm in the service. Almost always those I talk to in these chance encounters have some vital personal relation to the world tragedy. If they are not soldiers themselves, they are the mothers or brothers or wives of soldiers. That is the eternal

sadness which runs through all our experiences in these days. While I was talking to that boy this afternoon, in the midst of a quaint setting of French houses, the last rays of the sun were glorifying a mountain, whose cliffs rise abruptly above us on the east, making them beautiful beyond description. For a few moments, under the spell of such beauties, one drops into the old way of thinking, "What a beautiful place the world is!" and then the thought comes surging back, "The War!" and blots out everything else. These boys, for whose brief playtime we are preparing, are here in France for something very different from play. So, while we are bound that they shall have "the time of their lives," during their stay here, there is always a deeper purpose in our preparations. We mean that they shall go back to camp and the trenches, not only with new vigor and the memory of a happy time, but with new hope, new purpose, and new inspiration for the high task in which they are engaged, and for the perils and hardships involved in it.

February 14. The women, under the direction of Mrs. Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., have been doing wonders, such as cleaning and furnishing two large club-houses, opening a restaurant, bargaining for the whole milk supply of a cheese manufacturer, hiring a small army of servants, etc., etc. The men have been preparing athletic fields, bathing and boating facilities, hiring an orchestra, engaging dramatic talent in Paris, and, as a foundation for all this, arranging the hotel accommodations for the thousands of men who are expected here.

Besides the preparations for the work of my own department I have been putting in a great deal of time on this hotel problem, inspecting and classifying hotels and houses in all three communities, and helping to settle the innumerable questions of policy and procedure that are constantly arising. To-day at the *Mairie* we had a meeting with all the hotel-keepers; and when we were all in our places, the Mayor at the centre of the long horse-shoe-shaped table, five of us secretaries next to him, and then the crowd of men and women who filled every available inch, and breathed up every

particle of air (of course, the windows were all tightly closed), I confess that I felt very much as though we secretaries were five Daniels in khaki in a den of French lions. For there were such knotty questions to be solved as, whether one egg should be added to the breakfast menu, how the supply of sugar, flour, and coal was to be equitably distributed, how the men are to be apportioned among the hotels on their arrival, and other questions equally likely to cause troublesome disagreement. But all passed off amicably; even the question of the egg for breakfast was decided in the affirmative.

Of course, we have had many disappointments and unpleasant surprises. Worst of all has been the discovery of radical defects in the heating system of our luxurious Casino here—the famous gambling establishment which we are turning into a Y hut. It is no easy task to repair a steam plant, when the only man capable of repairing it is in the Army, and has to be gotten home for the purpose by special permission from the War Department. Again, only one of our two carloads of supplies has arrived, and most of us are groaning at items that are missing from our equipment: no chocolate for the restaurant; no cigarettes for the canteen; no books for the library; no magazines or American newspapers (except the ones I've been saving); no coffee urns; no movie films until after dinner this evening, when they happily arrived; no hymn books except the ones I fortunately brought by hand from Paris, when I came. Two of our men were away for four days hunting in several different cities for various necessities, such as coal, sugar, rice, billiard tables, water heaters, chairs. To-day we have been doing the last things with regard to the ceremonies which will celebrate the arrival of our first *permissionnaires*, that is, our men on leave.

THE FIRST ARRIVALS

February 19. How can I describe to you the work that I am now sharing? The whole thing is so big, and so varied in its detail, that I despair of making you see it as it is, especially as I have once more gotten into the perfect whirl of Y activity, and have barely any time for writing letters. Don't

worry, though, that I am repeating my earlier mistake of overdoing.

You already understand, I think, what our work here is. We are at the first place selected as the place for American soldiers to go when on leave, that is, for their brief week of vacation, and the whole problem of housing the men and amusing them has been given over absolutely to the Y. The Army only stands by to aid if called upon, and the Y is the whole show. And it is *some* show. Although I had had a good deal to do with the preparations, I had not appreciated what a tremendous undertaking it was, till the men had actually begun to arrive. The second day after the opening I said to Karl Cate, the man who really organized and launched the whole plan, "Well, how do you feel, now that your plans are taking actual shape?" and he answered, "I feel dazed."

I wish you could have seen the arrival of those first troops. Only one other experience over here has moved me as much, and that was the arrival of the troop ships, which I saw more than once in the early days of my stay, but could not then even mention in my letters. Never shall I forget the slow progress into the harbor of ship after ship, each thronged with our boys in khaki, so that you hardly saw the ship, but only the boys. Well, the arrival of our boys here, the first to come for their leave, was as thrilling as that, for they came here straight from the trenches, with the mud thick on their boots and clothes, and wearing their steel helmets, and looking like *war*; not the neat and gay crowd that thronged the decks at their arrival in France, but men who had been up to the front, and tasted the real hardships and perils of the trenches. I was glad and proud to have the French people here see them dirty and tired, with their muddy clothes and the signs of real service plain upon them, not unworthy to stand beside the *poilu* in his dingy blue.

And then to see the transformation. It seemed barely an hour before they were streaming into our palatial Casino, washed and spruced up, with their natty barracks caps on their heads instead of the uncomfortable and ungainly helmets, and already a more rested look on their faces, as though the

strain were beginning to let up. Of course, some of them were complaining and dissatisfied, especially that first day when things didn't run very smoothly, but most of them began at once to enjoy themselves. We have a wealth of entertainment for them, and this beautiful region, aided by superb sunshiny weather, offers every possible out-of-door attraction; but the joy that I have heard most often mentioned is the *beds*. To sleep in a real bed between sheets, and to lie as late in the morning as you choose, that appears to be the height of bliss. One boy said to me to-day (he arrived yesterday) that the bed was so soft he couldn't get used to it: it kept him awake. Another boy, commenting on the same luxury, said that it made him dream of being at home, all night long, "I think I must have dreamt of it fifty times during the night," he said.

Some of the boys, in spite of all the hard work they have been doing, are off at once on bicycles or climbing the mountain on an all-day hike. Others just luxuriate in sitting around. Most of them love to talk, and we secretaries consider it one of our privileges to provide them with interested listeners. Their stories must be very accurate, I think, for I've heard the same incidents half a dozen times from different men. Of course, I try to act just as surprised at the sixth hearing as at the first, for the least thing you can do for these boys, who have been up "where the big noise is," as they say, is to listen to their yarns of "the War as we have mixed in it."

My work in the religious department is in full swing. The second day the boys were here was Sunday, and we had Morning Service, a regular Church Service (held, by the way, in a room formerly devoted to high-class gambling: for this Casino of ours has been almost as famous as Monte Carlo for that). We had a good turn-out of the boys right in the middle of the morning, though a bright sun was shining outside. In the evening we had our bigger meeting, held in the theatre, with the assistance of an orchestra, a military band, and two quartettes. I confess the musical end of it was a little top-heavy. But as a whole it was a fine meeting, and we'll know better another time than to try to have singing

indoors led by a brass band of fifty-six pieces! Beginning Monday we have had a daily twenty-minute Vesper Service, and I've been surprised myself at the way the boys have come, from thirty to fifty each day. We have with us as a speaker for the week Dr. Crawford, President of Allegheny College, Pennsylvania, who is celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of his presidency by coming over here for Y work. Also we have a Roman Catholic Chaplain, a fine fellow.

In addition to the work of the religious department, I have taken the direction of the Information Bureau, with the assistance of one man and two women who give part of their time to it. For although there are about twenty-five workers here now, we are dreadfully understaffed for this huge undertaking, and each of us is carrying at least two jobs. You should see my works of art on the bulletin boards, announcing hikes, movies, band concerts, and vaudeville, and telling how to get your clothes mended, where to rent bicycles, what to do if you are sick, etc., etc., etc. The Information Bureau is a most desirable station for anyone who wants to get into personal touch with the boys, for there is a constant stream of them coming there for every imaginable sort of help; and out of rush hours they find it a natural place to come to and talk.

Margaret Deland is one of our women workers, and is very enthusiastic about everything. E. H. Sothern is here for a week. Loie Fuller, the famous dancer, has arrived; and is, by the way, an ardent supporter of the religious services. The three younger dancers, too, whom she has brought with her, nice English girls, already familiarly known to all as Fairy, Finesse, and Peach, bring a train of boys with them to hear Dr. Crawford at the daily Vespers—one of the reasons, doubtless, for the surprising success of those Services. Gerry Reynolds, who has made a great hit with the boys wherever he has gone, has been sent down from Paris as director of the entertainment department, a big job. And the head of the whole enterprise is Franklin S. Edmonds of Philadelphia.

Yesterday I received in one mail from the family and friends at home fifty-two newspapers and forty-nine maga-

zines! It is a perfect Godsend for the work, for no magazines have reached us from Paris. Practically everything in the reading-rooms in the two cities is from my private supply, and it makes quite a show too. The five "Saturday Evening Posts" that came yesterday are being eagerly devoured, and a doughboy who is quartered here in the house where I myself live has been reading the February "Century" all the afternoon and evening.

A VARIED PROGRAMME

February 26. We have had a very eventful week, and feel that our venture is a great success. As more and more men have arrived, the town has become gayer, and the Casino has taken on more and more the air of the huge pleasure palace that we have intended it to be. To see its great rooms and halls literally thronged with men in khaki has been a tremendous satisfaction, and still more to note the growing chorus of approval and appreciation.

The roads in every direction roundabout are full of men on bicycles or afoot. In the evenings they flock in for the theatre and movies, and on special nights there is a perfect mob, as for instance on "Stunt Night" when the men themselves provide the numbers on the programme, and still more on the night of the "Costume Ball." This last was really one of the funniest performances ever witnessed. It was amazing to see the costumes which the men produced: American ingenuity was thoroughly illustrated. The French people, who came in to look on, seemed fairly bewildered by the whole performance, and it really was astonishing to witness the fun and high spirits of men who have just come from the hard and terrible experiences of the front, and are going back to them when the short leave is over.

The only thing that is not joyous about the whole enterprise is the fact that the vacations come to an end, and every day some of our friends appear in their steel helmets, with their packs on their backs, to say good-bye. How they do hate to go, and yet not one but goes with a fine spirit of courage and readiness to see the thing through. I can tell

you it's a much harder thing to go *back* to the trenches, than it was to go up to them the first time. Yes, you would all be proud to see the way your fellow-countrymen in khaki accept their share of the peril, and also of the hardship which I really think is even harder to face. Mud and wet and cold for weeks together are a severer test of courage than shell-fire, I'm inclined to believe. The spirit with which our men take it all is well illustrated by a remark from one of them, made to me the other day. He had told me how his shoes were often frozen stiff in the morning, "so stiff," as he said, "that you can't possibly get them on." "But what do you *do*, then?" I asked him. "Put them on, just the same," said he.

I cannot tell you how proud we have been of the bearing and behavior of our boys while here on leave. Here they are, after months of the greatest hardship and strain, spent under strict surveillance of officers and military police, and then, when they come here, they are suddenly given complete independence, the only restriction being that they must stay within the ample bounds of the Leave Area; and yet their behavior as a whole has been simply splendid. Of course, some have tried to have the regulation "good time"—once or twice in the evening I have piloted to their hotels boys whose inability to find their way was not wholly due to their unfamiliarity with the street plan of the city—but these have been the few exceptions. The credit is to be shared, I think, between the boys themselves and the Y, which has given them such a good time of a decent sort.

March 17. Since I last wrote you, we have received permission to mention the name of this place, when we write home. I presume you already know it from the newspapers or some other source, but it is a satisfaction to be able to say right out that I am at Aix-les-Bains, in Savoie. The other main centre of the Leave Area is the delightful old city of Chambéry, about fifty *kilomètres* to the south. When I was down there a few days ago, I went on a hunt for something in the way of a church bell, and found one in a funny little brass-workers' shop near the Castle. I used it this morning for the first time in the call to a nine o'clock Communion Service.

During this past week we have provided boat excursions, mountain railway trips, day trip to Chambéry, walk about the city of Aix personally conducted, hikes and mountain climbs, a basket-ball game, a baseball game, with formal opening of our athletic grounds, tennis, vaudeville, a play by professionals, movies, band concerts, orchestra concerts, piano and vocal concert, stag dances, amateur dramatics, evening of parlor games, Vesper Services, Sunday Services, Communion Service.

On one of the boat trips, I was detailed to go along and help. We took two boat-loads of the boys across the lake to a very interesting old Abbey, *l'Abbaye Hautecombe*, which they inspected. Then in a delightful place warmed by the midday sun, overlooking the lake and made gay by primroses in blossom, we had lunch. Hot coffee and sandwiches had been sent around by motor, and "dogs" were provided, which the boys broiled on sticks over camp-fires. It seemed like a genuine American picnic, and the pleasure of the boys in it, especially in the homelikeness of it, would have done your hearts good. That is a sample of the great satisfaction of this work, the chance to give a rest and a bit of home and a word of good cheer and uplift to the boys who are with such splendid spirit enduring the hardships of army life, and now are meeting its sterner demands with such genuine American courage and efficiency. If only the home folks could see them here, what comfort they would take; to see their boys looking so well, carrying themselves with such manly self-control, expressing, though often in army slang of course, the high ideals and purposes of the nation they represent. They have completely won the hearts of the French people here; and as for us older Americans, who cheer them from the side lines, we have no words to express the pride and confidence that they inspire in us.

March 25. The work has been running along smoothly for the past week, and that is saying a good deal, considering what an elaborate programme the Y puts on. To be sure, we have had only moderate numbers of men recently, for we are in an intermediate period from the army point of view, some of the

fundamental army plans having been under revision. That, we understand, is now accomplished; and we shall soon have a chance once more to see whether our smooth-running machine will stand the strain of "big business" and "capacity houses." I have great confidence that it will.

Have I reported that our evening amusements have been extended by the arrival of a theatrical stock company from America (in the Y uniform)? Besides the full-length play, "Baby Mine," which the boys have hugely enjoyed, they gave us a delightful representation the other night of some scenes from "The Taming of the Shrew." It was interesting to note how thoroughly the boys enjoyed that also. In the same way concerts of serious music hold good-sized audiences.

On the other hand, it is delightful to see how they take to the more primitive kinds of amusement, as, for instance, the other evening, when a lot of horns and policemen's rattles were distributed just before a "Stunt Night" performance, in order that the audience might take active part in the show. The men were standing around in the spacious halls of the Casino, with their marble columns and mosaic ceilings and the blaze of electric lights, halls where the rich and fashionable of the world used to display themselves in peace times. Suddenly, as the first of the noise-producing instruments were distributed, weird sounds began to be heard in various directions, and in a moment perfect pandemonium reigned. It continued without cessation until the show began fifteen minutes later, and the faces of the few sedate French people who were there were a study.

PREPARING FOR EASTER

March 30. Holy Week, never more worthy of the name than here and now, is drawing to a close. Not a week given over to the exclusive thought of the deep things of life, for it has been a week of joyous occupation for our boys here, who are having their short breathing-space, after long months of weary training, and just before they may be plunged—who knows?—into the very midst of this terrific battle now going on such a short distance away. There have been excursions

and athletics, a big picnic, a boxing bout, music and dancing, theatre and the movies. But in the midst of it all, at the heart of it, a serious note of reverence and noble purpose. I wish you could have looked in upon our Good Friday Service yesterday afternoon, the room well filled, faces that the preacher will long remember, some of the men to start for the front two hours later. When I rang the church bell, they came flocking in in much larger numbers than to the regular daily Vesper Service, answering the Good Friday call; and I could feel their response from the first moment, when I began the service with a word in which I tried to turn their thoughts to the *triumph* and *glory* of Christ's heroic death (away from the sadness of it) and so to make them feel their comradeship with him, in the course on which they themselves had entered, and to feel the *need* of that comradeship. I think they felt it far beyond what any words of mine could make them.

To-day again (Saturday) at the Vesper Service we had an unusual number—not a great many at that, you understand, yet very good, I am sure you would have thought, for an audience of young soldiers at a religious service at five o'clock on a weekday afternoon. And now, in the evening, I am looking forward to Easter. The boys are at the theatre, and I have come home to think through my Easter message for to-morrow morning. I haven't had time up to now to do more than give it broken thoughts at odd moments—rather different from the long mornings of careful preparation for such a day in Central Church pulpit. But I've been busy speaking at the Services of the week, making and putting up signs on the big bulletin board, running the Information Desk, and last but not least *building a church*. For that is what it has amounted to.

Up to now, as I have indicated in previous letters, we have had our main Sunday Service in the theatre, a most unsatisfactory place, except that it was the only quiet room which could be warmed in cold weather. Now that the weather is warmer, there is another large hall, set off by itself, which is available. But what do you suppose it is?—The

great *Salle des Jeux*, or Gambling Hall, of pre-war days. It is that that I have been busy transforming into a Cathedral, which will be dedicated to the uses of religion at our Easter Services.

When I was a child we were always allowed to spend our Sunday afternoons in the nursery "playing church." When all was ready, there was in truth a brief Service with a parson (my first attempts), a choir, and a congregation, these last two being impersonated by just two persons, my sister and a cousin; or, if my cousin was not there, we dispensed with the congregation as being the least important, or, in other words, the least interesting part. But the Service was, after all, a small part of the entire performance: we usually spent most of the afternoon in *building the church* out of tables, chairs, boxes, a doll's piano, the fire fender, and other suitable materials.

This week I seem to have been reverting to that childhood game, but on a scale truly magnificent. I began with the huge empty hall, rather ornate in decoration and chilling in its general aspect; moreover, with a distressing echo that threatened to defeat any preacher's eloquence. I called to my aid the *concierge*, the electrician, the *tapissier* (upholsterer), and the gardener, all among the regular employees of our Casino and taken over by the Y as a part of its contract with the Gambling Association. After that, it was like waving a magic wand. Comfortable chairs were produced by the score from one storeroom; curtains were brought from another. The indefatigable little *tapissier* with his helpers, including a French *blessé* in his uniform of "horizon blue," performed acrobatic feats on high ladders in hanging draperies over the bare windows of the clere-story (you see the ecclesiastical is beginning to gain ascendancy). At once the hall lost its appearance of bareness, and instead of the echo, behold, excellent acoustics. From the garden and greenhouse came a wealth of palms and all manner of green plants. A pulpit desk was found among the properties of the theatre: the *tapissier*, entering into the spirit of the enterprise, presented, "as a friendly gift to the Y. M. C. A. for their religious

service," a beautiful cover for the desk, made of rose-colored velours edged with gold: and to complete the whole I found in one of the hotels a large English Bible. Not that we Y people lack Bibles, but they are all the little khaki-covered pocket ones; and it did not seem as though our church would be complete, unless something that at least approximated "the great pulpit Bible" could be at the centre of the whole.

An organ, also a product of the theatrical department, is at one side of the pulpit, and beyond it seats for chorus choir and orchestra. The chairs for the audience are skilfully arranged, if I do say so, for I spent an hour devising the scheme and trying it out, the scheme being, so to dispose the seats that the congregation will just naturally take the front seats, or at least not the back ones, yet without realizing that they have been cajoled into doing it. If it works as I expect it will, Central Church may be in some danger of having its entire ground plan revised when I get home again, for I seem to remember a certain doorward tendency on the part of the congregation there.

So now all is ready for to-morrow. Even the hymn-sheets (substitutes for hymn books) are folded, the signs are posted, in my best handwriting (three inches high), the bell is hung and ready to be rung and tolled—and I must really stop writing you about it, and get my sermon ready.

THE HUT DE LUXE

April 5. I realize how much I have left undescribed in my letters, how much not even mentioned. For instance, I cannot remember that I have given you any connected description of our wonderful Casino, "*Le Grand Cercle*," which is the home of the Y here in Aix. Possibly I have said more about it than I recall, but I will run the risk of repetition, and take you through it now on a personally conducted tour.

As you walk along the street with me in the centre of the city, you see a building that even among the substantial hotels, apartment houses, and banks attracts your special attention. The entrance, designed like a triumphal arch,

stands at the middle of a long central building, beyond which are two large wings; the whole is surrounded by trees, shrubs, and flower beds and is enclosed by a high iron railing, on which at intervals are displayed shields (the coats of arms of France, of Savoie, and of the United States) and the flags of the two nations. We pass an American soldier, evidently just arrived in town, and, seeing the Y brassard on my arm, he stops me to ask "Where is the Y?" I point to the great white building at which you have been looking. "That?" he exclaims in undisguised astonishment. "Sure thing," I answer; "come along with us, and I'll show you around our million-dollar *hut*."

Inside the imposing entrance, you see on your left a doorway leading to the theatre ticket-office and beyond that to the office of Mr. Edmonds, our Chief Secretary for the whole Savoie Leave Area. But I see you are looking at the big bulletin boards which cover the walls on left and right and overflow onto a standing sign-board which has recently been added to our equipment. There is a section for to-day's programme, and another for to-morrow's. Another section is given over to notices of permanent interest. Please notice the row of soldiers standing in front of these bulletins and considering which of the advertised attractions they will take in.

We pass on now into the long hall which runs the length of the building at right angles to the entrance vestibule. In it, a little to the right, is the Information Desk, draped with the flags of France, America, and England, and brightened by flowers (hyacinths and daffodils they happen to be to-day). Mrs. Anderson, of Colorado, is the woman now on duty, and at the other end of the huge oak desk is Senator Benson, of California. Dr. Cooke, formerly of Japan, is in the background, making a sign to announce that there will be an athletic meet to-morrow afternoon. The mail-box for the letters of the Y staff is on one side, and under the capacious desk, if we who are in charge of this department are willing to confess it, is a horrible collection of baseball bats and tennis rackets, a violin, a box of costumes used in last night's show, an overcoat that some soldier has asked us to keep for him,

and various other odds and ends; for whatever has no other abiding-place is liable to be deposited with "Information."

Turning now to the right, you pass a large coat room; and beyond a doorway and a corridor (where we have many war maps and maps of this region displayed) you reach the beautiful reading-room and library, a quiet place, well supplied now with literature. Upstairs near the reading-room is the Chaplains' room (where I wrote the first part of this letter, with a very bad pen) and up another flight are the movie man's repair-rooms, the photographer's dark-room, and other work-rooms of that sort.

Descending and partly retracing our steps, we reach the spacious foyer of the theatre, and then the theatre itself, most complete in auditorium and stage. It seats nearly a thousand. The foyer now holds four of our eight billiard tables, and it opens out on the terrace, which is a delightful place on a sunny day. A daily French class meets there afternoons. Next to the foyer is the large Movie Hall, used also for lectures, as, for instance, one this evening, after Evening Service (it is Sunday now—April 7) on "What America is Doing in the War" by our Chief Secretary, Mr. Edmonds. On the other side of the Movie Hall is the restaurant. All of these rooms are very high, with marble columns, arched or domed ceilings decorated with rich mosaics, stained glass windows, frescoes, handsome draperies, and innumerable electric lights. Along one side of the restaurant is the canteen, in what was formerly the bar.

In the corridor outside of the restaurant are the rest of the billiard tables. And now we have reached the part of the building formerly devoted to gambling, for, as you know, this was a second Monte Carlo. By a strange turn of fate, in which we have gleefully co-operated, you have also come now to the part of the building which at present, under the Y régime, is used for religious purposes. The small room which you next enter, capable of holding a hundred people, is where we hold our smaller Services, such as daily Vespers, the Sunday Morning Service, and the Communion Service. A glass door separates it from the former bar, and indeed the words "Royal

Bar" appear on the glass. A door on the opposite side of the room leads into the grand hall which I described to you a week ago in my Easter letter, the great gambling hall that we have transformed into a church for our larger meetings.

This very inadequate description will at least give you some notion of the splendid building we have to work in.

WHILE THE GERMANS STILL ADVANCED

April 15. Knowing the general war situation, you will understand without my telling you that our particular part of the Y work is quite out of gear at present. We hope and expect that these conditions are temporary and will be of brief duration, but meantime it would have been wrong to keep here the whole of our very large force (fifty or more), doing nothing. So two-thirds of them are scattering, and only enough are being retained to keep the organization intact, and make it possible to reconstitute the whole on twenty-four hours' notice. In general, the plan is to hold here the whole business force, the heads of the various departments (athletic, entertainment, religious, women's work), and a few other workers. This reduced staff includes Mrs. Deland, the authoress; Miss Annable, a treasure; Miss O'Connor, one of our best executives; Miss Saltonstall, the sole survivor of the theatrical stock company. Of the men, there are Carrell, the athletic director, a host in himself; Guy Maier, a talented musician, in the entertainment department; Snediker, another out-door man; Messrs. Howarth, Stenburg, and Martin, of the business department; Mr. Bond, our theatrical manager; Dr. Cooke, who works with me and in the main office; and myself. Mr. Edmonds, our chief, will be here every other week; and Frank Smith will take charge in his absence. We shall greatly miss those who are now leaving, and I regret especially the loss of Dr. Denison, who has given the boys no end of pleasure with his car, and whose talks and sermons have been an inspiration to us all.

For the few soldiers who are on duty here and the small numbers of others who are sent here on leave even under present conditions, we must keep up some sort of pro-

gramme, indoors and out. As our professional vaudeville artists have been temporarily dismissed, and the stock company now goes "on the road," and there will be of course little talent among the men to fall back upon, we must bestir ourselves, those of us who remain, to invent and provide the amusement needed. Each of us is thinking what he or she can contribute, or how we can combine to produce something.

A VISIT TO GRENOBLE

April 29. I may have mentioned in an earlier letter that ten days ago some of us drove about fifty miles to a place where a small group of American soldiers is stationed, to carry canteen supplies and see just what chance there was for helping the boys there. We found then that Sunday is the best day to visit them, as they are free on that day, so we planned to go the next time on a Sunday, and yesterday we carried out that plan. We arranged the party so as to include one of the women, and happily it occurred to me that it would be fine to have some refreshments which she could serve, thus giving a sort of homelike touch to the whole. That proved to be a most popular feature of our visit.

We felt complimented that when the sergeant announced in the morning that some of the Y people from Aix would visit them that day and would hold a religious Service before midday mess, every single man in the outfit stayed in barracks to receive us. Of course, the main thing that this indicated was their hunger for contact with some of their fellow-countrymen besides those of their own group—for they are quite alone there, among French soldiers—but whatever the reason, it was delightful to us to feel that our visit was anticipated with such pleasure.

We had gotten up that morning at six-thirty so as to make an early start from Aix, and had driven through what would have been glorious scenery, could we have seen it; but the clouds came rolling down the valley soon after we started, and we were in them until near our destination, when by a steep zig-zag descent we came down from the mountains into the broad valley where the city lies.

The boys there have their luncheon very early, so we had just time to get the stuff out of the car and arrange for heating up the chocolate we had brought (already mixed in a big urn), when it was time to begin the Service. It was held right in the barracks, the men sitting on benches beside a long central table or on the ends of their bunks on either side. We had no piano or other musical instrument, but one of the boys started the hymns, and they went pretty well. (Sometimes on such occasions there is nothing for it but for me to start the tune myself. It scares me most out of my wits, and the result is usually a key way up, or way down, but it "goes," like many other makeshifts in war days.)

Already the boys had shown plainly how glad they were to see us, and their faces lighted up still more when they heard that there was to be a sort of "party" right after mess. While they were eating—it took them only about fifteen minutes to put it down—we got things ready. Mrs. Anderson, our woman-worker, one of our best, invaded the French mess shack, and charmed the French cook, so as to expedite the heating of the chocolate. She stood over it, stirring vigorously to keep it from burning. An officer (French) came in during the process, and she said his face, on seeing a woman so much at home there, was a study. He soon recovered his equanimity, however, and did the honors in true French style, among other things insisting on her sampling each article of food that the boys were getting, soup, meat, and mashed potatoes, all very good, she says.

When the boys came back from their lunch they found spread out on the table a free treat in the way of cigarettes, chocolate almond bars, sweet crackers, and chewing gum, all of which (except the last item) were bought for them with money sent to me for some such purpose. The giver would have been pleased, I am sure, to see the happy look on the boys' faces at hearing that this was all a gift to them "from the folks back home."

Soon Mrs. Anderson was serving the chocolate, that is, she turned the faucet of the urn while the boys held the big cups from their mess-kits under it. Meantime the victrola

(a gift from the Y) had been started in a far corner of the barracks, "our favorite tune" as one of them said, laughing. I went over to hear it, and found that it was a song of many verses with a chorus to the effect that "Another little drink, another little drink, another little drink, won't do us any harm." This seemed so appropriate to the occasion (with perhaps a change of beverage from that intended by the author) that I made the boys bring it up next to the chocolate urn, and give it over again, while Mrs. Anderson supplied them with their second round.

Meantime our "chauffeurette," the little French girl who drives our Ford touring-car, was sewing a loose chevron onto a coat sleeve for one of the sergeants, just to prove that in spite of her short-clipped hair and generally boyish appearance, and her man's job, she had not neglected old-fashioned womanly accomplishments. The boys stood around in a circle two-deep to see her do it, and to hear her talk English with the delicious French accent that she has. Around Mrs. Anderson was a still larger circle, and we men had smaller groups, telling us about their work and their experiences in other parts of France and on the journey over. I ought to mention that when it was discovered that we had arrived with a flat tire, about a dozen men combined to replace it in record time.

Before we left, several of the older men took occasion to say to me that it meant a lot to the whole bunch to have us come, gave them new courage to go on with a rather hard and trying job.* And indeed, we could feel for ourselves that the whole place seemed to change in an indefinable but very apparent manner while we were there. I don't know when we have had a chance to do anything that seemed more worth while.

PLAY TIME AND TRAIN TIME

May 6. I may have told you already that the keeping of the "Log" is one of my jobs, an outgrowth of my management of the Information Desk and bulletin boards. The record

*Work in a "gas" factory.

in it reminds me that this week, as usual, the boys went on a picnic one day to the regular picnic place across the lake. We were reduced to row-boats, for the motor-boat was not available. It is a stiff row, chiefly because the boats are big old tubs, and it certainly seems as though the boys were working for their fun. Nevertheless they had a baseball game after they had eaten their lunch, and in the evening at the Casino were keen for a dance.

On another day there was a trip to the top of one of the mountains, where there is a hotel kept by a Scotch lady who is noted for the hot biscuits she makes (in spite of war restrictions). When autos are available it is an easy trip, fairly luxurious. But this time bicycles had to be substituted, aided by a lift on the railroad to the mountain's base. It was a long up-grade from there, and a few dropped out and gave it up; but those who persevered and sampled the biscuits and other good things to eat, and then had the glorious long coast home, were so delighted with their outing that they declared they were going to do it again before their leave was up. We have had two baseball games in the week; and another one was scheduled for Sunday afternoon, but was prevented by rain. For Stunt Night this past week we had a new feature, a minstrel show which was really capital. We have one natural comedian in our own staff, Henry Carrell, and at that time there happened to be several soldiers here who were great fun-makers.

You can see by all this that the boys by no means spend their time in idleness. On the other hand, there are some, of course, who need and greatly enjoy the opportunity to rest. They spend much time in the library, especially in the capacious leather arm-chairs. Sometimes you can see one of them who has fallen asleep there. They have even been known to break the customary quiet of that apartment by loud snoring. Many of them, even those who go in for plenty of exercise, do not get around till late in the morning; and a few, who have come here more tired than the rest, spend the best part of their first days in bed. One chap, who stopped here for a chat since I began this letter (I'm at the Information Desk), said he

seemed to be getting more sleepy each day instead of less so, the result, I suppose, of a long period of broken sleep.

Sunday was a busy day. There was Communion at 9 o'clock, conducted by one of my colleagues, a high-church Episcopalian. The Morning Service was in my hands, and I was particularly glad to have a good representation of the boys there, for I'd had a message taking shape in my mind that I wanted to get across to them. There are many things that take on a new aspect over here, perhaps not so much new truths, but certainly truths that, if old as the gospel, seem new in the fierce bright light that to-day shines upon them. A man who is trying to preach the truth of Christianity in these days wants more than ever before to get right to the heart of the thing and speak it out plainly. In the evening we had a Song Service, sitting around in a circle in the library, and I read to them from Victor Hugo's "Les Miserables" that wonderful story of Jean Valjean and the good bishop.

Many of the things we do I do not speak of, because they happen so often that one forgets to mention them, like eating one's meals. There is, for instance, the bidding good-bye to the out-going groups. This takes place almost every day, and yet there is perhaps nothing that speaks more eloquently of the work here than that daily event. As many of us as can do so go down to the station, and day after day it is the same story, yet always new. There are usually a few of the boys who have been particularly prominent in the week's pleasures and who of course stand out prominently in the departing group. Up to the last minute the jolly ones are cracking their jokes as they lean from the car windows, or skylarking on the platform till just as the train moves. But almost always there is another look in their faces besides the smiles, which tells us that they are genuinely sorry to go, that they feel they are leaving friends. Some of them succeed in expressing what many are evidently feeling, though more often by the grip of their hands, as they say good-bye, than by words. The farewell is usually prolonged, for there is always a lot of baggage from a connecting train to be put aboard the boys' train after it comes in. At length, however, there is the shrill

whistle that nearly deafens us, and the train starts. All the boys are hanging out of the windows, waving hats and handkerchiefs. We on the platform make our way to the very end and even a little way out into the yard among the switches and signals, and wave and wave till the train turns the curve, and disappears. You might think it would get to be an old story, doing it day after day, but it doesn't, even for those of us who are most regularly there. And I'm sure the boys are glad of the send-off, this final assurance that they are leaving friends behind. I fancy that the sight of those figures waving as long as they can be seen, especially the women, some of whom are always there—indeed all who are not definitely on duty elsewhere—makes a picture in the boys' memories that does not soon fade out.

ADVENTURES IN HIGH LIFE

May 14. I have had my first personal introduction to royalty! As the season advances—and just now the country here is a perfect paradise—more and more civilian visitors come to Aix, among them many titled personages. If we had time, we might have luncheon or afternoon tea with a different "lady" or "princess" several times a week. And it is a great mixture of nationalities, English, French, Italian, Serbian, Belgian, and *American*, for a number of these titled ladies were born in the U. S. A. It was with some difficulty that we adjusted ourselves to the strain of hobnobbing with the *nobility*, but we had barely gotten used to that, when *royalty* arrived, in the person of the sister of the King of Belgium, the Duchess of Vendôme, accompanied by her husband, the Duke (French), and her young daughter, the Princess.

My own first encounter with these personages was at the formal opening of the Tennis Club of Aix, to which the Y staff was invited. We regarded it as a diplomatic necessity to be represented, and I was one of those detailed to that duty. We were told in stage whispers, after our arrival, that the Duchess of Vendôme was there, and, after being told where she was seated, managed to glance at her occasionally in our politest manner. We supposed that that was as far as we

should get, and were still more sure that the excitement was all over, when at length she and her party rose and went out. But in a moment she was back again, apparently to speak to Lady Strafford, at whose table we were sitting. It was something of a shock to see Lady Strafford make a low curtsy, and I was scared to death for fear our Y women would try the same thing on the spur of the moment, and probably tumble over. Before we knew what had happened, we had been presented. I, as it chanced, was the first of the men, and was really glad that I didn't know what I was meant to do with her hand, when she held it out to me. As it was, I could just shake it, with a perfectly clear conscience; and the Duchess did not seem upset by such plebeian treatment.

But the way these people play their game is really impressive. The Duchess, then and later at the Casino, asked such appropriate and intelligent questions that you could see she had been carefully "primed" in advance. I suppose there is always someone at her elbow to see that she has the right information at the right moment. You can imagine my surprise, however, when, as I was presented, she said, "And *you* have been here since the middle of January?" True, and of me only among the Y people present. Aren't they clever?

The Lady Strafford, of whom I speak, was originally an American, from Louisiana, I believe. She is an entertaining talker; and, as she has seen many prominent Englishmen at close range, she gives a very interesting view of recent events. It is really curious to see the group of American women here now—just visitors at the hotels, you understand—who have married foreigners of wealth or rank and title. There is even a princess among them. In fact, I have been hobnobbing so much with the high and mighty that I may find it difficult to put up with plain Miss and Mrs. I have actually been so bold as to decline an invitation from a princess, not the American one, to afternoon tea: it conflicted with my period at the Information Desk in the Casino.

May 18. As a sort of international courtesy shown by America to her ally Belgium, it seemed fitting to invite the Duchess of Vendôme to attend a performance of our Parisian

vaudeville in the Casino; and having ascertained that this would be acceptable to Her Royal Highness (I think that is the correct title to apply), we invited her for Wednesday evening.

The boys were told, of course; and almost all who are here, even those who had seen the show (on the stage) already, went to see how royalty looks and acts in a theatre box. We Americans are always amusing under such circumstances, for, trying to treat titled people in somewhat the way to which they are accustomed, and at the same time in the way in which we ourselves are accustomed to treat people, we usually make more or less of a mess of it. However, we get a good deal of fun out of the performance, and probably our victims do, also.

The box in the theatre was decorated with flags, and the one opposite also, occupied by the American and French Commandants. A delegation of us Y people met the party at the door. The women did *not* curtsey, and the men did *not* kiss the Duchess's hand; but we tried to be polite in a more ordinary way, and at any rate we succeeded in getting safely into the theatre.

Of course, it was necessary to begin with the Belgian National Anthem (we had been warned, or I fear not one of us would have recognized it) and then the Marseillaise and the Star Spangled Banner, everyone standing. Those of us in the box with the royal party had been warned that we must not sit down unless asked to do so by the Duchess; and we thought how tiresome, if she should forget to look behind her and see what we were doing. But she was right on her job, and we were seated at once. In fact, all through the evening one could not but note with admiration how constantly on the alert she was to do the courteous and considerate thing. There is no doubt about it, these royal people have to repay in full all the formal courtesies by which they are surrounded. I could not help thinking how tired she must be, saying polite and enthusiastic things about each act of the vaudeville, talking to each in turn, acknowledging every attention, etc., etc. Although I was seated almost directly behind her, she re-

membered all through the performance to turn around about once in so often, to address some remark to me. Even while one is glad that America has no titled aristocracy, at least one must admit the thoroughness and success with which in Europe the aristocrats "play the game."

Unhappily for us, we had been coached in some points of speech and behavior, with the result, of course, that more than usual we did the things we were warned not to do. For instance, you must not use the word "you" in addressing royalty, but must say, "Will Your Royal Highness do this?" or "Does Your Royal Highness think that?" It was like the old days when we were learning to ride a bicycle, and found that the harder we tried to steer away from a stone or a post, the surer we were to run into it. I never heard so many "yous" in my life. It seemed as though there were no sentences in the English language which did not contain that fatal word.

I had some special agonies of my own, for beside me sat a lady in waiting (at least I think that is what she was) who spoke no English; and I had to inflict upon her my hopeless French, a series of inane exclamations for the most part, about the French *blessés*, the American soldiers, the admiration of America for Belgium, and the beauties of Aix-les-Bains. I thought she winced once or twice at some of my most atrocious attempts, but in the main she displayed extraordinary composure under great provocation.

After the show was over, the Duchess, the little Princess, and the rest remained to see the "Games" which frequently close our evening's entertainment. You can imagine that it is a lively performance when forty or fifty husky boys "get going." The best description I have heard was that of an English lady who visited us a short time ago. She said that while looking on she kept thinking of Rubens's picture, "Lions at Play."

I am afraid this is a very frivolous epistle to write from so near the scene of the most momentous campaign of history. But we learn more and more that war, like the circus, has some queer side shows.

LEARNING MORE NEW TRICKS

May 27. I have added another activity to the long list that I have reported to you from time to time, I mean in addition to my main job. I wish I had kept a complete list, just to prove what a "broadening" experience this Y work in France is. Well, my latest has been censoring vaudeville shows. Our bill here changes once a week now, and I am one of a committee of three to sample the new acts and pronounce upon them. Last Friday evening, therefore, when the new bill went on, we attended the performance from beginning to end—and pronounced it all excellent. What would my Puritan ancestors or my revered predecessor of fifty years ago in Central Church say about this? Not only attending theatrical shows (far from Shakesperian in character) but actually approving of them.

On Sunday afternoons we have recently started a new custom which is proving very popular. The women of the Y invite all the soldiers to be their guests on the terrace of the Casino between four and seven. Refreshments are served, and the orchestra plays. The women are scattered about and form the centres for the groups of men, who seem to enjoy thoroughly the homelike air of it all. The place is so quiet and beautiful, overlooking the lovely gardens of our Casino, that it is hard to realize that a war is going on. And of course that is just the way we want to make the men feel.

June 4. We have been very busy again lately. There is as much to do here now as there was in the middle of March, but with half as many Y workers as we had then, so that we have had to double up a good deal. I, for instance, am taking charge of several of the regular daytime excursions, such as the trip about the city ("Seeing Aix"), the bicycle trip to the *Gorges de Sierroz*, and one of the trips up Mt. Revard by the cog-railway. I enjoy that sort of work tremendously. All along I have gone on trips with the boys as often as possible, so that now I am merely doing regularly what I have done occasionally before. It would amuse you to follow me about on the "Seeing Aix" trip. We visit first the Roman

arch and other remains of classic times, and the Gothic stairway and "dungeon" of the *Hôtel de Ville*. Then we go through the bathing establishment, and view its pools and rest-rooms and equipment for treating various forms of disease. Next we explore the grotto, the galleries and chambers of which were worn in earlier ages by the hot medicinal waters, now piped to the tubs and pools and spouts of the establishment below. Finally, we arrive at the little museum, where relics of every period in the city's history, from the stone and bronze ages down, may be seen. Behold me, as we go along, mounted on some convenient step or bench, delivering brief popular lectures on history, geology, and architecture, but really bent on giving the boys a good time and making new friends among them.

LYON AND AGAIN GRENOBLE

June 24. The most interesting part of the past week has been spent in visits to two other places. The first was to the city of Lyon on a combination of Y and personal business. There were supplies to be bought for our library, a copy of a soprano solo to be secured for use at a concert in the Casino, some inquiries to be made at the *Grand Bazar de Lyon* (a department store) concerning an item of canteen equipment, and a visit to the United States Consul, besides the usual military formalities incident to all travel in a country at war. All of this was accomplished in the morning hours, so that at noon I found myself a gentleman of leisure, and just then I happened on an American soldier in the same state: for the officer, with whom he was travelling as orderly, had turned him loose for a limited period, and he was strolling about to see the town. Of course, as soon as I spied him, I walked up and introduced myself: it is a great convenience that one's fellow-countrymen abroad in these days are dressed in an unmistakable uniform; it makes foreign travel a very sociable affair. He was the nicest sort of a boy, from Oregon, who had gone straight from school into the Army. I took him with me to lunch, at which, though I was his host by virtue of paying the bill, he in a sense was mine, for I had

started on my journey with an insufficient supply of bread tickets and he was able to contribute enough for our joint needs. We might both of us have been guests of a French priest, who came by just as we were walking off together, and who asked us, evidently on the strength of our American uniforms, to go and eat with him, an interesting commentary on the popularity of the American Army in France in these days.

My other visit was to a small group of American soldiers, about whom I have written to you once or twice before, at a place about two hours from here by train. That is, it took us two hours to reach there from here; but, owing to the vagaries of the present state of French railroad traffic, we were nearly six hours in getting back. (The journeys between here and Lyon were equally disproportionate: three hours to go, seven to return.) Heretofore this trip of which I am now speaking had been made by auto; this time it was possible to make use of the railroad, as we could spend two days in making the trip, and it is not right to use *essence* (gasoline) except for real necessities.

Our plan was to go on a Saturday, so that we could give the boys a "show" on Saturday evening, and a Service on Sunday. We were a party of eight, five women and three men, including our best available "talent," a parson, and a chaperon. It had not been easy to provide a programme, for the performance had to be given without any musical instrument. There is no piano at the barracks, and we happen just now to have no one who plays any other instrument. You might think that under such circumstances it was rather venturesome to put on a programme consisting largely of dancing and singing; but it is astonishing how well you get on without things, when you can't have them.

We put up at a hotel in the city near which the boys are stationed, and in the afternoon rode out on the trolley (five miles) to their little town. There we had our supper in an apology for a garden, which was the best place the little country café could offer; and a very excellent supper it was. Our dancers had their last rehearsal while we waited for the food to be served, the rest of us clapping time, while Gerry Reynolds

whistled the tune of the "Sailor's Hornpipe." The French people who saw us no doubt took us for lunatics, but we are used to that.

After supper we walked the short distance to the barracks, arriving just as "inspection" was being completed. After looking over the various possibilities, we decided to give the show out-of-doors, between the two buildings which our men occupy. The little square of turf formed the stage, a drainage ditch represented the footlights, and on the farther side some bunks, a bench, and two chairs accommodated the audience, that is, the more favored part of it, for across the field, perhaps an eighth of a mile away, there was a literal "niggers' heaven" —a long fence which, as the show proceeded, held a larger and larger number of Moroccans, who are encamped there. Around us, beyond the buildings and trees in the foreground, was a superb panorama of mountains, some broken and jagged, some massive and precipitous, some cloud-capped, while one long line of them, breaking through the clouds, was covered with the eternal snows. All the time that our foolish little show was going on, marvellous transformations were following one another on those mountain heights, as we passed from sunset, through the afterglow, to moonlight.

To see our performers, in costume, emerge from the barracks on either side, and do their stunts in the open, was certainly a novelty. Everything was vigorously applauded, and every available encore was called for. Then, with the help of the victrola, there was dancing. Our Y girls were good sports, for the conditions did not make dancing easy. Some of the boys were bashful about beginning: hob-nailed boots and a turf floor made them fearful of accidents. But before long all who could dance at all were taking part; and the rest seemed to enjoy watching, especially when the dancers began to "cut in." To see Joe robbed of his partner by Jake, and then promptly take his revenge by dispossessing Pete, was an unfailing source of amusement. Advice was freely given from the side lines. Before nine-thirty, which was the hour for "lights out," we said our good-nights, and were taken back to the city, in two installments, in the army Ford truck.

Next morning, making an early start, we were all out at the encampment in time for nine o'clock Service, and all the men were on hand, too. This was held in one of the barracks. Then there was half an hour for talk and good-byes. You can hardly imagine what it means to the boys, especially to those who are in isolated places, to see a group of American women. An entertainment such as we gave them helps to cheer them up, and a Service gives them a lift; but the biggest thing is to get the touch of home that nothing can give as the women can.

Our journey back to Aix was long, but not without its diversions, especially our picnic luncheon, mostly fruit, which was ripe enough to be hard to manage in close quarters. No need to shout "*complet*" to the other travellers who looked in at the door of the compartment: no one dared enter.

IV. BEHIND THE LINES, NEAR CHÂTEAU-THIERRY

ON THE WAY

July 3. I have said good-bye to Aix-les-Bains, and very hard it was to leave there. I had lived and worked there nearly six months, a never-to-be-forgotten experience. My last Sunday being the one before the Fourth, I had an especially good chance to say my last word to the boys at Aix, as well as to my comrades of the Y staff there. The kindness of all of them did not make it any easier to leave, as you can imagine. It was almost like leaving another parish.

Monday I took my usual trips with the boys; Tuesday (yesterday) I spent in packing, saying good-byes, and doing the innumerable last things; and I came up to Paris on the night train.

You will wonder why I have left Aix so long before the time of my sailing for America. It is because I hope that in the interval I may have a chance to see some of our Central Church boys, none of whom ever got to Aix in all those months. I had been trying to get this opportunity for several weeks past, asking to be sent as a worker; for I do not believe in asking for the privileges of a mere traveller at such a time, even though for justifiable personal reasons. No response came to my request, and I feared that my plan could not be carried out. I spoke to Edmonds of my disappointment, and with his co-operation I did, somewhat late, receive my new appointment. I understand that it will take me into an interesting region. I have gotten as far as Paris, and hope by Friday to get the necessary movement orders, and start. Of course, even if I get into the neighborhood where our boys are, I may not see them, but at least I am doing what I can to achieve it. I know there are some of you to whom it would mean much, if someone you know could bring you a personal report of how your boys look and what they are doing.

July 4. I have time to give you a brief account of this memorable day in Paris. The city has paid a great tribute to America and her fighting men.

Paris is positively gay with flags, and that in itself means a great deal in a people as war-weary as the French are. Even a year ago when I first got here, I remember being fairly startled by the contrast between Paris and New York in that respect—New York a riot of color in its flag enthusiasm, and Paris all grey and sombre, the *business* of war. But to-day flags have flown everywhere, on all public buildings and most private ones: half the people in the vast throngs wore some emblem of America. The flowers sold in the streets were made up into bouquets of red, white, and blue.

The utter disregard of anything the Germans might do with their big gun or a daylight raid (tempted by the great crowds and the parading soldiers) was splendid. Everyone was on the streets, apparently, and stood in dense masses for a couple of hours waiting for the procession and watching it pass.

I stood in the Place de la Concorde to see our boys go by. I need not tell you how different it was from the peace-time parades of the old days at home. These were men who are fighting for us now, many of them right from the front, the survivors of some of the glorious attacks with which our men have begun to show how Americans can fight. And they are going back to it to-morrow. There was a band at the head of the procession; but its music soon passed and was lost in the great open space where I stood, and the men marched by to the sound of their own tread.

The French people applauded (in the sort of indoor fashion which is their custom), saluted each American flag as it passed, and threw flowers to our boys. A French *aéroplane* performed unbelievable feats just over our heads. The whole scene was very brilliant and strange. But the thing that gripped you was the *meaning* of it, the meaning of those bronzed lads in khaki from every state in the union, marching as fighting men through the streets of Paris. In the mind of all of us was the announcement in the morning papers from President Wilson that America has now sent her first million men to fight with the Allies for the world's liberty.

I have spent the afternoon in walking in all directions on the boulevards and talking with as many of our American

soldiers as I could, helping some to find their way about, pointing out objects of interest to those who seemed to have an inclination toward sight-seeing, giving small sums of money to a few who seemed depressed by the empty state of their pockets, and hearing all sorts of war stories hot from the front. I must have talked with twenty or thirty, and I heard some thrilling tales. On the whole I am not sorry that my movement order could not be gotten in time to allow me to leave the city to-day but I hope that there will be no further delay to-morrow.

IN LA FERTÉ-SOUS-JOUARRE

July 8. I am at least approaching the fulfillment of my wish, for I have gotten near enough to our Central Church boys to get direct news of a few of them, from boys in their outfits who know them. It has been all good news. Besides this I have met any quantity of Massachusetts boys, and not a few from Worcester. Some of these have sent messages to their families at home, which it will be a great pleasure to me to convey. Constantly, ever since I have been up here, I have kept asking the boys I meet, where they come from, so as to identify all who come from Massachusetts, and we have had some fine talks about the old Bay State, I can assure you. And about a good many other states, too, for that matter, for any part of the United States looks good to all of us over here.

I have been only two days at this place; but even if this were all, I should count it one of my great experiences in France. Some day I can tell you more about it. It is the nearest I have come to the stern realities of war: within sound of the guns, and within sight of the tremendous activities that go on just behind the lines.

Among the boys I have seen is one who was an eye witness of Chaplain Danker's wounding. He told me from his own immediate knowledge how the Chaplain, when he was hit, insisted that he was all right, and that others needed help more, and ought to be attended to first. There is no doubt about what the boys thought of him, or how they took his

death to heart. The tears stood in this boy's eyes, as he talked about it.

The secretaries at Paris and up here have been very kind in arranging my present short assignment so as to give me the best chance of running across Massachusetts boys, first in sending me up to this sector, and then in assigning me to work in a very central position, where men from many different outfits are coming and going all the time. They come in droves into the little ex-wineshop, where I am helping run the Y, and the streets are full of them. When I am not on duty, I spend all my time walking about on the lookout for chance encounters. Even when I don't have an opportunity for a talk, it seems worth while to say just a word in passing, especially to the boys who are moving up toward the line. The way some of the faces light up in response to just a friendly greeting makes you realize how hungry some of them are for a touch of friendship.

Yesterday, Sunday, I spoke at a Service held in the assembly hall in the *Hôtel de Ville*, through the courtesy of the Mayor. Below in the square were the litter from the market and the empty stalls, and along the farther side passed an almost continuous stream of men, horses, trucks, and all sorts of army supplies, on their way to the front. Imagine how it seemed, to look out on that, as we sang "Onward, Christian Soldiers." We faced the windows singing it, so that the boys idling about the square and perhaps some marching at the farther end of it might catch the notes of that old hymn of Christian faith and purpose.

IN MONTREUIL-AUX-LIONS

July 9. Just a line to let you know that I had barely finished my previous letter when I was moved to a still better station, nearer the front, or rather was sent to open one. The place had been selected by the Head Secretary of the division, the building secured with the assistance of the American "Town Major," and I was chosen to start the enterprise, which gratified me very much, being a new man in this division. They said they wanted a man with lots of

“pep,” and I didn’t let on that I was rather surprised at being chosen, but am putting up a bluff that I am the very man for the place. It is a wonderful situation, as central as the other and more important in being the final distributing-point of men going up to the front line. From the moment we open the canteen in the morning till we close at night because of darkness (we are not yet equipped for the necessary screening of lights), there is an *absolutely steady line* of from ten to a hundred men waiting to buy.

Up here you are required to carry your gas mask all the time and are equipped with the steel helmet. The guns are audible at all times of day and night, unless the noise of the traffic drowns it. All night long, as at the other place, one hears the tramp of men, the clatter of horses’ feet, the pounding of motor trucks.

The town in which we are has been completely evacuated by civilians, and I am in a house which was very plainly vacated in a hurry—all sorts of personal things left lying about. It seemed funny enough to take possession of other people’s property, without their consent or even knowledge. I’ve tried to be considerate, and have moved up into the garret some things that the owners might regret having left behind, especially children’s things—building blocks and other toys, and a high chair. But most of the contents was rubbish, ankle deep, which had to be fairly shovelled out. You wouldn’t believe that, though, if you could see how cozy and neat our little Y looks now. I think I am having the best time yet.

July 20. I wrote you on July 9 about my new venture only about six miles from the front, which I had then been running only one day. I kept it up for a week (the limit of my time there) and had a wonderful experience all through. At first I had only a limited amount of help from another man, whose main work was getting supplies up to the advanced position of one of the batteries; but later he was transferred entirely to my canteen, for there was certainly enough work to keep busy two men to say the least.

Each day our crowd of customers grew bigger, as the news

of the canteen spread farther and farther afield. The whole countryside was alive with troops, though so skillfully dispersed that it would take a keen observer to discover the fact. The popularity of the canteen had its disadvantages, however, from a military point of view. Very early we received word that the line must not extend out through the front door, but through the back rooms and the courtyard behind, in order to avoid the gathering of a crowd in the street; but even with that precaution too many remained outside for safety. A German plane overhead would at once notice the crowd, and a shelling of the town would soon follow. The Military Police held off as long as possible, realizing what the supplies meant to the men; but on Friday night came word that we must close up.

Fortunately in the meantime a large hall had been discovered nearby, and permission from the Town Major to occupy it had been secured. The place had been cleaned out by us on Thursday; and as soon as the order to close up the canteen arrived I went to the Assistant Provost Marshal (local head of the Military Police) and asked permission to make a trial in this hall. (His first word had been that we must move out of the town altogether, and set up a tent in the woods somewhere.)

He gave his consent to the experiment, and I made some large signs to aid in keeping the men out of sight of the enemy, to the effect that

MEN MUST SCATTER AT ONCE
ON LEAVING THE BUILDING
OR THE Y WILL BE CLOSED

and that

MEN MUST NOT COLLECT
OUTSIDE OF THIS BUILDING.
COME INSIDE OR GO AWAY.

So on Saturday morning the Y canteen was opened up in the *Salle de M. Engle* at the *Café de la Lyre*, and the Red Triangle and the golden *Lyre* swung side by side. The two rooms in our new quarters were 20 feet by 40 feet and 25

feet square; but even so the line, after circling about both of them, would, if we did not keep watch, straggle down the stairs and out into the street. On Sunday afternoon the A. P. M. stationed one of his men at the door to take the record of men entering, and between three o'clock and dark he counted 973. I knew this counting was an ominous sign; and sure enough on Monday afternoon, just as I was reluctantly taking my departure for Paris, came word that, even though kept indoors, too many men were being drawn together by our canteen, and we must close down. I have not heard what happened after that.

At any rate, as long as we did run, we did a whacking business. Three times a day I had to restock from the warehouse, and each night we ended "sold out." In the week that I was there we took in over 21,000 francs.

From the beginning I had been watching for a chance to get nearer to our Central Church boys. One of the regiments had gone into the front line just before I got there, and I could get no chance to follow it. I had more hope of reaching the gun positions of the two batteries in which eight of our boys are. At first, I could only send messages to the people who might help me, being tied down at the canteen myself. But on Friday I had a chance to drive over to the place where the artillery regiment had its headquarters, and there enlisted the help of a Y man who promised to intercede with the Chaplain to get permission for me to go up to the gun positions or the *échelons* at night. He was to let me know next day, if any way opened. That was the day when we moved into the larger quarters, and I could not get away for a moment. Nor did I discover till too late that the usual trip of the Y truck to the artillery headquarters had not been made that day, preventing my getting any message from there. On Sunday, having heard nothing, and having a second chance to go over myself, I went, and to my disgust learned that the Chaplain had made arrangements for me to go up with him earlier that morning to the *échelon* and help in the Service. But the word, as you see, had never reached me, and the chance was gone. My request to be allowed to

go up with the kitchen-wagons or the ammunition-train that night was promptly turned down. I was told that no one, not the Chaplain himself, could go up that night, for it was expected that the German offensive would then begin. And it did in fact begin, as you will recall, on that night between July 14 and 15.

I took an interesting walk that Sunday afternoon, after I had returned to my own station. It was due to a mistake I had made in filling out a remittance blank for a boy who was sending money home to his brother. I went out to his camp to find him, a couple of miles from the town. It was in a wood which was packed full of men in tents and dug-outs, a most interesting revelation to me of what a camp just back of the lines is like. When leaving there, my companion and myself had enough curiosity to walk a mile or so farther, toward the German lines, to a height from which we could see nearly to the lines themselves. At that time of day the road was practically deserted, no conveyances, only four or five soldiers and Y men walking. Trenches and barbed-wire entanglements showed the preparations made for a possible retreat. We knew that the woods were full of guns. But it all *seemed* so peaceful, that it was hard to believe that only just out of sight was one of the hottest places of the whole battle-line.

That night or early the next morning the big offensive began with terrific bombardments. Many guns of the Allies were placed far behind the town I was in and shot over our heads, and the Germans shelled places well in our rear. At some places farther from the front than we, no one slept a wink from the terrific noise of the nearby guns. But curiously enough in our situation, in a sort of little hollow, the worst of the noise was cut off. The guns were perfectly audible, of course; but we went calmly to sleep, and had as good a night's rest as on any night that I was there.

On Monday afternoon I went by motor back to the rail-head, and took the train for Paris. The next night, as I learned later, the railroad station, where I had boarded the train, was completely wrecked by a well-placed German shell. The train which I took was packed with civilians who were

hastening to escape before the expected bombardment began. I did not realize at the time that this was the cause of the heavy train-load.

And now each day's report of the battle in the newspapers tells me what is happening up in the region just north of where I spent my busy week. Had our troops retreated, it would have brought the battle at once into the very region where I was; but, thank God, the line is moving the other way, and all the reports are full of glowing praises of our boys.

The days since then have been spent in getting the necessary papers, authorizing me to return to the States, from the Y and from the American and French authorities. Naturally, it is a complicated and prolonged process; but it is now complete, and I should be actually on my way, were not the sailing of my vessel delayed.