



Class PZ3

Book V393

Copyright N^o Y

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

copy 2





Yank

the

CRUSADER





100

YANK—THE CRUSADER

By
EARL C. VAN ZANDT ✓

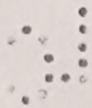
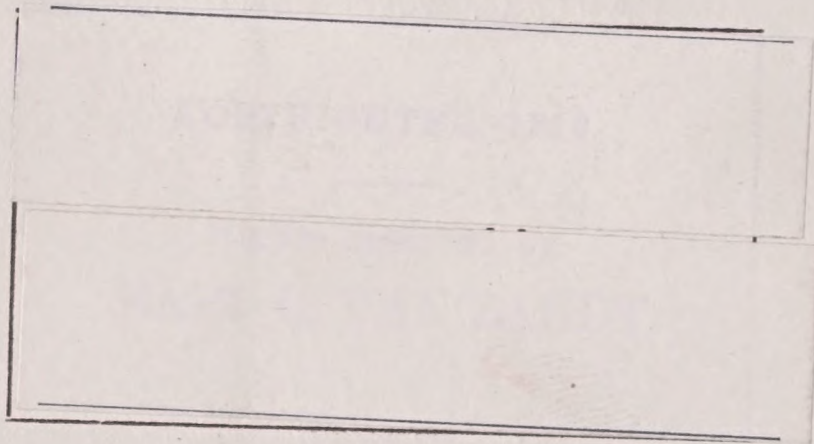
910
1205



DENVER, COLORADO, AUGUST, 1919

copy 2

PZ 3
V393
Y
Copy 2



AUG 25 1919 ✓

©CIA529657

Record 1



AMERICA'S SONS

**Dedicated to
the brave mothers of
America's sons who have
been called upon to make the
supreme sacrifice on
the battlefields
of France**

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. The Rancher Boy—A Man of Destiny..	13
II. A Newspaper Does Fred a Good Turn..	19
III. Christy Strong.....	27
IV. The World Unrest and the War Cloud..	33
V. The Volunteer.....	40
VI. The Double Challenge.....	49
VII. Fred's Trip at Uncle Sam's Expense...	56
VIII. Christy Strong Drafted and His Trip to Camp	65
IX. Christy Finds a New Democracy in the Army	76
X. Christy Strong Meets Fred Sheldon....	91
XI. A Campfire With Yank.....	105
XII. Rush to and at Point of Embarkation...	119
XIII. The Shove-Off	135
XIV. Trip Across Atlantic in an Army Trans- port	147
XV. The War Spirit of Great Britain.....	162
XVI. Yank Seeing France From a Boxcar Pullman	177
XVII. Training Behind the Front.....	187
XVIII. The Religion of the Front.....	201
XIX. Routing the Hun—And Fred's Destiny.	211
XX. The Armistice.....	224
XXI. The Home-coming of the Crusaders Who Fought and Won.....	238

Introduction

THIS BOOK is written upon the foundation of three ideals. The first is to convey to the American public a birdseye view of Yank's life and experience from the peaceful fireside to the hell-like no man's land.

The second ideal is to bring to the reader a vivid picture of Yank adapting himself to the new conditions of army life.

The last ideal is to show what this war has meant to our nation, bringing unforeseen good to the individual citizen, and the country in general.

It has seemed wise to divide the book into three parts. Part One includes the first six chapters which deal with the peacetime environments of our heroes.

The next six chapters or Part Two, are used to describe and portray Yank in the training camps of the United States, the underlying principle being to show how the pooling of personalities has perfected a new and better Democracy.

The last nine chapters, or Part Three, are written with the hope of bringing the life "over there" and the actualities of the battlefield to the folks who could not be there.

A love story is connected to the lives of most of the Yanks, and, as mother and sweetheart at home deserve the credit for inspiring our men into doing deeds of bravery, this book would be incomplete without a touch of romance.

Therefore, I have chosen to write this in the form of a love story, adding touches of army life as the book progresses.

PRIVATE EARL C. VAN ZANDT.

YANK—THE CRUSADER

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE RANCHER BOY—A MAN OF DESTINY

The greatest race of all, the human race, goes ahead in spite of all the uses and abuses that man makes of it.

A number of years ago in one of the largest cities of our country there lived a man by the name of Sheldon, who for some reason, became possessed of the money-making demon at a very young age.

The explanation of his lust for the glittering, yellow stuff may be found in the fact that his father was a poor minister and unable to give his son any of the luxuries of life.

Most lads of his age just naturally acquire the hobby for disliking school. Noel finished the fourth grade. His dad made many promises and threats in order to reconcile his son to the school-going notion. One of the traits of the Sheldon family is bulldog determination and the boy had it, much to his sorrow and undoing.

Young Noel Sheldon, living in a big metropolis, could see all the luxuries and artificial beauty that money could buy. This knowledge gave him a hankering for them. Early in his life the money-making bee started to buzz in his head and just as early he took to the newspaper game.

Noel was quick to learn and early in his new vocation he learned to judge when a man wanted a newspaper long before the customer would motion for the newsies. This foresight on the part of the boy soon made him the best newsy in the city and

even the attentions of the head men of the newspaper were attracted by this ambitious young lad. It was not long until Noel was climbing the ladder of fame in the newspaper game and also feathering his nest with a golden lining.

Years passed, and this determined, ambitious, self-centered Noel Sheldon came into his manhood, unquestionably a shrewd money-getter and truly a valuable man for the corporations that saw fit to make use of him.

His eagerness for wealth carried with it a number of careless habits that by degrees were wrecking his physical and moral life. Beauty to him was merely a thing. His slight body was fast losing its grip with health.

For some unknown reason a fine young lady with the noblest of ideals and womanly traits fell heiress to a married life with such a miser as Noel Sheldon. Love does funny tricks. Who can tell whether Providence showed some super-knowledge when the two were made man and wife!

One cold December morning there came a child into the apartment of the Sheldons. But the little babe was not long for this world, and when it passed away Mr. Sheldon began to realize for the first time the richness of the treasure in the Big Pleading Brown Eyes of his wife. She had been pleading with him from the very first to give up his quest for gold and search for the great joy and genuine pleasure in life which comes from unselfish Christian living.

The death of his first born had a tendency to sour him even more on all the things worth while, if such a thing could be possible. Night after night unconsciously he sought the treasure in the Big Pleading Brown Eyes of his wife. Each day and

every hour of the day his well-meaning wife prayed for a change in her husband. Sometimes she felt like giving up, but now and then she was encouraged to carry on with her prayers when she often heard Noel speak a noble thought.

He could not reconcile himself to the new ideals that filled his mind. It was not until the panic of 1893 had taken the greater portion of his wealth and the major portion of his health that he began to realize that gold was only for this world, and the treasure in those Big Pleading Brown Eyes offered a life beyond the grave.

Death was opening its horrible gates to him when Noel Sheldon, with a convicted past staring him in the face, finally gave in to those Big Pleading Brown Eyes. He said, "Dear wife," and it was a bit of an effort for him to say "dear," "If God spares me I will serve Him and go out to that Golden West you speak of in search of happiness and health."

Several weeks later Sheldon improved sufficiently to travel. True to his word, he took his wife on the first train west, not at all worried as to where his ticket would take him. Determination marked Noel Sheldon's battle for health and happiness in the same degree of intensity as he waged his fight for gold and riches.

The story of the success and development of his ranch in Western Oklahoma is a long and unnecessary story. With great foresight he selected a fine cattle range over forty miles from the little town of Fargo, the closest railroad center.

On April 3, 1898, in a neat home down on the prettiest spot on the meadow, while the eastern sun was peeking over the hills, another light came into the world. A babe as chubby and healthy as you please blessed that home.

You could almost see the boy grow, and Mother Sheldon was very busy making clothes to keep up with her chubby pride and joy.

A family riot almost took place when it came to naming the boy. Dad and maw went round and round and it is hard to tell what might have happened but for the hired man, who suggested calling the kid Fred. Mrs. Sheldon was pleased because her favorite brother's name was Fred. It was two against one and so dear dad had to content himself with a hope of naming someone or something else.

Fred was not four years old when he started to ride horses. The hired man bragged, "In ten years I allow Fred will outride anyun in this yere country" Old Pete would invariably shift his weight from one foot to the other as he made his brag and then suffix the sentence with that old familiar phrase, "By Heck!"

Mrs. Sheldon taught Fred his A, B, C's when the boy was six years old. Pete "Allowed that the little brat was a seer when it came to figuring." The expression "brat" on the part of Pete was merely admiration of his clever young protege.

Old Pete's great indoor sport was to spend hours telling of the boy-wonder at the Sheldon ranch. He might have lost his job sometime ago but for his ability to puff up the chest of Dad Sheldon by singing praises of Fred. Truly, Fred was a remarkable boy and deserved much praise.

Christmas day, 1902, was a happy one at the Sheldon ranch. A present came to them in the form of a new bundle of life, a brother to Fred.

Jim, as the newcomer was called, was the first playmate our little hero had outside of old Scotch, the faithful collie dog of the ranch. The dog lost his usefulness as a cattle dog because

his attentions were changed to Fred. One of Fred's childhood habits was to climb to the top of the corral fence and sit there for hours as if communing with the gods. Below Fred at his feet lay Scotch, watching every movement of his master, always on the alert to meet any emergency that might endanger his little pal. Fred, Jim and Scotch were always together.

The parents of our hero planned to send him to school and finally give him a college education, but when Fred was six years old Mr. Sheldon passed away. So Fred was kept at home with his mother, who now managed the affairs of the ranch.

The playdays of our hero were cut short.

As the years went by he proved that as far as running the ranch was concerned no one could beat him. He produced fine results and as an authority on cattle he was as good as the best and was always square in his dealings.

Fred loved the outdoor life and it loved him. He was kind to all his fellowmen and the same to the helpless animals. He never compromised when challenged; he planned his fight and with the Sheldon determination fought his plan to a victory.

Not far from Fred's home but over the hills and off the road to town lived Molly McByde, one of the sweetest blue-eyed Irish maidens in the Golden West.

Mother McByde, the mother of Molly and a native of the Emerald Isle, a woman of the highest character, was obliged to take in washing to keep herself and sick husband alive. They were advised to go west and live in the country so that they might improve Mr. McByde's health.

The homestead idea welcomed them into Oklahoma. They took advantage of the government's offer and with the little they had saved up man-

aged to build a frame shack and buy several cows, a mare, a few pigs and some chickens. Good fortune smiled upon their little investment and they managed to live comfortably, and as a crowning glory a darling baby girl came to make her home with them.

The babe, Molly, grew up under the good care of her mother. Like Fred Sheldon, she had no playmates. Her hobby was to gather the various colored flowers and decorate the little shack, and she soon learned to make herself useful around the home.

Molly's education was neglected in the namby-pamby things of the city life, but no one could cook a better dinner than she when she had reached her fourteenth year. The hard work in her early life had not taken from her the beauty of youth.

So we find her in her nineteenth year—the year that she and Fred first met—a crowning example of radiant womanhood.

CHAPTER II

A NEWSPAPER DOES FRED A GOOD TURN

Unreasonable as it might seem, Fred and Molly had never met before they had grown up. Their meeting came about as the result of a very singular incident.

Molly's hobby was gathering flowers. Not far from her home and on a little winding brook, where an old cow-trail crossed, lay Molly's fancied spot. A giant tree of the meadows stood at one end of an open space which was bordered on both sides by bushes and shrubbery of various shades of green. The border was rather irregular, with now and then a shapely little tree adding to the picturesque setting of the scene. The carpeting was such as only God can arrange with His unlimited display of nature in rare colors of grass, shrubs, and flowers; many were the hours Molly spent in this parlor.

An oil boom was on in full swing at the time. Oil experts were combing Oklahoma for signs of money-producing wells. One of these oil prospectors, passing through that part of Oklahoma at noon-time, came to the spot of which you have just read, and here was tempted to eat his lunch in the shade of the big tree. Finishing, he carelessly threw the newspaper which covered his lunch on the ground and went his way.

Some time had passed since Fred had ridden the range to brand his new stock, so instead of sending one of his hired men to do the job, he decided to go himself. Starting very early one morning, he rode

and rode, and for some unknown reason could not get away from day-dreaming. The young bronco he was riding was a wild and new mount and before Fred realized it the little devil was taking his rider through a strange country.

At about two in the afternoon the wind started to blow as Fred was lazily passing through Molly's fancy-land. The newspaper left by the oil expert blew in the young bronco's face. The panic-stricken animal gave a mighty plunge forward and threw his unsuspecting rider to the ground with a violent shock.

Old Scotch was still faithful to his master even though he had long since passed his best days. Generally the dog had to stay home because his master felt that the trips were too much for such an old animal. However, this time Scotch had "slipped one over" on the boss and had followed him. When the accident occurred Scotch followed the bronco for a short distance, but came back to his master and, barking lustily, soon brought assistance.

Molly was out in her big back yard feeding her chicks when she was attracted by the barking. At first she paid little attention to the noise, but its persistence annoyed her more and more until her curiosity was so aroused that she felt compelled to search for the source of the disturbance.

She located the pleading bark and was surprised to find that it came from her favorite spot. Her surprise was even greater when she saw a big mass of human being lying in an awkward heap upon the ground.

She immediately played the part of the good Samaritan and with a tenderness which characterized all that she did, soon had nursed the unfortunate victim to consciousness. Fresh hoof-prints told the story.

Fred looked about him in bewilderment and in his startled frame of mind was content to lie quietly in the arms of the beautiful, fairy-like maiden, for fear he would waken from the wonderful dream.

Finally in a dazed manner he looked around to see if he were awake or only dreaming, when at last he stuttered, "S-s-say, g-g-gosh I-I am-am ain't I? Where a-am I-I or-or are y-you really th-there?"

The look of sympathy on Molly's face changed to a smile such as only good girls are capable of wearing. She saw and was amused at Fred's embarrassment, the Irish in her started to play its part as she undertook to have some fun at the stranger's expense. She said, "Friend, how came you to be in my parlor?"

Now he was convinced that he was only dreaming. Being thus convinced, he was perfectly satisfied to dream on. The idea of being in a parlor when all he could see was the beauties of God's out-of-doors and feel Molly's gentle arms holding his head up, was bewildering.

He thought he must be in heaven. At least it was heavenly to have the attentions of such an angel. As he awakened and sensed the situation, Fred really enjoyed it. He pretended to be in worse shape than he was, just to prolong his visit in Paradise. "S-say, I-I don't know your name, but I sure allow it isn't improper for me to ask since you saw fit to treat me so kind?"

Blushingly, she replied: "My name is Molly. Now I have told you who I am. Who are you?"

"Gosh! I didn't reckon you'd care who I might happen to be."

Molly, with a wicked twinkle in her eye, answered: "I might not be caring so much who you are, but as I have never seen you before I kinda want to know."

Poor Fred was fussed, much to the satisfaction of Molly's jovial spirit. He tried to change the subject and in a rather clumsy, boyish manner suggested that he had enough strength to be on his way. Molly's seeming harshness and the fall left him in rather a dazed state of mind. "Miss Molly, might ye be so kind as to be telling me where I am?"

She was being fully repaid for her trouble by the comical monologue Fred Sheldon was presenting. Her soul reveled in her innocent prank, so she answered: "You are in my parlor."

"Reckon yore parlors in these parts are different than what we call parlors where I live. Can you tell me how to get home?"

"Stranger, I don't know where you live."

Molly could see old Fred's heart and she knew that she had gone far enough. The idea of being called a stranger by one with whom he had fallen in love did not appeal to him at all, and his facial expression betrayed his inner thoughts. "My name is——," and then Molly broke up his sentence by quickly saying:

"You must come to my house and let mother dress those nasty cuts."

Fred's face cheered up a bit. Her words were like music to him. He forgot to finish his sentence. He forgot his embarrassment. He forgot that he should be on his way home. He forgot everything except Molly. "Sure! I'll do anything you say. Gosh! I owe you a heap of a lot."

The way Fred said it Molly could not help feeling the kindness and warmth of his big heart. She helped him to his feet and together they managed to walk the short distance to her house.

Mrs. McByde always kept a close watch on Molly and as usual she was looking in the direction of the favorite spot when the pair came into sight. Mother

was mystified, and by the time she reached them she was on the run. "Faith, and what is the trouble?" she said, eyeing the bloody-looking figure that her daughter was so lovingly assisting. The young folks were taken by surprise by the sudden appearance of Mrs. McByde.

Once they were inside the house, mother hustled all the pillows and soft things in the cottage for Fred to rest upon, as he was still playing the sick game. Mrs. McByde, noticing that Molly seemed to be playing the part of a wall flower and not realizing that she had taken the patient completely out of Molly's hands, demanded of her that she be more hospitable to the unfortunate lad.

"Mother, I don't know his name," said cunning, little Miss Molly.

Mrs. McByde, feeling a bit put out to think that she should lead herself into such a peculiar situation, however, was equal to the occasion. "Faith, and what kin yer name be?"

"Fred Sheldon, ma'am," he said, with a sigh of relief.

"Yis, and faith I met your father just when I first settled here. Ye live over in the big meadows, don't ye?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Yer old man helped me when I needed it and that makes it a double pleasure to fix ye up a bit. He wasn't looking fit that day and sure can ye tell me if he is still ailing?"

In a voice which showed all too deeply the loss of a partnership with his father, Fred answered: "I reckon dad is all right, for maw says he is in heaven with a good friend by the name o' God."

"Sure, he is with angels, sich as he has a right to be. This is my gurl, Molly, Mr. Sheldon."

“They call me ‘boss’ over home, but I don’t mind if you call me Fred.” He never before was prefixed with “Mr.” and it annoyed him. He wanted to know the last name of his new friends, and finally plucked up enough courage to ask.

The afternoon was well-nigh spent when he suddenly remembered that he must be on his journey home. He would not have his mother worry over his absence, and with this thought on his mind he jumped to his feet so quickly that it really frightened his hostesses. He was just turning the knob on the door when he realized that he must be told the way home.

Mrs. McByde gladly volunteered the information and because of the great distance Fred must travel, she forced Fred to use Molly’s favorite horse.

Fred gladly accepted the kind offer for several reasons, one being that he would have an excuse to come back and thus renew his friendship with Molly.

“Goodbye, and a thousand thanks,” called Fred, as he mounted the pony a bit unsteady and rode away.

Mother and daughter followed him to the gate admiringly watching him as far as their eyes could see, their best wishes following him all the way. They walked back to the house arm in arm, speaking of their unexpected visitor only in the highest terms. Molly loved him and could not conceal this fact from her mother, who was not displeased by it.

Darkness soon overtook Fred but not until he was on the road that lead to his home. The moon brightened the way. The hero soul began to dictate thoughts to him as he figured out how he might elevate himself in Molly’s estimation.

Fred saw himself as the greatest bronco buster and the champion lariat artist of the world. He fancied himself doing many acts of chivalry before his newly-made friend. A Napoleonic idea of himself sprung to his mind. It really amused Fred to think of the extravagant ideas of himself he was enjoying.

He little knew at that time that the opportunity for heroic service was near. The war cloud was speedily lowering over his country and soon he was to face the crisis.

The pony was the victim of numerous displays of affection as they were homeward bound. Even Scotch, his faithful dog, showed signs of being jealous.

Mrs. Sheldon was getting uneasy as Fred was already more than three hours late. The hired help were gathered around the kitchen stove speculating on what might have happened to the boss. His mother was worked up to a high pitch of excitement and finally she sent the help in all directions searching for her boy. She was almost frantic when she saw the guilty bronco grazing in the meadow.

The searching party had been gone for nearly an hour when Fred rode up to the kitchen door and dismounted. He entered the house and found his mother on her knees. She leaped to her feet and, clasping him in her arms, exclaimed: "My prayers have been answered."

As Fred told his story his mother perceived that something new had entered his life, but she never questioned the boy as she knew the truth would come to her in its own natural way.

The searching party returned at a late hour and forgot their anxiety when they were greeted by their smiling boss. Old Pete, who had long since forgotten his age and just as long since passed his stage

of usefulness, simply had to say to Fred, "I allowed, by heck, that you would be able to keer fer yerself."

Smilingly, Fred returned: "You have been teaching me how all these years."

"Not a braggin' nor nuthin' of that sort, but I shore am proud of ye, boy."

Fred had to repeat his explanations as many times as there were men on the farm because they all desired to be confidential with him, farmer fashion. Old Scotch would help Fred's explanations by adding emphasis to whatever his master would say with a sharp bark.

Fred went bright and early the next day to return the pony. Molly and he visited a long time that day, and love sang its own sweet song.

On every trip to town Fred found it convenient to see Molly, even though it took him some distance out of his way. Mother Sheldon, realizing it took Fred an unusually long time to make the trips, suspected the reason and longed for the day when Fred would tell her the whole story.

That day came when our country sent forth her call for men.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTY STRONG

A long look ahead is of such great value to each man individually and our country as a whole, that it is a great pleasure to introduce a far-sighted young man who played a big part in the life of our hero, Fred Sheldon. The fact is, he had a lifting influence on the lives of everyone he met.

This splendid specimen of American manhood stands out as a champion of his ideals. "If anything stands in the way of attaining your ideal, fight it," was one of Christy Strong's favorite expressions, and he practiced what he preached.

The devil was trying to trip him into the pits of hell but the temptations never whipped him because Chris had a Partner, a big Partner who could and did help him overcome the artificial charms of Satan.

The standards Christy chose were the standards he flew. Among his many good qualities were his noble unselfishness, and his love for righteousness. Many men received a real, warm, man-to-man introduction to Christy's big Partner because of his untiring, never-ceasing efforts to show men the way to the Upper Trail.

He was six feet high, slight, with a soldierly bearing, and it was a pleasure to view his neat and correct appearance. His real attraction was his wonderfully expressive face. The character stamped in that face made it different. His jaws were squared and well set; his forehead high, and his big brown eyes wore that ever human, watchful, sympathetic appeal. His dark hair showed the care of a self-

respecting man, and together with his rosy cheeks completed the make-up of a very pleasing personality.

To Christy the beauty of living was the joy in life. Chris fought a good fight; he was a real fighter and the fighting spirit permeated everything he did.

Many of the folks who met Chris would compliment him because of his sterling worth and the inspiration he gave them. You could not flatter him into big-headedness. He would always humbly show appreciation for the words of encouragement that his admirers would give him, only feeling their compliments were words of encouragement. "If I ever do anyone any good, it is due to the patience and prayers of my dear, little mother."

Mrs. Strong, Christy's mother, never said anything that would shake her son's faith in God or his fellowmen. She lived for her son and it was the great ambition of her life that in so doing she might give to the world a true-blue servant. Every step of the way she prepared for him a life of service, in the service of the King of Kings and Master of all.

The life of this wonderful little mother was so adventuresome and is of such great importance to our story that surely the reader will enjoy the privilege of knowing more about her.

Sweden was her birthplace and there the first sixteen years of her girlhood were spent. Her play and education were well divided and in no wise made her a dull or silly young miss. She received her education in the tongue of her forefathers, but was also a fine student of English.

She learned to read the American newspapers and read so many wonderful things of the land that Americans all love, that even against the wishes of her fond parents and many friends, she crossed the Atlantic and reached the great metrop-

olis of the western hemisphere after an unusually stormy six weeks' voyage. Fortunately for the fearless young immigrant, a kind-hearted American woman became very much interested in her and was a real friend.

Minnie's understanding of English was a favorable surprise to Mrs. Roberts, the leading dressmaker of C——, who was her fellow-passenger on the boat. Hour after hour and day after day the two would talk over the many things of interest in the land she had read so much about. Like a child in wonderland, she listened to her well-informed, new friend tell of the vastness, the majesty, the richness and the promise of the land toward which they were sailing.

The weeks of the stormy voyage ended and the land of liberty welcomed Minnie with outstretched arms. Already, before she was in sight of the coast, her friend, Mrs. Roberts, assured her of a position and it was not long until she was quite an accomplished dressmaker, earning very good wages.

The restless and adventuresome spirit in the coming American had not been satisfied. The noise and hustle of the large city did not appeal to her. There was an inherent longing for something bigger, something more magnificent, that could not be quieted.

In those days the newspapers were filled with long descriptive articles booming the Rocky Mountain country. The wildness of the country rekindled her adventuresome nature and in spite of all the opposing influences that stood in her way, Miss Minnie decided to venture again. She was soon on her way to the Golden West.

Her destination was a large town which was situated almost in the shadows of the giant Rockies. The first time in her life that she experienced a feel-

ing of satisfaction was when she stepped off the train in D——. This busy western town seemed to be the one place in the world for which she was longing.

Not long after her arrival in D—— she found a good location to build up a dressmaking business, and with the money she had saved during her employment in Mrs. Roberts' concern, Minnie was able to equip a neat little shop. Her ability as a dressmaker soon became known to "the four hundred" and then she had all the work she could do.

Just around the corner from her little shop was the grocery store where she bought her few little supplies. A certain young man always made it a point to wait on the young customer, and as the days went by they became lovers and finally husband and wife.

The young couple, Mr. and Mrs. Strong, after a happy honeymoon in the Rockies, settled down, and with their combined earnings were able to start a grocery store all of their own. They soon worked up a thriving business and then started a little home.

The Strongs were very happy together. Mr. Strong was prudent in all his business dealings, while his little wife was a housekeeper second to none. It was in this happy home that Christy first saw the light one beautiful spring.

Christy, from his babyhood to his manhood, was all that could be expected of a robust, healthy child. Early in life he learned to smile and all through life had a smile for everyone he met.

In his early boyhood his favorite stunt was to miss Sunday school. He would rather play baseball or football or any of the real manly games than study about Peter, James and John. Even his school lessons had to take a back seat. However, his dad was careful and judicious and tamed the boy in time.

When Christy reached the age of twelve his father gave him a membership in the Y. M. C. A. The boy took advantage of the opportunity and availed himself of all that it had to offer.

Christy's habits started to change. Regularity took the place of carefree carelessness. He became interested in the meaning of life and then sought its meaning in all its fullness.

That summer Christy was privileged to attend the "Y" camp. Each new day in the heart of the old Rockies brought the boy into a stronger realization of the handiwork of the Creator. He took real interest from then on in the Bible stories which were told around the campfire.

The young lad would take short hikes into the mountains with a big Partner, "The Great Trail Blazer, Jesus Christ." The lad's vision broadened with such comradeship and from then on a great change took place in Christy's life. The great passion for service was developing in his soul.

The vacant lot behind Christy's home was the scene of much of his childhood play. His life had a touch of romance in it and on those old playgrounds it started. A little playmate by the name of Helen Grant was for some reason the queen in all his games and the mistress of all his playhouses. It continued to be so until one day when Christy was fifteen years old, he met an evil companion.

The two boys had just eaten dinner at Christy's home and were bound for a movie when a notion came into Bullie's head. He went under the electric arc and picked up several chunks of carbon. The boys passed Helen's home where Bullie stopped and wrote some unclean thoughts on the sidewalk. Christy did not suspicion anything bad, and, unfortunately for him, he paid no attention to the action of his friend.

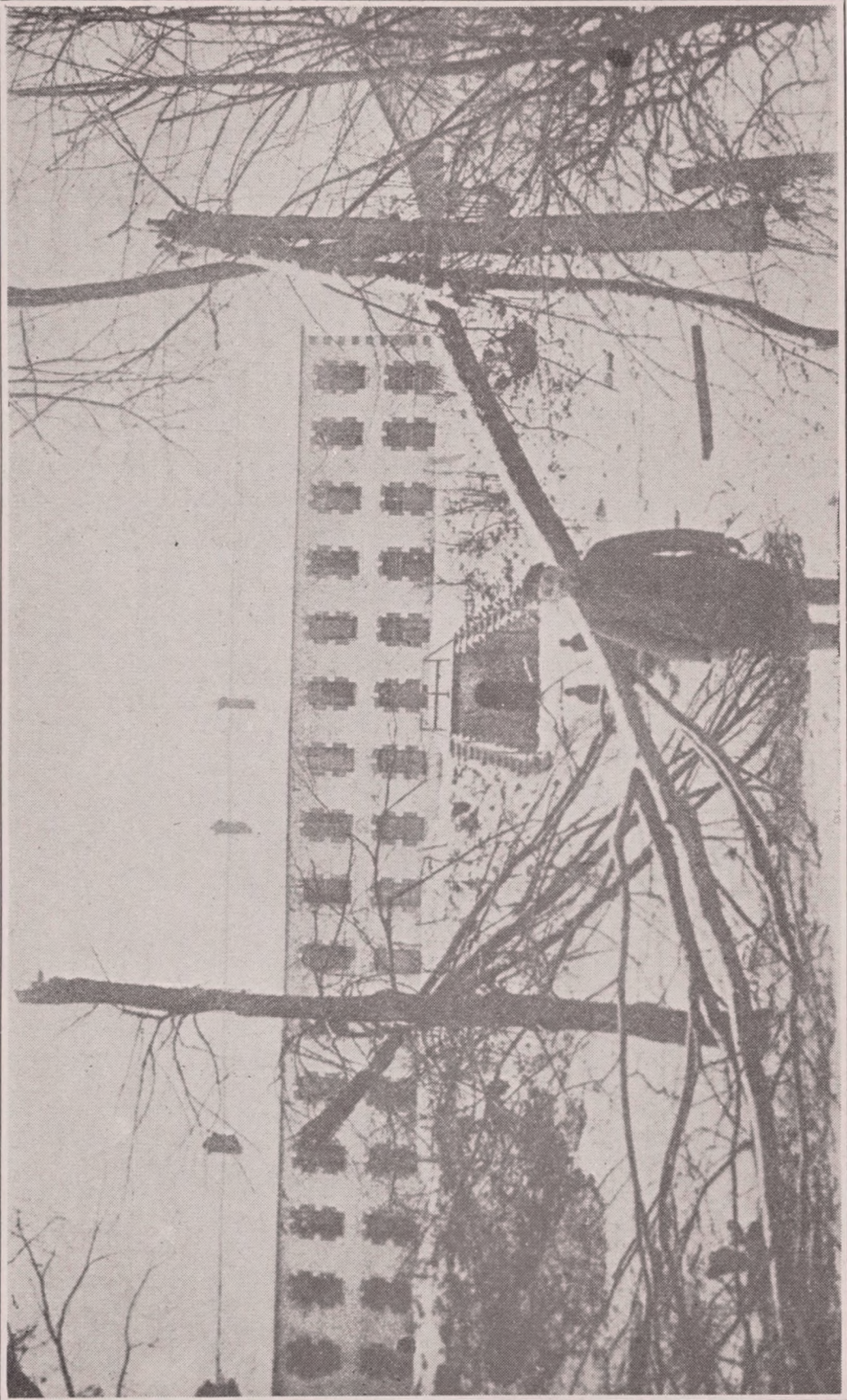
The next morning the whole of the Grant family were out scrubbing the sidewalk, but the more water they threw on the walk, the thicker the ice formed on the carbon marks.

Chris came by the house to walk with Helen to school while the Grants were engaged in erasing the gutter slang from their walk. Someone had lied. The whole family pointed the accusing finger at Chris. Poor fellow, his big heart nearly broke when he read the vulgarity of which he was accused. His spirit was broken to think that his friend would think such smut and that he should be accused.

Injustice had been done and Chris was the victim. His heart almost stopped beating and his blood grew cold as he resolutely decided to say nothing in defense of himself and to put it up to his friend to make amends. Bullie just naturally could not and would not do it, so Chris decided to wait until he grew to be a man before he told the Grants his story.

Eight years passed and he remained faithful to his decision. Then the day came when he told his story. That day followed closely the day that our country declared a state of war existed. He had been thinking and knew that it was right for him to do his best for his country and fair to himself, to let the Grants know the truth. They were glad to hear it and in fact long before he told them they decided that they had placed the blame on the wrong shoulders.

All these years he was not carrying a grudge; on the other hand, the same love for Helen burned within him. Helen, however, called him "friend" and was proud to do so, but as the years had passed another suitor had been pressing his favors upon her.



BOCHE PRISONER

CHAPTER IV

THE WORLD UNREST AND THE WAR CLOUD

Civilization has encountered many obstacles on its road to perfection. The day on which war was declared the world had reached the highest ebb of civilization, not because we were so much wiser than our forefathers but because of the accumulated knowledge of the past ages being used to the best advantage by the present generation.

Men everywhere, when they pause in a moment's thought of the achievements of their fellow beings, exclaim that it is impossible to invent anything more to add to the already close relationship of all the nations of the world. Their minds are bewildered as they search for improvements on the locomotive, steamship, airship, automobile, telephone, telegraph, wireless, phonograph, typewriter, newspaper, motion-picture machine and wonderful machinery of the factories. No age in history can boast of such rapid intercourse between nations.

The past twenty years had seen the nations of the world change from a group of nations concerned only in their own selfish welfare to a group of nations struggling for a world brotherhood. This may be truly said of all nations with one outstanding exception—the emperor-ridden country of Germany.

The black sheep of the nations was like all other black sheep—selfish, self-centered, and unthoughtful of the feelings of others. This country was ruled by an ego-maniac whose lust for power knew no bounds, this characteristic being inherited from his fore-

fathers, who educated him to plan and plot a world empire at the expense of an unsuspecting world.

His forefathers had been successful in the cold-blooded game of conquest. They found that they added more in dollars and cents to their empire in a few years of territorial conquest than they did in many years of peaceful pursuits.

Jealous and with craven eyes, the Leech of Berlin watched other countries prosper while he was inwardly planning their destruction. Forty years or more he was preparing for the terrible manslaughter that was to make him ruler of the world. He used the public schools, kindergartens, Sunday schools, colleges, and churches to mould public opinion for his "Germany rule the world" policy.

The rest of the world was content to play the fine game of "live and let live." They realized that the world had a plenty for all who were willing to work for it.

Commercially speaking, no one would suspicion the slightest ill-feeling between nations, although some nations, because of their resources, gained more wealth than others. Germany herself was enjoying an enviable world-wide trade.

The empire had changed from an agricultural country to a manufacturing country and because of its natural resources the time allotted to her as a manufacturing center was short, and because of this she must find more resources in iron ore that she might continue her manufacturing career.

Some few years before the war was declared the richest iron ore mines in the world were discovered near Verdun, France. This place was food for the jealous, lustful eyes of the Kaiser.

The peace-loving world did not offer many real causes for starting such a war, so he made much ado over a situation which occurred in a Slavonic prov-

ince in Austria. By right of geographical situation and nationality the province belonged to Serbia but the Dual Monarchy won it from the small country by force of arms.

The reader will remember how the tin-horn Archduke paraded through the streets of this province, even when he knew that the people hated him, and that his chances for coming out alive were small.

Austria demanded reparation from little Serbia because the archduke was shot, and made ten conditions to which Serbia must agree in order to escape a military invasion from the big bully. Serbia must agree within twenty-four hours.

The little country did all in its power to reason with Austria. It called upon the willing big brothers—France, England and Russia—to aid her in the trouble. They did their best to reason with Austria but all of no avail. Behind Austria stood the Kaiser and his crowd, commending the stand their colleague took in forming this critical moment in world history.

The thief likes to cover up his footprints of guilt and the same can be said of Kaiser Bill. While his henchmen were promoting this low-down, criminal plan against a poor, helpless little nation, he was leisurely yachting on the North Sea. The old fox was caught playing his game by those he planned on subduing. The larger nations stepped in and with their combined efforts fought this military monster and its system of grabbing small defenseless countries.

July 28, 1914, will long be remembered in the annals of history as the day the great war cloud burst and in all its terrible fury soaked the whole world with its gloom of misery.

Some have given the Satanic Emperor credit for his ability to develop so wonderful an organization

as his military demon. Others loathe to give him credit because he was superior in a dastardly game for which the self-respecting world had no use.

The nations of Europe with only a few exceptions became involved in the ever-spreading, violent pestilence of war. The fortunes of battle naturally favored the best prepared and if Providence had not interceded the invader would have captured Paris, taken Calais, London and then crossed the Atlantic to finish his job.

The blood-soaked battlefields were lengthening as "The Mad Man of Europe" was successful. The more he won the more defiant he became and as a consequence he showed little respect for neutral nations.

His henchmen had discovered and perfected many forms of destruction which met with great success, and when it was inconvenient for him to abide by his agreements of honor, International Law or any other "Scraps of Paper," he would ruthlessly set them aside and proceed with his program of destruction. Mad with his increasing success, the ego-maniac defied the whole world.

Away from the smoke and fumes of the battle-field, across the Atlantic, was prospering the greatest liberty and peace-loving nation in the world. Even it felt the deadly fangs of the autocracies' rampant, hap-hazard warfare. The republics of South America, the deserts and jungles of Africa, Australia, Asia and North America all began to feel the effects of the war.

The United States of America has been the melting pot of the world for more than a century. Old Uncle Sam has been a good fellow to the deserving and many from every country in the world have adopted him as their guardian, choosing as the land of their preference the good old U. S. A. Peoples

from the enemies' country selected this land in preference to their fatherland. This great conglomeration of nationalities at the beginning of the world-war made our great country a pandemonium of different opinions regarding the cause of the horrible condition of affairs. Immediately we chose a policy of neutrality.

Our position as a neutral was sneered at by the victorious Maniac of Berlin, and because of his success and our love for freedom and peace and our seeming lack of military power, he missed no opportunity to slap us in the face. We patiently put up with much because we could not believe that his policy was as fiendish as it really was.

He boldly announced an unrestricted submarine warfare on and after February 3, 1917. This was the slap that riled the American people into drastic steps, the first of which was an armed neutrality, which proved ineffectual at its best and a good excuse for more hostility from our enemy.

April 6, 1917, the war cloud allowed a few rays of light to shine through from across the Atlantic and our friends and foes saw the sun rise that day in the form of the Stars and Stripes and across that old flag were written the words contained in the memorable speech of President Woodrow Wilson, the message of world freedom—a declaration of war against the enemies of a world brotherhood.

If we entered the war merely because a war-passioned nation destroyed some of our property, our cause was insufficient. If we entered the war to approve or disapprove of the actions of friend or foe, we were still in want of a cause. If we entered the war to destroy a nation or several nations, we are no better than the Boche. If we entered the war because we were inspired to do so in

protection of the righteous ideals that our forefathers fostered and fought for in years gone by, our cause was worthy and worth while. If we entered the war accepting the German challenge, if it was our ambition to make the world a safe place to live in, and thus make future wars impossible, our cause deserves the applause of the world.

We made a choice of policy which placed at the disposal of the allies all our resources in men and money. The example of our forefathers bade us do no less. The barbarian's haughty challenge called for such an action. Our dream of a world peace must be won at the point of a bayonet, and therefore we must show our faith in the ideal by fighting.

Even though it was hard to have any kindly feelings toward the Boche, we had no quarrel with the German people but with their fiendish government which had not only caused much misery and hardship to our allies but had succeeded in bleeding white the youth and flower of their own country. It was not our object to segregate the scientific German mind from the brotherhood of the world.

The people of the United States sensed the foregoing situation with a remarkable speed and a noble spirit. It truly hurt them to know that they had enemies plotting against them when they felt at peace with the whole world. The plotting of revolts and setting the torch to the industries of a peaceful nation could only exist where there was an autocratic government, where the destiny of a nation was a family secret of its ruler.

We accepted our place among the champions of democracy as a nation, and every citizen of that nation counted it a rare privilege to back up his country to the best of his ability.

President Wilson said in his famous war speech: "It is a fearful thing to lead this peace-

loving nation into war." Millions of other men like Fred and Chris felt that it was the honorable thing, and they were willing to make the supreme sacrifice if necessary to see their cause victorious. However, their brave hearts were eager to live for their country.

The American youth was favored with so much to live for when the call to colors came he had much to give up; but with an admirable eagerness he willingly placed himself at the command of his country.

The war gave many of the boys the opportunity of seeing their own country, and the more they saw of the U. S. A., the more they felt it to be a country worth fighting for.

CHAPTER V

THE VOLUNTEER

The tenth of every month was Fred's big business day in town. April 10, 1917, he found bigger business than ever awaiting his attention. His country was at war.

It did not take him long to make a decision. His whole life was a fight. Fight was all he knew. Fight was his answer to the challenge that confronted every American youth after the declaration of war.

He mounted his pony and rode in the direction of Molly's home. He arrived there earlier than usual and consequently found Molly busy doing chores around the house.

His spirit was high. He could hardly control himself. If he had met a German that day there would have been another Hun shooting up daisies with the nutrition of his carcass.

His pony had not stopped when he leaped off and rushed over to Molly, and before he realized it had her cuddled in his powerful arms, at the same time telling her of his decision to enlist. Molly bravely encouraged him.

Fred did not spend much time at Molly's home because of his excited state of mind. Molly had all she could do to cool him sufficiently to get him to promise to return and visit her before he left. No doubt he would have done so without the persistent plea, but kindred hearts are anxious hearts.

Molly soon saw the boy on his pony, off for home. Even though she encouraged him in the splendid

motive of enlisting, her heart filled to overflowing as he rode out of sight.

She did not return to the kitchen; no indeed. Her fairy garden was calling—she must see the spot where she first met him. The pen of the world's greatest author could not describe the emotions of her thoughts. It is hard to part company with a good friend, but to have your dreams of love broken into so abruptly hurts way down deep. Then, too, she kept picturing him facing the dangers of battle. Her soul swelled with pride as she pictured him fighting as she knew he could and would. Her thoughts became so sacred that she could no longer stand, so on bended knee she asked God for courage that she might be worthy of such a partner.

Just as the sun was sinking below the horizon Fred greeted his mother who stood at the gate awaiting his return. She readily perceived the frame of his mind and did not need to be told that her son's spirits were high. She could hardly wait for an explanation because she had never seen him in such an expectant mood before.

"Fred, my boy, what might be the nature of your joy?"

"Mother, we are at war, and your son joins the colors tomorrow."

A mixture of expressions quivered over his mother's face—some of pride, others of sorrow. She smiled the best she could but her heart was burdened and too full for words.

Fred kissed his mother—that kiss lasted just a little longer than usual—and then he went around his ranch giving his men instructions regarding their permanent duties.

His trip completed, he returned for supper. Not many minutes later the news was spread to all the neighboring ranches and a meeting was held plan-

ning a farewell to the boy who meant so much to that community.

The question of what to give Fred as a token was the big issue of the meeting. They took up a collection which had many liberal donations.

Supper was over in the Sheldon home. Mother and son were busily engaged in preparing for the trip. Mother was doing much thinking while Fred was talking over the war issues and possibilities.

An hour had passed since supper when forty or fifty of the good country folks took possession of the Sheldon home to pay their respects to the lad they had learned to love and admire.

Old Pete was master of ceremonies and hence opened the celebration with the following flow of oratory: "Fred, we reckon that you would not have any ill-feeling if we would just come and say goodbye."

"Pete, it is all right. I reckon anything you do is all right."

Thus flattered, old Pete was at a loss to continue. "We reckon your mother wants to be with you, so our stay will be short."

"Thank you, Pete," said Mrs. Sheldon, pleasantly relieved.

A short program followed. The prima donna of the countryside rendered several patriotic selections. Fred's young brother, Jim, gave the only piece he ever learned, "Just Before Christmas I'm as Good as I Can Be." Fred remembered the work the kid put into rendering that little poem. He was proud of his young brother, who was to take his place from then on.

Old Pete called for refreshments, nuts, doughnuts and cakes of all descriptions. They made merry and after the bunch had eaten the master of ceremonies called for quiet.

“Fred, we are happy and thought that you might be glad to know that we are all in cahoots on a present for you. Gosh, boy, you don’t know how we’ll miss you. (The tears trickled down the old man’s cheeks.) This yer rag holds a few dollars which will buy you something when you’re in the army. Goodbye, old boy, and remember we all count on you as a scrapper.”

Fred untied the red bandana and found everything from the kiddie’s penny to the foreman’s five-dollar bill. He really did not need the coin, but resolved to use the money wisely and buy something that would last and remind him of the little, last hour.

“Neighbors, my wish is that you will be good to maw. Keep her happy. Jim needs watching and if he is bad just tell me when I get back and I’ll spank him. (Everyone enjoyed the brotherly remark and gave way to hearty laughter.) Thanks for your goodness. Come often and keep maw company.”

The little party left the house, proud to have enjoyed the privilege of attending the farewell to their own Fred. Their bowed heads showing up in the moonlight expressed plainer than words that they were thinking of the days they would miss Fred’s smiling face.

The light burned all that night. Mother and son spoke of the past and planned for the future. Naturally the mother heart yearned for a successful career for her boy; but her thoughts were of other things. She was a woman of worldly experience and knew the temptations and pitfalls that confronted her lad. She knew his innocence and country ways would make him an easy prey to the henchman of Satan if he were not warned.

It was hard—the hardest thing she ever did to take the father’s place and point out the guideposts

to a victorious life. While she was advising she was praying for wisdom.

The old family Bible had been lost for some time but Mrs. Sheldon knew many passages. Her deepest passion was to feel positively that she would meet her lad in the great land of promise if not again on earth. His was the religion of the clear blue sky, and as often as his mother had spoken of the teachings of Jesus Christ they meant but very little to him. That night, however, they were more real to him and he at least made the first step toward a closer relationship with his Creator.

Rays of the eastern sun were shooting above the horizon when brother Jim was in the stable hitching up.

A few minutes later mother and son, with arms linked, walked to the carriage. He had no suitcase but mother sewed a neat little bag for his belongings. In the other hand he carried a rolled blanket. It was a sight to see the young cowboy dressed in a big sombrero with wide leather band, blue shirt and red bandana around the neck, and, best of all, his only pair of go-to-meetin' trousers and fancy high-top boots.

"Maw, we'll sit in the middle seat while Jimmy drives us to town." Not much was said as they rode along.

"Jim, turn to the right," Fred said just in the nick of time.

"Brother, that isn't the right road to town."

"You are right, but I want maw to meet some friends."

No more was said and soon they were driving up to the McByde gate.

"Mother, you and Jim must come in and meet some friends of mine," he said with a half-bashful gesture.

Molly had spied the visitors and was out to see them before Fred could help his mother to the ground.

Mrs. Sheldon had suspicioned for a long time that Fred was dividing his attentions, even though he never intentionally let it be known.

“Fred, I am so happy you have brought your mother. I have wanted to see her for so long. Mrs. Sheldon, let’s hurry and see my mother; she will be so happy.”

Fat little Mrs. McByde was not far behind Molly, so the little group met at the gate. Formalities of etiquette were not in order as they all felt as though they had been life-long friends.

“And be ye Fred’s mother? Ye sure look the like of the woman he describes as sich,” said the hostess of the little farm.

Jim was taking in everything and his occasional glances at Fred were full of teasing expressions.

Arm in arm the mothers walked to the cottage, thinking of the future and flattering one another about their children. Once having entered the house, they talked and worked together, finishing the morning house cleaning. Mrs. McByde suggested that they have a farewell feast for the boy in whom she claimed a big interest.

“Jim, you mind the horse and Scotch while we take a little walk.”

“Sure, brother,” he said with a twinkling of inquisitive trickery brightening his features.

The two lovers strolled up the old trail that led to Molly’s enchanted spot, talking of the future and making sensible plans.

The kid was cautiously carrying out the orders of his big brother, especially while the couple was in sight. But his curiosity was aroused so much

that he forgot his responsibility and followed in the direction of the old trail, keeping well out of sight but in a place where he could witness all that went on.

The feast all prepared, Mrs. McByde went out and called the unsuspecting guests. Jim was first to hear and with little or no delay double-timed to his post of responsibility before his unfaithful act was discovered.

The sweethearts answered the call and the mothers walked out to meet them. They all met just in time to watch Jim intently staging an act all his own.

He stood faithful, old Scotch under a tree and pretended the dog was Molly, and himself Fred, in the garden of love. Unconscious of any audience, he went through the scene he had witnessed in Molly's favorite spot.

"Molly, dear," said the playful boy to old Scotch (who seemed to enjoy the whole show) "We have known each other only a short time and I reckon I am a bit early, but you know I am leaving and I kinda want to make sure before I go. What would you say if I asked you to marry me when I come back?"

"Now, Scotch, you must nod your head and say: 'I have been thinking about that very thing.'"

"I kinda reckoned you wouldn't mind, so I told you my plans for us. Now dear girlie, won't you say 'yes'?"

About this time it was a great effort for the mothers to contain themselves. They were enjoying the little play much more than the ones who were being imitated. It was a double comedy first to watch the youthful actor and then to study the guilty expressions of Molly and Fred.

“Now, Scotch, you say to me: ‘Fred, there could not be another man to whom I could promise so much. Yes, dear, here is my hand.’”

Fred turned redder than an American Beauty rose when he made this explanation. The young pretender acted the part very well. “You see, Molly, I haven’t had time to buy a ring but my friends gave me a farewell reception last night and I intend to buy the ring with the money they gave me. Might it please you to seal the bargain with a kiss?”

This was more than the lovers could comfortably stand, but both stood speechless as Mother Sheldon interrupted the youngster by calling him to dinner. The boy was taken by surprise when he turned around and found he had been entertaining an audience. It didn’t take him long to seek mother’s protecting wing.

“Come children and we’ll feast to the day ye’ll be man and wife.”

Mrs. Sheldon had not expected such a scene when she left home that morning. The whole affair so amused her that she forgot many of her sorrowful thoughts.

The banqueting all over, the jolly party started for the depot to see their hero off to war. The time was all too short for kisses, hugs and good-byes. With a hurried “Mother” and a big hug that expressed more than affection, Fred turned to his sweetheart.

“Molly, old girl,” said he as it was her turn.

“Fred, remember and come back to me the same as you are now. That is all I ask.”

“You bet,” said he.

Just as the train was pulling in, mother came in for another and last embrace. “Fred, buy yourself a Bible and study it. It is man’s treasure book and

in it you will find comfort and strength," was her final advice.

All that Fred saw was the brave smiles that blessed the faces of his loved ones. They felt that they were losing a great deal when their hero boy stepped on the train and waved "good-bye."

CHAPTER VI

THE DOUBLE CHALLENGE

Unlike Fred, Chris could serve his country in many capacities. Manly strength combined with a fighting spirit, as well as a splendid education backed with spiritual power, all challenged the best in him.

It might be well to state that, like many young men with high ideals, he was confronted with perplexing questions: Is war right? Could he still believe in Jesus Christ and kill his fellow men on the battlefield? Is there a God cruel enough to allow such a terrible carnage of life to continue? These and other important questions he must answer.

That night the young idealist could not sleep. He must take a stand on one side or the other. He must fight his own fight. No one could make the decision for him. The following morning at the breakfast table Chris was not as affable as usual.

Mother Strong instinctively knew her son was in a very pensive mood. She naturally wanted to share his troubles. "Chris, you seem worried this morning."

"Mother, dear, I didn't sleep well last night."

"My boy, more than the loss of sleep bothers you. Can't you tell your mother?"

He had not settled the questions, so he shook his head signifying that for the time being he had nothing to say.

That day on every street corner, on all the cars, in the school and everywhere the topic of discussion was the war. Some street corner patriots had the

Germans retreating as far as Berlin. If hot air would do the trick these enthusiastic flag wavers would have had the terrible Hun whipped in a short time. Many of the sick, lame and lazy were bragging about what they would do if only given an opportunity.

Our friend Chris had very little use for grandstand play. During the school hours he was inattentive to the war discussions which took the place of the many lessons. He was thinking.

The Y. M. C. A. was his favorite haunt. Many were the hours of unselfish service he had rendered that institution. When school was over he hurried down to the room where he taught a Bible class of high school men. It was quiet there and in that quiet he made his decision.

The twilight hour caught Chris feeling the need of nourishment, so with a determination he started for home. It seemed to him as if all the world's burdens had been lifted from his shoulders.

Naturally the whole day Mrs. Strong fretted about her son's apparent unsettled mind. Supper was spreading its tempting aroma thru the house while mother and father waited for the presence of their son before partaking.

They waited a little longer than usual but as he entered the room the expression which lightened his face also lightened the weight on his mother's heart.

The happy family were all seated at the table. Mr. Strong requested, "Son, will you ask the blessing?"

"Young man," the father said, "you have had some time to consider your place in this world war. Naturally your mother and I are interested. Have you decided?"

"Yes, I am going to join the army."

Startled by the quick reply, both parents assumed a thoughtful attitude while Chris explained his position.

“My life has been dedicated to unselfish service. The cause of righteousness is my fight because it was the fight of my Commander-in-chief.

“Several questions perplexed me to start with but I am thoroughly convinced that our cause is right and I know, that being the case, I don't have to make a choice between Christ and country. In this case they go hand in hand.

“Jesus Christ in my estimation was the greatest fighter the world has ever known. He fought for righteousness unceasingly and without compromise.

“I have been a lover of peace and am still a lover of the brand of peace the Savior championed, a peace founded in righteousness. Peace under present conditions would be disgraceful, therefore I am ready to serve my country in the best possible way.”

The parents agreed and knew Chris felt every word he spoke. They listened to him with a tremendous pride. It was decided that he should finish his year at the university before going into active service.

A dozen opportunities for service presented themselves to Chris. Two of them really challenged him, the officers' training school and the army Y. M. C. A.

Most of his friends advised and encouraged him to go to the training camp. They felt and knew he would make a good and thoughtful officer.

The university with its regular routine of duties became tiresome and unattractive to him. The big obligation of serving country was continually annoying him. He felt God was challenging him to teach the Bible truths to the men in khaki and on the other hand his fellowmen seemed to challenge him to

shoulder a gun. Chris preferred to accept the challenge of man.

If he were to give way to his love for sport, action and his physical prowess, he would join the army. If he were to give way to his passion for men's souls he would answer the call of God.

It was hard, mighty hard, for him to feel that he was worthy of a position so sacred as preaching the gospel to the soldiers. The thought that he could at least try to make himself worthy challenged him and upon that basis he enlisted in the army "Y" work.

Chris was sent to a cantonment made up of old regular army men, where young sixteen, seventeen and eighteen-year-old enlisted lads were being sent to fill up the old companies.

The mixing of the "regulars" of many summers' service with the innocent, unsuspecting young boys, who enlisted as the result of high impulsive ideals, presented a hard problem. Most of the boys felt they were not soldiers until they had acquired all the bad habits of the old-timer.

Many stories could be told of how Chris played the big brother to the younger lads. Many a mother has thanked God for what Christy did for her son.

One Sunday afternoon Christy left his hat in one of the squad tents while he fell in for mess and after eating a good army dinner he found a little recreation in playing catch with the men.

A number of crap-shooters gathered to try their luck in the tent where Christy left his hat. It was generally known that Chris was to be drafted and as he approached the tent he heard one of the gamblers remark: "Damn it all, I'd sure like to see Chris three months after he's in the army. I'll bet he'll gamble, cuss, smoke, and chase around with the worst."

Chris was burning with indignation and he felt the force of such a challenge. He let the men in the

tent know that he overheard the remark and for over an hour he explained why his accuser was wrong. He preached a sermon that touched the hearts of those men but was not aware of the force back of his talk until the next day.

Corporal Dan, a cowpuncher and backwoodsman, had never known what decency was until Chris introduced him to the Savior.

The day after Chris changed the crap game into a Bible class, Corporal Dan told Chris what the men had to say concerning the talk of the day before. He heard it himself and remained to hear the remarks the men made in Christy's absence. "Say, buddie, you know since I heard those men talk after you left, I am forced to say that I believe every man has a streak of decency in him somewhere. They didn't laugh or sneer when you left, not by a long shot. The old sin-soaked birds spent the rest of the afternoon discussing the Bible."

Christy was well pleased to learn the men's attitude and took advantage of the situation. "Corporal, old boy, I am satisfied the more I talk to these men that they are literally hungry for the truth. They want to know the strong, virile, manly Jesus Christ that you and I know."

"You're right, Chris, and I am in for telling the men the best way I can."

On another occasion a would-be "tough guy" thought he would show off in front of Chris. He belittled all things sacred, but he found a man in front of him who would defend the faith and if need be with physical force.

"Hell, I don't believe in a God or any of that Christian bunk," said Mr. Wise Guy.

Christy frankly told his new acquaintance what a foolish remark that was. The fellow was very hostile

because Chris did not mince words or give them a double meaning. He left the hut in a furious heat of rank, unsportsmanlike passion.

Several days later Chris walked along a row of stables and happened to meet Mr. Tough Guy, and as he was always smiling and happy, greeted Toughy, "Good afternoon, and how are you?"

The bull-headed one scoffed, "The hell you say, you pale-faced Christian."

Christy warned his antagonist. Mr. Tough Guy, even though much taller and heavier than his opponent, fell victim to Christy's fighting prowess.

That night the hut had a visitor who was patched up and rather dark around the eyes. He had decided to fall victim to Christy's religion.

"I never saw a fellow like you," said Private Barney to Christy. "I am sorry we quarreled." The way he looked showed the truth of his statement.

"Never mind, old pal, come into my office tonight when the show is over and we will talk things over."

Barney took advantage of the invitation and that night before they parted they were both down on bended knee praying to their heavenly Father.

One day in front of a bunch of the boys, Sergeant Malone was being kidded by one of the men because he attended the closing devotionals that Chris held every night in the hut. The sergeant did not mind being kidded himself, but the guilty party went one too far when he included Christy's name in one of his remarks.

The sergeant gave the man a chance to recall his statement, but foolishly and sadly for him, he stuck to his remark, the main reason being that his bluff was called. A good, old-time exciting fist fight followed, bringing victory and the added admiration of his company to the sergeant.

PART II

CHAPTER VII

FRED'S TRIP AT UNCLE SAM'S EXPENSE

The train pulled out of Fargo carrying our hero. By his awkward and restless actions it was plain to be seen that he had never traveled before.

The train pulled into a division town where it took on fuel. This was the biggest town Fred had ever been in and his curiosity led him as far as the depot.

An old slicker who was traveling on the same train took advantage of this opportunity of making the acquaintance of his intended victim. "Friend," said he, "I take it that you are a stranger in this town."

"Yes sir, I am," said Fred in a big-hearted manner.

"We have twenty minutes here and nothing to do. How would you like to see the place?"

Fred's face brightened up for the first time since he waved his last good-bye. His lonesome longing would have led him to make friends with a rattlesnake. "By gosh, I'd like to be a doin' or a goin' or somethin', but gee, I don't want you to be losing any time on me."

"My name is John Bustem," said the slicker, extending his hand to Fred.

"My name is Fred Sheldon," said the cowboy, heartily.

They walked along Main street, Bustem doing most of the talking, trying his best to miss the train. Fred was a bit nervous; he watched the town clock

and insisted on getting back to the train, so Bustem's first step to trim the cowboy was frustrated.

"Fred, my friend, I am traveling alone and feel a bit lonesome. What do you say, shall we sit together for the rest of the journey?"

"Reckon we can if the railroad company don't mind."

Together they sat, swapping family history; however, Bustem did most of the talking, smoothly alluding to the scenery now and then.

"My mother and sisters were all killed a few weeks ago and I have not been myself since," said Bustem, endeavoring to gain Fred's sympathy. He made this statement when Fred had confided in him the experiences of the last few days at home, the farewell and the collection the neighbors had given him and his ambition to buy his Molly an engagement ring with the money his admiring friends had given him.

"Since the loved ones have passed away I haven't been able to work (he almost cried at this point), my heart is broken, I don't sleep nights. Financially I am ruined. It cost a young fortune to send the bodies back east to be buried and the worst of all is I have had to sell some of the family treasures in order to meet all these obligations. All I have left are some precious pieces of jewelry that I prized most. My sister's wonderful diamond engagement ring is one of the pieces. Now I must sell it. Why, my dear boy, I would rather see your bride-to-be wear it than anyone else on earth. You have meant so much to me in the short time we have known each other. Yes, I understand that ring cost my sister's beau seven hundred dollars."

"Gee, I'd sure love to see that ring on Molly's hand but, gosh, I don't reckon I have enough of the long-green."

“Beggars can’t be choosers in such matters. How much have you?”

“One hundred thirty-one dollars and thirty-three cents in the handkerchief and forty-five dollars in my pocket.”

“Too bad; it’s a terrible sacrifice to give a ring of such value at such a price, but I must eat.”

“Man, I’d sure like to take a look at that ring,” said Fred expectantly.

“A pleasure! a pleasure!” He then guardedly pulled out of his pocket a wonderful imitation stone for which he had paid at least two dollars and twenty-five cents some days before. It was really a very attractive imitation, sparkling and glistening beautifully while the slicker held it in the sunlight. It almost outshone the brightest evening star.

“Gosh! Molly will go wild over that stone. The bargain is sealed as far as I am concerned,” said cowboy Fred Sheldon, as he opened his bag in search of the little handkerchief containing the money.

They were pulling into a station and as luck would have it, a former victim of Bustem’s stepped into their car. The slicker noticed him instantly and became very restless while Fred was hunting for the money.

Fred finally found the bandana containing the coin and then went into his pocket for the rest when he noticed the nervous twitching of his friend Bustem.

“You are not sick, are you?” inquired Fred.

“No, no; hurry up with that coin,” he whispered in a sneaking way.

Right there Fred’s suspicions were aroused and for the first time he noticed the stranger who was then looking “swords and daggers” at Bustem. Buying and selling cattle had given Fred a fair idea of how to deal with men. He knew that when a man

tried to hurry a sale it was high time to be making a second inspection of the article.

"Reckon you don't mind my looking at that ring again," said Fred inquisitively.

Thinking he could work the bluff, Bustem cleverly slipped the ring to Fred and whispered, "Isn't it a darling, a perfect beauty!"

Just about this time the stranger interceded. "What the hell are you doing? Up to that damned old ring-selling gag again. You and I have a little deal to settle and then you and the cowboy can proceed with your deal."

"Stranger, you have made a mistake; you are doing me an injustice. I'll have you arrested if you don't withdraw your assertion." As he was reaching for his hip pocket the stranger dealt him a blow in the jaw.

Bustem was turned over to the railroad authorities and his case disposed of by severe punishment from Uncle Sam.

Fred's first worldly experience taught him a good lesson and from then on he lost that "ever-trust-everyone" habit. He was surprised to say the least, but very grateful to the stranger. "Say, pal, you have sure saved me a heap. Won't you sit down and tell me about that bronco?"

"Sure, I am not a saint by a long shot but I'll be damned if I'll let such a guy pull the same wool over my eyes twice."

During the course of their conversation they learned that they were on the same mission and enjoying a ride at Uncle Sam's expense and spent most of the time together.

A little later in the day the atmosphere of the car was greatly changed. Many of its occupants were enlisted men or men on their way to enlist. At the last town at which they stopped they picked up four

negroes. One had a banjo, another the bones, still another a mouth harp and the last a wonderful tenor voice. They had spent their youth together and had grown up singing, playing and working. Their daddy's old "massa" was a Confederate officer and from his many stories of the battlefield they derived their fighting spirit.

A great treat was in store for the men as the music those darkies rendered was very fine indeed. The darktown quartette sang and the more they sang the larger grew their audience.

The train pulled into a big southern depot. A military band waited to welcome the little bunch of volunteers. They paraded up and down the main streets of the city for over an hour. All along the line of march the high-spirited lads were encouraged by the cheering of onlookers. The boys were anything but in step. However, the people were not looking at their feet. This march was long remembered by Fred. They wanted him to check his luggage at the depot but his experience with Bustem made him a bit over-cautious so he decided to carry that home-made bag on his shoulders all through that busy Texas city. The rest of the men followed Fred's example and carried their baggage. It was an unusual sight. They looked like a bunch of immigrants except for the fact that there was a something in their expression and manner that belied such a thought.

The march was over and the splendid Red Cross women gave the boys a great feed and a capital entertainment. One of the motherly women befriended Fred and before they had to part she had helped him to choose and send Molly's engagement ring. (Enough good cannot be said for the unselfish American women who so nobly served their country through the Red Cross, and the desire of the men to

be worthy of protecting such women was greatly strengthened by their influence.)

The next morning the men were sent to the recruiting barracks where they underwent physical and mental examinations. They were then given the famous "shots-in-the-arm" and sent to their training company.

The drill sergeant was an Irishman of only a few summers in America and he in himself was good timber for the leading part in any comedy.

"Biys, yes'll 'ave to be attintive if yes'll be soldiers. Ye is sure an awkward bunch but I 'ave 'ad worse 'an the like o' ye before."

"Attintion."

"Jis step out 'ere an' take a look at yessilf," said the sergeant a bit disgusted but somewhat amused.

The many poses of attention were more or less characteristic of an ancient city in ruins; one man leaning forward, another standing on one foot, another star-gazing, another humpbacked, another straight from the head up with someone else straight from the feet down.

The sergeant's troubles had begun but nevertheless in a week's time he had the boys keeping step, doing their facings and making a fairly good attempt at carrying themselves in a military manner.

The cowboy was very popular with the men and made many friends, some good and some bad.

Crap-shooting is one of the old army standbys. The excitement and chance of the game appealed to Fred's nature. The first night he rolled the bones he came out a big winner. If Fred had only known that the loser of the eighty dollars could ill afford to lose the money our big-hearted cowboy would have returned it to the weak individual.

Corporal Ben Wiseman was the "wise-guy" of Fred's company. He spent most of his time giving advice and telling of his past which included a few terms in the guardhouse. Yes, he even told his superior officers where to get off at. Gee! he was tough—in his own estimation. He was so tough he ate pancakes for breakfast, coffee and bread at dinner and a hunk of meat at supper! He was sure a barbarian!

It was a show well worth the price of admission to listen to Cook Hartman mimic Corporal Wiseman. He cocked his hat over his right ear and vehemently puffed on a cigarette as his audience listened to him imitate Wiseman thus, telling several of Bud's favorite ones. "Boys, while on a trip in Alaska we went hungry for four or five days, when we came on a bunch of Eskimos. I only had five cartridges left in my old revolver, but say it was my only chance to live and I plunks two of them and the rest took to the tall timber. No one could have made me believe it until I tasted it, that human flesh was good eating.

"You know when I was only a kid of highschool age my old man ran a general store. A bunch of the old lumberjacks heard about a shipment of guns my father received and they stole them that night. The sheriff of the town got up a gang to hunt the thieves down and when I heard of it I made up my mind to catch those criminals single handed, so I starts out with my old betsy and my purp and after walking through the woods for five or six hours I spied the lumberjacks and sneaked up on them and all twenty of them threw up their hands while I gathered the twenty rifles. I ordered them to march ahead of me while I carried the guns to town. That's how I made my first thousand dollars, a reward."

When cook Hartman finished the men would be in an uproar, almost splitting their sides from having their funny bones tickled by such impossible yarns.

The cook's conclusion was made in the following words, "One day I kept account of old Wiseman's experience and found that he had only lived a hundred and thirty years."

More laughter and much applause.

Ben like the rest of the men took a liking to the big cowboy and started philosophizing on him. He really roped Fred in on some of his "dope" because he was more cautious not to cheapen himself in Fred's estimation.

"Fred, what do you say we hit for the lighted city tonight," said Ben.

Feeling "flush" after a successful night with the dice old Fred was jubilant enough to try anything. "Sure I am with you, but I reckon you'll have to lead the way."

"Why boy, I know all the Janes in the burg and where we can get all liquored up. Why, they turn over the whole town to me every time I step out."

"I reckon you'll have to leave me out of that kind of dope. All I want is to see the sights."

"Boy, I'll show you the time of your young life."

That night the boys stood retreat and "beat it" down to a cafe and ate a regular supper. They attended a burlesque which catered to their lower passions and having only a few drinks they returned to their barracks, morally O. K.

The next day drill and also supper over, up through the sleeping quarters went the old familiar call, "Crap-game in the upper hall!" Fred was soon in the midst of a most disastrous game—for his pocketbook. He went broke.

He felt lost without any spending money so he thought of sending home for some, but he was too proud to do that, so he resorted to borrowing from his comrades. It was an easy matter for him to borrow twenty-five dollars. That night Corporal Wiseman and he again meandered toward the bright lights.

Fred was discouraged and discontented when he thought of his financial condition and his indebtedness made him lose his own self-respect and thus he gave way to heavy drinking.

“Sh-sh-ay Fred-hic-hic wh-what hic-do you hic-say we hic-visit the mad-mad-dames,” said Bud in a staggering stupor.

They turned in that direction but as Fred went into his pocket for a match he pulled out a letter from Molly and even though under the influence of liquor he plucked up enough courage to resist this temptation and was soon in his bunk asleep.



CHATEAU THIERRY RUINS

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTY STRONG DRAFTED AND HIS TRIP TO CAMP

“Christy, old boy, the men are sorry to have you leave.”

“I’ll tell you corporal Dan, I am sorry and happy both. Sorry because I must leave so many friends; sorry that I can’t carry on the good work with you. I am happy for the opportunity of having been with you all here. I am anxious to show these boys that as a soldier I can fight the good fight and keep the faith.”

“Boy, I know you’ll make good. It can’t be otherwise.”

“Thanks corporal, I know I’ll have your prayers.”

“You can be damned sure of that,” exclaimed Corporal Dan.

That night in the hut Chris gave a goodbye talk to the men. It was short and to the point holding up the ideal of a victorious life.

A number of Christy’s closest friends had planned a surprise for him and in one of the classrooms they set up a fine banquet while he was delivering his farewell talk.

Sergeant Hayes who acted as spokesman for the occasion called Chris to one side and before the guest of honor knew it he was in the little classroom, his cheering companions chose as the banqueting hall.

“Men let’s find our seats before we start the activities of the evening,” said the toastmaster.

On both sides of Christy sat men joking and encouraging him.

One would exclaim, "Wait till I get you in my company. I sure will make you work for a change."

Another would chime in, "Colonel Christy, I report to you as orderly," and thus was the whole hour of feasting spent in kidding Christy.

Not a crumb was left when Hayes called the men to attention. "The festivities of the evening will start. Private Williams will start the program with one of his coon songs."

Much applause followed the comedian's selections.

The program was put on by soldier talent and equaled any first class vaudeville.

"Horseshoer Hale has a few words to say," said Sergeant Hayes.

Christy's right hand man stood up and paid him the following tribute. "Men we'll miss Christy. We will always remember him as a kind, thoughtful, faithful and persistent fellow, always standing and fighting for the right things in men's lives. I have known Christy the secretary. I have known Christy, the man. You know him as the secretary so I am going to take a few minutes telling you of Christy, the man.

"He and I have palled together in our spare time. We have gone to the theater; we have played ball together; we have hiked in God's out-of-doors and we have bunked together and in all his ways I have found him true blue, impelled only by the highest motives. He loves a good time, that is, a good, good time and every day all of us witness the great pleasure he gets out of life by his smile that is famous throughout the whole camp.

"Yes, I repeat we shall miss Christy because he is somebody—somebody hard to replace."

Poor Christy was all blushes and for the moment tongue-tied. "Say fellows, my mind is empty while

my heart is filled to overflowing. Men it has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve you. I am sure that only pleasant memories will be our thoughts of our past relationship. May God bless and keep you always."

Barney was the first to grab Christy's hand, "Chris write often and give an account of yourself. Gosh I hate to see you go."

"Barney, you know I'll remember you and often."

"Say, what's the big idea. Are you going to hold Christy's hand all night," shouted Wagoner Pitman as he pushed Barney aside and took Christy's hand trying his favorite stunt of outgripping the other fellow. "Ouch, cut it out you big stiff," he yelled as he found more than his match in Christy. "Chris old podunk, you have sure got me athinking about that Bible dope and I'm a-guessing you're right. When you are not busy remember me somehow."

"You bet I will," said our friend and the procession continued until every man in the building had shaken hands with Christy.

The last in that line was generally first in all others but he had a good reason for being last. Aviator Rimback put his hand on Christy's shoulder and said, "Kid, what do you say we take a little hike in the moonlight."

"Glad to do it, Rimmy. You know your pleasure is my delight."

Rimmy was full of fantangled ideas or fancies that tangled. "Kid, what do you say we trade rings? I'll give you my girl's ring for the one you are wearing. When the war is over we will meet, have a big celebration and return rings. You see in this way we will think of each other often."

“All right, Rimmy, I couldn’t refuse such an enticing offer,” he said laughingly and they made the trade.

The next morning Buck, Christy’s boss, Rimback, and horseshoer Hale went down to the train with Christy.

The whistle blew and the train pulled out separating Christy from the men of his heart.

The men walked back to camp, each relating some incident where Christy was hero; seemingly each trying to outdo the other.

Christy was comfortably seated reading some literature he had been longing to read for some time when an elderly woman across the aisle said, “Good morning Mr. Y. M. C. A. man. Won’t you come and sit with husband and me while I am knitting this Red Cross sweater. I’d like to hear something about our boys.”

“Thank you, madam, for your kind invitation,” he said as he laid his book down.

“How many men do you think are now at Camp F_____?”

“Madam, I am instructed and bound by honor not to peddle such information.”

“Pardon me. You see I have two sons in the army and I am always so anxious to know what is going on in military circles.”

“I feel it an honor to speak to the mother of two fighting men,” said Chris.

“My sons, the one in France and one in Camp F_____, both speak so highly of the work you ‘Y’ men are doing.”

“That does my heart good, even though I am changing uniforms,” said Christy.

“You don’t mean that you are going to give up the ‘Y’ work to go into the army?”

“Yes, ma’am, I am drafted.”

“Why I never knew they could draft a Y. M. C. A. man,” exclaimed the elderly woman.

“Yes ma’am, it must be. The good will of the army men must be preserved. The Y. M. C. A. work is no place for draft dodgers.”

“Mrs. Colman is my name. We have just finished a little stay with our son and are on our way back home.”

“I am delighted to meet you, my name is Christy Strong. I am going home to spend a week with the folks before going into the army.”

“Mr. Strong I am glad to know you. Why that name sounds so familiar,” she said thoughtfully and then she put her hand into her large knitting bag and pulled out a bundle of letters. They had a worn look as no doubt mother had read her son’s letters many times.

After several minutes she found the one she wanted and read this paragraph to herself:

“Mother dear, tonight I am sending you the best I have to assure you that from now on I am going to lead a Christian life, by God’s help. I have made friends with one of the dandiest young fellows in the world, a Y. M. C. A. secretary. He has told me why I should take such a step. Gee! I wish you could meet Christy Strong, I just know you’d like him.” Mrs. Colman could hardly control her delight. She wanted to tell Christy about that sacred piece of news but—

“Mrs. Colman I am wondering if you happen to know a friend of mine by the name of Tom Colman.”

“I happen to know Tom the best way in the world, only as a mother can know a son.”

“Isn’t this a peculiar coincidence? Now I understand why I haven’t seen the boy for a couple of weeks.”

The ride lasted several days and nights before the conductor called the town of Christy's destination.

It was a pleasant surprise for his folks, as he had told them nothing of his home coming.

"Why Christy," said mother Strong as if she were awakening from a pleasant dream.

"Yes mother dear it's I," he explained as he embraced and kissed her.

"Your dad will be so glad to see you."

"I surely hope so for I know I will be glad to see him." That night in the Strong home there was great jollification.

The next day he visited many friends. Among them was the one you know he could not and would not miss. "Well, well, Christy. When did you return?" smiled Helen as she opened wide the door of her home.

"Helen, it seems so good to see you. How are the folks and how are you?"

"Everyone is well and happy and as for me I am quite well, thank you," she replied rather sharply as she noticed a girl's ring on his finger. "Oh mother, someone is here to see you."

Mrs. Grant hurried to the door and when she saw the visitor she invited him into the parlor.

Mother Grant and Christy spent several hours relating pleasant memories of old days. Recollection of her play days increased Helen's jealousy of that ring. In fact if it had not been for that ring Christy's chances as a suitor would have been far greater.

"Goodbye folks. It is time I am on my way."

"But Christy you must stay for supper," said Mrs. Grant.

“Thank you just the same but it is someone else’s misfortune to entertain me at that hour.”

“Tomorrow then you must dine with us.”

“I’ll do so if Helen will accept my invitation to the theater.”

“She will do that,” smiled Mrs. Grant.

“She hasn’t said so,” replied Christy, with a faint heart.

“Why Christy, you know I wouldn’t say no.”

“All right, I’ll accept. Goodbye for the last time tonight.”

“Goodbye,” said Mrs. Grant, her eyes almost popping with admiration as she watched her choice for her favorite daughter walk out of sight.

Helen also said “Goodbye,” but it had a ring that worried Chris.

He filled his engagement that night in the hospitable home of his family physician, Doctor Martin.

“Christy, you are on time as usual. The wife will soon be ready for supper, in the meantime let us have a little chat in my library.”

“All right Doctor.”

“My boy, it was my privilege to bring you into this world. I have watched you grow from infancy to manhood. I know your capabilities. The next few minutes I desire to tell you that your friends expect much from you. They all want you to have your commission. You know that if you would work your pull with the senators you could start up the ladder of advancement.”

“Doctor, if I have to pull any strings to make good I’ll not get very far. I have made up my mind to do my best no matter where I am. If my best deserves a commission all well and good.”

“My boy, there isn’t any doubt that your best will deserve much, but listen to one who knows. A man is not always rewarded according to his talents.”

“I have decided, Doctor, that there is only one place I wish to win a commission, and that is on the battlefield.”

“Boy, that is your trouble. You are too confounded sentimental. You would do well to take my advice.”

“Doctor, I appreciate your interest in my welfare. I am confident however, that I’ll be placed where I am needed most.”

“Supper is ready,” called the hospitable Mrs. Martin.

The next day Christy, true to his promise ate supper at the Grants, the first in nine years.

Arm in arm Helen and he strolled toward the theater. Christy was almost afraid to break the silence that started the minute they left her home.

“Helen, aren’t we having an exciting time,” he ventured.

“Christy, I am surprised to see you are wearing a girl’s ring.”

He broke into a big, hearty laughter as he explained the bargain between Rimback and himself. It amused him to know that a little thing like that bothered her.

She did not realize that she was betraying her real interest in Christy.

* * *

The time was not very long until Christy, with four hundred other drafted men were speeding toward a southern cantonment.

The Red Cross again made itself useful by providing some little military necessities and sending the men on their way with a smile.

One of the men who commenced to feel the peculiar freedom which results from breaking home ties remarked, "From now on I am out for a good time."

"Make it a **good**, good time," returned Christy.

The men soon knew Christy and enjoyed him. They knew he stood for the better things and though he never paraded his virtues he naturally found a place in the admiration of all the men.

A young man of education, who had many advantages as far as mental attainments were concerned sat in the same car with Christy. In his own estimation the sun would look dark in comparison with the brightness that gleamed forth from his shining countenance.

He sought to engage Christy in an argument that was more or less obnoxious to our friend Chris; however, the learned young man introduced himself. "My name is Mr. Fred Jude, lawyer, of D——."

"I am mighty proud to make your acquaintance," said Christy, extending his hand, "and mine is Christy Strong."

"Mr. Strong, I am so glad you are with us. I have been hoping to find a college man to speak to."

"Yes, but why single me out, there are so many such men in the car."

"Oh, of course Mr. Strong, if you don't desire my company I can—"

"You misunderstood me. You must sit down and feel at home Mr. Jude."

"There is a subject that interests me and I have no doubt interests you," started Mr. Jude.

“I’m sure I will be interested.”

“You see, Mr. Strong——.”

“Excuse me but I am indebted to you if you will call me Christy.”

“Well then Christy, when I was a young kid I went to Sunday school and read the Bible because my mother told me to, but since I have studied science I am forced to tell you that Christianity is mighty impractical.”

“I am sorry that you have misled yourself into such a conclusion,” returned Christy rather sharply and half sorry for the argument that was bound to follow. He would rather take a beating than argue but in that case he had to show his colors. “Of course I admit that if the practice of righteousness is impractical, so is Christianity.”

“Tommy rot! that isn’t what I am bothered about. This heaven and hell stuff, this soul stuff makes me laugh. No one has ever been able to convince me of its truth.”

“Well, my dear friend, we are not going into a lengthy discussion on this subject because to weigh every word and thought of this topic would require some time. However, let me tell you ‘this soul stuff,’ as you call it wouldn’t be a laughing matter with you, my friend, if you could have witnessed the sight I saw not so very long ago.

“An epidemic came along and took the lives of many of our soldier boys at a camp in this country. Sir, I saw a hundred or more of those big bucks lying on their backs motionless and cold. Man! as I looked at them stretched out, merely clay images, merely changeable mixtures of elements, the idea struck me that something better had left their old bodies. Yes, something better had left them, their life which I often term soul, that something that

pilots a man's conscience, that something that makes men live up to their ideals, that motive power that directs the movements of the smallest muscle in the body. Yes that something had left them, leaving their old bodies to return to dust."

Mr. Jude said no more and so a silence followed.

The remainder of the trip was pleasant, the men sang and joked and had a regular good time.

They reached the camp in good spirits and when they stepped from the train a sergeant lined them up and directed them to the casual camp.

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTY FINDS A NEW DEMOCRACY IN THE ARMY

Christy enjoyed a close touch with the men of the army while a "Y" man but he had to be one of them before he come to know the real soldier.

The army like the country from which it developed was made up of the country's best and worst men. Some of the best had some bad in them, while some of the worst had some good in them. The full force of the value of the pooling of personalities which was brought about by the mobilization of our army was most evident here.

The twenty-seven men from Christy's district were marched to company twenty-four, while the rest of the men were distributed to the other companies.

First Sergeant Kline, an old campaigner gave the following instructions, "Corporal Nelson, take these men down to the bath house after you have assigned them to their tents."

"Yes, sir," came the prompt reply.

"The idea of forcing a man to take a bath," said one of the new men.

"Some would never take a bath otherwise; personally I am glad of the opportunity," chimed in another.

"It isn't the bath I mind, but to be ordered," said another.

"Oh, pshaw," said one who didn't enjoy listening to the kicking, "I imagine the water and soap will have the same effect on the skin."

Thus argued the men pro and con until they were clean from the dust of the trip and their crankiness all washed away.

“Now fellows we will go to the supply tent and draw our first equipment which consists of a mess-kit, folding cot, barrack bag, straw tick and several blankets.”

On the way to the tent Jude said, “Christy, the corporal seems to be a pretty fine fellow.”

“That’s how he impressed me,” returned Christy.

“Now men let’s take the ticks down to the straw pile to fill them.”

“Ha, ha, ha, say old boy, what’s the idea of filling your barrack bag with straw?” Christy asked Shorty Duncan with a burst of laughter that was backed up by a rather boisterous chorus as Shorty, half put out over his first error said, “I don’t see any medals on your chest for brains.”

The bunch laughed twice as hard and soon had enough straw in their ticks to make them comfortable.

Dinner was several hours away when the corporal told them: “The time between now and chow is yours.”

“Golly, I wonder how these army meals taste,” ventured one.

“I am so cussed hungry I could eat my own cooking,” said another.

The whistle blew and the hungry men needed no more coaxing.

“Say, boy you eat that roast beef as though your meat diet had been neglected before now.”

“I notice you’re not wasting any,” returned the criticized young man.

“Man, that is the first real wheat bread I have eaten for many a day,” said one.

“You bet, the same here. Now I see where the wheat bread goes,” replied another.

During the next four or five days trainload after trainload of men pulled into camp, some from this state, some from another. It beat any labor day parade! A bunch of farmers, then a number of cowboys, miners, backwoodsmen, Mexicans, yes, men from all walks of life: the lawyer, the banker, the saloonkeeper, the merchant, the laborer and the bum all marched to the inspecting barrack. Many a man was separated from old John Barleycorn by the officer in charge.

Soon all the men were assigned to their companies. Then real business started.

There is a certain group of men in the army that beat any newspaper in the world when it comes to spreading rumors. Generally they coined their own stories and the first one they let loose in casual camp was that the camp was quarantined for twenty-one days.

“Goodnight, just to think that we can’t leave these old sandy streets, these tent mansions for twenty-one days,” said one of the men.

“That’s a hell of a note,” piped old Shorty Duncan.

“Wow! we will go crazy for want of entertainment,” said another.

“I am sure there is some talent in camp,” returned Christy.

The next few days the men went through their primary training in the school of the soldier. When they lined up for drill there was the Italian, with his red bandana, the Mex, the dude with his bally-eye glass, the patched-up tramp, the cowpuncher in his leather chaps all in the same squad learning to do “squads east” and “west.”

"Gee! pard, we get those shots in the arm tomorrow. One of the corporals told me just two minutes ago."

"That's damned foolishness," said Shorty with his usual love for fighting all things.

"My friends, these inoculations for typhoid and dyptheria are of inestimable value to the army. Before this system was introduced into our army, almost as many men died of these diseases as were wounded and killed. Today a case of either is practically unheard of," said Christy who spoke the absolute truth.

"We get shot at sunrise," was the first remark from an early riser. He made a mistake, however, for the shooting hour was changed to sunset.

"Say wasn't that old doctor a regular butcher, the one that stabbed you Chris," said Jude.

"Yea bo, I'll say so," returned Chris, "he did it so fast I could hardly realize it was over."

"For the love of Pete, we have to take it twice more."

"Cheer up Shorty, the worst is yet to come," cheered one of his comrades.

"Boys I have some good news," said Phil Menar, Christy's buddie and tentmate.

"More rumors," sneered one.

"Out with it, always anxious for news from home."

"Here goes, captain so-and-so told lieutenant what's-his-name when Corporal D—— was almost within hearing distance, who told me, that we get our uniforms tomorrow."

"Here's hoping you're right."

"Won't old Shorty make a great looking soldier," laughed one of the men.

"Yea bo, all the women will go wild over him," kidded another.

“Say boy, if you tried to follow me you’d last about one night,” said Shorty.

“Ha, ha,” kidded the other, “why boy, if I followed you I’d set a safety match afire.”

The next day the men were nursing their stiff arms but were a happy gang when they were ordered to draw their uniforms and after supper they amused themselves by trying on their clothes.

“Christy be careful and don’t bend over or you’ll need a tailor,” chuckled Shorty.

“Never mind Shorty, what is that, a khaki night-dress you are trying on. It should keep you warm,” smiled Christy.

“Christy, these leggins must be made for barrel covers,” said Phil.

“Yes, take a look at these tin lizzies,” said another pointing at a pair of oversized boots.

The next day there was a long line of men exchanging misfit clothing at the quartermaster warehouse.

“Wouldn’t that cork your preserves! Look at little sister lovelyface strutting up the street with his hat cocked on one ear and a cigarette in his hand. He is only taking up about half the street with his swagger. He is kind enough to leave the other half for the rest of us. That poor half-baked prune,” snickered Phil.

“Oh Percival! Oh Percival! I tell you you’ll tear the buttons off your coat if you don’t quit struttin’,” called old Shorty Duncan.

“Christy, I witnessed the best show of the season this afternoon. Gee! it was good. You know that backward bird who boldly butted into our conversation and then had nerve enough to tell us how backward and bashful he is. Well that poor boob was back of the bathhouse telling our mascot (a bulldog) how tough he is. Why if the show is as good

as that rehearsal he'll win the prize." When Phil told this to Chris he could hardly retain his laughter.

"Some of these men ought to win a diploma from the School of Hardboils, that is if sham and acting win them. It is really amusing to watch some of these country ginks and penpushers try to be tough," said one of Christy's tentmates.

"There is a degree of pardonable pride permissible in the wearing of Uncle Sam's uniform, but this tough-guy attitude is mighty unsoldierly and to say the least, disgusting," said Christy.

"Those are my sentiments exactly," added Phil.

Many of the men spent their time in letter writing, others in getting acquainted, while still others slopped up their time by rattling "them bones."

Christy did the first two and occasionally watched a crap game with the idea of lining up the gamblers in his company.

Two calls were very popular with the new men; mess call and mail call. Some day another call would appeal to them after a little longer turn in the army, namely, pay call.

"Mail call!" called a corporal and soon he had a big crowd around him:

"Private Smith,
"Corporal Jones,
"Private Johnson,
"Private Strong, etc."

The lucky ones smiled from ear to ear while the less fortunate showed their disappointment by teasing the rest.

"Christy does she still love you?"

"My dearest honeysuckle," another chimed in.

"Oh, how I miss you," added Shorty Duncan.

The writing was unfamiliar to Chris and when he opened the letter this is what he found:

July 7, 1918.

Mr. Christy Strong,

Dear Sir:

I desire to call to your attention a little matter between you and me. If you act according to my wishes I'll forget it. If you continue bothering my personal affairs you will find yourself in a big mess of trouble.

The last five years or more Miss Helen Grant and I have been keeping company, in fact I am about ready to ask her to marry me.

Since you were last in D—— she speaks of you most of the time and I have a reason to believe you took her to a show one night.

She is my girl and I am advising you to cut out the stealing of her affections.

Signed,
Bully Harvey.

P. S. I mean business.

“Ha, ha! Gee, this is interesting. It's deep. It's encouraging. It's a threat and almost scares me,” Christy said as he called for aid to hold his sides so they would not split.

“Phil, read this letter.”

“No Christy, I don't make a practice of reading others' mail.”

“Yes, but this is so funny, so foolish, so ridiculous, so full of tragedy and comedy that I know you would enjoy the treat, however, I wouldn't persist,” said Christy.

“I'd like to laugh with you but you'll excuse me this time,” returned Phil.

Christy became rampant and in the fit of passion raved on, “Why, that little chunk of a sister's sore toe, that insignificant good-for-nothing give me some trouble. He has done all of that he can when he laid

the blame of writing on Helen's sidewalk on my shoulders. I guess if Helen didn't want my company she was woman enough to tell me. That yellow degenerate better hide in his hole and keep his crooked nose out of my business."

The men enjoyed the scene but were half afraid to laugh because they were not seeing the Christy that they had known. Something had taken possession of him for the minute and it was the old devil himself.

Christy had worked himself into such a frenzy that it took the rest of the evening for him to cool off.

The next day after the drill an Indian of high standards and good education introduced himself to Christy. "My name is Red Bull."

"And my name is Christy—"

"Never mind boy I have known your name for several days," smiled the chief.

"You didn't know very much," winked Christy.

"Just to change the subject a bit, how do you like the army life?" questioned Chief Red Bull.

"Not so worse, how about you?" inquired Christy.

"As a life's ambition it is far from my line, but I am pleased to do my best, which is only too little, to help whip the Hun."

The men spent the better part of the afternoon talking about the things that were and the things that are to be.

Christy's natural interest in men led him to ask his new friend, "I am puzzled to find so many illiterate white men from your section of the country. Can you give me an explanation of the situation?"

"Yes, indeed, I can explain that very easy. Around our reservation lived a number of palefaces more or less isolated from each other. They were

healthseekers and settled on homesteads many years ago and because of their isolated locations could not send their children to school.”

“That’s too bad, but I trust they will make good soldiers even with such a handicap. You know that in the few moments that we have been together I have learned something I couldn’t have learned in school. Every man from different parts of the country teaches me something new. This army is really a wonderful university in itself,” said Christy.

“Yes, Christy, this army gives one a wonderful opportunity to study his fellow men which is undoubtedly a great advantage.”

Three-thirty o’clock and the men fell in for a two hours’ drill. When that drill was over some of the less thoughtful men remarked, “Those poor half-wits will never do better than crumb the detail.” Another said, “They can eat and sleep and that is about all.”

The truth is that the first few drills were far from the height of perfection, but each man was in a degree responsible for the situation; however, as the men trained together it was remarkable and inspiring to notice the wonderful improvement within five weeks’ time.

Supper was over and the men could do as they pleased until taps or 10 p. m. Each engaged that time according to his own desire, a would-be tough-guy invited Christy to the canteen. “Have a cigar friend,” said he.

“Thank you but I don’t use tobacco,” said Chris in a pleasant manner.

“You are sure different than most guys. Well, you must have something.”

“All right friend, just as you say. I’ll have a bar of candy and I thank you very much,” Christy said.

“What do you say we beat it back to the company. One of those crap games is calling me.”

“All right friend, but I am asking you if you wouldn't come over to the little Bible class we are going to have for a few minutes.”

“Why Christy, if I went into a Bible-meeting all hell would rejoice thinking that they would get rid of me.”

“Pal, I don't know your name, but if you have stated your case correctly may I say for the first time, let Satan rejoice because I'd sure be glad to see you there.”

“Nothing doing tonight, some other time.”

“All right, it shall be as you say, but what did you say your name is?”

“Billy Snead of Leadville, a gambler by ill-fortune.”

The teacher of the class did not arrive so Christy was chosen to lead it. Eight men were present. It was a very cosmopolitan gathering, a lawyer, a farmer, a banker, a hobo, a merchant, a criminal, a sheepherder, and a miner all around the mess table and each having an equal right to his opinion on the subject.

Christy thought “I am not going to try to teach this lesson. I'll let these men do that and I'll direct their line of thought. It will be a great thing for each fellow to know about the other, it will give them a more sympathetic feeling toward one another.”

The topic of the lesson was “The Fighting Man's Fight.” The hobo told the following story: “Boys, I was not always a hobo, nor am I by nature, but I want to tell you my story because I need your help. My sis, Anna, who is a Red Cross nurse in France has written me and she speaks of the strengthening powers of the Bible. That is why I am here tonight.

“Boys I worshipped the very ground my little sister Anna walked on. Then she was only sixteen and so beautiful. Lovers she had aplenty. My God! I never thought anyone could take advantage of her innocence, but a lowdown skunk slyly led her astray. If I could only get that reprobate he would pay fourfold for what he did to my sister. She went from worse to worse. It broke her mother’s heart, who soon died. And I, oh how I plead with her, but all in vain.

“Boys, I just couldn’t work. All I could see was Anna in her trade of shame. I just couldn’t stand it so one afternoon I went out and liquored up in a wonderful fashion and for the next ten months I drank up all my savings. Yes and I used dope. Good God, I crave some now—(the tears trickled down his face as he fidgeted for a moment.)

“Boys I went down and down until I had to beg and steal, yes, many’s the night I have spent in jail. All those days are over now. Look here, a few weeks ago I heard from my sister who I thought and wished was dead.”

The hobo pulled from his hip pocket an old worn out leather case from which he took a letter. “Boys, I don’t know how this letter ever reached me, but listen to what it has to say:

Somewhere in France,
May 2, 1918.

To My Only Brother:

Dear Carl: I don’t know if this letter will ever reach you. I don’t know if you are still alive. I do hope you are.

The last time I saw you was four or five years ago. You were in a padded cell where they kept cocaine fiends. You were delirious and that day I visited you I came there a wornout prostitute. I came to give you more dope and drag you closer to

hell. You were out of your head and how you swore. You cursed me shamefully and rightly too. Yes, dear brother, I came there in scarlet sin, but I left there afraid, ashamed and in the spirit of repentance.

That night I didn't go back to my crib. No, I went to a place that all the girls made fun of, the "Salvation Army." There I met a kind woman who reminded me of mother. I had attempted suicide before going there but I was too weak, I hadn't eaten since morning and then only a small portion. Then too I had a terrible fight with my old sins. I wanted to die but my punishment was life.

She nursed me for nearly a year and because of my longing for the bad life it was no small job. She read me bits of the Bible, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." This I remembered and it gave me strength, it gave me reason to live and now I am only sorry for one thing and that is, I am not sure of you. Brother, I read the Bible each day and it comforts me and strengthens me against the horror of sin. If this letter reaches you and I pray continually that it will, this is my advice: Trust in God, study the Bible, and pray.

The day they called for volunteers to become nurses in this beautiful country I felt it an opportunity to give comfort, kindness, love and joy to the world to make up for my bruised past. I am here letting God use me to heal the sick and wounded. Dear brother, there is time for us both to do much for our brothers and sisters. Oh, how I wish I could hear from you.

Your loving sister,

Anna Stewart.

Carl said, "Men I still love her, love her all the more because she has fought and won. I am asking

you to give me a lift in this life that I had almost forgotten.”

The following morning private Jude said, “Christy, you know since listening to that story last night I am forced to say that I feel a little different toward the men who are togged out in tramps’ rags. Really, there must be a reason for their falling so low. It is our duty to help such men.”

“Your are right,” said Shorty Duncan, “It’s funny how that letter finally reached Carl.”

The men are divided into groups of eight which constitute a squad and each squad takes its turn on fatigue, which includes policing the street, kitchen police and caring for the bathhouse. Several days before casual camp disbanded, Christy’s squad had its turn. That night private Jude came to his tent a bit put out when he remarked, “I don’t see why they chose me to scrub the bathhouse. It is sure a hard, dirty job. I don’t see why they couldn’t have elected one of these bums that’s used to that kind of life.”

“My friend, we have no lawyers, no bums in our army. We do have officers and privates and, like the rest of these men, we are privates, so I imagine it behooves us to keep quiet,” said Christy.

“Yes, Christy, that’s where the rub comes, in the scrub.”

Carl, who had been working in the kitchen, added a little humor to the stories. “I have only known of one kind of panhandling before, but now I have been introduced to another kind of panhandling.”

The pun finally worked its way thru Shorty Duncan’s dome and he came back with one he had heard several days before. “Boys, do you know this bunk fatigue is all bunk.”

“Well, boy, I am tired enough to hit the bunk early,” said Christy.

“Here’s two of us,” repeated another, and it wasn’t long until the bunch were in snoozers’ land happily dreaming of another day.

The last day in casual camp was an easy one. The men only had to prepare to move to their companies and as they were instructed to send all civilian clothes home, they did not have much to bother with.

The commanding officer of the camp called all the men together and gave them his little advice. He stood a bully big fellow, head and shoulders over all those about him. He wore a big smile, brimming over with good nature but none of the men would ever do anything to make him mad. Major Boxton stood before six thousand husky westerners, telling them, “You are the best lot of men I have ever seen, physically. You are the kind of stuff that Uncle Sam expects to win the war. By gosh, I know you will, but there are several things I want you to remember. Leave the wild women alone, keep yourself fit, and write home often. Those mothers are the ones who will inspire us to victory. Yes, last but not least, remember God. I am a rather rough fellow by nature but I always take my hat off to God. I have said all I am going to. My best wishes are for you.”

“Christy, that was short and to the mark,” said Phil.

“Even though the old bird is rough on the outside, he has a heap of good inside,” said Shorty.

“I am for him all the way,” chimed in another.

“Say, fellows, I hope the men get the real value of what he said,” added Christy.

“I have just been in the orderly room and found out that Christy, Shorty Duncan, Jude and myself are assigned to the same company,” said Carl Stewart.

The last morning in camp the men were called out bright and early and though the men hated to be separated, orders were orders. The six thousand men were to be distributed among a hundred different companies. Just thirty minutes after the procession started the whole casual camp was deserted and the men on their way to their respective companies.

Imagine six thousand soldiers carrying big blue bags, some carrying washtubs, scrubbing brushes, mirrors and other domestic necessities, with now and then a dog following. You will then have a fair idea of the parade that took the men to their companies and a step closer to France.

CHAPTER X

CHRISTY STRONG MEETS FRED SHELDON

There are some things dearer to a man's soul than his own ambitions. To many of us there is at least one thing much dearer, friendship.

When two strong, virile, manly men pal together and have genuine reason for admiring and caring for each other, there comes a bond of partnership that lives in everything they do. Many such friendships have been formed by the strong men of our army.

Yes there is a strength peculiar to the friendships made in the army. The men live together; they share hardships together; they brave dangers together and if spared from the grim grip of death those friendships have a sacred meaning and a lasting touch in the memories of the men.

"Shorty, my boy, why are you hiding your head in your arms? Are you sick?"

"Say Christy, that makes me want to cuss. Hell, yes, I am sick. Sick of seeing nothing but men dressed in uniforms of khaki. I'd give a year's pay to see a woman once more. I'll go nuts, plum nuts. Just think, they are going to confine us to the company street for ten more days," said Shorty in a very disgusted mood.

"Shorty, you are a specialty in the art of peddling gloom. You always hear about the things that make a fellow want to cuss," answered Christy, trying hard to look on the bright side of it, but there was no bright side to another ten days of quarantine.

The new men were placed in the last three tents in the street and the closest to town.

Fred Sheldon had missed only a few nights getting drunk since his experience with Corporal Wiseman. For over a year he regularly passed these tents in the wee small hours of the morning.

Christy, being of a nervous nature could never sleep the first night in a new bed so in order to quiet his restlessness he jumped out of his bunk and strolled up and down his company street in the moonlight. It was an early morning hour when he noticed a big husky staggering up the street.

"Sh-shay pal-hic-can you-hic t-tell me hic-hic-where I am hic," said Fred as he approached Christy nearly on all fours.

"This is the machine gun company," answered Christy.

"Goo-goodnight-hic, I-I-I tried-hic to put away-hic, too many-hic-hic bo-bo bottles of hic, sky," said Fred.

"I agree with you pal. No argument on that point. I'll take you to your tent and put you to bed," suggested Christy.

"Put me-hic-hic to bed hic-hic. Do you think I am hic-a baby-hic-hic?"

Christy could hardly keep from laughing as the acting was very comical even though it was really a sad condition for him to see a man so drunk that it was hard to distinguish whether the victim was beast or man.

"Ha, ha, no pal you are pretty much of a man according to size, but otherwise you are a bit out of kelter tonight. What tent do you sleep in?"

"I reck-reckon you're about right. Hic-number ni-nine," answered Fred as Christy led him to the bathhouse and gave him a cold bath before putting him to bed.

"Hey, Shorty! Wake up! First call has blown," hollered Christy.

“Yes,” yawned Shorty, “I’ll pile out in just another minute.”

“Oh no, you don’t wait any minute, you are not at home now,” and with that he pulled the blankets off of Shorty.

“Boy wait until I get out of the army I will sure ruin the guy who blows the bugle,” said old Shorty as he rubbed his eyes.

“Snap out of that dope Carl, you have only five minutes to dress in,” called Shorty who couldn’t let anyone rest as long as he was disturbed.

“Sure mike, I thought of that last night and didn’t take my clothes off,” returned the one time hobo who had been used to sleeping that way.

“Say, Shorty, will you bring me my shoes?” asked Jude.

“Who in hell was your servant before the army grabbed you?” returned Shorty.

“Thanks Shorty, I appreciate your kindness,” said Jude sarcastically.

The whistle blew and the men “fell in,” most of them half asleep but only several minutes after the call for breakfast came. Like magic the men all awakened and tried to be first in line.

“Hello pal, how do you feel this morning?” said Christy to Sergeant Sheldon as they fell in toward the end of the line.

“You’re the bird that put me to bed last night are you?”

“You are right, but I never felt any wings sprouting as a result,” answered Christy.

“Ha, ha, ha, well, I reckoned I’d find out. I am fairly middling although I have felt better. Say pard I want to tell you you’re a man after my own heart. I’ll remember you for last night,” said Fred.

“Your best smile pays the bill,” said Christy.

“That’s the easiest bill I ever paid. I don’t reckon you’d mind telling me your name?”

“Private Christy Strong sir, and your name?”

“Fred Sheldon is mine. Don’t pay any attention to the stripes on my arm. Just call me Fred. I reckon you’re not insisting on being called Private Christy Strong.”

“Not by a long shot. Christy is enough.”

That evening Sheldon was headed toward town and as he passed Christy’s tent he hailed his new friend. “Say Pard, come down town with me. No one will ever know the difference and we will put on a real celebration. There is more booze where I got the other.”

“Fred I am not using that rotten stuff. You need a rest old boy. How about staying home tonight?”

“Stay in camp when I know where to get liquored up. Say what do you think I look like?”

“Fred, to be truthful ,you look dissipated and when you are drunk you look mighty foolish.”

“You shoot straight pard. I want to ask you a question,” said Fred.

“Peg away,” answered Christy.

“Don’t you reckon a man can be just as good a soldier and drink as when he don’t drink?”

“I do not,” answered Christy.

The men talked for several hours and that night the old cowboy forgot his first intention to get drunk. For the first time in many a moon he stayed home and kept sober. He enjoyed his talk with Christy and after a hearty laugh they parted with a liking for each other.

The next evening after supper Fred didn’t even get down as far as Christy’s tent. It was pay day and a big crap game attracted his attention.

“I’m coming for a dollar,” said the man handling the dice.

"I'll fade you," challenged Fred.

"Nice dice, pretty dice, come now," pleaded the crapshooter.

"That's it pet the dice and they'll be kind to you," said another.

"Boy, you can hold those dice longer than any runt I've ever known," said another.

"Come dice, come says I."

"I'll bet you a plunk he breaks his arm this time."

"I'll take your bet," said the crapshooter.

"Eight is your point and eight she is. You lucky dog."

"Two bucks I bring home the bacon this time," challenged the shooter.

"I'll take you," accepted Fred.

"Say, boy, you must be wearin' a horseshoe. Seven and you take the kale. You can't always win," said Fred.

The game continued through the night, some men going broke and others winning the pot.

"Damn it, I'm broke and I expected to win enough to square up my debts," said one who played and lost.

"Hell, I've shot my wad, I guess the kid don't get any shoes this pay day," said another.

"It is the last gambling I ever do," said another loser.

The truth about the average gambling game is that the man who loses is the man who can least afford to. He is either in debt to someone else, he has a dependent or he needs some little necessity.

Old King Sol was just peeping over the horizon while the group of fifteen men were still on their knees, cussing their luck or bidding well to win the pot. First call blew and Fred held the dice.

“Fellers this is the last roll and I am betting all I have. Let me see, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, forty-six dollars. Anyone game to cover it?” said Fred.

“I’ll take twenty of it,” said one.

“All right, I’ll cover the rest,” said another.

“Four is your point.”

“Come dice, don’t go back on your daddy now,” said the cowboy.

“Boy, that was a close shave. My heart was in my mouth,” said one of the betting men.

“Come seven you know me dice,” called the man who had a twenty dollar interest in the stakes.

“Seven she is.”

The men stood reville and it was easy to pick out of the company the men who had been gambling.

Fred, who had not written home for over a year had been borrowing money from everyone in the company. He had that down-in-the-mouth feeling. He was sore at the world and everything and everybody in it, but he felt a desire to talk things over with his friend Christy.

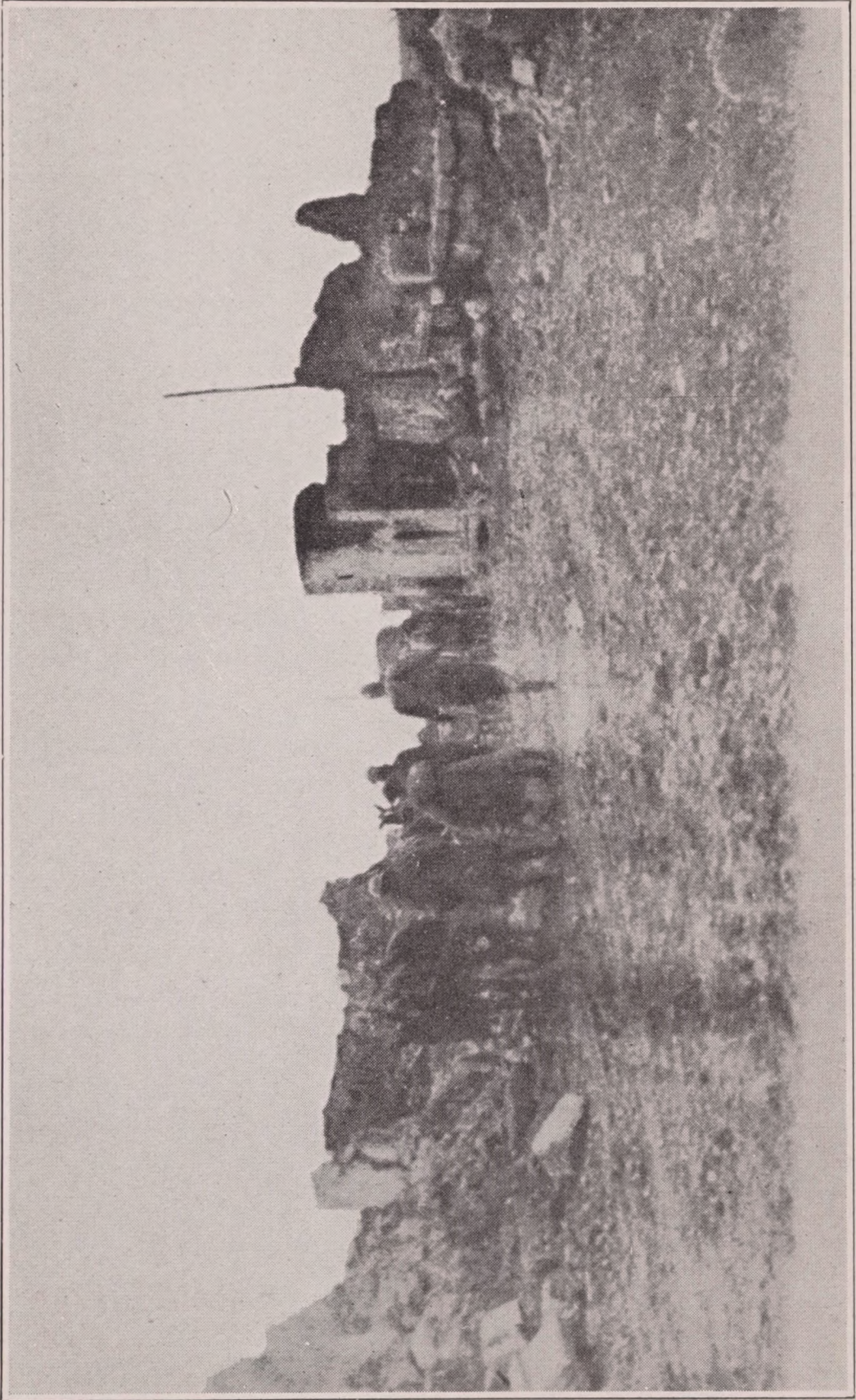
“Say pard, I aint generally tellin’ my troubles to everyone, but I don’t mind telling you for some reason, Christy,” confided Fred.

“Old boy, I am sure glad you feel that way,” comforted Christy.

“Pard, what do you say we take a walk around camp tonight,” suggested Fred.

“You can bank on me,” said Christy.

Fred led the way and for some spell not a word was spoken, not until Fred broke the silence that seemed like a century to Christy. “Say pard, you’re different from the rest of these birds. I reckon I am complimenting myself when I try to take up with you; but I never thought you’d mind if I’d ask you to give me a boost. No, I don’t mean to borrow money, I owe enough of that.”



NEAR THE FRONT

“Why, old boy, I count it a privilege to do as you say,” said Christy.

“You see it is like this. I ain’t never been a saint, but there is a something I am feelin’. I just feel that I have been adoin’ wrong. When we were talking the other night you spoke about a feller by the name of Jesus. My mother used to tell me about him, but fool-like, I never listened to her very much but she told me about a treasure book and I have remembered it ever since. Funny, not a day passes but what I have thoughts of that feller. I reckon it wouldn’t do no hurt to make his acquaintance. You know I kinda have a feelin’ that I’d like to be worthy of writin’ my dear old maw and the gal.”

Just for a few minutes the scene changes to the Sheldon ranch and Molly’s home.

“Jim isn’t there a letter from brother?” inquired Mrs. Sheldon of her son who had just returned from town.

“No dear muvver, there ain’t, and if he don’t write soon, I’ll beat him up when he comes home,” said Jim.

Mrs. Sheldon smiled half-heartedly at the thought of her brave youngster beating up his big brother.

“Mrs. Sheldon, I reckon there is a reason why he aint writing you,” said Pete in a manner that showed his faith in Fred.

Mrs. Sheldon who had known the world and all its ways could not and would not let her mind rest by the comforting word of an outsider. She must hear from her son before her soul would rest. She knew on the other hand the dangers that wait to assail an unsuspecting youth from the country. She knew that if sin had clutched her son in its death-like grip he wouldn’t feel worthy of claiming her for a mother.

“Say maw, I don’t want you to worry about that big brother of mine. He ain’t worth it and maw, it’s spoiling your pretty face. I don’t want your hair to turn any grayer. I reckon he’ll be able to take care of hisself.”

“Jimmy boy, I’m sure you’ll always remember mother.”

“Muvver you know I will,” and he squeezed his mother and drowned her in kisses.

Jimmy had assumed the responsibilities of the farm in a manly fashion. He, like many other American youths, had nobly done his bit to win the war by relieving older men of their duties, while they were off to whip the Hun, and deserves a great deal of praise.

Mrs. Sheldon spent a big part of every night in petitioning the Master to guide and direct her son’s footsteps in the right direction. This is the reason Fred’s thoughts led him to think of “that feller” and also gave him a yearning to make himself worthy of writing the “mother and the gal.”

A few miles from the Sheldon ranch and down a road traveled frequently by Fred there was another scene; it was in the humble little cottage of Mrs. McByde.

“Mother dear, I am confident we will hear from him,” said Mollie.

“Sure and I hope before ye’ll finish the knitting,” added the mother.

“Mother dear, each stitch I weave brings him closer to me, each stitch is a prayer for him and I know he remembers me and when he can he will write and tell me where to send these tokens of love.”

Molly had such faith in her lover that nothing in the world could shake it. Every day she lived for him. No one could take his place in her heart. He

was her's and she was his. You can imagine her surprise when some days later she received a letter.

* * *

“Fred, old boy, you know it is never too late to make yourself worthy of them.”

“Yes, Christy, that's easy to say, but I reckon it's hard to do.”

“Pal, you are right again. It is a hard task, but I figure the test of real manhood comes in accomplishing hard things.”

“Chris, I reckon you're about right at that.”

The boys walked and talked until late into the night and as they started toward their bunks Christy placed his hand on the big cowboy's shoulder and said, “Fred, just this word and I know you will feel that it is coming from a friend. Old boy, if you depend on yourself to win this scrap that you and I have planned you will lose, but on the other hand, if you trust in Him who was strong enough to create heaven and earth and all that therein is, you will win the fight.”

“Christy, I'll not make a promise tonight, but I reckon you're not a mindin' if I claim you for a buddie.”

“Why Fred, it couldn't be otherwise.”

* * *

Days have passed since that night and the strong, manly, virile friendship between Christy and Fred waxed more firm. Many times they hiked out into the deserts by starlight and shared each others' troubles and delights. Only a few times did Fred go back to his old life of dissipation.

One beautiful night when the harvest moon was shining in all its majesty, “The Pals” as the men of their company called them, took one of their hikes. The harvest was ripe and the reaper was ready.

“Christy, old pal I’m a wantin’ to be a Christian and I reckon if you tell me how I’m a-willin’ to try.”

“Old boy, I’ll do my best. What do you say we make a bargain between each other. Let us help each other to make a success of Christian living.”

“Christy, here is my hand. I am not a countin’ on bein’ much good to you as I am the one who needs your help.”

“Boy, we need each other,” returned Christy.

Once in a while Fred stumbled but he always found his Big Partner, Jesus Christ, on hand ready to give him a boost.

They started toward camp and Fred could hardly wait until they reached the Y. M. C. A., where he sat down and wrote this letter.

Dear Mother:

I reckon you wonder at the reason I haven’t been writin to you. I am ashamed of myself. For a long time I had an idea I ought to, but I had been drinkin and gamblin and just lived so rotten I couldn’t write.

One night when my old clod hoppers wouldn’t track, a pal o mine found me and has cared for me ever since.

From then on my desire to cut out that kind of life grew as Christy and I became better friends.

You remember when you told me about the Bible. I got one now and am sending you one so that little Jimmy will know how to read from it before he leaves home.

My next letter will be longer but I am anxious to know if you think I am good enough to write.

Your loving son,

Fred Sheldon.

Let us follow the letters the big-hearted cowboy wrote that night and again we’ll have the pleasure

of visiting the Sheldon ranch and Molly's home.

"Maw, Oh Maw, you can't guess what I have," said Jimmy.

"Now Jim, I don't want you to tease me with any toads or snakes."

"Maw it's something you have wanted for a long time," said the young lad so enthusiastically that it was an easy guess for Mrs. Sheldon.

"Let us read the letter," said Mother Sheldon, as she fairly snatched it from her son.

"Oh, how I knew it, how I felt it; but dear Father in Heaven, I thank you for answering my prayers," said Mrs. Sheldon with tears trickling down her cheeks.

She sat down that night and answered his letter. Jimmy also added a few lines.

* * * * *

"Mother, mother, it has come, just as I said it would," shouted Molly when she was fifty yards from Mrs. McByde.

"Sure and faith I knew he'd be a writin' you soon," returned the Irish lady.

"Mother I knew it. I was sure he would write. I can hardly wait to see what he has to say."

"And sure it's a slow way you be afindin' out," remarked the mother probably more anxious than the daughter.

My Dear Molly Girl:

Just a little letter tonight because I reckon I am a better man than what I have been for the year just past.

You see I kinda went wrong and you know I couldn't write while in that condition. Too much booze and gamblin was my trouble.

I met a feller by the name of Christy and I reckon we have been a bummin together over three months.

You can blame him for this letter. He wouldn't rest until I wrote it and I am admitting I sort o wanted to write, but I just couldn't until he kinda led me away from the sinning game.

I am trying hard to be the kinda feller I know you fancy me to be and then I reckon I can come home and claim the hand that wears the ring. (Molly jumped for joy when she read this).

Of course I'm not a blamin you if you turn me down.

Yours with a heap of love,
Fred.

P. S. Love to your mother and a heap for you.

"Those knitted goods will be finished tomorrow and I'll write him a big letter."

"Sure Molly, you do that and I'll be amakin' him some ates."

* * *

"Good-mawnin' Christy, it's sure a big bully mawnin'."

"You're right, old scout. I needn't ask you how you are Fred. Your big smile tells the story."

"I reckon you're well buddie," returned Fred.

Every morning as regular as the darkness faded and the light ruled the day "the pals" would inquire of each other how they felt. They really cared. Many an extra step they took just to see one another. Every hour they weren't drilling they were together. They shared everything alike.

"Say Christy, old Fred is in fine spirits. He is a different fellow than he used to be. No more cus-sing and he looks so fit," remarked a man in Christy's platoon.

"He has a good reason to be happy," returned Christy.

"I wonder who the girl is," replied the other.

“You are fishing but they don’t bite in this lake. Try Sheldon, he might tell you,” smiled Christy.

Good letters of encouragement and cheer made the boys happy. Too much cannot be said for the inspiring influence of a good girl or mother over the men in camp.

Several days later Fred Sheldon’s name was called at mail call for the first time in many a day. Christy heard the call and carried the big package and two letters to the cowboy. He fairly flew into Fred’s tent with the messages.

“Here old boy, the answers to your letters. Gee! that’s great,” said Christy somewhat elated to think his prophecy had come true.

Fred nervously tore open the letter his mother sent him and read it as he placed his arm on old Christy’s shoulder.

“I am sure proud of maw,” said Fred as he opened the other letter and handed it to Christy, saying, “I am askin’ a favor of you. Will you read it to me.”

“Yes, Fred, I am for anything you say,” and as Fred sat with his big fists clenched ready to fight any unfavorable report, his friend read:

My Dear Fred:

My heart was cheered as I read your letter. It seemed an awful long time since I heard from you and I know I’ll not have to wait as long again. (“You bet she wont,” resolved Fred.)

Dear Fred, it made me sorry to know that you were sinning, but my joy has made up for that sorrow many times since I know that you are doing the right thing now.

I am still waiting for my mate to come home and claim the girl that wears the ring.

Your own Molly.

P. S. Mother sends her love and I am adding some kisses. Hope you enjoy the package mother and I sent you.

“Gee, I’m so happy I’m afraid of myself. Guess we’ll be openin’ the package and seein’ the likeness of the inside,” said Fred embracing his pal, Christy.

“Look at the eats,” said Christy.

“Well let’s call in our friends and feast.”

“All right, Fred.”

Friends, and a few of the uninvited, ate to their hearts’ content.

“Boy, that cake is magscrumptious,” said Shorty Duncan in complimenting terms.

“That chicken is the best I’ve eaten for many a day.”

“Yea bo and I’m not a kiddin’ you when I tell you that the candy is high class,” put in Hobo Carl.

The men didn’t eat supper with the rest of the company that night as their appetite had been satisfied. Surprises of this type made the boys radiantly happy.

Friendship, like the oak tree, must start from the acorn. If the acorn is nourished properly it grows into a small sprig and with more nourishment it grows and grows until it becomes a stalwart oak.

The same truth holds in regard to a man’s relationship with his Creator. At first it is an acorn and with proper nourishment it grows to a stalwart oak.

The nutrition for the soul as Fred found it to be was simply Bible study, prayer and testifying for the Master.

CHAPTER XI

A CAMPFIRE WITH YANK

Among the happy hours of a soldier's life are the ones that Uncle Sam gives him on a pass. He gets away from drills, details and the rest of the army routine. He feels more like his own sponsor and consequently returns to his training with a new vim and vigor.

"Say Fred, this certainly is a great night. I would sure like to be sitting around a campfire and listen to a bunch of men singing, watching images dancing and acting in the blaze and vanish in the smoke."

"Christy, old boy, I don't see why you couldn't do just that thing. I reckon a lot of men will go any time you start them to thinking that way."

"Old boy, you have me almost in the notion of working up a trip to the mountains. Will you help me get the men interested?"

"You bet, Christy you can count on me," answered Fred.

The boys were soon on their way home. They hunted up an almanac and found that three weeks from the coming Saturday and Sunday the full moon would smile upon the night.

The job that they were undertaking was a large one, especially when added to military obligations; but Fred said to Christy when it was all over, "Pard, I am straight on one proposition and that is, a man gets out of a thing just what he puts into it. That's why we are so happy."

That night, the night that "the pals" decided on the hike, neither of them slept a great deal. They were thinking how they could make the trip more attractive.

"Good morning Fred, how are you?"

"I am feeling fair enough, but I couldn't get that trip out of my head last night," replied the cowboy.

"Minds of great men run in the same channel," joked Christy.

"Yea bo, I'll say so."

"Fred, there are a number of things to take into consideration on a trip like we are anticipating. Namely, four meals, the men must obtain permission of their commanding officer to use their blankets, entertainment must be provided and finally we will have to figure out how much to charge the men."

"Many the meals have I cooked on the round-up so you'll leave that part to me. By heck! there goes that old drill call. We will talk it over later.

"Company, fall in!" commanded the first sergeant.

"Report!"

"First squad all present."

"Second squad all present or accounted for," and thus replied all the corporals in charge of squads.

The first sergeant saluted the captain and reported the whole company present or accounted for.

"Take your post!" commanded the captain.

"Squads right, march!" The men were off for their day's drilling.

The company marched a little distance from camp when they were allowed to march "route step." A minute later someone would start singing "There's a Long, Long Trail A Winding," then at the front of the column of march a bunch would pipe up and sing "Goodbye Broadway, Hello France," while at the

rear another crowd would tune up on "Keep The Homefires Burning," so the men in the middle of the line hardly knew what they were singing.

The men came to a village and were ordered to march at "Attention." Each squad is a family of eight men. The men enjoy each others pranks and share each others burdens. The corporal of Christy's squad was a regular clown. There was a pretty little maiden standing in the door of her home as the company passed. The corporal stumbled clumsily and thus attracted the young lady's attention. He flirted with her while his squad enjoyed the display of nonsense. (There is a cute and true little saying concerning the army, "It isn't what you do, it's what you get away with that counts." The soldiers enjoyed slipping little stunts like this over on their officers.)

A little beyond the village the men were allowed to rest, and all, except one officer, found places at the right of the road.

"Twenty minutes rest and smoke," said the captain.

"Shorty, how would you like to take a hike up Mount Cook and camp out over night," questioned Fred.

"Just the card. Count me in on it," said Shorty.

"Yes, and Fred, here is another."

The men marched to the drill grounds and after a short rest they drilled until the sweat formed little rivulets down their faces. They then returned to the barracks for dinner and swapped their opinions of the hike and things in general.

The afternoon was spent in study and practice on their different field pieces and also cleaning clothes and other necessary undertakings.

"It was a strenuous day," said one.

"The hardest we have had," answered Fred.

“Say old boy it will cost in the neighborhood of three dollars a man for the trip and do it right.”

“That’s all right. Pay day is between now and then and I reckon these birds might better spend it camping, than lose it shooting dice.

“You are right, Fred, but the idea is, can we make them believe it.”

“Christy I have already talked to a bunch about the trip, and they are all for it.”

“All right I will set about arranging details, while you boost it with the men.”

“The pals” held a conference just before taps that night, and Fred told of his success. “Christy, seventy-two men have already said they’d go. I reckon we can count on a share of them.”

“That is great! I have also been lucky. Captain James of the Canadian army promised me that he would gladly accept my invitation to take the hike and tell us of his experiences. The auto company will take care of our need for autos. Counting everything, if we charge three dollars I can give you ninety-six cents to feed each man.”

The big cowboy smiled and exclaimed, “The show is on and I am promising the boys the feed of their life.”

Every day someone would add his three dollars to the fund of the hike and by Saturday of the trip Fred had collected one hundred and twenty-three dollars, or in other words, forty-one men beside Christy, the captain and himself were going.

The day of the hike, Fred and Shorty went ahead to make camp and prepare supper, while Christy and Carl started the men on their way.

“Gee, Christy, I’m glad I worked the captain for a pass,” said one, jubilantly.

“I have been looking forward to this trip for a long time,” added another Yank.

The last of the men met Christy and together they rode in the auto to the trail that led to the campsite. They hiked for about two hours through the pines before they came to the camp.

"Here comes Christy," said Shorty to Fred.

"Believe me he has worked hard to make this affair a success," praised the cowboy.

"By gum! He is always working hard to make others happy," added the other.

"Hello Fred. How is everything setting?"

"Reckon everything is lovely Christy. I am ready to serve supper anytime."

"I knew everything would be all right in your hands," complimented Christy as he added to Carl, "Call the men for supper."

"You birds better cut yourselves some branches to fry hot dogs on."

"Say the old cowboy has done himself proud. The best meal I have eaten in many a day."

Another said, "It is a real treat."

"That cocoa is great," another said.

The men ate heartily, but the cowboy had more than they could get away with. One by one the men gathered around the campfire. The men watched the full moon peeping over the straight pines that stood sentinel like keeping the troubles and hub-bub of a restless world away from Yank at the campfire.

"Well, Glut, have you finally quit eating?" called one of the man as he came to take his place at the campfire.

"Everybody happy?" asked Christy.

"We say so," yelled the bunch.

Then they started to sing, "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here," "It's a Long Way to Berlin," some old love songs, some old folk songs and a few hymns. When Christy thought they had sung enough he in-

roduced Captain James, who by this time really didn't need any introduction as he had already made friends with the bunch. He was welcomed by three lusty cheers.

Said he, "Well, fellows, I hardly know what to say. I am sure you will be easy on me and save your vegetables for the next speaker. I have been gassed by Jerry and am not able to withstand a barrage of tomatoes.

"Tonight I am reminded of the many times I have sat around with a crowd of men, but not under such ideal conditions. I'd like to be back with the boys and I am going to tell you why.

"I am lonesome and old Jerry is the cause for my lonesomeness. As I sit here and watch you men pal up and think of what happened to my mate over there, it makes my blood boil.

"In civilian life, he was careless and carefree. No one had much use for him then,—even I disdained his thoughtlessness; but I knew that there was something good in him and now I can boast of being right.

"Canada called upon her sons to help fight for her empire. He said to me, 'James, it isn't any use to be a-talking. I must enlist. Others can talk, but I am going to the front.'

"That is the best thing I have ever heard you say. You and I will go together,' said I.

"His folks were wealthy and gave him the best that money and wealth could offer. Life in the university appealed to the lad, not for the learning to be obtained there, but only for the fun he got out of athletics.

"Yes, his mother and dad called him a fool when he enlisted because his future at home offered him nothing but a wealth of happiness. The parents feared that his earlier training was such that he wouldn't be able to stand the gaff. They told him

all of this and it hurt him away down deep to be called a fool.

“Well, we enlisted, and were assigned to a camp, only to receive six weeks training before we embarked as the first contingent of Canadian troops. The thing I remembered him repeating so often, ‘They called me a fool. Maybe I was. It was hard to leave my sport corner but I am not complaining. Someone had to go.’

“Men, I have traveled through many camps and cantonments, both in this country and over there. I find it a natural thing for each to brag their’s is the roughest and toughest in the whole army. I feel that way about the first troops that left Canada.

“From every alley, from every boulevard of life, came the men who joined us; ministers, actors, bakers, chimneysweeps, lawyers, and jailbirds, and men who had little or nothing to do. Many who were tired of the game of life and sought adventure, answered the call.

“Well, we arrived in France and I am admitting we were far from scientific soldiers, but thank God that he made us fighters! Oh, yes, I boast that the Canadians are fighters! They have been tried and found true!

“We were sent to the front in a hurry, after our trip across the Atlantic. Bill and I were both commissioned with a ‘leftenant’s’ rank. Our rapid advance through the ranks, raised our ambitions to become captains even though this would separate us.

“You men will probably remember the first gas attack that Jerry sent over. Bill and I with a detachment of men were sent over the top into no-man’s-land. Things were happening fast and furious. We escaped the first cloud of gas because we were just outside of it. We couldn’t understand how so many of our comrades were being killed. We

were getting close to Jerry and no assistance was in sight. The foe outnumbered us to a pitiful degree. The dirty skunks showed us no quarter, and God! I stood petrified as I saw them butcher my pal, Bill. It drove me mad! I started to run. I don't remember whether I ran forward or backward, but that made no difference as I stumbled into a shell crater where a cloud of gas found lodgement and there I lay unconscious for four days, when some brave stretcher bearer found me and brought me in. Jerry killed about seventeen thousand of our men in that attack.

"Six weeks later I recuperated enough to notice that my old blouse had been replaced by a new one and instead of a 'leftenant's' ornaments I saw the decorations of a captain on my shoulder.

"I didn't do much thinking then, but now I can't see why Bill couldn't win his spurs. Why couldn't I go back and avenge for Bill's killing? Yes, and God knows it would take more Huns than the Kaiser has to even up for Bill.

"The day that I visited his little mother I knew why I wasn't sent back into the battle again. She was brave. She said (now and then a tear trickling down her cheeks), 'I called my Billie boy a fool. How I have brooded over that. He was wise and noble. Yes and captain I have prayed that he would be brave.'

I told her that he was and handed her a little note which read:

Mother Dear:

When I left home I was an aristocrat. I despised the Germans because they were Germans. Since then I have lived in a new world, a world where men are men, a world where God is man's only resort.

Now, mother, I believe in God. I met him on the battlefield, when everyone else had gone from me. I believe in my fellow men. They taught me that by their nobleness, the poor and the rich alike.

Some are rough and so was I. It's just that kind of a life, but surely God will overlook the rough and see the good.

Your loving son,
Bill.

P. S. Mother dear, my pal has promised to deliver this message if he returns. I hope you will read it to him.

“Men, I copied that letter, it has made many a mother's son think.

“ ‘Captain James,’ said she as her face lighted up like a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day when the sun breaks through, ‘Captain, I laugh now when we speak of sacrificing. When we die the way Bill died we gain more than we lose.’

“Men, right then and there I knew why I was spared any more trench life, why I wasn't sent in to avenge the life of Bill. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. He had planned a bigger work for me. He has sent me through your country telling the story of my mate. It has been the cause of many a man's shaking hands with his God.

“My life in the past hadn't been the most saintly. I cussed and told dirty stories with the rest of them, but the closer to the trenches I marched the more I felt the need of strength from our Saviour.

“The night before the battle my company and I slept, or better, tried to sleep in a dirty cellar of an old French cafe. No one was allowed to light a cigarette, no one had time to do that. Men, who never made a prayer before, tried it that night as the guns were vomiting forth their fire of hell. I came to my knees, as I heard those shells bursting

all around us. That was the first prayer in many a day, but thank God I have been praying ever since. I can still hear the roar of those thundering cannons, those mutilators of God's own kind.

"Boys, I know that every soldier thinks of his God more than most people imagine. I am asking you to mold and shape your lives so the people can know the way you are thinking.

"I am only asking you to make a decision in your own heart, and let the men around you know it by the kind of life you are living every day."

The captain sat down quietly and not a man stirred. Not a smile was seen and not a whisper was heard. Christy could hardly move, but after several attempts he stood and found himself groping for words to express the appreciation of the men for what they had just heard.

"Say fellows, that was a great talk." Christy then turned to the captain and said, "Captain James, I wish to assure you that we are all indebted to you for the message you have brought."

Shorty broke in, "Youse guys know I'm not the prayin' kind, but I want to hear the captain make a prayer."

"Captain, before we go to our rest will you dismiss us in the way suggested by my pal?"

"All right men, let us sing 'Onward Christian Soldiers,'" suggested the captain and then as the men bared their heads he offered this prayer:

"Almighty Father, we thank thee that we may fight for a righteous cause.

"We pray that thou wilt give us courage to do our best in this war so as to glorify Thy name. Give us strength to overcome the trials and temptations which befall us.

"We ask Thee to forgive those who have hatred toward us, and to keep us from hating. If it be thy

will, use us to help friend or foe into the Kingdom, not by word alone, but by the example of our own lives.

“We pray for a victory which will bless all the people of the world, and a victory in our own lives for all things that are right.

“Comfort the dear ones at home, that they may know the purity of our thoughts, purposes and lives, Amen.”

The men left the campfire and went to their blankets sheltered only by the clear blue sky. It was a wonderful moonlit trail that led them on their way to dreamland.

One of the boys remained after all the rest had left. The captain was warming his hands when Yank walked up to him and said, “Your talk has done me some real, genuine good. My mate couldn’t be on the trip so captain I would like to have you share the blankets with me.”

“That’s great,” answered the captain in a way that made Yank feel more at home and that evening a young man wrote a letter to his mother for the first time in three years.

The moon was playing hide-and-go-seek behind the hills. It was peeping at the men just as the peaceful hillsides were being transformed. One by one numerous lights began to appear, until finally some twenty or thirty campfires had burst on the twilight and a city seemed to have sprung up as if by magic with huge electric lights brightening the hillside.

Each of these campfires was warming the friendship of a couple of pals. They were talking over the possibilities of the trip, the scenery, and about Captain James. Many heart stories were told of the homelink or that someone that every red-blooded American cares for, his sweetheart.

“The pals” found their place. Christy couldn’t refrain from shaking the cowboy’s hands and saying, “Fred, you picked out a dandy place for us. When did you find time to gather enough pine boughs to make a bed so comfortable?”

“I picked out the spot, and while I was making supper the men made our bed. They all have the same thing.”

“Fred, I think we should see where the men are. I have my first aid equipment. We should be able to locate them in case of necessity.”

“Just as you say, pard.”

“Fred, that was great to hear old Shorty tell Jude about his sweetheart.”

“Yea bo, and from the looks of the lawyer I allow he enjoyed being a listener,” answered the good-natured cowboy.

“The pals” spent more than an hour around the different campfires listening to many love stories, and seeing the pictures of as many sweethearts and mothers, and finally were ready to call it a day and take advantage of a few hours of rest and privacy.

They had to rebuild their fire. They were like a pair of youngsters and childlike Christy said, “Cowboy, I am not a bit tired. I am so happy that everything has been so successful.”

“Yes, Christy, and what is more the men have received more than pleasure from this trip. They have been touched down deep, where there is a heap of good in them.”

“Fred, I was impressed with the love stories and stories of home that we listened to at each campfire. It was funny that everyone wanted to show us the picture of his sweetheart and mother.”

“Reckon, kid, you would have lost many friends tonight if it wasn’t for the fact that you are a good

detective and was able to find something beautiful in each of those pictures.”

“Ha, ha, you accuse me of being a diplomat. I suppose you would have told them how truly far from beautiful some of their choices were. Anyway I noticed you never contradicted my judgment.”

“Christy, I reckon the captain’s talk couldn’t have pleased you any better.”

“I can honestly say that the captain’s talk was tip top. I am more than pleased. I can’t keep my mind off of home since he spoke. It is settled in my mind since visiting all the campfires, that the mother and sweetheart will inspire each of us to fight like superhumans because of our desire to return to them. We will make quick work of it.”

“Them’s my sentiments, Christy, old pard. I’m guessin’ you better pile in. I allow if it wasn’t for that yawn, you’d still claim that you aren’t tired.”

The next morning Christy and Fred were first out of bed, and when breakfast was ready the men were called and also instructed to put out all fires.

Christy led the hike while Fred went to the place designated for supper.

The sun was sinking in the golden west. It was twilight when the men again found the cowboy with his tempting supper. They ate like a pack of hungry wolves and, the hike over, the only regret that the men offered was that the time was too short.

Every Yank, or at least the majority of Uncle Sam’s men, enjoyed some new experiences in the army which enriched his life by giving him a greater respect for his Creator, a strong faith and a deeper appreciation of his fellow men.

Like boys in their teens the Yanks felt the lack of responsibility and hence the desire for amusement and play with a tint of adventure. Their training and play bring them together. The hardships and

pleasures they share have formed many remarkable friendships. These friendships tend to make the men better American citizens. They become interested in the undertakings of their friends and understand better the problems they misunderstood before. They are for anything that will make their United States a better country.

CHAPTER XII

RUSH TO AND AT POINT OF EMBARKATION

“Good mawnin’ Chris. I allow you have heard the latest.”

“I don’t know if the last one I heard is the latest or not, Fred.”

“Our division moves to the point of embarkation this week.”

“Yes, sometime that is really coming and so is the end of the world. I will believe it when I am seated in a train and going in that direction.”

“Say Christy, a lot has been going on since we started on our hike. Gee, we will be on our way, muy pronto,” said Shorty in a high pitched, excited voice.

“I am sure glad we took that trip when we did. I wouldn’t have missed it for anything.”

A group of the fellows had congregated by this time to discuss the possibilities and probabilities of the new rumor.

“I have been waiting fifteen months for it,” said one.

“I have not been waiting that long but I have sure been aching to get a crack at the kaiser,” said another.

“If this is only a rumor I’ll stow away in the next army transport off for France. I am bound to get into the game,” boasted another.

Breakfast over, Fred could hardly wait until he told Christy. “It’s so I’m telling you, pard. The top soak elected me to detail a couple of dozen men to help pack the material belonging to the company.”

“Fred, that sounds good to me.”

“Yes, Christy, we have overseas inspection this afternoon.”

“The sooner the better,” said Christy.

After inspections too numerous to mention, the men rolled their packs for the last time and policed up everything in the company street. That night nothing was left for the men to sleep on. Some slept on top of their tents, others took refuge in a straw-pile, still others dug holes in old mother earth for their hips, while the rest tried many styles of beds.

The morning was still cloaked in darkness when the men piled out. They ate several sandwiches and then marched to the train.

“Boy, it’s great to be on the train. I confess that I believed we were going this time, but I had guessed wrong before. You fellows don’t look sad,” said Christy.

“Sad, I guess not. Goodbye Camp C——. I hope never to see you again,” said another.

“Am I dreaming? What’s the matter? I haven’t boozed up for a long time. Are we really getting started?” inquired the big cowboy in a rather bewildered manner.

“Say Fred, what makes that overcoat move?” asked Shorty.

“Cut it out, Shorty, don’t let anyone know that you are drunk,” was the comment of Sheldon.

“No, I am not kidding,” said Shorty.

“Goodnight, it is moving. Now I know someone has doped me. I must be having a nightmare,” said Fred.

“Ha, ha, old Carl has smuggled old Bob, the mascot, in the overcoat. Carl is all right,” said Chris.

The men had been on the way nearly a whole day, when Fred jumped clear out of his seat and

shouted, "Hurrah! Gosh, we are going past my home town!"

All the men rejoiced with the big cowpuncher and at the advice of Christy, the wires were kept busy making it possible to notify Mrs. Sheldon and Molly of the fact. It was a difficult proposition to make connections, but when there is a will there is a way. The old Sheldon determination came out in this affair. Fred telegraphed at each stop. Only ten hours, and he would be in Fargo. Every minute counted.

The telegraph operator was alone and could not leave his post. This was the first obstacle that arose. It seemed a century to him before anyone showed up and then only a weary Willie happened near the depot. "Say bo, I'll make it worth your while if you will go over to that house and get the White brothers to come over here immediately with their ponies. It is important."

"I ain't carin' much if I do," replied the tramp reluctantly.

"Get a move on. It means a heap to a soldier," pleaded the operator.

"Damned if I don't guess I better do it then," volunteered Mr. Hobo.

The tramp had quite a time locating the White brothers, as they were out in their cornfield doing some weeding.

"The telegram man wants you to saddle your hosses and hurry down right away."

"I'll swan. I'll be gol darned if I didn't think something like that would turn up after I turned the horses to pasture," said Alf White.

"You'll be adoin' me a favor, by heck, if ye'll be atellin' the man at the station I'll be thar as soon as I kin get Cy and the horses," added Alf.

"I'll do it for a handout," said the tramp.

“If it weren’t fer a contract with that thar man I’d shoot ye, but I’ll be durned if I give ye a hand-out. I’ll make him pay fer it,” resolved the farmer.

“You brothers never were so slow, which of those hosses is best for speed?” asked the operator.

“By heck, I guess the old grey be a bit the better,” answered Cy White.

“All right, take this message to the Sheldon ranch and give it to Mrs. Sheldon.”

“By heck, you must be a givin’ me the direction. Be gosh, as long as I’ve been in these here parts I never heerd the like o’ that place.”

“All right Cy. Make your best time.”

Five and a half hours slipped away before Cy reached the ranch. When he did get there old Pete was the only one at home.

“Be this the Sheldon ranch?” inquired the messenger.

“I reckon so,” answered Pete.

“By gum, I be a carryin’ a message for her, Mrs. Sheldon, an’ it be important,” said Cy as he curled his tobacco stained whiskers.

“She be out a visitin’ some friends and I am not able to be givin’ ye pertic’lars,” old Pete yawned more or less thoughtlessly.

“Be gosh, I don’t know what to be adoin’ about the consarned affair,” worried Cy.

“Yist be aleavin’ the message an’ I reckon it’ll be safe in her hands when she returns,” suggested Pete.

“Darned if I don’t think it be a wise idea,” said Cy as he slapped his hand on his knee and then kicked the ground with his number twelves.

While Cy was delivering the telegram to the Sheldon ranch, his brother Alfy was on his way to the McByde ranch and soon after leaving the station he was in front of Molly’s home handing her the message.

“Say, Miss, I reckon I be givin’ this to the right party,” said Alf.

“Right you are,” Molly said as she opened the envelope.

“Mother, mother, you can’t guess why I am so happy. Let us dress up quick. I can’t wait. Hurry mother and get ready.”

“And sure Molly, what may all this fuss be about?” questioned Mrs. McByde.

“Mother, I knew you couldn’t guess, but Fred is going through Fargo,” answered Molly.

“Sure, an faith I’ll be plased to see ’im. Molly me girl, ye better infarm Mrs. Sheldon. They must know it. They left here only an hour ago,” said Mrs. McByde.

“Mother, I’ll ride my pony and catch up with the Sheldons while you are getting ready.”

“You are a good schemer, me girl,” said the proud mother.

Mollie rode and rode, and just as she made the last turn she spied Jimmy trying to repair an accident that had just happened. As the excited young lady rode up she found the lad with his sleeves rolled up and going at it.

“Oh! Mrs. Sheldon, I have such good news for you. Fred will be in Fargo just four hours from now,” said Molly.

“Let us all pitch in and help Jim fix this rig. I can hardly believe my own ears. Is the war over?” questioned Mrs. Sheldon.

“Mrs. Sheldon I don’t know anything about it, but I do know he will be in Fargo for ten minutes,” answered Molly.

“Oh, I do hope that we see him. Let us hurry,” added Mrs. Sheldon.

The folks soon picked up Mrs. McByde and then proceeded on their way to Fargo.

* * *

“Fred, why all the primping?” asked shorty.

“Pal, I reckon you will be seein’ soon.”

Old Fred was like a wild bronco. First he would rough the daylights out of Christy, then he would go to the washroom and clean up and on returning to his seat he would mess up on someone else, then fix up again. He was wild with joy.

Christy knew the name of the town and hence put the fellows up to calling out Fargo. The first time it excited Fred, but the men took up with the idea and every little rock, weed or telephone post was Fargo to them.

* * *

“Muvver I see the smoke of the engine,” said Jimmy in a joyous mood.

“And sure the lad is bright,” complimented the good Irish woman.

“Oh, I am so glad,” exclaimed Molly.

“And sure me girl, who isn’t?” added Mrs. McByde.

Tears of joy played a happy tune down the cheeks of Mrs. Sheldon.

The train pulled into the station and Fred made one big leap off the train. A happy reunion followed.

“Fred you are looking well.”

“And Molly dear, I say as much and more for you,” returned Fred.

“Sure an’ faith the army don’t seem to be hurtin’ ye,” said Mrs. McByde refusing to be overlooked.

“That’s true and I allow that I have never felt better in my whole life.”

“Brudder, do you want to see me salute?” questioned Jimmy.

“You bet kid, snap me one. That’s great. Are you a good boy? Can you outride me yet? How’s things at the ranch,” and grabbing Scotch in his arms he said, “Has he taken good care of you old fellow?”

“Mother, isn’t it great! We are on our way over. I sure want you to meet my pal, Christy.”

Mrs. Sheldon more than shook the hand of her son’s friend. She kissed him to show her gratitude for the part Christy played in Fred’s life. Christy then stepped aside and let the folks enjoy a fond farewell.

Jimmy like many a young boy took a shine to Christy, and while the family reunion was in progress they talked things over.

“My maw worries over Fred when he don’t write and I am trustin’ you to make my big brudder mind this,” said Jim.

“I’ll do that Jimmy. Have you any more instructions for me?” asked Christy.

“Hey Fred, break away. The train is starting,” yelled one of the men.

“Fred you lucky dog,” said Shorty, but Fred was too busy waving from the train steps and paid little or no attention to what anyone said.

“Christy, I didn’t think you’d let Fred beat your time,” suggested one.

“Ha, ha, that was good how Christy tried to make up with the kid. I wonder if he thought that he would undermine Fred by getting in with her little brother,” taunted another.

“You have the family somewhat mixed,” said Christy blushing a bit when Fred turned around and came to Christy’s rescue by saying, “Boys that girl is mine. Let me tell you if she didn’t think so much of me, I’d be for givin’ Christy a good recommendation.”

“You’ll take that and be good,” said one of Christy’s standbys to his teasing friends.

It was about supper time when the train pulled into the next division point. The men were privileged to stand around the depot.

An old civil war veteran was the center of attraction at this burg. The men all gathered around him as he reeled off war yarns by the mile. If bravery were a bud, he would be a full grown flower. At least he was mighty flowery and the boys enjoyed his line of talk.

Said he, “I can remember the first battle we were in. We didn’t have the kind of guns you have now. Everytime we fired a shot we had to use the ramrods. Well, I’ll tell you we were all so excited like, that at the end of the first five minutes we had shot away all our ramrods. (Much laughter followed.)

“You remember how at the early part of the war the rebels had us on the run. Well, my men and I had been fighting hard that day. I was a corporal and had only seven men. We were sent to an outpost and had been isolated from the rest of our company. Well, I can remember that afternoon just as plain as if it were yesterday. It was dark and gloomy and rain, how it did rain. The wind favored us as it blew the rain in the faces of our enemies.

“You see I talk the southern lingo and when I saw a dead confederate soldier I changed clothes with him and had little trouble entering their lines. I soon found the commander’s tent and as my face was mud covered went in unsuspected. I learned that General Lee and his staff were only three-quarters of a mile away.

“I hurried over to the place and as the uniform I was wearing signified the rank of captain, I had very little trouble in meeting the general.

“Evidently the captain whose uniform I was wearing was in line for promotion, and, having found his name in the diary he was carrying, I was ready for them.

“General Lee said: ‘Captain Andrews, I was on my way to your headquarters to present you with this token of appreciation for service rendered and deeds of bravery.’

“I am admitting I was nervous and all that, especially when he said he was on his way to my headquarters. I knew that if he did they would find out that I was counterfeiting myself for the real Captain Andrews.

“The general addressed me by my new title of major. ‘Major, how are things on your front?’ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘the Unionists have us outnumbered at my point and have a tremendous store of munitions.’ Said he, ‘We will fool them, make a retreat tonight and strengthen our position. I am not telling all my plans but because of your valor and ability, I will confide in you that we have bluffed the north for the past six weeks, and if we can continue our bluff we will win the war, otherwise we shall fail.’ Said I, ‘General Lee, I am glad to know the exact situation and will keep up my men’s spirits. They have been eating poorly.’

“The good old general almost cried as he admitted it; but it must give credit for the encouragement he gave me.

“You can rest assured that I was mighty happy when he said to me, ‘Well, Major, as long as I have met you here I won’t bother running down to your headquarters as I must see a number of commanders. You may anticipate receiving orders to retreat.’

“‘Goodbye General, I am obliged to you for this promotion,’ said I.

“ ‘Major Andrews, it is a pleasure to advance such worthy men. May God bless your efforts,’ said he.

“Truly, I was almost tempted to run my bluff. It was quite a jump from corporal to major, but I was soon on my way toward Union lines.

“The best joke of all happened to me on my return. One of my own sentries spied me, and took a shot at me; he hit me in the leg. I ran toward him and surrendered.

“I told him my story, and he wasn’t taking any chances so I was sent back to Grant’s headquarters as a spy. If you men had the time I’d show you the wound.

“Men, I am glad that this opportunity came to me. General Grant called me in, and then and there I revealed my identity and told him my story.

“That is the real inside story of how the North turned the tables on the South, and from that day on the Yanks were victorious.

“Boys your train is pulling out. I’d like to tell you some other things, but I am sending my best wishes with you. Goodbye boys.”

“Goodbye friend.”

“Glad to have met you,” said another.

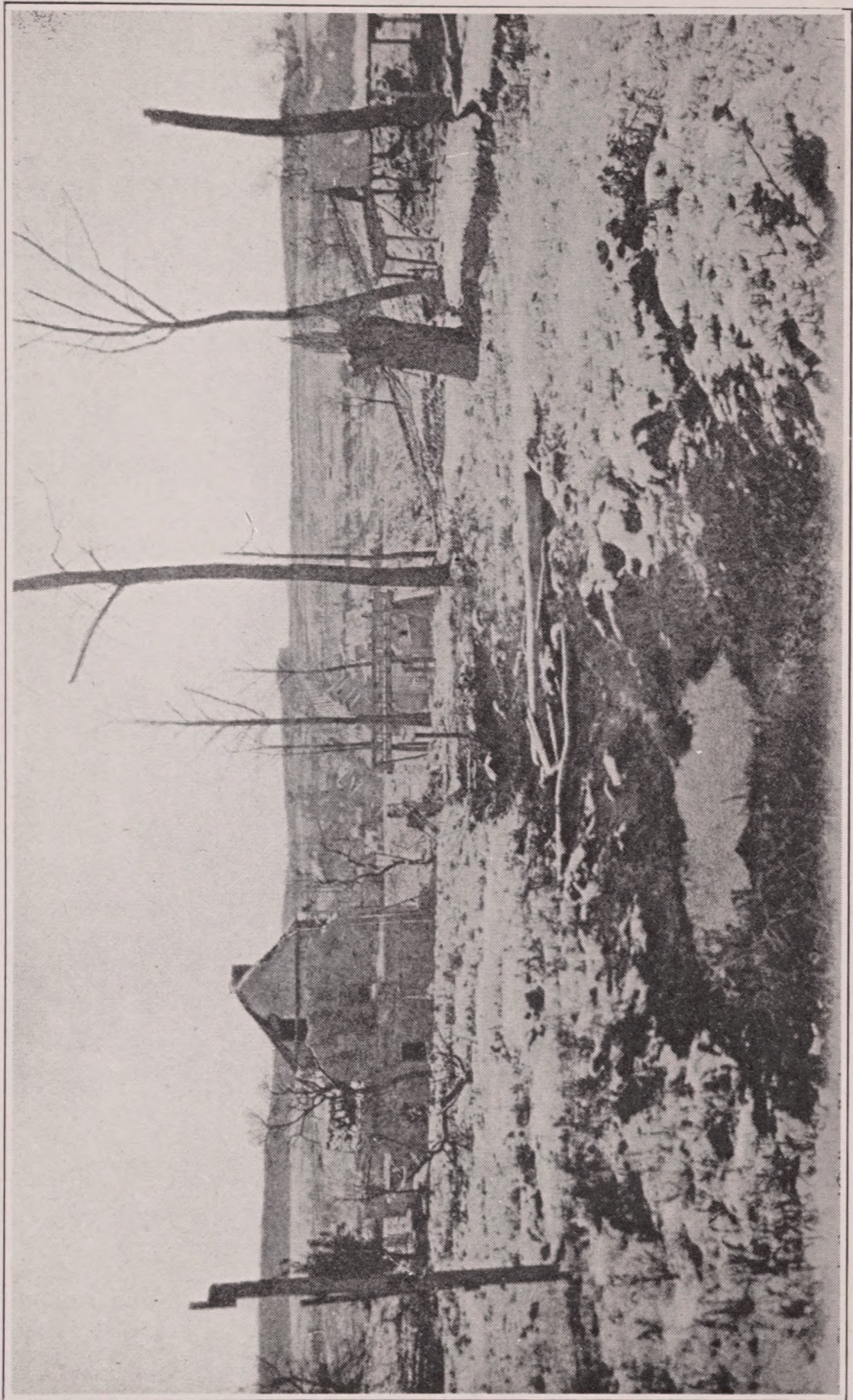
“Christy, on the level, do you swallow that line of dope,” said Fred.

“Well, it would sound good in a novel,” replied Christy.

“Guys, do you know I’d like to be able by some magic to gather all the stories of heroism in regard to this war, and put them in a book. I’d have some book,” said Shorty.

“Right you are,” said Fred.

The train was speeding toward its destination when a country jay member of the company said, “That old veteran had a wonderful experience.”



A VILLAGE NEAR CHATEAU THIERRY

“Yes, but I didn’t notice any medals on him,” said another.

“Don’t you believe he spoke the truth?” asked the farmer in such seriousness that the rest of the men howled in laughter.

All along the way, the mens’ time was occupied studying the soldiers’ manual, singing, reading, sightseeing and joking with the folks they met at the stations, parading in the large cities and keeping themselves clean and well fed.

As the men were parading in a certain large city for exercise, the sergeant halted his platoon near a curbing, and a tall melancholy looking old maid singled out Christy and talked to him.

“You poor boys, going over in that mutilation mill to be ruined for life. Oh! it makes my heart break,” said the old maid shedding a few tears.

“Ma’am,” Christy started to say something as she butted in.

“Just to think you might never come back to us American girls.”

Christy and the rest were thinking, if they were all as brave as she, there wouldn’t be much for which to return.

She chattered on, “I do hope the Kaiser will be punished. My, to think that you may come back with a leg shot off or an arm missing.”

Christy was too considerate to say what he was thinking, so he politely informed the weeping nuisance that the Kaiser would be amply punished and that the Yanks would have a part in it.

“Dear, dear, you men will be such beasts when this is all over,” she bellowed, wasting more tears.

“Madam, may I—”

She cut him short with another volley of weeping, “Oh, I hope I shall never live to see it all. It

is so horrible to think that all our best men will either be blind, crippled, or dead, boo, hoo.”

“Platoon, attention,” commanded the sergeant.

“Squads left, march.”

The men delighted in teasing Christy about his pleasant and encouraging friend.

“Oh dear, dear, you’ll be such a beast Christy,” poked Shorty.

“Say Christy, don’t you think you will miss the weeping Minerva?” chimed in another.

“Wouldn’t Christy be charming with only one leg?” suggested Fred.

“Say, I believe you fellows are jealous of my new girl,” and the men enjoyed a good laugh at Christy’s expense.

Turning to Fred, Christy said, “Setting all jokes aside, Molly is one of the prettiest girls I have ever seen.”

“I sure think so. I reckon we don’t argue on that point,” returned the cowboy.

The men finally reached the point of embarkation after a trip nearly across the continent. They passed through the deserts of New Mexico, saw the possibilities of Oklahoma, viewed the grainfields of Kansas, Missouri and Iowa; many crossed the great Mississippi for the first time; they paraded in Chicago, getting a first glimpse of a large city; Indiana and Ohio showed the men their treasures, while smoky old Pennsylvania gave them an introduction to the greatest manufacturing center in the world.

The mens’ vision was greatly enlarged the more they saw of the United States. They were proudly convinced of the fact that it is a country worth fighting for.

The men were stationed at the embarkation camp for some three or four weeks, in order to be properly equipped for overseas service.

Each week end, a portion of the men were allowed a pass, so that they could visit points of interest.

Fred and Christy were lucky and received a pass for New York, the great metropolis of the world.

“Christy, I reckon you’ll have to take the lead. I’m tellin’ you that I don’t think I can find my way about that burg.”

“All right Fred, the first thing I’ll do is see this expressman and have him direct us to a good hotel.”

“Four dollars a night to sleep! Why, Christy have you gone crazy?” questioned Fred.

“Never mind, Fred, the best is none too good while we are here,” answered Christy.

“Ride them, cowboy, I’m for you. If maw could only see me now,” laughed Fred.

They walked into the lobby of one of New York’s finest hotels. Said Fred, “Gosh, I feel funny, those darned hob-nailed boots make a heap o’ noise.”

Said Christy, “Boy, we will sure attract some attention with these boots on, I can’t hear myself talk.”

“I reckon I’d feel a heap better if I’d fall in one of those cracks,” suggested the cowboy.

“Yea, bo. So say we both of us,” added Christy.

Christy walked up to the hotel clerk desk, paid for the room and then addressed him, “Mister, we are strangers in this city. Could you direct us to some points of interest?”

An elderly man, with a pleasing personality, overheard the request and said to the boys, “Today I have nothing to do. I invite you to be my guests at breakfast and after that we will take in as much as possible.”

Mr. Jaeger, the host of the occasion, was a well educated and well-informed gentleman. He explained how New York became the international trade center, how the city was divided into districts,

one for woolen goods, one for mining, another the newspaper section, etc.

The men learned the magnitude of the telephone and telegraph system. They were amazed by the activities of the stock exchange, and enjoyed watching the goings-on of the curb-market.

They walked up to old Trinity church and then over to its historic old chapel, and sat in the same pew used by General George Washington.

They went through the Ghetto, the Bowery and all the many sections representing the different nationalities of the world.

They saw the melting pot, and were shown how the immigrant came into the country, and how all the opportunities offered him advancement, and a chance to take a place among the citizens of the world's greatest country.

He showed them Brooklyn bridge during its busiest hours. They rode on the subway, on the elevated, and last of all, just at dusk he took them to the top of the highest building in the world, seven hundred ninety-two feet and one inch.

The night was upon them, and like magic from nearly every window a light gleamed forth. Christy, in a moment of wonderment, looked to the east, west, north, and south and then overpowered for want of a better expression he said, "This sight is a master monument to the genius of mankind."

The day was strenuous and the boys were tired, so when supper was finished they didn't have to be coaxed to retire.

"Wow! a feather bed," said Christy.

"I can't stand anything like that. I'll have to sleep on the floor," said Sheldon.

Several minutes of quiet followed the men to bed, then bang! and old Sheldon with pillow in hand was giving Christy a fair beating.

“You big stiff,” said Christy as he reciprocated, and before they knew it they tangled and sprawled out all over the floor.

The day Yank completes his training in the good old U. S. A. is the day his play days are over and his hardships commence. Each step toward the front is harder than the one before.

PART THREE

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHOVE-OFF

The happiest moments in the life of a man are the ones he looks forward to with the greatest expectancy. There are three such moments in Yank's life: the first is the shove-off for France; the second is "over the top," and the third, last and no doubt the best, is the day he returns to God's country, the United States of America.

The men generally do a bit of serious thinking the day before they embark. Christy sent his mother and father the following letter on that day:

Dearest Mother and Father:

The day has finally come that I have been anticipating. We soon start for "over there." It is a pleasure to be able to leave this country knowing the strong traditions it has to strengthen me when I need strength.

My prayers are for you. My life, my all, whatever I may be or do that is worthy and honorable, I can attribute to you and your watchful care over me when I was at the formative age.

Should I bring disgrace upon the family name the fault is mine because you have lived noble lives. All that I have for you is admiration and love.

Should it be my ill-fortune to cross in a doomed transport, my assurance of meeting you in the Promised Land gives me great comfort.

Your loving son,

Christy.

The letter written, he arose from his desk with an extraordinary smile beaming forth from his countenance. It pleased his pal, Fred, so much that it was impossible for him to refrain from asking the source of his unusual joy.

“Fred, old boy, this is a clean bill of sale. You may read it, but may I tell you that you are the only one to whom I would confide so much,” said Christy.

Fred read it, and for a moment a sober look came over his face as he said, “Christy, you are so thoughtful it puts me to shame. I reckon you’re not carin’ if I pattern after you and write maw a letter on the order of that?”

“Do it Fred, and while you write I shall run over to the bank and exchange our money for French money.”

“You’re on Christy, old kid,” said the big cowboy soldier as he picked up his pen to labor with a letter. It is true his letter was not as well arranged as Christy’s, but it came from the best in him and it gave much comfort to Mrs. Sheldon.

Half an hour later Christy returned. Old Fred was standing up gazing at a picture of the old West entitled, “The Round-Up.” “Say, pard, I’m glad you’re back. You know for a minute I reckon I have been dreamin’ and God knows how I wish them dreams was true! I can see myself swinging the lariat and hear my old heart beat to the tune of my ponies’ trot. Gee! I can hear that coffee boilin’ over on the bonfire, and the odor of that sizzlin’ bacon whets my appetite for another term at that kind o’ life.”

“Fred, your wild old soul took me with it all the way and I enjoyed the journey. Never mind kid, it won’t be long before you can take your turn at the round-up,” comforted Christy.

“Christy, I reckon you’re right if they round-up in heaven,” answered Fred.

“Boy, I have never heard you speak that way,” remarked Christy.

“I ain’t a giving up hope of coming back, not by a long shot, but I have a kind a hunch that I ain’t.”

“Say, Fred, we have only ten minutes before our final overseas inspection. What do you say we go to our barracks and get ready?”

“All right, just as soon as I mail this letter to maw. I kinda want you to read it and fix it up,” said Fred.

“Fred, that is a dandy letter and I can find nothing to criticize,” answered Christy.

All the men in the company were wearing a smile as they lugged their equipment out on the drill grounds for final overseas inspection. A few, but only a few of those smiles were forced, while the real genuine ones showed the eagerness of the men to get a crack at the Hun. The inspection over and every man had received his equipment. The captain issued orders to roll their overseas packs, and, as they did so, each man could not help feeling that the government had only forgotten to issue to each man two things, one of them a cart, the other a mule.

The overseas equipment consisted of a packcarrier and haversack; reserve rations, four boxes of hard-tack, a two-pound can of bully beef and a condiment can full of sugar, coffee and salt; a toilet outfit consisting of two towels, toothbrush, comb, steel mirror, razor, shaving brush and soap; clothing including two suits of underwear, a pair of trousers, a blouse, two woolen shirts, four pairs of heavy socks, a woolen overcoat, a raincoat, two pairs of big heavy hobnailed trench shoes, an overseas cap, a steel helmet, spiral puttees, one pair of mittens, two pairs of leather gloves, a waist belt, an extra pair of shoe

strings; Red Cross articles, a sweater, wristlets, helmets and socks; bedding consisting of three woolen blankets, a shelter half, rope, five tent pins and a pole. Around the waist they wore a pistol belt with side arms consisting of a first-aid packet and pouch; cup, canteen and canteen cover; holster, revolver and ammunition pouch. The most important part of the equipment was the mess kit, a meat can and cover with knife, fork, and spoon and outside of this equipment Yank did not have anything to carry unless he so desired.

The men were happy when they had finished rolling their packs, and the mess sergeant announced that the banquet was ready to be served.

“That Bert Smith is sure some cook,” said one of the men.

“I’ll say so,” added another.

“Gee! that chicken and stuffin’ reminded me of maw’s cooking,” allowed Fred.

“I’m sure full. I made a glutton of myself, but let me tell you I have a hunch that it is going to be a long while before we set down to such a spread again,” added Christy.

The boys enjoyed their cigars and cigarettes and it was fascinating to watch the men puff to the tune of the music the band played.

No speeches were made at this banquet, but several good vaudeville numbers sent the men to their places of rest in good spirits.

“Christy, old pard, I ain’t in love with the idea of sleepin’ on the hard floor tonight.”

“My sentiments exactly, Fred. What do you say we bunk over in the strawpile?”

“I never thought of that. I reckon I won’t need much coaxing.”

“All right, Fred. I’ll go over to the Y. M. C. A. and ask Scotty if he has any spare blankets.”

“Christy them’s the dope. Now if it don’t rain we’re Jake.”

“I’ll say so,” said Christy.

They spread their blankets out, took off their shoes, emptied their pockets and crawled under the covers.

The boys were very talkative that night when Christy said, “Fred old boy, let us imagine the old heavens as a mirror and in that mirror let us watch the activities of the world.”

“I allow that I can guess at the first thing you’re seein’.”

“What do you say it is?”

“Christy, I’ll say it is a woman in your home in a big western town.”

“You are right again Fred; but let me tell you what else I see.”

“It ain’t like me to be interruptin’ you,” returned the cowboy.

“Old boy, I’m not thinking about the city and its white way, not by a long shot.

“This is the great harvest season and as I look up into our mirror I see the extensive grain fields of the middle west; I see the big threshing machines preparing an abundant harvest for the market and I see that wheat being milled into flour which feeds our armies.

“Say, Fred, when I was a kid they nicknamed me Jam, hence I cannot overlook seeing the orchards yielding their rare abundance to the apple pickers and berries gathered in a thousand fields, all the different fruit markets of the country dumping their produce into the canneries where jam and preserves are being made for the men in khaki.

“I see thousands and thousands of ranches like your own, unlimited acreage for thousands, yes millions of cattle to graze upon. I see them being

loaded into cars and trainload after trainload pulling into slaughter houses, where they are preparing meat to give us strength to carry on.

“The shepherd and his flock attract my attention now, and I see the sheep shorn of their wool and running and romping over their pastures as their old coats are being hurried to the eastern woolen mills, where they are made into miles and miles of olive drab cloth for our uniforms.

“I am enjoying seeing how the big clothes factories are cutting and sewing the cloth together to make millions of shirts, trousers, overcoats and underwear for the fighting men of Old Glory.

“I see the tanneries curing hides and shipping them to the shoemaker, who is turning out these strong, well-made shoes that you and I are going to hike to Berlin in.

“I look up into the mountains of our country and see an enormous output of necessary metals of war: coal, iron ore and others. The coal is being used to keep the gigantic furnaces of war industry ablaze. The iron ore is being made into steel and distributed to different manufacturing centers. The harbors of our country are honey-combed with steel frames for the construction of ships for a great fleet. The manufacturing metropolis of the world, Pennsylvania, is turning the raw material into cannon and ammunition.

“I see the arsenals of our country meeting the demands of our army, and ready at any time to double or triple their capacity if necessary.

“The majestic forests of the north are yielding their share, and there I see the old lumberjacks cutting huge trees, which are being milled into lumber for building cantonments, framework for aeroplanes, guns and wooden ships.

“The great chemical laboratories are making important discoveries, that will aid our men in sanitation, and enable them to face the barbarous gas attacks of the foe.

“I see methods of transportation being improved by the rapid output of autos and locomotives, which our new merchant marine is carrying to France every day.

“I see the people of our nation contributing of their wealth more than is expected of them, vieing each other as they give the best of their mentality also to the service of the government in time of need.

“The leaders of our country show me their high ideals and purposes for waging this war and I am thanking God for such noble men of affairs to lead us in the cause for which you and I are about to fight.

“Yes, Fred, old boy, I cannot fail to mention the thing that inspires me most, the thing that gives me the greatest desire to fight until the last drop of blood. I see millions of mothers and sweethearts, some of them knitting and all of them doing the best they can to fill the vacancies left by the men. I see them laboring and toiling for the victory that means ‘peace on earth, good will to men.’

“Fred, that mirror has strengthened my purpose and if such is possible has increased my assurance of victory over the murderous Hun.”

A pause followed Christy’s elaboration of the power of his country when Fred said, “Christy, I have never thought of all these things, but let me tell you what I am seein’ in the mirror.”

“All right, Fred.”

“Well, I reckon, old boy, as I’m looking up there I see a great big pond—big puffs of smoke are above a convoy of transports steaming toward France.

“You and I are on one of them. We ain’t out in the ocean far when a submarine starts chasing us,

when one of our seaplanes drops a depth bomb on it and a mixed-up concoction of submarines and Dutchmen go flying in the air.

“The convoy finally reaches France and our company runs down the gangplank and onto a train which hurries us to the front.

“Kid, I see our old company advancing toward the front; on one side of me I see battery after battery of artillery going ahead; on the other side the infantry is maneuvering so that they can find their place of action. The artillery is set and we are passing it.

“Gosh, bullets are whistling past us and shrapnel shells are bursting. The air is getting warm from the heat of the guns. Our artillery starts opening fire and we are behind the infantry ready to open up on Fritzie boy.

“I guess I am excited, but I hear the lieutenant say, ‘Follow me,’ and over the parapet we go into no-man’s-land and find ourselves face to face with the enemy. I can see the bayonets that are gleaming and those that are stained with gore. I can hear the murderous thunder storm trying to outdo the efforts of anything the war-god ever dared dream of.

“Man, my old heart is fairly turning summersaults as the Hun despairs of facing us and turns in a wild retreat.

“Our infantry is right on him, giving the blood-thirsty barbarian more than his share of hell.

“A dandy position just beyond their first trench looms up and it is there we decide to mount our machine gun. In a jiffy we put it together, and in less than half that time I hear the rat-tat-tat-tat-tat vomiting forth its missiles of death in such a volley of fire, that it mows the enemy down like a McCormick mower cuts the hay in a pasture in the golden West. Man I can’t wait till I get into some of that

kind of excitement. It sure would make life worth while."

Fred finished the picture which was no doubt characteristic of his natural longings. The pals said nothing for some minutes. They were listening to some of the more restless men giving vent to their energies in the old "Y" hut across the street.

Nearly all night long a column of fours marched on the pavement toward the train.

"Fred, if only the Kaiser and his crowd could be here and hear those big old trench boots play their little song of victory on the pavement, I don't imagine the old madman would get much comfort from the tune."

"I reckon he wouldn't at that, but Yank is playing him a similar tune on the western front that I allow is giving him a couple of sleepless nights," returned the cowboy.

Before the rise of the morning sun the cowboy was feeling hostile and issued this challenge, "Christy, if you don't pile out of those blankets you're in for a real roughing."

"It'll take a bigger man than you, and what is more you haven't eaten breakfast."

The big strawpile, the last day in the U. S. A., and all things considered, Fred couldn't overcome the temptation, and with a big leap he landed on his pal, mauling him for all there was in it.

"Say, Fred, you big stiff, keep out of my ribs. Don't you know that's where I live?"

"Christy, I reckon you'd make a good bronc, but I am aguessin' I could ride you."

"Let us shake out these blankets, return them to the owner and then take a good hot bath, eat breakfast and be ready and rearing to go," suggested Christy, a bit out of breath.

"Are you whipped?"

“I’ll answer that question the second Tuesday of next week,” answered Christy.

They scrambled up and as a result of mutual agreement, they followed Christy’s suggestion.

“Say boys, I sure feel like a good breakfast when I look at those packs and know I have to carry them two miles before boarding the train,” said Christy.

The men ate, and as it is the custom in the army for the company that is leaving to clean the barracks for the one that is to follow, they swept the floors, washed the windows and left every corner spick and span.

The whistle blew and the sergeant commanded the men to “fall in,” according to the way they were to march on the ship. It took only a second for the men to find their places, as everyone was ready to go. The report of the sergeant to the captain was, “All present, sir.” The captain then ordered the men to sling their packs.

The company was soon marching. They were cheered from the roadside by many men who were unfit for service and relegated to the depot brigade. These men were eyeing with envy the men who were on their way to take their places among the flower of the world’s manhood.

“Gee! that two miles seemed like twenty,” said one of the men, as beads of perspiration formed little streamlets down his face.

“Yes, and you carry that pack thirty miles a day, and you’ll have a right to complain.”

The men were soon arranged on the train and for five hours they enjoyed their last ride on an American coach for many a day.

“Boy, they tell me an American soldier can get all the wine he wants when he gets to France,” said one of the men.

Christy didn't believe this, so he said: "I think you are wrong. However, we will wait until we get there."

"I know you are against spirits but let me make this prediction: If we can get wine and all we want of it you will see less drunkenness than you did when we were forbidden the use of liquors," said the champion of liquor.

"This thing I do know. If you put a bone in front of a dog's nose he'll snatch at it. If you are right about the soldiers being able to get wine in France, and the boys let loose and act worse than they have under these conditions, will you vote for prohibition next election?" proposed Christy.

"I will," was the reply.

The men reached the destination of their last train ride, and were marched onto a ferry which took them to the docks where they would soon embark.

They were lined up in single file and a nice American Red Cross lady handed each man some cigarettes, a bar of chocolate, hot coffee and buns, and two postal cards upon which were written these words: "The ship on which I sailed has arrived safely overseas. Name....., Co....., Reg....., American Expeditionary Forces."

The men immediately addressed the cards to their relatives and friends, and just as they approached the gangplank they dropped them into a large mailsack. When the last man had dropped his in the bag, it was labeled and tied up, until a wireless was flashed across the Atlantic heralding the safe arrival of the ship. Then the bag was opened and the messages of good tidings were sent broadcast to many anxious relatives and friends.

Darkness soon fell. The gangplank was pulled in. The men had received little cards informing

them of where they were to eat and sleep for the next ten or twelve days.

They found their places and were soon on deck acquainting themselves with the different parts of the ship.

“Say, pard, I reckon they won’t be a pullin’ out very soon. What do you say we sleep on deck to-night? I ain’t exactly in love with them hammocks.”

“Anything you say, Fred.”

The pals were tired from the lack of sleep the preceding night, and the strenuous day they had just completed, so the hard bed didn’t bother their sleep.

“Fred, we are still in the U. S. A.,” said Christy in the morning.

“I’m sure glad. I want to take a good look at that Statue of Liberty,” said Fred.

The men ate breakfast and the whole deck was brown with men as the whistle blew. The tug steamed up and inch by inch pulled the big transport into the river. The band played and the men sang and hurrahed, as the ocean liner shoved off for “over there.”

CHAPTER XIV

TRIP ACROSS ATLANTIC IN AN ARMY TRANSPORT

“Hurrah! We are off!” cried one of the men.

“We won’t come back till it is over, over there,” added another.

The band began to play “Goodbye Broadway, Hello France.” The men joined in on the chorus with an unusual amount of Yankee pep.

“Fred, for fellows like you and me, it is certainly great to have this opportunity of crossing the Atlantic for the first time.”

Carl listened to the boys talk of the folks they were leaving when he said: “You fellows are different from me in one respect. I am going closer to the one I care for most, while you are going away from your loved ones.”

“That’s so, your sister is a Red Cross nurse in France,” said Christy.

“She is, and I am sure going to hunt her when I get there,” said Carl.

“That is natural, and we sure wish you the best of luck.”

“Look over there. Gee, they are tall buildings,” said the cowboy.

“The tallest in the world.”

“I knew that was New York,” returned Fred.

“You couldn’t know it better than I,” said Carl Stewart, as rather unpleasant memories of the past clouded his mind.

“Did you ever live there?”

“You might call it living, but I don’t. Those days that I spent on the Bowery and in Sing Sing—

hell, I hate to recount them. They drive me mad.”

Christy noticed the Statue of Liberty in the distanced and cleverly changed the line of Carl's thought toward the great symbol of our country.

“Yes, and you want to take a good long look at the dear woman because it will be some time before you will see it again,” said Carl.

Carl's advice was more or less unnecessary, as the men stood in wonder gazing at the huge bronze monument and sending their goodbyes to her. Not one took an eye off of her until distance made it impossible for them to see her any more.

“Boy, a fellow just naturally feels like he is really saying goodbye to a very good friend when Miss Liberty passes from his sight,” remarked the cowboy.

“You are mighty right,” said Christy.

The big whistle blew, and the ship's captain called to a gang of Hindu Lascars to let her go, and, bang! went a big chain clanging with a huge anchor going rapidly to the bottom of the ocean. The ship came to a stop and thus she stood for a number of hours while the convoy was being made up. Finally the sixteenth and last ship steamed into view. Several sub-chasers, two cruisers or destroyers, and the rest transports, formed the fleet.

Late that afternoon the commander of the fleet gave the signal to start, and soon the big chains were drawing in the anchors and the men were really on their way as the ships were steaming at full speed ahead. Night and day, storm or calm, for ten days the fleet left its furrows behind.

“Chris, I sure do wish this transport was flying the Stars and Stripes,” declared Carl.

“Naturally you do, and so do I. How about it, shorty?”

“Yea, bo, I have been looking over at that battleship. It flies Old Glory, so I ain’t half so afraid,” admitted Shorty.

“You bet. That flag sure looks good on that pole,” said Fred.

“Say, I spoke to one of these English sailors and the first thing he did was to tell me how England was transporting all our troops. Gee! that made me boil, and I told him a few things,” said Carl.

“We must be fair with Great Britain. She is a great sea power and has paid a big price in men, money and ships in this war,” said Christy.

“Yes, that’s true, but I don’t like the English anyway. They tried to grab our country and couldn’t do it,” returned Carl, angrily.

“Yes, that was a long time ago and we don’t hold any grudges. The truth is, that they are our allies, and if some thoughtless subject of any of our allies should in any way try to cheapen our efforts in this war, we should not retaliate by trying to belittle the efforts of his country. Our president says we are only a single champion of democracy,” replied Christy.

“You are right. Because another man steals is no reason why I should,” agreed Carl.

“I can’t figure out the reason for painting all these ships that way. I can’t see as it does any good, but I reckon Uncle Sam isn’t wasting any paint,” said Fred.

“The camouflage is supposed to make the ship invisible at a shorter distance, or to fool the enemy as to its shape,” answered a bystander who knew.

“Look up there,” said Shorty, as he pointed to a seaplane cutting fancy capers in the air.

“I wonder if it is going all the way across?” asked one of the men.

“I doubt it. It will see us out of the danger zone and will return,” said a fellow who was on his second trip over.

The buzz of the propeller could be heard for a long distance and there Christy stood awestruck and hypnotized, as he watched the birdman speed and play in the air. “Man, I sure envy that aviator. I would transfer into that branch of the service tomorrow if they would let me.”

“Yes, an’ pard, here’s another who would like to ride one of them bird broncos,” said Fred.

“I sure hate to carry one of these big, burdensome life-preservers all through this trip,” said one of the men, as the bugler played the call to quarters. In several minutes the decks were cleared of men.

Assembly blew and the men were given their first boat drill. They were lined up and ready to avail themselves of the lifeboats and rafts in just three and a half minutes.

“Fred, that gymnasium exercise is sure some stunt. It takes a contortionist to keep his feet as the boat sways from side to side,” said Carl.

“Yes, and that is the first time since I was drunk that I lost my balance,” said Fred.

“Hey, Shorty, what’s the trouble? Ha, ha,” shouted Christy.

“Well, I hope youse guys are enjoying yourselves,” said Shorty, a bit sore to think he was the first victim.

“I am sure of one thing, Shorty: the whales will sure enjoy their dinner,” said Christy as the men laughed and kidded Shorty for all there was in it.

“Hell, youse guys will——” and he did about face, adding another course to the whales’ dinner.

“Supper is ready, Shorty.”

“I don’t want no supper,” said Shorty, rather feebly.

“Fred, I have been hunting for you ever since supper,” said Christy.

“Well, pard, I met the ‘Y’ man upstairs. I told him about you and he wants to meet you. I told him I reckoned you had nothing to do, so I would find you.”

“Fred, I will be glad to meet him.”

“Mr.—, what did you say your name was?” said Fred embarrassed for his inability to remember names.

The good-natured, elderly gentleman smiled and kindly jested when he said: “I haven’t changed my name. It was and is Mr. Wicks.”

“Mr. Wicks, this is my partner, Christy Strong, the fellow I was telling you about.”

“Mr. Strong, I am glad to know you. This is my co-worker, another Y. M. C. A. secretary, Mr. McKeough.”

“Mr. Strong, we are both inexperienced when it comes to doing Y. M. C. A. work. Mr. Wicks is a banker and I am a railroader, so we feel mighty lucky to meet you. We feel assured of a successful and pleasant trip,” said Mr. McKeough.

“Gentlemen, I can assure you that it is a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Don’t be backward about using Fred and me. We are both willing to serve the men. Here are several letters of recommendation to show you that we are not counterfeit,” said Christy.

“We know you are all right but nevertheless will be interested in the letters,” complimented Mr. Wicks.

To Whom it May Concern:

Christy Strong is the leader of the gospel team of the ———— division. The men have done fine work in Camp Dix. No place is too humble, no task

too hard and no night too stormy for them to respond to any request for service. They are competent and able to take charge of any service in tent or hut.

During their stay in Camp Dix they have secured 256 decisions for Christian living.

They have the fullest confidence of the Y. M. C. A. force in Camp Dix and our prayers will follow them as they go overseas.

Faithfully yours,

Thomas R. Thoburn.

“That is fine,” said Mr. Wicks.

The next day “the pals” received an order from regimental headquarters. Evidently the “Y” men had been at work because Fred and Christy were detailed for the whole trip to do Y. M. C. A. work.

Christy and Fred made their bunk on the deck close to the “Y” room. No matter the kind of weather, the boys slept on deck and enjoyed it.

The men were three days out when old hobo Carl hurried toward Fred as he stood in the doorway handing out stationery and cheer to the men. “Say, Fred, I am found out,” said he.

“What have you been doing?” said Fred, willing to give Carl a brotherly lift any time, no matter the crime.

“The ship captain has found the purp,” he answered almost in a broken-hearted manner.

“Are they going to throw him overboard?” asked Fred.

“The gruff old cuss said he’d have to get rid of him somehow.”

“Never mind. We will save old Bobby,” assured Fred.

“Gosh! I wish I could take your word for it,” said Carl.

“They are going to dump our mascot overboard,” said Fred to each man as he handed him a sheet of paper. Soon the news spread all through the ship. Men of all ranks could be heard expressing their disapproval of throwing their pet overboard.

The captain maintained: “An order is an order, and there is one that forbids mascots in the American Expeditionary Force, hence the animal must be disposed of.” The captain was strong-willed and was about to order his crew to drown the animal. He can thank his lucky stars that a Lascar in the crow’s nest had sighted a trans-Atlantic mail boat bound for the U. S. A., for the throwing of Bob into the ocean would have caused mutiny on the ship, and a need for a new captain.

He called to his signal officer to wigwag the American-bound ship, and this was his message:

“Draw close to our port side. I have a passenger for America.”

The mail liner pulled up to about ten yards of the big transport and a rope ladder was stretched from ship to ship, upon which a British seaman crossed, carrying Bob to the postoffice.

The boys cheered their mascot, as they saw him find safe conveyance home. The skipper in the mail ship had a rather surprised look when he found out who his new passenger was to be, but as he looked into the tanned faces of the khaki-clad youths in the other ship, he appreciated the incident and took Bobby from the sailor, and held him in his arms until the mangy little cur could not see his company any longer.

“Gee! I’m sure Bob will receive good care on our ranch. Scotch is getting too old to be of much value,” said Fred.

“Do you think they will send him to your ranch?” inquired Shorty.

“Really, I believe they will,” said Christy.

“Reckon that address that Christy wrote on that tag will do the business,” complimented the big cowpuncher.

“Mr. Mailman:

“I am Bobby, the mascot of the 135th M. G. Co. The men I love and bummed around with are going ‘over there’ to fight for you, it is their desire that you recompense them by delivering me to the address on the other side. Signed:

“M. G. Co.—the Whole Gang.”

The sun set in a clear blue sky like a huge ball of crimson fire. It sank into the ocean, shooting up gleaming rays toward the heavens until the moon faded them into solitude by its glittering, glistening pristine beauty.

“Boy, this is a wonderful night,” said Christy, taking a deep breath.

One of the men said: “I love to look out on the ocean and see the waves break in that trail of moonlight.”

“I reckon that nights like these are for festivals that the mermaids attend,” said Fred.

“Why, Fred, that is a novel idea. I suppose they press a button and on comes the moon,” joked Carl.

“No, but honest now, don’t this be a bully big night?” said Fred.

“You bet, old boy, I am sure enjoying every second of it.”

Christy left the bunch, for something told him that he should take a few minutes in thought and reverence by himself, and as he sought his place of

seclusion he joined several groups and listened to their brand of "dope."

"Frank, do you know that getting used to sleeping in those hammocks is like getting used to sleeping with a rattlesnake?"

"Well, Ned, I don't know how you look at the proposition of a gang of men eating and sleeping in the same place. I am telling you it is giving me a craving to get back to the wild life in Alaska, where there are no limitations and no bounds wherein man can lay his weary bones."

"Gosh, fellows, I'd sure like to smoke now," said one of the men in the circle.

Another piped in: "Here's another that would like to light up, but I am not taking a chance. They say orders are to open fire on any matchlight. Cigarettes haven't grip enough to take such a chance."

"Say, do you know the cigarette habit is to America what the hop habit was to China?" said Frank.

"I'd give anything if I hadn't started," said one.

Christy left this bunch with the idea of being alone, but he was attracted by a number of men singing and spent a little while with them, adding his voice and making more or less harmony.

Weary and tired from meeting so many men and conversing with them on as many different subjects, Christy found much rest and pleasure in the few minutes he stood alone on the aft of the ship. He stood communing with his Creator, asking for forgiveness and strength and courage.

The next morning when the men awakened they found a stormy sea. The waves would splash against the side of the transport and cover everything on deck.

On one of the ships of the convoy several men were standing on deck as a large wave raised over it

and took two of the men out into the ocean. The wave carried one to his fate among the sharks, while it favored the other by returning him to the deck, a very much worried young man.

“Say, boys, this is the first time I have appreciated these life-preservers. They sure keep you warm,” said Shorty.

“You birds might not believe it, but when I was a youngster my maw used to tell me about great men of the world. Boy, I’m telling you I have increased my respect for Christopher Columbus since taking this trip,” said Fred.

“Yes, and to think that he had only a cigar box to travel in,” put in Carl Stewart.

“Assembly” blew and all the men hurried to their places on the deck, and as the last man found his place, the ship’s captain, in spite of his gruff ways, gave way to a genuine smile of appreciation and complimented the men thus: “It has taken you men just one minute and forty seconds to find your places. The time is especially good considering that we are in the most dangerous part of the submarine zone. You are always there when you are needed most.”

“Boys, how would you like to see the machinery of the ship?” inquired Christy.

“Reckon they’d allow us down there?” said Fred.

“I am sure of that,” said Christy.

“We are for it,” said the men and they followed Christy as he led them into a room where the power was made that is used to propel the big transport.

“Oh, I say, ole chop, ’ow many are you?” greeted the chief engineer as Christy approached him.

“Four of us,” was the reply.

“Oh, I say, I am bloody sure you would like to see the 'ole place and 'ave me explain it to you.”

“That is the reason we came down,” said Christy.

“This bloody part is the first thing,—the big eight cylinders with eight-inch bores and a four-foot stroke. The steam is used four times and then condensed into water and kept in a continuous process until we reach the other side. We carry fresh water for our engines.

“The eight big furnaces develop sixteen hundred pounds of steam, which develop six thousand horsepower. Let us go into the furnace room.”

“Isn't this a heap to be floatin'?” said Fred.

“I'll say so,” agreed Shorty.

“Comrades, I say that in those coal bins we are carrying four thousand tons of coal. We use a hundred tons a day.”

“Gee! I'd hate to take those Hindus' jobs. If hell is hotter'n this here place I'm sure glad I changed cars,” said Fred.

“Those Indians must be crazy, they carry on so,” said Shorty.

“'Ow would you chaps like to go down the shaft tunnel?”

“We'll try anything once,” boasted Fred.

“This shaft is ninety feet long and fourteen inches in diameter, made of the best steel. It weighs about one hundred tons. The propeller blades are eighteen feet high and eighteen inches wide, and three such blades on each propeller.”

“Thank you, sir, for your kindness. We appreciate it. Believe me this has been worth the whole trip,” said Christy.

“Some name he called you, Carl. ‘I say, ole chop, you bloomin', blasted, bloody bloak’,” mocked Shorty.

“Even at that the old bird was a good old scout,” said Fred.

The men had started something, because, as they told their comrades of the machinery, it gave them a desire to see it.

Christy and Fred returned to their Y. M. C. A. work, when an officer informed Christy, that he had been selected to censor some of the mail. This was an experience that our friend didn't really care for, but after he had read a few of the letters he enjoyed the job as much as if he were attending the funniest of all comedies. Herein are included some of the letters he read:

Dear Girlie:

I ain't nowhere much. I ain't writing from anywhere much and am not writing on any special day much. The cause for my troubles is that censor man. He tells us we can't tell you anything that will be information for the enemy. So I am not going to disobey orders. I still love you.

Your feller, Jake.

Dear Brother:

I am going to write you a few lines to tell you that I am on the high seas. * * * This is the first letter I have written under the ban of censorship. Let me tell you that I bet he'll leave the address even at that. * * *

In closing, I hope that you get this letter. If you don't, write me anyway. Your brother,

Phillip.

Dear Wife and Baby:

Your hubby is getting closer to the firing lines. I am somewhere on the ocean. I don't remember the name of the last station we stopped at or I would

tell you. Ha, ha, that's a good one. At least, we didn't get out and parade.

The land will sure look good and when you receive this letter I will be somewhere in France.

Your Loving Husband.

P. S. Thank the kid for praying for me. I am sure that his prayers will be answered.

Dear Maw:

I reckon you will be surprised to know that your kid is traveling on the ocean in a big boat.

Say, maw, if they intend to build a bridge across the ocean, I reckon you'll have to wait until it's finished before you see me again.

Gosh, I was about to tell you something and then I had a funny feeling in my stomach and I didn't want to spoil this letter, so I double-timed to the railing and threw up everything save my boots, and the hobnails saved them.

Well, there isn't a heap to talk about so I'll tell it all to you when I get home. Gosh, I'll have a lot to tell you.

Your kid, Cyrus.

Christy finished his work late that night. The next morning the men awakened, only to get the first glimpse of land they had had for some days. Christy took a little walk toward the aft where he stood beside an Irishman by the name of Murphy, who, with tears in his eyes, made the following remark: "Just to tink of it. It hoits like 'ell. There are about tin thousand Murphys on that island going barefooted and 'ere am I well dressed."

Christy did not answer. He was in no mood to sympathize with his friend Mike, so he walked away chuckling to himself.

"Say, boy, what are you bubbling over about?" asked Fred of his chum.

Christy told the story of the ten thousand bare-footed Murphys and they enjoyed the joke together. Fred could not refrain from mentioning: "I allow that is some family to be a worryin' about."

"Fred, it sure seemed good to see those subchasers come out to meet our convoy."

"I'll say so, kid. Speed is their middle name," answered the good-natured cowboy.

Bang! bang! and the battle was on. A submarine had shot and thank God, missed. It was a revelation to see our gunners aim and fire in that direction. The depth bomb of the seaplane did the business, according to reports we received on our ship.

Shorty had managed to be quiet for about—well, it seemed a long time—when he said, half apologetically:

"Guys, I wish I was on the land over there. I never did like the ocean."

"I guess there are many who feel that way about it now," answered Christy.

"Some real excitement at last," said Fred.

"That was some old battle," added Carl.

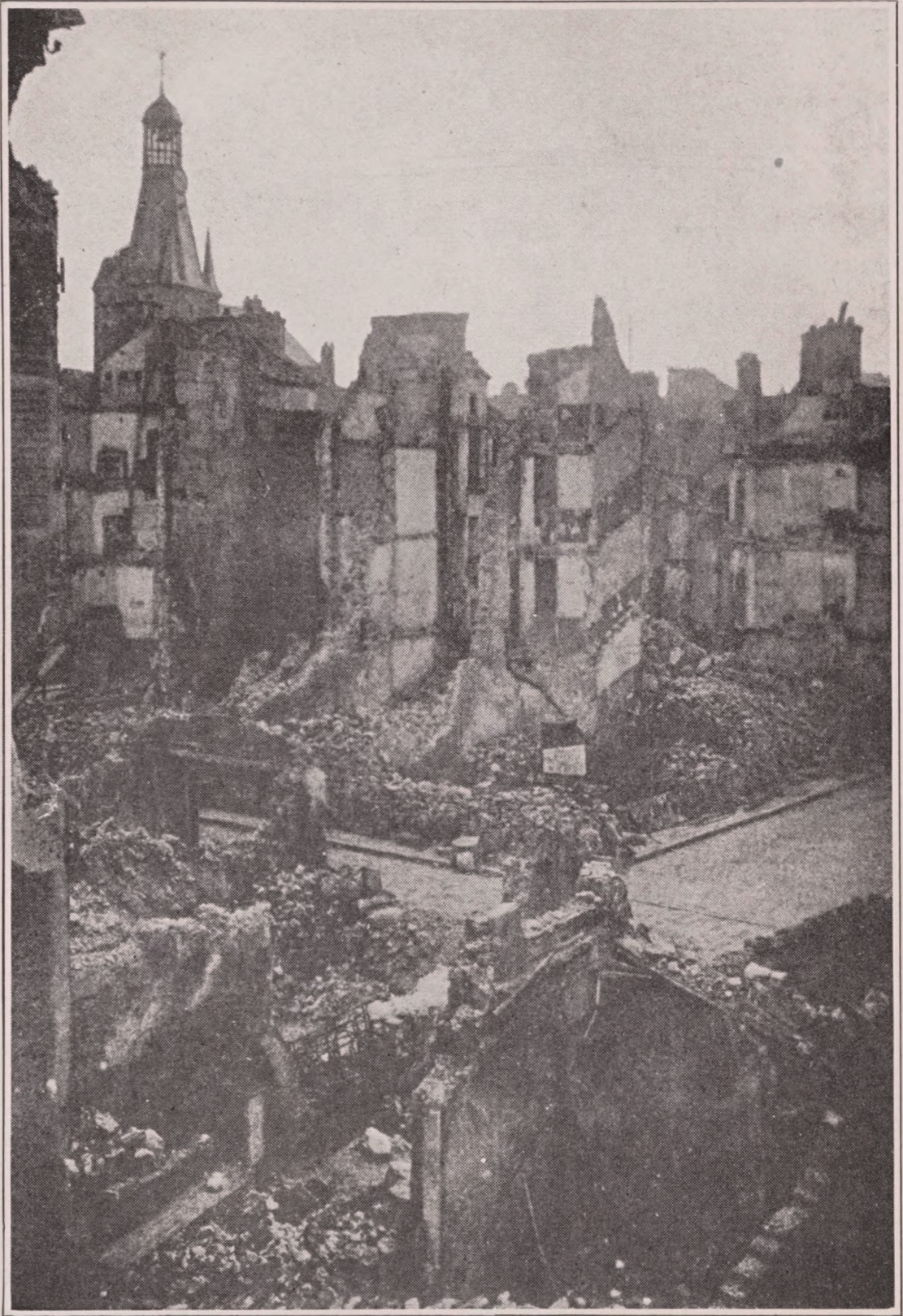
"Goodnight. I am admitting that the water seemed mighty close to the deck."

"Yea, bo, and I am tellin' you I had my leggins off and my shoestrings untied ready to take off my shoes," said Carl.

"I reckon that was a clever idea, Carl. Them shoes would sure enough be a disadvantage in case you'd want to swim to shore," said Fred.

"Have you seen the corporal who has been worrying himself sick about submarines?" inquired Carl.

"Why, that big coward, he couldn't lead me across an irrigation ditch in peace times, let alone



RUINS IN CHATEAU THIERRY

trying to lead a man into no-man's-land," answered Fred.

Many fish schooners were passed. The men were glad to learn that the next morning they would debark. The rest of the time on the boat was the happiest and jolliest of the whole trip.

Some time during the night the anchor was let down in the river Mersey. Lights from the lighthouse that night were greeted with a warm welcome.

The next morning the men awakened to find themselves enveloped by a fog, which compared with the darkest of cloudy nights. It was so thick they could not see the water below.

The fog began to rise about midday, when the men could see the dim outlines of the lighthouse and gradually the roofs of the buildings came into view, until the whole city was clearly revealed. Then the anchor was raised, and a tug pulled up beside the transport, and brought it to shore.

Ships on every side and wharves piled up with the products of their country! It was a real revelation to the boys to walk down the gangplank and plant their feet on good old terra firma.

"We are here, at last," said Christy.

"Thank God we are here and all together, too," said Carl.

The men, although stiff from the lack of exercise and weak from the want of comfortable sleep and proper food, ran down the gangplank like a bunch of young colts.

Christy could not help exclaiming, and in so doing, he expressed the sentiment of every soldier of Old Glory who has landed on foreign soil: "Boys, I am glad to be here because it's a time I've looked forward to for some days, weeks and months, but let me tell you I will be much more glad when I plant my feet on good American soil."

CHAPTER XV

THE WAR SPIRIT OF GREAT BRITAIN

The men were very happy to set foot on good old mother earth, even though on foreign soil.

“The whole world is queer save thee and me and sometimes even thee seems queer to me.” The men from now on will meet strange people with queer habits and customs of living.

Unfortunately for the country and also for the true impressions of the men, they were hurried through war-ridden countries of four years' standing. Naturally, the countries could not be normal. The backbone of these countries were taking a peaceful nap with six feet of earth to separate them from the noise of the cannon or were at the front fighting for the same thing that brought us into the quarrel. The cities were run down, unclean, unsightly, and consequently uninviting to the critical eye of the stranger.

It is truthfully said, that the people make a country. The trip the Yanks took across England automatically introduced them to the waif of the wharves, the slums, and on up to the royal bloods.

The more Yank saw of foreign soil, the greater was his desire to return to God's country, our own United States of America.

The ship was tied to the dock and from the decks Yank showered coins upon the kiddies who had gathered to greet them.

“That policeman sure looks like a circus clown, with his unshaven face, his helmet and his big star,” remarked one of the men.

“Have you any more change? I’d like to watch the kids scramble.”

The men were marched down the gangplank and a la army style were lined up along the side of the road, waiting for orders. Yank spent his first hour in England watching the procession of foreigners like children watch a circus parade.

“Well, I’ll be gol darned, if here don’t come a flivver,” said Fred, as all the men turned around to meet the road louse of America, exclaiming in chorus: “Gee, that buggy sure looks good.”

“I reckon you boys have been noticin’ the big horses they have in this country,” said Fred.

“They are large animals,” returned Christy, adding: “You notice they hitch their horses in front of each other instead of side by side.”

“Yes, and instead of traveling on the right side of the road they take the left,” added Shorty.

“Yank, do you want some ‘sky’?” asked a kid not over twelve years old, as he showed the men the bottle he was carrying in his trouser front.

Fred asked, “How much?”

“Two dollars, Yank,” was the reply.

“Kid, don’t your feet get cold?” asked Carl of a dirty-faced, ragged, little bum whose feet were sticking out of the front and back of his shoes.

“Don’t notice it, Yank,” said he.

All through their march in Liverpool, a gang of these kids followed them, trying to sell their booze. They no doubt thought they were doing a patriotic work. Judging from the comment on the liquor, the young urchins must have made a comfortable margin.

“Fred, did you ever see such a sight in your life?” questioned Christy after they had marched through the slums of Liverpool.

"I never reckoned their was so many kids in all the world," suggested Fred.

"Rags, and more of them, wrap their little bodies, and talk about dirty faces! They sure beat anything I have ever seen," added Shorty.

"Did you notice their rosy cheeks and large heads?" asked Christy.

"Man, it almost broke my heart to see them old women dive after the coin that the men threw to the kids," remarked Fred.

"They sure appear to need the money," added Carl.

"That is the sad part of it," added the big-hearted cowboy.

"Yes, it is a pitiful sight, and for my part, I would just as soon, and much rather, have some of our great war-work organizations care for some of these folks that the war has made needy instead of buying me some cigarettes and candy," added Christy.

"Them's my sentiments," Shorty put in.

"Yes, and mine," emphasized the western character.

One thing that impressed the marchers, as they passed through the city toward their train, was the cheering of the people, who had already seen hundreds of thousands of Yanks pass by. Their cheering showed the boys that they had not lost the spirit of victory.

"Hello! an American woman. Boys, get your cups out; she is serving coffee," said Fred.

The boys single-filed, and eagerly awaited their turn in line. In that line was one more eager than the rest when he spied the Red Cross arm band on the young lady. Said he: "Lady, it sure seems good to see a real American woman. What part of the States are you from?"

“St. Louis, Missouri,” answered the soldiers’ friend.

“Have you ever met my sister, Anna Stewart? She is a Red Cross nurse,” said Carl.

“No, Mr. Stewart, but I am so glad to meet her brother, because I have heard of her wonderful deeds of mercy and bravery. My name is Miss Alta June,” answered the charming young lady, bidding Carl goodbye and wishing him the best of luck.

A Tommy handed to each Yank an envelope engraved with these words: “A Message from the King.” He handed Christy one, who said: “The King told me he’d be down to see me, but I guess he thought that it would be all right to write me.”

“By heck, I reckon old George won’t forget the days he spent on my ranch,” said Fred, and thus familiar remarks were passed concerning his royal highness’ letter.

Windsor Castle.

Soldiers of the United States:

The people of the British Isles welcome you on your way to take your stand beside the armies of many nations now fighting in the old world the great battle for human freedom.

The Allies will gain new spirit and new heart in your company. I wish I could shake the hand of each one of you and bid you Godspeed on your mission.

April, 1918.

George, R. I.

The men were then crowded into third class English coaches which, unlike our American coaches, do not have aisles between two rows of seats, but are divided into four or five rooms with steps on the outside as their only means of communication. It takes two of these English coaches to compare favorably in size with an American car.

Eight men and eight overseas packs filled the little room to a capacity load. Even at that the men slept fairly well, as they were too tired to do otherwise. It made the fellows sore when they pulled into Winchester at 2 a. m. and had to climb a long hill with their packs on their backs.

“Goodnight, (yawn) I am sure sleepy,” said Carl as he laid his pack on the floor of his first home on foreign soil.

“This is a dirty place for an American soldier to lay his head,” said Shorty, as the sergeant called: “You men who want something to eat, get your mess kits and fall in.”

The men forgot their tired feeling and proceeded to fill a spot that had been more or less unburdened since the day they embarked.

They then went to bed, some sleeping while others listened to them sleep.

“Throw a shoe at him,” said a much-vexed soldier who had been listening to the guilty party industriously “sawing wood.”

“Kill him,” called another.

Bang! biff! went a hob nailed barrage that missed its intended victim, and on he snored, much to the pleasure of his friends.

“Let him alone; it is the only time he ever works,” said another.

“Wake him up, so we can get a head start on him,” called another.

“Wake up, you little runt,” said the cowboy as he grabbed and shook old Shorty.

“Ah-h-h, wh-what do you want?” said he, again coming into the land of the living.

“Ha, ha, ha; that’s a good one on Shorty. Who is the girl from Michigan?” questioned Fred.

“Did you hear him talking in his sleep?” asked Carl.

"I hope I did," answered Christy.

"Do I talk in my sleep?" asked Shorty, still far from awake.

"I'll say so, and it is a good thing your mother don't hear you," kidded the big cowboy.

"Well, I'm a telling you I haven't done anything to be ashamed of," prompted Shorty, feeling a bit guilty and ready to clear himself of any suspicion.

"Some folks aren't ashamed of the same things others are rightfully ashamed of," said Christy.

"Now, youse guys is working a frame-up on me. What did I say?"

"I don't remember exactly but you asked that Michigan girl to give you one more kiss," volunteered Fred, as the listeners enjoyed another good one on Shorty.

"Yes, and what is more you told her that you would call your auto and have your valet escort the lady home," added Carl.

The men all joked about Shorty's auto and valet for some time and to this day they still guy him about it.

"You guys will be late for reveille," suggested Shorty, willing to do anything to sidetrack the men.

"No reveille this morning," said one of the men, as they continued relating the happenings of the night.

"Boy, I was sure walking in my sleep last night," said Fred.

"The old earth was rocking and swaying. I could not get rid of that ocean sensation," said Christy.

"That was the same sensation I had," remarked Carl.

"It didn't bother me," said one.

Breakfast over, Fred remarked: "Boy, that food was really great."

“You bet. American cooking can’t be beat,” said Carl.

All the men who ate the rations of our Allies were always glad to get back to eating with Uncle Sam.

“Boy, I’ll never wash another dish when I get out of this man’s army,” said Fred.

“Here’s another in the same boat,” added Christy.

“Fred, you take a bath while I wash my clothes and then we will change off. This is the camp in which we are to clean up ourselves and our belongings,” said Christy.

“You’re on, Christy. I reckon you’re not forgettin that this will be the longest we have been apart for near a fortnight.”

“That is so, but it will be good for you to get rid of me.”

“I reckon not,” said Fred.

The men had finished cleaning themselves and their clothing and thus worked up a good appetite.

That afternoon, the company fell in for a hike which gave the men a glimpse of an English city and its people.

The men were allowed to talk in ranks and even before they had left the camp they were each holding a kiddie or two by the hand. Some, not taller than a frog’s back, would try to bum a cigarette from Yank.

“Fred, it is a bit funny to see those lads smoking. I don’t like to see it encouraged.

“Do you reckon those tykes will make a habit of it?”

“Fred, it is certain they won’t overlook any opportunities to bum all they can.”

The little kids, half-fed as they were, walked all the way in spite of the fact, that they had to take two steps to Yank’s one. Yes, and nearly all of

them ran back to one kind of a shop or another in order to spend the money that Yankee boy gave them.

“Boy, you keep that candy. That’s why I gave you that coin,” said the big cowboy.

“Me share with my Yank,” said the lad, as he pleaded and forced Fred to be sociable.

“Goodbye, Yank,” said the boy.

“Goodbye, kid,” said the cowboy.

The next day the same lads waited for their big Yankee friends. This time three or four made quite a scramble for Fred’s hand, which resulted in a little hostility among them.

The lad who had taken a liking to Christy the day before ran up to him, crying: “Say, I told mother of my Yank and she says I can bring you and your chum to tea this evening. Will you come?”

Christy hesitated and said: “We will gladly accept your kindness.”

“I’ll show you to our home after the march,” volunteered the boy.

“Come, lad, and eat dinner with us,” invited Christy.

“No thank you. Mother will have tea ready so we must hurry,” said the curly-haired, rosy-cheeked blondy.

“Fred, we are invited out, so we must get passes.”

“All right, pard, and together the three went to the sergeant and received permission to be absent.

“Mother, dear, these are our Yankee friends,” said the cheerful little boy.

Not less cheerfully were the boys welcomed into the home. “My boys, what may be your names?” inquired the smiling mother.

“Yes, I am so glad to be your hostess tonight. Son, introduce your two sisters to Mr. Strong and Mr. Sheldon, while I lay the spread.”

“Jack, dear, you draw the chairs to the table and we will have tea.”

The men ate what the war had spared the home-folks of England. Sugar and wheat flour products were not on the bill of fare. The boys forgot about satisfying their appetites as they were charmed by their new friends.

The men left the home of their English friends and Christy asked: “Fred, you said so little. May I ask your reason?”

“Well, Christy, I ain’t got no education nor refinement and then I couldn’t keep my mind off those two vacant places at the table, one marked ‘Brother’ and the other ‘Dad.’ I reckon the war won’t hit our country that hard.”

“You can get by anywhere,” said Christy.

“Yes, boy, but it makes a heap o’ difference. I just couldn’t get my mind off the sacrifice one family was making,” commented Fred.

“It gives a fellow an idea of what these people are doing.”

“You know I kinda enjoyed the tea an’ those muffins an I reckon by the way you were talkin to the girls you enjoyed them.”

“Yes, Fred, you are right. They are fine girls. Did you notice that, like their mother, they referred often to their brother and their dad at the front?”

“Pard, I’m a tellin’ you this is a mighty pretty country and them hedges, trimmed as they are, add to its beauty.”

“Fred, have you noticed that nearly every home in England is named?”

“I had not, but come to think of it you are right.”

“This is a quaint and beautiful country but the cities show lack of care,” said Christy.

“I reckon you have been noticin’ a lot of Tommies with an arm or leg cut off,” said Fred. “It makes you boil with passion to get a crack at the Hun.”

* * * * *

Every day since Fred left the U. S. A. Molly McByde started early in the morning to meet the mailman, so that she might get some news of her absent lover’s welfare. Each minute seemed a day, and the days stretched into centuries, until one day the mail carrier brought that token of good news—the safety-arrival card.

She hurriedly turned and in a hippety-hop fashion she danced down the winding country road that led her to that little cottage where, anxiously waiting, was another heart beating for news of a cowboy “over there.”

Almost wild and overcome by joy, Molly heralded the good news to Mother McByde. The two hugged each other, rejoicing in the good news, and when, finally, the good Irish woman baker had gathered her wits together she opened the oven only to find a black, smoking thing in the shape of so much bread.

“Ay told ye there be an angel watching over our bye,” said Mrs. McByde.

Molly answered: “Mother, our prayers helped.”

“Sure, an faith, Molly, me girl, I am sure ye kin be restin’ in peace. Ye be a lookin’ wornout.”

“Yes, mother dear, now I won’t need to worry about those submarines.”

“Ay told ye it be foolish to be a worryin’ about him.”

“But mother, why were you always saying, ‘I wonder how our boy is today’?”

“Yis, Molly, I was a bit consarned,” admitted Mrs. McByde.

Over the hills but not far away another overseas card gave comfort to another.

The thousands of homes that were made happy by these messages had their own way of thanking God.

Christy addressed one to his mother and the other to Helen Grant.

One Saturday afternoon the postman dropped the card in the Grant mailbox and our friend, the brave writer of the letter which threatened Christy for paying attention to Helen, that noble Bully Harvey, happened to open the mailbox and find the card among some letters. The letters he gave to Mrs. Grant, but the card he put in his pocket.

Helen said, “Mother, I wonder why we don’t hear from Christy?”

“I have been wondering that same thing myself. Suppose you call up Mrs. Strong and find out if she has received any word?”

“Central, give me Blue 257.”

“Is this Mrs. Strong talking?”

“I am Helen Grant. Mother wants to know if you have heard from Christy. Is he safe?”

“Yes, I received a card today, saying that he had arrived safely overseas.”

“Oh,” and forgetting all courtesies, Helen hung up the receiver and in a rampant rage she came at her mother in a fashion contrary to her usual sweet disposition. “Mother, I told you he didn’t care for me! I knew it all the time! I don’t see why he couldn’t have written me. I’ll never talk to him again.”

“Why, Helen, you never gave him to understand that you cared for him. The truth is that I have

been worrying that I would be mother-in-law to that Harvey fellow," said Mrs. Grant.

"Bully is at least considerate of me," hesitated Helen.

Mr. Harvey made his usual Sunday call at the Grant home. Helen and he took a ride in his car.

"Helen, I am so happy. We can get married now. The draft board has exempted me from military service."

The young lady suddenly realized for the first time that her heart was somewhere in France and she answered him like this: "Bully, I like you as I would a brother but not as a lover."

The ordinary man would take the hint, but this extraordinary man flattered himself with the ego idea of his ability to influence Helen to become his wife. He never overlooked an opportunity to cheapen Christy in her estimation and Christy's seeming neglect to write her was made much of by this young patriot.

* * * * *

Some soldiers are afforded the opportunity to write while others are not. Christy, unfortunately, missed his when he visited the English home. He was some days on foreign soil before he could find the time and stationery together.

The men were ordered to dry all clothing and get themselves in readiness to move at a moment's notice. Uncle Sam wasted no time and moved troops from England to France with admirable dispatch.

"Christy, they be a callin' this a rest and cleanup camp, but I am namin' it Camp Sleepless. I could feel all kinds of things a crawlin' over me. Golly, my imagination ran wild," said Fred in his easy-going, cowboy fashion.

"Youse isn't the only guy what felt crumby," said Shorty.

“The pals” were headed in the direction of the Y. M. C. A. with the idea of writing some letters, but unfortunately for Christy his friend introduced him to the secretary as an ex-secretary.

The secretary nabbed Christy then and there and thus he lost another and last chance to write his friends. “You are the very man I want. Every night we close this ‘Y’ with a sacred meeting. Can I get your gospel team to lead it tonight?”

It was a late hour to get his gospel team together, so he volunteered: “Sir, I’ll do anything within my poor power to extend the kingdom of God. May I ask you how you found out about our gospel team?”

“Several of your men have spoken about it, Mr. Strong.”

When the meeting was over a big burly fellow who had seen service at the front came up to Christy and grabbed his hand, saying, “My name is Sergeant Paulson and I want to tell you that I enjoyed your talk very much. You shoot straight. Anyone with more than an ivory head could get your meaning. Your talk beat any sermon I ever listened to. I am going straight from tonight on. Shake on it.”

“Old boy, what I do or say comes because I pay the price of preparation in prayer to the Almighty. Believe me, it does my old heart good to know of your decision.”

A number of men gathered about Christy to express appreciation of his talk.

Soldier fashion and true to nature, the men wanted to hear about the trench life first handed, so they sat around Sergeant Paulson as he told some weird tales of the trench.

Said he: “The one thing that attracted my attention to what Christy had to say was his reference to the homefolks and the debt of honor we owe them.

"I didn't mean to make you homesick," said Christy.

"You can't do that as I am not returning to America," said Paulson.

"Why not?" asked Christy, a bit stunned.

"You see, it is like this: I used to have a sweetheart back home. Now I am a wreck physically and the same mentally. I wrote her a letter, telling of my condition. We were engaged but I told her I didn't want to use her as a crutch the rest of her life. I advised her if she desired to break our bond she shouldn't answer my letter and I would know that she didn't want me. It has been three months and sixteen days since I wrote that letter. I have not received an answer, so I am staying in England because I know I couldn't stay away from her if I returned."

"My boy, maybe the ship that carried that letter was sunk?" suggested Christy.

"I have thought of that myself, but it isn't fair to burden her heart with a wreck like me."

Christy and Paulson had a short, confidential talk and as a result another letter was addressed to Somewhere-in-America.

Paulson contended, "A man who is crazy to get into the trenches is sure crazy; at least they are generally crazier to get out of them. I hope the war is over before you fellows have to go through that hell of hells."

The men said nothing for the next hour as Paulson took them "over the top" with him.

Lights out, and the men bid each other the best of luck.

"Christy, I allow that I could listen to that fellow all night," said Fred.

"Well, Fred, I am a good listener to such as he," said Christy.

“Man, that guy had some real experience,” said Shorty.

“You know that he has a mighty honorable notion about treating his girl. If I am disabled I reckon I’ll do the same,” said Fred.

“Personally, I can’t believe in such a stand because if a girl really loves you, it will work a great hardship on her,” said Christy.

“I am admitting there is some room for argument, Christy, old boy,” said Fred.

“It must be a source of great satisfaction for you, Christy, when men compliment you and promise to live better,” said Carl.

“Carl, I have no right to any credit because I let God use me as he sees fit.”

“You are sure being used to do a heap o’ good,” complimented Fred.

The next morning the men again rolled their packs, marched to the station, boarded the train and were hurried to the point of embarkation, which meant a trip across the English Channel.

The men were packed into an old Pacific liner, with barely room to stand, and in these crowded quarters they were doomed to spend the long night.

There has been no hardship endured by the American soldier that he is not proud of, not from the point of boasting—for boasting is hated by men of action—but from the fact that he is proud to have had his part in bringing victory to Old Glory.

CHAPTER XVI

YANK SEEING FRANCE FROM A BOXCAR PULLMAN

“At last! We are in France.”

“At last!” said another.

“Thank God we are here. It is twelve months since I enlisted.”

“Well, I was drafted, but I am telling you that I am glad to be here,” added another crusader.

“It is hard to believe, but sure enough there is the tri-color.”

“Fred, can you realize that we are somewhere-in-France?”

“Yes, Christy, and I reckon it is for a rather exciting visit.”

The men debarked and unslung their packs. Then they returned to unload and police-up the ship.

“I am not a-kiddin’ youse guys when I say, ‘War is hell.’ Some of these officers are the devil’s worst.”

“What is the matter now?” asked Christy.

“Matter enough. That weasel-faced lieutenant stood about three feet from me while I was struggling to put a big officer’s pack on my back. The bum wouldn’t even give me a lift.”

“That is one bird I ain’t much use for. I allow if an enemy’s bullet don’t get him, one of our own will.”

“Say, fellows, did you hear the one that the top kicker slipped on him?” asked Carl.

“No, let us hear it.”

“The Lewie told old John that he was informed that the men planned on bumping him off. John an-

swered him: 'Well, I guess the guys ain't afraid of you. They won't shoot you from behind.' "

This story amused the men and, adding to their joy, came another cause for laughter. The ship officer had just finished lowering the gangplank. A minute or so later snooty Mr. Lieutenant returned to the deck after a tour of trouble finding. Like a dunce he stood on the upper deck, the gangplank on the dock. The ship officer ordered the gangplank to be raised. Imagine the shave-tail's humiliation as he stepped down the gangplank amid the horse-laugh of his whole company.

France was the place where a man's rank as an officer was respected by the enlisted men, only when the officer was big or bigger than his job. Officers, who gained the respect and confidence of their men, were always obeyed in a fine spirit.

The minute the men landed in France they felt more than ever their part in the war and wanted to take it as nobly and finely as possible.

"Wouldn't that cork your preserves! Just our blamed luck; another hill to climb as long as the pearly steps to heaven," said Carl.

"Why kick? We shook one jinx anyway. We moved in the morning instead of at night."

"That's the boy, Shorty. I knew you would soon see life as it really is," said Christy.

"Carl, I reckon you will be pleased to know we are headed for an English rest camp," smiled Fred.

The men climbed the hill and reached the camp. They were assigned to their tents and then fell in for mess.

"That is sure bunk to hand out breakfast tickets to American soldiers," grumbled Carl.

Christy was hungry and what he received merely served to tease him and for the time he sided in with

Carl. The Tommy had a right to declare war on the Yanks for what was said.

“Shorty, you had better run over to the camp quartermaster and get some sky hooks,” suggested Christy.

“Sky hooks!” grinned Shorty. “What are you trying to slip over on me? You big stiff, I was a man when you were still wabbling in swaddling clothes.”

“Well, Shorty, twelve of us have to sleep in here. You are the smallest, so it would be safer for you to sleep in the air with the sky hooks supporting you. It’s a cinch there isn’t enough room on the floor.”

“You can’t come that on me.”

* * * * *

“What’s the grand idea? Forty men to one of these four-wheeled box cars. Goodnight! Three days and three nights,” said Carl.

“That is packing ’em fairly snug,” admitted Shorty.

Bing! bang! bumped the rusty spring bumpers as the “frog” engine backed up in order to get a start.

“What are you looking so thoughtful about?” questioned Christy of Shorty.

“I ain’t a kickin’ or anything, but I am going to suggest to the high moguls of this railroad to add three more men to each car so we can sleep without falling over.”

“I allow they will say that is a clever idea.”

“Hey! Quit your shoving or you’ll push me out. We can’t all squeeze in the door at once. Ain’t you no sense?” hollered Shorty to a rather selfish young man, with whom we will get better acquainted as the story advances.

Naturally everyone was anxious to see as much of France as possible. Forty men could not find room in the allotted space, therefore the unlucky ones must patiently await their opportunity to grab one of these seats.

You might ask "Why didn't the men get out and sit on top of the boxcars?" but such signs as these were posted in all railroad stations:

"—— Two hundred soldiers killed. Why? They sat on top of boxcars and came to a tunnel with only six inches clearance."

"Dead soldiers can't fight. Help whip the Hun. Don't sit on tops of trains."

"Some men are hard—mainly in the head. Never was a man's head hard enough to go through the top of a tunnel."

You might better ask: "Why didn't the men get out and walk?" If they did and the train happened to go down a long hill it might go so fast that it would crack the men's stiff joints to catch up with it.

The men ate supper and with the darkness came the cold. They closed the doors when someone suggested that they go to bed.

"Some bed," sarcastically commented someone.

"Move over, my hip is on a bolt head," said another.

"That isn't anything to complain about. Three men are using me for a foot rest and my pack just fell on my face," complained another.

"Home, sweet, sweet, sweet home," chimed in another.

"Shorty, move over," suggested Rent.

Shorty was suspicious of Rent and rightly so; therefore he lit a match and found the big hog better fixed by far than he was.

“You better do a bit of moving yourself or I’ll bust ye in the eye,” retorted Shorty.

Rent shammed sleep but he shared some of his space with Shorty as the result of a well directed kick in the shins.

“By the count, let us turn over,” called Christy.

“I’m for it, but some one will have to untie my legs first.”

“Are you ready? Let’s go—One, two, three,” and no one moved.

“What’s the matter?”

“I reckon we all found a soft spot and didn’t care about being disturbed,” said the cowboy.

“Youse guys are in luck. I am sleeping over a flat wheel. I am also going to suggest to the head gink of this road that he might enjoy a larger patronage if he would use round wheels on his cars.

“Say, you long, lean, lanky nut, keep your feet out of my mouth. When I want a toothpick, I’ll tell you,” emphasized one of the boys.

“Whose feet are these?”

No one answered.

“You better take them out of my face or——”

“Come on, fellows, let’s not threaten. I allow we are all suffering the same inconvenience,” said the cowboy.

“I have a new idea. Let us sleep in relays. Half of us sleep while the rest stand,” called Christy.

“That is a bright idea. I am for it, but I must be on the first relay.”

The trouble was in the fact that all the men wanted to be on the first relay.

The day was peeking through the numerous cracks in the box car when Fred shouted: “It’s time to get up and milk the cows.”

The first fellow up said: “Let’s eat breakfast.” Every one stood up and stretched their tired bones

and then took to the "Corned Willie" and hardtack. They existed on this until noon when they again shared bread and "Corned Willie." All the meals on the train consisted of this great variety of food.

Some of the men were sitting down, some standing up and some kneeling while they were eating. The train was speeding down hill when the engineer suddenly put on the brakes.

Bang! Clang! Boom! Biff! Bing! The old cars jerked each other and as for the occupants—a mess was messed up by the jolt.

"Umph! Oh, gi-give me some air," said a Yank who had found himself on the pit of his stomach spinning around on Fred's head.

"Pard, I allowed that you were perched up there for the rest of the day," said the cowboy as he felt his neck to see if his bones were all together.

"Ha, ha, ha," rang a chorus of happy voices as they noticed old Rent in the corner with his face plastered with "Corned Willie" and tomatoes.

Breakfast thus interrupted, the men gathered up the fragments of their feed after spending some time separating the same from their blankets and equipment. They made the following claims:

"Gosh! Wow! I almost had a bite in my mouth. The next thing I remember was collecting my mess kit from all parts of the car."

"Golly, I was all heaped up in the corner."

Another half-dazed victim added: "The French make their boxcars out of blamed good lumber. Gee! My head feels like it butted out the end of the car but I can't even find a dent."

The men finally regained their balance and were soon forgetting their disappointment over their breakfast.

The train pulled into a French town. There was a mademoiselle busily engaged misunderstanding Yanks' French.

Fortunately in Christy's car there was a fellow who could speak good French.

"Say Plant, what do you reckon old Frenchie is talking about?" asked Fred.

"Serg.," he says, "you Americans won't quit until you kill all the Germans."

"They sure admire the Americans," said Christy.

"It's a privilege to fight for such an appreciative bunch of people," added Carl.

"Hey, Plant, what did she say?" asked an eager Yank.

"Come on, tell us."

"I am sure going to learn to 'parley vous'," said another.

"Parley vous, Francais?" asked a sergeant of a young lady who came to the other side of the car.

"Oui, Oui," was the reply.

He had taken a few lessons in French. It was comical to watch him put a sentence together and then have the fair damsel say: "Je ne compris, je ne compris."

"Kid, they don't understand your French," advised Shorty.

Christy added: "You will have to teach these folks how to speak French." The bunch enjoyed the sergeant's disgust for the young mademoiselle for not understanding his French.

Bang! Clang! Again the train managed to get started. French books were the objects of Yanks' desires. Some of the men found them in their coats, while others tore their packs apart in quest of them.

A few minutes later a Chinese school was in session. The men were studying out loud and asking Professor Plant numerous questions about pronounc-

ing. One would say: "Vin Blanc"; another, "Vin Rouge"; someone else, "Beaucoup"; another, "L'pain"; still another, "Toute de Suite."

"Hurrah!" called the once disgusted but now elated sergeant, as he scored heavily. The reason for his burst of hilarity may be accounted for because of the fact that he called to a mademoiselle, "Oui, La, La, kiss papa." She saluted accordingly.

"Hey fellows," called Carl as he pointed to some soldiers in green uniforms.

"One of those low-down Huns," said Shorty.

"I wonder why they print 'P. G.' on their backs?"

"I guess because they are German prisoners."

"Some look like kids of sixteen years," remarked one of the men."

"The French guard don't seem to worry about them running away," said Christy.

"They are being treated too well for anything like that."

"They are a lucky pack of hounds."

"I'll say so."

"I wonder what they are thinking when they see so many Yanks?" said Christy.

"I'll bet they are thanking God for their luck and if they are at all decent they are praying for the souls of their comrades in arms," added Carl.

The train pulled into a large railroad center. The men were noticing everything.

"I hate to see those women smashing baggage," said Shorty.

"It is a shame," agreed Carl.

"Boys, here comes a real American engine. What is going to happen?" asked Carl.

"Christy, do you know where those black soldiers with the red-tassled caps are from?"

"They are Algerians."

"See those Russian soldiers? They are big men. They are dressed for cold weather. Their large hats must be made from unsheared sheepskins."

"A Red Cross car is pulling in," called Christy.

"They are certainly dandy cars," said Carl.

The Red Cross train stopped. Some of the boys went through the cars, while others stood on the outside and talked to the wounded.

"Fred, I am mighty sorry for those fellows."

"They appeared to be happy."

"I guess it is a rest to get away from the front."

The men were a little different as they continued their trip. Before they had never seen any of Uncle Sam's war victims. They had only seen the excitement; they only heard the bands and the shouts of their friends. Now they saw the wounded and heard their stories.

The men did some thinking as the train rambled along. Yes, both the good and the bad. The good, because they had some bad in them; the bad, because they had enough good in them to care.

The journey was almost over. Yank had traveled from one end of France to the other. He had seen the farming sections, the manufacturing towns, the cities, the towns and the villages.

Christy remarked: "Fellows, in many ways France is the same as the United States. It is true, the farms are not so big as ours. They don't have modern implements. It is interesting to watch the oxen slowly dragging the plow. Their houses, chateaus and castles have a touch of the ancient."

"Their good roads impress me. Their railroads depress me," said Carl.

"I reckon they don't have the room, but you don't see many cattle," remarked Fred.

"They sure make use of everything," said Shorty.

Everyone enjoyed a dilapidated feeling after being bumped from rail to rail.

“Gee! I am glad that ride is over,” said Carl.

“So am I,” came from a dozen bystanders.

The men marched through a village that had never seen any American soldiers.

The friendly invaders passed through a line of admiring French folks. Yank could hear them say: “Beaucoup, L’Amerique,” “Bon L’Amerique.”

The children would ask for “Souvenir L’Amerique.”

The men soon made many friends. Like in our own country a man found what he was looking for. The young man looking for the good French home found it, and the reverse was also true.

CHAPTER XVII

TRAINING BEHIND THE FRONT

The Yanks were sent into the trenches, some with much training behind the lines, while others had very little, if any. There were many ways too numerous to mention to tell how they finally reached the front.

The men were assigned to their billets; one was a deserted house of three rooms with a nice, hard, red tile floor for Yank to sleep on; the second was in a French cowbarn, where eight-four men were billeted. Forty-eight were given four, nice, large airy rooms in a chateau, in one of which they could read, write and play the piano.

“The pals” were assigned to the cowbarn. Christy said: “Let us take that corner.”

“I’m on; I reckon one part of this place smells as musty as the other,” answered Fred.

“Say, I imagine those old spider webs were started in the time of Caesar,” said Christy.

“Let’s clean out this place before making it our home,” said Sergeant Sheldon, and no sooner was the suggestion made than the boys started to work on it.

The next morning no bugle sounded or if it did no one heard it. Everyone was making up for lost sleep. The straw tick was extremely inviting to say the least.

Rays of light were shining through the round window, the only means of illumination in that hay-loft. Christy awakened later than usual and found

that the men were still sleeping. He whispered to Fred: "I guess I'll get up and shave."

"I reckon you mean a haircut. Listen, take care not to step through the wornout stairway. I nearly broke my fool neck on it."

"I ain't a gettin up today," said Shorty.

"No, not until mess call anyway," chimed in Carl.

"Say, boy, I sure slept," said one.

"That shows that you are used to sleeping in barns," said another.

"Youse birds better get up and read your underwear," said Shorty, as he itched in one spot and then another.

Shorty started something, mainly the men's imaginations, and under the spell they started scratching and took Shorty's advice. They found there were none of the guilty creatures, therefore they were comforted, and on the strength of it they slipped under the covers until Christy returned to tell them: "Boys, I sure feel great. I shaved, washed my teeth and combed my hair. I recommend it to all of you."

One by one the men uncovered, dressed and went through the ordeal of cleaning up for the first time in what seemed like a century. It was nearly dinner time when they finished their job.

The kitchen was always the popular spot in France. All the men were glad to have Bert Smith running that popular spot.

"Let her go!" said Bert. The bugler played their favorite call and the men lined up with mess kits in hand and received a good feed, though under the circumstances, of course, Bert could not put out what he did in the U. S. A.

"How about going swimming this afternoon?" asked Christy while the men sat on the damp green grass making a table out of their laps.

"I'm a rearing to go," said Fred.

"Here's another for the venture. That pond will be mighty muddy when we do the little stunt," said Carl.

"My old underclothes will stand up by themselves and if I could convince myself they wouldn't break off, I'd wash them after swimming."

"You guys hear how strong Christy's socks are? That five-ton truck got stuck in a mudhole and after four horses and a company of men failed to pull it out, these Strong socks did the trick," smiled Shorty.

"Strong is my name."

"Oui, Oui," returned Shorty, giving the men to understand that he was not neglecting his education in French. "I am going up for seconds, that slum tastes like more."

"Eat, but you must work," said Christy.

"By gosh, you can tell who does the work around here by how much he eats," returned the soldier in question.

The men had their swim and then strolled in different directions, their main purpose being to see the adjacent country. Before the men left the captain announced: "There is wine in this country. The French drink it in place of water. Men, I know you won't be foolish. When you begin to feel good, come home."

"Christy, you don't appear to be happy. I told you that you could buy spirits in France," said the fellow who had made the claim that soldiers could buy liquor in France.

"Friend, you were right about it, too much so. I hope you are right about the men being able to contain themselves, but I am afraid," said Christy.

"I guess I knew what I was talking about," persisted the champion of booze.

“Maybe so and maybe not. We will know to-night whether you vote a dry ticket next election,” returned Christy.

Cowboy Sheldon and Christy took another hike. They planned their future. They had really found in each other a something that made them want to stay together. Fred’s vision had been broadened and his interest in men had been opened by his touch with Christy. Christy’s love for the blue sky and love of adventure were deepened by his contact with the cowboy from the wild and woolly west.

“Fred, I must admit that I have been wondering how we are going to hitch up in civilian life. We must plan pooling our energies together and giving our best to the world. It cannot be otherwise,” said Christy.

“A rough ranger like me can’t be of much help to you. My calling is on the ranch,” said Fred.

“Fred, you are a man among men. You are unlike many folks. You can make a choice.”

“I reckon that brother can run the ranch and I know Molly will approve of your idea,” said Fred.

“You have it planned already,” said Christy.

“Christy, I ain’t much for throwin’ bouquets. The men all agree your talks are better than any sermons they have listened to. They know you speak from the heart. Pard, that is why I am for your proposition,” complimented Fred.

Christy blushed and was found wanting for something to say for the first time in many a day. He then pictured to his cowboy friend ambitions for the future in a manner similar to this: “Fred, I am convinced that the Bible is God’s plan; in it He discloses his plans for you and me and our fellowmen. Men should know God’s plan. You and I, as believers, have a responsibility, namely, to tell the story to our fellowmen.”

"Pard, you are right. Your sentiments are expressing it my way," said the cowboy, with a simple, childlike faith in his pal.

"The pals" hiked and hiked on an every-winding French road and planned and planned. Their plans were saturated with the highest and nobles of ambitions. They were so sacred that it would not be right to make them public.

Fortunately for some of their comrades, "the pals" chose a short cut home, which led them through a certain village. They had not passed the town very far, when a fellow staggered from the side of the road: "I can wh-whip anyone in the w-w-world; yes, and youse are included." He made a pass at Sheldon and almost smashed his nose against the pavement. He was soon on his way to his billet.

"Christy, look who is 'zig-zag.' I allowed he had better sense."

"Fred, we will wash him up. I never saw such a rotten, filthy mess. It is bad enough to see hogs wallow in swill but to see a human wallowing in his own vomit is the worst thing I can imagine," remarked Christy, almost disgusted and discouraged with the world and all therein.

The champion of booze was one of those individuals who knew when to stop and also was busy leading helpless ones home. Said he: "Christy, you are right. 'You put a bone before a dog's nose and he'll snatch at it,' as you said. I never saw so much drunkenness. It is too bad. I am going to keep my promise even though I know the nature of the beast is to seek the object of his thirsts and appetites. I am for closing it all out."

"So am I," said Christy.

"Those newspaper men, preachers and others that have been writing in the newspapers and maga-

zines about how sober the A. E. F. is, I just reckon those divine choppies must be looking out of the wrong end of the telescope when they come over here. No, our boys don't drink only when they can get it."

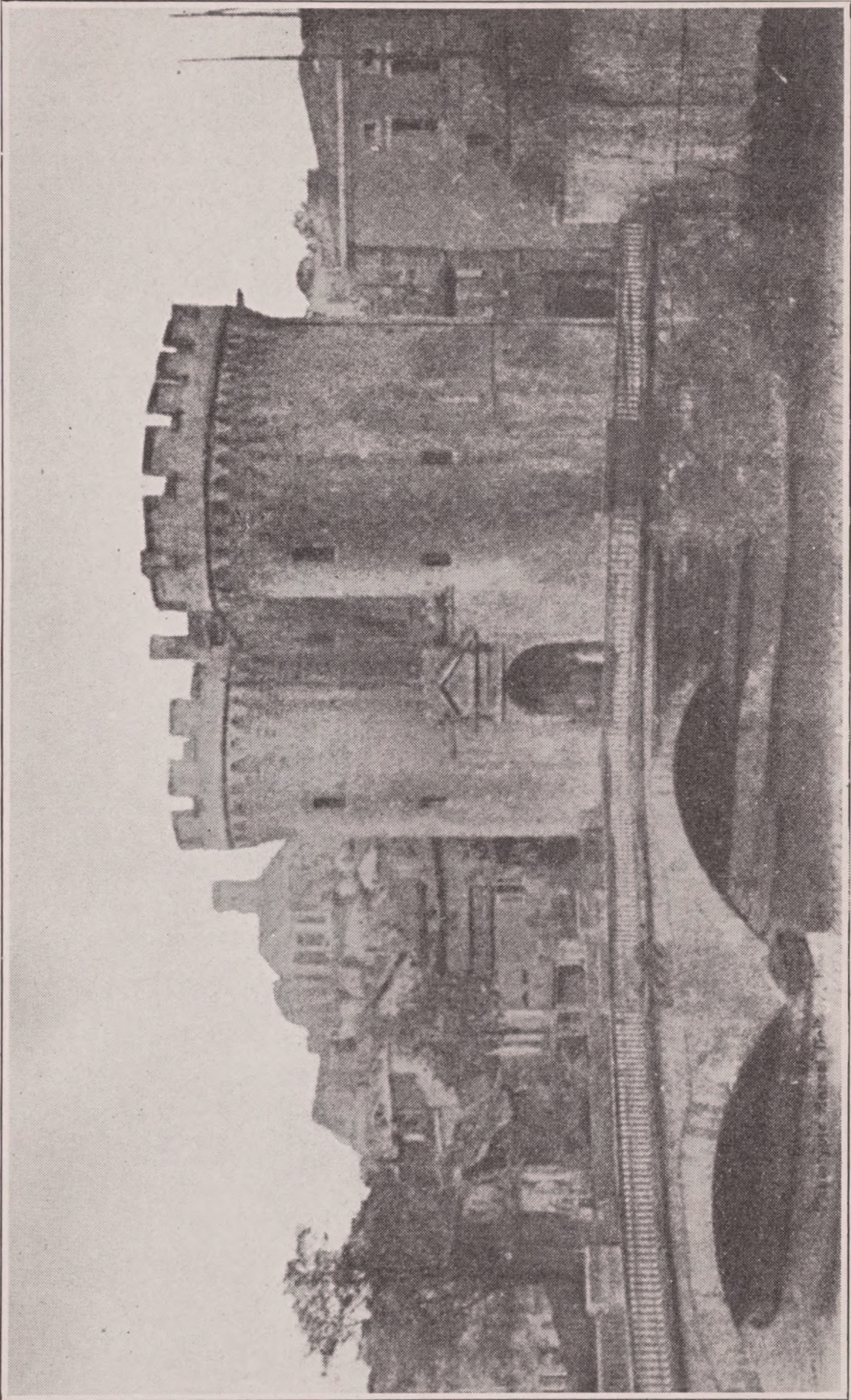
The boys had been drinking much water and to change to the French custom of drinking wine and try to keep the same capacity was just a bit too much of a change. Not all or even a majority of our boys did the drinking, but many did.

The next day the company was taken for a long hike. The after-effects of the day before were fairly well cured by this method. The captain gave the men this song and dance: "I am disgusted with the whole outfit. Many of you made hogs of yourselves. Those of you who did, know that you are liable to a court-martial. You are not going to get it, or I would better say that if you were court-martialed most of the company would be serving time.

"Some of the interesting incidents of yesterday's celebration were these: One of my men, standing in the door of a cafe, instead of giving me a proper military salute, shouted: 'Howdy, Captain; how are all the folks?' Another brilliant actor was carrying more than he could handle. I sent him home and took a bottle away from him. He argued with me, telling me that I had to pay him for it and also warning me not to drink. He then started home, but managed to wander back into town again. Men, I could tell you more but it is foolish. I expected more of you."

The men and even the captain laughed at the whole affair. It was funny but silly. Many of the guilty ones felt they were getting more than a square deal. They made resolutions to do better. Some

THE GATE OF VERDUN



“THEY SHALL NOT PASS”

kept them; others did not as long as their money lasted.

For the next few days the men were busy training. The end of the day would generally find them too tired to do much other than write a letter and go to bed.

A week or so after the battle of "Cognac" and the capture of "Vin Blanc," the men came in after a strenuous drill. The mail orderly stood in the door of the orderly room, holding a bunch of letters in his hands, a smile on his face.

The men knew that it was to be their first mail call in France. It mattered not to them that they were in formation; they forgot that part of it and stampeded the corporal.

The lucky boys danced, each man ran to a place of solitude—some to their bunks, others to a tree or down to the bridge.

"Gee, I got eight letters! How many did you get, Shorty?" asked Carl.

"A big bunch," was the reply.

"The pals" found each other and hiked down the path, and located themselves on an old log by the side of the swimming hole.

"I am sure lucky and happy. Two letters from Molly and the same from maw," said Fred.

"I cannot say as much, but the folks haven't forgotten me."

"I reckon, Christy, you won't mind listening to me read Molly's letter to you. She has received that safe-arrival card."

My Dear Fred:

Your dear letters received. The safe-arrival card made me especially happy. I read your letters every day and sometimes oftener. The word "safe" on that card keeps my days brighter.

The newspapers all seem to think the war will soon be over. I do hope so. The sooner, the happier I will be.

I am trying to be brave, but I fear I am failing—failing miserably—because I really want the war to end before you get into it.

If it doesn't end and you get into it, I am content to let the Lord's will be done.

No one can ever take your place in my heart. No, never.

Should you be called into the battle soon, remember in case you don't come back I will labor for the Lord so that we will meet in Heaven.

When I kissed you goodbye, it was only goodbye until we meet again.

Your little Irish sweetheart,
Molly.

P. S.—Get a Hun for me.

“Fred, that is a letter to be proud of. It is a masterpiece.”

“Christy, I don't reckon you'll mind being corrected. Not the letter, but the girl who wrote it.”

“You are right again. She is a mighty good girl.”

“I allow that she is plumb too good for me, but I ain't tryin' hard to convince her o' that,” smiled Fred.

“Fred, there are two who don't think so. She is one and I the other.”

“Christy, I have been wonderin' why your girl didn't write?” inquired Fred.

“Fred, I haven't a girl. I just thought she loved me. She was honest, however, and told me that she only considered herself a good friend of mine. Even so, I would like to hear if she is well.” Christy's voice broke as he said it and for a second his eyes

filled up when the cowboy said: "That kid brother of mine sends you his best wishes and wants you to visit us when we return."

"Ha, ha, someone remembers me. Indeed I will visit you. Say, I am writing him a letter today," said Christy.

The big cowboy smiled. "Don't swap me for him. I have been worrying that he would be cuttin' me out of Molly or tell her how little I am naturally worth."

"Mother certainly is a jewel. Listen to what she has to say:

To My Dear Son Christy:

Your postal card heralding the good news of your arrival was in this morning's mail.

We also received the letter you sent before you embarked. Dear boy, it has been a source of added comfort to your father and me.

Your companionship is missed by us both. We sincerely desire that it may be as sweet and rich when you return as it was before you left. Keep close to God and it will.

We are delighted to know that you have a chum with such manly attributes. He will no doubt be staunch and true. Make yourself worthy of Fred's company and when you and he return the doors of our home are open wide to you.

Dad and I caution you to care for your health. We join in sending you our love and best wishes.

Your mother,

Minnie Strong.

No comment was made on the letter. Fred had just finished reading his letters when they heard the bugle play, "Soupy, soupy, soupy, without a single bean." More from force of habit than from any-

thing else, the men jumped to their feet and ran for their place in the mess line.

“Everybody is smiling.”

After a period of snappy drill that afternoon and the last meal of the day finished, the men hurried to find enough candle light to answer their letters.

“I reckon, Christy, you’re happy not to be censoring these letters,” said Fred.

Twenty or more men found room to write on the kitchen table, on boxes, on boilers or anything that offered a smooth surface. These conditions being more or less rustic, the men didn’t write long drawn-out letters.

One by one they finished their letters. Some went to bed while others remained to discuss the current events of the day.

“How is the old meat burner?” asked Christy.

“Fairly well, pal, and my Avis says, I’m the guy for her.”

“Then you are in Jake.”

Said Bert: “I am, kid! I’m K. O. with the board. Avis still loves me.”

“What’s the latest dope, Bert?” asked Christy.

“Say, Christy, do you think I am a commanding general or an information bureau?”

“Everybody who hears a rumor comes to tell you about it in the hope of getting something to eat,” said Christy.

“You hit it on the head. I’ll tell you a good one on old Shorty. He was eating his supper and set it down on the ground to come over to the kitchen to get some ‘seconds,’ and a goose ate his meal. Ha, ha. He came over and wanted more. Boy! the bawling out I gave him. I felt sorry for him as I saw him take it to heart. It hit him right between the eyes!”

“You didn’t refuse him?”

“Refuse him? I’ll say not. He came in and gave me a lift with the work and I filled him full.”

“Since coming to France I notice you are unusually popular.”

“That ain’t all, brother. I am making these birds work for what they eat,” said the fighting cook.

Bert was orating on how “some boob burned the water” when “taps” sounded. He hollered to the bugler: “Hang that horn up in a tree and let the wind blow it.”

Shorty and Carl and “the pals” came together as they were going to bed. Shorty and Carl told their experience in a French barber shop.

“That barber that shaved Carl acted as if he was shell-shocked.”

Carl made a face that would scare the ordinary individual, as he said: “That maniac was trying to teach me the whole French language while he was working on me. He gave me a shower bath and crawled my frame and barely missed cutting my ears off with his gesticulations, and for emphasis he planted his fist on my nose.”

Shorty laughed and said: “I ain’t kiddin’, old Carl acted as though he was struck by a shell.”

“I noticed, Shorty, you didn’t let Frenchie shave you.”

The next morning the captain announced the company would roll their packs and march to the train. No one knew where they were going and all sorts of speculations were afloat.

Christy said to his pal: “Fred, it is evident that we are getting closer to the danger zone. It won’t be long until we are in it. We stick together in all things.”

“You know me, kid. You said it the other night. ‘It can’t be otherwise.’ ”

“Fred, my only ambition is to win the American Distinguished Service Cross,” said Christy.

“Them’s exactly my sentiments. I would rather have one of them than any hardware on my shoulders,” said Fred.

“Fred, it’s over the top together,” exclaimed Christy as “the pals” shook hands.

“Did you hear my knuckles crack?” asked Christy.

“Well, pard, I don’t mean to hurt you much,” laughed Fred.

Their bond of friendship sealed by this vow, they listened to the many comments that were buzzing around them.

They were sent to an army corps center, where they were given new equipment and then sent to a machine-gun school, where they received their final training before being sent to the front.

The training the men received while in France, up to the time they left the machine gun school, was much the same as they had received in the States. Of course they had learned to travel in box cars, sleep in barns, and wade through the everlasting mud of France.

School finished, the men started their trip toward the front. It was a memorable day in the lives of the men when Jim, the company clerk, came running out to where the boys were taking apart a machine gun, and told them: “The motorcycle orderly brought orders for us to pack up and leave for the front.” The news spread like wildfire.

“That sure sounds a heap like something doing. I joined the army to fight,” said Fred.

“The sooner we get there the quicker it is over.”

“Gee, I’ll have to catch a bunch of Huns in order to keep my word,” said Shorty.

“Everyone I knew told me to get a German for them,” said Christy.

“Christy, we are in for another box car ride,” said Carl.

“I can stand anything just to get a crack at the Kaiser,” emphasized Christy.

“I’d rather get him than anyone I know,” returned Carl.

Every now and then one would either have extra good ears or imagination and they would have the men hearing a cannon shot. They were passing through a country that had not been spared the war god’s grim ravishing. The cannon’s roar was now and then raising enough fuss to be heard. Each hour the sound became plainer and more threatening.

Shorty, in a fit of excitement, pointed in the air. “See those aeroplanes! They are fighting. Gee! See that one tumbling! I wonder if it is an American. Gosh! there goes another. Say, that is exciting.”

The men watched the event, enjoyed it and only feared that it was an American plane that was downed. They were pleased when they ended their trip and heard that the fight in the air was won by an American.

It was just twilight. The S. O. S. was busy sending supplies to the front. Trucks and ambulances were returning from the front with wounded.

“Christy, I am tired of listening to those guns,” said Fred.

“I hope to get used to it mighty soon.”

“I reckon things must have been lively around here. I can’t help feeling sorry for the folks. Not a fence standing, all their cow and horse sheds ripped to splinters; the walls of their homes look like chicken wire,” said the cowboy.

“Yes, and Fred, the thing that increases my admiration for the French people is the way they hold true to their home in spite of the foe,” said Christy.

The next day they marched, and marched, and slept in mud no less than three inches deep.

Mud bespattered but ready, the men awakened. They ate a rather cold portion of food, which was not always the case. There was some such complaining as this:

“Guys, I am going to get the Kaiser and torture him to death for getting me into such a mess as this,” said Shorty.

“I am going to do my best to make this a short business. Clean sheets beat mud and wet blankets,” added another.

“And when we get the Hun we will cage him and send him to the zoo,” said another.

It was just 2 o'clock in the afternoon when the captain halted the company and commanded them to put their gas masks in the alert position. The men felt a peculiar sensation grasp them.

“Fred, do you notice many of the boys who used to cuss are exchanging it for slang?” said Christy.

“I allow they are compromisin' with God.”

The men were within range of the enemy's guns. Now and then a shrapnel shell would burst around them. They were given a rest and under cover of darkness marched into the second line trenches.

“Christy, there isn't much trench here,” said Carl.

“I reckon we are too busy chasin' the Hun to stop and dig any ditches,” put in the big cowboy.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RELIGION OF THE FRONT

Many men marched into battle with the idea of never coming back. Many others marched into the battle with that hope, that desire, of again seeing the Statue of Liberty, once more to stroll down Broadway, and then return to their occupations.

Every man knew that some would come back and others wouldn't. Even though men had different ideas about coming back, they were alike in taking a long look ahead.

A long look ahead concerning their relationship with their God. Each man answered that question for himself and in his own way. Some said very little about it to their friends; others lived out and out for the teachings of Jesus Christ; still others argued that they didn't believe in any of that religious dope; but thank God only a few. Even most of them found their God before it was too late.

Many claim to have offered their first prayer before they went on the battlefield or in some tight place. Plenty of others tell that they prayed for the first time in many a day.

The religion of the front is big and magnificent. The best part of it is that it contains sermons in real practice. All sham and hypocrisy is cast aside. A man is a man, no more or less. If he has any worth in him his friends will find it out.

Shorty Duncan, old rounder that he was, after several unsuccessful attempts to live a Christian life, still desired to do so. The lives of Fred, Carl and Christy made him feel that way. He felt that they

had a big something that he did not possess, and a big something that he really ought to have.

The first night on the front, seven or eight fellows gathered to talk things over. The subject of interest simmered down to the one important thing.

Shorty sought that something when he said: "Youse guys have been talking about Jesus Christ. You have been living the way you talk. I've started a couple of times, but you see I hain't done much of that kind of living."

"Shorty, old boy, you are doing all right. When you feel that you are not living up, just ask the Big Partner to help you," suggested Christy.

"Well, I just want to ask you one question."

"What is it, Shorty? I'll do my best to answer it."

"Well, just suppose you were walking through the jungles of Africa. Suppose you had a Bible in one hand and a club in the other. Suppose a big lion springs out at you, Which would you use, the Bible or the club?" asked Shorty in all seriousness.

For a moment Christy was stumped for a reply. "Shorty, if I had used the Bible when I should, then I would not need to worry about that hand, and as far as the club hand is concerned, I am telling you that my feet would carry me to a safer zone in a mighty short time."

The boys all laughed at the well-put answer. Shorty felt a sigh of relief as he said: "Guys, I ain't goin to let that Bible hand bother me when I am fighting the Hun."

"I reckon, Shorty, I haven't been much of a saint myself, but I feel a heap better since I started to agree with the Master," argued the cowboy.

"It changed me from a tramp to the fair likeness of a man," added Carl.

“Here is a little testament I have been carrying for someone,” said Christy.

“Thanks, kid, and I’ll sure use this one.”

Zip! Siz! went a volley of fire over the men’s heads.

“Gee! I ain’t crazy about meetin’ none of them imps.”

The men all laughed at each other because of the peculiar movements they made as the bold missiles visited their territory.

The boys accustomed themselves to the roar of the beastly guns and the shrapnel bursting around them. They kidded one another about how well they were learning to dodge bullets or how they liked Jerry to shave them.

The men learned to sing to the tune of the whizzing bullets; most of their music came under the heading of quick time.

“I reckon it won’t be long and we’ll be getting our share of this excitement.”

“I guess you’re right, Fred. I feel excited now,” said one.

“My old bones kinda tell me we are in for some live times,” smiled Fred.

It was a cold night. Fred had just finished taking a walk to keep warm. This time he was away from the crowd a little longer than usual. When he returned it was impossible for him to conceal his anger.

“What is the matter, Fred, are you worried over something?” asked Christy.

“Worried? I should say not. I am sore. I allow that I have a right to be,” said the cowboy, gritting his teeth as he spoke.

“What’s the trouble?” asked one of the men.

“Trouble enough. Fellows, I don’t believe in talking, but that wretched Rent would make a saint cuss.”

“We agree,” said one and then another.

“What has he done?” asked another.

“Fellows, I allow that you won’t tell every one in the A. E. F.. I just have to tell some one or I’ll explode.”

“Mum is the word,” agreed the bunch.

“Dad blamed if I can hold it any longer. Well, as I walked over in that direction I saw a fellow bending over someone. Thought maybe I could be a bit of help in case the fellow was injured or sick, so I walked over to the spot. My old blood boiled when I saw Rent relieving that half-dead German kid of his coat. I asked Rent what he was doing and he told me that he was cold and thought he would take the kid’s overcoat. Gee! Fellows, I never heard of such selfish cowardice before.

“The low-down cur deserves a lynching,” said one.

“I hate selfishness; that is the worst I ever heard of,” said Carl.

“Fellows, I looked into the face of that dying kid. I knew he was a German, but that didn’t make no difference to me. I felt his hands and they were cold. Then Rent said: ‘He is only a Hun.’ I allow that I knocked that selfish brute into an unexpected sleep.”

“Served him right.”

“Ain’t that cowardly, to take a coat off a defenseless sick kid?” said Shorty, clenching his fist ready to give Rent a good whipping.

“Where is your overcoat?” asked Christy.

Fred admitted: “I allowed that it might help the kid more’n it would me.”

The men felt the bigness of the cowboy's heart and began asking themselves could they have done so much for the German boy.

"What are we going to do to Rent?" asked Shorty.

The men argued pro and con for a few minutes when they walked over to where Rent lay. The selfish coward was just coming to when the men surrounded him, blindfolded him and gave him to understand that his punishment was to be a night in no-man's-land, tied to a post. The men were amused at Rent's sad demonstration of bravery.

"You coward! You selfish cur! What have you to say for yourself?" demanded Sheldon.

"I, I, I, don't kn-know. Wh-what have I-I d-done?"

"I reckon you know what you did to that kid, you coward."

"Guy, I ain't kiddin'. You better make peace with God before we make pieces of you," advised Shorty.

"Wh-why, this is some joke," pussyfooted Rent.

The men led the prisoner what seemed a long distance to him. They tied him to a badly splintered tree with enough rope to hold up Brooklyn bridge. They returned to the sick and wounded boy and added Rent's covers to his fox-hole.

The men retired and snatched a little sleep. That cold, cold night Rent pulled and tugged at those ropes in a fruitless attempt to free himself. Early the next morning, after the guns opened fire in dead earnest, Fred untied the knots and freed an altogether different Rent.

He was shaking like a leaf. That brazen, selfish spirit had been whipped. For the time being he did not have anything to replace the miserable evil.

He did find courage to tell Fred: "I am ashamed; I'll try and do better."

The cowboy felt that he had done a big thing for Rent. He called the men together and told them in his warm-hearted fashion: "I am for giving Rent a chance to make good."

"We can do no less," said Carl.

The men talked it over and decided to forget the past and let the future bear the fruits of their judgment.

Fred turned his attention to the wounded young Fritzie. The fair-haired youth knowingly looked into Fred's tanned face and said: "Ich danke sie," which means "I thank you."

It is true that the terrible habits of selfishness and cowardice had such a tremendous hold on Rent that it was an everlasting and continued fight for him to overcome them. In spite of all he could do, the dreaded evils would appear in his actions. The men overlooked much because they realized he was making a real fight. The men of the A. E. F. detested the nasty habits of selfishness and cowardice.

It didn't take the men long to adapt themselves to the conditions at the front. It was common to hear some one whistle or sing some of the songs they learned back in the training camp.

Now and then one of the men would joke about Jerry's effort to hit them. Joking, singing and whistling can be counted as a valuable part of the religion of the front.

Sergeant Sheldon came from the company orderly room with a bit of news: "The first sergeant told me that we will get into the real fighting tomorrow."

"My old heart feels for the infantry men," said Christy.

"You bet, they are the guys that go over the top, and deserve the credit," added Shorty.

The company runner came up to Sheldon with an order from Major Smith. "Sergeant Sheldon will report to Battalion Headquarters for the purpose of receiving special instruction."

All the men in Fred's company were eager for his promotion. They thought that was why he was called away at that time.

"Gee, guys, I hope we don't lose Fred," remarked Shorty.

Christy felt concerned for fear he would lose Fred's companionship.

Fred walked into the dugout that was used for battalion headquarters. The major was waiting for him. The cowboy-sergeant saluted his superior officer with so much snap that it increased an already great admiration for the young westerner. "Sir! Sergeant Sheldon reports to Major Smith as commanded by order."

"Sergeant Sheldon, your services stand out as the best in the battalion. You are the one man I am willing to trust with dangerous work," said the major.

"Sir, I am willing to do anything. I have a pal; he and I planned to do this kind of work together." Fred forgot his military bearing for the moment; he fidgeted with his helmet straps; he stood on one foot and then the other, embraced in deep thought, fearing that the major would think he was afraid to go alone.

"Sergeant, you may pick out seven men. Send me their names and numbers. I will send you more definite instructions later. In the meantime, take this stationery and have the men send a letter home, which will be mailed in case they don't come back."

"All right, sir." Then Fred saluted, adding a snappy about-face and marched out of the office.

“Guys, I have a hunch something is going to happen.”

“Shorty, something is always happening up here,” said Carl.

“Gee! here comes Fred.”

“What is the news?”

“Fellows, the major wants me to take a detail out into no-man’s-land to do some dangerous work. I am giving you men first chance to join me.”

They all volunteered, so Fred was not troubled with recruiting for this job. One of the volunteers said: “I would rather follow Fred into hell-fire than some of these birds down a country road.”

“Men, I reckon you might want to write a letter home. In case we get bumped off the major promised to mail them.”

Christy and Fred went to their fox-hole and offered a prayer. They prayed for strength and courage to carry on their task in a creditable and honorable fashion.

When they had finished their prayer, Christy said to his pal: “There is one verse that I like to think of as a soldiers’ verse. It shows the wonderful faith of David, the warrior, when he said: ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.’”

The big cowboy smiled and said: “Christy, I reckon that is the only way a Christian could feel.”

“Right you are.”

The men sat down and wrote their letters, using helmets, gas mask bags or a part of a blown-up cart to write on.

Funny as it may seem, the mother instinct seemed to be irritated as the boys planned the expedition. Christy found out that at that hour his mother went into her bedroom to pray.

Christy's letter to his mother:

Dear Mother:

These days are filled with hardships, but the excitement makes us forget that.

Mother, dear, the hardest trial of all is to watch the suffering of others.

The hour is near when my manhood is to be tested. My memory of you will help me.

I owe my country my all. I am willing to pay in full. I enter into this fight with the hope of returning to you. Of course duty is first, no matter what the danger may be.

Should the war god fail to demand of me my life I will continue to be for anything that will make America a better country.

Should this letter reach you, it only means that we will meet each other up there.

Your loving son,
Christy.

Christy started to fold his letter and put it into an envelope, when he looked into Fred's face and found there an expression that caused him to unfold it and say: "Fred, when you finish yours, read this."

"I reckon you'll not have to ask me twice."

A few minutes later Fred gathered the letters and delivered them to the major. He returned from his final conference. His eyes sparkled with that inherent desire to be a hero, a real hero.

Bravery is the finest quality in a man's religion. The only fear most men of the front had was they feared they might fear. The realness of a man's religion can be judged by his deeds of bravery.

The story of Rent's selfishness and cowardice is brought out to show how the men of the A. E. F. hated such low-lived habits. On the other hand,

how they loved and admired unselfishness and bravery.

Many and many a man has shared his blanket with his buddy on the coldest night. Many the cigarette has had a dozen puffers. Many an individual food ration was split four ways and even more.

Bravery is the first in the list of essentials that backs the religion of real men, the kind who fought and won. Love is next and close akin to bravery. Love, not that weakling, foolish, namby—pamby sort, but that love of right, that love of freedom, that love of home, that strong, virile love shown in the deeds of mercy performed by some of the ruffians on the battlefield.

The beauty of that practical religion is that it gave to its men the heart to laugh, to joke, to sing in spite of the almost unbearable conditions. It gave to its men the unselfish thought of others. It gave to them a wholesome conception of the real manhood of the Christ.

CHAPTER XIX

ROUTING THE HUN—AND FRED'S DESTINY

The Argonne sector was the scene of many heroic and unselfish deeds; like the whole western front, it is honeycombed with shell holes. Many splendid photographs have told the story of destruction. The conversation of the men will doubtless bring out human touches that the camera cannot snap.

The time was fast approaching when Fred's detail was to start.

Said Shorty: "Guys, I kinda have a funny feeling. I am 'fessing up. Gee! but it will be exciting."

The fellows all laughed at Shorty's attempt to be honest and brave at the same time.

Darkness hid the enemy in its shadows, so Fred and his detail ventured forth on their daring mission. The men were unusually cautious that first night. They accomplished their work then returned to headquarters and reported.

The next day the noise was terrible—more terrible than any thunderstorm; yes, more terrible than any conception of the human mind. Fred's faithful crew worked all the night before and fought all that day. They couldn't hear one another talk; the continuous roar of the cannon drowned their voices.

In the middle of the afternoon it quieted down and many of Fred's friends crowded around him as he and his companions told of their expedition.

Shorty was first to have his say: "Guys, I ain't kiddin' youse; I didn't need a shave-tail to tell me to stand still when Jerry sent up them star shells. The blame things scared me stiff."

“Goodnight! I stumbled on top of a dead German and took his iron cross from him. It will make a good watch fob,” said Carl.

Christy added: “We managed to get within ten yards of Fritzie’s lines without being discovered.”

“Yes, and I’ll bet they wouldn’t have talked so much if they knew where we were,” said Carl.

“They are confused, ruffled and worried over our last advances. They never intended to retreat; from their line of lingo it is plain to see that the Yanks are too much for them,” said Christy.

“I reckon Shorty will have a-plenty of souvenirs. I allow he has more than he can carry.”

“Youse guys can laugh,” said Shorty, as he pulled the head of a dead Hun from his bag. “Gee! that will make a fine inkstand for a lawyer friend of mine.”

The company clerk ran over to the boys in a high fit of excitement when he broke the news of the company’s first casualty. “Corporal Corn has been killed and three more of the boys severely wounded.”

A spell of gloom came over the men as they listened to the news. They thought that they had hardened themselves to the fate of war, but it was different when fatality entered the ranks of their own company.

The big-hearted cowboy was touched. “I reckon Corporal Corn did well. I always allowed he meant well.”

“Boys, it is getting closer home,” said Christy.

“Guys, I know his wife and kid. I ain’t no one to care for so I am going to give them a helping hand,” promised Shorty.

The men snatched a bit of sleep whenever they could. The night was spent in getting into position, moving the wounded and bringing up reinforce-

ments. They found more time to sleep in the day time than at night.

The day Fred pictured in that sky mirror was at hand. Fred was given command of a machine gun that wrought havoc to a German counter-attack. It was all over when Fred said: "I never allowed that God made such good runners. Jerry leads the world in passing machine gun bullets."

Shorty was perspiring as he carried ammunition to the gun. "Youse guys shoot, just to see me work," snapped Shorty, but withal his grumbling there never was one more willing than he.

Cook Smith and his detail came up with several boilers of hot stuff. The food was well cooked, such as it was, and the cook fed each man his full share.

After dinner Shorty took a drink from his canteen but there remained only the dregs, which was a pile of dirty sand. The hardest of all trials at the front, agree most of the Yanks, was the lack of an ample supply of anywhere near decent water.

Sergeant Sheldon and his detail were ordered on another expedition into no-man's-land. They were less cautious this time.

The early part of the night was well lighted by the moon, but later clouds gathered and the fields were closeted in a dead, drear darkness.

The men were muddy and wet from head to foot. Their poor raincoats were of little value. Uncertainty preceded each step; it was a question whether they would stumble over the dead or wounded, or step into a shell hole. Perchance they might bump into some of the enemy. However, the last was least likely as Jerry was busy figuring out the safest way home.

The men had to keep close together or they would lose each other. Confidently and boldly the men carried on. It was no fault of theirs that when the

early morning light broke through, they found themselves past their objective, away from any assistance. The rainy weather conditions fooled them.

The men had fought hard and well the day before and battled the elements that stormy night, in quest of military information. They were tired; their old bones ached, their muscles cried for rest and relaxation, their stomachs begged for nourishment. It would have been easy for them to surrender, but Yanks' fighting spirit would not let them give up.

The gray of the early morning was turning to a brighter hue, when the enemy discovered them.

Jerry, of four years' war experience, had learned many things about the game, that gave him an advantage over Yank of only a few days' actual war life. Nevertheless, the Huns had been taught to respect the prowess of Yank, therefore they sent thirty men to capture the eight American Crusaders.

A miracle seemed to transform the tired men when they realized their position. They were no longer worn out, but abnormally strong and ready for a rough encounter.

The zero hour was rapidly approaching. The American artillery was to open a barrage only a few yards over Sheldon's head. Jerry was closing in on Fred. The fight started when Shorty hollered: "Guys, we are in for a fight to the finish."

The zero hour came when Jerry was closing in and the artillery barrage cut them from their command. It was a clear case of eight Yanks against thirty Huns.

Fred's men were surrounded. Fritz fired the first gun. It wounded Christy but not enough to put him out of commission.

Sheldon hollered some orders but no one heard him. Instinct taught the men to follow Fred, who led them to an old, blown-up dugout. Boche, with

his bayonet, had an advantage over the machine gunners in close-up fighting, who were armed with revolvers.

Jerry was puzzled. He was looking behind almost as much as in front. They seemed to fear more Yanks were near. Evidently they had been fooled before.

Bang! and the first Hun was bumped off. Bang! and another. They were still closing in on the men when the artillery dropped a shell in the bunch of Germans to the south of the dugout, which killed and wounded seven more. Now Fred had only three sides to watch.

Fred realized that a hand-to-hand encounter would prove fatal. One avenue of chance was still open to him; to beat a hasty retreat to the south. Four Yanks did this and thus attracted the enemy's attention from the dugout when tenths of seconds meant life or death.

Two of the retreating Yanks were killed but Jerry suffered ten more. The odds were fifteen to six. After several attempts, Fritzie managed to close in on the four Yanks in the dugout.

Christy was cornered and bleeding from the arm. He fought hard but now his revolver was empty and his body groggy from several other blows. He had reached the stage where death would be the easiest way but he remembered his promise to his mother.

Shorty Duncan and Carl Stewart fought the Hun with all their might. Fred jumped out of the hole, not from fright, but instinctively grasped an opportunity to put Jerry at a disadvantage. While Fred was leaping Jerry misjudged a bayonet lunge and only ripped Sheldon's trousers from hip to knee.

Christy's assailants stood mummified when the cowboy gave them one of his defiant glances. The big, true-hearted cowboy knew it would be suicide

to jump back into the pit. He knew if he did not do so his pal would be among those "out west."

The fight within Fred was worse and harder than the one with Jerry. The fight within was so terrible because, as things stood, he had a mighty good chance to come out of the scrap untouched.

Just then he heard Shorty call: "Fred," "Fred," as the little fellow was keeling over and bleeding from the heart.

Fred's rage was warmed into rampant fury. One of his pals had just been killed by the bloody foe. His own partner was bleeding and helpless. At that moment the fight within Fred was much worse than the fight with Jerry. At least it was a more severe test of his manly qualities. The law of self-preservation is the first and most natural of all.

Just at that all-important moment Fred's imagination was unusually vivid. The sweetest of all pictures was painted on his mind. He saw Molly and himself at the altar. He saw them spending a beautiful sunshiny afternoon in the environs of Molly's favorite spot. Another picture flashed to his mind, more tempting than the first. It showed him teaching his own son to ride while both grandmothers applauded and Molly watched every move with a mother's care.

In spite of the tremendously inspiring and enticing temptation, Fred determined to save his companion's life at any cost. The fight within lasted about a tenth of a second and was won in less than half that time.

The odds were still in Jerry's favor, seven to three. Carl was knocked unconscious by the butt of a German rifle. Christy was only semi-conscious as Jerry was about to end his existence. Two of the four men who retreated shammed death. Their trick fooled Jerry. They equipped themselves with the

rifles of the dead Germans and baffled the enemy by making a neat cleaning and thus evening things up.

The cowboy made a leap upon Christy's torturers. Fred disposed of the two barbarians. The leader of Jerry's detachment slipped his bayonet under Fred and then was brazen enough to throw up his hands and shout "Kamerad." The slaughter was all over, because the Yanks came after information. They knew the captives were in possession of the same.

The prisoners held their hands overhead while they were searched and relieved of weapons. One Yank guarded the Huns while the other gave first aid to the wounded.

The infantry, commonly termed doughboys, had advanced behind the artillery barrage. They arrived too late to assist in the little fight. However, they made a fine job of routing the Hun.

After turning over the prisoners, the men returned to their companies. Their comrades received, with mingled emotions of sorrow and pride, the fate of their highly respected heroes. Other casualties had entered upon the companies' roster. That night the captain had to make a request for twenty-nine replacements in order to bring his company up to fighting strength.

Returning to the scene of battle: It was several minutes before Christy realized that our man of destiny, the cowboy, lay before him breathing his last. Christy was too weak to even attempt to bend over his friend, so he crawled and squirmed along the ground until finally he managed to get close to him. "Fred, can I do anything for you?" he asked in a quivering voice. Fred smiled and moaned as he motioned him to come closer. A last effort gave him enough strength to rise up in a sort of fashion and kiss Christy, saying in a panting breath, "Molly" A second time he kissed his pal and said,

“Mother!” in a parting breath. He went west grasping Christy by the hand as if to say: “Old boy, I reckon we’ll meet in the happy hunting grounds.”

“The Rancher Boy—A Man of Destiny.” He reached his destination!—the Promised Land—the place where all thoughtful men are aiming to go.

The stretcher bearers found Christy and Carl some time that same afternoon. They were hurried back to an overcrowded field hospital, where they received hasty medical attention. Later they were sent to a base hospital.

One long day passed before they pulled into the hospital center. The train was unloaded and fortunately the boys were assigned to the same ward.

The day nurse followed the doctor’s instructions. She washed and dressed the wounds. Under the influence of unconsciousness, Christy’s arm was operated upon. She came to bed seven. She stood in front of the bed and gazed in fearful amazement. She instinctively whispered, “Carl! Carl!” No reply; no sign of response greeted her. His head was bandaged so that the face underneath could not be seen.

The nurse ran back to her desk, then returned to the bed. She looked on his “dog tag” and found his name to be Carl Stewart. She attended to her many duties with unusual dispatch and then returned to bed seven.

The next day, after an uneasy and short rest, she was assured by the scar on Carl’s chin that he was truly her brother. She watched him morning, noon and night, always anxious about his condition.

Carl improved rapidly, but to her it seemed a slow process. She wanted to tell him that she was his sister, but she feared it would be dangerous to

startle him. It was hard to keep the good news from him.

One fine afternoon, Carl awakened from his slumber just as the nurse happened into the ward. She walked over to his bedside and sweetly inquired, "May I do something for you, Carl?"

He answered: "I realize I am not normal. I know that I am a bit dazed, but listen, you resemble my sister before—before we parted."

The nurse was alarmed; she was almost afraid and at the same time felt complimented and proud to know that he still cared for his sister. Again she asked: "Carl, may I do something for you?"

"Gee Sis used to call me Carl in the same sort of way. I just want you to talk to me, that is all. You remind me of my sister—the best girl in the world. Like you, she is a Red Cross nurse somewhere-in-France." Semi-conscious as Carl was, he seemed to enjoy talking to the nurse about the childhood days of his sis and him. He talked himself to sleep. She lingered for some time, joyfully recounting his reminiscences.

Naturally, Christy was hungry for companionship. He craved for something to replace the emptiness of his life. Helen did not care for him, at least he was given every reason for such an assumption. Fred, his bosom friend, his pal, his chum, had been taken from him. He would think of his folks at home and in those moments would feel comforted. He didn't dare think too much about home. He would read the Bible and find rest. He longed for the moments when Nurse Stewart would take his temperature, feel his pulse and offer a few kind words of encouragement. His heart was filled with rapture during those moments.

It was one of those happy moments for Christy when Carl exclaimed: "Say, nurse, you look like

my sister, you talk like my sister, and, and, and I believe I am in my right mind when I say you are my sister."

"Yes, Carl, you are right. I am your sister. I thought it would be best for you to grow stronger before I told you. You are strong now and I am glad you found it out," comforted Anna as with tears of joy streaming down her cheeks she petted her brother.

Something evidently told Christy that Dan Cupid was shooting at his old heart. Every thought of her was one of love and affection.

Nurse Stewart wasn't the prettiest girl in the land of the living nor was she a beauty. Her features were pleasant, although marked by lines of worldly experience. The hard work of the emergency told on her. It is certain that her attraction was not to be found in skin deep beauty, but in her fine quality, her beautiful manner, her willingness, her thoughtfulness and cheerfulness.

She was graceful and trim of stature. She was energetic, alert and very clever. She could rightly claim the friendship and admiration of anyone she came in contact with. Christy wanted to know her better and because he wanted to, he would.

The doctor, followed by the little white cart, went through the ward, prescribing. He came to bed seven and told the occupant: "Son, you are improving marvelously. Soon you will be able to return to your company." This was unwelcome, welcome news. Unwelcome, because his visit with his sister would come to an end. Welcome, because he could return to the front for the grand windup.

"Good morning," said the doctor in his cordial manner, to Christy. "How do you feel this big morning?"

"Sir, I feel good enough to get out of bed."

"That's the trouble with you boys. You work on a man's sympathy and defeat his better judgment. You may get up for several hours after dinner."

"You lucky guy," called one of the bed-ridden patients from across the ward.

"Congratulations," called Carl.

"Damn it! I have been here six weeks and you haven't been here half that time," called another.

Quiet was more or less maintained so long as the doctor was in the ward, but when he left they would joke and poke fun at each other. Their greatest sport was to kid each other about the branch of service they were in. Yes, and to praise their beloved mess sergeant. However, the adjectives they used sounded rather out of place for parlor reading. Drawing of ridiculous cartoons formed a part in the day's activities.

A little Belgian girl came in with the American edition of one of the large dailies. The success of our armies, the rumored surrender of Austria, the news of Germany's readiness to consent to the Allies' terms gave the men a renewed eagerness to return to the front.

Christy ate his dinner without tasting a bite. He slipped on his overcoat and walked over to Carl's side.

"Christy, you are lucky. I hope to be up soon. I hope to get up in time to go back to the company with you."

"I hope so, too. We must stick together from now on."

"I am for it," said Carl.

"Boy, you called me lucky, but I am not half as much so as you are," said Christy.

"What do you mean?"

“You have such a good sister. Boy, I am admitting that I have been jealous of you. She certainly pays particular attention to you. You know, Carl, I love her,” blushed Christy.

Smiling, Carl lifted his head and looked his friend straight in the eyes. “She is some girl. I wish you success, old kid.”

Christy bowed his head and walked away. Instinctively he walked out onto the porch to satisfy his longing for the big outdoors. He was just in time to see a long Red Cross train pull into the hospital center. A number of buglers played “Assembly.” From every door came men carrying litters to the train, where they unloaded the mutilated bodies and took them to different wards. Two or three such trains with ten or twelve coaches pulled in every day.

Christy’s mind drifted over his multiplicity of troubles. He would talk to himself, sometimes out loud. He would say, “She is such a good girl. I can’t believe it.” Then he could see Fred with the bloody Hun’s bayonet sticking through him. Even now he seemed to care for Helen. He longed for something in his life that was missing. A companion to share his abundance of life, some one to confide in, someone to plan with.

Christy was fatigued so he went back to his bed, stopping long enough at Carl’s bed to say: “Old boy, it won’t be long until we return to our company.”

“You are right, but you must take care of yourself.”

“I sure love that girl,” said Christy to himself. “Gee! I am sorry Carl ever told that story.” He remembered the story in the good book—the story of the woman who was accused and about to be stoned by her accusers. They asked the Great Teacher,

“What shall we do with this woman?” Christ answered, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” No one moved as Jesus told her: “Nor do I accuse thee; go thy way and sin no more.” This picture on his mind, Christy fell asleep like a babe in a cradle.

The next day Carl was permitted to get up. Nurse Stewart managed to get relieved. The three spent the afternoon in a quiet place where they could be alone.

Carl started: “I feel fine, but being in bed so long has weakened me.”

“Yes, and brother I have a suspicion the battering you received has something to do with your weakness.”

That afternoon a new truth brightened the lives of the boys. They found something in common was drawing them closer together.

A fight was started in Christy. The past of the girl he loved formed a barrier against his ambition. Not only from his point of view, but Anna had character enough not to encourage Christy, although that same morning she confided in Carl: “He is the only man I truly admire and love.”

Carl's fondest hope had come true—he had found his sister. Christy was dazed by the happenings of the past month—Fred's death, his disappointment in Helen, the barrier of Anna's past.

The dawn of peace lighted the world. The allied success encouraged Christy to keep strength and fight the manifold bruises of his heart. His strong smile, his clean thought, his words of good cheer endeared him to everyone he met.

CHAPTER XX

THE ARMISTICE

Four years of bloodshed and devastation, carnage and pillage upon the frontiers of France, Italy, Belgium and the Eastern Front; four years of war involving most of the nations of the world; four years of untold suffering under the reign of the war god, had brought the world to look upon the grim business as a regular part of its activities.

Four years of fighting on the battlefields had meant as many years of prayer for peace by the folks at home.

November 11th the world was overjoyed by the news of the sudden death of the cruel hearted, cold, uncouth, bloodthirsty war god. The goddess of peace ascended to the throne of the universe amid the cheers of celebrating peoples in a surprised and happy world.

The boys at the front staged a celebration all their own; the war-stricken countries rejoiced; even our enemies heaved a sigh of relief; the homes, the towns, the villages, and the cities of all the nations received the welcome news with a demonstration long to be remembered.

Peace a reality, the world could soon return to its normal activities. Better than all else the flower of the world's manhood could again turn their attentions from the grim tasks of the battlefield and do about-face unashamed; they could look with expectancy toward home and the pursuit of their life's ambitions.



ROAD NEAR CHATEAU THIERRY

Peace not only changes the status quo of the world at large, but it also changes the men engaged in the world conflict. They think of the future of their countries and their part in it. Why should they not dwell on these things? Who has a greater right than they? They have fought for a great cause and the result must not be an empty shell of ideals.

The people at home welcome into their midst from the American Expeditionary Forces different men from those who left for "over there." The real change is that they feel their responsibility more than ever.

With responsibility backed up with righteousness as their foremost principle, the Yanks will return to their communities, leaders, inspired by noble and brave motives which sacrifice, and sacrifice alone, can compel.

The Yanks, true to their nature as fighters, will fight for the ideals they know to be theirs. Although humble because of their hatred for boasting, they are strong with the strength that comes from victory. They will give of their strength liberally to help make their country better.

The Yanks return to their loved ones with a greater capacity for friendship and undoubtedly a deeper appreciation for the comforts of home.

No hazy, hap-hazard, visionary religion will satisfy their religious nature. They have found a religion based upon a strong foundation of righteousness, altruistic and just the simple teachings of Jesus Christ. True to their responsibility and strong with victory to back them, will the Crusaders, in their own way, answer the great question: "What shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

On November 11th, 1918, a new era dawned upon the world. The Yanks' mind turned from thoughts of dying for their country to thoughts of living for

their country. With vivid recollections to remind them of how their comrades bled and died to give to the world a new freedom, so will they live that their comrades died not in vain, but for the glory of all the people in the world.

Christy and Carl were in the discharging ward of the hospital when the good news startled them. They were detained several hours because everyone stopped working and gave vent to their feelings. The usual quiet of the hospital was forgotten; crutches were thrown away; sick and half-sick celebrated. The noise and excitement in many ways resembled the celebration of a football victory.

The boys, tired of waiting for their releases, returned to their old ward to share in the hilarity of their mates.

One patient expressed everybody's sentiments when he said: "Men, I feel that it is another German trick."

"Gosh! I sure hope it is real. Just think! It means no more bullet dodging," said another.

"I sure wish that I could be in the States tonight," yelled a fellow from the other end of the ward.

"Man! Man! I am telling you that there is something doing at home," shouted a happy war victim as he let go with three loud, lusty hurrahs.

"My gal will be expecting me home on the first transport," added Skinny.

"Yes, and guys I have a rare old picture of Skinny as a serious benedict," smiled his pard from across the ward.

Cowpuncher allowed "Skinny will shore be able to teach his kids a heap o' devilment."

"I am not kidding the bunch when I tell you that I am going to get married and raise a bunch of kids before they have another war," promised old Texas.

Hard-boiled Pete almost believed his own word when he said: "Guys, I wish the war would last long enough for me to kill a few more Huns."

Every man in the ward was nicknamed soon after he entered it. Generally the patients knew each other by no other names.

Bursts of enthusiasm would break into their conversations. Outside the band played "Liberty Bell" and all the men who were able ran to the window to listen.

"Boy, that song has a fine, big meaning just now," said Christy.

"You are right. The crowd out there thinks so. Gee! they are happy," added Carl.

"So am I."

"Christy, I don't know if you are or not. One minute you are so jubilant and the next you look so sad and lonesome."

"Carl, I am mighty glad for the tidings of peace, but I must admit that I get to thinking: 'Why couldn't it have ended a month ago?' Then Fred would have been here."

The noise subsided after several hours, so the boys returned to the office, hoping to be released from the hospital. Nurse Stewart was there to greet them. "Are you boys ready to leave?" said she.

"Yes, Sis."

"I am so happy, so overjoyed! I just can't tell you how happy I am. It is all over before we part," said Anna, as tears of joy bubbled forth.

"We are happy," said Carl, as he took advantage of the occasion to hug and kiss his own sister. Christy felt a bit jealous of his own friend and promised himself a similar treat at another time.

"Brother, you must write often and tell me all about everything."

The sergeant called the boys to his desk and gave them their release and a note to the R. T. O. directing them to their company.

“Goodbye, nurse; I count it an enviable privilege to have met you.”

“Goodbye, Mr. Strong; I am so glad that you and brother are together.”

“So am I, and say, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“I’ll try to grant it.”

“Will you answer my letters?” asked Christy.

“Most certainly.”

The men received two days’ rations and then proceeded on their way through a country blessed with the cessation of hostilities after four long years.

“Traveling in this coach beats the old boxcar,” said Christy.

“I’ll say so,” replied Carl.

They passed through villages, towns and cities on their trip. They found much of interest in each.

“The little town we passed through had a queer way of celebrating,” said Christy.

“You mean lighting all those candles on the town hall?”

“Yes, I guess they are the only means of illumination.”

“The whole town was out but no one knew what to do.”

“Yes, Carl, but it is easy to see that the people are happy. If some kid shouts the whole crowd shouts.”

Mistakes occur in the best regulated institutions, the army not excepted. The boys were sent to the wrong company. However, this was unknown to them when they decided to join in the celebration at Bordeaux. They managed to slip by the military police. They felt that this was a day of all days and were willing to take a chance.

It was past noon November 12th; but the people were still wild. The wildest dreams of the wildest dreamer could not commence to give the demonstration a close second.

“Look, Carl, see the crippled soldiers marching down the street.”

Men with legs cut off marched on stumps and hobbled on crutches; blind were led by their more fortunate comrades. Men disabled in many other ways paraded down the boulevard, some were pushed in armchairs; nevertheless, all were shouting and carrying on with their triumphant march.

Every passerby stopped to cheer the brave warriors. The hat was passed and the heroes received liberal donations.

A carnival was in town. Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, British, Italians, and soldiers from all over the world attended the different stunts. After spending beaucoup francs, the boys returned to the public square.

An American band played some popular music. The crowd was enormous. The air was saturated with joy.

“Boy, look at those Poilus dancing on their peg-legs. See that woman throwing dishes in the air. Good night! See the mademoiselles steal Yank’s cap. I guess we better ditch ours,” said Carl.

“Old Yank is at the height of his glory in that crowd. Those girls have him corraled and won’t free him,” added Christy.

“I don’t imagine he is trying hard to get free. Notice the gang carrying a bunch of Poilus and Yanks on their shoulders.”

The band played the national anthem of France. Everyone came to attention. Imagine a city square three blocks long and half that wide peppered with people. The music was beautiful and inspiring for

everyone sang with such ardor and devotion that every foreign listener was impressed. A few minutes later the Star Spangled Banner was played.

The music ended. The crowd renewed its noisy celebration. The boys ate supper and then joined no less than a dozen disorganized raving mobs. They would run, then stop to dance. They would capture more Allies. The Japs would sing their songs. Frenchie, Tommie and Yank did likewise. It was a great jangle, but everyone was happy.

The men in uniform were the center of attraction, each having three or four mademoiselles hanging on his arms. The foreigners couldn't parley with the girls; in fact the noise and confusion made the occasion a poor place for discussing topics wise or otherwise.

The bells and the whistles were blowing all day and night. The time came for them to quit. The crowd dispersed. The boys were at a loss to know their destination. They were tired and couldn't find a place to sleep so they reported to the R. T. O.

The office had no record of their company being in that part of the country. The boys took the queue and acted innocent of being A. W. O. L. They were retained in Bordeaux for a couple of weeks. They were given the pass privilege because it was easy to see that they were unfit for duty.

No check was taken of them, therefore they decided to rent a room in some good French home. This the boys did, much to their great satisfaction.

One afternoon after they had recuperated from the armistice blowout, they took a sightseeing trip through the old port city.

The Opera House, built by Louis XVI, was the first point of interest.

Christy said: "It is not a very imposing structure from the outside."

They stepped inside and were awed by the beautiful display of art. They gazed in wonder at the paintings on the wall. They spent some time admiring the exhibit.

They wandered in the direction of a tall church steeple, which they learned to be St. Michel's tower. A kind lady took them through the ancient cathedral, explaining its architectural beauty and design. She led them down into the cellar, where they were introduced to a family of mummies.

"They are in a fine state of preservation," said Christy.

"I'll bet they are old enough to be your great-great grandfather," added Carl.

"They are more than five hundred years old. They were buried in arsenic deposits," said the good madame in her broken English.

"Even their clothes are in good shape."

"Yes, and you can tell where the arsenic didn't touch them," added Carl.

"I wonder what they would do if they could wake up and see the world of today?"

"Christy, I'll admit that is one on me. I guess the young ladies would flirt with us."

"You are always ready to flirt since that big night."

The boys walked down to the river on their sight-seeing expedition. They stood gazing at a number of small vessels steaming toward the ocean, when Christy broke a long silence by saying: "Gee! I would like to be on one of those boats, homeward bound."

"Two of us," approved Carl.

A new spirit gripped the boys in its dangerous clutches—the spirit of unrest. A strong passion for home burned within them. The men retraced their steps toward their French home, neither having much to say, but both of them thinking of that day.

The nights they spent with that French family will long be remembered, especially the first one. The boys and their hosts tried to make each other happy. They would try conversing with each other. Carl would start a sentence, the first two words being French, but invariably he would end it in English but through signs, gesticulations and a dictionary he could finally make them "compris."

The old French custom of offering the best wine in the house to guests was remembered by the hosts on this occasion.

Carl allowed Monsieur to fill his glass, but Christy did not. The hosts insisted, but of no avail. They were almost insulted and provoked at their guest.

Poor Christy felt embarrassed and tried to explain by saying, "Zig Zag," and then going through the motions of a drunken man. They still insisted he drink a little but he said "Malade," and tried to show them it would give him a headache. "I'll have some water."

"Je ne compris," said Monsieur.

"De leau is what you want," volunteered Carl.

"De leau," ridiculed the French hostess, puckering up her lips and squinting her eye in disgust, trying to explain by her actions that water was only fit to wash in and too filthy to drink.

They clicked their glasses, offering toasts to the victorious Allies. Christy managed to drink his water, only to be convinced that she was right.

The fire of enthusiasm had not disappeared. They spent most of the evening complimenting each other. Christy would say, "Francais et L'Amerique kamerade." They would all join in on a chorus of "Ah, Oui," which means "Yes." "L'Amerique tres bon," said the host. The remainder of the evening was spent in learning French. The boys would point to their eyes, ears, noses and so forth, while their happy

and interested teachers would give them the French pronunciation.

The first lesson over, the boys retired to their room with an extensive French vocabulary of almost fifteen words. They were content to converse in English for the rest of the evening.

The comfortable looking bed was the big attraction; very little time passed before the boys hopped in. Carl laughingly exclaimed: "I claim this is sure some way to soldier."

"It isn't hard to take," said Christy.

They laughed over the events of the evening and kidded each other about their ability to "Parley Francaise."

The next day after a prolonged stay in bed the men crawled out to find the sun well up and their watches at ten.

Christy decided that he needed a bath so he made a brave attempt to explain his wants. "Compris, Compris," assured the good madame. She then gave her husband some instructions, who with the boys walked down to a barn where they hitched an old horse to a squeaky two-wheeled cart.

The boys were under the impression that they were being taken to a bath house. They were puzzled when the rig drove up to an old stone building where they loaded it with hay.

"Ha, ha, this is a good one on you, Christy. I'll bet they think you want to sleep on hay."

"I guess not."

"Really, I believe the old fellow wants to sell you the horse."

"I guess he thought I would not buy him unless the old animal was fattened up a bit."

"Where are you going to get all the money?" asked Carl.

“Really, I am wondering what kind of a scrape I have worked myself into.”

Carl contended to the last that the good folks were trying to sell Christy the horse. Christy had a slight suspicion that Carl was all wrong and he was right, because when they returned Christy was led to an open back porch, where he saw a big tin bath tub, in the middle of which was a charcoal stove industriously heating water.

Christy stripped, jumped in and hastily jumped out, then jumped around some more to keep warm, as the cold wind was blowing from several directions; he then jumped into his clothes when he noticed that across the way from him was a fair and amused young damsel enjoying his jumping monologue.

“Froid, beaucoup froid,” said the madame of the house as he came downstairs. He understood her to mean the bath was cold, after she gave a few imitations of a cold person. He replied, “Oui,” but let her believe it was pleasant.

* * * * *

Over the ocean and many more miles westward, in a little ranch house sat a mother by a big fireplace. She was reading the last letter from her son.

Mrs. Sheldon bravely attempted to take her son’s death in the Utopian spirit he suggested, but way down deep in her heart it hurt. It pained her but silently she bore her sorrow.

She wrote the following note to Molly:

Dear Molly:

November 16, 1918.

Fred has written his last letter. He wrote it for you and me. Come over and read it.

It will be a comfort to have you stay with us for a while. If Fred were alive he would desire as much.

Lovingly,

Mrs. Sheldon.

Jim rode the best bronc on the ranch. It wasn't long before he dismounted and handed the note to Molly. She opened it, read and re-read it. She thanked Jim for his kindness and hastily turned away from him in an attempt to hide her tears.

"Mother! Mother!" cried Molly, "I don't believe it! I can't believe it! It can't be true! Mother please read this note for me."

Mother McByde read the first words. Her eyes filled before she finished the letter. She could hardly see the signature.

Daughter and mother exchanged some words of comfort, when suddenly Molly ran away from her mother and staggered blindly down the trail that led to her favorite spot.

She wasn't thinking; she couldn't think. She only brooded over her terrible loss. She desperately threw herself over the stump on which several years before Fred carved their initials in a heart. There she stayed until, utterly worn out from weeping, she fell asleep.

She dreamed of her lover, her hero, her all, on the battlefield. She saw him reading her letters. She saw them make him proud of her. She saw them encourage him and give him the heart to do wonderful deeds of bravery. She saw him in the fight, laughing at danger. She saw red blood gushing from his wounds, the kind of red blood that is possessed only by his kind; and then she saw him on the cold ground—dead!

The most beautiful part of her dream had just begun. She saw him ascend the golden steps and enter the pearly gates of a new and more abundant life. She saw herself at the bottom of those stairs claiming admittance through the pearly gates. An angel descended and told her: "Dear child of the

world, service, not Christian thought, will gain you the reward you desire.”

Now Molly saw herself as a Sister of Charity. She saw herself ministering unto the sick and needy. Each deed of kindness seemed to bring her closer to her Fred, her lover, who died that humanity might live.

The hours were quietly stealing away. The black of the night faded into the gray of the early morning. The warm sun streaming over her awakened her from her dream. She rubbed her eyes and after a short reverie hastened to the Sheldon ranch.

The buildings on the ranch stood out upon the horizon long before she reached them. Mrs. Sheldon was waiting in the doorway to receive her son's sweetheart. They clasped each other in a loving embrace.

“Molly, dear girl!” said Mrs. Sheldon as she handed the Girl of the Golden West that last letter.

Dear Maw:

I reckon that you will be happy to know I have received Molly's and your last letter. They just naturally make me feel brighter.

Today I was selected to lead a bunch of fellers on an advance party into no-man's-land. Christy is going with me. Just want to let you know that I'll do my best to make you proud of me.

Lately my old mind won't behave. The wanderlust seems to charm me all day when there isn't any other excitement.

Maw, when you get this letter you will know that I have gone to the happy hunting grounds, where I allow my wanderlust will be satisfied.

Nowadays brother can take care of the ranch, Maw, I know you and Molly wouldn't have me any other place.

Yes, and I have been tryin hard to gain the good will of Peter.

There ain't a heap of paper so you and Molly will have to share this letter. Be brave.

Lovingly,

Your Soldier Fred.

P. S.—I allow that you won't make a fuss if I get killed, because we will meet in a better land.

Molly's countenance lighted up as she thought of her new mission in life. Until now the fatigue of the ride, the brooding of the night before, left their prints on her face; now the radiance of the new life shone forth as she began to feel the reality of her dream.

Her dream pictured her as a Sister of Charity doing acts of kindness which drew her closer to her lover. It was there that she decided. She confided: "Mrs. Sheldon, no one can take his place. I go from mother and you to become a Sister."

"Dear girl, I am glad you choose to seek your contentment in such a noble cause."

Years passed and, true to her dream, Sister Molly felt a closer relationship to her lover for each deed of kindness, each touch of charity, and each act of mercy she offered the world.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HOME-COMING OF THE CRUSADERS WHO FOUGHT AND WON

“Hurrah!” hollered Carl at the top of his voice as he came out of the orderly room. “Hey, Christy, we are to join the Sunshine Division. It is ordered home.”

“We are sure in great luck,” smiled Christy.

“Gee! I can’t wait,” added Carl.

“France is all right for the Frenchman, England for the Englishman, and believe me there is only one place for an American. That is the good old U. S. A.,” said Christy.

“We agree on that,” put in his comrade.

The men were sent to the machine gun battalions of the Fortieth Division, which were billeted in small towns outside of Bordeaux.

They were confident that they would be on the ocean in ten days or less; however they were doomed to disappointment. One week passed, two weeks, a month; then finally at the end of two long, rainy, unexciting months they marched into the embarkation camp.

The men’s hopes were again raised. Once more they were impressed with the idea that it would only be a matter of a few hours until they would be crossing the gang plank. Joy again ruled their souls.

Their spirits were the highest when the order came for them to march to the port of embarkation. They crossed the gang plank into a small river-going barge. Dame Rumor had the men believing that

they were going to sail down to the mouth of the Gironde and transfer into an ocean-going liner.

The river boat docked at a small camp about half way to the ocean. Gloom took possession of the men as they marched off the tugs and not a transport in sight. Their feelings were a bit ruffled as they marched through a crowd of Yanks whose favorite sport was to rub it in.

They called to the machine gunners:

“You will sure look good in a suit of fatigues.”

“Four more weeks on bread and water.”

“There is a lot of lumber for you boys to handle.”

“Ye who enter here leave all hope behind.”

Showered with such comment, the fellows went to their barracks wondering, “Who is the joke on?”

The first couple of days they tried to conceal their bitter disappointment. Vim and vigor characterized their arguments in favor of their leaving before the eight thousand men who had already been waiting from two to nine weeks.

Frequently groups of men would be engaged in a conversation justifying their special reasons for going home tout de suite! The farmer, the tradesman, the professional man and the business man alike could put up a very forceful argument why Uncle Sam should send him home first.

Days passed, weeks passed and even another month. “Oh, Death! Where is thy sting?”

The first few days almost any kind of a tub sailing on the river would cause excitement. Even Dame Rumor would get to work. Each day increased the men’s desire to get home until they were forced to say: “I’d go home in a row boat if given the opportunity.”

Hour after hour the khaki clad men would line the river bank. They were looking out across the Gironde but it wasn’t the other side they saw. They

were day dreaming; visions of home made their dreams a pleasure.

Once in a while a sail or cloud of smoke would appear on the horizon. The men would take out their field glass and look with expectancy for the Stars and Stripes.

Day after day, week after week they watched for their transport. They heard many good and bad rumors until they became immune. The boats lost their attraction for them and the sight of one was considered a dreaded nuisance.

A transport docked. It took some of the troops back to God's country. The lucky boys were watched by envious eyes.

"Christy, I don't begrudge those fellows their trip, but oh, how I wish I was with them."

"Well, some day it will be our turn," said Christy as he turned on his heel, unable to endure more torture from the scene.

The tables turned. The machine gunners were feeling mighty ornery when more troops marched into camp, Ill Fate. They peddled all the gloom that their minds could invent to the unfortunate engineers.

The hours were many, long, and wearisome, and there was nothing to do. The men would often gather around the big stove and relate some of their army adventures. Being casuals and coming from different divisions, they swapped some very interesting "dope."

Private Mel, who had been a prisoner in Germany, was the first to tell his experience.

Said he: "Boys, I was sure glad to get out of Germany."

"How did the Germans treat you?"

"Bad, very bad."

"Did you see many American prisoners?"

“Only a few.”

“Did they ill-treat you?”

“The officers abused everyone; the soldiers from the front were more friendly.”

“How did the Germans feel toward the Americans?”

“At first they laughed at us. Then they were amazed at our power and were unable to understand why we came to fight them.”

“How did they treat the French?”

“They consider the French their natural foes. They make them work hard and feed them poorly.”

“How do they treat Tommy?”

“They hate him and abuse him. They say England entered the war for selfish reasons.”

“How did the Germans act when the Armistice was signed?”

“They danced, they freed us prisoners, they celebrated. They were happy the war was over.”

“Did the German people suffer?”

“Indeed. The soldiers were well cared for, the people were not.”

“What did they eat?”

“A nasty smelling black bread, potatoes and vegetables, corn meal and sometimes horseflesh or fish.”

“How did the German children stand the starvation period?”

“Some sections of the country better than others.”

“Even our enemies celebrated the Armistice,” said Christy.

“Yes, but not because we won,” added Mel.

Carl added to the fireside yarns by telling the story of Sergeant Sheldon.

Corporal Kneedler told this story. Said he: “I never realized how France had suffered until the

night of the Armistice. Fellows, we were billeted in a small town which the Germans had just evacuated. The French folks did not celebrate and for some reason I couldn't rest until I found out the cause.

"Well, fellows, I asked a French lady of probably fifty years, 'Madame, why don't you celebrate?' Said she: 'Good friend, for you I am glad because you can return to your home, but for me it has come too late. I have lost my all, my three brothers, my three sons and husband.'"

The bugler blew "taps" and the party parted for their bunks.

The day finally came when the boys crossed the bridge whose other end was America. The men had met with so many disappointments that nothing would surprise them. Yes, they were happy but not to the noise-making degree.

It was on the fifth day of the voyage a commotion was started by a sailor who called out, "Submarines! Submarines!"

"Sure enough, there are four of them," said Carl.

"Yes, and believe me, I am glad they are not up to their old tricks," added Christy.

"So am I."

"It is a wonderful sight to see them ride the waves as they maneuver around us."

"Yes, and Christy, I would like to ride across in one of them," said Carl.

"Boy, you have never been sea-sick," added a fellow who had.

The last morning on the boat was a most welcome one. Bands came out to greet the men home. The Statue of Liberty never looked so good. Many boys told her, "Old girl, if you want to see me again you will have to do about-face." The skyline of New York stood out with a greater majesty than

ever. The men flattered their country with compliments which came from the heart.

“Here comes the tug to pull us in,” said an eager Yank.

“Look over there; the Red Cross women are on the job. Gee! They look so good waving Old Glory,” said Christy.

“See those Salvation Army women with their doughnuts. They deserve all kinds of praise,” said Carl.

“Carl, you and I are on baggage detail,” said Christy.

“Good! That means we will have a chance to take a good look at the big city.”

The men had just finished loading the baggage when the Kaiserin Auguste Victoria steamed into the Hudson. She was the first German boat turned over to the Americans.

The next day the men were entertained in New York City by the Rocky Mountain Club. Among the many things of interest, one was the most eminent. The ride up Riverside Drive along the Hudson where lay anchored Uncle Sam’s Grand Fleet.

“I never realized our navy was so large,” said Carl.

“Nor I.”

“It is a wonderful sight.”

Many “goodbyes” were in order as trainload after trainload of troops left for demobilization camps in all parts of the country. As usual, the Red Cross women were on the job at all the stations, feeding the boys with the best that money could buy.

* * *

A reformation was taking place in a certain young lady, while Christy was “Over There” waiting his turn to cross the gang plank.

The Honorable Harvey had forced his plea for her hand and found that he was playing a losing game.

She was thinking about someone who was somewhere-in-France. The war ended and she was happy. She planned for his return. She desired a high position for him; already she was thinking how she could help him fight life's battle.

“Absence makes the heart grow fonder.” No word from him made her realize her interest in him. She watched the papers, hoping to find something about Christy. She longed for his safe return.

Meanwhile Christy was corresponding with Carl's sister. He was looking forward to the day when he could go and come, when and where he pleased. He would go to her.

The day came when the boys received their honorable discharges. Christy received a letter from Anna which discouraged his attempt to win the nurse. She told the story of her past. She admitted that he was the man of her dreams but emphasized that past sins carry with them a sting through all the days.

Christy found it hard to see things Anna's way, but she was right. She was honorable and brave.

After all, it wasn't so hard for him when he returned home and received the open arm welcome of the sweetheart of his youth and a warm and loving hug.

There are two sides to the story of war, the good and the bad. The acts of bravery as noble as that of Fred's can only be called good. The lessons of unselfishness that were taught on the front, the wonderful deeds of mercy, the noble friendships formed are not only good but magnificent.

The birth of a new and purer democracy in our country has been caused by the war; because some-

where-in-France the sons of the east, west, north and south bled liberally for the great cause of Humanity.

The pride of each citizen of the United States is increased as he thinks of the victory that has been won over barbarism and autocracy. A new era has arrived with the high standard of "Peacetime Patriotism" challenging each man, woman and child to live up to the best that is in them, that the traditions of our forefathers and the flag they fought for, "Old Glory," may always protect the best land in all the world.

* * *

It was supper time in the Strong home. Christy walked in and surprised his folks. He lovingly embraced and kissed his mother and at the same time grasped his father's hand in a hearty hand clasp.

Yes, there were more silver hairs sprinkled among the gold. The charm of mother love in her face shone forth with new and radiant luster as they undoubtedly enjoyed the happiest and supreme moment in their lives.

END

A

no

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00023233502

