

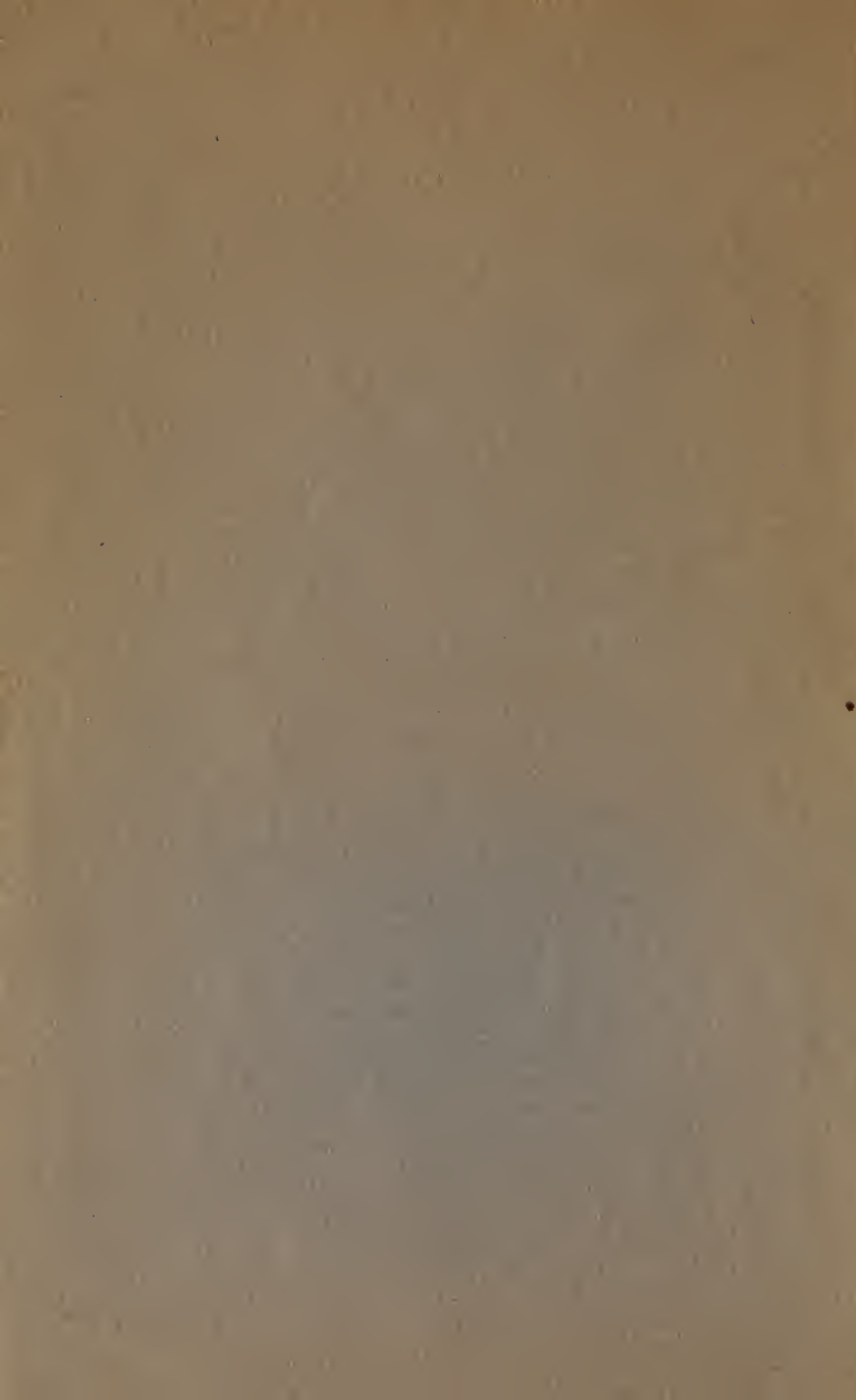
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With  
"Old Eph"  
in the Army

By  
A  
Soldier from France

WALKER H. JORDAN

PRICE, ONE DOLLAR



With "Old Eph"  
in the Army



# With "Old Eph" In The Army

(Not a History)

A Simple Treatise on the Human Side of  
The Colored Soldier.

—By—

WALKER H. JORDAN.

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To those whose death helped  
to give America a new  
Birth of Freedom, the  
Negro heroic-  
ally dead.



They fell asleep in Flanders Fields;  
Their eyes are closed forever,  
But still the light shines more bravely on—  
A beacon to us given.  
Our's is the fight they bravely led;  
Our's their battle cry; our's to follow Liberty's light;  
Our's to do or die.

Beside your tomb Humanity shall yet  
In reverence kneel;  
Posterity shall chant the theme of your  
Eternal fame.  
Polished brass nor marble grand may build  
No monument,  
But Freedmen singing where slaves oft moaned—  
Now unchained by shackled hands,  
Shall tell to all the race of men  
Your love for a fellow man!

W. H. J.







THE AUTHOR WITH LOVING CUP PRESENTED TO HIM  
BY HEADQUARTERS COMPANY 351ST FIELD ARTILLERY

### FOREWORD.

In submitting this little booklet to the Public a very earnest hope is entertained that it will in some slight degree operate as a corrective to the all too prevalent tendency on the part of some at attempt to burlesque the Negro Soldier into a forced accident, and to account for his exploits along lines other than those which are universally granted to be the compelling powers in other men.

As it is generally believed that in the necessarily broad scope of the Historian, with his methodical search for statistics and stereotyped formula for objectives and achievements, much of the charm of the intimate and personal is obscured, a further hope is voiced that this little booklet will endear itself to the Public because of it's efforts to illumine the human side of the Colored Fighter.

Stress laid upon "Morale and Temperament" is justified because these things are the Army,—not bullets and bayonets and gas and swords, but rather the spirit of the men who wield these things. Tell the morale and temperament of troops and their achievements are already prophesied. Feet may carry men into battle; hands may hold the rifle but it is the heart which drives home the bayonet.

Whatever conclusions reached are the product of many combined impressions reflected by the Colored Fighter during the varied stages of training and in actual combat, and suggested by the broader vision and more thorough appreciation of human rights which have come to him from the shell-torn battle fields of France.

THE AUTHOR.





## CHAPTER ONE

### MISINTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF RACIAL TRAITS

Perhaps in no other way, save through the red channel of War, could the eternally jocular spirit of the Negro youth, and of the Race as a whole,\* be so successfully mirrored up to the World's great gaze and admiration. So much has been said to burlesque the Colored youth and to paint in weird and grotesque figures his appearance, attitude and expressions in the war, that to the casual observer he is shunted into one of Longfellow's "Dumb, driven cattle," and not the hero of purpose which at heart he really is. There is altogether too prevalent an idea that the Negro was in the War simply because he could not do otherwise,—that the idea of service to God, Country, Race and Humanity entered not into the compelling powers which if they did not alone enlist his sympathies, did at least render the task less irksome and the nobility of purpose more definitely fixed in his mind.

Who does not dread war? Who, save the Hun, could be so utterly base that he will not seek any honorable end to avoid the horrors of bloodshed and death? America, herself, affords the world the most brilliant of all examples of the longsuffering gentleman, but who, when finally concluding that the quarrel is forced upon him, lends himself to the task with every ounce of strength of brawn and bone, of heart and of soul. The spirit of the Negro youth differs only in the quantity,—not in the quality. Truly, in the technique, the fight was not his, nor yet his a fair voice in the Government which willed the fight, and subsequent events have proven that no Race stood to gain less than his; yet when the call came, in spite of alien propagandā with its undeniable truths of Disfranchisements, Segregation and Jimcrowisms even in the Army and Navy, he stepped to the great altar of American pride and laid thereon his all. The sure knowledge that he gave freely,—without stint and without question—has been the balm of many an aching heart when the silver service star turned to gold in the cabin window.

It is believed that Headquarters Company 351st Field Artillery, (Camp Meade, Md.) creditably reflects the morale and temperament of the average colored unit enlisted. That Company was most heterogeneously composed, incorporating men from North and South, East and West, and ranging in its educational scope from the occasional illiterate to men fresh from the walls of Brown, Howard and Union Universities and the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts, and any number of Normal, Business and High School graduates. From Washington (D. C.), alone almost a dozen graduates from Business and High Schools volunteered to this one Company. Almost the entire Regimental Non-commissioned staff was made up of colored youths who had volunteered into the service; among such men from Washington were conspicuously: Battalion Sergeants Major Joseph Settlers, John R. Fearing and Weaver A. Wood; Sergeants John H. White and John R. Williams, and Privates Charles M. Gordon, Claudius Ramsey, Howard E. Early and many others. From Pittsburgh and the far west came scores of college and school men specially inducted at their own request through the medium of Lieutenant Harry K. Tootle and Sergeant John L. Clark.

It cannot be that these men did not know of existing conditions as regard Races here; it is not to be thought that their ears were spared the ringing of the omnipresent cry: "What has the Negro to fight for?" or that there was any doubt in their minds as to treatment expected, but Humanity—bigger than self, Race or Country—called and the Negro youth was too big not to be big enough.

Not as the cudgelled or scourged went he, but as one proud of his privilege to fight in the cause of Right and upborne by unfailling faith that 'twere the call of Duty and not the whip of man which sent him forth. Such men could not help but be brave and true and loyal; could not help restraining any hot retort which aggravating circumstances may have prompted. Their's was the conviction that their presence (certainly their early presence there) in Camp was the working of their own volition and this conviction was carried home to the hearts of others so much so that instead of they, themselves, feeling ashamed to admit volunteering, other drafted men schemed to prove that they were not drafted.

A Regiment is good or bad; happy or sullen according to the temper of it's noncommissioned officers. Officers cannot make a Regiment. They may discipline it, but they cannot make or mar it's spirit or morale. As are the noncommissioned officers so is the Regiment. And there was no happier, snappier Regiment than the 351st Field Artillery and few Companies as good as "Old Headquarters." (It is only fair to state here that in the early days of Headquarters Company, Pittsburgh (Pa.), furnished the majority of the non-commissioned officers. These were men who had been drafted and sent to Camp Lee (Va.). They were school men and knew their worth and their adaptability to become proficient in military training, consequently they applied while at Camp Lee for the rank of Noncommissioned officers. They were informed that with good deportment they "might become Privates, First Class." It was the best to be hoped for as the Labor Battalion with which they served was officered and noncommissioned officered by white men only. Nevertheless these men succeeded in getting themselves transferred to the Artillery at Camp Meade, and to the very last man they won the rank of noncommissioned officers—mostly Sergeants. Two of the three men who eventually won their bars as officers were among this number who with good deportment "might have become Privates, First Class."

But, let there be no doubt about it, three hundred widely different men will not be housed together in two small barracks and not develop epidemics of quarreling; thievery and deadly fights; will not stand for hours on guard in freezing weather of sleet, snow, wind and rain; will not be denied pass privileges and sentenced to the wood-pile because the Regimental Doctor's idea of illness differs with the Private's unless the morale and discipline of that Regiment smack miles beyond the ordinary. If there be anything more thoroughly equipped to test the morale and discipline of a Company and of a Regiment than a quarantine, Infantry Drill Regulations has not yet discovered it. Yet Headquarters Company, instead of going on pass as had been promised, went into a most rigid quarantine the day after Christmas and so remained until February 22, '18. And who could forget the winter of 1917-'18? The weather was rotten, beastly! Snow came early in November and went through hard onto April. Water-pipes burst within three inches of the range, and, because of the measles, no congregating around the stoves was permitted. It was a court-martial offense to close the windows night or day. Six feet from the barracks guards patrolled night and day. The Y. M. C. A., within twelve feet was forbidden and the Canteen in the same block might have been in Palestine for our presence there.

On Sundays when the Camp was flooded with women-folks the best that could be hoped for was to pace up and down the "dead line" with them on the one side, and the soldier on the other, with always the guard stalking between.

Yet that Company amused itself, went about it's tasks, soldiered without a break. There were no fights, no petty larcencies, no men in the guard-house, and not once was that quarantine broken or even bucked. "Old Eph" smiled and "carried on."

(The phrase "Old Eph" as applied to the Colored soldier in these pages, is adopted because of a nearness to the heart of the Colored Fighter born of the revolution it worked among the sentiments with which the term was originally invested. Coined in France by an Officer it was couched in scorn and sarcasm for every thing colored, but as the months rolled around it's constant association with the most valorous deeds of the battle field; it's habitual presence where ever the gilded court of Chivalry unfurled her dazzling banners, and the fragrance of it's glory wafted back from memory of those hard fought, death-stalked fields of France have happily served to clothe the term in the rosemary of honor and romance and placed it a household word in even the mouth of babes. The story of it's origin is as follows: An American Army Officer newly arrived in Brest lost his way one night and unable to find an M. P., (though how he ever reached such a blissful scene as the absence of an M. P., is beyond me), addressed himself to a tall colored soldier in the garb of the French Chasseur leaning against a half open door and talking to a young girl. "Which is the way to the Pontanezen Barracks?" he snapped, "and why in hell don't you salute?" The soldier looked at him, blinked his wonder, and shifting his weight to the other leg resumed his interrupted conversation with the girl. Accustomed to instant obedience from enlisted men, the officer fairly blazed with rage. "Look here, Mr. Nigger," he fumed, 'just because you've been in France a little longer than I have don't think that I have forgotten how to treat the like of you! I say which is the way to the barracks?"

"No compre! No compre!" screamed the soldier. "Je parlez Francaise. No compre Englaise. Je ne par parlez Englaise." (Meaning literally: I don't understand. I don't understand. I speak French. I don't understand English. I don't speak English!) But all of this was as unintelligible to the officer as his own question had been to the Moroccan. "The hell you say," the officer blurted out. 'Don't get funny with me. You'll tell me what I want to know or I'll knock your damned black block off!" and he laid his hand on his Colt and stepped between the Moroccan and the girl who instantly flung her young form in front of that of the soldier. The Moroccan still did not know what the officer said, but he did "compre" that the attitude of the other was one which when assumed in his own land just preceded the drawing of bolos by two men and the celebration, a little later, by one warrior over the death of the other. Lightly he brushed the girl aside, and his own knife leaped falcon-like from his girdle. Well—that officer found the way to the barracks all right but the route led dangerously near to Heaven or Hell according to his treatment of the thirteenth verse of the twelfth chapter of the Ecclesiastes.

During the officer's recovery he gave his version of how he chanced to have no revolver in hand, saying: "I thought the black rascal was an American—just a plain old Eph. It never occurred to me that they existed any where else." Hence the quoted origin of the term "Old Eph,"—hissed then in deadliest hate; whispered now in admiration, respect and deepest love.)

No race on the face of the earth is so wonderfully blessed with the ability for self-amusement as the Colored Race, and much stock is taken in the comic side of his nature especially when it depicts his physical fear, but let him show himself unafraid of the supernatural or scornful of death and there be those who rack their brains to account for his actions on other grounds save personal bravery and sagacity. More often than not the oft repeated ludicrous answers contributed to Negroes when questions of fear and bravery are propounded are due to a natural spontaneity of wit peculiarly his own,—a priceless relic of those darker days when his fore-parents must need cultivate their mirth within their own household or be lashed if the upturned pot failed to encompass their laughter.

The world makes haste to believe in his ludicrousness but a self-willed few are loath to accord him the "guts" to be brave and true. For instance, who has not heard this story: Sam and Bill were soon to go over the top. Sam was in a state of blue funk. Bill was delighted with the very prospect. "Think of the glory!" he exclaimed; 'think what the papers will say—'two brave Negroes capture Germans.' "Dat aint what deys gwine ter say," says Sam, 'deys gwine ter say 'whole Reg'ment ob white folks tromped ter def by niggers.'" (It being afore stated that a white Regiment was billeted in the immediate rear.) This story has been told from nearly every platform on which A. E. F., speakers have appeared. But how few of you have heard this story: A silent-unprepossessing colored soldier was picked for a rather ticklish piece of sharp-shooting. Before he could install himself he had to drag aside the bodies of three white soldiers slain there. (A white Regiment having previously "occupied" this sector.) The soldier was instructed to keep constant watch on a certain gap by way of which the enemy was known to reach his communicating trench. "Old Eph" settled down. Beyond in the far distance something stirred. "Old Eph's" rifle spoke once. The movement ceased; silence. But all during the night this was kept up. "Old Eph" banged away and ducked. Towards day break the officer returned, unable to resist the constant call of "Old Eph's" trusty. "Well, I hear you firing; what do you see?" he asked brusquely. "Nothing," replied Eph. "You told me to stop anything I 'thought moved'—see, —" Bang! went the rifle again. The officer peered, but saw nothing. He looked at "Old Eph" and observed: "Hem, nerves, eh? Better come along; have to send a calmer man up here." But before that could be done the boys went over and took that particular bit of trench, and lo, and behold there were nineteen dead Germans in that six yard gap, each with a neat little bullet hole drilled straight through the brain! But beyond the most advanced man not one single track showed in the mud. "Old Eph" had not let one "move on!"

The former story is very readily believed; the latter begs repetition even. Such is very typical of the world's division of it's stock of credulity. Probably the greatest impetus is given this belief by the advertising which the Race itself affords, often in the form of a modesty which defeats it's own ends. Who has not seen the "trick nigger;" the "smart darkey" whose sole address to the attention of other men is his ability to "act fool" before them? He may deceive himself into believing that he only "acts fool" at times, but all his life is generally apt to become one of unenumerative acting for which the Race pays with it's sobermindedness and integrity. For no person or people can continue to 'act



fool" promiscuously without feeling the cap of the jester and the tail of the monkey grow over the very soul. Are we to be branded a Race of jesters?

The inclination to play to the gallery is not confined to the illiterate only. It reaches up to the pedestal on which once sat one called by some the genius of the Race. Too often he spoke not what he believed but what he knew the galleries would applaud. In striking contrast to the above is the Young Negro who lacking the strength to force his convictions upon others, or, who doubting their sympathy, takes the shortest way out and denies his own convictions. The author chanced one night upon three of his comrades in close conversation about going over seas. All three were loud in declaring that they saw no reason why they should go out to fight another's battles when their own cause lay bleeding. They waxed warm with indignation at the very thought, but upon listening carefully and weighing their arguments against the scope of their intelligence one was forced to conclude that there existed somewhere a vast discrepancy. So, on the next day the author spoke privately with each of these men, and alone, beginning always with words like these:

"Gee, I surely will be glad when the time comes to go over. I wont feel right if I don't have a part in this thing before it is over with." The reply of the first two men was almost identical, saying: "I too—I'm just crazy to get over there; always wanted to go; joined up to go over." "But," said the author, "you said last night that you did not want to go. How about it?" "Oh," they laughed, "*I said that because I thought that was the way they felt about it, and the other sounds so like bragging. It is my duty to go, and I want to do my duty!*" One added that: "My little 'brown-skin' has already told me that if I don't go over and help to get the Kaiser, to find another hat rack for my cap," Yet if that same lady had been asked in Howard Theater if she thought colored soldiers should go over, she would undoubtedly have screamed: "NO!" The third—the proud father of a six-weeks old babe—went even further and said: "I don't care what anyone says; I can't explain it myself, but I know that it is right that every able bodied man should go over and serve. For myself I ask nothing, but somehow I feel that my best over there will give my boy a better fighting chance over here!" What nobler spirit dare anyone ask! "For myself I ask nothing, but for my boy,—,—." Great brave, noble spirit! He has wiped away all hope of an alibi when his son shall ask of America a fish. Sleep on brave warrior comrade of mine. Your pure spirit must have supped with the immortal Roosevelt's ere this. God will not forget you; America must and shall not!

Such illustrations may be duplicated on the streets, in the Churches and theatres of any of our larger cities where Colored soldiers have congregated. Meet them and ask them if they would like to go back and they will visit upon upon you a wry face and shriek no—no—no! Yet if the call came today or tomorrow many of these same fellows would be missed from their accustomed places along the highways. I have heard them in public say that they would die rather than ever again go back to France with its filth, slush and mud, but in a privacy where only soldiers sat those same lips have voiced these sentiments: "Oh, I don't know; if it broke out again, I expect I would trail along with the rest." Such things may be a form of modesty but they do much to destroy the world's belief in the sturdiness and depth of character of the Race, and indulge a perversion of the truth—that Negroes love their Country and their Race pre-eminently.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### PRE-WAR TEMPERAMENT. THE VOYAGE. "A SUB! A SUB!"

The enviable record which the 351st Field Artillery made at Camp Meade, and which today stands unchallenged, could not have been the creation of a regiment less sure of its morale; less firm in its convictions.

Gradually some of the enthusiasm of the men filtered into the hearts of the officers, and in the Regiment's last hours there it was accorded a treatment rare, if not entirely exceptional. More or less was it customary for Regiments about to move portward to go into quarantine. In some instances a seal was set upon the mail, and I very distinctly remember one Regiment which when it was placed on the priority list had an armed guard flung about its barracks. The 351st Field Artillery was visited with none of these contingencies—no seal was set upon the mail; pass privileges were not denied (men being on pass the very last afternoon and evening in Camp), and no semblance of a guard stationed. All these highest honors in the gift of the Commandery accorded this same Regiment which only a few months before had been decried as hopeless as soldiers and worse than hopeless as Artillerymen.

When the whistle rang down the curtain on the last act of training at Camp Meade the yells and hurrahs which split the quiet of that wonderfully beautiful Sunday were as epochal as the reverberations hurled around the world from memorable Lexington. The Camp itself described a veritable flower garden, bursting with "dusky maidens," "pinks" and "browns" shouting their last good-byes, snatching farewell kisses, buckling on the pack and holsters of their knights and sending them away with the smile which afterwards silvered many a dull cloud in No Man's Land.

In exactly one and one-half minutes the entire Regiment had entrained and the train was under way. Where ever the troop train halted there gathered the loved ones of the soldier boys, for all the world seemed to know that the 351st Field Artillery was moving that day. At Philadelphia especially did a large crowd gather. Evidently some Church had just closed for the station was flooded and many a chap saw in the throng old familiar faces. Yet not one man left or attempted to leave the train, not even did they grouch because they could not. "Nope, can't come off," they yelled back to invitations to stroll. "In the Army now, but I'll see you when I come home with the Kaiser," On through the night the troop train dashed while the songs of the soldiers bounded to and fro amid the hills and made the little vales to ring joyfully.

Monday morning the Regiment went on board ship, but by virtue of the fact that many of the sailors were granted two days shore leave, it was readily deduced that the vessel would not sail before Wednesday. Some of the fellows were within three minutes ride of their homes, and without exception these were the unfortunates whose homes were sufficiently far from Meade to preclude all possibility of their receiving passes hitherto, yet when their requests were refused they simply smiled, "soldiered" and added another item to the Kaiser's credit slip.

At high noon, Wednesday, June 16, 1918, all hands were ordered below. It was beastly hot aboard ship, and in spite of the best efforts of the Sanitary

Corps the hold of a ship is ever a foully-smelling, poorly ventilated place. But down below went every man jack of them, save the Regimental Noncommissioned staff and Clerks, singing always the loved refrain:

“We’re going over; we’re going over—  
Well they put it up to us to settle up this muss,  
So what do we care! So what do we care!  
We’ll go sailing over the foam, and we’ll hang the Kaiser  
To the sour apple tree—  
Then we’ll all come marching home!”

At 3:48 P. M., the U. S. S. Great Northern paid off to the call of the tugs and by nightfall the statue of Liberty was a memory along with Roast Beef and Apple Pie. The U. S. S. Great Northern, while she lay at her mooring, had appeared very princely and adequate (and she was both) to unaccustomed eyes, but when she slipped past quarantine and stepped upon the watery highway which leads to France she seemed all too frail for so great a task, and it is believed that fully one half of the men speculated as to their belief in her going down, but on the third and fourth days out there were many who would have welcomed a sinking or any thing which would have permitted them to get off that dancing, prancing bit of a ship. They were that sea-sick. Although sea-sick “Old Eph” rubbed his Alladin’s lamp and smiled. The sick fellow laughed at the sicker fellow and the perfectly hearty chap made rough sport of both. The latter’s sense of humor some times exerted itself in an almost merciless manner.

I remember one lusty chap who chanced one day upon a rather sickly group of soldiers sitting close up beside the smoke stack, afraid to stir lest the lunch they had bolted follow the breakfast scattered promiscuously over the deck.

“Feeling better?” he asked, sympathetically. They nodded in the affirmative. “How would you like to have a nice, fat, juicy piece of pork?” he teased, dangling before their eyes just that very worst thing for sea-sickness. It was the straw which broke the camel’s back. There was a wild scramble for the rail. Some reached it, but all lost their lunch while the jester fared on to fresher fields. It was some satisfaction to those poor sick souls to live to see this same chap asprawl on the deck; his head under the rail; his dinner going down and curses coming up from the deck below where his mess landed.

Sunday morning the siren screamed the approach of danger and every man tumbled up on deck, tightening his life belt and making every thing safe to abandon ship. Not a cloud was in the sky. A calm, smooth sea was running, so that with high powered glasses it was comparatively easy to see hard off to starboard and close onto eight thousand yards was the object of alarm—what appeared a three inch pipe projecting perhaps some eighteen or twenty inches above the glassy waters. The behavior of the ship’s crew was commendable; splendid—sufficient to inspire courage in the weakest. Every man flew to his post; calm, precise; methodical, attaining that rarest of all accomplishments—haste without waste. The Commander’s hand rose and fell sharply. One of the ship’s guns (forward) spoke like a thoroughbred. At the third shot that seemingly impossible target was sent spinning in the water. Still the thing came on. We might easily have turned about and run away, but instead the wheel was slammed hard over to starboard. The vessel slued around and like an avenging angel bore down upon its prey, all the while the gunners hit with the regularity of a practiced habit.

At this formation I stood between Private John H. Myers (Balto. Co., Md.) on the left and Mechanic Henry Gamble (Pittsburgh, Pa.), on the right. To the latter I said: "We may go down—eh?" "Yes," he said evenly, "what about it?" "Oh, nothing," I replied more steadily, jacked up by his superior courage. "Swim?" he asked after a bit. "A little," I replied, recalling my timorous essays at swimming around Farmville, Va. He grunted. "Stick to me," he said. "I'm good." And I felt like kicking myself because I had just been wondering if chivalry were the privilege of a certain class only. Private Myers was rather proud of his record with pistol and rifle and kept grumbling: "God, I hope they come within rifle range!"

Meanwhile thousands of eyes raked the horizon for the approach of other hostile craft; our sister ship trailing a few points off, her gunners "setting" upon their pieces. It was not until the object swept beneath our very bows that we knew for a surety that it was not a "sub," but merely a buoy which had slipped its cables and drifted out to sea. But the fact that it was only a "scare" in no wise affected the psychology of the situation. It accomplished two great facts. Firstly, it showed the brave man how little effort it required to be brave and inspired the weaker ones to bravery; secondly, it wiped clean the last vestige of sea-sickness.

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On Wednesday—exactly one week from sailing—at 4:43 P. M., the headlands of Brest hove into sight and by 6:03 the U. S. S. Great Northern had dropped anchor. The vessel swerved slightly, then drew up close to the wind and lay quiet at her moorings. It was France! Lord, how glad we were! No one slept aboard ship that night. A holiday spirit was rampant—cards, laughter, songs and jests whiled away the hours. On Thursday morning, June 27, 1918, at 8:11½, Color Sergeants John L. Clark (Pittsburgh, Pa.), and Clarence N. McIntosh (a volunteer from Hampton Institute) with guards George P. Braxton and Charles H. Dorsey (Baltimore, Md.), stepped ashore, being the first of the enlisted men in the Regiment to touch French soil.

Behind them in the first squad came the author. But before that event our's was the great pleasure of hearing the ship's commander say to our Col. Cole: "Sir, I have brought over many troops but none who kept and left as nice a ship and whose morale, discipline and personal appearance were as perfect as yours." If you know ship commanders you are aware that lying or plain "bull" is not numbered among their vices. Col. Cole was certainly not the type of man to withhold any such information and immediately upon reaching billets in the Pontanezen Barracks, in a speech to the non-commissioned officers he expressed his entire satisfaction and appreciation, and also his belief in the Regiment's strength of character and powers to withstand the shocks yet to come. His was the opinion that he commanded the "finest Regiment in France." So far as we may learn subsequent developments instead of altering that opinion have corroborated it.



## CHAPTER THREE

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### LATHUS—SOCIAL EQUALITY—LONELINESS—MAIL—PREJUDICE

The scope of American training was now finished. The voyage over left nothing to be desired, but there were those who knew that the second of the two greatest tests yet to come—the test of social equality—lay just ahead. How much truth there was in the far flung taunt that the Colored youth would not acquit himself well when left alone amid a people whose regard for class and color worship was shorn away with the guillotine in 1789 was about to be tested. It was no secret that the Department had deliberated considerably on the advisability of sending colored fighting troops to Europe where they must be billeted with other troops and in French towns where only women and children lived; and it is a loved confession that it was not without serious trepidations that some of the Regiment watched for the day when the cards would be placed, as it were, upon the table and “Old Eph” be left to battle alone the accumulated prejudice of the Western Hemisphere. On the 4th of July the 351st Field Artillery initiated the little villages of Lathus and Montmorillon as training areas for American troops. The effects of this adventure are noteworthy only when proper cognizance is taken of the cardinal facts—that the peasantry had never before seen colored American or American soldiers at all. Had the peasantry and the colored soldiery met in the Sahara Desert they could not have been less acquainted. The language was foreign, thus eliminating the possibility of any Germane sympathy among the contestants and swinging any possible favor to the side of the officers, some of whom had taken advantage of their superior opportunity and possessed a working knowledge of the tongue; but, most important of all, Prejudice, because of race, creed or previous conditions of servitude, does not, in this particular, inherently exist in the French mind. Thus “Old Eph,” his officers and the French peasantry were thrown together in a cockpit on nearly a common basis, and left to their own ingenuities to exist with each other, in spite of each other or because of each other.

All the world knows the result of that contest. Gen. Foch wrote it in *Croix de Guerre* on the Colored soldiers' breasts and from the chevalier cords which a grateful nation wreathed about his shoulders shook the immortal light by which Democracy beat down the foes of Humanity and Civilization. If there exist anything more remarkable than the wonderful manner in which the Peasantry grew into “Old Eph's” heart, it is the wonderful and remarkable manner in which “Old Eph” grew into the heart of the Peasantry which is the heart of Glorious France.

Immediately upon the sounding of Retreat the troops fared forth to conquer the town. Their advent was heralded in a most pleasing manner. From every corner of the village the children ran to meet them, their clumsy sabbots clattering merrily upon the rough cobbles of old Napoleonic streets. In a twinkling the troops disappeared amid an avalanche of tumbling, laughing, humanity, climbing upon his broad shoulders, riding on his long, swinging arms, cluttering his every step and adorning themselves with whatever part of his accoutrements they could detach. In less than no time the troops filled every room in the little village—from cellar to garret. Stores, wine shops, taverns hummed like a

massive bee-hive. Mostly the troops took what they fancied and then childishly held out their hands filled with French coins for the land-lady to take her charge. Yet, through it all ran no tenor of discord. Over hill and dale strolled the troops hemmed in on every side with a bevy of pretty, gesticulating girls. Here and there, perhaps, an officer was privileged with a friendship, but mostly they stood afar off, agape with wonder at this new phase in "Old Eph's" character. It was reserved for Corporal Edward A. Spann (Easton, Pa.), to have the most unique experience of all. He rivaled a Colonel, or, rather he had the rivalry of a Colonel, for 'pon my word the Corporal held the better hand.

Below the town ran a small stream in which the soldiers bathed and in which they were wont to wash their clothes. But more often than not their approach with laundry made them the object of the washerfolks—women and girls—congregated there, who immediately strove to be the first to get to the troops to wash their clothes—not for pay but for the sheer love of service for France. If the soldier grew thirsty as he rambled over the hills he stopped in at the first house and if it were after the "magic hour"—Retreat—it was more likely wine he was given than water. On the road no peasant's cart or aristocrat's carriage passed the colored soldier without the pleading invitation to sit beside the driver on the high seat. On Sundays the village came to the Regiment; strolled with it, sat in front of its tents, shared its mess, and every fellow was rightfully called poor if he boasted less than three about his tent. So things went until long before "Old Eph" became expert at counting francs and centimes he was enthroned and crowned the village's king and mighty knight and chevalier.

Added significance is attached to "Old Eph's" attainments here because of the conditions which he had to combat from within. Surrounded by an admiring throng, yet the boys were lonesome; blue, for crowds do not make company any more than a multiplicity of words elicits conversation. One may stagnate in New York City, but live in a world of romance and bliss alone in the heart of the desert, and in spite of the triumph over exterior conditions some of the most lonesome days believed to have been endured by any Regiment in France were visited upon the 351st Field Artillery during its stay in Lathus. The Regiment had been in France hard onto two months before the first word from the outside world was received, or before there came even the rumor that mail was on the way. First it was twelve sacks, then eight and all the way down until finally one poor, pitiful little sack of old letters was its share. I have seen some wonderful pictures, but few deserving to rank with the one presented on that memorable red-letter day when the boys lined up for the first mail in France. It was as though some one had said: "The Master will pass this way and bless us," and every face wore that longing, hoping, fearing expression which might be expected when a man's soul salvation depended upon a glance from his Lord. And for the chap who received a letter or even a card from home a light beamed in his features such as Raphael never saw nor Mozart dreamed. But for the one who received nothing Dante never painted more sorrow on the faces of those for whom Hope was forever fled than these faces showed. Long after the officer had finished calling off the names this latter group stood about, stricken as though life was a dead thing and they the dearest of all. One little fellow I remember well—Private Hamere D. Davis—he must have bolstered his age to enlist) received no mail and his very heart seemed

broken, but his boon companion—then “Private” Charles S. Taylor (Indianapolis, Ind.), did receive one letter and he lay on his back out behind his tent simply devouring the written words. Private Davis stood it as long as he could, and then he sidled over: “Give you two bits to let me read your letter,” he said thickly, stretching forth a hand that trembled slightly. He didn’t know who the letter was from and he didn’t care. He didn’t have two bits and neither did any one else because the Regiment had not been paid since May, but that did not matter. Charles S. Taylor was one of the whitest men it has ever been my good pleasure to know. “Sure, old Top,” he said, “go to it,” and he handed over the letter. Good Lord how Davis ate up those words! The letter was from Taylor’s mother—one of those priceless epistles written by an old fashioned mother—such a letter that any fellow might catch up and read and think that it was written by his own mother expressly for him. It spoke of keeping the feet dry; of red flannel and mutton tallow for the sore chest and of bathing the feet in salt water when they ached from the long march.

Favorite among the soul pictures which memories of Lathus conjure up, is one of the close of day; a light, shifting breeze banking a snowy pillow of white, incandescent clouds against a soft background of blue, rich purple and gold; a scattering herd drifting lazily through a sharp rift in a mossy ridge; a sleepy brook ambling musically under a vine-crested bridge; the 351st Field Artillery Band playing in the Public Square; children at play in the streets; soldiers everywhere, their fingers entwined in those of the lassies, their thoughts wrapped around the pillars of their own homes “over there;” blue doves strutting and cooing in the eaves of a seven hundred year old Church on the steps of which sat our good Chaplin, Rev. Woolfolk; Sergeant Thornton; Sergeant Scholley E. Webb and Private Harry T. Kelley, ringed about the noble, but bent old form of the village Padre, his cap off, his tired, knotty old hands clasped, his thin gray locks sweeping the tanned, wrinkled skin of neck and in his eyes slumbering the embers of a celestial fire as though a new wick strove to glimmer through a cracked and worn vessel.

Upon such a scene at the close of an August day another Regiment—needless to say not colored—marched. “Old Eph” stood in wonder. Full well he knew the force of prejudice—knew all too well how too frequently the bitter years roll; the hearts that break; the lives that are snuffed out before even a little lie is laid in the dust, and his throne swayed and trembled mightily beneath him. It did not need a prophet to tell that the morrow would bring forth. True enough, day break found his worst fears confirmed. Grave and divers rumors, emanating from an all too readily guessed source, came to his ears, as to how he had been pictured as monkeys; named as infinitely inferior to other American soldiers and branded as cowards driven into the Army and out of America because he was venereal infested and hopelessly sick. I, myself, saw groups of school children slip behind colored soldiers and peer to see if, indeed they wore tails like monkeys. In the grasp of elderly hands and the question in honest peasant eyes I read the search their souls made into the heart and body of the colored soldier, but, thank God, I saw, too, the look of utter satisfaction and commendation which shamed away their momentary fear. More than one Mademoiselle asked of us on that strange morning: “Messieurs vous malade? Vous no malade, Messieurs?” (Gentlemen are you sick? You are not sick, Gentlemen!) And

when the inevitable answer came: "Non, Mademoiselle, nous ne par malade." (No, Lady; we are not sick), they would break in the most radiant of smiles, grasp our hands and exclaim: "Il a correcte, Messieurs! Vous non malade—bon—bon—ah, tres bon soldat! (It is correct, Gentlemen! You are not sick—good—good, ah, very good soldier!) But ah, my friends, these things hurt to the very heart! Why should this most damnable of all human curses—Prejudice—follow us there and attempt to breathe the stench of hate in the garden where the fair flowers of trust and friendship were bursting to blossom?

These other soldiers would not be one of us. We had hardly dared expect so much but we did expect to be, at least, left alone, and we did know that nothing could have carried America higher in the estimation of the world than a rigid shelving of the traditional grievance of Racial Prejudice while the great bleeding heart of Humanity was being goose-stepped to death under the iron heel of Prussianism. How hard put to must have been the French mind to accommodate this weird picture of two peoples crossing three thousand miles of submarined water to die side by side, if need be, for a common cause, yet scorning even in the shadow of the cross to break bread one with the other at the same table. The Regiment stood at bay. "Old Eph's" cards were face upward on the lap of the Gods and he left them there, scorning to hold by trickery what he had won in open, fairest play. The Regiment felt that these people knew past all doubting just where Envy sought to blind Justice with its glasses of jade. They who spoke with single tongues and naked hearts so close to Nature's great throbbing healthy heart, must surely recognize health and sure manhood and character in the 351st Field Artillery. (We carried not one venerable to France. We left not one there. We brought not one back to America. Few Regiments can truthfully say as much. I know of none that can say more. All thanks to our good Medical Sergeants and rollicking soldier and gentleman, 1st Lieutenant "Bill" Howard.) Such a lie as our enemies (and the word "enemies" is used without malice, for all enemies are not necessarily malicious ones. And among the most persistent apostles of Racial Prejudice some of our own are numbered. We love them, but we cannot countenance their scorn for the inalienable rights of all free people) sought to foster mocked the better judgment of these people, and by nightfall the colored soldiery was on the crest of a wave of appreciation which swept them far out into the deep of the Peasant's sea of admiration and utmost respect. "Old Eph's" throne was steadier than ever, not in spite of these tales, but as it ever will be, because of them. Before that night was done Fate snatched the veil from a point thought by all many years yet in the distance. We saw those other soldiers refused patronage and driven from the shops, wine rooms and taverns, and followed into the streets with the shrieking cry: "Allez! Allez! Le blanc soldat no bon—ugh!" (Go! Go! The white soldier no good—ugh!) Children were seen to flee in terror at their approach, and the red flame of shame and anger to mount in the cheeks of mothers and daughters wherever they passed. Believe not that every soldier in this other Regiment deserved these things, but the peasant was but using the scale in which he had seen others weighed. Again, not all good soldiers in France were colored; nor yet all the bad, but Truth and Justice are inseparably allied against the contentions that a wholesale rottenness rankled among all colored troops.

Always had it been customary when our band started into the village for the people to make haste (of their own accord) to arrange seats for the musicians

in the Public Square, but on the following day when our instruments were packed and this other band went forth to play it was twenty and two minutes before the first chair was surrendered, and then the obliging one not even tarrying to witness the effort.

Long before the break o' day of the next morrow the Regiment was under way to entrain for La Courtine the Artillery training grounds. The little village was thought to be yet at its dreams, but not so, for suddenly every door and shutter crashed open and the populace emptied itself upon the streets, the ladies still wearing their kerchiefs, their hair yet fussed from slumber. For a short moment they stood in tense silence, unheeded tears dimming their vision; then in another moment they were upon us, cheering, shouting, calling the names of those they knew, clinging to them, walking with them even to the little station where they stood whispering their good-byes; their hopes for good luck until we should meet again until the long troop train bustled away.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### LA COURTINE—ARTILLERY TRAINING

On the train some one slapped me lustily on the back. I wheeled to look up at the long, lanky, Ichabod-Crane-like figure of Sergeant John I. Johnson (Mt. Washington, Md.). "Well, Bo," he beamed, "we did it—eh?" "Did what?" I tried to snap, as if I did not know what lay nearest his big old heart. "Did what?—don't be an ass," he growled. "Why, won out like men at Lathus! And, say, I shall never fear again. The way these 'birds' (an expression for soldier handed out by the Company's first Captain, Captain Carl M. Taute, and pronounced—b-u-r-d), stood up under the hospitality of those people makes one think they must be angel proof. It was always the Regiment of which he thought and there were many others just like he.

At La Courtine the Regiment was jolted out of some of its cocksureness by losing its beloved Commander, Colonel Cole (now Brigadier-General) W. E. Cole), who was superseded by newly commissioned Colonel W. H. Carpenter, a southern gentleman of many sterling qualities, absolutely fool proof, but cursed with the deadly delusion that he "knew colored people, and knew it was impossible for them not to lie." He lived to explode his own theory in as much that upon occasions he took face value stock in the word of his non-commissioned officers against that of the officers of the Military Police with whom trouble threatened. Because the Colonel was a great mathematician and a close student of the great strategic school of War he was prone to be a partisan where others, not so fortunate as he, were concerned, and as late as early in August, back at Lathus, he expressed his sentiments to the non-commissioned officers, telling them that the Regiment would never make Artillerymen; that it was impossible; that their inherent ability was far too inadequate to grasp the intricate problems of firing data, yet within three short weeks after the Regiment gazed its first time upon French 155's (six inch heavy cannon) the Colonel—by now known as "Ben Hickory"—clapped his thighs and exclaimed to his brother officers: "Fine! Fine! Can't be beat. By God, my men fight! Go to the front next week sure!" And fine it was. The guns were shortly turned over to the troops, a problem was handed them. They must find the coordinates, throw out Out-Posts (O. P.'s); install lines of communication and demolish the objective in a certain time. They did it. The long lanyard which other troops were wont to use, "Old Eph" scorned, replacing it with a raw hide shoe lace tied to his finger as though he feared to lose his precious "Hun Tamer," "City of Baltimore," or "Hell Cat" by which pet names he dubbed his favorite pieces. And these very guns which "Old Eph" used were an issue to another Regiment—not colored—but that Regiment failed as Artillerymen and never saw the firing line in that capacity. It was this Regiment and the only one with which we had trouble in France, yet the most scathing burlesque written about the 351st by any troops in France was written by a member of that Regiment. A clipping of this burlesque was sent to one of us while we were yet in France, and in that burlesque the writer wrote of the "Battle of La Courtine." There was never such a battle! La Courtine is not a battle field but an Artillery training area—miles behind the firing line!

Much credence was given to the rumor in high circles that "Ben Hickory" is moving Heaven and Earth to get to the front." Certainly from the time that he was sure "my men can fight" until the signing of the Armistice he was never satisfied with aught less than a Hun position for a target.

And because only fully equipped Regiments could hope to go to the front, and because of the whispered probability that the Regiment might be horse-drawn, when an assignment of horse equipage arrived in camp "Ben Hickory" promptly seized the entire out-put—horses, mules, wagons, harness, saddles and spurs—apportioned it among the Batteries and stood pat. It no longer mattered to him whether we were motorized, horse-drawn or hand pushed so long as we got to "that firing line." He subsequently had to give up the entire equipage when our tractors arrived. These tractors were brought to us by a retinue of officers. On the next day Lieutenant "Pop" Wade gave a demonstration to prospective chaffeurs, explained the mechanism and what might be expected of them. Just one day later "Old Eph" had them cake-walking all over the camp.

But, the skeptic will say, they were always directed by officers. Not so. All over France went details—large and small—of colored enlisted men in charge of non-commissioned officers only. Sergeants Charles McPherson (Annapolis, Md.); Jacob M. Sampson (Va. Union University, Richmond, Va.); Robert G. Elliott and Mechanic Cornelius Hargrave (Baltimore, Md.), and many others, sergeants, and corporals as well, carried and brought men from every corner of the Republic, and not one man was left away or was put under guard for disobedience while away. Or, an order would come; a detail of mechanics—if it chanced to be work for them—would be called, given transportation and told to report to the Commanding Officer at —— a three or four day journey away. They went, reported, and were told: "Here is an assignment of cars, or horses for your Regiment, and here is a map of the route. Report without delay to your Commanding Officer." Oft times the maps proved hopelessly incorrect. Yet always at the appointed time "Old Eph" showed up. Not once did anyone have to go after him because of refusal to obey his non-commissioned officer or because his own ingenuity failed to meet unparallel contingencies of road conditions or when his chart was kilometers amiss.

"Ben Hickory" saw the triumph of color at Lathus; saw the wonderful alacrity with which "Old Eph" became a part of the guns he fired; saw the complex engine of the tractors yield up its every secret to his deft touch; saw him go and come unpiloted from coast to coast, but it was reserved for an accident to demonstrate "Old Eph's" fearlessness and utter devotion to duty. They were moving a gun one night, bringing it down from a crested position. Three men were on the limber. Half way down the hill the cannon snatched away from all but the three on the limber and tore madly down. On-lookers shouted to the men to let go, as it was impossible to stop the plunge of the heavy gun. Two men leaped clear, but Private Willie Lee (Suffolk, Va.), and of Battery A) clung tightly. The wheels struck a stone and bounded like a wild thing; the tongue went skyward and Private Lee was shot off into space. When they picked him up his neck was broken. This affair removed the last fly from the Colonel's ointment. He spoke in glowing terms of the lad's fine efforts, gave him a military funeral and ordered every man in the Regiment to attend, he leading, although it was Sunday and the day of passes when the officers always disappeared at Reveille. It was so he saw yet another phase in the character of

this people whose very soul he thought he knew, and the expression on his face was kinsman of the one on Washington's when after being told how the militia stood fire, he remarked: "Then the liberties of the country are safe."

Still there were those on whose soul the veneer of appreciation lay lightly like melting snow-flakes, and who upon the slightest provocation, real or imagined, did not scruple to make the colored fighter the butt of every brutal joke. It is not, however, in the Army alone that such conditions exist, but in Civil life as well. Indeed, some of the leading wits, cartoonists and artists of the country seem possessed of but one single sense of humor and that having its source in the vitals of the Colored Race.

If it be his wit which invites their pen the accompanying illustrations strive mightily to usurp first place in the observer's gaze; if his valorous deeds upon the field of battle, the hero, himself, may well be excused for not recognizing the purported portrait of himself. Such may be but friendly overtures towards the Race, but it is not to be denied that by such much of the depth of character and honor of achievement are ruthlessly shorn away. During the visit of Major R. R. Moton to the Regiment at Pont-a-Mousson, a corps of camera men appeared to make Regimental pictures. It was suggested that pictures be made of our Regimental Sergeants Major; Battalion Sergeants Major; or of First Sergeants and Sergeants and Corporals; or a mixture, or of the Regiment en masse but it was none of these things which these camera men wanted, but rather they sought to take three of the least educated, of the least soldierly appearance and photograph them crouched in the mud beside a stone wall, grinning broadly and gnawing on hard tacks. Such was the type of picture they wished to flash upon the screen of the world as typical of the 351st Field Artillery. Does any one question as to what the effects of such a picture would be with a view of establishing the intelligence of the Regiment? It is not at all improbable that the world of moving picture fans will one day be called upon to witness the revolting scene of the hanging of a Private of the 804th Pioneers at Belleville on the morning of the 9th of November, but the theatres themselves will crumble to dust before the world gets even a glimpse of that impressive scene of the awarding of the Distinguished Service Crosses to Lieutenant Campbell and Private Bernard Lewis on the 8th of November and in the very same locality, or of the hanging of another Private (not colored because latter statistics have proven that at the date of this second hanging no colored soldier had been hanged) earlier in the year and for which on the day of execution the entire camp at La Courtine stood at attention from 6:00 A. M., to 6:10 A. M. during which time the event was to take place.

It is manifest that much effort is expended to rob whatever good thing the Negro does, whether in civil life or in the military, of all honor and glory and to portray it as an accident—just had to happen, and not as a direct result of much hard labor and intuitive ability. Proof positive of this may be found in the portrayal and recital of the glorious deeds of Lewis and Johnson. I saw such a picture of Johnson. The Colored lad's face was horrid with fear, his whole person portrayed as one of abject terror, yet about him lay his foes—the foes of the man who penned that stupidest of all pictures. None of the proud soldierly bearing, none of the glory of battle which the youth could not help but feel, appeared, and too, some dullard had dared write that he did his deadly work with a razor! Why seek to strip him of the honor of having so successfully mastered the art of bayonet fencing that twelve of his veteran foes could not touch him? Why





JOHN L. CLARK

TYPICAL OF REGIMENTAL CALIBRE.

"WITH GOOD DEPORTMENT HE MIGHT HAVE  
BECOME PRIVATE FIRST CLASS." AT CAMP  
LEE; WITH A CLEAN BREAK HE BECAME  
FIRST SERGEANT, AND THEN COLOR  
SERGEANT AT CAMP MEADE, AND  
BATTALION SERGEANT MAJOR  
ON THE FIELDS OF FRANCE.



strive to send down to the ages a picture of him with the common alley weapon as though he had crept upon his foes and slain them while they slept? Why not say that he parried, thrust; jabbed out and in in the best approved Perishing style? Why not?

Long to be remembered too is a picture which recently appeared in a widely circulated magazine, depicting a colored soldier high-jumping into a German trench. In either hand he flourished a razor. Beneath him on his knees, his hands raised in an attitude of prayer, his cap shot from his head with fear, was a German soldier and beneath the picture was the problematical question of the Colored fighter: "Hair cut or shave?" Again the appearance of the Negro was destined to excite more laughter than the appearance of the captive; least of all things was it calculated to inspire respect for the Colored fighter as a master of the red game of War. This particular picture by some means got posted in the orderly room of Headquarters Company 351st Field Artillery—probably the most visited orderly room in France after the General's. One officer, especially, took unique pleasure in calling attention to the knotty hair; thick lips and pictured fear of the colored lad, and said: "I bet that was some scared ducky, too!" but that officer's wife is not widowed nor his two babes orphaned today because a "scared ducky" blazed him a way to freedom when his own (the officer's) automatic jammed from inexperienced handling.

It was here in La Courtine that I had the exquisite pleasure of seeing again my old school mate and pal—Sergeant Burnette Griggs (Farmville, Va.). He was freshly returned with a detail of some forty odd men under his sole command. They had been practically all over France buying horses for the Government. He told me of days on days when a hard tack would have been a delicacy; of times when a dry spot along the road where they slept would have been the envy of a king, and of wild nights in Epinwall when the Boches rained hell upon them and their charges. "Would you like to go home?" I asked. "Sure," he replied. "Guess every fellow would." "If they gave you an honorable discharge and a pass-port would you beat it for the little old U. S. A.?" I asked again. "The devil, no!" he said. "I came over to see this thing through, and I mean to do it." "Is that the way your Regiment (the 350th F. A.) feels about it?" I teased. "Yep; every man of them! he solemnized. And again I recalled those words of Washington: "The liberties of the Country (Race) are safe."

Here in the last days of the Regiment's stay this other Regiment from Lathus arrived. Their advent was sounded by an epidemic of brawls and street fights in which "Old Eph" demonstrated a prowess and physical ability to care for himself which later reddened the earth of Marbache Sector with German blood. As to the justice of their fighting "Ben Hickory's" words are more eloquent than mine. "My men good men," he said, "but they fight—fight—fight like hell if you bother them!" This last clause is both pertinent and prophetic. It became axiomatic that whenever a colored soldier was joined by one not colored the latter always prefaced his remarks by saying: "I don't belong to the \_\_\_\_\_," naming the Regiment with which the 351st always had trouble. Or, "I come from Pennsylvania or New York or some other liberal state." "Old Eph" had set his mark upon some; had put the fear of God in to their hearts and these other wanted no trouble with him, and it is momentous that because they wanted none, they got none.

Not many days passed before our fondest dreams came true. Orders to "go forward to the firing line" were received. "Old Eph" was ready—heart and soul; body and mind—primed to the go, and eager for the fray. History, to lay any claim whatever to accuracy and fairness, cannot eliminate from its fairest pages the gallant exploits of the colored soldier; and this other History and the people of this other History are doomed to oblivion if they forget too readily those other lives laid beside their own on the altar of sacrifice in Baal's temple of War. Traditions are the natural heritage of a people and because of them they may comfort themselves with whatever delusions they wish as to race superiority; race ascendancy, kulture, so long as they are not forced upon others, and suffering results there from, but let that happen and those same delusions will throttle and crush them just as those who vaingloriously inspired and fostered the red hobgoblin of the French Revolution and the recent holocaust eventually disappeared into its capacious maw. Aye, yes, delusions are sweet, sweet things, but so is the wine of the Gorgias.

## CHAPTER FIVE

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### LA COURTINE—A PSYCHOLOGICAL UP-HEAVAL

Now that there no longer existed a doubt that the Regiment was going to the front a great psychological upheaval took place among some of the officers. It was no secret that the officers of a Regiment going to the front were admonished that the dark of the firing line were an ill chosen place for the settling of private grievances and that the slate should be wiped clean before this greatest opportunity for foul play was reached, but the Regiment was certainly not prepared for the literal and liberal interpretation of that admonition which some officers demonstrated. The frugidity of military discipline is hardly calculated to be conducive to the productivity of comradeship and the development of personal friendship between officers and enlisted men, albeit military discipline and courtesy were not compiled for the special benefit of enlisted men only. Men may be officers and gentlemen as well; some times they are. In all of the manifold corrective measures which the Manual of Court-Martial provides, rare are the instances in which the sentence of death may be spoken of as mete, and then only in the jurisdiction of a properly constituted and duly appointed court. Yet I know personally of an instance when an enlisted man was ordered: "Don't talk back to me, and get up on deck in three minutes, or I'll put a bullet through your head!" Men have lost their bars, and I dare say their lives, as well, for less than that. Certainly it made the speaker's insurance significant for he was probably nearer death at that particular moment than ever Fritz brought him. Were it not for the very extenuating circumstances surrounding this instance no attempt at apology would be offered for the lack of immediate obedience on the soldier's part, but for three days the soldier had been sick and in that time had eaten nothing. Before now men have died of sea-sickness, and still others have deliberately walked past the boards out into the deep from sheer misery of it. Still this soldier might have been able to manipulate the four flights of companionway but Humanity and Humanitarian ethics were not beautified by insistence which had for its object only the demonstration and abuse of authority. This instance and the sing-song of one other officer to "shoot one of you birds some day," constitute the only exception in this particular class, though there were some one or two other individuals whose chief pleasure in life lay in the opportunity which their position afforded to take the joy out of the lives of others. But when the upheaval came these very individuals wore in every expression, tone, word and deed, the perfectly flagrant appeal: "Let us have peace. If we have grievances one to the other let us patch them up here and now. I am willing. I want to go back to see my wife and children and I know you do too, so let us forget all *little* unpleasantries." Who was it?—Shakespeare, I believe, who said: "Conscience makes cowards of us all."

This condescension was especially noticeable towards the band which hitherto had come in for the most severe grilling. No effort will be made here to deny the fact that the discipline in the band lacked much of the snap which was the pride and boast of the Company proper, but it is equally true, however, that the band, itself, was not entirely responsible for its condition. From the

very first the band had to fight hard for its every day existence. It was never popular with the majority of the Company Officers, some of whom lived especially by the code: "when in a grouch go out and kick the band." Every new officer who came to the Company was placed in charge of the band with which he experimented. It was a kind of dumping ground. I have known the band to have as many as five different commanding officers in a week of seven days. This constant changing with the variations which each individual officer inaugurated could not help but reflect badly upon the morale and discipline of that body. Under the very competent leadership of Band Leader Dorcy Rhodes, a most excellent gentleman and soldier, a Regular Army man and a veteran of the Mexican Campaign, granted only normal conditions, the band of the 351st Field Artillery need not have been content with only second place among the American Expeditionary Forces Bands.

But from the very first a senseless and unequivocal feud sprang up between the National Army officers and Mr. Rhodes, born, it is believed, chiefly of the longevity of service of the latter and of his enviable record as a soldier and a musician. Mr. Rhodes took orders directly from the Colonel but in matters of discipline for the band, Company officers were the high tribunal. Consequently a void was registered between the legislative and judiciary elements involved. Not only did this tribunal fail to stand back of the band master in his efforts to discipline the band, but before the very men whom he accused his authority was questioned, and a passive moral support afforded the men under him, thus neutralizing his power over them and lessening the potency of his efforts as a collective band. So in the efforts of some of the officers to "teach him his place" they tied the only hand that might have led the 351st Field Artillery band out of the dust of the one better band in France. That the band, in spite of the constant knocks given it, ever remained the apple of the eye in the sight of both Colonels, each one of which possessed power enough to speak it into dissolution, tends to place the blame for its lack of official (Companial) popularity where it belongs. Colonels are not prone to tolerate institutions which fall short of the mark. But in spite of all this handicap, under the guidance of Mr. Rhodes; Sergeants Horace B. Wallace and Leon J. Carter; Corporal Peter Phillips; Musicians Nelson R. Jordan; Jesse Davis and Assistant Band Leader Berry A. Claytor and many others the band was finally steered to the point where its loyalty was unquestioned. The upheaval mentioned before placed them solidly on a footing with the best of the Company's men. Again, all of this upheaval was entirely unnecessary, for although it is not always a virtue in Eph to forget too readily his just cause for grievance, he does, and so now, the *little* unpleasantries of training were swallowed up in the mad enthusiasm for the firing line, and the only effect it had upon him was to set him wondering if persons so constituted possessed the guts for the battle charge. Too, there were other officers by whose fidelity the troops swore. Conspicuously were Captains George C. Mather; Bell; Charles H. Shons,\* and Edward F. Bowman; 1st Lieutenants George DeF. Lord; Carlton H. Palmer; Arthur E. Green; Leverett Hooper; 2nd Lieutenants Charles S. Young; Harold G. Telford; Leonard L. Lyons and others.

\* Captain Charles H. Shons was probably the best beloved officer of Headquarters Company while that unit was in France. A strict disciplinarian he was nevertheless a very human gentleman. Many little personal kindnesses, oft times in a camouflaged way, were finally traced to his hands. At Brest when the Company was about to embark for home an order was received that any soldier not physically fit to make the long hike to the dock would be immediately trans-



Everything was now ship-shape. The Regiment moved out towards the front, but even before the Regiment reached the firing line we caught a glimpse of the high pinnacle to which "Old Eph" was carrying the gilded banner of bravery and heroism. One of the innumerable stops for coffee was made outside of the walls of the Base Hospital at ———. Here we saw our first wounded colored soldiers. Those who could, climbed upon the walls from one side while we clambered up from the other. They were cheerful and full of hope and most of them were eager to be well and return to the fray. "It is the only place," they said "you will like it after the first few days." One great big strapping colored soldier sat just opposite my position on the wall. Both of his feet were bundled up; his head and face were almost entirely swathed in bandages and his right arm was in a sling. I gazed down upon him with a feeling of pity choking up inside of me. "They hit you pretty hard, laddie-boy, didn't they?" I asked. "Hell, no!" he roared. "You ought to see the other fellow."

"Did you get him?" I queried. "Get him?" he laughed. "He was the last of the mob, I think," he said. "I had got rid of thirty rounds of ammunition. My automatic was burnt up—gas clogs an automatic, you know. At the third advance a fat Hun fell in love with my bayonet and I let him have it. I went down then with shrapnel in both feet; I had already got this slash across the face. A wounded Boche must have seen me move for he crept over and on his knees drove his bayonet through the flesh of my right shoulder. It stuck in the ground and I managed to pull him down and give him my trench knife through the fifth and six." When the whistle blew I started to clamber down he called up to me: "Go up, boy, and give them hell—some of you may come back here, but send the Boche on his way!" God, how we promised to avenge them; and God, how we did!

All that day I watched the faces of the men about me to see how the sight of suffering and pain had affected the temperament of the troops, but not once did I see a trace of fear but only hope that they might live to keep the promises so valiantly given. Later on in that same day I saw four men dig out their rifles and begin studiously to oil the mechanism and to polish up that fourteen inches of cold steel on the rifle's tip.

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ferred to the Base Hospital and left pending his improvement. Sergeant Denny Bibb (Harrisburg, Pa.) whose ability as a telephone man and supply sergeant had recommended him to the Captain was suffering badly from asthma, developed to the best of our knowledge since his entrance into the army, and could not have made the hike with his pack. Captain Shons took this pack, buckled it on his own back and carried it every inch of the way.

## CHAPTER SIX

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### FROUARD—AN AIR RAID

At the close of a wet, sultry day we steamed into Frouard. As usual it was raining—great sheets of water fairly tumbled from the dull grey heavens. The Regiment detrained. It was farewell to box cars until after the firing line. All were immensely glad of that. Anything was better than those box cars we thought, but we didn't know. Such billets as were to be had were uninhabitable. A fresh body of troops had just moved out, and the straw and grass they had used was left for us. Honestly that stuff moved when one looked at it; it fairly vomited vermin. When mess was served—the first hot mess for days—the boys sat on the curb or flat in the streets and ate, all the while the dirty water from their dirty helmets streamed into their dirtier mess, but it was hot, and what's the difference when one is beastly hungry? One lad was a little more fortunate than some of the others. A peasant, his son and daughter passed, and seeing him on the curb invited him to enter and place his pan upon the table. Too glad of the chance to cheat such a night of some of its prey the soldier followed the trio into the hut. Hardly had the peasant produced his black bread and vin rouge (red wine) ere the siren screamed the arrival of a Boche plane. Instantly the town went black; the peasant's candle was snuffed in a jiffy, but was relighted when the windows and doors had been barricaded against any possible exposure of light. From every angle the French anti-air craft guns barked and every now and then the slow, deep rumble of exploding shrapnel told that the Boche was fighting back. Nearer and nearer came the Boche and louder and more persistently roared the land guns. Shrapnel was now exploding in the streets. Evidently the Boche sought to descend low enough to drop a spy, it being too dark for a picture. On the other hand the French determined not to let him come near enough to earth to do either, and to and fro across the Heavens they blazed away at him. He circled; he dipped; he went off on the wing and rode his own tail but it did him no good; the French shells were ever bursting just beneath his wings; their search-lights blinding him when he wheeled and sought to swoop earthward.

Meanwhile the soldier and the peasant family sat like stones in their seats. The father and son were frightened. They admitted it and shortly went below to one of the bomb-proof cellars which necessity has added to most of the French homes wherever war has passed. It was the daughter who urged them to go to safety, excusing the one because of his age, the other because of his youth.

But she, herself, sat without a tremor, her face pale, her blue eyes flashing falcon-like in the dim candle light. Had death come then it would have found her like unto as it left her great grand sires—each dead in his marble senate chair when this same Hun had passed on his way. Nearer and nearer came the bomb-bomb of the plane and faster and still faster spoke the land guns. Death danced a ghostly step on the thatched roof and the little town rocked like a cockle shell in a storm with every explosion of the high powered projectiles. Presently she arose and stood underneath a steel arch leading into the adjoining room. Had the house shattered as it might have done did one of these missiles find its mark this arch might have stood or broken the fall of the immediate over-head



structure. Pale as a lily she stood there clinching her hands until the blood showed, and stamping her tiny feet, exclaiming: "Boche! Boche! Par bon—ugh!" (Boche! Boche! No good—ugh!) The soldier still sat by the table. All that he needed to be really afraid was to admit it to himself, but somehow this he would not do before this slip of a girl, but one year more than half his own age, yet standing like a martyr before the stroke. So he sat there striving to keep a firm grip on his feelings his hands clutched on the table, his ears following the battle far above in the dull clouds. But the strain was awful. To sit there and be fought at without the chance of fighting back made an experience equalled by but one—that of the luckless doughboy who alone in some front trench listens all night to the agonizing cry of his companion dying by inches in dark No Man's Land. With a nod the girl invited him to a place beside her own but he refused and when he could stand it no longer he leaped towards the door, and flung it open, his hand grabbing at his Colt. Only God knows what he hoped to accomplish with such a weapon against a Boche plane shooting from its vantage point in the sky. Hardly had he opened the door before the voice of the guard barked at him from the dark: "Close that door, you damn fool!" and bang! went his rifle. A bullet smacked hard into the casement above the soldier's head. He slammed too the door and leaped away back into the room now in darkness; a gust of wind having gutted the candle light. He might have fired back but he didn't; he didn't even disagree with the guard's opinion of him. And right willingly he went and stood meekly beside the girl in the arch. Could all America have felt the strain of those next few moments she were better equipped to appreciate London's agony when hopelessly she watched the Zeppelins reduce her school houses and her children to a mass of twisted iron and charred and bleached bones. After an eternity the sirens screamed: "All's clear!" And there in high heavens we saw the Boche plane come tumbling like a huge barn afire straight down to earth. The pilot, it is said, dropped inside our own lines; the plane, itself, swept on and perished among those who sent it forth.

On this occasion "Old Eph" amused the French soldiers quartered here by refusing to take cover. The French, wise in this method of warfare, made haste to take cover, throwing themselves down beside the walls and crowding into the cellars, but Eph stood in groups about the dark streets, watching the battle and plucking the shrapnel where it crashed into the walls. His curiosity brought upon him the just reprimand of the Colonel for only the darkness rendered his indiscretion even passive. Yet once again "Ben Hickory" preached a gospel he did not practice, for none were more curious than he. On the next night when he started forth for the firing line in a great observation car, he was hailed just outside of the danger zone by a guard and told that he could not pass. The Colonel flashed his eagles but they meant nothing to this dusky sentry who had been told to let no one pass that way. But the sentry did tell him of a detour which he might make and which might lead him to the desired place provided the Colonel was willing to run the gauntlet of the enemy planes.

Well, "Ben Hickory" had a way of his own, and no one has ever been able to accuse him of overlooking bets, so he waved his chaffeur (Mechanic John Brown of Baltimore, Md.), forward. They succeeded in maneuvering a ravine, and clearing a wood, emerged into a little opening, but so did Fritz with a G. I.\* can of red-hot shrapnel. The Colonel and his chaffeur walked back that night and on the way back the Colonel fired his chaffeur!

\*"G. I. Can" Artillery slang for German 210 shells.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE FIRING LINE

Contrary to the widely advertised and generally accepted theory that the Colored soldiers reached the firing line only in time for the shouting the majority of Colored fighters were thrown into the struggle when it had assumed its fiercest countenance. It was no longer a vieing of men but a hateful picture of the struggle of demons. Men came to the firing line, but devils, themselves, fought. The great game was stripped of the last shred of romance and adventure and even chivalry had ceased to exist. The scabbard was thrown away; only the sword remained. Probably Allied officialdom never put the seal of approval on ruthless warfare, but certainly among the enlisted personnel an unwritten code excluded all but war to the knife. The Boche, himself, set the pace by punctuating his cry of "Kamerad!" with the bark of his dum-dum pistol, and Eph learned to come back with "Kamerad, hell!" and to drive home the bayonet with a vengeance. The great heights to which the acceptance of this no-prisoner policy reached is well illustrated in the story told to the author by Sergeant Creighton M. Porter (371st M. G. C.) of an American ambulance driver. All the earth knows the generosity and magnanimity of those big hearted men, yet the story goes: The driver was hurrying back with a badly wounded German when the latter suddenly raised up and said: "You Americans think you're going to win this war, but you ain't." Whereupon the driver replied: "Yes, and you think you are going to a hospital, too, but you ain't." And with that he dumped the badly wounded soldier upon the ground and dashed off. Three thousand miles away the civil mind may well ask what more do Barbarians, but there in the stench of battle smoke where sentiment has given away to cold steel and human compassions are frozen into bullets or melted into red-hot shrapnel one does not register many surprises save at the varied forms of human demise. Men's veins no longer ran blood; they pulsated fire and liquid hell. Such is the condition of things when "Old Eph" stepped down into the valley of the shadow with a smile upon his lips—the same smile I saw upon his face when the grim reaper had said to the tired heart "Be still!"

Aside from the general hardships which are the natural antipathies through which every moving, fighting army must pass to be successful the unparalleled conditions under which the last war was prosecuted permitted a wide scope for the experimental, netting oftimes a vast amount of unfortunate and some times tragetic results. To say that three, four or five divisions have gone forward to this or that sector means very little to the civil mind, but to the military (even to that little bit of which the author may be possessed) a multitude of detail work springs into existence, transportation must be provided; traffic regulated to the nicety of a second; food apportioned; accoutrements and clothing inspected and reissued; rear and van guards and flanks flung out and tens of thousands of little things each though negligible in itself but assuming as gigantic proportions in their absence as the proverbial nail for want of which a shoe, horse, rider and kingdom were lost, and each little hardship and inconvenience stabbing more or less maliciously at the stamina of the troops. Volumes might be written of the mud, filth, slush, rats, vermin, food, or rather of the lack of food, but a scant one or two will amply suffice.

Enroute to the firing line we were particularly fortunate in having our own rolling kitchen along and in being able to accommodate the movements of the troops with the clumsier efforts of the kitchen when we moved across country. But at St. Jenevevie the only available place for the establishing of this luxury was the basement of what was left of an old shell torn homestead. Even during the day the kitchen was only partially visible and at night the absence of candles often left it in pitchy darkness save for the occasional fitful gleam of a candle here and there which the troopers brought from their billets. All the flies—little and big and medium of the entire sector, seemed to celebrate the arrival of food and took up their abode in our kitchen; their drone beneath the ground vieing with the rumble of the heavy guns above. The cooking was done in open pots and every good housewife knows the effect of heat and steam upon drowsy, half-starved flies. Yet there in the dark what a mess line we had, and what a cry for “seconds” prevailed! No matter what we thought, one must eat lest the feet lag on the charge or the arms lack the punch of the hardier bayonet work, and too, there are worse things than horse stew seasoned with flies and nice little roach bugs! Our cook—Private William H. Boardley—once made some prune pie. Can you imagine it—prune pie made and eaten in the pitch dark from open pans with millions of flies buzzing about and clamoring noisily for every morsel you take! Well, there were some prunes in it; I saw the seed of one! Yet not one scrap of that “prune-fly-pie” was left!

Of all the fighting troops it was my privilege to observe in France I think “Old Eph” ranks first in the preservation of his dignity in the presence of those scavengers of the trench—rats. Make no mistake about it by imagining reference being made to such rats as the faithful tabby chases to his lair over here, but rather grant your conception stretched to the appreciation of an animal easily mistaken for tabby herself. At night, especially, when one entered his billets one was greeted with what sounded desperately like the pattering of human feet on the rough boards. Probably the soldier would draw his ‘gat,’ creep to the door and fling it open fully expecting to find some enemy spy, and yelling in the dark: “Who’s there?” But his answer lay in an ominous ring of beady, glassy eyes staring at him from the remote corners of the room. Should he lie down to sleep these precious little animals scurry over and over his body, smell for his breathing, romp over his face and gnaw assiduously at the toes bursting from over worked hobnails. To strike at then is only to presume upon their self delegated prerogative and they resent it by squaring off, rearing on their hind legs and snapping their beady eyes as though to say: “Aren’t you dead yet; if not, why not? I’m hungry.” It was a joke to “Old Eph” and to some others but I have knowledge of an officer who went into hysterics because of the persistency of these creatures. This officer was a most splendid and gallant soldier, yet at the mere mention of a rat the very flesh on his frame would creep and twitch. He would cover his face and empty his automatic in the direction of the retreating rodent.

And of course there is the itchy memory of those wonderful little fellows who “sticketh closer than a brother.” They, at least, were no respecter of persons or sex, for after a tired Red Cross nurse was seen to rumple her chestnut hair over an Army map the rivers took on new life and surely the hills did seem to move.

But to get back to the weightier thought that the present war gave large scope for the experimental. This is more or less true of every army, and its

success—the Army's success—depends considerably on the ability of its Commanders to reduce the necessity for experiments. It may not be beyond the plane of truth to say that the Allied Army quit the experimental stage only during the last months of the War. Not only is a large percentage of error in every Army directly traceable to the experimental but the varied application of the human element in the whole scheme not infrequently results in a forced miscarriage of the best laid plans, thus accounting for an equally large proportion of mishaps. The ability of the common soldier to recognize and allow for the latter margin of error is probably the best test of his loyalty and discipline. One of the most common causes of complaint among the doughboys prior to the arrival of the 167th Field Artillery Brigade (composed of the 351st, 350th and 349th) was a lack of strict coordination between Infantry and Artillery operations. This particular kind of error is said to have figured conspicuously in the annals of the 368th that dark day in the Argonne. Most of the boys with whom I have talked seemed more prone to believe that "some one blundered" than that 'twere a malicious attempt at human slaughter. Probably the blame for the whole mess will never be correctly fixed, but, certainly the relieving of the responsible officer, Major \_\_\_\_\_ tends to lend color to the contentions of the enlisted men, and to shatter the black brush with which some are wont to smatter the achievements of that organization. Shortly the arms of this same Regiment plucked as beautiful a rose for the chaplet of America as ever adorned Miss Liberty's brow. But, be that as it will, or may, it is known that through it all "Old Eph" maintained an eye single to Duty and kept an ear ever peeled for Humanity's slightest call. And it was with a good deal of pride and relief that the Infantry in the Marbache sector welcomed the coming of the 167th Field Artillery Brigade and staked their all on its reputation.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### FIGHTING CALIBER—BATTLE ZONE—RUNNERS, TELEPHONE MEN—THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW—A SHOOTING MATCH

So we came to the firing line. Some difficulty was experienced here in keeping "Old Eph" from singing and yelling and firing "at will." The pack is less heavy; the trench less muddy and vermin-lined when one can sing, but orders were orders and Eph contented himself with this refrain, accompanied to the roar of his cannon: "Now Mr. Kaiser count your men!" (I do not know that this expression was original with the 351st. I do know that the lads of that Regiment made it the burden of their song.)

Our bit of Marbache sector was spread fan-like just beneath the walls of Metz but slightly to the north and west with the 351st meshed in the vortex and the enemy sweeping a tri-cornered front with the best manned forts and emplacements after Gibraltar. The French were on our extreme right; the 349th immediately under us; the 350th holding the left flank with the 58th, while a battery of Coast Artillery shot nine-point-twos from the rear. Our position was cramped, and aside from not permitting the freedom of movement which was desired, it forced the greater portion of our guns to take up positions off to the left and out of direct line with the major enemy positions which were hard off to the right. This meant that more than two-thirds of our guns had to shoot almost entirely across our sector to figure creditably in our barrages and bombardments. Every inch of communication—telephone, buzzer, radio, runners—between Batteries, Battalions, Brigades, Regimental and Company Headquarters and the echelon was installed, operated and maintained by the enlisted men. Repairs often meant work in exposed positions, yet no one grumbled. Sergeant Harrison Chester (Baltimore, Md.), once worked so for four consecutive days and nights along with Lieutenant Leonard L. Lyons and was mentioned in the letter to General Headquarters in *re* the Lieutenant's being struck by shrapnel. It was of Private Leolian Dockins, another telephone man, of whom Lieutenant Harold H. Nute said: "Damn, but that fellow has guts; gee, I would go with him any where—to hell!" This is more than praise; it is worship when one understands that Lieutenant Nute was not popular, for the very good reason that he did not aspire to be. The average "shave tail" is naturally unpopular; Lieutenant Nute studiously acquired his. Life presents some strange paradoxes but none more queer than the spectacle of two men in one and the same Regiment, one the exponent of a theory of which he is not openly a disciple; the other a disciple of a theory of which he is not openly an exponent.

The work of the runners at the front cannot long escape the attention of the practiced eye of the Historian. It may, however, never enter into the annals of the world's greatest war, but certainly its neglect will forever burden the conscience of civilized Humanity. Night after night when the order "Runner!" was bawled from the office the entire force would spring forward, jostling each other for the honor of going forth in the darkest, death-ridden night to measure the span of their lives with the hell without. Perchance the positions had been



shifted and the soldiers not well informed as to where ended their lines or where began that of the enemy, yet there is no record of messages going astray, or of the wrong coordinates being transmitted to gun squads or of a miscalculated charge slaying friendly troops.

Or, what mattered it to the dusky doughboy that the morrow would find him hot-footing it across shell swept No Man's Land, tonight he is merry, furnishing his weapons, and gambling as to the fresh notches the morrow will add to his rifle butt. Nor can it be said that time and distance had dimmed his memory of existing conditions at home, against which he now fought in a foreign land and for a people with the least possible claim upon his generosity. For had the three thousand miles which intervened between him and his native country possessed the potency to so benumb him, Fritz was prepared in a novel way to keep him informed even as he did the Russians and the Irish. From his high perch in the sky he shot a propaganda more deadly than bullets steel-jacketed or poisoned, asking "Old Eph" why he fought; reminding him of the lynchings; disfranchisements; jim-crowisms and segregations which were ever his bitter portion in the land of his nativity. It was not always easy to pull the trigger steadily or drive home the bayonet with a clear conscience when visions of swinging sisters, roasting brothers and horse-whipped mothers and fathers swam in the mind. But Eph had put his hand to America's plow. Eph would not look back now, but mark you, America, God and Eph will not forget! Will you?

I have seen our boys go down to No Man's Land with a smile, yet knowing full well what the end thereof might be. One might see them any evening, filing along in single file close to the edge of the camouflaged road moving up so as to be in line to go over in the early morning. They were solemn, thoughtful, but they were unafraid. The eye was calm, clear, steady; the voice untouched by a single tremor of panic, the step firm and true. I have heard them jest on the last lap of the journey, and call as they passed to the fellows serving the guns: "Give 'em hell, buddy; tomorrow I'll tell you where you hit." I have seen other men go down to the valley with slow, faltering tread, their eyes upon the ground; hands hot and sweaty, the cheeks pallid. I remember one Company of our own Infantry that had been brought up under heavy fire during the night to remain in the immediate vicinity in order to take the places of the boys already in the fore and soon to go back. All night they had marched under fire and rain. There was no food and little rest. They were told that when they came to the front line they might rest until the other troops moved out—probably not before evening of the next day. They reached the front, foot-sore and hungry, slightly before day break to find that the patrol which had just gone over had been counter attacked and was being cut to pieces. There was not a moment to spare. "Go forward!" was the order to be followed immediately by: "As you were! Cut out that damned yelling! Forward!" "Old Eph" had broken into a yell of triumph. The lust of battle was deep in his soul and forward like a blood hound unleashed he went. They tried to "carry on" with their light packs but even these were too much for their spent strength and with their trench knives they cut themselves loose and went forward, knocked out the machine gun nests, broke up the enemy formations and crammed them like rats back into their own trenches. One entire machine gun nest yelled "Kamerad!" from their dugout and filed out with their hands high above their heads. The boys frisked their weapons, left a guard to conduct them to the rear, and forged on. Hardly had they turned their backs before the captured Germans caved in

the skulls of their captors with short clubs which they carried up their sleeves, and then sought to turn the guns again upon the remainder of the patrol, but attracted by shots in their rear the patrol wheeled and bore down like an avalanche. Then, God how they fought. Again the Germans took to their dugouts; again they yelled "Kamerad!" but "Old Eph" had learned his lesson. "Kamerad, hell!" he screamed. "Take this—and this—and this!" he bellowed as he showered into the dugout the hand-grenades, and then again the Germans came out, but, me thinks, Gabriel will need a fisherman's net rather than a trumpet to carry them to their Judge for they left not enough of them alive to put on a muster roll. Nothing could stop Eph now. They swept the field and went forward to Bois Frehaut and that night slept upon their arms.

Later when our men went into the one-time No Man's Land to bury the dead strange sights met their gaze. The battle field was indescribable. Scattering, the search for the dead began, and it became a slang almost when a searcher would sing out from some remote part of the field: "Here's one" (meaning a colored soldier was found dead there), the other searchers would yell back: "How many Germans?" for wherever a colored soldier had lain down for his last long sleep he generally made his couch upon the stilled forms of his foes.

Hard off at right angles to what had been the old German front line trench was a little shell riddled hillock, and there cuddled up in a pile much as a hen would have gathered her chicks were nine white soldiers, long dead and stinking. It was the end of what must have been an awful tragedy. Evidently they were a portion of a raiding party and had either become separated from the command or had blundered upon a Boche machine gun nest. Standing there under the pale stars it did not require much imagination to conjure up the picture of what must have happened. One could almost see them look vainly towards their own trenches from which no succor came, or came too late, and then fling themselves down together in the hope of shelter—incidentally the very worst thing they could have done. And lying there, probably with a milk white star-shell to make them unmistakable targets, the enemy machine guns had fanned them with its hot breath of death until the last nerve had ceased to quiver and the last heart ceased to be afraid. Of the nine three men had not fired a single shot, and only one man of the remaining six had emptied his rifle; their bayonets showed no blood.

Our Infantry seemed to have swung off sharply to the right and led almost into the French quarter. In an old abandoned trench three French soldiers were taking pot-shots at a German sniper thought to have taken refuge in a gully slightly behind a little knoll. One of the Colored soldiers—a boy from the 366th—was eager to take a hand. The French tried to dissuade him but could not and for more than a half hour these two pitted themselves against each other. It was necessary to get this fellow or else the French trapped there must go entirely through our sector to reach the left wing of their own whither the tide of battle had turned. "Old Eph" drew his bead carefully and pulled but always the German came back with a bullet which kicked up the earth above our heads. "Old Eph" chuckled to himself: "I'm going to get that Dutch son-of-a gun," he said and crammed his magazine full once more. Then before anyone could guess his intentions he sprang upon the lip of the trench. It would seem, however, that the German had also said to himself: I'm going to get that American



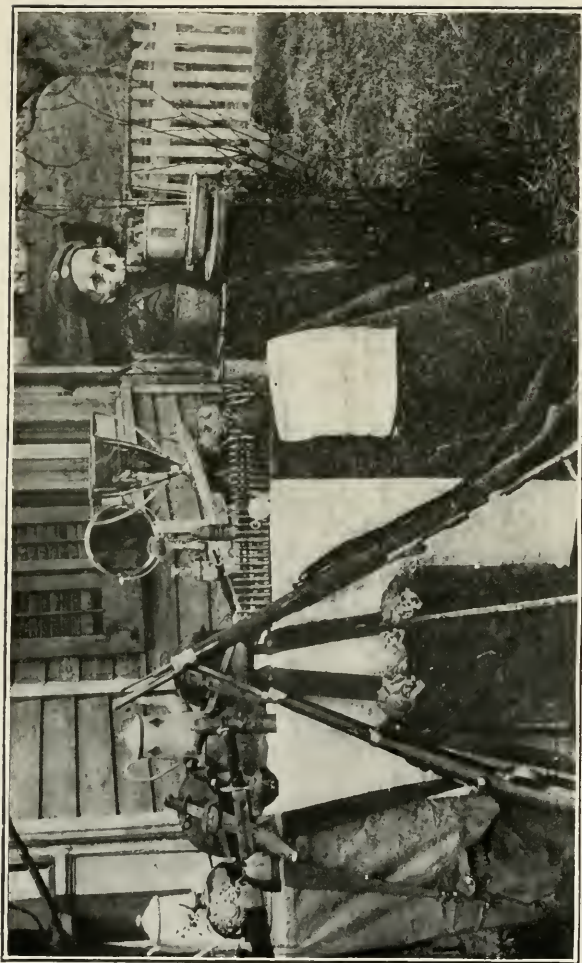
son-of-a-gun," for he, too, stood, legs apart, upon the parapet, his figure silhouetted against the star-lit sky (as Eph's must have been to him). Both men began shooting about the same time and shot about as fast as God would let them. Suddenly Eph lurched forward to his knees and toppled back among us, a bullet seared in the flesh of his thigh. But the German was seen to fling out his arms, leap high in the air, crash down and roll heavily down the little knoll towards us; his rifle sliding a part of the way after him.

For him the toil of life was all over. And who shall say upon whose head the blood flowing from his side shall be?

Back at Frouard when exploding shrapnel threatened to put a period to the existence of the little town it had been but natural to suppose that Eph's actions were born of inexperience in aerial warfare, but in these after days the constant repetition of such dare-deviltry as just mentioned; the constant courting and flirting with death were ever and whenever found abolished in the minds of all who saw or heard all doubt as to the indubitable fact that deep down in the heart-core of the Colored Fighter his sense of humor was lorded over by a greater sense of loyalty and bravery which rose to every challenge when the Gods of Chance rattled the death-head dice and called him to the play, and likened him unto Arthur's knights who pitched their tents in the forks of the road and met all comers for the sake of king and country. The French fairly smothered the soldier with kisses, but that is one of the things I despair of Eph's ever learning to love—being kissed by men, and although he could not keep them from kissing him he spent the next few moments trying to wash his face—incidentally a thing he had not done for these many days. Here we talked with the first prisoners in whose capture our Artillery had been instrumental. They were a motely group, but there is no doubt that they were good soldiers—better collectively than individually; better with the machine gun than with the bayonet; better with a battery of cannon than with a regiment of infantry. Almost all, I think, fully expected to be killed. I picked out one German who looked agreeable and tried out my German on him. He would not "compre." "Hell, talk United States," he growled. "Got a cigarette?" I gave him one. "Well, what do you think of the Colored fighter?" I asked. He spat viciously. "I didn't have to come to Germany to know how you people fight," he said. "I used to live on 40th Street between 9th and 10th avenues. My regiment has been in the fight for nearly three years; this is the first time we didn't clean the field. I was in your army once, went into Mexico with your General."

"What are you going to do after the war?" "Go back to 40th Street", I laughed. "Why, man, you can't do that," I told him. "There will be an embargo and boycott on all things German." He grinned knowingly. "Yep, for a few years, probably, then your Congress will lift the ban, pronto. That's how you Americans do things." And I wondered if the fellow was not pretty near to the truth. We talked for thirty odd minutes. He knew more of America's movements than I did—knew of nearly every strike, bombing and disease that had startled the country. Time has proven some of his predictions and assertions to be absolutely correct; some partially so, and others grossly wrong in their entirety. As of the latter he was very curious to know if we knew that Bernstoff's army of a half million had seized the Hudson fortifications; forced the capitulation of Washington (D. C.), and driven Mr. Wilson into exile in Europe. We heard that Mr. Wilson *was* in France. It was hard not to believe anything he said; he was that well informed. He knew that an armistice was





WAR SOUVENIRS FROM THE BATTLEFIELDS ABOUT HISTORIC METZ.

eminent—knew some of the purported terms and strove to reflect the impression that Imperial Germany would *agree* to the restoration of certain war bounties. But he *knew* that had Germany been granted the first armistice and had been allowed to fall back to a certain position tentatively to talk peace, “all hell could not have got her out of her second lines.” Nothing that was said seemed to affect his cocksuredness that no matter how the dice fell Germany was bound to win. Even when a Colored private ordered him to “about face, forward, march,” his attitude was one of insufferable arrogance and sarcastic indulgence.

This little essay over the battle field afforded an excellent opportunity for the securing of souvenirs, all kinds and classes of which were scattered helter-skelter in every direction taken by the flying foe, and to “Old Eph’s” enthusiasm a new force was given which swept him to the nth power of fighting fervor.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE COLORED OFFICER

The work of the Colored Officer in France has come in for a great bit of commendation and more criticism, but just how far current History is to be depended upon to correctly reflect the true value of his services is very hard at present to determine, since so few of the works on the matter are from the pens of those best qualified by actual contact and experience to do exact justice. Indeed, it is almost strange that more of our Colored Officers have not risen up in defense of their laurels in France. And the only sane solution to their silence is their unanimity in agreeing that any attempt at argument might be made to appear as lending a shred of respectability to the slanderous declamations of the critics, and that their deeds stand indicative of the morale, temperament and amenability to discipline of the troops they commanded. Grave issue, however, may be taken with their modesty in as much as it is not only their integrity as officers which is being attacked but the capability of the Race to produce Military Leaders as well as followers is threatened with impeachment.

Of course much of the criticism against them springs from prejudice. This brings one to the question as to just how much prejudice there was in France in the American Army and how did it exert itself. Some of the modes of its expression (where enlisted men were concerned) have already been touched upon, and for a long while it was believed that its outlet through the social activities of the troops constituted its only offense. That it was used to discredit and demoralize the Colored troops from the Military standpoint was not generally believed or accepted until after the Armistice and the imprint of its cloven hoof unmistakably shown leading down into the very shadow of No Man's Land, itself. In fact, in some instances, it was not believed that a wholesale policy, officially sanctioned, to discredit, discriminate and jim-crow was in vogue in France until after the return of the Colored troops and the doffing of uniforms released the naked truths.

I want always to think well of my Government—indeed I want that no one shall think better, and in this I am sure that I stand with a majority of My Race who are willing to believe that the issuance of segregation orders and orders tending the dissuasion of fraternalization of French officers with Colored had their origin less in the seat of Government itself, than in the mendacious strength of a prejudicial few to so paint the Negroes' popularity in France that certain officials believed such orders necessary to the maintenance of Anglo-Saxon predominance—social and Military—at home and abroad. (This, however, in no wise constitutes an apology for the short-sighted policy which scorned investigation and the information, as to the behavior of Colored troops, which the French authorities right willingly would have supplied). To illustrate: about the time of the signing of the Armistice a goodly number of Colored officers arrived in France. Now the Government need not have gone to the trouble, expense and danger of sending these men to France had it not been that they could be of invaluable aid. A thousand excuses might have been invented to retain them in America. But they were not. Yet from the day of their arrival in France they were a white elephant on the hands of certain officers who strove

to keep them from sharing in the honor of the conflict and from the rightful place for which America at Destiny's behest had prepared them. From pillow to post they were shuttled; now in this town; now in that; a student of this school today; a student of that tomorrow and finally a forced loafing when the Allied cause and the cause of Humanity begged the services of every available man. Twelve of these men—Lieutenants—were sent to our own Regiment (and their own Regiment since they were men who had risen from the ranks of the 351st Field Artillery. Three of these men: Lieutenants James S. Davis; James A. Norris and John C. Robinson having formerly been Regimental Sergeant Major; First Sergeant and Sergeant respectively from my own Company.

Instead of these men being put to work as the spirit of the High A. E. F. order assigning them must have intended, they were studiously—and shall we not say maliciously relegated to a nil statue. An order was posted holding them in reserve at the discretion of the Commanding Officer. They were not permitted the honor of Officer of the Day; took no Reveille, Retreat or Guard Mount, were present at scarcely none of the Company's formations and were spoken of to enlisted men not as Lieutenant so and so, but merely as "Davis" "Norris" and Robinson." Yet they were Artillerymen, specially selected; specially trained and specially transported for specific duty with the 351st and other Artillery, but when the prejudicial ingenuity of officers higher up failed to inaugurate new schemes whereby these men might further squander a great Nation's life and time and wealth and opportunity they succeeded in being linked onto that portion of the Regiment which existed only on paper and which boasts the least likelihood of entrance into the annals of the Nation's part in the world's greatest war. This was not the work of the Government proper, nor yet of the High Command in France, but absolutely the manipulations of a single individual officer who arrogated to himself the function of influencing all other officers with his own bigotry.

So, granted that the Government strove to be fair to the individual, as many instances tend to show, it is difficult to effect a reconciliation between these two hypotheses—that the Government is inherently fair to the individual; yet the Government methodically plots the assassination of the social, economic and military character of the Race to which the individual belongs. This verges desperately close to the impossible. No Government could be so utterly base and only the unvarnished truth remains—that in France the Government was unhesitatingly used to further private ends just as in America some of its noblest efforts were lost in feathering the nests of the profiteers. And that group of men who so rob the Government of the support of its citizens presents so sorry a spectacle as to be despicable and revolting. They are the barbarians building their purple palaces upon the bleak bones of Humanity's martyrs; they the ghouls streaming over the battle fields, feasting upon the gory dead, and prying open death-locked fingers to snatch the jeweled rosary or the dead's most treasured trinket.

It is almost begging the question to attempt to prove that colored soldiers will follow and be amenable to the discipline of Colored officers. It was not my privilege to serve with an outfit so officered, and I cannot write with first hand information on this particular and interesting point, but I have already mentioned how entirely Colored enlisted men responded to the orders of their Non-commissioned officers, and the valorous deeds of units officered by Colored are prohibital of any truth in the assertion that Colored Officers are not capable



of leading their men to any point of efficiency reached by others. It is hard to imagine a more ridiculous statement than that made by some critics that Colored Officers cannot command Colored troops because the "Colored soldier offers complications and peculiarities peculiarly his own." If it be that he is peculiar who better than another Colored soldier is best qualified to appreciate this peculiarity? This is no attempt to say that Colored troops may not be well officered by white officers. They may well be; some times they are. And for a white officer to be white enough to command Colored troops he needs no greater knowledge of human nature; no more patience and no more faith in mankind than such as are necessary to successfully command his own, but in this one particular he needs no Achilles heel—a strict immunization to the influence of others not so white as himself. Needless to say that fulfillment of the most elementary of patriotic obligations waives individual prejudices and leaves room only for devotion to the common weal to which all things else are subordinate.

To those Colored Officers living and dead who fought that Democracy might not perish from the earth posterity may erect no earthly monument, but in letters of blood they, themselves, have written it upon the great bleeding heart of Humanity that wherever the exigencies of mankind require the services of strong men and loyal; wherever Right and Justice shall sound the battle cry, the Colored soldiery shall not be found wanting, but waiting and courageously willing in the foremost ranks.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE ARMISTICE—AFTER-WAR CONCLUSIONS—RECONSTRUCTION

On the morning of the tenth of November Private Armour D. Strothers; and Private James B. Haney (both of Pittsburgh, Pa.), and Private Paul Quesada (of New York), snatched from the air with their wireless apparatus the Armistice terms, and on the morning of the eleventh the signing of the Armistice cold-decked the Race and the Colored soldiery in the midst of its most brilliant achievements, but, not however before it had repeatedly demonstrated to the entire satisfaction of the whole world its loyalty, bravery and readiness for any task which an over-ruling Destiny might ordain.

Immediately after the Armistice the Regiment moved to the port of Brest by way of Ville au Val; Belleville; Pont-a-Mousson; Liverdun; Maron Couterne and Le Mans. Concerning this last named place, dear to every home-bound soldier's heart, because it is the official delouzation station I made in my diary this entry: "January 6, '19. Packing for Brest. Watching Lieutenant 'Bill' Howard examine white officers for cooties." While the Regiment wound its way through the above named towns, consuming the time intervening from the 11th of November to the 5th of February, we received eleven different orders to go forward to Brest, and just as many more orders countermanding those first commands. Why human hearts did not break only God knows. But during those weary, mailless, payless, almost foodless days the Regiment kept up to the high standard of morale and discipline which it had so valiantly set for itself at Lathus.

Mention has already been made of the relationship which existed between the colored soldier and the women folks of France, but if the casual reader is not to be misinformed, further reference is necessary. Though the gallantry of the colored soldiery inspired them to be most sweet, most kind, gracious and obliging, there was ever apparent that happy medium of sterling friendship and respect which obliterated that unholy atmosphere reducing the one to an unscrupulous libertine and the other to a voluptuous mistress. The altar of love may have been lighted in the hearts of some, but more generally the warm comradeship sprang from friendship and a love of service. By the teaching of their own pure hearts whose holies of holy harbored the memory of their Poilu—their hero and Demi-God—they knew that back home in America each dusky lad had set the seal of his love upon the heart of some lady of his own choice. Thus each was content to be loved a little after that other and in a widely different fashion. Perish the false idea that our own women suffer because of those others over there, for whether it was around the bivouac fire, in the dugout or jolting along in freezing box cars it was ever of "My dusky maiden," "High Brown," "Brown," "Pretty Pink," or "High Yellow" over which "Old Eph" raved. And nothing cemented his cause so well as the picture of his wife, mother, sister or sweetheart, or brought more readily from its honored place in the family album "My Poilu" or from its faded box the cherished lock of infant hair.

The War is finished, yet just begun. "Old Eph" winds his way again back to his old home town, but never again will he fit only in the inconsequential, menial niche which has too often been his only share. The great smith, Mars, has wrought for him a stouter heart, and if he has not yet learned how to live,

he knows past all doubting how to be unafraid in the valley of the shadow and how to die splendidly defending his own, and although his hands are gone out in the pursuit of the weapons of peace, his fingers shall not soon forget the itch of those other weapons with which he struck in twain the despoilers' fingers from the fair and unprotected, nor his soul ceased to thrill to the stern and mad joy of battle when Right and Justice captain his cause. Meanwhile the pendulum of the high hope of his soul pulsebeats from the great white dome of the Capitol at Washington to the historic council rooms at Versailles. But it is not the cap and bells of vain-glorious praise which in Justice's name "Old Eph" demands, but that whether it be in the open forum of the World's Public Opinion, or in the secret chamber where around the polished table grave faced men propound the doctrine of a League of Nations, he be accorded the respect for his rights which his morale, discipline and arms have won, instead of the distorted burlesque which bias and sometimes malicious minds conspire to create.

In some circles grave disappointment has resulted in the Race's failure to receive full and complete recognition before the authors of the League of Nations, but such fear and disappointment were justifiable, and probably were pardonable only, if the League were solidly placed on purely Democratic lines, and its very premise unquestionably true and just. To doubt the great strength of the Race—its cause and its capability with the care of an over-ruling God, ever championing the cause of the down-trodden, but right—to one day come into its own, is to thwart the very best effort of the Race in its incipency. Too, one more "scrap of paper" more or less, added to the waste-basketed treaties of Belgium and Louvain cannot red-flag Destiny from its ordained track nor can it obscure the iniquitous machinations of the willful few who seek to achieve with the pen what one other whom they put down, failed of accomplishment with the sword. But, be that as it will or may, this much remains to be truthfully said: If the History of Democracy from Israel to Jefferson and Mr. Wilson is to be believed (and it is); if this Democratic League of Nations be not founded upon the principles of Right and absolute and unstinted Justice to all free peoples under the sun, be it and its foster-child—Peace—signed or unsigned; ratified or vetoed, it can no more stay the hand of Providence and dodge the fate of Israel than does smashing the lens remove the rankling cancer gnawing at the vitals of the diseased; and for all those nations whose hands are uplifted to uphold this molten calf and who seek to draw over its form the cloak of the Master, it cannot at best be more than mere whitening bones (showing where the nations of men went away on the road to shame) along the Gethsemanic trail leading to a Golgotha of death and self-oblivion.

Recent months have added to the list of charges against the Race's integrity what is the most momentous accusation yet mentioned, while although false in the literal and integral sense, is nevertheless ephocal. Reference is made to the charge that the War has seriously changed the Young Negro—that he has come back with "his head in the air—braggadocia." Granted that the Young Negro is changed, exception is taken to the common version of the nature of this change. It is universally agreed that all things human change; that War—the greatest power of human passions—possesses the greatest potentialities to bring about this change. Races, Countries, Creeds, Ideals and all things else know the power of this greatest element, and the Young Negro reserves to himself no peculiarity to remain unaffected. But the assertion that he has come back with "his head in the air—braggadocia," is a coinage of certain masses

whose vituperations against the Race spring from the fact that in the ranks of returning Colored soldiers they fail to find the '61 "Sambos" who grinned like Cheshire cats, showed the whites of their eyes and turned a fool's somersault at the mere mention of watermelons and chittlings.

This idea is not necessarily shared by those who think seriously and who recognize the powers of War to destroy existing conditions and to rehabilitate others, and the very fact that the masses have lost their fool and 'trick darky' is synonymous to saying that wise men have found in the ranks of returning Negro soldiers many men after their own hearts. It is epochal in that it marks a long stride in the rapidly narrowing margin between the Races. The one looking backward beholds something of which to be proud; the other gazing forward looses sight of everything save the Destiny which beckons, and the cry of the masses is the surest thermometer of the breadth of that neutral ground. For does the king fear the hireling peasant? No; but what if it be found that the hireling is of gentle birth?—the king dangles his own lineage before the other's eyes that by comparison his own (the king's) may appear the brighter. What if the gentle born emerges into a duke?—The king ransacks his brain to find a "sop" to stay his rise and growing popularity. What if the duke turns out to be a prince?—the king sets his men-at-arms to man the fastenings of the fortress and sends his jesters broadcast to surreptitiously decry the man. But what if the prince declares himself kingly born and no redress, real or perjured, can swear away his aspirations?—my lord, the king, makes much haste to hang on his neck the golden chain of recognition and welcomes him to the joys of his castle and the honor of a place beside his very own in the battle line.

Even to the most sanguine mind it is too preposterous for contemplation that "Old Eph," now war-made into "New Eph" has come back expecting to find here social conditions which prevail in France, or that he dreamed for a moment that he would be carried shoulder high through the streets to the banquet hall and feted save within the limited capacity of his own people. (And they have done that, God bless them!) The true soldier, himself; the true citizen do not ask as much, but only this—a recognition of worth as both Peace and War have proven it, without regard to Race, Creed, Color or previous conditions of servitude and the cessation of pre-judicial opposition. These—the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (which involve the right of honest toil in competition with other free men)—are not more than those constitutionally granted to all the citizenry of this Great Republic of ours.

A grateful nation cannot lessen or besmirch its great honor by lending itself to the furtherance of these just ends. In the Mayor's welcome ship which came out to meet the 351st Field Artillery on its return to America, many have pretended to see the death of prejudice, but to those who accustom themselves to look beyond today and who know that the walls of prejudice do not crumble over night when the pitchers are broken and the light of day flows forth, the feet of Joshua's host are just mounting to the highways about the walls of Prejudicial Jericho. Destiny will have her own even though Treaties and Leagues are tacked high on the walls of the assemblies of men and Governments rot in the gutter. But why, comes the question, if all these good things be true of France, why does Eph clamor to return to the United States? Why not live for aye in this land of equality, justice and freedom? Scores of answers might be forthcoming, any one of which possessed of sufficient force to satisfy the most exact,—home is here; the land of his fathers; his loved ones await him and Congress



says he shall come back that the spirit of the Constitution remain inviolate. But none of these constitute the real purpose which brings the Young Negro back to America, but rather this—to free his own fair land from the Barbarian of Racial Prejudice which enslaves it. So, notwithstanding the honors showered upon him; notwithstanding the social equality which his sterling character won for him; and notwithstanding the innumerable invitations to stay with these people who loved him so well that for his sake they dared the displeasure of the Great American Government, he returns to the land of his birth, not, however, with “his head in the air—braggadocio,” but rather with his head low in shame because of the abuse to which a prejudicial oligarchy under the guise of Democracy has brought the powers of Humanity and Civilization. His is a better vision; a broader, bigger vision. He no longer sees prejudice as an obstacle to be steered around, but as a bulwark which the battering ram of righteous might must demolish before the millions of his people can hope for a better place in the sun in which to live and work. Nor is his alone this better vision, for a mighty host is marshaling under his banner. Throughout the entire country individuals who were content to regard the Race as a tolerance have been emancipated by the War and its constituent influences into a thorough recognition and appreciation of the great worth of the Negro as a citizen, soldier and economic and industrial factor. Let me tell you a story exposing this point.

After the Armistice the Regiment proceeded to hike from Pont-a-Mousson to Maron, the official entraining station, but a few of us were privileged to go across country in trucks, which we did, reaching the station about three days ahead of the Regiment. Unfortunately there were no billets to be had; another Regiment had gobbled up every available hayloft, cowshed, and chicken house so we betook ourselves to some empty box cars standing in the yards below the town. These box cars could be made fairly comfortable if only the French did not see the fire we built on the floors of them and chase us out, which they did on the average of about nine times every night. Indeed it seemed that the engineers were engaged in some kind of a push-pin game with those cars. For hardly had we cuddled up when along they would come, yank us out, juggle the cars about and often bring them back to the very same spot. Meanwhile we would stand around on the rails with all of our earthly possessions exposed to a constant down pour of cold, miserable rain. On the second day food supplies gave out. The Regiment there had scarcely enough for itself and we got no more than we could steal and it was impossible to steal—much. During the last night a white ordnance sergeant banged on our “side door pullman” and asked for shelter and food. We offered him the shelter and told him to go to the devil for the food, which he would not do and laid down beside us and shortly all hands were snugly asleep. I say snugly because in our sleep old wolf Hunger could not snatch away our lavished table which our dreams conjured up. Funny, isn’t it, how sound a broke and hungry man can sleep! At any rate we were aroused next morning by a French peasant pounding on the car. ‘Maybe God knows what he said (excuse me) but this is what he meant. He wanted us to get out of that car and be darned quick about it; that he wanted to put wood in it. We told him to go where they don’t use wood for fire; that we would not get out of that car at six in the morning for every Frenchman in Christendom after Foch himself. We might have been there until yet had he not let drop this one hint, to wit: That he must get some wood to Maron by eight o’clock. Get wood to Maron? If this wasn’t Maron, then where in the

thunder were we? Oh, we *were* in Maron, yes, but during the night our pullman had been shifted just eleven kilometers south of that town! (A kilometer is commonly judged to be three-fifths of a mile.) Well, thank God, there are some words that do not hold up well under long distances. There was nothing to it but to fall out, roll packs and hike back to Maron on a thrice empty stomach and get there before eight at which time the Regiment was due. We set out. The ordnance sergeant walking at my side and on the way we fell to discussing races as we had seen and known them under fire—knowing that fire brings the best or the worst of all things to the fore. He told me how all his life he had hated Colored people because he had been taught so; taught to believe them inferior in all things to other people; had laughed at the virtue of their women because he had seen them sell it for a mess of pottage; and had believed every evil thing about the Race simply because every one who had sought to correct his opinion had ended by throwing stones at some one else instead of taking the lie that was told and carrying it straight to the bank of truth and proving it, once for all, n. g. The War had corrected his whole life as to the Colored man, “but as to your women,” he said “I am willing now to believe that there must be virtue among them, for if there were not your men could not be what they have proven themselves to be—loyal and true and upright. By the way that reminds me of the story of a pal o’ mine, Charles Sumner. Charles Sumner was a student at a Southern College when the war broke out. He was drafted and his exemption claim turned down. He came to France, served under the French with a portion of a Colored Regiment; was gassed and furloughed to his home in South Carolina. When he reached home he found a huge service flag and star floating from the front window, and as he strolled around the grounds he found in a back window of a little out-house another tiny service flag and star. ‘Mother,’ he said ‘whose service flag is that! And she answered haltingly: ‘Charles do you remember Old Black Sam who used to work here on the place?’ ‘Yes,’ ‘It is his flag, Charles; he is a soldier now. Please don’t think your mother sentimental, boy, but I guess I felt that I wanted to do something.’ Without a word the boy plucked down the flag and bore it around to the front of the house and hung it beside his own. His heels clicked sharply together; his hand came up to the salute. ‘Mother,’ he said, ‘never hang the service flag of a soldier in Uncle Sam’s Army in the rear. They belong at the front together, no matter whether they are black or white.’ His mother’s eyes filled with tears. ‘Oh, boy,’ she said, ‘your mother is so glad you feel that way about it. I was afraid you would be angry. Your father, you know, could never countenance a nig—Neg—Colored soldier. And Sam *was* a good boy.’ ‘Good Old Black Sam,’ the boy mused. ‘But, mother, how did he ever get to be a soldier? He had no education—could not even read or write.’ ‘No; they turned him down in the draft; said he had flat feet, but Sam volunteered, my boy, to serve his Country. He is a soldier now and has won the French cross. His mother came over to wash for me last week but all we did was to weep in each other’s arms for love of our boys over there.’ The boy choked up, but presently stammered, with his arm about his mother. ‘Oh, mother, mine, we’ve all been so wrong about it all. Why, those Colored boys have hearts just like ours—feet and bodies that grow hungry and cold and tired and ache even as our own, and, mother there are no black bullets in No Man’s Land. Good Old Black Sam; good old Sam. God ever watch over thee, lad, and brother of mine and bring you back to us who love you!’”



Such is typical of a class of the prejudicial—a prejudice born of ignorance of the better qualities and achievements of the Race. And the shame is ours that some of the Race itself are just as ignorant. Since my return to the United States I have talked to three people who are not far removed from this class. Two of them were Y. M. C. A., men the other a lady high in the estimation of the Race. I quote here a sample of the conversation I held with the three. "So you have been in the Army—eh?" they asked. "Yes," I replied. "I served my entire enlistment period with the 351st Field Artillery." "Did you go overseas?" "Yes," I replied. "But you didn't see any active service?" "Oh, but I did," I replied again. "But I was told, on good authority, that the 351st never went overseas, and after that I was told by a soldier who was over there that the 351st did not make good at the training grounds and was converted into stevedores."

In no case do I think that I succeeded entirely in making them believe but that I was an imposter and a gross liar, and in every case when I tried to pin them down as to where they got their information it was ever the same some one, not colored, from over there had said it at this place or that, and they had believed it! We might ignore the informant as unworthy of the uniform he wore, but more shame be unto those of our own Race who did not trouble to find out the truth and stifle the lie in its cradle. That anyone or ones so near to the great tissues of war did not know that America's first Heavy Field Artillery to be motorized was Colored and saw service in France seriously taxes the minds of some of us to believe in the sincerity of some of our leaders. Not that anyone should know as a brag or taunt but as a bit of Race History in which a pardonable pride may be taken just as honest parents cherish the birth dates of their off-springs. I wonder how many of those who read these pages have any idea of the number of Colored troops in France; in camp and who and what Regiments saw active service and where? The individual may not care a picayune as to the person al exploits of the individual Colored soldier, and no one will quarrel with you if you care not to know that Sam Jones died in No Man's Land that your own brother might come back to you—that the babe on your lap might be spared the mangle of the iron heel, but it is not in our power to excuse if you fail to realize that it is highly incumbent upon you to know that which this Race of your's and mine has contributed to purchase a Peace for all the free peoples of the earth. Nothing can be more deadly than such a lie.

That old dollar-bill-in-the-sweater-collar-lie piled up a wall of prejudice which blocked many a good, erstwhile American Red Cross dollar, and went a long way towards the nullification of a great Public's moral support of that worthiest of institutions before some thoughtful person took the lie by the nape of the neck, weighed it in the scales of Practicability and branded it, once for all, as utterly base and malicious. Of scarcely less magnitude and destructive possibilities is the surreptitiously propounded fallacy purporting to discredit the Race's efforts to unanimously stand back of the Government in its hour of direst need. Wild ravings cannot help but fan the flame into greater heat, but if the lie is to be denied the support of those ever ready to spell evil with "c-o-l-o-r-e-d" it must be taken in its swaddling clothes and strangled with the very truth it seeks to tarnish. Stones flung at other' peoples' homes cannot build our own, but rather they argue the absence of girders and beams and rocks in the immortal monument we strive to raise for our posterity to live and to die by.

It is especially difficult to appreciate the evolutions of that mind which husbands that most rhapsodical of all ideas that every Young Negro, whether he had been to France or not, is enamoured with the idiotic idea of allying himself with women of other than his own Race. And, unfortunately, this theory is not indulged by the enemies of the Race only, but frequently among our own fairer sex, it is made the basis for much and divers dissention. Had the war done no more than show Eph how beautiful is the path which leads to the shrine where the ministrations of love are enhanced by the charm of his own women, all the hardships and travail of soldiering were over balanced as compared with value received. Oh, the homage he brought to her memory and the liegemen his recital of her virtues banded together to protect her good name! How can he ever forget that picture of a beautiful "brown-skin" lady cut from a March or February Crisis (17) in far away France and posted by Corporal Charles S. Taylor and Private William B. Lockett (Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts) above the door of the orderly room; that picture before which every Colored soldier who passed stood at "attention and saluted" and swore eternal felicity to her and destruction to the hands that dared profane!

No, Eph, will not forget, fair ladies, o' mine, nor will he rashly take the bit into his own teeth, but in the hands of a great and Divine Providence which shapes the Destiny of all men, will he be an instrument which suffering and death shall not break until, because of his valor as a citizen and a soldier, Humanity shall give him his cloak of knighthood and usher him to a place in the purple halls of earth's free men.

In the interim the giant heart of the Race will throb on; its great nerves, muscles and sinews will tirelessly throb and expand in the ceaseless vigil to ever jealously guard the rights of the Race—which rights are not different to those of America—until the dawn of that inevitable morrow when the last trace of racial prejudice—this very worst blot on the fair escutheons of American idealisms—shall shiver and crumble in dissolution.



## EPILOGUE.

The tale of the Headquarters Company 351st Field Artillery is not well told if one omits the honorable mention due the wonderful Demobilization banquet given March 3, '19, at the Hostess House, Camp Meade, Md., and chaperoned by the very estimable ladies of that unit. It is to be believed that this splendid Company had long wanted such a banquet in order that in addition to the most elaborate supper and spectacular and classic dancing they had to offer they might stage the presentation of a most wonderful solid silver—gold-lined, handsomely engraved loving Cup; shaving set, and cigarette case to its Company Clerk. The funds for these gifts were contributed by the entire enlisted personnel, and a goodly number of officers under the auspices of Sergeants Emory R. Cole; Timothy P. Hawkins; Corporal Charles S. Taylor and Private William A. Turner. The presentation speech in which glowing tribute was paid to the efforts of the clerk in dealing with his fellow comrades was most excellently voiced by Regimental Mail Sergeant William C. Anderson (a volunteer from Philadelphia, Pa., and formerly a Y. M. C. A. man). It goes without saying that so long as life shall last upon this earth the recipient of these treasures and his posterity will ever love, ever cherish, ever honor the memory of the dear, dear old pals and comrades of good old Headquarters Company 351st Field Artillery. An heirloom, these things are, fit for the heritage of a king—priceless treasures which much gold and precious stones cannot take from their pedestal in the heart and home of the receiver.

As the Arab partook of salt one with the other; as the American Indian smoked the common pipe of Peace as a token of good will and fellowship, so the passing of the Loving Cup cements men's hearts together in a common cause—one for all; all for one to the eternal glory of Race and Country. About its rim memory will paint every face, and its pure, fair depths reflect the souls of those who gave!

ADIEU!







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