GIBBONS FLOYD PHILLIPS

AND THEY THOUGHT WE WOULDN'T FIGHT

Floyd Gibbons

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«And they thought we wouldn't fight»:

Содержание

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FOREWORD

Marshal Foch, the commander of eleven million bayonets, has written that no man is more qualified than Gibbons to tell the true story of the Western Front. General Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces, has said that it was Gibbons' great opportunity to give the people in America a life-like picture of the work of the American soldier in France.

The key to the book is the man.

Back in the red days on the Rio Grande, word came from Pancho Villa that any "Gringos" found in Mexico would be killed on sight. The American people were interested in the Revolution at the border. Gibbons went into the Mexican hills alone and called Villa's bluff. He did more. He fitted out a box car, attached it to the revolutionary bandits' train and was in the thick of three of Villa's biggest battles. Gibbons brought out of Mexico the first authoritative information on the Mexican situation. The following year the War Department accredited him to General Pershing's punitive expedition and he rode with

the flying column led by General Pershing when it crossed the border.

In 1917, the then Imperial German Government announced to the world that on and after February 1st its submarines would sink without warning any ship that ventured to enter a zone it had drawn in the waters of the North Atlantic.

Gibbons sensed the meaning of this impudent challenge. He saw ahead the overt act that was bound to come and be the cause of the United States entering the war. In these days the cry of "Preparedness" was echoing the land. England had paid dearly for her lack of preparedness. The inefficient volunteer system had cost her priceless blood. The *Chicago Tribune* sought the most available newspaper man to send to London and write the story of England's costly mistakes for the profit of the American people. Gibbons was picked for the mission and arrangement was made for him to travel on the steamer by which the discredited Von Bernstorff was to return to Germany. The ship's safe conduct was guaranteed. Gibbons did not like this feature of the trip. He wanted to ride the seas in a ship without guarantees. His mind was on the overt act. He wanted to be on the job when it happened. He cancelled the passage provided for him on the Von Bernstorff ship and took passage on the largest liner in port, a ship large enough to be readily seen through a submarine periscope and important enough to attract the special attention of the German Admiralty. He sailed on the *Laconia*, an eighteen thousand ton Cunarder.

On the night of February 27, 1917, when the *Laconia* was two hundred miles off the coast of Ireland, the Gibbons' "hunch" was fulfilled. The *Laconia* was torpedoed and suck. After a perilous night in a small boat on the open sea, Gibbons was rescued and brought into Queenstown. He opened the cables and flashed to America the most powerful call to arms to the American people. It shook the country. It was the testimony of an eye witness and it convinced the Imperial German Government, beyond all reasonable doubt, of the wilful and malicious murder of American citizens. The Gibbons story furnished the proof of the overt act and it was unofficially admitted at Washington that it was the determining factor in sending America into the war one month later.

Gibbons greeted Pershing on the latter's landing in Liverpool. He accompanied the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces across the Channel and was at his side when he put foot on French soil. He was one of the two American correspondents to march with the first American troops that entered the trenches on the Western front. He was with the first American troops to cross the German frontier. He was with the artillery battalion that fired the first American shell into Germany.

On June 6th, 1918, Gibbons went "over the top" with the first waves in the great battle of the Bois de Belleau. Gibbons was with Major John Berry, who, while leading the charge, fell wounded. Gibbons saw him fall. Through the hail of lead from a thousand spitting machine guns, he rushed to the assistance of the wounded

Major. A German machine gun bullet shot away part of his left shoulder, but this did not stop Gibbons. Another bullet smashed through his arm, but still Gibbons kept on. A third bullet got him. It tore out his left eye and made a compound fracture of the skull. For three hours he lay conscious on the open field in the Bois de Belleau with a murderous machine gun fire playing a few inches over his head until under cover of darkness he was able to crawl off the field. For his gallant conduct he received a citation from General Petain, Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies, and the French Government awarded him the Croix de Guerre with the Palm.

On July 5th, he was out of the hospital and back at the front, covering the first advance of the Americans with the British forces before Amiens. On July 18th he was the only correspondent with the American troops when they executed the history-making drive against the German armies in the Château-Thierry salient – the beginning of the German end. He rode with the first detachment of American troops that entered Château-Thierry upon the heels of the retreating Germans.

Floyd Gibbons was the first to sound the alarm of the danger of the German peace offensive. Six weeks before the drive for a negotiated peace was made by the German Government against the home flank in America, Gibbons told that it was on the way. He crossed the Atlantic with his crippled arm in a sling and his head bandaged, to spend his convalescence warning American audiences against what he called the "Crooked Kamerad Cry."

Gibbons has lived the war, he has been a part of it. "And They Thought We Wouldn't Fight" is the voice of our men in France.

Frank Comerford.

CHAPTER I
THE SINKING OF THE *Laconia*

Between America and the firing line, there are three thousand miles of submarine infested water. Every American soldier, before encountering the dangers of the battle-front, must first overcome the dangers of the deep.

Geographically, America is almost four thousand miles from the war zone, but in fact every American soldier bound for France entered the war zone one hour out of New York harbour. Germany made an Ally out of the dark depths of the Atlantic.

That three-thousand-mile passage represented greater possibilities for the destruction of the United States overseas forces than any strategical operation that Germany's able military leaders could direct in the field.

Germany made use of that three thousand miles of water, just as she developed the use of barbed wire entanglements along the front. Infantry advancing across No Man's Land were held helpless before the enemy's fire by barbed wire entanglements. Germany, with her submarine policy of ruthlessness, changed the Atlantic Ocean into another No Man's Land across which every American soldier had to pass at the mercy of the enemy before he could arrive at the actual battle-front.

This was the peril of the troop ship. This was the tremendous

advantage which the enemy held over our armies even before they reached the field. This was the unprecedented condition which the United States and Allied navies had to cope with in the great undertaking of transporting our forces overseas.

Any one who has crossed the ocean, even in the normal times before shark-like Kultur skulked beneath the water, has experienced the feeling of human helplessness that comes in mid-ocean when one considers the comparative frailty of such man-made devices as even the most modern turbine liners, with the enormous power of the wilderness of water over which one sails.

In such times one realises that safety rests, first upon the kindliness of the elements; secondly, upon the skill and watchfulness of those directing the voyage, and thirdly, upon the dependability of such human-made things as engines, propellers, steel plates, bolts and rivets.

But add to the possibilities of a failure or a misalliance of any or all of the above functions, the greater danger of a diabolical human, yet inhuman, interference, directed against the seafarer with the purpose and intention of his destruction. This last represents the greatest odds against those who go to sea during the years of the great war.

A sinking at sea is a nightmare. I have been through one. I have been on a ship torpedoed in mid-ocean. I have stood on the slanting decks of a doomed liner; I have listened to the lowering of the life-boats, heard the hiss of escaping steam and the roar of ascending rockets as they tore lurid rents in the black sky and

cast their red glare o'er the roaring sea.

I have spent a night in an open boat on the tossing swells. I have been through, in reality, the mad dream of drifting and darkness and bailing and pulling on the oars and straining aching eyes toward an empty, meaningless horizon in search of help. I shall try to tell you how it feels.

I had been assigned by *The Chicago Tribune* to go to London as their correspondent. Almost the same day I received that assignment, the "Imperial" Government of Germany had invoked its ruthless submarine policy, had drawn a blockade zone about the waters of the British Isles and the coasts of France, and had announced to the world that its U-boats would sink without warning any ship, of any kind, under any flag, that tried to sail the waters that Germany declared prohibitory.

In consideration of my personal safety and, possibly, of my future usefulness, the *Tribune* was desirous of arranging for me a safe passage across the Atlantic. Such an opportunity presented itself in the ordered return of the disgraced and discredited German Ambassador to the United States, Count von Bernstorff.

Under the rules of International courtesy, a ship had been provided for the use of von Bernstorff and his diplomatic staff. That ship was to sail under absolute guarantees of safe conduct from all of the nations at war with Germany and, of course, it would also have been safe from attack by German submarines. That ship was the *Frederick VIII*. At considerable expense the *Tribune* managed to obtain for me a cabin passage on that ship.

I can't say that I was over-impressed with the prospect of travel in such company. I disliked the thought that I, an American citizen, with rights as such to sail the sea, should have to resort to subterfuge and scheming to enjoy those rights. There arose in me a feeling of challenge against Germany's order which forbade American ships to sail the ocean. I cancelled my sailing on the *Frederick VIII*.

In New York, I sought passage on the first American ship sailing for England. I made the rounds of the steamship offices and learned that the Cunard liner *Laconia* was the first available boat and was about to sail. She carried a large cargo of munitions and other materials of war. I booked passage aboard her. It was on Saturday, February 17th, 1917, that we steamed away from the dock at New York and moved slowly down the East River. We were bound for Liverpool, England. My cabin accommodations were good. The *Laconia* was listed at 18,000 tons and was one of the largest Cunarders in the Atlantic service. The next morning we were out of sight of land.

Sailors were stationed along the decks of the ship and in the look-outs at the mast heads. They maintained a watch over the surface of the sea in all directions. On the stern of the ship, there was mounted a six-inch cannon and a crew of gunners stood by it night and day.

Submarines had been recently reported in the waters through which we were sailing, but we saw none of them and apparently they saw none of us. They had sunk many ships, but all of

the sinkings had been in the day time. Consequently, there was a feeling of greater safety at night. The *Laconia* sailed on a constantly zig-zagging course. All of our life-boats were swinging out over the side of the ship, so that if we were hit they could be lowered in a hurry. Every other day the passengers and the crew would be called up on the decks to stand by the life-boats that had been assigned to them.

The officers of the ship instructed us in the life-boat drill. They showed us how to strap the life-preservers about our bodies; they showed us how to seat ourselves in the life-boats; they showed us a small keg of water and some tin cans of biscuits, a lantern and some flares that were stored in the boat, and so we sailed along day after day without meeting any danger. At night, all of the lights were put out and the ship slipped along through the darkness.

On Sunday, after we had been sailing for eight days, we entered the zone that had been prohibited by the Kaiser. We sailed into it full steam ahead and nothing happened. That day was February the twenty-fifth. In the afternoon, I was seated in the lounge with two friends. One was an American whose name was Kirby; the other was a Canadian and his name was Dugan. The latter was an aviator in the British army. In fights with German aeroplanes high over the Western Front he had been wounded and brought down twice and the army had sent him to his home in Canada to get well. He was returning once more to the battle front "to stop another bullet," as he said.

As we talked, I passed around my cigarette case and Dugan held a lighted match while the three of us lighted our cigarettes from it. As Dugan blew out the match and placed the burnt end in an ash tray, he laughed and said,

"They say it is bad luck to light three cigarettes with the same match, but I think it is good luck for me. I used to do it frequently with my flying partners in France and four of them have been killed, but I am still alive."

"That makes it all right for you," said Kirby, "but it makes it look bad for Gibbons and myself. But nothing is going to happen. I don't believe in superstitions."

That night after dinner Dugan and I took a brisk walk around the darkened promenade deck of the *Laconia*. The night was very dark, a stiff wind was blowing and the *Laconia* was rolling slightly in the trough of the waves. Wet from spray, we returned within and in one of the corridors met the Captain of the ship. I told him that I would like very much to have a look at his chart and learn our exact location on the ocean.

He looked at me and laughed because that was a very secret matter. But he replied:

"Oh, you would, would you?" and his voice carried that particular British intonation that seemed to say, "Well it is jolly well none of your business."

Then I asked him when he thought we would land in Liverpool.

"I really don't know," said the ship's commander, and then,

with a wink, he added, "but my steward told me that we would get in Tuesday evening."

Kirby and I went to the smoke room on the boat deck well to the stern of the ship. We joined a circle of Britishers who were seated in front of a coal fire in an open hearth. Nearly every one in the lighted smoke room was playing cards, so that the conversation was practically confined to the mentioning of bids and the orders of drinks from the stewards.

"What do you think are our chances of being torpedoed?" was the question I put before the circle in front of the fireplace.

The deliberative Mr. Henry Chetham, a London solicitor, was the first to answer.

"Well," he drawled, "I should say about four thousand to one."

Lucien J. Jerome of the British Diplomatic Service, returning with an Ecuadorian valet from South America, advanced his opinion.

I was much impressed with his opinion because the speaker himself had impressed me deeply. He was the best monocle juggler I had ever met. In his right eye he carried a monocle without a rim and without a ribbon or thread to save it, should it ever have fallen from his eye.

Repeatedly during the trip, I had seen Mr. Jerome standing on the hurrideck of the *Laconia* facing the wind but holding the glass disk in his eye with a muscular grip that must have been vise-like. I had even followed him around the deck several times in a desire to be present when the monocle blew out, but the

British diplomatist never for once lost his grip on it. I had come to the opinion that the piece of glass was fixed to his eye and that he slept with it. After the fashion of the British Diplomatic Service, he expressed his opinion most affirmatively.

"Nonsense," he said with reference to Mr. Chetham's estimate. "Utter nonsense. Considering the zone that we are in and the class of the ship, I should put the chances down at two hundred and fifty to one that we don't meet a 'sub.'"

At that minute the torpedo hit us.

Have you ever stood on the deck of a ferry boat as it arrived in the slip? And have you ever experienced the slight sideward shove when the boat rubs against the piling and comes to a stop? That was the unmistakable lurch we felt, but no one expects to run into pilings in mid-ocean, so every one knew what it was.

At the same time, there came a muffled noise – not extremely loud nor yet very sharp – just a noise like the slamming of some large oaken door a good distance away. Realising that we had been torpedoed, my imagination was rather disappointed at the slightness of the shock and the meekness of the report. One or two chairs tipped over, a few glasses crashed from table to floor and in an instant every man in the room was on his feet.

"We're hit," shouted Mr. Chetham.

"That's what we've been waiting for," said Mr. Jerome.

"What a lousy torpedo!" said Mr. Kirby. "It must have been a fizzer."

I looked at my watch; it was 10:30.

Five sharp blasts sounded on the *Laconia's* whistle. Since that night, I have often marvelled at the quick coordination of mind and hand that belonged to the man on the bridge who pulled that whistle rope. Those five blasts constituted the signal to abandon the ship. Every one recognised them.

We walked hurriedly down the corridor leading from the smoke room in the stern to the lounge which was amidships. We moved fast but there was no crowding and no panic. Passing the open door of the gymnasium, I became aware of the list of the vessel. The floor of the gymnasium slanted down on the starboard side and a medicine ball and dozens of dumb bells and Indian clubs were rolling in that direction.

We entered the lounge – a large drawing room furnished with green upholstered chairs and divans and small tables on which the after-dinner liqueur glasses still rested. In one corner was a grand piano with the top elevated. In the centre of the slanting floor of the saloon was a cabinet Victrola and from its mahogany bowels there poured the last and dying strains of "Poor Butterfly."

The women and several men who had been in the lounge were hurriedly leaving by the forward door as we entered. We followed them through. The twin winding stairs leading below decks by the forward hatch were dark and I brought into play a pocket flashlight shaped like a fountain pen. I had purchased it before sailing in view of such an emergency and I had always carried it fastened with a clip in an upper vest pocket.

My stateroom was B 19 on the promenade deck, one deck

below the deck on which was located the smoke room, the lounge and the life-boats. The corridor was dimly lighted and the floor had a more perceptible slant as I darted into my stateroom, which was on the starboard and sinking side of the ship. I hurriedly put on a light non-sink garment constructed like a vest, which I had come provided with, and then donned an overcoat.

Responding to the list of the ship, the wardrobe door swung open and crashed against the wall. My typewriter slid off the dressing table and a shower of toilet articles pitched from their places on the washstand. I grabbed the ship's life-preserver in my left hand and, with the flashlight in my right hand, started up the hatchway to the upper deck.

In the darkness of the boat deck hatchway, the rays of my flashlight revealed the chief steward opening the door of a switch closet in the panel wall. He pushed on a number of switches and instantly the decks of the *Laconia* became bright. From sudden darkness, the exterior of the ship burst into a blaze of light and it was that illumination that saved many lives.

The *Laconia's* engines and dynamos had not yet been damaged. The torpedo had hit us well astern on the starboard side and the bulkheads seemed to be holding back from the engine room the flood of water that rushed in through the gaping hole in the ship's side. I proceeded down the boat deck to my station opposite boat No. 10. I looked over the side and down upon the water sixty feet below.

The sudden flashing of the lights on the upper deck made the

dark seething waters seem blacker and angrier. They rose and fell in troubled swells.

Steam began to hiss from some of the pipes leading up from the engine well. It seemed like a dying groan from the very vitals of the stricken ship. Clouds of white and black smoke rolled up from the giant grey funnels that towered above us.

Suddenly there was a roaring swish as a rocket soared upward from the Captain's bridge, leaving a comet's tail of fire. I watched it as it described a graceful arc and then with an audible pop it burst in a flare of brilliant colour. Its ascent had torn a lurid rent in the black sky and had cast a red glare over the roaring sea.

Already boat No. 10 was loading up and men and boys were busy with the ropes. I started to help near a davit that seemed to be giving trouble but was sternly ordered to get out of the way and to get into the boat.

Other passengers and members of the crew and officers of the ship were rushing to and fro along the deck strapping their life-preservers to them as they rushed. There was some shouting of orders but little or no confusion. One woman, a blonde French actress, became hysterical on the deck, but two men lifted her bodily off her feet and placed her in the life-boat.

We were on the port side of the ship, the higher side. To reach the boats, we had to climb up the slanting deck to the edge of the ship.

On the starboard side, it was different. On that side, the decks slanted down toward the water. The ship careened in that

direction and the life-boats suspended from the davits swung clear of the ship's side.

The list of the ship increased. On the port side, we looked down the slanting side of the ship and noticed that her water line on that side was a number of feet above the waves. The slant was so pronounced that the life-boats, instead of swinging clear from the davits, rested against the side of the ship. From my position in the life-boat I could see that we were going to have difficulty in the descent to the water.

"Lower away," some one gave the order and we started downward with a jerk toward the seemingly hungry, rising and falling swells. Then we stopped with another jerk and remained suspended in mid-air while the men at the bow and the stern swore and tusseled with the ropes.

The stern of the boat was down; the bow up, leaving us at an angle of about forty-five degrees. We clung to the seats to save ourselves from falling out.

"Who's got a knife? A knife! A knife!" shouted a fireman in the bow. He was bare to the waist and perspiration stood out in drops on his face and chest and made streaks through the coal dust with which his skin was grimed.

"Great Gawd! Give him a knife," bawled a half-dressed jibbering negro stoker who wrung his hands in the stern.

A hatchet was thrust into my hands and I forwarded it to the bow. There was a flash of sparks as it was brought down with a clang on the holding pulley. One strand of the rope parted.

Down plunged the bow of the boat too quickly for the men in the stern. We came to a jerky stop, this time with the stern in the air and the bow down, the dangerous angle reversed.

One man in the stern let the rope race through his blistered fingers. With hands burnt to the quick, he grabbed the rope and stopped the precipitous descent just in time to bring the stern level with the bow.

Then bow and stern tried to lower away together. The slant of the ship's side had increased, so that our boat instead of sliding down it like a toboggan was held up on one side when the taffrail caught on one of the condenser exhaust pipes projecting slightly from the ship's side.

Thus the starboard side of the life-boat stuck fast and high while the port side dropped down and once more we found ourselves clinging on at a new angle and looking straight down into the water.

A hand slipped into mine and a voice sounded huskily close to my ear. It was the little old Jewish travelling man who was disliked in the smoke room because he used to speak too certainly of things about which he was uncertain. His slightly Teutonic dialect had made him as popular as the smallpox with the British passengers.

"My poy, I can't see nutting," he said. "My glasses slipped and I am falling. Hold me, please."

I managed to reach out and join hands with another man on the other side of the old man and together we held him in. He

hung heavily over our arms, grotesquely grasping all he had saved from his stateroom – a gold-headed cane and an extra hat.

Many feet and hands pushed the boat from the side of the ship and we renewed our sagging, scraping, sliding, jerking descent. It ended as the bottom of the life-boat smacked squarely on the pillowy top of a rising swell. It felt more solid than mid-air at least.

But we were far from being off. The pulleys twice stuck in their fastings, bow and stern, and the one axe was passed forward and back (and with it my flashlight) as the entangling mesh of ropes that held us to the sinking *Laconia* was cut away.

Some shout from that confusion of sound caused me to look up. I believe I really did so in the fear that one of the nearby boats was being lowered upon us.

Tin funnels enamelled white and containing clusters of electric bulbs hung over the side from one of the upper decks. I looked up into the cone of one of these lights and a bulky object shot suddenly out of the darkness into the scope of the electric rays.

It was a man. His arms were bent up at the elbows; his legs at the knees. He was jumping, with the intention, I feared, of landing in our boat, and I prepared to avoid the impact. But he had judged his distance well.

He plunged beyond us and into the water three feet from the edge of the boat. He sank from sight, leaving a white patch of bubbles and foam on the black water. He bobbed to the surface

almost immediately.

"It's Dugan," shouted a man next to me.

I flashed a light on the ruddy, smiling face and water plastered hair of the little Canadian aviator, our fellow saloon passenger. We pulled him over the side and into the boat. He spluttered out a mouthful of water.

"I wonder if there is anything to that lighting three matches off the same match," he said. "I was trying to loosen the bow rope in this boat. I loosened it and then got tangled up in it. When the boat descended, I was jerked up back on the deck. Then I jumped for it. Holy Moses, but this water is cold."

As we pulled away from the side of the ship, its receding terraces of glowing port holes and deck lights towered above us. The ship was slowly turning over.

We were directly opposite the engine room section of the *Laconia*. There was a tangle of oars, spars and rigging on the seats in our boat, and considerable confusion resulted before we could manage to place in operation some of the big oars on either side.

The jibbering, bullet-headed negro was pulling a sweep directly behind me and I turned to quiet him as his frantic reaches with the oar were jabbing me in the back.

In the dull light from the upper decks, I looked into his slanting face – his eyes all whites and his lips moving convulsively. He shivered with fright, but in addition to that he was freezing in the thin cotton shirt that composed his entire upper covering. He

worked feverishly at the oar to warm himself.

"Get away from her. My Gawd, get away from her," he kept repeating. "When the water hits her hot boilers she'll blow up the whole ocean and there's just tons and tons of shrapnel in her hold."

His excitement spread to other members of the crew in our boat. The ship's baker, designated by his pantry headgear of white linen, became a competing alarmist and a white fireman, whose blasphemy was nothing short of profound, added to the confusion by cursing every one.

It was the tension of the minute – it was the give way of overwrought nerves – it was bedlam and nightmare.

I sought to establish some authority in our boat which was about to break out into full mutiny. I made my way to the stern. There, huddled up in a great overcoat and almost muffled in a ship's life-preserver, I came upon an old white-haired man and I remembered him.

He was a sea-captain of the old sailing days. He had been a second cabin passenger with whom I had talked before. Earlier in the year he had sailed out of Nova Scotia with a cargo of codfish. His schooner, the *Secret*, had broken in two in mid-ocean, but he and his crew had been picked up by a tramp and taken back to New York.

From there he had sailed on another ship bound for Europe, but this ship, a Holland-American Liner, the *Ryndam*, had never reached the other side. In mid-Atlantic her captain had lost

courage over the U-boat threats. He had turned the ship about and returned to America. Thus, the *Laconia* represented the third unsuccessful attempt of this grey-haired mariner to get back to his home in England. His name was Captain Dear.

"Our boat's rudder is gone, but we can stear with an oar," he said, in a weak-quavering voice – the thin high-pitched treble of age. "I will take charge, if you want me to, but my voice is gone. I can tell you what to do, but you will have to shout the orders. They won't listen to me."

There was only one way to get the attention of the crew, and that was by an overpowering blast of profanity. I called to my assistance every ear-splitting, soul-sizzling oath that I could think of.

I recited the lurid litany of the army mule skinner to his gentle charges and embellished it with excerpts from the remarks of a Chicago taxi chauffeur while he changed tires on the road with the temperature ten below.

It proved to be an effective combination, this brim-stoned oration of mine, because it was rewarded by silence.

"Is there a ship's officer in this boat?" I shouted. There was no answer.

"Is there a sailor or a seaman on board?" I inquired, and again there was silence from our group of passengers, firemen, stokers and deck swabs.

They appeared to be listening to me and I wished to keep my hold on them. I racked my mind for some other query to make

or some order to direct. Before the spell was broken I found one.

"We will now find out how many of us there are in this boat," I announced in the best tones of authority that I could assume. "The first man in the bow will count one and the next man to him will count two. We will count from the bow back to the stern, each man taking a number. Begin."

"One," came the quick response from a passenger who happened to be the first man in the bow. The enumeration continued sharply toward the stern. I spoke the last number.

"There are twenty-three of us here," I repeated, "there's not a ship's officer or seaman among us, but we are extremely fortunate to have with us an old sea-captain who has consented to take charge of the boat and save our lives. His voice is weak, but I will repeat the orders for him, so that all of you can hear. Are you ready to obey his orders?"

There was an almost unanimous acknowledgment of assent and order was restored.

"The first thing to be done," I announced upon Captain Dear's instructions, "is to get the same number of oars pulling on each side of the boat; to seat ourselves so as to keep on an even keel and then to keep the boat's head up into the wind so that we won't be swamped by the waves."

With some little difficulty, this rearrangement was accomplished and then we rested on our oars with all eyes turned on the still lighted *Laconia*. The torpedo had hit at about 10:30 P. M. according to our ship's time. Though listing far over on one

side, the *Laconia* was still afloat.

It must have been twenty minutes after that first shot that we heard another dull thud, which was accompanied by a noticeable drop in the hulk. The German submarine had despatched a second torpedo through the engine room and the boat's vitals from a distance of two hundred yards.

We watched silently during the next minute as the tiers of lights dimmed slowly from white to yellow, then to red and then nothing was left but the murky mourning of the night which hung over all like a pall.

A mean, cheese-coloured crescent of a moon revealed one horn above a rag bundle of clouds low in the distance. A rim of blackness settled around our little world, relieved only by a few leering stars in the zenith, and, where the *Laconia's* lights had shown, there remained only the dim outlines of a blacker hulk standing out above the water like a jagged headland, silhouetted against the overcast sky.

The ship sank rapidly at the stern until at last its nose rose out of the water, and stood straight up in the air. Then it slid silently down and out of sight like a piece of scenery in a panorama spectacle.

Boat No. 3 stood closest to the place where the ship had gone down. As a result of the after suction, the small life-boat rocked about in a perilous sea of clashing spars and wreckage.

As the boat's crew steadied its head into the wind, a black hulk, glistening wet and standing about eight feet above the

surface of the water, approached slowly. It came to a stop opposite the boat and not ten feet from the side of it. It was the submarine.

"Vot ship vass dot?" were the first words of throaty guttural English that came from a figure which projected from the conning tower.

"The *Laconia*," answered the Chief Steward Ballyn, who commanded the life-boat.

"Vot?"

"The *Laconia*, Cunard Line," responded the steward.

"Vot did she weigh?" was the next question from the submarine.

"Eighteen thousand tons."

"Any passengers?"

"Seventy-three," replied Ballyn, "many of them women and children – some of them in this boat. She had over two hundred in the crew."

"Did she carry cargo?"

"Yes."

"Iss der Captain in dot boat?"

"No," Ballyn answered.

"Well, I guess you'll be all right. A patrol will pick you up some time soon." Without further sound save for the almost silent fixing of the conning tower lid, the submarine moved off.

"I thought it best to make my answers sharp and satisfactory, sir," said Ballyn, when he repeated the conversation to me word

for word. "I was thinking of the women and children in the boat. I feared every minute that somebody in our boat might make a hostile move, fire a revolver, or throw something at the submarine. I feared the consequence of such an act."

There was no assurance of an early pickup so we made preparations for a siege with the elements. The weather was a great factor. That black rim of clouds looked ominous. There was a good promise of rain. February has a reputation for nasty weather in the north Atlantic. The wind was cold and seemed to be rising. Our boat bobbed about like a cork on the swells, which fortunately were not choppy.

How much rougher seas could the boat weather? This question and conditions were debated pro and con.

Had our rockets been seen? Did the first torpedo put the wireless out of commission? If it had been able to operate, had anybody heard our S. O. S.? Was there enough food and drinking water in the boat to last?

This brought us to an inventory of our small craft. After considerable difficulty, we found the lamp, a can of powder flares, the tin of ship's biscuit, matches and spare oil.

The lamp was lighted. Other lights were now visible. As we drifted in the darkness, we could see them every time we mounted the crest of the swells. The boats carrying these lights remained quite close together at first.

One boat came within sound and I recognised the Harry Lauder-like voice of the second assistant purser whom I had last

heard on Wednesday at the ship's concert. Now he was singing – "I Want to Marry 'arry," and "I Love to be a Sailor."

There were an American woman and her husband in that boat. She told me later that an attempt had been made to sing "Tipperary," and "Rule Britannia," but the thought of that slinking dark hull of destruction that might have been a part of the immediate darkness resulted in the abandonment of the effort.

"Who's the officer in that boat?" came a cheery hail from the nearby light.

"What the hell is it to you?" our half frozen negro yelled out for no reason apparent to me other than possibly the relief of his feelings.

"Will somebody brain that skunk with a pin?" was the inquiry of our profound oathsman, who also expressed regret that he happened to be sitting too far away from the negro to reach him. He accompanied the announcement with a warmth of language that must have relieved the negro of his chill.

The fear of the boats crashing together produced a general inclination toward maximum separation on the part of all the little units of survivors, with the result that soon the small crafts stretched out for several miles, their occupants all endeavoring to hold the heads of the boats into the wind.

Hours passed. The swells slopped over the sides of our boat and filled the bottom with water. We bailed it continually. Most of us were wet to the knees and shivering from the weakening

effects of the icy water. Our hands were blistered from pulling at the oars. Our boat, bobbing about like a cork, produced terrific nausea, and our stomachs ached from vain wrenching.

And then we saw the first light – the first sign of help coming – the first searching glow of white radiance deep down the sombre sides of the black pot of night that hung over us. I don't know what direction it came from – none of us knew north from south – there was nothing but water and sky. But the light – it just came from over there where we pointed. We nudged dumb, sick boat mates and directed their gaze and aroused them to an appreciation of the sight that gave us new life.

It was 'way over there – first a trembling quiver of silver against the blackness, then drawing closer, it defined itself as a beckoning finger, although still too far away to see our feeble efforts to attract it.

Nevertheless, we wasted valuable flares and the ship's baker, self-ordained custodian of the biscuit, did the honours handsomely to the extent of a biscuit apiece to each of the twenty-three occupants of the boat.

"Pull starboard, sonnies," sang out old Captain Dear, his grey chin whiskers bristling with joy in the light of the round lantern which he held aloft.

We pulled – pulled lustily, forgetting the strain and pain of innards torn and racked with violent vomiting, and oblivious of blistered palms and wet, half-frozen feet.

Then a nodding of that finger of light, – a happy, snapping,

crap-shooting finger that seemed to say: "Come on, you men," like a dice player wooing the bones – led us to believe that our lights had been seen.

This was the fact, for immediately the oncoming vessel flashed on its green and red sidelights and we saw it was headed for our position. We floated off its stern for a while as it manœuvred for the best position in which it could take us on with a sea that was running higher and higher.

The risk of that rescuing ship was great, because there was every reason to believe that the submarine that had destroyed the *Laconia* still lurked in the darkness nearby, but those on board took the risk and stood by for the work of rescue.

"Come along side port!" was megaphoned to us. As fast as we could, we swung under the stern and felt our way broadside toward the ship's side.

Out of the darkness above, a dozen small pocket flashlights blinked down on us and orders began to be shouted fast and thick.

When I look back on the night, I don't know which was the more hazardous, going down the slanting side of the sinking *Laconia* or going up the side of the rescuing vessel.

One minute the swells would lift us almost level with the rail of the low-built patrol boat and mine sweeper, but the next receding wave would swirl us down into a darksome gulf over which the ship's side glowered like a slimy, dripping cliff.

A score of hands reached out and we were suspended in the husky, tattooed arms of those doughty British Jack Tars,

looking up into their weather-beaten youthful faces, mumbling our thankfulness and reading in the gold lettering on their pancake hats the legend, "H. M. S. *Laburnum*." We had been six hours in the open boat.

The others began coming alongside one by one. Wet and bedraggled survivors were lifted aboard. Women and children first was the rule.

The scenes of reunion were heart-gripping. Men who had remained strangers to one another aboard the *Laconia*, now wrung each other by the hand or embraced without shame the frail little wife of a Canadian chaplain who had found one of her missing children delivered up from another boat. She smothered the child with ravenous mother kisses while tears of gladness streamed down her face.

Boat after boat came alongside. The water-logged craft containing the Captain came last.

A rousing cheer went up as he stepped on the deck, one mangled hand hanging limp at his side.

The sailors divested themselves of outer clothing and passed the garments over to the shivering members of the *Laconia's* crew.

The cramped officers' quarters down under the quarter deck were turned over to the women and children. Two of the *Laconia's* stewardesses passed boiling basins of navy cocoa and aided in the disentangling of wet and matted tresses.

The men grouped themselves near steam-pipes in the petty

officers' quarters or over the grating of the engine rooms, where new life was to be had from the upward blasts of heated air that brought with them the smell of bilge water and oil and sulphur from the bowels of the vessel.

The injured – all minor cases, sprained backs, wrenched legs or mashed hands – were put away in bunks under the care of the ship's doctor.

Dawn was melting the eastern ocean grey to pink when the task was finished. In the officers' quarters, which had now been invaded by the men, the roll of the vessel was most perceptible. Each time the floor of the room slanted, bottles and cups and plates rolled and slid back and forth.

On the tables and chairs and benches the women rested. Sea-sick mothers, trembling from the after-effects of the terrifying experience of the night, sought to soothe their crying children.

Then somebody happened to touch a key on the small wooden organ that stood against one wall. This was enough to send some callous seafaring fingers over the ivory keys in a rhythm unquestionably religious and so irresistible under the circumstances that, although no one seemed to know the words, the air was taken up in a reverent, humming chant by all in the room.

At the last note of the Amen, little Father Warring, his black garb snaggled in places and badly soiled, stood before the centre table and lifted back his head until the morning light, filtering through the opened hatch above him, shown down on his kindly,

weary face. He recited the Lord's prayer and all present joined. The simple, impressive service of thanksgiving ended as simply as it had begun.

Two minutes later I saw the old Jewish travelling man limping about on one lame leg with a little boy in his arms. He was collecting big, round British pennies for the youngster.

A survey and cruise of the nearby waters revealed no more occupied boats and our mine sweeper, with its load of survivors numbering two hundred and sixty-seven, steamed away to the east. A half an hour steaming and the vessel stopped within hailing distance of two sister ships, toward one of which an open boat manned by jackies was being pulled.

I saw the hysterical French actress, her blonde hair wet and bedraggled, lifted out of the boat and carried up the companionway. Then a little boy, his fresh pink face and golden hair shining in the morning sun, was passed upward, followed by some other survivors, numbering fourteen in all, who had been found half-drowned and almost dead from exposure in a partially wrecked boat that was picked up just as it was sinking. It was in that boat that one American woman and her daughter died. One of the survivors of the boat told me the story. He said:

"Our boat was No. 8. It was smashed in the lowering. I was in the bow. Mrs. Hoy and her daughter were sitting toward the stern. The boat filled with water rapidly.

"It was no use trying to bail it out. There was a big hole in the side and it came in too fast. The boat's edge sank to the level of

the water and only the air-tanks kept it afloat.

"It was completely awash. Every swell rode clear over our heads and we had to hold our breath until we came to the surface again. The cold water just takes the life out of you.

"We saw the other boats showing their lights and drifting further and further away from us. We had no lights. And then, towards morning, we saw the rescuing ship come up into the cluster of other life-boats that had drifted so far away from us. One by one we saw their lights disappear as they were taken on board.

"We shouted and screamed and shrieked at the tops of our voices, but could not attract the attention of any of the other boats or the rescuing ship, and soon we saw its lights blink out. We were left there in the darkness with the wind howling and the sea rolling higher every minute.

"The women got weaker and weaker. Maybe they had been dead for some time. I don't know, but a wave came and washed both Mrs. Hoy and her daughter out of the boat. There were life-belts around their bodies and they drifted away with their arms locked about one another."

With such stories ringing in our ears, with exchanges of experiences pathetic and humorous, we steamed into Queenstown harbour shortly after ten o'clock that night. We had been attacked at a point two hundred miles off the Irish coast and of our passengers and crew, thirteen had been lost.

As I stepped ashore, a Britisher, a fellow-passenger aboard

the *Laconia*, who knew me as an American, stepped up to me. During the voyage we had had many conversations concerning the possibility of America entering the war. Now he slapped me on the back with this question,

"Well, old Casus Belli," he said, "is this your blooming overt act?"

I did not answer him, but thirty minutes afterward I was pounding out on a typewriter the introduction to a four thousand word newspaper article which I cabled that night and which put the question up to the American public for an answer.

Five weeks later the United States entered the war.

CHAPTER II
PERSHING'S ARRIVAL IN EUROPE

Lean, clean, keen – that's the way they looked – that first trim little band of American fighting men who made their historic landing on the shores of England, June 8th, 1917.

I went down from London to meet them at the port of arrival. In my despatches of that date, I, nor none of the other correspondents, was permitted to mention the name of the port. This was supposed to be the secret that was to be religiously kept and the British censor was on the job religiously.

The name of the port was excluded from all American despatches but the British censor saw no reason to withhold transmission of the following sentence – "Pershing landed to-day at an English port and was given a hearty welcome by the Mayor of Liverpool."

So I am presuming at this late date of writing that it would serve no further purpose to refrain from announcing flatly that General John J. Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces overseas, and his staff, landed on the date above mentioned, at Liverpool, England.

The sun was shining brightly on the Mersey when the giant ocean liner, the *Baltic*, came slowly up the harbour in the tow

of numerous puffing tugs. The great grey vessel that had safely completed the crossing of the submarine zone, was warped to the dock-side.

On the quay there were a full brass band and an honourary escort of British soldiers. While the moorings were being fastened, General Pershing, with his staff, appeared on the promenade deck on the shore side of the vessel.

His appearance was the signal for a crash of cymbals and drums as the band blared out the "Star Spangled Banner." The American commander and the officers ranged in line on either side of him, stood stiffly at attention, with right hands raised in salute to the visors of their caps.

On the shore the lines of British soldiery brought their arms to the present with a snap. Civilian witnesses of the ceremony bared their heads. The first anthem was followed by the playing of "God Save the King." All present remained at the salute.

As the gangplank was lashed in place, a delegation of British military and civilian officials boarded the ship and were presented to the General. Below, on the dock, every newspaper correspondent and photographer in the British Isles, I think, stood waiting in a group that far outnumbered the other spectators.

There was reason for this seeming lack of proportion. The fact was that but very few people in all of England, as well as in all of the United States, had known that General Pershing was to land that day.

Few had known that he was on the water. The British Admiralty, then in complete control of the ocean lines between America and the British Isles, had guarded well the secret. England lost Kitchener on the sea and now with the sea peril increased a hundredfold, England took pains to guard well the passage of this standard-bearer of the American millions that were to come.

Pershing and his staff stepped ashore. Lean, clean, keen – those are the words that described their appearance. That was the way they impressed their critical brothers in arms, the all-observing military dignities that presented Britain's hearty, unreserved welcome at the water's edge. That was the way they appeared to the proud American citizens, residents of those islands, who gathered to meet them.

The British soldiers admired the height and shoulders of our first military samples. The British soldier approves of a greyhound trimness in the belt zone. He likes to look on carriage and poise. He appreciates a steady eye and stiff jaw. He is attracted by a voice that rings sharp and firm. The British soldier calls such a combination, "a real soldier."

He saw one, and more than one, that morning shortly after nine o'clock when Pershing and his staff committed the date to history by setting foot on British soil. Behind the American commander walked a staff of American officers whose soldierly bearing and general appearance brought forth sincere expressions of commendation from the assemblage on the quay.

At attention on the dock, facing the sea-stained flanks of the liner *Baltic*, a company of Royal Welsh Fusiliers Stood like a frieze of clay models in stainless khaki, polished brass and shining leather.

General Pershing inspected the guard of honour with keen interest. Walking beside the American commander was the considerably stouter and somewhat shorter Lieutenant General Sir William Pitcairn Campbell, K.C.B., Chief of the Western Command of the British Home Forces.

Pershing's inspection of that guard was not the cursory one that these honourary affairs usually are. Not a detail of uniform or equipment on any of the men in the guard was overlooked. The American commander's attention was as keen to boots, rifles and belts, as though he had been a captain preparing the small command for a strenuous inspection at the hands of some exacting superior.

As he walked down the stiff, standing line, his keen blue eyes taking in each one of the men from head to foot, he stopped suddenly in front of one man in the ranks. That man was File Three in the second set of fours. He was a pale-faced Tommy and on one of his sleeves there was displayed two slender gold bars, placed on the forearm.

The decoration was no larger than two matches in a row and on that day it had been in use hardly more than a year, yet neither its minuteness nor its meaning escaped the eyes of the American commander.

Pershing turned sharply and faced File Three.

"Where did you get your two wounds?" he asked.

"At Givenchy and Lavenze, sir," replied File Three, his face pointed stiffly ahead. File Three, even now under twenty-one years of age, had received his wounds in the early fighting that is called the battle of Loos.

"You are a man," was the sincere, all-meaning rejoinder of the American commander, who accompanied his remark with a straightforward look into the eyes of File Three.

Completing the inspection without further incident, General Pershing and his staff faced the honour guard and stood at the salute, while once more the thunderous military band played the national anthems of America and Great Britain.

The ceremony was followed by a reception in the cabin of the *Baltic*, where General Pershing received the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, the Lady Mayoress, and a delegation of civil authorities. The reception ended when

General Pershing spoke a few simple words to the assembled representatives of the British and American Press.

"More of us are coming," was the keynote of his modest remarks. Afterward he was escorted to the quay-side station, where a special train of the type labelled Semi-Royal was ready to make the express run to London.

The reception at the dock had had none of the features of a demonstration by reason of the necessity for the ship's arrival being secret, but as soon as the *Baltic* had landed, the word of

the American commander's arrival spread through Liverpool like wildfire.

The railroad from the station lay through an industrial section of the city. Through the railroad warehouses the news had preceded the train. Warehouse-men, porters and draymen crowded the tops of the cotton bales and oil barrels on both sides of the track as the train passed through.

Beyond the sheds, the news had spread through the many floors of the flour mills and when the Pershing train passed, handkerchiefs and caps fluttered from every crowded door and window in the whitened walls. Most of the waving was done by a new kind of flour-girl, one who did not wave an apron because none of them were dressed that way.

From his car window, General Pershing returned the greetings of the trousered girls and women who were making England's bread while their husbands, fathers, brothers, sweethearts and sons were making German cemeteries.

In London, General Pershing and his staff occupied suites at the Savoy Hotel, and during the four or five days of the American commander's sojourn in the capital of the British Empire, a seemingly endless line of visitors of all the Allied nationalities called to present their compliments.

The enlisted men of the General's staff occupied quarters in the old stone barracks of the Tower of London, where they were the guests of the men of that artillery organisation which prefixes an "Honourable" to its name and has been assigned for centuries

to garrison duty in the Tower of London.

Our soldiers manifested naïve interest in some of England's most revered traditions and particularly in connection with historical events related to the Tower of London. On the second day of their occupation of this old fortress, one of the warders, a "Beef-eater" in full mediæval regalia, was escorting a party of the Yanks through the dungeons.

He stopped in one dungeon and lined the party up in front of a stone block in the centre of the floor. After a silence of a full minute to produce a proper degree of impressiveness for the occasion, the warder announced, in a respectful whisper:

"This is where Anne Boleyn was executed."

The lined-up Yanks took a long look at the stone block. A silence followed during the inspection. And then one regular, desiring further information, but not wishing to be led into any traps of British wit, said:

"All right, I'll bite; what did Annie do?"

Current with the arrival of our men and their reception by the honour guard of the Welsh Fusiliers there was a widespread revival of an old story which the Americans liked to tell in the barrack rooms at night.

When the Welsh Fusiliers received our men at the dock of Liverpool, they had with them their historical mascot, a large white goat with horns encased in inscribed silver. The animal wore suspended from its neck a large silver plate, on which was inscribed a partial history of the Welsh Fusiliers.

Some of these Fusiliers told our men the story.

"It was our regiment – the Welsh Fusiliers," one of them said, "that fought you Yanks at Bunker Hill. And it was at Bunker Hill that our regiment captured the great-great-granddaddy of this same white goat, and his descendants are ever destined to be the mascot of our regiment. You see, we have still got your goat."

"But you will notice," replied one of the Yanks, "we've got the hill."

During the four days in London, General Pershing was received by King George and Queen Mary at Buckingham Palace. The American commander engaged in several long conferences at the British War Office, and then with an exclusion of entertainment that was painful to the Europeans, he made arrangements to leave for his new post in France.

A specially written permission from General Pershing made it possible for me to accompany him on that historic crossing between England and France. Secret orders for the departure were given on the afternoon and evening of June 12th. Before four o'clock of the next morning, June 13th, I breakfasted in the otherwise deserted dining-room of the Savoy with the General and his staff.

Only a few sleepy-eyed attendants were in the halls and lower rooms of the Savoy. In closed automobiles we were whisked away to Charing Cross Station. We boarded a special train whose destination was unknown. The entire party was again in the hands of the Intelligence Section of the British Admiralty, and every

possible means was taken to suppress all definite information concerning the departure.

The special train containing General Pershing and his staff reached Folkstone at about seven o'clock in the morning. We left the train at the dockside and boarded the swift Channel steamer moored there. A small vociferous contingent of English Tommies returning to the front from leave in "Blighty" were crowded on all decks in the stern.

With life-boats swinging out over the side and every one wearing life-preservers, we steamed out of Folkstone harbour to challenge the submarine dangers of the Channel.

The American commander occupied a forward cabin suite on the upper deck. His aides and secretaries had already transformed it into a business-like apartment. In the General's mind there was no place or time for any consideration of the dangers of the Channel crossing. Although the very waters through which we dashed were known to be infested with submarines which would have looked upon him as capital prey, I don't believe the General ever gave them as much as a thought.

Every time I looked through the open door of his cabin, he was busy dictating letters to his secretaries or orders or instructions to his aides or conferring with his Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Harbord. To the American commander, the hours necessary for the dash across the Channel simply represented a little more time which he could devote to the plans for the great work ahead of him.

Our ship was guarded on all sides and above. Swift torpedo destroyers dashed to and fro under our bow and stern and circled us continually. In the air above hydro-airplanes and dirigible balloons hovered over the waters surrounding us, keeping sharp watch for the first appearance of the dark sub-sea hulks of destruction.

We did not learn until the next day that while we were making that Channel crossing, the German air forces had crossed the Channel in a daring daylight raid and were at that very hour dropping bombs on London around the very hotel which General Pershing had just vacated. Some day, after the war, I hope to ascertain whether the commander of that flight of bombing Gothas started on his expedition over London with a special purpose in view and whether that purpose concerned the supposed presence there of the commander-in-chief of the American millions that were later to change the entire complexion of the war against Germany.

It was a beautiful sunlight day. It was not long before the coast line of France began to push itself up through the distant Channel mists and make itself visible on the horizon. I stood in the bow of the ship looking toward the coast line and silent with thoughts concerning the momentousness of the approaching historical event.

It happened that I looked back amidships and saw a solitary figure standing on the bridge of the vessel. It was General Pershing. He seemed rapt in deep thought. He wore his cap

straight on his head, the visor shading his eyes. He stood tall and erect, his hands behind him, his feet planted slightly apart to accommodate the gentle roll of the ship.

He faced due east and his eyes were directed toward the shores of that foreign land which we were approaching. It seemed to me as I watched him that his mind must have been travelling back more than a century to that day in history when another soldier had stood on the bridge of another vessel, crossing those same waters, but in an almost opposite direction.

It seemed to me that he must have been thinking of that historical character who made just such a journey more than a hundred years before, – a great soldier who left his homeland to sail to other foreign shores halfway around the world and there to lend his sword in the fight for the sacred principles of Democracy. It seemed to me that day that Pershing thought of Lafayette.

As we drew close to the shore, I noticed an enormous concrete breakwater extending out from the harbour entrance. It was surmounted by a wooden railing and on the very end of it, straddling the rail, was a small French boy. His legs were bare and his feet were encased in heavy wooden shoes. On his head he wore a red stocking cap of the liberty type. As we came within hailing distance, he gave to us the first greeting that came from the shores of France to these first arriving American soldiers.

"*Vive l'Amérique!*" he shouted, cupping his hands to his mouth and sending his shrill voice across the water to us. Pershing on

the bridge heard the salutation. He smiled, touched his hand to his hat and waved to the lad on the railing.

We landed that day at Boulogne, June 13th, 1917. Military bands massed on the quay, blared out the American National Anthem as the ship was warped alongside the dock. Other ships in the busy harbour began blowing whistles and ringing bells, loaded troop and hospital ships lying nearby burst forth into cheering. The news spread like contagion along the harbour front.

As the gangplank was lowered, French military dignitaries in dress uniforms resplendent with gold braid, buttons and medals, advanced to that part of the deck amidships where the General stood. They saluted respectfully and pronounced elaborate addresses in their native tongue. They were followed by numerous French Government officials in civilian dress attire. The city, the department and the nation were represented in the populous delegations who presented their compliments, and conveyed to the American commander the of the entire people of France.

Under the train sheds on the dock, long stiff, standing ranks of French poilus wearing helmets and their light blue overcoats pinned back at the knees, presented arms as the General walked down the lines inspecting them. At one end of the line, rank upon rank of French marines, and sailors with their flat hats with red tassels, stood at attention awaiting inspection.

The docks and train sheds were decorated with French and American flags and yards and yards of the mutually-owned red,

white and blue. Thousands of spectators began to gather in the streets near the station, and their continuous cheers sufficed to rapidly augment their own numbers.

Accompanied by a veteran French colonel, one of whose uniform sleeves was empty, General Pershing, as a guest of the city of Boulogne, took a motor ride through the streets of this busy port city. He was quickly returned to the station, where he and his staff boarded a special train for Paris. I went with them.

That train to Paris was, of necessity, slow. It proceeded slowly under orders and with a purpose. No one in France, with the exception of a select official circle, had been aware that General Pershing was arriving that day until about thirty minutes before his ship was warped into the dock at Boulogne. It has always been a mystery to me how the French managed to decorate the station at Boulogne upon such short notice.

Thus it was that the train crawled slowly toward Paris for the purpose of giving the French capital time to throw off the coat of war weariness that it had worn for three and a half years and don gala attire for this occasion. Paris made full use of every minute of that time, as we found when the train arrived at the French capital late in the afternoon. The evening papers in Paris had carried the news of the American commander's landing on the shores of France, and Paris was ready to receive him as Paris had never before received a world's notable.

The sooty girders of the Gare du Nord shook with cheers when the special train pulled in. The aisles of the great terminal

were carpeted with red plush. A battalion of bearded poilus of the Two Hundred and Thirty-seventh Colonial Regiment was lined up on the platform like a wall of silent grey, bristling with bayonets and shiny trench helmets.

General Pershing stepped from his private car. Flashlights boomed and batteries of camera men manœuvred into positions for the lens barrage. The band of the Garde Républicaine blared forth the strains of the "Star Spangled Banner," bringing all the military to a halt and a long standing salute. It was followed by the "Marseillaise."

At the conclusion of the train-side greetings and introductions, Marshal Joffre and General Pershing walked down the platform together. The tops of the cars of every train in the station were crowded with workmen. As the tall, slender American commander stepped into view, the privileged observers on the car-tops began to cheer.

A minute later, there was a terrific roar from beyond the walls of the station. The crowds outside had heard the cheering within. They took it up with thousands of throats. They made their welcome a ringing one. Paris took Pershing by storm.

The General was ushered into the specially decorated reception chamber, which was hung and carpeted with brilliant red velvet and draped with the Allied flags. After a brief formal exchange of greetings in this large chamber, he and his staff were escorted to the line of waiting automobiles at the side of the station in the Rue de Roubaix.

Pershing's appearance in the open was the cue for wild, unstinted applause and cheering from the crowds which packed the streets and jammed the windows of the tall buildings opposite.

General Pershing and M. Painlevé, Minister of War, took seats in a large automobile. They were preceded by a motor containing United States Ambassador Sharp and former Premier Viviani. The procession started to the accompaniment of martial music by massed military bands in the courtyard of the station. It passed through the Rue de Compiègne, the Rue de Lafayette, the Place de l'Opéra, the Boulevard des Capucines, the Place de la Madeleine, the Rue Royale, to the Place de la Concorde.

There were some fifty automobiles in the line, the rear of which was brought up by an enormous motor-bus load of the first American soldiers from the ranks to pass through the streets of Paris.

The crowds overflowed the sidewalks. They extended from the building walls out beyond the curbs and into the streets, leaving but a narrow lane through which the motors pressed their way slowly and with the exercise of much care. From the crowded balconies and windows overlooking the route, women and children tossed down showers of flowers and bits of coloured paper.

The crowds were so dense that other street traffic became marooned in the dense sea of joyously excited and gesticulating French people. Vehicles thus marooned immediately became

islands of vantage. They were soon covered with men and women and children, who climbed on top of them and clung to the sides to get a better look at the khaki-clad occupants of the autos.

Old grey-haired fathers of French fighting men bared their heads and with tears streaming down their cheeks shouted greetings to the tall, thin, grey-moustached American commander who was leading new armies to the support of their sons. Women heaped armfuls of roses into the General's car and into the cars of other American officers that followed him. Paris street gamins climbed the lamp-posts and waved their caps and wooden shoes and shouted shrilly.

American flags and red, white and blue bunting waved wherever the eye rested. English-speaking Frenchmen proudly explained to the uninformed that "Pershing" was pronounced "Peur-chigne" and not "Pair-shang."

Paris was not backward in displaying its knowledge of English. Gay Parisiennes were eager to make use of all the English at their command, that they might welcome the new arrivals in their native tongue.

Some of these women shouted "Hello," "Heep, heep, hourrah," "Good morning," "How are you, keed?" and "Cock-tails for two." Some of the expressions were not so inappropriate as they sounded.

Occasionally there came from the crowds a good old genuine American whoop-em-up yell. This happened when the procession passed groups of American ambulance workers and

other sons of Uncle Sam, wearing the uniforms of the French, Canadian and English Corps.

They joined with Australians and South African soldiers on leave to cheer on the new-coming Americans with such spontaneous expressions as "Come on, you Yanks," "Now let's get 'em," and "Eat 'em up, Uncle Sam."

The frequent stopping of the procession by the crowds made it happen quite frequently that the automobiles were completely surrounded by enthusiasts, who reached up and tried to shake hands with the occupants. Pretty girls kissed their hands and blew the invisible confection toward the men in khaki.

The bus-load of enlisted men bringing up the rear received dozens of bouquets from the girls. The flowers were hurled at them from all directions. Every two hundred feet the French would organise a rousing shout, "*Vive l'Amérique!*" for them.

Being the passive recipients of this unusual adulation produced only embarrassment on the part of the regulars who simply had to sit there, smiling and taking it. Just to break the one-sided nature of the demonstrations, one of the enlisted men stood up in his seat and, addressing himself to his mates, shouted:

"Come on, fellows, let's give 'em a 'veever' ourselves. Now all together."

The bus-load rose to its feet like one man and shouted "Veever for France." Their "France" rhymed with "pants," so that none of the French understood it, but they did understand the sentiment behind the husky American lungs.

Through such scenes as these, the procession reached the great Place de la Concorde. In this wide, paved, open space an enormous crowd had assembled. As the autos appeared the cheering, the flower throwing, the tumultuous kiss-blowing began. It increased in intensity as the motors stopped in front of the Hôtel Crillon into which General Pershing disappeared, followed by his staff.

Immediately the cheering changed to a tremendous clamorous demand for the General's appearance on the balcony in front of his apartments.

"*Au balcon, au balcon*," were the cries that filled the Place. The crowd would not be denied.

General Pershing stepped forth on the balcony. He stood behind the low marble railing, and between two enormous white-stoned columns. A cluster of the Allied flags was affixed to each column. The American commander surveyed the scene in front of him.

There are no trees or shrubbery in the vast Place de la Concorde. Its broad paved surface is interrupted only by artistically placed groups of statuary and fountains.

To the General's right, as he faced the Place, were the trees and greenery of the broad Champs Elysées. On his left were the fountains and the gardens of the Tuilleries. At the further end of the Place, five hundred feet straight in front of him, were the banks and the ornamental bridges of the Seine, beyond which could be seen the columned façade of the Chambre des Deputies,

and above and beyond that, against the blue sky of a late June afternoon, rose the majestic golden dome of the Invalides, over the tomb of Napoleon.

General Pershing looked down upon the sea of faces turned up toward him, and then it seemed that nature desired to play a part in the ceremony of that great day. A soft breeze from the Champs Elysées touched the cluster of flags on the General's right and from all the Allied emblems fastened there it selected one flag.

The breeze tenderly caught the folds of this flag and wafted them across the balcony on which the General bowed. He saw and recognised that flag. He extended his hand, caught the flag in his fingers and pressed it to his lips. All France and all America represented in that vast throng that day cheered to the mighty echo when Pershing kissed the tri-colour of France.

It was a tremendous, unforgettable incident. It was exceeded by no other incident during those days of receptions and ceremonies, except one. That was an incident which occurred not in the presence of thousands, but in a lonely old burial ground on the outskirts of Paris. This happened several days after the demonstration in the Place de la Concorde.

On that day of bright sunshine, General Pershing and a small party of officers, French and American, walked through the gravel paths of Picpus Cemetery in the suburbs of Paris, where the bodies of hundreds of those who made the history of France are buried.

Several French women in deep mourning courtesied as

General Pershing passed. His party stopped in front of two marble slabs that lay side by side at the foot of a granite monument. From the General's party a Frenchman stepped forward and, removing his high silk hat, he addressed the small group in quiet, simple tones and well-chosen English words. He was the Marquis de Chambrun. He said:

> "On this spot one can say that the historic ties between our nations are not the result of the able schemes of skilful diplomacy. No, the principles of liberty, justice and independence are the glorious links between our nations.
>
> "These principles have enlisted the hearts of our democracies. They have made the strength of their union and have brought about the triumph of their efforts.
>
> "To-day, when, after nearly a century and a half, America and France are engaged in a conflict for the same cause upon which their early friendship was based, we are filled with hope and confidence.
>
> "We know that our great nations are together with our Allies invincible, and we rejoice to think that the United States and France are reunited in the fight for liberty, and will reconsecrate, in a new victory, their everlasting friendship of which your presence to-day at this grave is an exquisite and touching token."

General Pershing advanced to the tomb and placed upon the marble slab an enormous wreath of pink and white roses. Then he stepped back. He removed his cap and held it in both hands in front of him. The bright sunlight shone down on his silvery grey

hair. Looking down at the grave, he spoke in a quiet, impressive tone four simple, all-meaning words:

"Lafayette, we are here."

CHAPTER III
THE LANDING OF THE FIRST AMERICAN CONTINGENT IN FRANCE

The first executive work of the American Expeditionary Forces overseas was performed in a second floor suite of the Crillon Hotel on the Place de la Concorde in Paris. This suite was the first temporary headquarters of the American commander.

The tall windows of the rooms looked down on the historic Place which was the scene of so many momentous events in French history. The windows were hardly a hundred yards from the very spot where the guillotine dripped red in the days of the Terror. It was here that the heads of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette dropped into the basket.

During General Pershing's comparatively brief occupancy of these headquarters, the reception rooms were constantly banked with fresh-cut flowers, the daily gifts of the French people, – flowers that were replenished every twenty-four hours. The room was called the "Salon des Batailles."

In one corner of the room, near a window overlooking the Place, was General Pershing's table. It was adorned with a statuette of General Joffre and a cluster of miniatures of captured

German standards. Extending from the floor to the ceiling on one of the walls were two enormous oil copies of "La Bataille de Fontenoy" and the "Passage du Rhin." A large flag-draped photograph of President Wilson occupied a place of honour on an easel at one end of the room.

During the first week that General Pershing stopped at the hotel, the sidewalk and street beneath his windows were constantly crowded with people. The crowds waited there all day long, just in the hope of catching a glimpse of the American commander if he should happen to be leaving or returning to his quarters. It seemed as if every Parisienne and Parisian had taken upon herself and himself the special duty of personally observing General Pershing, of waving him an enthusiastic "vive" and possibly being within the scope of his returning salute.

But the American commander would not permit demonstrations and celebrations to interfere with the important duties that he faced. Two days are all that were devoted to these social ceremonies which the enthusiastic and hospitable French would have made almost endless. Dinners, receptions and parades were ruthlessly erased from the working day calendar. The American commander sounded the order "To work" with the same martial precision as though the command had been a sudden call "To arms."

On the morning of the third day after General Pershing's arrival in Paris, the typewriters began clicking incessantly and the telephones began ringing busily in the large building which

was occupied on that day as the headquarters of the American Expeditionary Forces in France.

This building was Numbers 27 and 31 Rue de Constantine. It faced the trees and shrubbery bordering the approach to the Seine front of the Invalides. The building was two stories high with grey-white walls and a mansard roof. At that time it could be immediately identified as the one in front of which stood a line of American motor cars, as the one where trim United States regulars walked sentry post past the huge doors through which frequent orderlies dashed with messages.

Ten days before, the building had been the residence of a Marquis and had contained furniture and art valued at millions of francs. All of those home-like characteristics had been removed so effectively that even the name of the kindly Marquis had been forgotten. I am sure that he, himself, at the end of that ten-day period could not have recognised his converted salons where the elaborate ornamentation had been changed to the severe simplicity typical of a United States Army barracks.

General Pershing's office was located on the second floor of the house and in one corner. In those early days it was carpetless and contained almost a monkish minimum of furniture. There were the General's chair, and his desk on which there stood a peculiar metal standard for one of those one-piece telephone sets with which Americans are familiar only in French stage settings. A book-case with glass doors, a stenographer's table and chair, and two red plush upholstered chairs, for visitors, comprised the

furniture inventory of the room.

One of the inner walls of the room was adorned with a large mirror with a gilt frame, and in the other wall was a plain fireplace. There were tall windows in the two outer walls which looked out on the Rue de Constantine and the Rue de Grenelle. Opposite the Rue de Grenelle windows there was a small, deeply shaded park where children rolled hoops during the heat of the day and where convalescent French soldiers sat and watched the children at play or perhaps discussed the war and other things with the nurse-maids.

This was the first workshop in France of the American commander-in-chief. Adjoining rooms to the left and right were occupied by the General's staff and his aides. And it was in these rooms that the overseas plans for the landing of the first American armed contingent in France were formulated.

It is safe now to mention that St. Nazaire on the west coast of France was the port at which our first armed forces disembarked. I was in Paris when the information of their coming was whispered to a few chosen correspondents who were to be privileged to witness this historical landing.

This was the first time in the history of our nation that a large force of armed Americans was to cross the seas to Europe. For five and a half months prior to the date of their landing, the ruthless submarine policy of the Imperial German Government had been in effect, and our troop ships with those initial thousands of American soldiers represented the first large

Armada to dare the ocean crossing since Germany had instituted her sub-sea blockade zone in February of that same year.

Thus it was that any conversation concerning the fact that our men were on the seas and at the mercy of the U-boats was conducted with the greatest of care behind closed doors. In spite of the efforts of the French agents of contra espionage, Paris and all France, for that matter, housed numerous spies. There were some anxious moments while that first contingent was on the water.

Our little group of correspondents was informed that we should be conducted by American officers to the port of landing, but the name of that port was withheld from us. By appointment we met at a Paris railroad station where we were provided with railroad tickets. We took our places in compartments and rode for some ten or twelve hours, arriving early the next morning at St. Nazaire.

This little village on the coast of Brittany was tucked away there in the golden sands of the seashore. Its houses had walls of white stucco and gabled roofs of red tile. In the small rolling hills behind it were green orchards and fields of yellow wheat. The villagers, old women in their starched white head-dresses and old men wearing faded blue smocks and wooden shoes, were unmindful of the great event for which history had destined their village.

On the night before the landing the townspeople had retired with no knowledge of what was to happen on the following day.

In the morning they awoke to find strange ships that had come in the night, riding safely at anchor in the harbour. The wooden shutters began to pop open with bangs as excited heads, encased in peaked flannel nightcaps, protruded themselves from bedroom windows and directed anxious queries to those who happened to be abroad at that early hour.

St. Nazaire came to life more quickly that morning than ever before in its history. The Mayor of the town was one of the busiest figures on the street. In high hat and full dress attire, he hurried about trying to assemble the village orchestra of octogenarian fiddlers and flute players to play a welcome for the new arrivals. The townspeople neglected their *café au lait* to rush down to the quay to look at the new ships.

The waters of the harbour sparkled in the early morning sunlight. The dawn had been grey and misty, but now nature seemed to smile. The strange ships from the other side of the world were grey in hulk but now there were signs of life and colour aboard each one of them.

Beyond the troop ships lay the first United States warships, units of that remarkable fighting organisation which in the year that was to immediately follow that very day were to escort safely across three thousand miles of submarine-infested water more than a million and a half American soldiers.

The appearance of these first warships of ours was novel to the French townspeople. Our ships had peculiar looking masts, masts which the townspeople compared to the baskets which

the French peasants carry on their backs when they harvest the lettuce. Out further from the shore were our low-lying torpedo destroyers, pointed toward the menace of the outer deep.

Busy puffing tugs were warping the first troop ship toward the quay-side. Some twenty or thirty American sailors and soldiers, who had been previously landed by launch to assist in the disembarkation, were handling the lines on the dock.

When but twenty feet from the quay-side, the successive decks of the first troop ship took on the appearance of mud-coloured layers from the khaki uniforms of the stiff standing ranks of our men. A military band on the forward deck was playing the national anthems of France and America and every hand was being held at the salute.

As the final bars of the "Star Spangled Banner" crashed out and every saluting hand came snappily down, one American soldier on an upper deck leaned over the rail and shouted to a comrade on the shore his part of the first exchange of greetings between our fighting men upon this historic occasion. Holding one hand to his lips, he seriously enquired:

"Say, do they let the enlisted men in the saloons here?"

Another soldier standing near the stern rail had a different and more serious interrogation to make. He appeared rather blasé about it as he leaned over the rail and, directing his voice toward a soldier on the dock, casually demanded:

"Say, where the Hell is all this trouble, anyhow?"

These two opening sorties produced a flood of others. The

most common enquiry was: "What's the name of this place?" and "Is this France or England?" When answers were made to these questions, the recipients of the information, particularly if they happened to be "old-timers in the army," would respond by remarking, "Well, it's a damn sight better than the Mexican border."

As our men came over the ship's side and down the runways, there was no great reception committee awaiting them. Among the most interested spectators of the event were a group of stolid German prisoners of war and the two French soldiers guarding them. The two Frenchmen talked volubly with a wealth of gesticulation, while the Germans maintained their characteristic glumness.

The German prisoners appeared to be anything but discouraged at the sight. Some of them even wore a smile that approached the supercilious. With some of them that smile seemed to say: "You can't fool us. We know these troops are not Americans. They are either Canadians or Australians coming from England. Our German U-boats won't let Americans cross the ocean."

Some of those German prisoners happened to have been in America before the war. They spoke English and recognised the uniforms of our men. Their silent smiles seemed to say: "Well, they don't look so good at that. We have seen better soldiers. And, besides, there is only a handful of them. Not enough can come to make any difference. Anyhow, it is too late now. The

war will be over before any appreciable number can get here."

But the stream of khaki continued to pour out of the ship's side. Company after company of our men, loaded down with packs and full field equipment, lined up on the dock and marched past the group of German prisoners.

"We're passing in review for you, Fritzie," one irrepressible from our ranks shouted, as the marching line passed within touching distance of the prisoner group. The Germans responded only with quizzical little smiles and silence.

Escorted by our own military bands, the regiments marched through the main street of the village. The bands played "Dixie" – a new air to France. The regiments as a whole did not present the snappy, marching appearance that they might have presented. There was a good reason for this. Sixty per cent. of them were recruits. It had been wisely decided to replace many of the old regular army men in the ranks with newly enlisted men, so that these old veterans could remain in America and train the new drafts.

However, that which impressed the French people was the individual appearance of these samples of American manhood. Our men were tall and broad and brawny. They were young and vigorous. Their eyes were keen and snappy. Their complexions ranged in shade from the swarthy sun-tanned cheeks of border veterans to the clear pink skins of city youngsters. But most noticeable of all to the French people were the even white rows of teeth which our men displayed when they smiled. Good dentistry

and clean mouths are essentially American.

The villagers of St. Nazaire, old men and women, girls and school children, lined the curbs as our men marched through the town. The line of march was over a broad esplanade that circled the sandy beach of the bay, and then wound upward into the higher ground back of the town. The road here was bordered on either side with ancient stone walls covered with vines and over the tops of the walls there extended fruit-laden branches to tempt our men with their ripe, red lusciousness. As they marched through the heat and dust of that June day, many succumbed to the temptations and paid for their appetites with inordinately violent colics that night.

A camp site had been partially prepared for their reception. It was located close to a French barracks. The French soldiers and gangs of German prisoners, who had been engaged in this work, had no knowledge of the fact that they were building the first American cantonment in France. They thought they were constructing simply an extension of the French encampment.

That first contingent, composed of United States Infantrymen and Marines, made its first camp in France with the smallest amount of confusion, considering the fact that almost three-quarters of them hadn't been in uniform a month. It was but several hours after arriving at the camp that the smoke was rising from the busy camp stoves and the aroma of American coffee, baked beans and broiled steaks was in the air.

On the afternoon of that first day some of the men were

given permission to visit the town. They began to take their first lessons in French as they went from café to café in futile efforts to connect up with such unknown commodities as cherry pie or ham and egg sandwiches. Upon meeting one another in the streets, our men would invariably ask: "Have you come across any of these FROGS that talk American?"

There was nothing disrespectful about the terms Frogs or Froggies as applied to their French comrades in arms. American officers hastened to explain to French officers that the one piece of information concerning France most popularly known in America was that it was the place where people first learned to eat frog legs and snails.

The Frenchmen, on the other hand, were somewhat inclined to believe that these first Americans didn't live up to the European expectations of Americans. Those European expectations had been founded almost entirely upon the translations of dime novels and moving picture thrillers of the Wild West and comedy variety.

Although our men wore the high, broad-brimmed felt hats, they didn't seem sufficiently cowboyish. Although the French people waited expectantly, none of these Americans dashed through the main street of the village on bucking bronchos, holding their reins in their teeth and at the same time firing revolvers from either hand. Moreover, none of our men seemed to conclude their dinners in the expected American fashion of slapping one another in the face with custard pies.

There was to be seen on the streets of St. Nazaire that day some representative black Americans, who had also landed in that historical first contingent. There was a strange thing about these negroes.

It will be remembered that in the early stages of our participation in the war it had been found that there was hardly sufficient khaki cloth to provide uniforms for all of our soldiers. That had been the case with these American negro soldiers.

But somewhere down in Washington, somehow or other, some one resurrected an old, large, heavy iron key and this, inserted into an ancient rusty lock, had opened some long forgotten doors in one of the Government arsenals. There were revealed old dust-covered bundles wrapped up in newspapers, yellow with age, and when these wrappings of the past were removed, there were seen the uniforms of old Union blue that had been laid away back in '65 – uniforms that had been worn by men who fought and bled and died to free the first black American citizens.

And here on this foreign shore, on this day in June more than half a century later, the sons and the grandsons of those same freed slaves wore those same uniforms of Union blue as they landed in France to fight for a newer freedom.

Some of these negroes were stevedores from the lower Mississippi levees. They sang as they worked in their white army undershirts, across the chest of which they had penciled in blue and red, strange mystic devices, religious phrases and hoodoo signs, calculated to contribute the charm of safety to the running

of the submarine blockade.

Two of these American negroes, walking up the main street of St. Nazaire, saw on the other side of the thoroughfare a brother of colour wearing the lighter blue uniform of a French soldier. This French negro was a Colonial black from the north of Africa and of course had spoken nothing but French from the day he was born.

One of the American negroes crossed the street and accosted him.

"Looka here, boy," he enquired good-naturedly, "what can you all tell me about this here wah?"

"Comment, monsieur?" responded the non-understanding French black, and followed the rejoinder with a torrent of excited French.

The American negro's mouth fell open. For a minute he looked startled, and then he bulged one large round white eye suspiciously at the French black, while he inwardly debated on the possibility that he had become suddenly colour blind. Having reassured himself, however, that his vision was not at fault, he made a sudden decision and started on a new tack.

"Now, never mind that high-faluting language," he said. "You all just tell me what you know about this here wah and quit you' putting on aihs."

The puzzled French negro could only reply with another explosion of French interrogations, coupled with vigorous gesticulations. The American negro tried to talk at the same time

and both of them endeavouring to make the other understand, increased the volumes of their tones until they were standing there waving their arms and shouting into one another's faces. The American negro gave it up.

"My Gawd," he said, shaking his head as he recrossed the street and joined his comrades, "this is shore some funny country. They got the mos' ignorantest niggers I ever saw."

Still, those American blacks were not alone in their difficulties over the difference in languages. I discussed the matter with one of our white regulars who professed great experience, having spent almost one entire day on mutual guard with a French sentry over a pile of baggage.

"You know," he said, "I don't believe these Frenchies ever will learn to speak English."

Our veterans from Mexico and the border campaigns found that their smattering of Spanish did not help them much. But still every one seemed to manage to get along all right. Our soldiers and the French soldiers in those early days couldn't understand each other's languages, but they could understand each other.

This strange paradox was analysed for me by a young American Lieutenant who said he had made a twelve-hour study of the remarkable camaraderie that had immediately sprung up between the fighting men of France and the fighting men of America. In explaining this relationship, he said:

"You see, we think the French are crazy," he said, "and the French know damn well we are."

Those of our men who had not brought small French and English dictionaries with them, made hurried purchases of such handy articles and forthwith began to practice. The French people did likewise.

I saw one young American infantryman seated at a table in front of one of the sidewalk cafés on the village square. He was dividing his attention between a fervent admiration of the pretty French waitress, who stood smiling in front of him, and an intense interest in the pages of his small hand dictionary.

She had brought his glass of beer and he had paid for it, but there seemed to be a mutual urge for further conversation. The American would look first at her and then he would look through the pages of the book again. Finally he gave slow and painful enunciation of the following request:

"Mad-am-moy-sell, donnie moy oon baysa."

She laughed prettily as she caught his meaning almost immediately, and she replied:

"Doughboy, ware do you get zat stuff?"

"Aw, Hell," said the young Infantryman, as he closed the book with a snap. "I knew they'd let those sailors ashore before us."

From the very first day of the landing we began to learn things from the French and they began to learn things from us. Some of our men learned that it was quite possible to sip an occasional glass of beer or light wine without feeling a sudden inclination to buy and consume all there remained in the café.

The French soldiers were intensely interested in the

equipment of our land forces and in the uniforms of both our soldiers and sailors. They sought by questions to get an understanding of the various insignia by which the Americans designated their rank.

One thing that they noticed was a small, round white pasteboard tag suspended on a yellow cord from the upper left hand breast pocket of either the blue jackets of our sailors or the khaki shirts of our soldiers. So prevalent was this tag, which in reality marked the wearer as the owner of a package of popular tobacco, that the French almost accepted it as uniform equipment.

The attitude of our first arriving American soldiers toward the German prisoners who worked in gangs on construction work in the camps and rough labour along the docks was a curious one. Not having yet encountered in battle the brothers of these same docile appearing captives, our men were even inclined to treat the prisoners with deference almost approaching admiration.

In a measure, the Germans returned this feeling. The arrival of the Americans was really cheering to them. The prisoners disliked the French because they had been taught to do so from childhood. They hated the English because that was the hate with which they went into battle.

It sounds incongruous now but, nevertheless, it was a fact then that the German prisoners confined at that first American sea-base really seemed to like the American soldiers. Maybe it was because any change of masters or guards was a relief

in the uneventful existence which had been theirs since the day of their capture. Perhaps the feeling was one of distinct kindred, based on a familiarity with Americans and American customs – a familiarity which had been produced by thousands of letters which Germans in America had written to their friends in Germany before the war. On the other hand, it may simply have been by reason of America's official disavowal of any animosity toward the German people.

One day I watched some of those prisoners unloading supplies at one of the docks in St. Nazaire, more or less under the eyes of an American sentry who stood nearby. One group of four Germans were engaged in carrying what appeared to be a large wooden packing case. Casually, and as if by accident, the case was dropped to the ground and cracked.

Instantly one of the prisoners' hands began to furtively investigate the packages revealed by the break. The other prisoners busied themselves as if preparing to lift the box again. The first German pulled a spoon from his bootleg, plunged it into the crevice in the broken box and withdrew it heaped with granulated sugar. With a quick movement he conveyed the stolen sweet to his mouth and that gapping orifice closed quickly on the sugar, while his stoical face immediately assumed its characteristic downcast look. He didn't dare move his lips or jaws for fear of detection.

Of course these Germans had been receiving but a scant ration of sugar, but their lot had been no worse than that of

the French soldiers guarding them previously, who got no sugar either. American soldiers then guarding those prisoners reported only a few of them for confinement for these human thefts.

Surreptitiously, the American guards would sometimes leave cigarettes where the prisoners could get them, and even though the action did violate the rules of discipline, it helped to develop further the human side of the giver and the recipient and at the same time had the result of making the prisoners do more work for their new guards.

It should be specially stated that lenience could not and was not extended to the point of fraternisation. But the relationship that seemed to exist between the German prisoners and American soldiers at that early date revealed undeniably the absence of any mutual hate.

Around one packing case on the dock I saw, one day, a number of German prisoners who were engaged in unpacking bundles from America, and passing them down a line of waiting hands that relayed them to a freight car. One of the Germans leaning over the case straightened up with a rumpled newspaper in his hand. He had removed it from a package. A look of indescribable joy came across his face.

"Deutscher, Deutscher," he cried, pointing to the Gothic type. The paper was a copy of the New York *Staats-Zeitung*.

The lot of those prisoners was not an unhappy one. To me it seemed very doubtful whether even a small percentage of them would have accepted liberty if it carried with it the necessity of

returning to German trenches.

Those men knew what war was. They had crossed No Man's Land. Now they were far back from the blazing front in a comparatively peaceful country beyond the sound of the guns. If their lot at that time was to be characterised as "war," then in the opinion of those Germans, war was not what Sherman said it was.

Their attitude more resembled that of the unkissed spinster who was taken captive when the invading army captured the town. She flung herself into the arms of the surprised commander of the invaders and smilingly whispered, "War is war."

The German prison camps at St. Nazaire were inspected by General Pershing on the third day of the American landing when he, with his staff, arrived from Paris. The General and his party arrived early in the morning in a pouring rain. The American commander-in-chief then held the rank of a Major General. In the harbour was the flagship of Rear Admiral Gleaves.

There was no delay over the niceties of etiquette when the question arose as to whether the Rear Admiral should call on the Major General or the Major General should call on the Rear Admiral.

The Major General settled the subject with a sentence. He said, "The point is that I want to see him," and with no further ado about it General Pershing and his staff visited the Admiral on his flagship. After his inspection of our first contingent, General

Pershing said:

"This is the happiest day of the busy days which I have spent in France preparing for the arrival of the first contingent. To-day I have seen our troops safe on French soil, landing from transports that were guarded in their passage overseas by the resourceful vigilance of our Navy.

"Now, our task as soldiers lies before us. We hope, with the aid of the French leaders and experts who have placed all the results of their experience at our disposal, to make our forces worthy in skill and in determination, to fight side by side in arms with the armies of France."

CHAPTER IV
THROUGH THE SCHOOL OF WAR

Clip the skyline from the Blue Ridge, arch it over with arboreal vistas from the forests of the Oregon, reflect the two in the placid waters of the Wisconsin – and you will have some conception of the perfect Eden of beauty in which the first contingent of the American Expeditionary Forces trained in France.

Beckoning white roads curl through the rolling hills like ribbons of dental cream squeezed out evenly on rich green velour. Châteaux, pearl white centres in settings of emerald green, push their turrets and bastions above the mossy plush of the mountain side. Lazy little streams silver the valleys with their aimless wanderings.

It was a peaceful looking garden of pastoral delight that United States soldiers had picked out for their martial training ground. It was a section whose physical appearance was untouched by the three years of red riot and roar that still rumbled away just a few miles to the north.

The training area was located in the Vosges, in east central France. By train, it was a nine-hour day trip from Paris. It was located about an hour's motor ride behind the front lines, which at that time were close to the north of the cities of Nancy and

Toul.

The troops were billeted in a string of small villages that comprised one side of the letter V. French troops and instructing officers occupied the other converging line of the letter. Between the two lines was the area in which our men trained. Where the two lines converged was the town of Gondercourt, the headquarters of Major General Seibert, the Commander of the first American division in France.

The area had long since been stripped of male civilian population that could be utilised for the French ranks. The war had taken the men and the boys, but had left the old people and children to till the fields, tend the cattle, prune the hedges and trim the roads.

With the advent of our troops, the restful scene began to change. Treeless ridges carpeted with just enough green to veil the rocky formation of the ground began to break out with a superficial rash of the colour of fresh earth. In rows and circles, by angles and zigzags, the training trenches began to take form daily under the pick and shovel exercises of French and Americans working side by side.

Along the white roads, clay-coloured rectangles that moved evenly, like brown caravans, represented the marching units of United States troops. The columns of bluish-grey that passed them with shorter, quicker steps, were companies of those tireless Frenchmen, who after almost three years of the front line real thing, now played at a mimic war of make-believe, with taller

and heavier novitiates.

Those French troops were Alpine Chasseurs – the famous Blue Devils. They wore dark blue caps, which resemble tam o'shanters, but are not. They were proud of the distinction which their uniform gave them. They were proud of their great fighting records. One single battalion of them boasted that of the twenty-six officers who led it into the first fight at the opening of the war, only four of them existed.

It was a great advantage for our men to train under such instructors. Correspondents who had been along the fronts before America's entry into the war, had a great respect for the soldierly capacity of these same fighting Frenchmen; not only these sturdy young sons of France who wore the uniform, but the older French soldiers – ranging in age from forty to fifty-five years – who had been away to the fronts since the very beginning of the war.

We had seen them many, many times. Miles upon miles of them, in the motor trucks along the roads. Twenty of them rode in each truck. They sat on two side benches facing the centre of the trucks. They were men actually bent forward from the weight of the martial equipment strapped to their bodies. They seemed to carry inordinate loads – knapsacks, blanket roll, spare shoes, haversacks, gas masks, water bottles, ammunition belts, grenade aprons, rifle, bayonet and helmet.

Many of them were very old men. They had thick black eyebrows and wore long black beards. They were tired, weary men. We had seen them in the camions, each man resting his

head on the shoulder of the man seated beside him. The dust of the journey turned their black beards grey. On the front seat of the camion a sleepless one handled the wheel, while beside him the relief driver slept on the seat.

Thus they had been seen, mile upon mile of them, thousand upon thousand of them, moving ever up and down those roads that paralleled the six hundred and fifty miles of front from Flanders to the Alps – moving always. Thus they had been seen night and day, winter and summer, for more than three long years, always trying to be at the place where the enemy struck. The world knows and the world is thankful that they always were there.

It was under such veteran instructors as these that our first Americans in France trained, there, in the Vosges, in a garden spot of beauty, in the province that boasts the birthplace of Jeanne d'Arc. On the few leave days, many of our men, with permission, would absent themselves from camp, and make short pilgrimages over the hills to the little town of Domremy to visit the house in which the Maid of Orleans was born.

Our men were eager to learn. I observed them daily at their training tasks. One day when they had progressed as far as the use of the New French automatic rifles, I visited one of the ranges to witness the firing.

Just under the crest of the hill was a row of rifle pits, four feet deep in the slaty white rock. On the opposite hill, across the marshy hollow, at a distance of two hundred yards, was a

line of wooden targets, painted white with black circles. Poised at intervals on the forward edge of the pits were a number of automatic rifles of the type used by the French army. An American soldier and a French soldier attended each one, the former in the firing position and the latter instructing.

The rear bank of the pits was lined with French and American officers. The order, "Commence firing," was given, and white spurts of rock dust began dancing on the opposite hill, while splinters began to fly from some of the wooden targets.

At one end of the firing trench a raw American recruit, who admitted that he had never handled an automatic rifle before, flushed to his hat-brim and gritted his teeth viciously as his shots, registering ten feet above the targets, brought forth laughter and exclamations from the French soldiers nearby. He rested on his gun long enough to ask an interpreter what the Frenchmen were talking about.

"They say," the interpreter replied, "that you belong to the anti-aircraft service."

The recruit tightened his grip on his rifle and lowered his aim with better results. At the end of his first fifty shots he was placing one in three on the target and the others were registering close in.

"Bravo!" came from a group of French officers at the other end of the trench, where another American, older in the service, had signalised his first experiences with the new firearm by landing thirty targets out of thirty-four shots, and four of the

targets were bull's-eyes. The French instructors complimented him on the excellence of his marksmanship, considering his acknowledged unfamiliarity with the weapon.

Further along the depression, in another set of opposing trenches and targets, a row of French machine guns manned by young Americans, sprayed lead with ear-splitting abandon, sometimes reaching the rate of five hundred shots a minute. Even with such rapidity, the Americans encountered no difficulties with the new pieces.

French veterans, who for three years had been using those same guns against German targets, hovered over each piece, explaining in half French and half English, and answering in the same mixture questions on ways and means of getting the best results from the weapons.

Here a chasseur of the ranks would stop the firing of one American squad, with a peremptory, "Regardez." He would proceed with pantomime and more or less connected words, carrying the warning that firing in such a manner would result in jamming the guns, a condition which would be fatal in case the targets in the other trenches were charging upon the guns.

Then he showed the correct procedure, and the Yanks, watchfully alert to his every move, changed their method and signified their pleasure with the expression of "Trays beans," and "Mercy's."

"Do you think it would have resulted in a quicker and possibly more understanding training if these Americans were instructed

by British veterans instead of French?" I asked an American Staff Officer, who was observing the demonstration.

"I may have thought so at first," the officer replied, "but not now. The explanations which our men in the ranks are receiving from the French soldiers in the ranks are more than word instructions. They are object lessons in which gesticulation and pantomime are used to act out the movement or subject under discussion.

"The French are great actors, and I find that American soldiers unacquainted with the French language are able to understand the French soldiers who are unacquainted with the English language much better than the American officers, similarly handicapped, can understand the French officers.

"I should say that some time would be lost if all of our troops were to be trained by French soldiers, but I believe that this division under French tutelage will be better able to teach the new tactics to the new divisions that are to follow than it would be if it had speedily passed through training camps like the British system, for instance, where it must be taken for granted that verbal, instead of actual, instruction is the means of producing a speeding up of training."

Thus it was that our first American contingent in France was in training for something more than service on the line. It rapidly qualified into an expert corps from which large numbers of capable American instructors were later withdrawn and used for the training of our millions of men that followed.

This achievement was only accomplished by the exercise of strict disciplinarian measures by every American officer in the then small expedition. One day, in the early part of August, 1917, a whirlwind swept through the string of French villages where the first contingent was training.

The whirlwind came down the main road in a cloud of dust. It sped on the fleeting tires of a high-powered motor which flew from its dust-grey hood a red flag with two white stars. It blew into the villages and out, through the billets and cook tents, mess halls, and picket lines. The whirlwind was John J. Pershing.

The commander-in-chief "hit" the training area early in the morning and his coming was unannounced. Before evening he had completed a stern inspection which had left only one impression in the minds of the inspected, and that impression was to the effect that more snap and pep, more sharpness and keenness were needed.

At the conclusion of the inspection all of the officers of the contingent were agreeing that the whirlwind visitation was just what had been needed to arouse the mettle and spirit in an organisation comprised of over fifty per cent. raw recruits. Many of the officers themselves had been included in the pointed criticisms which the commander directed against the persons and things that met disfavour in his eyes.

The night following that inspection or "raid," as it was called, it would have been safe to say that nowhere in the area was there a recruit who did not know, in a manner that he would not

forget, the correct position of a soldier – the precise, stiff, snappy attitude to be presented when called to attention. The enlisted men whose heels did not click when they met, whose shoulders slouched, whose chins missed the proper angle, whose eyes were not "front" during the inspection, underwent embarrassing penalties, calculated to make them remember.

"Have this man fall out," General Pershing directed, as he stood before a recruit whose attitude appeared sloppy; "teach him the position of a soldier and have him stand at attention for five minutes."

One company which had prided itself upon having some of the best embryonic bomb-throwers in the contingent, contributed a number of victims to the above penalties, and as the General's train of automobiles swirled out of the village, the main street seemed to be dotted with silent khaki-clad statues doing their five minute sentences of rigidity.

"What about your men's shoes?" General Pershing asked a captain sharply, while he directed his eyes along a company line of feet whose casings seemed to be approaching the shabby.

"We need hobnails, sir," replied the captain.

"Get them" – the words snapped out from beneath Pershing's close-cropped grey moustache. "Requisition hobnails. Your men need them. Get them from the quartermaster."

The American commander stepped into the darkness of a large stone-walled stable, which represented the billeting accommodations for ten American soldiers. A dog curled in the

doorway growled and showed its teeth. The General stepped past the menacing animal, and without heeding its snarls close to his heels, started questioning the sergeants in charge.

"Are any cattle kept in here?" he asked.

"No, sir," replied the sergeant.

"Detail more men with brooms and have it aired thoroughly every day."

Observed from a distance, when he was speaking with battalion and regimental commanders, the commander manifested no change of attitude from that which marked his whole inspection. He frequently employed his characteristic gesture of emphasis – the wadding of his left palm with his right fist or the energetic opening and closing of the right hand. When the Pershing whirlwind sped out of the training area that night, after the first American inspection in France, it left behind it a thorough realisation of the sternness of the work which was ahead of our army.

The development of a rigid discipline was the American commander's first objective in the training schedules which he ordered his staff to devise. After this schedule had been in operation not ten days, I happened to witness a demonstration of American discipline which might be compared to an improved incident of Damocles dining under the suspended sword at the feast of Dionysius.

A battalion of American Infantry was at practice on one of the training fields. The grenade-throwing exercises had been

concluded and the order had been given to "fall in" preparatory to the march back to the camp.

Upon the formation of the long company lines, end on end down the side of the hill, the order, "attention," was sharply shouted bringing the men to the rigid pose which permits the eyes to wander neither to the right nor to the left, above nor below, but straightforward.

As the thousand men stood there, rigid and silent, a sudden disturbance took place in the sky above them. Shells began exploding up there. At the same time the men in the ranks could distinctly hear the whirr and the hum of aeroplane motors above them.

Almost every day reports had been received that German planes had evaded the Allied aerial patrols along the front and had made long flights behind our lines for the dual purposes of observing and bombing.

As the American battalion stood stiff and motionless, I knew that the thought was passing through the minds of every man there that here, at last, was the expected visitation of the German flyers and that a terrific bomb from above would be the next event on the programme. The men recognised the reports of the anti-aircraft guns blazing away, and the sound of the motors suggested a close range target.

The sound seemed to indicate that the planes were flying low. The American ranks knew that something was going on immediately above them. They did not know what it was, but it

seems needless to state that they wanted to know. Still the ranks stood as stiff as rows of clay-coloured statues.

An almost irresistible impulse to look upward, a strong instinctive urging to see the danger that impended, and the stern regulations of "eyes front" that goes with the command "attention," comprised the elements of conflict that went on in each of the thousand heads in that battalion line.

In front of each platoon, the lieutenants and captains stood with the same rigid eyes front facing the men. If one of the company officers had relaxed to the extent of taking one fleeting upward glance, it is doubtful whether the men could have further resisted the same inclination, but not a man shifted his gaze from the direction prescribed by the last command.

One plane passed closely overhead and nothing happened. Three more followed and still no bombs fell, and then the tense incident was closed by the calling out of the order of the march and, in squads of four, the battalion wheeled into the road and marched back to billets.

As one company went by singing (talking was permitted upon the freedom of routstep), I heard one of the men say that he had thought all along that the officers would not have made them stand there at attention if the danger had not been over.

"As far as I knew, it was over," a comrade added. "It was right over my head." And in this light manner the men forgot the incident as they resumed their marching song.

When Mr. W. Hollenzollern of Potsdam put singing lessons

in the curriculum of his soldiers' training, a tremor of military giggling was heard around the world. But in August, 1914, when Mars smiled at the sight of those same soldiers, marching across the frontiers east, south and west, under their throaty barrage of "Deutschland, Deutschland, Über Alles," the derisive giggles completely died out. It immediately became a case of he who laughs first, lives to yodel.

The American forces then in training took advantage of this. They not only began to sing as they trained, but they actually began to be trained to sing. Numerous company commanders who had held strong opinions against this vocal soldiering, changed their minds and expressed the new found conviction that the day was past when singing armies could be compared solely with male coryphées who hold positions well down stage and clink empty flagons of brown October ale.

"It's a great idea," a company commander told me. "We learned it from the Blue Devils. They are the toughest set of undersized gentry that I have run into in France. They have forearms as big as three-inch shells, and as hard. Their favourite pastime is juggling hand-grenades that can't possibly explode unless they just lightly touch one another.

"Yesterday we watched them, bared to the waist, as they went through three hours of grenade and bombing practice that was the last word in strenuosity. Keeping up with their exercises was hard work for our men, whose arms soon began to ache from the unaccustomed, overhand heaving.

"Then we watched them as their commander assembled them for the march back to the village. At the command, 'attention,' their heels clicked, their heads went back, their chins up and their right hands were pasted rigidly against their right trouser leg.

"At the command 'march' all of them started off, punctuating their first step with the first word of their marching song. It was not any sickly chorus either. There was plenty of beef and lung power behind every note. My men lined up opposite were not missing a bit of it. Most of them seemed to know what was expected when I said:

"'On the command of "march," the company will begin to sing, keeping step with the song. The first sergeant will announce the song.'

"My first sergeant responded without a change of colour as if the command to sing had been an old regulation. I knew that he was puzzled, but he did it well. The name of the song chosen was passed down the line from man to man.

"When I gave the command to march, the company, almost half of them new recruits, wheeled in squads of fours, and started off down the road singing, 'Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here.' There were some who were kind of weak on the effort, but there was a noticeable crescendo when the sergeant passed the word down the squad that the company would be kept marching until everybody had joined in the singing.

"We swung into camp that night with every voice raising lustily on 'One Grasshopper Hopped Right Over Another

Grasshopper's Back,' and after dinner the billets just sprouted melody, everything from ragtime to Christmas carols and baby lullabies."

One noticeable characteristic about our soldiers during that training period before they had come in contact with the enemy, was a total absence of violent antipathy toward all persons and things Teutonic.

On the march the men then sang "We'll Hang the Damned Old Kaiser to a Sour Apple Tree," but at that time I never heard any parodies on the "Gott Straffe Germany" theme. Our soldiers were of so many different nationalistic extractions and they had been thrown together for so short a time, that as yet no especial hatred of the enemy had developed.

An illustration of this very subject and also the manner in which our boys got along with the civilian populations of the towns they occupied came to my notice.

A driving rain which filled the valley with mist and made the hills look like mountain tops projecting above the clouds, had resulted in the abandonment of the usual daily drills. The men had spent the day in billets writing letters home, hearing indoor lectures from instructors, playing with the French children in the cottage doorways, or taking lessons in French from the peasant girls, whose eyes were inspirations to the dullest pupils.

I spent several hours in a company commander's quarters while he censored letters which the men had submitted for transmission back home. The Captain looked long at a letter in

his hand, smiled and called for his orderly.

"Tell Private Blank I want to see him here right away," were the Captain's instructions. Blank's name was not quite so German as Sourkraut, but it had a "berger" ending that was reminiscent of beer, pretzels and wooden shoes.

"Here's a letter written in German," said the Captain to me, referring to the open missive. "It's addressed to somebody by the same name as Blank, and I presume it is to some one in his family. Blank is one of the best men in my company, and I know that the letter is harmless, but it is impossible for me to pass it when written in an enemy language."

The door opened and a tall, blonde enlisted man stepped in, shaking the rain from his hat. He stood at respectful attention, saluted and said:

"Did the Captain wish to see me?"

"Yes, Blank, it is about this letter written in German," the Captain replied. "Who is it addressed to?"

"My father, in Cincinnati, sir," Blank replied.

"I am unfamiliar with German," the Captain said. "I notice the letter is brief. Is there anything in it which the company has been ordered to omit mentioning?"

"No, sir," Blank replied.

"Will you translate it for me?" the Captain asked.

"Yes, sir," said Blank, with just a bare suggestion of a blush. Then he read as follows:

"Dear Father: I am in good health. Food is good and

we are learning much. I am becoming an expert grenadier. In this village where we are billeted there is a French girl named Germain. Before the war she lived in northern France, near the German frontier, and she speaks German. So it is possible for us to talk together. She fled before the German troops reached her village. She lives here now with her aunt.

"I carry water from a well for her and she has given me each day a roll of fresh made butter for our mess. In the evening we sit on the front seat of her uncle's small carriage, which is in the front yard, and we imagine we are taking a drive, but of course there are no horses. Her uncle's horses were taken by the army a long time ago. She is very anxious to know all about America, and I have told her all about you and mother and our home in Cincinnati.

"She asked me what I am going to do after the war, and I told her that I would return to Cincinnati to help you at the store. She cried because she said she did not know where she was going after the war. Her father and two brothers have been killed and her aunt and uncle are very old.

"I have some more to write to you about Germain later. But must stop here because the Sergeants are assembling the men for indoor instruction. Love to all. It is raining very hard. Your son, – "

Blank's face seemed to redden as he hesitated over a postscript line at the bottom of the page.

"This is nothing," he said. "I just asked father to ask mother to send me one of the photographs I had taken on the day I enlisted."

"For Germain?" the Captain enquired, smilingly.

"Yes, sir," replied Blank.

"Why didn't you write this in English?" the Captain asked.

"My father reads only German," Blank replied.

Blank was instructed to rewrite his letter in English and address it to some friend who could translate it into German for his father. As the door closed on this American soldier of German extraction, I asked the Captain, "Do you think Germain could stand for Blank's German name, after all she has lost at the hands of the Germans?"

"She'll probably be wearing it proudly around Cincinnati within a year after the war is over," the Captain replied.

It might be reassuring at this point to remark that girls in America really have no occasion to fear that many of our soldiers will leave their hearts in France. The French women are kind to them, help them in their French lessons, and frequently feed them with home delicacies unknown to the company mess stoves, but every American soldier overseas seems to have that perfectly natural hankering to come back to the girls he left behind.

The soldier mail addressed daily to mothers and sweethearts back in the States ran far into the tons. The men were really homesick for their American women folks. I was aware of this even before I witnessed the reception given by our men to the first American nurses to reach the other side.

The hospital unit to which they belonged had been transported into that training area so quickly and so secretly that its presence

there was unknown for some time. I happened to locate it by chance.

Several of us correspondents seeking a change of diet from the monotonous menu provided by the hard-working madam of our modest hostelry, motored in a new direction, over roads that opened new vistas in this picture book of the world.

Long straight avenues of towering trees whose foliage roofed the roadways were sufficient to reanimate recollections of old masters of brush realism. Ploughed fields veiled with the low-hanging mist of evening time, and distant steeples of homely simplicity faintly glazed by the last rays of the setting sun, reproduced the tones of "The Angelus" with the over-generous hugeness of nature.

And there in that prettiest of French watering places – Vittel – we came upon those first American nurses attached to the American Expeditionary Forces. They told us that all they knew was the name of the place they were in, that they were without maps and were not even aware of what part of France they were located in.

It developed that the unit's motor transportation had not arrived and, other automobiles being as scarce as German flags, communication with the nearby camps had been almost non-existent. Orders had been received from field headquarters and acknowledged, but its relation in distance or direction to their whereabouts were shrouded in mystery. But not for long.

Soon the word spread through the training area that American

nurses had a hospital in the same zone and some of the homesick Yanks began to make threats of self-mutilation in order that they might be sent to that hospital.

The hospital unit was soon followed by the arrival of numerous American auxiliary organisations and the kindly activities of the workers as well as their numbers became such as to cause the men to wonder what kind of a war they were in.

I happened to meet an old top sergeant of the regular army, a man I had known in Mexico, with the American Punitive Expedition. He had just received a large bundle of newspapers from home and he was bringing himself up-to-date on the news. I asked him what was happening back home.

"Great things are going on in the States," he said, looking up from his papers. "Here's one story in the newspaper that says the Y. M. C. A. is sending over five hundred secretaries to tell us jokes and funny stories. And here's another account about the Red Cross donating half a million dollars to build recreation booths for us along the front. And here's a story about a New York actor getting a committee of entertainers together to come over and sing and dance for us. And down in Philadelphia they're talking about collecting a million dollars to build tabernacles along the front so's Billy Sunday can preach to us. What I'm wondering about is, when in hell they're going to send the army over."

But that was in the early fall of 1917, and as I write these lines now, in the last days of 1918, I am aware and so is the world,

that in all of France nobody will ever ask that question again.

That army got there.

CHAPTER V
MAKING THE MEN WHO MAN THE GUNS

While our infantry perfected their training in the Vosges, the first American artillery in France undertook a schedule of studies in an old French artillery post located near the Swiss frontier. This place is called Valdahon, and for scores of years had been one of the training places for French artillery. But during the third and fourth years of the war nearly all of the French artillery units being on the front, all subsequent drafts of French artillerymen received their training under actual war conditions.

So it was that the French war department turned over to the Americans this artillery training ground which had been long vacant. Three American artillery regiments, the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh, comprising the first U. S. Artillery Brigade, began training at this post.

The barracks had been long unoccupied and much preparatory work was necessary before our artillerymen could move in. Much of this work devolved upon the shoulders of the Brigade Quartermaster.

The first difficulty that he encountered was the matter of illumination for the barracks, mess halls and lecture rooms.

All of the buildings were wired, but there was no current. The Quartermaster began an investigation and this was what he found:

The post had been supplied with electricity from a generating plant located on a river about ten miles away. This plant had supplied electrical energy for fifteen small French towns located in the vicinity. The plant was owned and operated by a Frenchman, who was about forty years old. The French Government, realising the necessity for illumination, had exempted this man from military service, so that he remained at his plant and kept the same in operation for the benefit of the camp at Valdahon and the fifteen small towns nearby.

Then the gossips of the countryside got busy. These people began to say that Monsieur X, the operator of the plant, was not patriotic, in other words, that he was a slacker for not being at the front when all of their menfolk had been sent away to the war.

Now it so happened that Monsieur X was not a slacker, and his inclination had always been to get into the fight with the Germans, but the Government had represented to him that it was his greater duty to remain and keep his plant in operation to provide light for the countryside.

When the talk of the countryside reached Monsieur X's ears, he being a country-loving Frenchman was infuriated. He denounced the gossips as being unappreciative of the great sacrifice he had been making for their benefit, and, to make them realise it, he decided on penalising them.

Monsieur X simply closed down his plant, locked and barred the doors and windows, donned his French uniform and went away to the front to join his old regiment. That night those villagers in the fifteen nearby towns, who had been using electrical illumination, went to bed in the dark.

It required considerable research on the part of the Artillery Quartermaster to reveal all these facts. The electric lights had been unused for fifteen months when he arrived there, and he started to see what he could do to put the plant back to work. It required nothing less finally than a special action by the French Minister of War whereby orders were received by Monsieur X commanding him to leave his regiment at the front and go back to his plant by the riverside and start making electricity again.

With the lights on and water piped in for bathing facilities, and extensive arrangements made for the instalment of stoves and other heating apparatus, the purchase of wood fuel and fodder for the animals, the Brigade moved in and occupied the camp.

The American officer in command of that post went there as a Brigadier General. As I observed him at his work in those early days, I seemed to see in his appearance and disposition some of the characteristics of a Grant. He wore a stubby-pointed beard and he clamped his teeth tight on the butt end of a cigar. I saw him frequently wearing the $11.50 regulation issue uniform of the enlisted men. I saw him frequently in rubber boots standing hip deep in the mud of the gun pits, talking to the men like a father – a kindly, yet stern father who knew how to produce

discipline and results.

While at the post, he won promotion to a Major General's rank, and in less than six months he was elevated to the grade of a full General and was given the highest ranking military post in the United States. That man who trained our first artillerymen in France was General Peyton C. March, Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

Finding the right man for the right place was one of General March's hobbies. He believed in military mobilisation based on occupational qualifications. In other words, he believed that a man who had been a telephone operator in civilian life would make a better telephone operator in the army than he would make a gunner.

I was not surprised to find that this same worthy idea had permeated in a more or less similar form down to the lowest ranks in General March's command at that time. I encountered it one cold night in October, when I was sitting in one of the barrack rooms talking with a man in the ranks.

That man's name was Budd English. I met him first in Mexico on the American Punitive Expedition, where he had driven an automobile for Damon Runyon, a fellow correspondent. English, with his quaint Southwestern wit, had become in Mexico a welcome occupant of the large pyramidal tent which housed the correspondents attached to the Expedition. We would sit for hours hearing him tell his stories of the plains and the deserts of Chihuahua.

English and I were sitting on his bed at one corner of the barrack room, rows of cots ranged each side of the wall and on these were the snoring men of the battery. The room was dimly illuminated by a candle on a shelf over English's head and another candle located on another shelf in the opposite corner of the room. There was a man in bed in a corner reading a newspaper by the feeble rays of the candle.

Suddenly we heard him growl and tear the page of the newspaper in half. His exclamation attracted my attention and I looked his way. His hair was closely cropped and his head, particularly his ears and forehead, and jaw, stamped him as a rough and ready fighter.

"That's Kid Ferguson, the pug," English whispered to me, and then in louder tones, he enquired, "What's eating on you, kid?"

"Aw, this bunk in the paper," replied Ferguson. Then he glared at me and enquired, "Did you write this stuff?"

"What stuff?" I replied. "Read it out."

Ferguson picked up the paper and began to read in mocking tones something that went as follows:

"Isn't it beautiful in the cold early dawn in France, to see our dear American soldiers get up from their bunks and go whistling down to the stables to take care of their beloved animals."

English laughed uproariously.

"The Kid don't like horses no more than I do," he said. "Neither one of us have got any use for them at all. And here, that's all they keep us doing, is tending horses. I went down there

the other morning with a lantern and one of them long-eared babies just kicked it clean out of my hand. The other morning one of them planted two hoofs right on Ferguson's chest and knocked him clear out of the stable. It broke his watch and his girl's picture.

"You know, Mr. Gibbons, I never did have any use for horses. When I was about eight years old a horse bit me. When I was about fifteen years old I got run over by an ice-wagon. Horses is just been the ruination of me.

"If it hadn't been for them I might have gone through college and been an officer in this here army. You remember that great big dairy out on the edge of the town in El Paso? Well, my dad owned that and he lost all of it on the ponies in Juarez. I just hate horses.

"I know everything there is to know about an automobile. I have driven cross country automobile races and after we come out of Mexico, after we didn't get Villa, I went to work in the army machine shops at Fort Bliss and took down all them motor trucks and built them all over again.

"When Uncle Sam got into the war against Germany, this here Artillery Battalion was stationed out at Fort Bliss, and I went to see the Major about enlisting, but I told him I didn't want to have nothing to do with no horses.

"And he says, 'English, don't you bother about that. You join up with this here battalion, because when we leave for France we're going to kiss good-bye to them horses forever. This here

battalion is going to be motorised.'

"And now here we are in France, and we still got horses, and they don't like me and I don't like them, and yet I got to mill around with 'em every day. The Germans ain't never going to kill me. They ain't going to get a chance. They just going to find me trampled to death some morning down in that stable."

Two or three of the occupants of nearby beds had arisen and taken seats on English's bed. They joined the conversation. One red-headed youngster, wearing heavy flannel underwear in lieu of pajamas, made the first contribution to the discussion.

"That's just what I'm beefing about," he said. "Here I've been in this army two months now and I'm still a private. There ain't no chance here for a guy that's got experience."

"Experience? Where do you get that experience talk?" demanded English. "What do you know about artillery?"

"That's just what I mean, experience," the red-headed one replied with fire. "I got experience. Mr. Gibbons knows me. I'm from Chicago, the same as he is. I worked in Chicago at Riverview Park. I'm the guy that fired the gattling gun in the Monitor and Merrimac show – we had two shows a day and two shows in the evening and – "

"Kin you beat that," demanded English. "You know, if this here red-headed guy don't get promotion pretty quick, he's just simply going to quit this army and leave us flat here in France facing the Germans.

"Let me tell you about this gattling gun expert. When they

landed us off of them boats down on the coast, the battalion commander turned us all loose for a swim in the bay, and this here bird almost drowned. He went down three times before we could pull him out.

"Now, if they don't make him a Brigadier General pretty quick, he's going to get sore and put in for a transfer to the Navy on the grounds of having submarine experience. But he's right in one thing – experience don't count for what it should in the army.

"Right here in our battery we got a lot of plough boys from Kansas that have been sitting on a plough and looking at a horse's back all their lives, and they got them handling the machinery on these here guns. And me, who knows everything there is to know about machinery, they won't let me even find out which end of the cannon you put the shell in and which end it comes out of. All I do all day long is to prod around a couple of fat-hipped hayburners. My God, I hate horses."

But regardless of these inconveniences those first American artillerymen in our overseas forces applied themselves strenuously to their studies. They were there primarily to learn. It became necessary for them at first to make themselves forget a lot of things that they had previously learned by artillery and adapt themselves to new methods and instruments of war.

Did you ever hear of "Swansant, Kansas"? You probably won't find it on any train schedule in the Sunflower State; in fact, it isn't a place at all. It is the name of the light field cannon that France provided our men for use against the German line.

"Swansant, Kansas" is phonetic spelling of the name as pronounced by American gunners. The French got the same effect in pronunciation by spelling the singular "soixante quinze," but a Yankee cannoneer trying to pronounce it from that orthography was forced to call it a "quince," and that was something which it distinctly was not.

One way or the other it meant the "Seventy-fives" – the "Admirable Seventy-five" – the seventy-five millimetre field pieces that stopped the Germans' Paris drive at the Marne – the same that gave Little Willie a headache at Verdun, – the inimitable, rapid firing, target hugging, hell raising, shell spitting engine of destruction whose secret of recoil remained a secret after almost twenty years and whose dependability was a French proverb.

At Valdahon where American artillery became acquainted with the Seventy-five, the khaki-clad gun crews called her "some cannon." At seven o'clock every morning, the glass windows in my room at the post would rattle with her opening barks, and from that minute on until noon the Seventy-fives, battery upon battery of them, would snap and bark away until their seemingly ceaseless fire becomes a volley of sharp cracks which sent the echoes chasing one another through the dark recesses of the forests that conceal them.

The targets, of course, were unseen. Range elevation, deflection, all came to the battery over the signal wires that connected the firing position with some observation point also

unseen but located in a position commanding the terrain under fire.

A signalman sat cross-legged on the ground back of each battery. He received the firing directions from the transmitter clamped to his ears and conveyed them to the firing executive who stood beside him. They were then megaphoned to the sergeants chief of sections.

The corporal gunner, with eye on the sighting instruments at the side of each gun, "laid the piece" for range and deflection. Number one man of the crew opened the block to receive the shell, which was inserted by number two. Number three adjusted the fuse-setter, and cut the fuses. Numbers four and five screwed the fuses in the shells and kept the fuse-setter loaded.

The section chiefs, watch in hand, gave the firing command to the gun crews, and number one of each piece jerked the firing lanyard at ten second intervals or whatever interval the command might call for. The four guns would discharge their projectiles. They whined over the damp wooded ridge to distant imaginary lines of trenches, theoretical cross-roads, or designated sections where the enemy was supposed to be massing for attack. Round after round would follow, while telephoned corrections perfected the range, and burst. The course of each shell was closely observed as well as its bursting effect, but no stupendous records were kept of the individual shots. That was "peace time stuff."

These batteries and regiments were learning gunnery and no scarcity of shells was permitted to interfere with their education.

One officer told me that it was his opinion that one brigade firing at this schooling post during a course of six weeks, had expended more ammunition than all of the field artillery of the United States Army has fired during the entire period since the Civil War. The Seventy-five shells cost approximately ten dollars apiece, but neither the French nor American artillery directors felt that a penny's worth was being wasted. They said cannon firing could not be learned entirely out of a book.

I had talked with a French instructor, a Yale graduate, who had been two years with the guns at the front, and I had asked him what in his opinion was the most disconcerting thing that could happen to effect the morale of new gunners under actual fire. I wanted some idea of what might be expected of American artillerymen when they made their initial appearance on the line.

We discussed the effect of counter battery fire, the effect on gun crews of asphyxiating gas, either that carried on the wind from the enemy trenches or that sent over in gas shells. We considered the demoralising influences of aerial attacks on gun positions behind the line.

"They are all bad," my informant concluded. "But they are expected. Men can stand without complaint and without qualm any danger that is directed at them by the foe they are fighting. The thing that really bothers, though, is the danger of death or injury from their own weapons or ammunition. You see, many times there is such a thing as a faulty shell, although careful inspection in the munitions plants has reduced this danger to a

percentage of about one in ten thousand.

"At the beginning of the war when every little tin shop all over the world was converted into a munitions factory to supply the great need of shells, much faulty ammunition reached the front lines. Some of the shells would explode almost as soon as they left the gun. They are called shorts. The English, who had the same trouble, call them 'muzzle bursts.'

"Sometimes the shell would explode in the bore of the cannon, in which case the cannoneers were usually killed either by pieces of the shell itself or bits of the cannon. The gunners have to sit beside the cannon when it is fired, and the rest of the gun crew are all within eight feet of it. If there is an explosion in the breech of the gun, it usually wipes out most of the crew. A muzzle burst, or a breech explosion, is one of the most disconcerting things that could happen in a battery.

"The other men in the battery know of course that a faulty shell caused the explosion. They also know that they are firing ammunition from the same lot. After that, as they pull the trigger on each shot, they don't know whether the shell is going out of the gun all right or whether it is going to explode in the breech and kill all of them. That thought in a man's mind when he pulls the firing lanyard, that thought in the minds of the whole crew as they stand there waiting for the crash, is positively demoralising.

"When it happens in our French artillery the cannoneers lose confidence in their pieces. They build small individual dugouts a safe ways back from the gun and extend the lanyard a safe

distance. Then, with all the gun crew under cover, they fire the piece. This naturally removes them from their regular firing positions beside the pieces, reduces the accuracy and slows up the entire action of the battery. The men's suspicions of the shells combined with the fear of death by their own weapons, which is greater than any fear of death at the hands of the enemy, all reduce the morale of the gun crews."

Now, for an incident. A new shipment of ammunition had reached the post. The caissons were filled with it. Early the following morning when the guns rumbled out of camp to the practice grounds, Battery X was firing in the open. At the third shot the shell from piece number two exploded prematurely thirty yards from the muzzle. Pieces three and four fired ten and twenty seconds later with every man standing on his toes in his prescribed position.

Ten rounds later, a shell from number three gun exploded thirty feet after leaving the bore. Shell particles buried themselves in the ground near the battery. Piece number four, right next to it, was due to fire in ten seconds. It discharged its projectiles on the dot. The gun crews knew what they were up against. They were firing faulty ammunition. They passed whispered remarks but reloaded with more of the same ammunition and with military precision on the immediate command. Every man stuck to his position. As each gun was fired the immediate possibilities were not difficult to imagine.

Then it happened.

"Commence firing," megaphoned the firing executive. The section chief of number one piece dropped his right hand as the signal for the discharge. The corporal gunner was sitting on the metal seat in front of his instruments and not ten inches to the left of the breech. Cannoneer number one of the gun crew occupied his prescribed position in the same location to the immediate right of the breech. Gunner number two was standing six feet behind the breech and slightly to the left ready to receive the ejected cartridge case. Gunner number three was kneeling over the fuse setter behind the caisson which stood wheel to wheel with the gun carriage. Gunners four and five were rigid statues three feet back of him. Every man in the crew had seen the previous bursts of dangerous ammunition.

Number one's eye caught the descending hand of the section chief. He pulled the lanyard.

There was an eruption of orange coloured flame, a deafening roar, a crash of rendered steel, a cloud of smoke blue green, and yellow.

A black chunk of the gun cradle hurtled backward through the air with a vicious swish. A piece of the bore splintered the wheels and buried itself in the ammunition caisson. Thick hunks of gun metal crumbling like dry cake filled the air. The ground shook.

The corporal gunner pitched backward from his seat and collapsed on the ground. His mate with fists buried in his steel seared eyes staggered out of the choking fumes. The rest of the crew picked themselves up in a dazed condition. Fifty yards away

a horse was struggling to regain his feet.

Every man in the three other gun crews knew what had happened. None of them moved from their posts. They knew their guns were loaded with shells from the same lot and possibly with the same faults. No man knew what would happen when the next firing pin went home. The evidence was before them. Their eyes were on the exploded gun but not for long.

"Crash," the ten second firing interval had expired. The section chief of piece number two had dropped his hand. The second gun in the battery had fired.

"Number two on the way," sang out the signalman over the telephone wire to the hidden observation station.

Ten seconds more for another gun crew to cogitate on whether disaster hung on the dart of a firing pin.

"Crash."

"Number three on the way."

Another ten seconds for the last section to wonder whether death would come with the lanyard jerk.

"Crash."

"Number four on the way." Round complete. The signalman finished his telephone report.

Four horses drawing an army ambulance galloped up from the ravine that sheltered them. The corporal gunner, unconscious and with one leg pulverised was lifted in. Two other dazed members of the crew were helped into the vehicle. One was bleeding from the shoulder. The lead horses swung about; the ambulance rattled

away.

"Battery ready to fire. Piece number one out of action." It was the signalman reporting over the wire to the observer.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.