

Case Carleton Britton

Funny Stories Told by the Soldiers



Carleton Case

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Carleton B. Case
Funny Stories Told by the Soldiers / Pranks,
Jokes and Laughable Affairs of Our
Boys and Their Allies in the Great War

PREFACE

Now that the dread of awful war has passed with the coming of welcome peace, we can turn our minds with renewed cheerfulness to the merry side of the great world's conflict and enjoy with our boys the funny things they saw and did and said while "over there."

The comedy side of the war has been quickly seen and readily interpreted by the world's great writers, as well as by the very officers and men, in all departments of the service, who themselves participated in both the serious and the frivolous affairs of warfare as developed day by day.

It is the humorous experiences of which these warriors and writers have told us in speech and print that we have sought to gather into one volume for the edification and delectation of a humor-loving public. Enough and too much has been told of the horrors of war. To hear the pleasanter side, the merry doings of our soldiers and their allies, the victorious hosts of freedom, is a welcome relief to war-weary hearts, freed now, and forever, from the dire dread of the awfulness of modern slaughter.

So this collection of funny stories has come into being; its mission to cheer us all with the merry tales told by and about our conquering soldiers.

SECRETARY BAKER TELLS A GOOD ONE

“The neat and even elegant appearance of the American soldier isn’t maintained,” said War Secretary Baker in an address, “without hard work. Yes, the work is hard, but doesn’t the result more than justify it?”

“On the train the other day a private sat with his tunic unbuttoned, for the temperature was high. A sergeant strode up to him and said:

“Button up that tunic! Did you never hear of by-law 217, subsection D? I’m Sergeant Jabez Winterbottom!”

“A gentleman in the seat behind tapped the sergeant sternly on the shoulder.

“How dare you issue orders with a pipe in your mouth?” he asked. ‘Go home and read paragraph 174, section M, part IX. I am Major Eustace Carroll.’

“Here a gentleman with a drooping white mustache interposed from the other side of the aisle:

“If Major Carroll,’ he said coldly, ‘will consult by-law 31 of section K, he will learn that to reprimand a sergeant in the presence of a private is an offense not lightly to be overlooked.’”

THEN HE GRABBED THE PAIL

A woman, one of the 30,000 British working for the Y. M. C. A., was assigned to scrub the Eagle hut floor in London. She had done little manual labor in her life, but accepted the job without protest and went down on her knees with a pail of hot water, a cloth, and a cake of soap. Soon the water in the pail was black. A man in uniform passed. The woman looked up and asked if he would mind emptying the pail and refilling it with clean water.

There was a pause, then his reply:

“Dammit, madam, I’m an officer!”

This time there was no pause, but like a flash the scrubwoman retorted:

“Dammit, officer, I’m a duchess!”

CALLING THE GENERAL DOWN

When General O’Neill, of Allentown, first went to Spartanburg, S. C., his train was three hours late. The negro escort appointed to receive him at the station had been dismissed. The general walked. Presently he was accosted by a sentry.

“Who is you?”

“General O’Neill.”

“Well, you cut the buck and go up there to headquarters to beat de debbil and see my captain and explain yosself. We’s been waitin’ three hours fer you.”

DID SHE SAVE DOC ONE?

In the field hospital:

Doctor – Save me a sample of everything your patient takes.

Nurse – He took a kiss this morning.

WANTED TO KILL THE COOKS

A young Canadian officer, who had lived for years in China, was deputed to take to France for service behind the lines a company of Chinese coolies. On the ocean voyage over, which was a turbulent one, a row developed between the coolies and the Cantonese cooks, and the coolies decided to kill the cooks. Hearing of it the Canadian called in several of the coolies and told them if they killed the cooks they would have nothing to eat until they reached France.

“What’s the matter?” asked the Canadian of the coolie ringleader. “Isn’t the food good?” Yes, the food was good.

“Isn’t there enough food?”

Yes, there was plenty of food.

“Isn’t it well cooked?”

Yes, it was well cooked.

“Well, then, what the devil is the matter? Why do you want to kill the cooks?”

“Well,” replied the coolie, “we don’t know exactly why, but somehow or other the food won’t stay down.”

YOU CAN'T BEAT THE IRISH

An elderly Colonel, about to retire, was holding “officer hours” for the last time and four old offenders were brought in for punishment.

The Colonel looked them over wearily, and then said:

“I’ve been listening to the yarns and excuses you men have concocted for the past three years and I’m tired of them all. If any of you can think of something new, I’ll let you off without punishment. If you can’t, I’ll give you the limit.”

“I took just one drink, and it made me ill, Colonel,” began the first.

“Old stuff,” said the Colonel.

The second offenders alarm-clock had failed to work, and the third offender had bad news from home. There was nothing new in this, and each was given the limit.

However, the Colonel’s eyes brightened at the approach of the fourth culprit, an Irishman.

“Be original, Duffy. Tell me something new,” urged the Colonel.

“Well, Colonel,” Duffy began, with his eyes a-twinkle, “when Oi heard the sad news that you was goin’ to l’ave us, it made me so down-hearted that Oi went to the nearest public house and drowned me sorrows.”

“You win!” exploded the Colonel. “Now get out!”

ASK SOMEONE FROM MISSOURI

A long and patient but vain effort on the part of a khaki-clad driver to induce a mule, drawing what appeared to be a load of laundry, through the gateway of a local hospital, afforded considerable amusement to the doughboys who were watching the proceedings. The mule would do anything but pass through the gateway.

“Want any ’elp, chum?” shouted one of the boys to the driver, as he rested a moment.

“No,” replied the driver, “but I’d like to know how the devil Noah got two of these blighters into the Ark!”

CLARK STREET ENGLISH

American tourists who are shaky as to their French have often been embarrassed by the voluble replies which their carefully studied phrases bring forth from French lips. Just now the tables are frequently turned, and the Frenchman or woman is puzzled by the fluent American vernacular. An example:

Yankee Trooper – “Parly-voe English, mademoiselle?”

French Maid – “Yes, a vairl leetle.”

Yankee Trooper – “Good work! Say, could you put me wise where I could line up against some good eats in this burg?”

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

Captain (sharply) – “Button up that coat.”

Married Recruit (absently) – “Yes, my dear.”

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A BELGIAN DOORYARD

The Crown Prince mourns the passing of “The Day,”
“The low-down herd winds back to Germany.
“The loot-squad homeward plods its swagless way,
“And leaves the world to Peace and Victory.

“Now fades the glimmering Weltmacht on the sight,
“And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
“Save where the Kaiser wheels his bonehead flight,
“And frowsy princelings streak for distant folds.

“Save that from Nauen’s undismantled tower
“The moping Hun does to the Yanks complain
“Of such as, having tasted of his power,
“Decline to load him up with grub again.

“Beneath those powdered walls, that abri’s shade,
“Where blasted dug-outs hide a mouldering heap,
“Each in his nameless hole forever laid,
“The Kultur-spreaders of the Rhineland sleep.

“For them no more the Louvain fires shall burn,
“Or strafing Zepp’lins ply their evening care;
“No Yank machine-guns shall their fire return,
“Or Anzac bayonets drive them from their lair.

“Oft did the poilu sweep them from the field,
“Their line full oft the stubborn English broke:
“How frantic did they to the doughboys yield!
“How bowed their ranks to Foch’s giant stroke!

“Now let Derision mock their fiendish toil,
“Their swinish joys, and destiny obscure;
“Let ransomed Europe, with a peaceful smile,
“Collect her war-debts from the vanquished boor.

– *James Pontifex, in The Chicago Tribune.*

WHEN PRESIDENT WILSON LAUGHED

No doughboy in the charming Champs Elysees theater, Paris, laughed harder than President Wilson when the “Argonne players” put all officers on the gridiron. It was Broadway’s own 77th division that presented a snappy bill before the dignified peace commissioners with the exception of Col. House, who was ill. The play was entitled “Annex Revue, 1918.”

Here are some of the sallies at which Mr. Wilson laughed:

“If they don’t send me home soon I’ll be so full of service stripes that I’ll look like a zebra.”

“I don’t mind if they miss me over there, just so the Germans miss me over here.”

“Paris girls – take it from me – they take it from you. One girl took my identification tag. She thought it was a franc.”

“By the time you pay your insurance and allotment you owe yourself money.”

The division’s song, “They Didn’t Think We’d Do It, but We Did,” will soon be heard on Broadway.

BEEF, MILK AND BEER

A cow strayed one day between the German and the English trenches. Both sides coveted the cow for its milk and meat, but it was sure death to go out and get the cow. So the English threw a note wrapped around a stone into the German trenches: “You throw a mark in the air, we will shoot at it. If we hit it, it is our cow. If we miss, we will throw a shilling in the air. If you hit it, the cow is yours.” In a few moments a sign was lifted over the German trenches reading “O. K.,” and a mark shone in the air. But Tommy missed. Then a shilling flashed and Fritz missed. Five marks and five shillings flashed in the air and all were missed. Finally the sixth mark flashed and Tommy “scored.” Up came a sign from the German trenches: “Cow is yours, but we want our marks.” So Tommy went out, picked up the shillings and marks and carried the marks over to the German trenches. “Good shot,” came from a Teuton. “Here is some beer for you,” and out came six bottles of beer, which Tommy took over to the English lines – with the cow!

TOO BAD SHE HADN'T MORE SONS

Two men riding in a street car were talking about the war. "Well, how much longer do you think this thing will last?" asked one of the men of his friend. "Pretty hard to tell," was the answer. "But as for me it can go right on for years. I'm making big money out of it all right." And he looked it!

A well-dressed middle-aged woman sat next to the man who had just spoken and, as he finished his speech, she took off her gloves, stood up and hit the man a stinging blow across his face. "That is for my boy in France," she said; and before he could recover she hit him another one, and added: "And that is for my other boy who is about to sail."

Then she sat down, while the red-faced man looked about at a carful of people whose approving glances of the woman's act led him to feel that he had better leave the car. —*Ladies' Home Journal*.

WHY HE GOT THIRTY DAYS

Everything was ready for kit inspection; the recruits stood lined up ready for the officer, and the officer had his bad temper all complete. He marched up and down the line, grimly eyeing each man's bundle of needles and soft soap, and then he singled out Private MacTootle as the man who was to receive his attentions.

“Tooth-brush?” he roared.

“Yes, sir.”

“Razor?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Hold-all?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Hm! You're all right, apparently,” growled the officer. Then he barked:

“Housewife?”

“Oh, very well, thank you,” said the recruit amiably. “How's yours?”

TIME TO SWEAR OFF

A British officer who was inspecting the line in Flanders came across a raw-looking yeoman.

“What are you here for?” asked the officer.

“To report anything unusual, sir.”

“What would you call unusual? What would you do if you saw five battle cruisers steaming across the field?”

“Take the pledge, sir.”

THE CHOCOLATE SOLDIERS

A negro drill sergeant was addressing a squad of colored “rookies” under him. He said: “I wants you niggers to understan’ dat you is to car’y out all o’ders giben on de risin’ reflection ob de final word ob comman’. Now when we’s passin’ dat reviewin’ stan’, at de comman’ ‘Eyes Right!’ I wants to hear ever’ nigger’s eyeballs click.”

NO FOOTSTEPS IN THE AIR

Dear Old Lady – “I suppose you’ll follow in your father’s footsteps when you grow up?”
“I can’t; he’s an airman.”

CHICKEN FEED ON BROADWAY

The very prosperous-looking gentleman stopped and permitted the very pretty girl to fasten a carnation in his buttonhole. Then he handed her a quarter.

“What is this for?” he asked.

“You have fed a Belgian baby,” was the reply.

“Nonsense,” said the other, adding a \$5 bill to his contribution, “you can’t do it. Here, take this, and buy a regular meal for the baby.”

THIS WAS IN ENGLAND

Binks – “Ah, what a loss I have suffered in the death of my mother-in-law!”

Jinks – “She meant a good deal to you?”

Binks – “Yes; she was a vegetarian, and gave us her meat-card.”

VERY LADYLIKE

This story is from London: A young woman in khaki uniform and cap met a Scotch kilty. She saluted. He curtsied.

HE DROPS INTO POETRY

Frank Proudfoot Jarvis has been at the Front with the First Canadian Mounted Rifles for three years, and his sense of humor and the joy of life still survive. In a letter dated, “Somewhere in Mud, 17th of Ireland,” he writes to his brother, Paul Jarvis, of New York:

“Dear Old Top:

“I had expected to be in gay (?) Paree on furlough at this time, swinging down the Boys de Belogne with girls de Belogne on each arm, but this is postponed till April. The papers say that von Hindy has ordered dinner for himself and the Crown Prince on April Fools’ day, and, if we meet, there will be a sound of deviltry by night and a Waterloo that will cause the princelet to wireless his dad:

“Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, we’re ”soaked“ again.”

“However that may be, here I am sitting in a shed, with a sheepskin over my shoulders, looking like a lady – but not smelling like one. Fritz is acting rather nasty, sending us his R. S. V. P.’s by the air-line, and we reply P. D. Q., and the ‘wake’ is a howling success as the big bulls and the little terriers ‘barcarole.’ And speaking of wakes, I was awake myself the other night in my hut and the Gothas were whirring overhead and Fritz pulling the string every now and then. It was pitch-dark and a big Bertha had just shaken all creation, when I overheard two ‘blimeys’ fanning buckwheat while they hunted a shell-hole.

“Where are yer, Bill?” asked one.

“I’m ’ere,” says Bill.

“Where’s ’ere?” says his pal.

“Ow the blinkin’ ’ell do I know where ’ere is?” says Bill.

“Just then Fritz put one alongside of my hut and snuffed out all the candles, but thanks to the good old soft mud – and how we have cussed that mud! – I am writing to you, Old Top, tonight. I expect to be on the hike again in a day or so, I know not where and I do not care. All places look alike to this old kid. They can set me down in a field of mud and inside of forty-eight hours I have got a home fit for a prince, or a ground-hog – sometimes I am living several feet under ground and other times I am living in a tent, a hut, a stable, barn, shed, and, when in luck, in some deserted chateau.”

Jarvis, lying on his back looking up at a twinkling star through a hole in the roof seems to have started a train of verse in his brain, for he writes:

“I got to cogitating about a lot of things, and for the first time in my life I found rimes running through what I am pleased to call my mind. So, I lighted my dip and jotted down the enclosed doggerel. They say it is a bad sign when a man starts to write poetry, but I don’t for a moment think anyone would call this by that name or that I shall even be acclaimed a *Backyard* Kipling. Besides, as I flourish under the sobriquet ‘Bully Beef,’ owing to my major-general proportions, I am certainly no Longfellow. But here it is, such as it is:

WHERE DO I SLEEP NEXT?

I've slept in cradles,
I've slept in arms,
I was a baby then —
Unconscious of war's alarms.

I've slept on the prairie
Shooting the duck and the goose,
I've slept in the bush
Hunting the elk and the moose.

I've slept on steamboats
With my bed on the deck,
And I've slept in church
With a kink in my neck.

I've slept in fields,
Under the stars,
And I've slept on trains
In old box cars.

I've slept in beds
Of purple and gold,
I've slept out in Flanders
In the mud and the cold.

I've slept in dugouts
With the rat and the louse,
And I've slept in France
In a fairly good house.

I've slept in barns
On beds of straw,
I've slept in sheds
Wi nae bed at a'.

I'm sleeping now
On a stretcher of wire,
And I pray my last sleep
Will be near a fire.

I'm tired of the wet,
The mud, and the cold,
And I won't be sorry
When I sleep in the Fold.

*“Taps, ’ Bon swear,
”As usual,
“Humblehoof.”*

THIS PLEASED THE COLONEL

The sergeant halted the new sentry opposite the man he was to relieve.

“Give over your orders,” he said.

The old sentry reeled off the routine instructions with confidence, but one of the special orders baffled him.

“Come on, man!” said the sergeant impatiently.

“On no account,” stammered the sentry, “are you to let any questionable character pass the lines, except the colonel’s wife.”

DID THE CHAPLAIN SWEAR?

Recently, during the operations of the British Egyptian expeditionary force in Palestine, a town to the south of Beersheba was captured, and in it was discovered a splendid example of mosaic pavement.

The excavation of it was placed in charge of a chaplain, and while the work was proceeding some human bones were discovered.

Elated at the find, the padre immediately wired to great headquarters, saying:

“Have found the bones of saint.”

Shortly after the reply came back:

“Unable to trace Saint in casualty list. Obtain particulars of regimental number and regiment from his identity disk.”

ONE SWEET KISS LOST

Before introducing Lieutenant de Tassan, aid to General Joffre, and Colonel Fabry, the “Blue Devil of France,” Chairman Spencer, of the St. Louis entertainment committee, at the M. A. A. breakfast told this anecdote:

“In Washington Lieutenant de Tassan was approached by a pretty American girl, who said:

“And did you kill a German soldier?”

“Yes,’ he replied.

“With what hand did you do it?’ she inquired.

“With this right hand,’ he said.

“And then the pretty American girl seized his right hand and kissed it. Colonel Fabry stood near by. He strode over and said to Lieutenant de Tassan:

“Heavens, man, why didn’t you tell the young lady you bit him to death?”

A COINCIDENCE OF WAR

The commandant of one of the great French army supply depots was busy one morning. He was a man of forty; a colonel in the regular French army. He was talking to an American colonel when an erect, sturdy-looking man with white hair and mustache and who wore the single star of a subaltern on his sleeve came up, saluted, delivered a message and then asked:

“Are there any more orders, sir?”

When he was told that there were none he brought his heels together with a click, saluted again and went away.

The commandant turned to the American with a peculiar smile on his face and asked:

“Do you know who that man is?”

“No,” was the reply.

“That is my father,” was the answer.

The father was then exactly seventy-two years old. He was a retired business man when the war broke out. After two years of the heroic struggle he decided that he couldn't keep out of it. He was too old to fight, but after long insistence he secured a commission. By one of the many curious coincidences of war he was assigned to serve under his son.

GERMAN PAPERS, PLEASE NOTE

The following is posted on the door of a deserted cabin in Coos County, Oregon:
“To whom it may concern:

“There’s potatoes in the wood-shed,
There’s flour in the bin,
There’s beans a-plenty in the cupboard,
To waste them is a sin.
Go to it neighbor if you’re hungry!
Fill up while you’ve a chance,
For I’m going after the Kaiser,
Somewhere over in France.

*“L. A. Johnson,
”Alias, Charley the Trapper.”*

UNANIMOUS

We should like to print this story in letters of gold, says the London Tit-Bits. It is of a colonel on the British front who wanted twenty men to face almost certain death.

He called the whole company together and made the situation clear to them. Then he asked for twenty volunteers to advance one pace. He loved his men, and it was almost more than he could bear. He closed his eyes to keep back his tears, and when he opened them the men stood in exactly the same formation. He was pained.

“Is there not one volunteer?” he asked.

A sergeant stepped forward at salute. “Every one has advanced one pace, sir,” he said.

PA WAS THE GENERAL

The young subaltern, who was a son of a general and never omitted to rub in that fact, was taking a message from the general to the gunners.

“If you please,” he said to the major, “father says will you move your guns.” The major was in an irate mood. “Oh!” he rejoined, “and what the blazes does your mother say?”

TOUGH ON GOMPERS

Kerensky kissed Arthur Henderson, the British labor politician, as the American Labor Mission calls him, and all England gasped. Kerensky is coming to this country. He may want to kiss Secretary Wilson or even President Wilson. This has led an anonymous poet to suggest that the President put his greetings into a song, and to furnish him with the song, as follows:

“Salute me only with thy fist,
And don't attempt to buss me;
The very thought of being kissed
Is quite enough to fuss me.
If you must kiss, try it on Gompers —
He hasn't been kissed since he wore rompers.”

HAD THE RIGHT DOPE

The more things the draft officials do to baseball here the better it flourishes in London, according to Richard Hatteras, of that thriving community, who was recently in New York. Mr. Hatteras says the game is getting a firm hold on every nationality in the British capital.

“Why, recently,” quoth he, “I saw a game in which East Indians were playing. One of these approached the plate at a crucial moment and cried aloud:

“Allah, give thou me strength to make a hit.’

“He struck out.

“The next man up was an Irishman. He spat on the plate, made faces at the pitcher, and yelled:

“You know me, Al! He made a home-run.”

TELL THIS NOT IN BOSTON

An American boy had his first experience in the first line of trenches under fire, and an American woman met him.

“Well, boy,” asked the woman, “what was it like? Pretty awful experience, wasn’t it?”

“Awful?” grinned the Sammee. “Funniest thing you ever saw.”

“Funny?” echoed the woman, amazed. “Why, what in the world do you mean?”

“Those beans! Why – ” and he went off into a gale of laughter. “Of course you don’t know. But cook had made an enormous pot of beans for the boys and, say, they did smell some good. But they were too hot and so cook put them on the edge of the trench to cool off. Just then the Germans let go some shells and one hit that pot square. And it didn’t do anything to those beans. Honestly, ma’am, it simply rained beans for an hour!”

THE MESSAGE WAS SOBER, ANYHOW

General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Sir Douglas Haig's "right-hand man," is rather fond of relating a story concerning a major who, sent to inspect an outlying fort, found the commander intoxicated. He immediately locked him up; but the bibulous one managed to escape, and, making his way to the nearest telegraph office, dispatched the following message to no less a personage than the colonial secretary: "Man here, named – , questions my sobriety. Wire to avert bloodshed."

HE HADN'T FINISHED

They had brought him in very carefully, the husky but femininely gentle stretcher bearers, for he was nothing but a kid after all, with a complexion like a girl's and with pathetically pleading eyes. He was crying in his hospital bed when the correspondent came across him and stopped to investigate.

“Are you in great pain?” the newspaper man sympathetically asked.

The lad looked into the other's eyes and nodded with a choking sob.

“Where does it hurt?” the correspondent pursued.

“It ain't that,” was the reply; “it's because they yanked me out of the scrap when I still had ten rounds left.”

THE OOZING OF THE COONS

Negro Sergeant – “When I say “Bout face!’ you place de toe of yo’ right foot six inches to de reah of de heel of yo’ left foot and jus’ ooze aroun’.”

SHE WAS IN UNIFORM

First Officer (in spasm of jealousy) – “Who’s the knock-kneed chap with your sister, old man?”

Second Officer – “My other sister.”

NO CHALLENGING OUT OF HIS CLASS

Sergeant (surprising sentry) – “Why didn’t you challenge that man who just passed?”

Newest Recruit – “Why, that’s Kayo Hogan, sergeant, and he’s got all o’ ten pounds on me!”

CALLING HIM SISSY?

The Fag – “Oh, I’d go to the war quick enough, but mother wouldn’t like me to; and I’ve never disappointed her since the day I was born.”

The Snag – “Well, if she was hoping for a daughter, I’m sure you’ve done your best to console her.”

HOW DISAPPOINTED HE'LL BE

Scotch Warrior from Palestine (whose baby is about to be christened, and who has a bottle of Jordan water for the purpose) – “Eh, by the way, meenister, I ha’e brocht this bottle – ”
Minister – “No’ the noo, laddie! After the ceremony I’ll be verra pleased!”

AMERICAN HUMOR IN FRANCE

The sense of humor of the American is a joy to the French, who miss this quality sadly in the English. A young French woman was conducting two young American officers around Versailles. When they got in the park the French girl said: "Do you know that the French have a pretty saying, 'The smaller the ivy leaf, the dearer the love?' So I want each one of you to find the tiniest leaf possible and send it to the one that's waiting at home." The men set out, and the first man came back with a perfectly enormous leaf, which he told the girl he had plucked for his mother-in-law! The second officer came back with a leaf even larger and, when asked what loved one was to have that tiny leaf, he said: "Why, this is for the Kaiser!"

SNOBBERY SQUELCHED

On seeing the haughty aristocrat about to disturb a seriously wounded soldier, the Red Cross nurse in charge interposed.

“Excuse me, madam,” she said, “but – ”

She was rudely interrupted by Lady Snobleigh, who cried:

“Woman, you forget yourself. I’m very particular to whom I speak.”

“Oh,” quietly answered the nurse, “that is where we differ. I’m not!”

BLASTED HOPES

“Where is the new recruit?”

“Well, sir, since he went, an hour or two ago, to sew on a button with guncotton, no one seems to have seen anything of him.”

PROFITABLE AUTHORSHIP

The Girl – “And can you manage on your army pay, Phil?”

The “Sub” – “Hardly; but I do a bit of writing besides.”

The Girl – “What kind of writing?”

The “Sub” – “Oh, letters to the gov'nor!”

THE “LONG, LONG TRAIL” OVER THERE

Paris, Nov., 1918. – In the logging camps and sawmills, in barracks and on the drill grounds, in camps and on the march, in “Y” and Red Cross huts, at all hours of the day and night, wherever in France the Yank crusaders were at work, I have heard these lines sung, hummed, and whistled:

“There’s a long, long trail a-winding
Into the land of my dreams,
Where the nightingales are singing
And a white moon beams.
There’s a long, long night of waiting
Until my dreams all come true,
Till the day when I’ll be going down
That long, long trail with you.”

Wherever a piano found its way into the American lines someone was sure to be playing this chorus; and, dodging in and out of a convoy along the rutted and winding hillside roads in the zone of operations, in drizzle and mud and low flung clouds, one was certain to hear some camion load of lusty doughboys going to the “Long Trail.”

But it remained for H. A. Rodeheaver, Billy Sunday’s trombone expert, to put a new touch to it. He put the “longing” into the long trail with a dash of Sundayesqueness that smeared sawdust all over the long trail.

“Rodey,” as the soldiers call him, has been singing his way through the American camps in France and emulating his picturesque master, when opportunity afforded, by laying down a metaphorical “sawdust trail” and inviting the boys to hit it again in their hearts.

It was quite remarkable how many hands went up in every camp and barracks and hut when he asked them how many had attended a Sunday revival back home. Then he started singing the songs they heard at these meetings, usually beginning with “Brighten the Corner Where You Are.”

He has just the quality of voice that got down deep over here, when the night was dark and damp and the dim light but half illuminated the place, and the boys naturally were letting their thoughts fly back home. They warmed up to him, for he’s a good scout, according to their way of thinking, and the first thing they knew he was asking them to call for any song they would like to hear. About the first voice that responded called for the “Long, Long Trail.”

“All right, men,” he said, with a sincere smile, and his magnetic face, beneath the wavy black hair, seemed to exude a hypnotic fascination. He nodded to his pianist and they started. The barracks, or hut, or camp resounded with the “Long Trail.”

“Fine, fine,” beamed Rodey from the rough board platform. “You know, men, that’s a mighty fine piece of music. Let’s sing it again; now, all together,” and the sound swells a little higher this time.

“Once more,” and Rodey waved his arm in lieu of a baton.

The sea of faces brightened perceptibly, even under the dim lights.

“Now, men,” said Rodey, “just sing that chorus over again and I’ll try the trombone.”

That trombone did the business. Rodey gets a sort of combination alto and tenor harmony out of that old trombone that brings the home folks right into the meeting.

“Now, men, once more, very softly,” and he played the harmony plaintively and fetchingly.

He’s got ’em, and the moment has arrived for sprinkling the sawdust.

“Before we go on with our little program, men,” he said, “let us just bow our heads for a minute in prayer and ask God to help us make the good fight, help us to do the work we came over here to do like men.” The men bowed their heads and he added:

“Just before we ask God’s blessing on these brave men, if there is a boy out there who feels that he has not been living quite as he knows his mother would like to have him live, if there is a boy out there who feels in an especial way the need of God’s help at this hour, will he please raise his hand.”

The place was very still. A hand went up way in the back.

“Yes,” Rodey said. “God bless you, boy.”

Then another and another, and soon scores of hands were held up, while they had their heads bowed.

Then Rodey prayed one of those conversational prayers, and he made it a personal appeal for each one of the boys whose hands had gone up.

It was not Rodey’s plan to send the boys back to their barracks with only seriousness and longing in their heads. He’s one of the most adroit handlers of an audience in Europe. He’d got the main idea planted and now he broke into smiles and there was an infectious laugh in his voice.

He was again talking to red-blooded men who were going out to fight. So he told a few corking stories, humorous but clean, and got down to them instead of talking over them. He was one of ’em. He wanted to send them away with a good taste in their mouths.

Dunbar’s “When Melinda Sings” he does to perfection. Once in awhile he pulls the “Hunk o’ Tin” parody on the Kipling poem.

Then they sing some more, both democratic music and old hymns, and finally they all stand up, after he has launched a two-minute patriotic talk that thrills, and sing “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Rodey never has a set program. He sizes up each new audience with a glance and in two minutes knows about what line of entertainment he ought to give them. If it’s a crowd that likes good stories, they get it. If it is a meeting that likes a Bible talk, they get that, and the great Sunday himself hasn’t much on his pupil in that line. But he never lets a crowd get away with a solemn face. He leads them up the hill and down the hill, and finally sends them back to the blankets feeling refreshed, inspired, and cheerful.

And when Rodey hit a camp of Negro troops – man, O man! what he did to them!

He thinks the war has been a holy war, a war of crusaders against the terrible Huns, and wants them beaten to a standstill. He insists on the knockout punch, and believes the world will be a better world for everybody after Fritz and his gang have been completely chastized. – Charles N. Wheeler, in *The Chicago Tribune*.

HIS OWN PERSONAL WAR

General Leonard Wood tells the story of a captain to whom was assigned a new orderly, a fresh recruit. “Your work will be to clean my boots, buttons, belt, and so forth, shave me, see to my horse, which you must groom thoroughly, and clean the equipment. After that you go to your hut, help to serve the breakfast, and after breakfast lend a hand washing up. At eight o’clock you go on parade and drill till twelve o’clock – ”

“Excuse me, sir,” broke in the recruit, “is there anyone else in the army besides me?”

WHEN TOMMY LAUGHS

There are many bright lines in the soldiers' letters home, as *Punch* and other papers note.

“A clergyman recently gave a lecture on ‘Fools’ at the ‘hut’ back of our station,” writes a boy from the Somme. “The tickets of admission were inscribed, ‘Lecture on Fools. Admit one.’ There was a large audience.”

And from Calais comes this:

“You will note with interest and tell the shirkers they’re missing something here. The ‘G’ came off the big sign east of the station here and we now read: ‘The only English love makers in the city.’”

ONE OF THOSE IRISH BULLS

The recruit from Ireland spent his leave in England. Asked on his return to the front what he thought of the place, he said:

“Faith, London is a great city; but it’s no place for a poor man unless he has plenty of money.”

WHEN GERMANY SALUTED A PIG

A Belgian farmer saved his bacon in an unusual way. He heard that the Germans were coming, so he killed and dressed his one pig, cleaned it, put it into his bed with only a part of the underface exposed, and put a lighted candle at each side of the bed. When the Germans arrived an officer entered the house, went into the room, saw what he believed to be a member of the family laid out for burial, saluted and went out!

AND SO IT PROVED

Arthur Train, the novelist, put down a German newspaper at the Century Club, in New York, with an impatient grunt.

“It says here,” he explained, “that it is Germany who will speak the last word in this war.”

Then the novelist laughed angrily and added:

“Yes, Germany will speak the last word in the war, and that last word will be ‘Kamerad!’”

WASHINGTON GETS THESE, TOO

They have some exceptional letters in the London “Family Separation” office, which looks after the families of soldiers at the front. These are all actual letters received:

“Dear Sir – You have changed my little boy into a little girl. Will it make any difference?

“Respectfully yours,

” – .“

“My Bill has been put in charge of a spittoon. Will I get more pay?” [“Platoon” was meant.]

“I am glad to tell you that my husband has been reported dead.”

“If I don’t get my husband’s money soon I shall be compelled to go on the streets and lead an Imortal life.”

“Dear Sir – In accordance with instructions on paper, I have given birth to a daughter last week.

“Truly yours,

” – .“

BLACK MAGIC

“Yes, sah,” said one negro, “a friend of mine who knows all about it says dis heah man Edison has done gone and invented a magnetized bullet dat can’t miss a German, kase ef dere’s one in a hundred yards de bullet is drawn right smack against his steel helmet. Yes, sah, an’ he’s done invented another one with a return attachment. Whenever dat bullet don’t hit nothin’ it comes right straight back to de American lines.”

“Dat’s what I call inventin’,” exclaimed his colored listener. “But how about dem comin’-back bullets? What do dey do to keep ’em from hittin’ ouah men when dey come back?”

“Well, Mr. Edison made ’em so he’s got ’em trained. You don’t s’pose he’d let ’em kill any Americans, do you? No, sah. He’s got ’em fixet so’s dey jes’ ease back down aroun’ de gunner’s feet an’ sort o’ say: ‘Dey’s all dead in dat trench, boss. Send me to a live place where I’s got a chancet to do somethin’.’”

SUCH EXCUSES AS THEY MAKE

A soldier was brought up for stealing his trench bunkie's liquor.

"I'm sorry, sor," he said. "But I put the liquor for the two of us in the same bottle. Mine was at the bottom, an' I was obliged to drink his to get mine."

HE HAD TROUBLES, TOO

At a church adjacent to a big military camp a service was recently held for soldiers only.

“Let all you brave fellows who have troubles stand up,” shouted the preacher.

Instantly every man rose except one.

“Ah!” exclaimed the preacher, peering at this lone individual. “You are one in a thousand.”

“It ain’t that,” piped back the only man who had remained seated, as the rest of his comrades gazed suspiciously at him. “Somebody’s put some cobbler’s wax on the seat, and I’m stuck.”

WHAT COULD HE MEAN?

An army chaplain was trudging along a hot, dusty road with a company of soldiers. As they stopped to rest and to get a drink of water at a farm house the farmer's wife said to the chaplain:

“You go everywhere the soldiers go, I suppose?”

“No, ma'am,” answered the preacher, “not everywhere; only in this world.”

NEVER MIND THE TARGET

The subject of rifle shooting often crops up at one of the training camps.

“I’ll bet anyone here a box of cigars,” said Lieut. A., “that I can fire twenty-one shots at 200 yards and tell without waiting for the marker the result of each one correctly.”

“Done!” cried Maj. B. And the whole mess turned out early the next morning to witness the experiment.

The lieutenant fired.

“Miss!” he announced calmly.

Another shot.

“Miss!” he repeated.

A third shot.

“Miss!”

“Here, hold on!” put in Maj. B. “What are you trying to do? You’re not firing for the target!”

“Of course not!” was the cool response. “I’m firing for those cigars!”

A LADY FROM HELL

Two “kilties” from the same town met in a rest camp “somewhere in France” and started exchanging confidences.

“Whit like a sendoff did yer wuman gie ye, Sandy, when ye left for France?” asked Jock presently.

Sandy lit a fresh cigaret before he replied frankly:

“Says she, ‘Noo, there’s yer train, Sandy; in ye get, an’ see an’ do yer duty. By jingo, ma mannie, if I thocht ye wed shirk it oot yonder I wud see ye was wounded afore ye gang off.’ That’s the sendoff she gaed me, Jock.”

THEORY VS. FACT

United States Senator Howard Sutherland, of West Virginia, tells a story about a mountain youth who visited a recruiting office in the Senator's State for the purpose of enlisting in the regular army. The examining physician found the young man as sound as a dollar, but that he had flat feet.

"I'm sorry," said the physician, "but I'll have to turn you down. You've got flat feet."

The mountaineer looked sorrowful. "No way for me to git in it, then?" he inquired.

"I guess not. With those flat feet of yours you wouldn't be able to march even five miles."

The youth from the mountains studied a moment. Finally he said: "I'll tell you why I hate this so darned bad. You see, I walked nigh on to one hundred and fifty miles over the mountains to git here, and gosh, how I hate to walk back!"

ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIER!

Two men went to the Y. M. C. A. director in one of the camps and said that they were in the habit of kneeling down and saying their prayers at home. What ought they to do here?

“Try it out,” was the advice.

They did; the second night two others in the barracks joined them; the third night a few more; gradually the number increased until considerably more than half the men resumed the habit of childhood and knelt by their cots in prayer before turning in.

A company captain in one of the cantonments the first evening his men stood at attention for retreat said: “Men, this is a serious business we are engaged in; it is fitting that we should pray about it.” There and then this Plattsburg Reserve officer made a simple and earnest prayer for the divine blessing upon their lives and their work. The impression upon the men was described as tremendous. Such incidents indicate the general spirit of the new armies.

WHO WAS THE JOKE ON?

They are telling the story in London taprooms of a German soldier who laughed uproariously all the time he was being flogged. When the officer, at the end, inquired the cause of the private's mirth, the latter broke into a fresh fit of laughter and cried:

“Why, I'm the wrong man!”

REAL YANKEE LANGUAGE

A French soldier who came proudly up to an American in a certain headquarters town the other day asked:

“You spik French?”

“Nope,” answered the American, “not yet.”

The Frenchman smiled complacently.

“Aye spik Eengleesh,” he said. The American grinned and the Frenchman looked about for some means to show his prowess in the foreign tongue. At that moment a French girl, very neat and trim in her peaked hat, long coat, and high laced boots, came along. The Frenchman jerked his head toward her, looked knowingly at the American, and said triumphantly: “Chicken.”

The American roared.

“Shake,” he said, extending his hand. “You don’t speak English; you speak American.”

DAMN THE KAISER

The grit of the British Tommy is amazing, as told by a Swiss correspondent who found himself with fourteen soldiers in a barn. A huge German shell suddenly “found” the barn in the very center and wrecked it. It was pitch dark; the Swiss was seriously wounded and decided to lay still until help should come. Suddenly a voice spoke out of the dark:

“Anyone left here?”

“Right here, old chap,” came an answer.

“Ah.” Then silence, and in a few moments came: “Say, old man, think you could give me a bit of a lift. Seems both of my pins are gone.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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