

BROUN HEYWOOD

THE A. E. F.: WITH
GENERAL PERSHING
AND THE AMERICAN
FORCES

Heywood Broun

**The A. E. F.: With General
Pershing and the American Forces**

«Public Domain»

Broun H.

The A. E. F.: With General Pershing and the American Forces /
H. Broun — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	9
CHAPTER III	13
CHAPTER IV	17
CHAPTER V	22
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	26

The A. E. F.: With General Pershing and the American Forces

TO

RUTH HALE

Some of the material in this book is reprinted through the courtesy of the *New York Tribune*.

CHAPTER I

THE BIG POND

"VOILÀ UN SOUSMARIN," said a sailor, as he stuck his head through the doorway of the smoking room. The man with aces and eights dropped, but the player across the table had three sevens, and he waited for a translation. It came from the little gun on the afterdeck. The gun said "Bang!" and in a few seconds it repeated "Bang!" I heard the second shot from my stateroom, but before I had adjusted my lifebelt the gun fired at the submarine once more.

A cheer followed this shot. No Yale eleven, or even Harvard for that matter, ever heard such a cheer. It was as if the shout for the first touchdown and for the last one and for all the field goals and long gains had been thrown into one. There was something in the cheer, too, of a long drawn "ho-old 'em."

I looked out the porthole and asked an ambulance man: "Did we get her then?"

"No, but we almost did," he answered. "There she is," he added. "That's the periscope."

Following the direction of his finger I found a stray beanpole thrust somewhat carelessly into the ocean. It came out of a wave top with a rakish tilt. Probably ours was the angle, for the steamer was cutting the ocean into jigsaw sections as we careened away for dear life, now with a zig and then with a zag, seeking safety in drunken flight. When I reached the deck, steamer and passengers seemed to be doing as well as could be expected, and even better.

The periscope was falling astern, and the three hundred passengers, mostly ambulance drivers and Red Cross nurses, were lined along the rail, rooting. Some of the girls stood on top of the rail and others climbed up to the lifeboats, which were as good as a row of boxes. It was distinctly a home team crowd. Nobody cheered for the submarine. The only passenger who showed fright was a chap who rushed up and down the deck loudly shouting: "Don't get excited."

"Give 'em hell," said a home town fan and shook his fist in the direction of the submarine. The gunner fired his fourth shot and this time he was far short in his calculation.

"It's a question of whether we get her first or she gets us, isn't it?" asked an old lady in about the tone she would have used in asking a popular lecturer whether or not he thought Hamlet was really mad. Such neutrality was beyond me. I couldn't help expressing a fervent hope that the contest would be won by our steamer. It was the bulliest sort of a game, and a pleasant afternoon, too, but one passenger was no more than mildly interested. W. K. Vanderbilt did not put on a life preserver nor did he leave his deck chair. He sat up just a bit and watched the whole affair tolerantly. After all the submarine captain was a stranger to him.

Our fifth and final shot was the best. It hit the periscope or thereabouts. The shell did not rebound and there was a patch of oil on the surface of the water. The beanpole disappeared. The captain left the bridge and went to the smoking room. He called for cognac.

"Il est mort," said he, with a sweep of his right hand.

"He says we sunk her," explained the man who spoke French.

The captain said the submarine had fired one torpedo and had missed the steamer by about ninety feet. The U-boat captain must have taken his eye off the boat, or sliced or committed some technical blunder or other, for he missed an easy shot. Even German efficiency cannot eradicate the blessed amateur. May his thumbs never grow less!

We looked at the chart and found that our ship was more than seven hundred miles from the nearest land. It seemed a lonely ocean.

One man came through the crisis with complete triumph. As soon as the submarine was sighted, the smoking room steward locked the cigar chest and the wine closet. Not until then did he go below for his lifebelt.

Reviewing my own emotions, I found that I had not been frightened quite as badly as I expected. The submarine didn't begin to scare me as much as the first act of "The Thirteenth Chair," but still I could hardly lay claim to calm, for I had not spoken one of the appropriate speeches which came to my mind after the attack. The only thing to which I could point with pride was the fact that before putting on my lifebelt I paused to open a box of candy, and went on deck to face destruction, or what not, with a caramel between my teeth. But before the hour was up I was sunk indeed.

It was submarine this and sousmarin that in the smoking room. The U-boats lurked in every corner. One man had seen two and at the next table was a chap who had seen three. There was the fellow who had sighted the periscope first of all, the man who had seen the wake of the torpedo, and the littlest ambulance driver who had sighted the submarine through the bathroom window while immersed in the tub. He was the man who had started for the deck with nothing more about him than a lifebelt and had been turned back.

"I wonder," said a passenger, "whether those submarines have wireless? Do you suppose now that boat could send messages on ahead and ask other U-boats to look after us?" And just then the gun on the forward deck went "Bang."

It was the meanest and most inappropriate sound I ever heard. It was an anti-climax of the most vicious sort. It was bad form, bad art, bad everything. I felt a little sick, and one of the contributing emotions was a sort of fearfully poignant boredom. I tried to remember just what the law of averages was and to compute as rapidly as possible the chances of the vessel to complete two more days of travel if attacked by a submarine every hour.

"The ocean is full of the damn things," said the man at the next table petulantly.

This time the thing was a black object not more than fifty yards away. The captain signaled the gunner not to fire again and he let it be known that this was nothing but a barrel. Later it was rumored that it was a mine, but then there were all sorts of rumors during those last two days when we ran along with lifeboats swung out. There was much talk of a convoy, but none appeared.

Many passengers slept on deck and some went to meals with their lifebelts on. Everybody jumped when a plate was dropped and there was always the possibility of starting a panic by slamming a door. And so we cheered when the steamer came to the mouth of the river which leads to Bordeaux. We cheered for France from friendship. We cheered from surprise and joy when the American flag went up to the top of a high mast and we cheered a little from sheer relief because we had left the sea and the U-boats behind us.

They had been with us not a little from the beginning. Even on the first day out from New York the ship ran with all lights out and portholes shielded. Later passengers were forbidden to smoke on deck at night and once there was a lifeboat drill of a sort, but the boats were not swung out in the davits until after we met the submarine.

Early in the voyage an old lady complained to the purser because a young man in the music room insisted on playing the Dead March from "Saul." There was more cheerful music. The ambulance drivers saw to that. We had an Amherst unit and one from Leland Stanford and the boys were nineteen or thereabouts. It is well enough to say that all the romance has gone out of modern war, but you can't convince a nineteen-year-old of that when he has his first khaki on his back and his first anti-typhoid inoculation in his arm. They boasted of these billion germs and they swaggered and played banjos and sang songs. Mostly they sang at night on the pitch black upper deck. The littlest ambulance driver had a nice tenor voice and on still nights he did not care what submarine commander knew that he "learned about women from her." He and his companions rocked the stars with "She knifed me one night." Daytimes they studied French from the ground up. It was the second day out that I heard a voice from just outside my porthole inquire "E-S-T – what's that and how do you say it?" Later on the littlest ambulance driver had made marked progress and was explaining "Mon oncle a une bonne fille, mais mon père est riche."

Romance was not hard to find on the vessel. The slow waiter who limped had been wounded at the Marne, and the little fat stewardess had spent twenty-two days aboard the German raider *Eitel Friedrich*. There were French soldiers in the steerage and one of them had the Croix de Guerre with four palms. He had been wounded three times.

But when the ship came up the river the littlest ambulance driver – the one who knew "est" and women – summed things up and decided that he was glad to be an American. He looked around the deck at the Red Cross nurses and others who had stood along the rail and cheered in the submarine fight, and he said:

"I never would have thought it of 'em. It's kinda nice to know American women have got so much nerve."

The littlest ambulance driver drew himself up to his full five feet four and brushed his new uniform once again.

"Yes, sir," he said, "we men have certainly got to hand it to the girls on this boat." And as he went down the gangplank he was humming: "And I learned about women from her."

CHAPTER II

THE A. E. F

THE dawn was gray and so was the ship, but the eye picked her out of the mist because of two broad yellow stripes which ran the whole length of the upper decks. As the ship warped into the pier the stripes of yellow became so many layers of men in khaki, each motionless and each gazing toward the land.

"Say," cried a voice across the diminishing strip of water, "what place is this anyhow?" The reply came back from newspapermen whose only companions on the pier were two French soldiers and a little group of German prisoners.

"Well," said the voice from the ship, "this ought to be better than the Texas border."

The American regulars had come to France.

The two French soldiers looked at the men on the transport and cheered, flinging their caps in the air. The Germans just looked. They were engaged in moving rails and after lifting one they would pause and gaze into space for many minutes until the guards told them to get to work again. But now the guards were so interested that the Germans prolonged the rest interval and stared at the ship. News that ships were in was carried through the town and people came running to the pier. There were women and children and old men and a few soldiers.

Nobody had known the Americans were coming. Even the mayor was surprised and had to run home to get his red sash and his high hat. Children on the way to school did not go further than the quay, for back of the ship, creeping into the slip, were other ships with troops and torpedo boat destroyers and a cruiser.

Just before the gangplank was lowered the band on the first transport played "The Star Spangled Banner." The men on the ship stood at attention. The crowds on shore only watched. They did not know our national anthem yet. Next the band played "The Marseillaise," and the hats of the crowd came off. As the last note died away one of the Americans relaxed from attention and leaned over the rail toward a small group of newspapermen from America.

"Do they allow enlisted men to drink in the saloons in this town?" he asked.

Somebody else wanted to know, "Is there any place in town where a fellow can get a piece of pie?" A sailor was anxious to rent a bicycle or a horse and "ride somewhere." Later the universal question became, "Don't any of these people speak American?"

The men were hustled off the ship and marched into the long street which runs parallel with the docks. They passed within a few feet of the Germans. There was less than the length of a bayonet between them but the doughboys did credit to their brief training. They kept their eyes straight ahead.

"How do they look?" one of the newspapermen asked a German sergeant in the group of prisoners.

"Oh, they look all right," he said professionally, "but you can't tell yet. I'd want to see them in action first."

"They don't lift their knees high enough," he added and grinned at his little joke.

A French soldier came up then and expostulated. He said that we must not talk to the Germans and set his prisoners back to their task of lifting rails. There were guards at both ends of the street, but scores of children slipped by them and began to talk to the soldiers. There were hardly half a dozen men in the first regiment who understood French. Veterans of the Mexican border tried a little bad Spanish and when that didn't work they fell back to signs. The French made an effort to meet the visitors half way. I saw a boy extend his reader to a soldier and explain that a fearfully homely picture which looked like a caterpillar was a "chenille." The boy added that the chenille was so ugly that it was without doubt German and no good. Children also pointed out familiar objects in the book such

as "Chats" and "Chiens," but as one soldier said: "I don't care about those things, sonny: haven't you got a roast chicken or an apple pie in that book?"

Some officers had tried to teach their men a little French on the trip across, but not much seemed to stick. The men were not over curious as to this strange language. One old sergeant went to his lieutenant and said: "You know, sir, I've served in China and the Philippines and Cuba. I've been up against this foreign language proposition before and I know just what I need. If you'll write down a few words for me and tell me how they're pronounced I won't have to bother you any more. I want 'Give me a plate of ham and eggs. How much? What's your name?' and 'Do you love me, kid?'"

The vocabulary of the officers did not seem very much more extensive than that of the men. While the troops were disembarking officers were striving to get supplies started for the camp several miles outside the city. All the American motor trucks had been shipped on the slowest steamer of the convoy but the French came to our aid. "I have just one order," said the French officer, who met the first unit of the American Expeditionary Army, "there is no American and no French now. There is only ours."

Although the officer was kind enough to make ownership of all available motor trucks common, he could not do as much for the language of the poilus who drove them. I found the American motor truck chief hopelessly entangled.

"Have you enough gasoline to go to the camp and back?" he inquired of the driver of the first camion to be loaded. The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders to indicate that he did not comprehend. The officer smiled tolerantly and spoke with gentle firmness as if to a wayward child. "Have you enough gasoline?" he said. Again the Frenchman's shoulders went up. "Have you enough gasoline?" repeated the officer, only this time he spoke loudly and fiercely as if talking to his wife. Even yet the Frenchman did not understand. Inspiration came to the American officer. Suddenly he gesticulated with both hands and began to imitate George Beban as the French waiter in one of the old Weber and Fields shows. "'Ave you enough of ze gaz-o-leene?" he piped mincingly. Then an interpreter came.

After several companies had disembarked the march to camp began, up the main street and along the fine shore road which skirts the bay. The band struck up "Stars and Stripes Forever" and away they went. They did not march well, these half green companies who had rolled about the seas so long, but they held the eyes of all and the hearts of some. They glorified even cheap tunes such as "If You Don't Like Your Uncle Sammy Go Back to Your Home Across the Sea," and Sousa seemed a very master of fire when the men paraded to his marches. These American units did not give the impression of compactness which one gets from Frenchmen on the march. The longer stride gives the doughboy an uneven gait. He looks like a man walking across a plowed field and yet you cannot miss a sense of power. You feel that he will get there even if his goal is the red sun itself at the back of the hills.

There was no long drawn cheer from the people who lined the streets to see the Americans pass. Even crowds in Paris do not cheer like that. Instead individuals called out phrases of greeting and there was much handclapping. Although mixed in point of service the men ran to type as far as build went. They amazed the French by their height, although some of the organizations which followed the first division are better physically. Of course these American troops are actually taller than the French and in addition they are thin enough to accentuate their height. It was easy to pick out the youngsters, most of whom found their packs a little heavy. They would stand up straighter though when an old sergeant moved alongside and growled a word or two. It was easy to see that these sergeants were of the old army. They were all lank men, boiled red from within and without. They had put deserts and jungles under foot and no distance would seem impossible for them along the good roads of France.

As ship after ship came in more troops marched to camp. The streets were filled with the clatter of the big boots of doughboys throughout the morning and well into the afternoon. There were American army mules, too, and although the natives had seen the animal before in French service,

he attracted no end of attention. In his own particular army the mule seems more picturesque. He has never learned French. It seems to break his spirit, but he pranced and kicked and played the very devil under the stimulus of the loud endearments of the American mule drivers.

The French were also interested in a company of American negroes specially recruited for stevedore service. The negroes had been outfitted with old cavalry overcoats of a period shortly after the Civil War. They were blue coats with gold buttons and the lining was a tasteful but hardly somber shade of crimson. Nor were the negroes without picturesque qualities even when they had shed their coats and gone to work. Their working shirts of white were inked all over with pious sentences calculated to last through the submarine zone, but piety was mixed. One big negro, for instance, had written upon his shirt: "The Lord is my shepherd," but underneath he had drawn a large starfish for luck. A few daring ones had ornamented themselves with skulls and crossbones. To the negroes fell the bitterest disappointment of the American landing in France. Two Savannah stevedores caught sight of a black soldier in the French uniform and rushed up to exchange greetings. The Senegalese shrugged his shoulders and turned away from the flood of English.

"That," said one of the American darkies, "is the most ignorantest and stuck up nigger I ever did see." They were not yet ready to believe that the negro race had let itself in for the amazing complications of a foreign language.

Later in the day the town was full of the eddies which occur when two languages meet head on, for almost all the soldiers and sailors received leave to come to town. They wanted beer and champagne and cognac, chocolate, cake, crackers, pears, apples, cherries, picture postcards, sardines, rings, cigarettes, and books of French and English phrases. The phrase books were usually an afterthought, so commerce was conducted with difficulty. A few of the shopkeepers equipped themselves with dictionaries and painstakingly worked out the proper reply for each customer. Signs were much more effective and when it came to purchase, the sailor or soldier simply held out a handful of American money and the storekeeper took a little. To the credit of the shopkeepers of the nameless port, let it be said that they seemed in every case to take no more than an approximation of the right amount. Fortunately the late unpleasantness at Babel was not absolutely thoroughgoing and there are words in French which offer no great difficulty to the American. The *entente cordiale* is furthered by words such as "chocolat," "sandwich," "biere" and "bifstek." The difficulties of "vin" are not insurmountable either.

"A funny people," was the comment of one doughboy, "when I ask for 'sardines' I get 'em all right, but when I say 'cheese' or 'canned peaches' I don't get anything."

Another complained, "I don't understand these people at all. They spell some of their words all right, but they haven't got the sense to say 'em that way." He could see no reason why "vin" should sound like "van."

Another objection of the invading army was that the townsfolk demanded whole sentences of French. Mixtures seemed incomprehensible to them and the officer who kept crying out, "Madame, where are my œufs?" got no satisfaction whatever.

Late in the afternoon phrase books began to appear, but they did not help a great deal because by the time the right phrase had been found some fellow who used only sign language had slipped in ahead of the student. Then, too, some of the books seemed hardly adapted for present conditions. One officer was distinctly annoyed because the first sentence he found in a chapter headed war terms was, "Where is the grand stand?" But the book which seemed to fall furthest short of promise was a pamphlet entitled, "Just the French You Want to Know."

"Look at this," said an indignant owner. "Le travail assure la santé et la bien-être, il élève et fortifie l'âme, il adoucit les souffrances, chasse l'ennui, et plaisir sans pareil, il est encore le sel des autres plaisirs. Go on with it. Look at what all that means – 'Work assures health and well being, it elevates and fortifies the soul, drives away ennui, alleviates suffering, and, a pleasure without an equal, it is still the salt of all other pleasures' – what do you think of that? Just the French you want

to know! I don't want to address the graduating class, I want to tell a barber to leave it long on top, but trim it pretty close around the edges."

The happy purchaser of the book did not throw it away, however, until he turned to the chapter headed "At the Tailor's" and found that the first sentence set down in French meant, "The bodice is too tight in front, and it is uncomfortable under the arms. It is a little too low-necked, and the sleeves are not wide enough."

Sundown sent most of the soldiers scurrying back to camp, but the port lacked no life that night, for sailors came ashore in increasing numbers and American officers were everywhere. The two hotels – the Grand and the Grand Hotel des Messageries, known to the army as the Grand and Miserable Hotel – were thronged. Generals and Admirals rushed about to conferences and in the middle of all the confusion a young second lieutenant sat at the piano in the parlor of the Grand and played Schumann's "Warum" over and over again as if his heart would break for homesickness. The sailors and a few soldiers who seemed to have business in the town had no trouble in making themselves at home.

"Mademoiselle, donnez moi un baiser, s'il vous plait," said one of the apt pupils to the pretty barmaid at the Café du Centre.

But she said: "Mais non."

Crowds began to collect just off the main street. I hurried over to one group of sailors, convinced that something important was going on, since French soldiers and civilians stood about six deep. History was being made indeed. For the first time "craps" was being played on French soil.

CHAPTER III

LAFAYETTE, NOUS VOILÀ

THE navy was the first to take Paris. While the doughboys were still at the port crowding themselves into camp, lucky sailors were on their way to let the French capital see the American uniform. I came up on the night train with a crowd of them. Their pockets bulged with money, tins of salmon, ham and truffled chicken. They had chocolate in their hats and boxes of fancy crackers under their arms, while cigars and cigarettes poked out of their blouses. They would have nothing to do with French tobacco, but favored a popular American brand which sells for a quarter in New York and twice as much over here. One almost expected each sailor to produce a roast turkey or a pheasant from up his sleeve at meal time, but it was pretty much all meal time for these men who were making their shore leave an intensive affair. One was a very new sailor and he was rejoicing to find land under his feet again.

"Oh, boy!" he said, when I asked him about his ship, "that old tub had two more movements than a hula dancer."

The little group in my compartment was sampling some champagne which hospitable folk at the port had given them. It was not real champagne, to be sure, but a cheaper white wine with twice as many bubbles and at least as much noise. It sufficed very well, since it was ostentation rather than thirst which spurred the sailors on and they spread their hospitality throughout the train. A few French soldiers headed back for the trenches were the traveling companions of the Americans. The poilus were decidedly friendly but somewhat amazed at the big men who made so much noise with their jokes and their songs. Of course the French were called upon to sample the various tinned and bottled goods which the sailors were carrying. It was "have a swig of this, Froggy" or "get yourself around that, Frenchy." The Americans were still just a bit condescending to their brothers in arms. They had not yet seen them in action. Of course there was much comparison of equipment and the sailors all tried on the trench helmets of the French and found them too small. The entente grew and presently there was an allied concert. The sailors sang, "What a Wonderful Mother You'd Make," and the French replied with the Verdun song, "Ils Ne Passeront Pas," and later with "Madelon."

I heard that song many times afterwards and it always brings to mind a picture of dusty French soldiers marching with their short, quick, eager stride. They are always dusty. All summer long they wear big overcoats which come below the knee. Dust settles and multiplies and if you see a French regiment marching in the spring rainy season, it will still be dusty. Perhaps their souls are a little dusty now, but it is French dust. And as they march they sing as the men sang to the newly arrived Americans in the train that night:

For all the soldiers, on their holidays,
There is a place, just tucked in by the woods,
A house with ivy growing on the walls —
A cabaret — "Aux Toulourous" — the goods!
The girl who serves is young and sweet as love,
She's light as any butterfly in Spring,
Her eyes have got a sparkle like her wine.
We call her Madelon — it's got a swing!
The soldiers' girl! She leads us all a dance!
She's only Madelon, but she's Romance!

When Madelon comes out to serve us drinks,

We always know she's coming by her song!
And every man, he tells his little tale,
And Madelon, she listens all day long.
Our Madelon is never too severe —
A kiss or two is nothing much to her —
She laughs us up to love and life and God —
Madelon! Madelon! Madelon!

We all have girls for keeps that wait at home
Who'll marry us when fighting time is done;
But they are far away – too far to tell
What happens in these days of cut-and-run.
We sigh away such days as best we can,
And pray for time to bring us nearer home,
But tales like ours won't wait till then to tell —
We have to run and boast to Madelon.
We steal a kiss – she takes it all in play;
We dream she is that other – far away.
A corp'ral with a feather in his cap
Went courting Madelon one summer's day,
And, mad with love, he swore she was superb,
And he would wed her any day she'd say.
But Madelon was not for any such —
She danced away and laughed: "My stars above!
Why, how could I consent to marry you,
When I have my whole regiment to love?
I could not choose just one and leave the rest.
I am the soldiers' girl – I like that best!"

When Madelon comes out to serve us drinks,
We always know she's coming by her song!
And every man, he tells his little tale,
And Madelon, she listens all day long.
Our Madelon is never too severe —
A kiss or two is nothing much to her —
She laughs us up to love and life and God —
Madelon! Madelon! Madelon!

When the train came into Paris early the next morning the sailors were singing the chorus with the poilus. They parted company at the quai d'Orsay. The soldiers went to the front; the sailors turned to Paris. It was a Paris such as no one had ever seen before. The "bannière étoilée" was everywhere. We call it the Stars and Stripes. Little flags were stuck rakishly behind the ears of disreputable Parisian cab horses; bigger flags were in the windows of the shops and on top of buildings, but the biggest American flag of all hung on the Strassburg monument which shed its mourning when the war began.

Two days later all the flags were fluttering, for on the morning of the third of July the doughboys came to Paris. It made no difference that they were only a battalion. When the French saw them they thought of armies and of new armies, for these were the first soldiers in many months who smiled as they marched. The train was late, but the crowd waited outside the Gare d'Austerlitz for more than two hours. French Red Cross nurses were waiting at the station, and the doughboys had their

first experience with French rations, for they began the long day with "petit déjeuner." Men brought up on ham and eggs and flapjacks and oatmeal and even breakfast pie, found war bread and coffee a scant repast, but the ration proved more popular than was expected when it was found that the coffee was charged with cognac. It was a stronger stimulant, though, which sent the men up on the tips of their toes as they swung down the street covering thirty-two inches with each stride. For the first time they heard the roar of a crowd. It was not the steady roar such as comes from American throats. It was split up into "Vive les Etats Unis!" and "Vive l'Amérique!" with an occasional "Vive le President Wilson!" This appearance was only a dress rehearsal and the troops were hurried through little frequented streets to a barracks to await the morning of the Fourth.

Paris began the great day by waking Pershing with music. The band of the republican guard was at the gate of his house a little after eight o'clock. The rest of Paris seemed to have had no trouble in arousing itself without music, for already several hundred thousand persons were crowded about the General's hotel. First there were trumpets; then brasses blared and drums rumbled. The General proved himself a light sleeper and a quick dresser. Before the last note of the fanfare died away he was at the window and bowing to the crowd. This time there was a solid roar, for everybody shouted "Vive Pershing." The band cut through the din. There were a few strange variations and uncertainties in the tune, but it was unmistakably "The Star Spangled Banner." Only a handful in the crowd knew the American National anthem, but they shouted "Chapeau, chapeau" so hard that everybody took up the cry and took off his hat. There was a fine indefinite noisy roar which would have done credit to a double header crowd at the Polo Grounds when Pershing left his hotel for the "Invalides," where the march of the Americans was to begin. It was pleasant to observe at that moment that our commander has as straight a back as any man in the allied armies can boast.

At least four hundred thousand people were crowded around the "Invalides." They had plenty of chance to shout. They were able to keep their enthusiasm within bounds when first Poincaré appeared and then Painlevé. The next celebrity was Papa Joffre and hats went into the air. There was an interval of waiting then and a bit of a riot. An old man who found the elbows of his neighbors disagreeable, exclaimed: "Oh, let me have peace!" Somebody who heard the word "peace" shouted: "He's a pacifist," and people near at hand began to hit at him. He was saved by the coming of the American soldiers. "Vive les Teddies," shouted the crowd and forgot the old man.

The crowd made way for the Americans as they marched toward the "Invalides" and into the court yard where the trophies won from the Germans are displayed. "You will bring more from the Boche," shouted a Frenchman. French and American flags floated above the guns and aeroplanes and minenwerfers. During the short ceremony the American soldiers looked about curiously at the trophies and up at the dome above the tomb of Napoleon. Many knew him by reputation and some had heard that he was buried there.

After a short ceremony the Americans marched out of the "Invalides" and toward the Picpus cemetery. The crowds had increased. It was hard marching now. French children ran in between the legs of the soldiers. French soldiers and civilians crowded in upon them. It was impossible to keep ranks. Now the men in khaki were just a little brown stream twisting and turning in an effort to get onward. People threw roses at the soldiers and they stuffed them into their hats and in the gun barrels. It was reported from several sources that one or two soldiers who were forced out of ranks were kissed, but no one would admit it afterwards. The youngsters in the ranks tried their best to keep a military countenance. They endeavored to achieve an expression which should be polite but firm, an air of having been through the same experience many times before. Only one or two old sergeants succeeded. The rest blushed under the cheers and entangling interest of the crowd and they could not keep the grins away when people shouted "Vive les Teddies" or threw roses at them. On that morning it was great to be young and a doughboy.

On and on they went past high walls and gardens to the edge of the city to a cemetery. There were speeches here and they were mostly French. Ribot spoke and Painlevé and Pershing. His was

English and he said: "I hope, and I would like to say it that here on the soil of France and in the school of the French heroes, our American soldiers may learn to battle and to vanquish for the liberty of the world."

But the speech which left the deepest impression was the shortest of all. Colonel Stanton stood before the tomb of Lafayette and made a quick, sharp gesture which was broad enough to include the youngsters from Alabama and Texas and Massachusetts and Ohio and the rest. "Lafayette, we're here!" he said.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRANCO-AMERICAN HONEYMOON

THE day after the Americans marched in Paris one of the French newspapers referred to the doughboys as "Roman Cæsars clad in khaki." The city set itself to liking the soldiers and everything American and succeeded admirably. Even the taxicab drivers refrained from overcharging Americans very much. School children studied the history of America and "The Star Spangled Banner." There were pictures of President Wilson and General Pershing in many shops and some had framed translations of the President's message to Congress. In fact, so eager were the French to take America to their hearts that they even made desperate efforts to acquire a working knowledge of baseball. *Excelsior*, an illustrated French daily, carried an action picture taken during a game played between American ambulance drivers just outside of Paris. The picture was entitled: "A player goes to catch the ball, which has been missed by the catcher," and underneath ran the following explanation: "We have given in our number of yesterday the rules of baseball, the American national game, of which a game, which is perhaps the first ever played in France, took place yesterday at Colombes between the soldiers of the American ambulances. Here is an aspect of the game. The pitcher, or thrower of balls, whom one sees in the distance, has sent the ball. The catcher, or 'attrapeur,' who should restrike the ball with his wooden club, has missed it, and a player placed behind him has seized it in its flight."

The next day *L'Intransigeant* undertook the even more hazardous task of explaining American baseball slang. During the parade on the Fourth of July some Americans had greeted the doughboys with shouts of "ataboy." A French journalist heard and was puzzled. He returned to his office and looked in English dictionaries and various works of reference without enlightenment. Several English friends were unable to help him and an American who had lived in Paris for thirty years was equally at sea. But the reporter worked it out all by himself and the next day he wrote: "Parisians have been puzzled by the phrase 'ataboy' which Americans are prone to employ in moments of stress or emotion. The phrase is undoubtedly a contraction of 'at her boy' and may be closely approximated by 'au travail, garçon.'" The writer followed with a brief history of the friendly relations of France and America and paid a glowing tribute to the memory of Lafayette.

The name for the American soldiers gave the French press and public no end of trouble. They began enthusiastically enough by calling them the "Teddies," but General Pershing, when interviewed one day, said that he did not think this name quite fitting as it had "no national significance." The French then followed the suggestion of one of the American correspondents and began to call the soldiers "Sammies," or as the French pronounce it, "Sammées." Although this name received much attention in French and American newspapers it has never caught the fancy of the soldiers in the American Expeditionary Army. Officers and men cordially despise it and no soldier ever refers to himself or a comrade as a "Sammy." American officers have not been unmindful of the usefulness of a name for our soldiers. Major General Sibert, who commanded the first division when it arrived in France, posted a notice at headquarters which read: "The English soldier is called Tommy. The French soldier is called poilu. The Commanding General would like suggestions for a name for the American soldier." At the end of the week the following names had been written in answer to the General's request: "Yank, Yankee, Johnnie, Johnny Yank, Broncho, Nephew, Gringo, Liberty Boy, Doughboy."

Now Doughboy is a name which the soldiers use, but strictly speaking, it refers only to an infantryman. The origin of the name is shrouded in mystery. One officer, probably an infantryman, has written, that the infantrymen are called doughboys because they are the flower of the army. Another story has it that during some maneuvers in Texas an artilleryman, comfortably perched on a gun, saw a soldier hiking by in the thick sticky Texas mud. The mud was up to the shoetops of the

infantryman and the upper part which had dried looked almost white. "Say," shouted the artilleryman, "what've you been doing? Walking in dough?" And so the men who march have been doughboys ever since.

Paris did not let the lack of a name come between her and the soldiers. The theaters gave the Americans almost as much recognition as the press. No musical show was complete without an American finale and each soubrette learned a little English, "I give you kees," or something like that, to please the doughboys. The vaudeville shows, such as those provided at the Olympia or the Alhambra, gave an even greater proportion of English speech. The Alhambra was filled with Tommies and doughboys on the night I went. Now and again the comedians had lapses of language and the Americans were forced to let jokes go zipping by without response. It was a pity, too, for they were good jokes even if French. Presently, however, a fat comedian fell off a ladder and laughter became general and international. The show was more richly endowed with actresses than actors. The management was careful to state that all the male performers had fulfilled their military obligations. Thus, under the picture of Maurice Chevalier, a clever comedian and dancer, one read that Mons. Chevalier was wounded at the battle of Cutry, when a bullet passed between his lungs. The story added that he was captured by the Germans and held prisoner for twenty-six months before he escaped. It did not seem surprising therefore that Chevalier should be the gayest of funny men. Twenty-six months of imprisonment would work wonders with ever so many comedians back home.

And yet we Americans missed the old patter until there came a breath from across the sea. A low comedian came out and said to his partner in perfectly good English: "Well, didja like the show?" His partner said he didn't like the show. "Well, didja notice the trained seals?" persisted the low comedian and the lower comedian answered: "No, the wind was against 'em." Laughter long delayed overcame us then, but it was mingled with tears. We felt that we were home again. The French are a wonderful people and all that, of course, but they're so darn far away.

Later there was a man who imitated Eddie Foy imperfectly and a bad bicycle act in which the performers called the orchestra leader "Professor" and shouted "Ready" to each other just before missing each trick. This bucked the Americans up so much that a lapse into French with Suzanne Valroger "dans son repertoire" failed to annoy anybody very much. The doughboys didn't care whether she came back with her repertoire or on it. Some Japanese acrobats and a Swedish contortionist completed the performance. There are two such international music halls in Paris as well as a musical comedy of a sort called "The Good Luck Girl." The feature of this performance is an act in which a young lady swings over the audience and invites the soldiers to capture the shoe dangling from her right foot. The shoe is supposed to be very lucky and soldiers try hard to get it, standing up in their seats and snatching as the girl swings by. An American sergeant was the winner the night I went to the show, for he climbed upon a comrade's shoulder and had the slipper off before the girl had time to swing out very far. Later, when he went to the trenches, the sergeant took the shoe with him and he says that up to date he has no reason to doubt the value of the charm.

The most elaborate spectacle inspired by the coming of the Americans was at the Folies Bergères which sent its chorus out for the final number all spangled with stars. The leader of the chorus was an enormous woman, at least six feet tall, who carried an immense American flag. She almost took the head off a Canadian one night as he dozed in a stage box and failed to notice the violent manner in which the big flag was being swung. He awoke just in time to dodge and then he shook an accusing finger at the Amazon. "Why aren't you in khaki?" he said.

Restaurants as well as theaters were liberally sprinkled with men in the American uniform. The enlisted men ate for the most part in French barracks and seemed to fare well enough, although one doughboy, after being served with spinach as a separate course, complained: "I do wish they'd get all the stuff on the table at once like we do in the army. I don't want to be surprised, I want to be fed." A young first lieutenant was scornful of French claims to master cookery. "Why, they don't know

how to fry eggs," he said. "I've asked for fried eggs again and again and do you know what they do? They put 'em in a little dish and bake 'em."

Yet, barring this curious and barbarous custom in the cooking of eggs, the French chefs were able to charm the palates of Americans even in a year which bristled with food restrictions. There were two meatless days a week, sugar was issued in rations of a pound a month per person and bread was gray and gritty. The French were always able to get around these handicaps. The food director, for instance, called the ice cream makers together and ordered them to cease making their product in order to save sugar.

"We have been using a substitute for sugar for seven months," replied the merchants.

"Well, then," said the food director, "it will save eggs."

"We have hit upon a method which makes eggs unnecessary," replied the ice cream makers.

"At any rate," persisted the food director, "my order will save unnecessary consumption of milk."

"We use a substitute for that, too," the confectioners answered, and they were allowed to go on with their trade.

The cooks are even more ingenious than the confectioners. As long as they have the materials with which to compound sauces, meat makes little difference. War bread might be terrapin itself after a French chef has softened and sabled it with thick black dressing. Americans found that the French took food much more seriously than we do in America. Patrons always reviewed the *carte du jour* carefully before making a selection. It was not enough to get something which would do. The meal would fall something short of success if the diner did not succeed in getting what he wanted most. No waiter ever hurried a soldier who was engaged in the task of composing a dinner. He might be a man who was going back to the trenches the next day and in such a case this last good meal would not be a matter to be entered upon lightly. After all, if it is a last dinner a man wants to consider carefully, whether he shall order *contrefilet à la Bourguignon* or *poulet roti à l'Espagnol*.

Whatever may be his demeanor while engaged in the business of making war or ordering a meal, the Frenchman makes his permission a real vacation. He talks a good deal of shop. The man at the next table is telling of a German air raid, only, naturally, he calls them Boches. A prison camp, he explains, was brilliantly illuminated so that the Boche prisoners might not escape under the cover of darkness. One night the enemy aviators came over that way and mistook the prison camp for a railroad station. They dropped a number of bombs and killed ten of their comrades. Everybody at the soldier's table regarded this as a good joke, more particularly as the narrator vivified the incident by rolling his war bread into pellets and bombarding the table by way of illustration, accompanied by loud cries of "Plop! Plop!"

Practically every man on permission in Paris is making love to someone and usually in an open carriage or at the center table of a large restaurant. Nobody even turns around to look if a soldier walks along a street with his arm about a girl's waist. American officers, however, frowned on such exhibitions of demonstrativeness by doughboys and in one provincial town a colonel issued an order: "American soldiers will not place their arms around the waists of young ladies while walking in any of the principal thoroughfares of this town."

Still it was not possible to regulate romance entirely out of existence. "There was a girl used to pass my car every morning," said a sergeant chauffeur, "and she was so good looking that I got a man to teach me '*bon jour*,' and I used to smile at her and say that when she went by and she'd say '*bon jour*' and smile back. One morning I got an apple and I handed it to her and said '*pour vous*' like I'd been taught. She took it and came right back with, 'Oh, I'm ever so much obliged,' and there like a chump I'd been holding myself down to '*bon jour*' for two weeks."

There could be no question of the devotion of Paris to the American army. Indeed, so rampant was affection that it was occasionally embarrassing. One officer slipped in alighting from the elevator of his hotel and sprained his ankle rather badly. He was hobbling down one of the boulevards that

afternoon with the aid of a cane when a large automobile dashed up to the curb and an elderly French lady who was the sole occupant beckoned to him and cried: "*Premier blessé*." The officer hesitated and a man who was passing stepped up and said: "May I interpret for you?" The officer said he would be much obliged. The volunteer interpreter talked to the old lady for a moment and then he turned and explained: "Madame is desirous of taking you in her car wherever you want to go, because she says she is anxious to do something for the first American soldier wounded on the soil of France."

The devotion of Paris was so obvious that it palled on one or two who grew fickle. I saw a doughboy sitting in front of the Café de la Paix one bright afternoon. He was drinking champagne of a sort and smoking a large cigar. The sun shone on one of the liveliest streets of a still gay Paris. It was a street made brave with bright uniforms. Brighter eyes of obvious non-combatants gazed at him with admiration. I was sitting at the next table and I leaned over and asked: "How do you like Paris?"

He let the smoke roll lazily out of his mouth and shook his head. "I wish I was back in El Paso," he said.

I found another soldier who was longing for Terre Haute. Him I came upon in the lounging room of a music hall called the Olympia. Two palpably pink ladies sat at the bar drinking cognac. From his table a few feet away the American soldier looked at them with high disfavor. Surprise, horror and indignation swept across his face in three waves as the one called Julie began to puff a cigarette after giving a light to Margot. He looked away at last when he could stand no more, and recognizing me as a fellow countryman, he began his protest.

"I don't like this Paris," he said. "I'm in the medical corps," he continued. "My home's in Terre Haute. In Indiana, you know. I worked in a drug store there before I joined the army. I had charge of the biggest soda fountain in town. We used to have as many as three men working there in summer sometimes. Right at a good business corner, you know. I suppose we had almost as many men customers as ladies."

"Why don't you like Paris?" I interrupted.

"Well, it's like this," he answered. "Nobody can say I'm narrow. I believe in people having a good time, but – " and he leaned nearer confidentially, "I don't like this Bohemia. I'd heard about it, of course, but I didn't know it was so bad. You see that girl there, the one in the blue dress smoking a cigarette, sitting right up to the bar. Well, you may believe it or not, but when I first sat down she came right over here and said, 'Hello, American. You nice boy. I nice girl. You buy me a drink.' I never saw her before in my life, you understand, and I didn't even look at her till she spoke to me. I told her to go away or I'd call a policeman and have her arrested. I've been in Paris a week now, but I don't think I'll ever get used to this Bohemia business. It's too effusive, that's what I call it. I'd just like to see them try to get away with some of that business in Terre Haute."

Some of the visiting soldiers took more kindly to Paris as witness the plaint of a middle-aged Franco-American in the employ of the Y. M. C. A.:

"I'm a guide for the Young Men's Christian Association here in Paris," he said, "but I'm a little bit afraid I'm going to lose my job. They make up parties of soldiers at the Y. M. C. A. headquarters every day and turn them over to me to show around the city. Well, Monday I started out with twelve and came back with five and today I finished up with three out of eight. I can't help it. I've got no authority over them, and if they want to leave the party, what can I do? But it makes trouble for me at headquarters. Now, today, for instance, I took them first of all to the Place Vendome. There were seven infantrymen and an artilleryman. They seemed to be interested in the column when I told them that it was made out of cannon captured by Napoleon. They wanted to know how many cannon it took and what caliber they were and all that. Everything went all right until we started for the Madeleine. We passed a café on the way and one of the soldiers asked: 'What's this "vin" I see around on shops?' I told him that it was the French word for wine and that it was pronounced almost like our word 'van' only a little bit more nasal. They all looked at the sign then, and another soldier said: 'I suppose that "bières" there is "beers," isn't it?'

"I told him that it was and another guessed that 'brune ou blonde' must mean 'dark or light.' When I said that it did, he wanted to know if he couldn't stop and have one. I told him that I couldn't wait for him, as the whole trip was on a schedule and we had to be at the Madeleine at three o'clock. 'Well,' he said, 'I guess it'll be there tomorrow,' and he went into the café. Another soldier said: 'Save a "blonde" for me,' and followed him, and that was two gone.

"After I had showed the rest the Madeleine I told them that I was going to take them to St. Augustin. The artilleryman wanted to know if that was another church. I said it was and he said he guessed he'd had enough for a day. I tried to interest him in the paintings in the chapel by Bouguereau and Brisset, but he said he wasn't used to walking so much anyway. He was no doughboy, he said, and he left us. We lost another fellow at Maxim's and the fifth one disappeared in broad daylight on the Boulevard Malesherbes. He can count up to twenty in French and he knows how to say: 'Où est l'hotel St. Anne?' which is army headquarters, so I guess he's all right, but I haven't an idea in the world what became of him."

The high tide in the American conquest of Paris came one afternoon in July. I got out of a taxicab in front of the American headquarters in the Rue Constantine and found that a big crowd had gathered in the Esplanade des Invalides. Now and again the crowd would give ground to make room for an American soldier running at top speed. One of them stood almost at the entrance of the courtyard of "Invalides." His back was turned toward the tomb of Napoleon and he was knocking out flies in the direction of the Seine. Unfortunately it was a bit far to the river and no baseball has yet been knocked into that stream. It was a new experience for Napoleon though. He has heard rifles and machine guns and other loud reports in the streets of Paris, but for the first time there came to his ears the loud sharp crack of a bat swung against a baseball. Since he could not see from out the tomb the noise may have worried the emperor. Perhaps he thought it was the British winning new battles on other cricket fields. But again he might not worry about that now. He might hop up on one toe as a French caricaturist pictured him and cry: "Vive l'Angleterre."

One of the men in the crowd which watched the batting practice was a French soldier headed back for the front. At any rate he had his steel helmet on and his equipment was on his back. His stripes showed that he had been in the war three years and he had the croix de guerre with two palms and the medaille militaire. His interest in the game grew so high at last that he put down his pack and his helmet and joined the outfielders. The second or third ball hit came in his direction. He ran about in a short circle under the descending ball and at the last moment he thrust both hands in front of his face. The ball came between them and hit him in the nose, knocking him down.

His nose was a little bloody, but he was up in an instant grinning. He left the field to pick up his trench hat and his equipment. The Americans shouted to him to come back. He understood the drift of their invitation, but he shook his head. "C'est dangéreux," he said, and started for the station to catch his train for the front.

CHAPTER V

WITHIN SOUND OF THE GUNS

THE men had traveled to Paris in passenger coaches, but when it came time to move the first division to its training area in the Vosges our soldiers rode like all the other allied armies in the famous cars upon which are painted "Hommes 36; chevaux en long, 8." And, of course, anybody who knows French understands the caption to mean that the horses must be put in lengthwise and not folded. No restrictions are mentioned as to the method of packing the "hommes."

The journey lay through gorgeous rolling country which was all a sparkle at this season of the year. Presently the vineyards were left behind and the hills became higher. Now and again there were fringes of pine trees. At one point it was possible to see a French captive balloon floating just beyond the hilltops, but we could not hear the guns yet. French soldiers in troop trains and camps near the track cheered the Americans and even a few of the Germans inside a big stockade waved at the men who were moving forward to study war. The trains stopped at a little town which lay at the foot of a hill. It was a mean little town, but on the hill was the fine old tower of a castle which had once dominated the surrounding country.

From this town, which was chosen as divisional headquarters, regiments were sent northeast and northwest into tiny villages which were no more than a single line of houses along the roadway. A few one-story wooden barracks had been built for the Americans, but ninety per cent. of the men went into billets. They were quartered in the lofts of barns of the better sort. The billeting officers would not consider sheds where cattle had been kept. Few troops had been quartered in this part of the country previously and so the barns were moderately clean.

The effort to make cleanliness and sanitation something more than relative terms was the first thing which really threatened Franco-American amity. The decision of American officers that all manure piles must be removed from in front of dwelling houses met a startled and universal protest. Elderly Frenchwomen explained with great feeling that the manure piles had been there as long as they could remember and that no one had ever come to any harm from them. The American officers insisted, and at last a grudging consent was forced. I saw one old lady almost on the point of tears as she watched the invaders demolish her manure pile. At last she could stand no more. "They make a lot of dust," she said critically, and went into the house.

A few days after the Americans arrived in camp came their instructors. A crack division of Alpine Chasseurs was chosen to teach the Americans. Nobody called these men froggies. They called them "chassers." It was enough to see them march to know that they were fighting men. Their stride was short and quick. Each step was taken as if the marcher was eager to have it over and done with so that he could take another. Even their buglers won admiration, for they had a trick of throwing their instruments in the air and catching them again that brought envy to the heart of every American band. Indeed, a good deal of friendly rivalry developed from the beginning and in the early days, at least, the French had all the better of it. They could lift heavier weights than our men, who averaged much younger. Little Frenchmen standing five feet three or four would seize a rifle close to the end of the bayonet and slowly raise it with stiff arm to horizontal and down again. American farmer boys tried and failed. Of course, this was a crack French division which drew its men from various organizations, while our division was just the average lot and perhaps not quite that since there was a larger percentage of recruits than is usually found in the regular army.

Although our men were somewhat outclassed by their instructors in these early days, they were game in their effort to keep up competition. Almost the first work to which the troops were set was trench digging. This is one of the most important arts of war and also the most tiresome. Somebody has said of the Canadians: "They will die in the last ditch, but they won't dig it." The Americans have

a similar aversion for work with pick and shovel, but trench digging came to them as a competition. I saw a battalion of the chasseurs and a battalion of marines set to work in a field where every other blow of the pick hit a rock. There was no chance to loaf, for when a marine looked over his shoulder he could see the French picks going for dear life down at the other end of the trench. At four-thirty the men were told to call it a day. The chasseurs leaped out of their trench; threw down their tools, and began to sing at top voice a popular Parisian love ditty entitled "Il faut de l'amour." One of the French officers told me afterwards that it was the invariable custom of his men to sing at the end of work, but the marines thought the "chassers" were merely showing off the excellent nature of their wind. More slowly the Americans clambered out of their trench, but they were ready when the last French note died away and piped up somewhat breathlessly: "Hail! Hail! the gang's all here!"

American company commanders were quick to appreciate the value of organized singing in the training of troops, and for the next few days the doughboys were drilled to lift their voices as well as their picks. Most of all, music was appreciated in the long hikes of the early training period. A good song did much to make a marching man forget that he had a fifty-pound pack on his back.

"I know I'm beginning to get a real company now," one captain told me, "because whenever they're beginning to feel tired they start to sing and freshen up." "No," he said, in reply to a question, "they didn't just start. It needed a little fixing. I noticed that when the Frenchmen stopped work they always started back to camp singing. 'We can do that,' I told my men when we started back. 'Let's hear a little noise.' Nothing happened. Nobody wanted to begin. They were scared the others would laugh at them. I can't carry a tune two feet, but I just struck up 'We'll hang the damned old Kaiser to a sour apple tree' to the tune of 'John Brown's Body.' A few joined in, but most of them wouldn't open their mouths. I told 'em, 'I'm just going to keep on marching this company until everybody's in on the song. I don't care if we have to march all night.' That got 'em going. Now they like it. They're thinking up new songs every day. I can save my voice now."

One of the reasons for sending the men into the Vosges for training was to get them within sound of the guns, but it was almost a week before we heard any of the doings at the front. It was at night time that we first heard the guns. It was a still, windless night and along about eight o'clock they began. You couldn't be quite sure whether you heard them or felt them, but something was stirring. It felt or sounded a good deal as if some giant across the hills had slammed the door of his castle as he left home to take the morning train for business. Up at the northern end of the training area the sound of the guns was much more distinct. In fact, they were loud enough some nights to become identified in the mind as events and not mere rumblings. A Sammy up in that village stopped our car one morning and asked if we couldn't give him a newspaper.

"I suppose you want to know how the baseball games are coming out," somebody suggested.

"To hell with baseball, I want to know about the war," said the soldier. "I'm with these mules," he said, pointing to half a dozen animals tethered on the bank of a canal. "I've been with them right from the beginning. I came over on the same steamer with 'em. I rode up with 'em in the train from – and here we are again. I don't hear nothing. They could capture Berlin and nobody'd tell me about it. All I do is feed these damned mules. 'Big Bill,' that one on the end, is sick, and I've got to hang around and give him a pill every six hours. I wish he'd choke. I don't like him as well as the rest of the mules and I hate 'em all.

"It'll be fine, won't it, when somebody asks me: 'Daddy, what did you do in the great war?' and I say: 'Oh, I sat up with a sick mule.'"

Back of the hills from some indefinite distance came the sound of big guns. They raged persistently for ten minutes and then quit. "Big Bill" began to rear around and kick. The soldier cursed him.

"Those guns were going like that all night, but mostly around two o'clock," he said. "Nobody around here knows anything about it. I wish I could get hold of an American paper and find out something about that fight. I've sent to Memphis for *The News Scimitar*, but somehow it don't seem

to get here. I wish those guns was near enough to drop something over here on the mules, especially 'Big Bill,' but I'm out of luck."

The nearest approach of the war was in the air. It wasn't long before German planes began to scout over the territory occupied by the Americans. One battalion almost saw an air fight. It would have seen it if the Major hadn't said "Attention!" just then. The battalion was drilling in a big open meadow when there came from the East first a whirr and then a machine. The machine, flying high, circled the field. The soldiers who were standing at ease stared up at the visitor, but it was too high to see the identifying marks. Soon there was no doubt that the machine was German, for little white splotches appeared in the sky. It looked as if Charlie Chaplin had thrown a cream pie at heaven and it had splattered. An anti-aircraft gun concealed in a woods several miles away was firing at the Boche. Presently the firing ceased and there was a whirr from the West. A French plane flew straight in the direction of the German, who climbed higher and higher. As the planes drew nearer it was possible to see machine gun flashes, but just then the Major called his men to attention. Regulations provide that eyes must look straight ahead, but it was a hard test for recruits and there may have been one or two who stole a glance up there where the planes were fighting. In each case an officer was on the culprit like a flash.

"Keep your head still," shouted a lieutenant. "That's a private fight. It's got nothing to do with you."

Soon the German turned and flew back in the direction of his own lines and when the necks of the doughboys were unfettered and they could look up again the sky was clear. Even the cream puff splotches were gone.

On another afternoon a Boche plane flew over the entire American area. It circled a field in divisional headquarters where a baseball game was in progress and flew home.

"I know why that German flew home after he reached – ," an officer explained. "Don't you see? He was trying to find out if we were Americans and that baseball game proved it to him."

The greatest aerial display occurred on a morning when a French officer was instructing an American company in the art of trench digging. He spoke no English, but an interpreter of a sort was making what shift he could. The doughboys tried to look interested and didn't succeed. It was harder when out from behind a cloud came one aeroplane, then another and another. When half a dozen had appeared from behind the cloud one doughboy could stand the strain no longer.

"Look," he shouted, "they're hatching them up there."

The French instructor finally granted a recess of ten minutes but before the time was up the planes had maneuvered out of sight. In spite of all the German activity in the air only one attempt was made to bomb the Americans during the summer. A single bomb was dropped on a village where the marines were stationed, but it did no damage.

The second week in the training area found the doughboys increasing their curriculum to include bombs and machine guns. It had not been possible to do much in the finer arts of war previously because of the absence of interpreters. A number of these had been mobilized now but they varied in quality. As one American officer put it, "Interpreters may be divided into three classes: those who know no English; those who know no French; and those who know neither."

However, the Americans managed to get their instruction in some way or other. No interpreters were needed with the machine guns. Instead each American company was divided up into little groups and a chasseur placed at the head of each group. I watched the instruction and found that little language was needed. The Frenchman would take a machine gun or automatic rifle apart and holding up each part give its French name. The Americans paid no particular attention to the outlandish terms which the French used for their machine gun parts, but they were alert to notice the manner in which the gun was put together and in the group in which I was standing two Americans were able to put the gun together without having any parts left over after a single demonstration.

Of course, a little language was used. Some of the marines had picked up a little very villainous French in Hayti and they made what shift they could with that. A few French Canadians and an occasional man from New Orleans could converse with the chasseurs and one or two phrases had been acquired by men hitherto entirely ignorant of French. "Qu'est-ce-que c'est?" was used by the purists as their form of interrogation, but there were others who tried to make "combien" do the work. "Combien," which we pronounced "come bean," was stretched for many purposes. I have heard it used and accepted as an equivalent for "whereabouts," "what did you say," "why," "which one" and "will you please show us once more how to put that machine gun together."

Not only did the Americans show an aptitude for getting the hang of the mechanism of the machine gun and the automatic rifle, but they shot well with them after a little bit of practice.

The first man I watched at work with the automatic rifle was green. He had taken the gun apart and put it together again with an occasional "regardez" and bit of demonstration from one of the Frenchmen, but the weapon was not yet his pal. He picked the gun up somewhat gingerly and aimed at the line of targets a couple of hundred yards away. Then he pulled the trigger and the bucking thing, which seemed to be intent on wriggling out of his arms, sprayed the top of the hill with bullets. The French instructor made a laughing comment and an American who spoke the language explained, "He says you ought to be in the anti-aircraft service."

The next man to try his luck was a non-commissioned officer long in the army. He patted the gun and wooed it a little in whispers before he shot. It was a French gun, to be sure, but the language of firearms is international. "Behave, Betsy," he said and she did. He sprayed shots along the line of targets at the bottom of the hill as the gun clattered away with all the clamor of a riveting machine at seven in the morning. When they looked at the targets they found he had scored thirty hits out of thirty-four and some were bull's-eyes. The French instructor was so pleased that he stepped forward as if to hug the ancient sergeant but the veteran's look of horror dissuaded him.

Bombing proved the most popular part of training and particularly as soon as it was possible to work with the live article. First of all dummy bombs were issued. A French officer carefully explained that the bomb should be thrown after four moves, counting one, two, three, four, as he posed something like a shot putter before he let the bomb go with an overhand, stiff, armed fling. He illustrated the method several times, but the first American to throw sent the bomb spinning out on a line just as if he were hurrying a throw to first from deep short. The Frenchman reproved him and explained carefully that, although it might be possible to throw a bomb a long way in the manner in which a baseball is thrown, it was necessary for a bomber to hurl many missiles and that he must preserve his arm. He also pointed out that the bomb would never land in the trenches of the enemy unless it was thrown with a considerable arc.

The men then kept to the exercises laid down by the instructor, but just before they stopped one or two could not resist the temptation of again "putting something on to it" and letting the bomb sail out fast. One lefthander who had pitched for a season in the Southern League was anxious to make some experiments to see if he couldn't throw a bomb with an out curve but he was informed that such an accomplishment would have no military utility.

The first American wounded in France was the victim of a bombing accident. A soldier threw a live bomb more than thirty meters from a trench. When the bomb burst a fragment came whirling back in some curious manner and fell into a box of grenades upon which a lieutenant was sitting. The fragment cut the pin of one of the bombs and the whole box went off with a bang. The lieutenant received only a slight cut on his forehead, but a French interpreter thirty yards away was knocked unconscious and lost the sight of his right eye. This Frenchman had spent two years under fire at Verdun without being scratched and here was his first wound come upon him on a quiet afternoon in a meadow miles from the lines.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.