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DIARY OF LAWRENCE B. CUMMINGS
SSU 3 (Car #127) & SSU 4 (Car #184)

Volume II: 5 December 1916 - 13 August 1917

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Descriptions

For Talbott and Jack Cummings

Second Book.

Diary of Laurence B. Cummings
Ambulance Driver - American Field Service
August 6, 1916 - Feb. 6, 1917.
Written in the field

Effecourt. December 23, 1916.

Well, youngsters, it's been a long time since I had a chance to scribble. Somehow things have been all jammed together without any breathing space. But now I'm going to try to tell you more about it from the day I left Paris at the end of my permission. December fifth. I felt like an Arctic explorer, outfitted with a big and rather smelly goatskin coat and enormous felt boots, and I was sure that when once I appeared so panoplied I should never be able to shake the nickname of "Cy" which the section had fastened upon me for once having had the temerity to warble the time-honored ditty "I took the old mare over to the County fairs". I was also inclined to squirm from the effects of a paratyphoid inoculation, but that seemed to be the regulation accolade of permissionaires. White and Wallace met me at Bar le Duc and we whirled off to Effecourt in the teeth of a stinging snowstorm. It was good to see the fellows again, though I had regretful longings for the sheets of the Continental when I rolled up in my blankets in the Auberge des Rats. I found Ostheimer about to leave to join Section 9 on duty in the Vosges under his brother as lieutenant. and in his place Almy installed as bunkmate. The last time I saw him was at his father's house

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us Cambridge - a small boy of eight who walked down the centre of the table after dinner. Porter, a western "sky pilot", had also joined the section. Next day to my disgust I discovered "Indianopolis" gone lame with burnt bearings and had to get Fowler's car ready for my request of twenty-four hours at Jouy. I got to the little village off us a valley near Dombasle in the middle of the afternoon and took up my lodgings in the bureau of the medecin divisionnaire - the customary kitchen with a huge cave of a fireplace. A little corporal and a private, commonly known as Pinard Pete, the horse-wranglers, acted as hosts. On the other side of the wall the majors horse stamped and nickered in his stall. The first words were "Have you heard? The Boches are attacking. They have taken trenches on Hill 304!" I could not credit it. We had been expecting the French to strike the blow. But a minute later in came the medecin divisionnaire - old Millieux. He went to the telephone and called the G.B.D. at Jubecourt. "There is a German attack on 304. Send up three extra cars to Esmes. Order ten more brancardiers to the poste there and five more to Montzeville. Without doubt we shall counter attack tonight!" And out he went. I expected to be sent up, but as time passed and we

word came. I ate my dinner with Pinard Pete and the corporal out of the gamelle brought from the poilu kitchens across the street and reheated, and turned in on the board bunk in the fireplace. All night Brancardiers and artillery officers came and went. At seven in the morning the telephone jingled and I got the ritualistic word that we more knows so well - "Vous montez à Cerney!" It was a miserable morning - a "Scotch mist" beating against the cars and mud shooting in broadsides from the wheels. As I climbed the hill of the Bois de Bethlainville I got the sound of the big guns in the fog. Montzeville was drifting and deserted, sinister in its shattered desolation. The road beyond was empty. I'll admit I had a very poor stomach for the drive. But soon as I got along by the flooded abris Biggs' car appeared around the Chatiancourt turn. He pulled up. "Things doing!" he said, and drove on. I ground up the hill and rounded "Straferi Corner", so called from the persistent attentions of the Boche artillery at that particular point. There were no new shell holes and everything was quiet in the trenches as I coasted down past the scene of my former faux pas - now dubbed "Cummings' Corner". Storming past heaps of coiled wire and racked-up lumber in

front of the Genie quarters in Esnes I reached the corners where the shattered church tower stands. "Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue" the facetious members of the section call it, though none feels facetious in passing it as it is the most shelled point in the ruin. From there "Hogan's Alley" leads over a rocky narrow way to the courtyard of the ruined chateau. I bumped my way there and found dozens of bandaged forlorn waiting. I loaded quickly and got away for Ville sur Cousances, passing Moffat going up. At Ville the triage hospital was crowded. Our cars had brought the men in faster than the evacuating cars could carry them to the other hospitals. Boche hand grenades had done deadly work. I returned to Esnes for another load after Bigelow and I had gulped a hasty cup of coffee at Jubecourt. The Mort Homme still lay ominously quiet in its shrouding mist. The French batteries split the air. Little de Clergy was working quietly in the courtyard marshalling his blessés. We had nearly all of them for the moment. On the return trip I passed Ware's car. A helmeted figure sprang out and spoke to me - our lieut going up to stand his trick with the rest of us. At Jubecourt I got orders to return to Jouy after unloading at Ville. At Jouy I found my little corporal friend crying his

heart out. He showed me a letters from headquarters in answers to an inquiry of his about his brothers at the Somme, telling him that the soldiers had disappeared - "probably pulverized", so it said, by a shell. Another incident almost unnoticed in the ghastly wholesale business of killing! It was dark when we reached Offecourt. The camp was almost empty and a few lonesome cars instead of the usual line-up showed that the section was busy. Soon a car from Bar rolled in bringing Perry and Fowler and a "new bird", Amory, and Piccarelli, the mechanic. Perry and Fowler did not wait even to change clothes but dashed off to Jubiecourt and Ornes. There, so we learned later, they had to wait on the outskirts of the village until an unusually vicious bit of shelling stopped. The French counter attack was on and the Boche were retaliating on Ornes. It seems that the enemy took several hundred metres of first line trench and were then driven out again except from a small salient. It took the French several days to dislodge them from this foothold. Nothing was gained by either side, but hundreds were killed and wounded. For several days and nights we were very busy, keeping four cars at Jubiecourt. The prohibition of day driving to Ornes

had to be disregarded. One night it got especially hot at the chateau. We were sleeping on brancards in the hallway of the G.B.D. at Jubicourt, much to the discomfiture of Parrot, the pink-whiskered keeper of the infirmerie. At varying intervals the telephonist would come shuffling in with his electric torch peering among the sleeping forms until he found his victim. Then would come the inquiry in a hoarse stage-whisper. "Est vous qui montez à Cerneş?" and the blankets would be tossed off and boots pulled on. A few minutes later you would hear the hum of the motors mounting Jubicourt hill in the snow. I got only a call to Montzeville, but the fellows who reached the chateau found all they wanted - especially Amory who had to seek shelter under the car. Big's car was hit by eclats, - one through the radiator and another through the front of the body just where Milliens had been sitting a minute before. The chateau wall was hit repeatedly. The men said that the scenes in the dressing rooms of the abri were horrible. Deed tired of carrying two men to bits. One said to the others that he had seen one of his comrades shot down in the No Mans Land between the trenches. Both legs were shot away. "You've seen a worm that has been stepped on?" he said. "That is how he squirmed. So I shot him!"

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Meantime we had some changes in camp. Evans left us, possibly for the flying corps, and Stewart and Lebow were assigned to the new Salonika section. Instead of appointing a new sous chef Perry instituted a system of officers of the day among the "old birds". I got the first job, not a weighty one, and failed utterly in inspiring proper respect in the breasts of my underlings, notably Fowler and Twitchell, who organized a green-apple battery. Bouts of winter played havoc with our cars. Frozen oil necessitated jacking up rear wheels and running the motor until the heat of the engine set the gears free. Poor essence added also to our difficulties and our bidons of near-gasoline often froze. The suffering in the trenches was frightful. Day after day we carried scores of "grands gelés" to the hospitals. One afternoon on the road to Julvecourt I saw a significant sight - the foreign forces of the allies on the march - not black Senegalese or slant-eyed Tonkinois, but the real fighting men - the attacking Zouaves - Moroccans in khaki and red fezes. Except for the bitter cold you might have thought for a moment that you were in Egypt as the train of mitrailleuse caissons passed.

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Another Jouy frequet again fell to my lot, but I spent most of it on the road. It was a noisy night in that valley of death under 304. Dell and I pulled in together at the chateau. The brancardiers came bustling about with the usual confusion. Up on the hill a new French battery of "big ones" was crashing. Then came the rocketing whine of an arrivé. The brancardiers scuttled into the abri or dropped on the ground. "Mettez-vous en dessous!" (Get down!) they yelled. I wanted to, but Stanley Dell stood calmly at the end of his car where a crashé had just been placed and the sight made me afraid to duck. The shell burst somewhere and the eclats dropped spattering about, thrown probably upward and then dropping. Another salvo came in before we finished loading and I was glad to get under way. On the next trip I got in ahead of Dell. Two more "haters" whined in and burst. Then Dell rolled calmly in. Porter, his orderly, told me afterwards that one of the shells hit the church towers above them just as they reached the corner. The church has a significance for us all, for each of us has had his experience at that corner. The relic that I prize most is a little iron cross that Eric Fowler found there and gave to me.

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Ifflecourt, December 30, 1916 — On the fourteenth we read in the Matin of Germany's specious offer of peace. I saw a fit answer to it next day when finishing my long picquet. I got a call to Bethlainville and wound slowly up the steep ascent, drofting again into the half ruined little village. Just above me loomed the dark bulk of a saucisse balloon - floating like some leviathan of the air, its big fins motionless and antennae streaming. As I returned along the edge of the ridge the great battlefield of Verdun unrolled in a panorama below me stretching from the Mort Homme to the peaked height of Vaux — gaunt brown and yellow hills seamed with trench lines and spotted with brown tree clumps. Along the length of it sparks flashed from these tree clumps, leaping out here and there quicker than the eye could follow. The slopes seemed crackling with a surcharge of electricity. Over on the Boche lines white smoke clouds burst out marking the fall of the shells. The hillsides spouted with them, and the wind spun them out in mist. The air shook like distant thunder. It was the artillery preparation for the infantry attack on the Cote de Poivre, though I did not know it then; and a few hours later the

forces swept into the German forts taking a toll of eleven thousand prisoners. It was a tremendous shelling - over 100,000 kilos weight of projectiles were hurled against the Bochers that afternoon; and the taking of the hill pushed them back virtually to the point where they began their attack on Verdun nearly a year ago.

Soon afterwards I got the Ville sur Cousance assignment with Bigelow - a twenty four hours piequet at the triage hospital, taking the wounded and sick to the various hospitals after they are brought in from the forts de secours and "sorted". This time we ran all night long on our trips to the shed-like hospitals at Froidos, the Bois de Lavoye, and the long lines of barracks at Fleury flanking the tracks where the constant loading of the red cross trains goes on. I remember the evening well. I was returning from Fleury where I had left my load of mud stained, tired poilus. Across the snow-touched fields a little red-tiled village lay clustered about the church spire. It was just dusk. Away over the hills came the flashes and thudding of the guns. And then, clear-toned and sweet, the Angelus rang.

I like these runs through the little villages with

the shifting soldiers groups. There is movement everywhere - trains of waggons, motors, camions. The soldiers are forever meeting and parting - saluting each others with the somewhat bromidic statement - "Pas chaud!" - and shaking hands left-handed. Now and then an old crone in white cap and sabots passes, stooping under her burden of faggots. Or a shuffling old "civil", beyond the age of service, drives his big Norman horses past, hitched tandem to his hay "chariot", plodding along afoot at the leader's head. Rubble walls and tile roofs form the inevitable background for the gray-blue uniforms as the soldiers lounge about. Swift streams rush under bridges turning mossy mill wheels. But sentries stand guard at the bridge heads and the locks. The war enters everywhere.

I had an amusing experience with a Boche prisoner at Dille. He was a little sniffly fellow, wearing the regulation brown denim clothes and marked with the white initials P.G. of a prisonnier de guerre. He was to go to the hospital at Souilly, where the detention camp sheds stand behind the wire barricade. I waited for an hour for the arrival of the homme de garde who was to escort

the fearsome captive. The garde was full panoplied with helmet, cartouche belt and fixed bayonet. But when we arranged our cortege I was somewhat surprised to have this guardian spirit cozily shut up in the ambulance while his charge mounted beside me. We got quite chatty before we reached Souilly. The little Boche confided to me that he had plenty to eat and wear and was well treated and that he wanted the war to end so that he could go home to his frau and babies and work on the tramway in Berlin. We were quite loquacious with repeated "Ja's!" and "Achs!".

One morning when I was at requet car at Jubecourt I took the medecin chef, familiarly known as "Pouf-Pouf", up to our new poste in the Foret de Hesse just west of Esnes. We jolted about over half-frozen rutty roads through thick woods where batteries roared among the splintered trees and finally came to the end of the road. The officers got down and went on ahead to look over the ground, leaving me to fraternize with the soldiers who huddled about their fires near rows of stacked arms. While standing there I saw a fearful sight - a rotted corpse of a soldier borne by on a stretcher, just a mass of bloody bandages and stained blue cloth and hard flesh. It seemed impossible

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that such a thing could ever have been a man - this ghastly thing just found lying in the woods unburied! The crude horror of it! The bestial rending of flesh!

That night, the first one for us, I got a call to the new poste. It was inky black in the woods and the road showed only as a whitish glimmer under the trees. The net result of my run was a slide into a ditch, a collision with a tree felled by a shell across the road, and an encounter with an outrailleurs caisson in which old Indianapolis haffily came out victorious. After this somewhat eventful trip we were instructed not to make the runs except by daylight.

Much chagrin has been caused our friends of the G.B.D. by the announcement that the brancardiers and other members of the service de santé must go into the line regiments and be replaced by the territorials. None seem keen for the change - and it's small wonder. Life about the hospitals, for all its grimness, is a different thing from the horrible existence in the boyaux and dug-outs with the half-frozen mud knee-deep. Even in the camps the mud is a curse. It is a slough of despond in the one back of the triage. I went there one day and encountered a wild

boar, happily domesticated, that nuzzled at me with great earnestness, begging for tid-bits. Our remaining domestic porkers, at the court, still continues to be the pride of the several hearts of the piratical Pabrist, Cezerac, and Sabatier, the little fat corporal. They absolutely refused to immolate him for our Christmas dinner, which, by the way, was held a day late. On Christmas night, however, we had an impromptu celebration with A. Piatt Andrew and Ex-Ambassador Bacon as guests. We sang to the accompaniment of Twitchell's harmonica, and listened to Twitch's account of a typical run to Ernes, since immortalized in the first issue of the Effeccurier. Mr. Bacon caught the spirit of things - so much so, indeed, that he wanted to make an Ernes trip and went up as Moffat's orderly when a call came in. He was wearing our uniforms, and we fitted him out in my fur coat and somebody else's cargue. He is an awfully good sport. He slept on a brancard at Jubrecourt and made the four-thirty runs like an "old bird." He said afterwards that he thought one of the coffins on the porch at Jubrecourt offered better rat-protection than a brancard. On Christmas day we had a diminutive tree in the dining room. The Frenchmen got useful gifts and the rest

of us were favored with pseudo-amusing ones. We gave the Lieut a silver cup and Perry a silver cigarette box. I missed the dinner, going up as orderly on Car 2 at Jubecourt. But I felt pretty Christmassy just the same, for your gifts were in my pocket, little sons, and the thought of you was very warm in my heart. Dear boys, I wish that I could see you!

Jubecourt, January 2, 1917. - Things have been warming up on our secteur. We keep hearing repeated rumors of attacks on Bois Haut and the Mort Homme. The Boches keep nipping away, taking a few metres of trench with hand grenades and then being dislodged by the furious fire from the French batteries. One night the Lieut ordered all cars ready to roll, and there was a hurry of preparations, lanterns shining among the cars and motors humming; but though most of us slept in our clothes no one was called out. Next day, however, we got it - Dec. 29th. I was second car at Jubecourt, going up to Montzeville with the ravitaillement at four in the afternoon and taking the usual French brancardier as orderly. From the top of the Bois de Bethlainville we could see an unusual amount of shelling. When I got back to Jubecourt a call

came in for Ernest. It was just dusk as I started up, Fowler going as orderly on our first run. We were made
We had just topped the crest of Jubecourt hill and started on the winding road over the bleak fields when the air along the horizon began flashing with long bands of light, vibrating and flickering like heat lightning. It grew as night came on, widening and mounting until the whole sky was ablaze. We rushed through Dombasle and up the Bois de Bethlainville. Above us beyond the gaunt line of woods the air was ablaze with red light like the reflection from some huge fire. A roar struck us that seemed to rock the car. Then we topped the crest. The valley lay below seething with angry light. On either side in the woods great spurts of flame leaped as the big pieces fired. Beyond on the slopes the batteries spat red. Further, over the distant hills the shells burst like white electric sparks. The noise was terrific - continuous like the roll of a thousand drums, but rising and falling irregularly The crashes of the giant pieces split this tumult with repeated shocks. Every French gun from the Meuse to Avocourt was firing in a tremendous tir de barrage. The valley rocked and staggered with

concussion. As we went on the darkish din grew. Fierce red bursts of flame leaped from the blackness ahead of us high in the air as the shrapnel shells let go their blast. Great clouds tore overs us with a continuous swish and whine, speeding from the huge cannons behind us fast as bullets from a repeating rifle. The road was light as day beyond Montzwille. I felt a curious sense of exhilaration as though the noise and light were an intoxicant. Fowler and Jewett afterwards said they felt it too. Beyond the fork and past Straffers corners the night turned green. On our right, parallel with the road and not far away, star shells were floating over the Mort Homme and 304 in endless succession. Below them the smoke rolled in black clouds as the shells exploded. Rockets streamed up and balls of red and green signals dropped from them. The valley as we went down it was lived in the ghastly light with its tinge of green; and beyond, back of the German lines, great sheets of red light flared. The snags and bushes by the road alongside us were black; the shell-holes in the road and ditches and the fields, round pools of water that threw back the light. Ahead the ruins of Esnes wavered in the pulsating flashes, and above them the crest of 304 belched fire like a crater.

It was impossible to tell the "departs" from the "arrives" in the

hideous tumult that seemed centred there. Shrapnel and big shells were falling on the slope like rain, and mitrailleuse and rifles cracking through the din told that men were fighting in that hell-pit. We passed a few straggling groups of soldiers and a lumbering cart or two, and then came the trill of an ambulance whistle and a little Ford rolled up - Jewett coming out alone from Ornes with his wounded. On we went, and crawled around in the chateau courtyard. Down in the abri the surgeons were busy. There had been a Boche grenade attack on 304 in the afternoon, and now the French batteries were blasting them out of the slight footing that they had gained. As we waited for our blessés, the firing slackened, rose again, then died away until only an occasional shot sounded; and when we started back along the road over which that arc of shells had just been curving the night was quiet.

It was an eventful night for Section H, however. Little Goyard on duty at Ornes kept calling for more cars. It had begun to rain, a lashing, stinging wind-driven blast that blinded you and tore at the car. It was next to impossible to see the road - and there was no moon. We passed car after car, and then things began to happen. Jewett hit a tree beyond Dombasle,

and went out of commission. Harrington tore out his transmission - we were all loaded heavy - and on our second trip from Esnes we came upon a group of three cars at the top of the hill beyond Brocourt, - Parrott taking over Harrington's load, and Wallace on his way up. Fowler and I made one more run to Esnes. We covered something over one hundred miles that night, moving along through the dark. I remember hours we ourselves seemed to be stationary with the dim glimmery of road streaming under us. At last in the courtyard of the poste I burnt out two hands and we limped away after working on the transmission in the dark. Not daring to trust the old cars further we went to Apprecourt and took Fowler's car. Returning to Jubrecourt we got a call at daybreak to go to Parrott's rescue at Montzeville. We found him in front of the poste there with a bent steering gear - the result of a head-on collision with Wallace in the middle of Esnes. We took over his load and he limped home. That cleaned out the poste. Andre got everybody running next day, and the night after that - New Year's Eve - we were nearly all at it again. It was a night of horrors. I went up as Jewett's orderly on Car 2. At dinner at the Jubrecourt poste a call came and up we went to Esnes. I stumbled down the cobbled

slope into the abri, made my way past the dim benches behind the wooden columns loaded with the tired, half-frozen failures, and so into the further vault. It is a cellar room, barrel vaulted, dirty whitewash smeared over the rough plaster. Down the middle runs a double row of tree trunks, shoring up the roof. At one end stands a little table and a wash stand. At the other stacks of bandages and surgical dressings fill a tier of shelves. The place is flooded with the blinding blute light of carbide lamps. It reeks of acetylene, ether and warm blood. The place is a shambles. Slung on chains between the columns two brancards hang. Brancardiers stand in close groups about them. White-robed medecins, red to the elbows, are working with sniffing scissors. There are things on the stretchers; inert forms. The brancardiers are lifting one of them - the dresser - stripping off the uniform and the filthy shirt. Others hold great compresses and bandages ready. The floor is littered with wads of cotton and gauze stained bright red. A bare arm is suddenly held up under the light. It is streaming blood - spurting it from jagged holes in the white skin. The hand! Red too, with a mass of blackened flesh protruding from a

hole through the back of it. A groan - inarticulate - half scream - brute like and horrible. My God! The man's face where the light hits it - those hanging shreds of flesh that should be features! He is trying to speak, poor devil, through that wound of froth and blood-bubbles. - A surgeon deftly and mercifully swathes the thing in bandages, but the crimson stains burst through. - There on the floor is another stretcher. Surely the man on it is dead with that ashen face. A dark red pool is forming on the wet floor where a trickle of blood drips. How still he is! He is covered with a slime of grey mud from cap to sodden boots. - There is another and still another. Off in that cave of a place through the loose Face, hair and hands - everything - is the colour of clay. dark red blood oozing across their clay-smeared faces. archway two more lie. It is a place of horror - If only one of those still forms would move! - The gaunt priest prowls about in his black cassock. The surgeons work swiftly, attempting only dressings of a temporary sort. Stretchers are hurrying and others swung up. The door swings open and the - four to an "Equipe" - helmeted regimental brancardiers bear in still more litters. On one is a brancardier, shot down while carrying a blessé back from the front line. They half-strip him. He has been shot through below the

waist - a little round hole only showing on each side. He is quite calm as they work on him. He calls a comrade and dictates a letter. "A ma mere!" I kiss another! (I carried it down later and felt honored in doing it) Goyard tells me how the others were wounded. It seems that up beyond Eaves on the Bethincourt road a group of infantrymen were gathered about their "cuisine roulante" getting their soupe. A shell fell in the middle of the crowd, killing them like rats. Seventeen dead and a dozen, badly wounded is the toll, not counting the slightly wounded. More are dying now here in the poste. Out between the banks in the cave cellar they are working over a man badly wounded in the stomach. He is in convulsions. Finally they swathe him and carry him out. He is dead when they reach the car. More cars have arrived - the boys come stooping into the abri in dripping caoutchouc and helmets. From the outer rooms as they open the door comes the sound of low moans from the wretches in the agony of "trench feet". A deadened thud above means the fall of a shell near the church. They are getting ready to load. The bearers work the stretchers out through the pillars, and we follow up into the courtyard. It is full of cars now. The square outlines of

four shows dimly above us in the darkness. A red flash from somewhere near lights the place. A crash! A shell at the church corner where we must pass. Another! Another! The stretchers are slid in. Motors cough and hum. Someone calls "Attention", and from around the corner comes a silent procession — stretcher bearers with brancards on their shoulders, four to each. They cross the court. The dead! Seven more of them. Harrington pulls out. We follow down "Hog's Back Alley". A star shell helps us clear the shell hole at the corners by the church and we make for the road.

We had to take them wounded to our old triage of Clairets Chenes, for they were of the 65th Division. There were only a couple of brancardiers there and a pottering little doctor, so we carried our men up the muddy path and laid them on the floor ourselves. Some had shattered legs and moaned ceaselessly while the slow process of "sorting" went on. Such an endless reading of "fiches" and writing in books!

Going back by Dombasle the heat overtook us as we waited at the railroad crossing with orders for Esnes again. Malades only this time - five of

thems. Jewett's car failed to "function" proferly and stalled in the middle of Bombarde hill. Only the arrival of Harrington and White with a ferrying of loads and shoulder work got us up. Finally at six o'clock we rolled up in our blankets on the brick floors of the poste at Jubecourt and got an hours sleep - our first of the new year.

The afternoon brought more work. Bigelows and I set out for the Ouvrage d'Esnes in the Foret de Hesse, getting into the woods at twilight. We passed plenty of fresh shell-holes - "obus verts" - fulled tree limbs out of the way from where they had been shot and somehow reached the poste. But there Bigelows went "en panne" smashing his driving gears in trying to turn around on a log bridge. We found a telephone, called another car, and then made our way to a queer little troglodyte village - small huts set among saplings with curving paths grotesquely suggestive of a Japanese garden. We entered one and fairly dropped down a steep flight of steps into a tiny abri ten feet underground. A bunk wide enough for three filled half the room - a table and a little bench the rest. In the clay wall a fire burned. There we stayed and ate our own

year's dinner - a can of sardines - while three bravearders entertained us for three hours. Occasionally the cave of a place trembled with the discharge of a nearby battery. And finally we heard the purr of Moffat's motor and climbed out to join him on the return trip.

Oh, little sons, something is wrong with the world. The unspeakable horror of all this - will it bring us anywhere? I can stand the sight of the terrifying things - the blood, the wounds, the suffering. I have got over the revulsion at seeing men living in slimy burrows like moles. The mere mechanisms of warfare grows commonplace. But the hideous fact that there are men - men with ideals and faith and love - men to whom life is a splendid thing, or was so once - that there are men seeking coldly to destroy the lives of other men like them is something that constantly grows more terrible. It shakes your whole belief in what seemed good in man - almost everything that you have relied upon crumbles under you and leaves you bewildered and adrift. What are we, after all?

Ypecourt, January 7, 1917. I've just been reading my last entry. It sounds pretty ghastly and so I'm going to turn to the pages of the "Ypecourier" for something that isn't depressing. The "Ypecourier", you must know, is a remarkable publication. There has been only one issue of the magazine and only one copy of that, laboriously penned and produced for our Christmas celebration by Dell, Twitchell, Bigelow, Denison and Purcell. We are proud of it - mainly because it is not like "Friends of France", the official publication of the Ambulance Field Service "endorsed by its members" apparently to offer documentary evidence that we are all heroes beyond dispute. We must be heroes, because we have published several thousand copies of "Friends of France", admitting the soft impeachment. That book, I may say, is not popular with Section 4. But we have no heroes in Sec. 4 - and hence the "Ypecourier". I wish I could show you the single extant copy of the magazine but I can't, and so I am going to quote some extracts. Here is Twitchell's account of "A Trip to Eerner": - 'Twas rainin' a mite when we set out, but 'twasn't long afore she commenced to clear up like an' by th' time we come to Jewbecourt things was bright an' shinin'. We set out round a corner where they was a God's quantity o' children a playin'. "Rather a pity", says I, "to bring them young critters up a speakin' of a foreign language." But Mr. Cummings he ain't say nawotthin. Wal, sir,

we come up through the Boys de Bettlinville, which ain't no more'n a stand of timber, most of which ain't standin' at all. Down to the bottom o' the hill we come on a crowd o' houses all bottoms side up. Says I, "I calilate that 'ere's one o' them fresh air colonies folks talks of." Says Mr. Cummins "Not presactly." Wal, the other side o' them houses we follered what was onct a road. They'd been doin a powerful lot o' diggin' there too, I kin tell yer! Holes! Dumm me if them meadders wa'n't so plum full o' holes ye could scarce tell which was meadders an' which was hole. Says I "What's them holes a doin' there?" Says he "Them's shell holes." "They be!" says I. "Must be an onmerciful big critter lives in them shells!" Just 'bout then there come a turrible cummotion like there was several offrest trains all a fightin' to see which could git down the fust. Mr. Cummins he commenced a usin' purty powerful language, an' I noticed we didn't slack up none. Why, we was a passin' them holes that fast it 'peared like they was all one trench! An' 'twa'n't long afore we come a chargin' over a few stone walls an' haul up on a rock pile long side'n a ruins. Mr. Cummins he explained to me later on as how that 'ere ruins was the remains of a shato. They suttinly didn't bother about leavin' much. Natirally I follers Mr. Cummins when he

goes a chargin' down a hole into the cellar o' that 'ere open-air enclosure. I ain't knocked my head more'n a dozen times afore I come to find we was a standin' in a sort o' room, with critters o' all sorts a hollerin' something' disgraceful like at Mrs. Cummins, but we was able t'git out with only six a follerin' us. Two of 'em Mrs. Cummins he calls "asses", but they don't say nawthin'. When they was all tuck in I looks round for a place to set an' I come to find there wain't none. "Yours sets on the mud-guard", says Mrs. Cummins. "The hell I do," says I. An' I walks back to Appleyard.

Surely that account should feel with envy the heart of any editor of "Friends of France". Isn't it worthy to be immortalized in the same volume of heart-throbs with those tales of hair-breadth 'scapes as told by the escapers themselves @ price 13 francs 50? And here is Dell's "Song of the Ford":-

Systems engendered me, Misery travailed with me,
God made my image of cans and of spoon.
But chance interfered with me, someone miscarried me.
Pity my lot. I was born too soon.
Born too soon in a world not made for me.
Where are old Joshua, Caleb and Zeke?
Where are the silo, the harrow, the tractor-plows -

The road to tours at the end of the week?
Ever met Kellner's? See what they did to me
After Bordeaux and the deft Peter Kent.
Where are the Jersey roads - where are the easy loads -
Where is the fuss with a rear axle bent?
Bent under medecins, bon-bons and victualments,
(My spirit is low when I'm sworn at in French)
But what can I say of the holes in the water-way,
Made by the things that they toss from the trench?
But give me your blesses, and your wat-de-your call-ems,
I know what you meane when you say 15/8,
And once we are headed back - damn the old muddy track!
Damn the old Germans - and let 'em "Raté"!

Could Emery Pottle do better?
(15/8 is the number of the triage hospital.
"Raté" is our word for shell-fire.)

And here is how old "Big" lifts up his voice in song -
'Twas rolling, and the flighty Ford
Did snort and snuffle on the hill.
All shelly was the road at Esnes
And also Montzeville.

Beware the Bury Bochers, my son,
The obus whine, the shrapnel screams.
Beware the Bois de Bethelainville
Or you will bust a team.

He took the turning crank in hand.
Long time he cranked and cranked in vain.
Then rested he against a tree
And then he cranked again.

One-two, one-two; and through and through
She coughed and sputtered chug-a-chug.
He took a wrench and busted the stench
He changed another plug.

And didst thou see the Bury Bochers
And bring some blesses back to Billy?
'Tis even so, my Commodore.
Those damned old Fords are hard to kill.

We call Perry the "Commodore" for obvious reasons.

The "Pfeecourier" also published "Scientific Facts". Here are a few choice excerpts:-

About Abris. "Abri" is pronounced ay bree. It is a ceiling with a hole under it. In the present war it has replaced the ancient guillotine. A shell falling on an abri, makes life commonplace for those within. In consequence of this civilians are forbidden the use of this safety device. In the construction of an abri the fact of prime importance is the determination of the common rendez-vous of all in-bound shells. The point having been determined, the abri is placed in the hole dug for that purpose. Hence the familiar proverb "A shell in an abri is worth two in the street."

Burros. The Burro is raised in Algeria and set down in Montevideo. He should not be confused with the Algerian rabbit-burrow, which of course cannot be raised. While the peasants of Algeria were raising burros, the enemies of Verdun were raising hell. It was this peculiar coincidence, coupled with the fact that the burro is the only beast that can be fitted into a trench at any angle that induced General Joffre to import this little fur-bearing quadruped to France. As far as can be ascertained the early

years of the animal are spent in a stern school of Stoicism. So efficient is this training that neither the Sphinx nor the North Star can claim a thicker skin. But like the magic "Open Sesame" of Ali Baba there is a "mot" to which the burro is susceptible. Where a team of burros is apparent on the radiator one need only whisper "Erichy!" when the road suddenly becomes burroless.

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All this nonsense, while intended primarily to create a little fun for the sections, was a sort of protest against the cant and sententiousness that seems to have somehow got into the published accounts of our work. It is, of course, a parody direct of the "Friends of France". There is happily in Section H a common sense attitude towards the work, leavened with a wholesome sense of humor that does not in any way lower the standard that has been set by unspoken agreement for conscientious, sympathetic work. The men shun mushy sentimentality as they would the plague, but I have seen the ones loudest in their protests against that sort of thing the coolest under shell-fire and the gentlest with their wounded. What they dislike most of all is the published accounts

of Ambulance life – such as some men who have gone home have put in the papers or such as appeared in "Friends of France". When we get the papers these accounts are read aloud and comments invited, which never fail in forthcoming. To say the least it is bad taste to label yourself a hero, even admitting that you are one – which they don't admit. Unfortunately too some of the people in control of Ambulance affairs in their eagerness to get more funds and more men have allowed their propagandist literature to get a little florid. There have been too many references to the "flower of young American manhood", "the century-old debt to France", "the blood of Lafayette" and similar rot. That may be necessary to create interest but it is mighty distasteful to the workaday man on the inside, and there is a strong feeling of disgust over it in our section. We were well launched in a discussion on this sore topic the other day when a few inspired voices lifted up in harmony with the tune of "I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier." only this is what they sang –

"I didn't raise my boy to be a German.
I brought him up to be a Friend of France
To help exterminate the Teuton vermin

Who put the Belgian babies to the cause.
We're here to rally round our Pious Andrews
And propagate the blood of Lafayette.
There'd be no wars today if in Berlin they'd say
"I didn't raise my boy to be a Germans!"

Jouy, January 16, 1917. Twotcheek and I are just finishing our forty-eight hours frequet here - as recent institution to save essence. We have had a quiet time of it except for an abortive "urgent call" to Cerney Last night. We found only three maladers, changed a tire and virtually rebuilt the motors en route. Just beyond the Chattancourt corners on the side of the road as it rises to Straferes Corners a new battery has been installed. Last night the Bochers were after it. We saw two arrivées there as we advanced, the last one close enough for us to get the sulphur fumes as we passed. There has been some considerable shelling of the road lately. Long continued rain and snow have played havoc with the roadbed. Except for an occasional glimmer the sun has not shone for over three weeks. Down near the Chattancourt corners two abysmal lakes of mud appeared, squarely across the road. Practically every car got stuck there, and rear springs and axles snapped like pipe stems.

I took a new man, Rothermel, up with me as orderly one night. We foundered like a sinking ship on the way up. The old car sunk to the mud guards, and I had a good view of the road until a passing company of troops pulled us out. The genie finally filled the holes, but as trips now has become a sort of obstacle race with the course laid through little 77 shell holes, and timbers, and coils of barbed wire that have fallen from the waggons. Much to our surprise Gooch and I came upon a fresh shell hole near the top of the Bois de Bethelainville on our return trip one night. We thought it just a chance shot so far back of the usual zone of fire but three nights ago the Boches threw more than twenty shells into the cross roads there, though none hit the road. Twitch and I saw the holes as we passed last night - black in the white surface of the snow. The night that Gooch and I went up was the quietest that I ever saw on the sectors. The full moon came up on the sky-line through the black tree trunks in the Bois de Bethelainville, flooding the snow drifts with silvery light and for a little while the sky was free from the lurid flashes of the guns. Another night

with Eric Fowler was a snowy one. When we awoke the early morning sun in the dim light we found an unbroken sweep of freshly fallen snow across the bleak open country between Brocourt and Donbasle. Not a wheel track was visible and we had trouble in keeping to the road. Corners had a ghostly look in the moonlight with the shrouding snow upon the blackened timbers, and that omnipresent quiet hanging over it that always seems death-like. You never know how the silence may be broken. Bigelow and I got into a lot of bad shelling all along the road the other night directed not against the batteries alone but the road as well. It was the night of a relève (changing troops) and the Boches evidently knew it. To add variety a gas shell exploded at the corner of the chateau, and the fumes were pretty unpleasant in the abri for a while though not to a dangerous extent. Everyone has a horror of the gas. Not long ago several gas bombs fell near the poste at the Carrefour d'Esnes filling the woods with the deadly vapors. Everyone there took to their masks. Luckily somebody had the forethought to cancel a call for a car.

Jubecourt. Jan. 16, 1917. Twitch and I came near a real adventure on our return from Jouy last night. A thick wet snow has been falling and freezing on

the road. We drove into it, blinking as it filed up about our shoulders. We passed companies of troops trudging up to the lines, suddenly appearing out of the swirling storm, their blue overcoats and helmets powdered with white, their moustaches and beards tiffed with ice. The gendarme sentry in his little wooden box at the bleak crossroads near the Bois St. Pierre stood knee-deep in a drift with the wind lashing the sleet about him. Twitchett's car slipped and skidded like an unbroken colt as we edged along to the top of Jubicourt hill. There trouble commenced. The hill road, bending and curving along the precipice there, was clogged with ravitaillement waggons and carts, horses straining and slipping as the whips whistled and cracked, wheels groaning. Our car took a side crab-fashion, and to save a collision with a huge van Twitchett turned the front wheels into the little parapet of earth that skirts the edge of the cliff. The outer wheel caught in a clump of bush over the edge, and the axle brought up on the dirt and, happily, there we stuck. Seeing the futility of trying to extricate the car or of continuing our tobogganing descent even if we could we carried our blanket rolls and knapsacks downhill to the poste of the G.B.D. There we met the lieut. just

setting out with the medicin chef to inspect the new sections in the heinkel car. We tramped alongside as they began the ascent, rear wheels spinning and slipping. Soon everyone was out pushing and grunting, and with many stops and much conversation we finally got the Delage up the slope. It was a precarious ascent. Carts, ambulances and pondereous camions were waltzing down the hill like drunken elephants, but luck seemed to guide their erring course. Tonight only one car, chain-equipped, will go to Verneuil, and a voiture à chevaux will do the evacuating from Juvincourt. There will probably be rare snowballing at camp when we get back to Effecourt-if we ever do. The old fleet cars had a fantastic look for the past few days with cottony white tufts on the wattle work and cushions of snow and pendent icicles on the parked cars. Starting your motor is fraught with some risk, for the environs over immediately fall you with snowballs as soon as the engine begins humming.

We had a new experience the afternoon that we arrived in Jouy. Up in the twilight sky a great "saucisse" was floating, swaying slightly on its tether. As we watched it began to descend. Its fat "fins" gave it a weird resemblance to an elephant head as it came down. We hurried to the other end of the village and got to the landing

place just as the observer was stepping out of the basket, hooded like an Arctic explorer. Dozens of soldiers were grasping the pendent ropes and attaching sand bags to the great balloon as it billowed over them. In a few minutes the crowd of them ran down the hill propelling the big parti colored bag floating over them, sharply outlined against the farther snow-covered hillside and looking curiously like a colony of ants with a fat grub worm. The big automobile with its drums and hausers interested us. The cable winds about a steel cylinder propelled by a second motor in the truck, set at right angles to the car.

In spite of our being at the front we lead remarkably constricted lives. Few of us have seen a gun fired or been in a trench. Our work is laid out for us and we can't deviate from it - a condition that probably would seem curious to anyone on the outside. We are very small cogs in this huge mechanism of war - and our efficiency depends on how closely we stick to our job. Sometimes I lose sight of the fact that our postcurs, important as it is, is only a small portion of the great battle line that twists its red way for hundreds of miles across Europe. Think of being the directing hand of all that line - Imelda, the news

general with the victories of the Cote de Poivre already won! A glorious task but a ghastly responsibility - dealing in this wholesale barbarism of human lives!

Now comes the reply of the allies to Wilson's question - "What Are You Fighting For?" Germany has not yet answered. Does she really know? Does anyone?

Glorieux, January 24, 1917. Well, kiddies, I'm coming home to you. Much as I feel I ought to keep on here I can't stay away from the sight of you any longer, and when any time is up with Section 4 I'm going back home to you. It's been a long time, little sons, - an awfully long time - and I need you so!

Well, let's get along with the story. The day after the Blizzard we had to go out in the park with shovels and dig out our cars from the big white snow drifts. Wheel-Chains came into great demand. We could only muster a few pairs, and next day, - Perry having gone into Bar le Duc to see Twitchell and Harrington off on permission - Dell and I set out in 440 to borrow chains from Section 2. They were temporarily quartered in barracks at Glorieux close to Verdun. We took the road through Dodelancourt, [illegible] striking across past the aviation hangars, and came out upon the Grand Route to Verdun, the "Route Sacrée". We met and passed

long trains of ravitaillement - the big motor camions, huge Juggernauts of the road; hooded forage waggons; two-wheeled carts piled high with hay; long "chariots" of bombers drawn by four and six big horses; - long streams of traffic going in both directions. Plodding foolers trudged along by the horses' heads or swayed on the seats, and others walked behind chewing to straps or creaky brake-wheels. Batteries of mottled 75's went by at the trot, six horses to each gun, a helmeted artilleryman in the saddle of each near horse. Ammunition caissons rumbled in their trail. Smart touring cars darted by filled with staff officers, klaxons honking shrieking. Little processions of the mitrailleuse caissons like two-wheeled sulkies went along pulled by leisurely mules in single harness. And by the roadside stolid Boche prisoners cracked rock and threw dirt along the roadway. Everywhere there was movement - blue figures against the white background of the snow. We edged our way through the traffic and at last reached the little village of Regret. On the kilometer stones a significant name appeared - "Verdun." At a fork in the road we swung to the left through the half ruined village of Glorieux, doubled back on a parallel road and drew up among the brown-plank, one-story barrack sheds. The Ford ambulancers of

Sections 2 were drawn up in line on the frozen road, flanked by the bulkier French ambulances. We went inside one of the long sheds and found Webster, chief of 2, busy with his packing. He had no chairs for us, with as few minutes to spare. Dell and I climbed the hill back of the barracks. A short tramp over the snows through a line of rusted barbed wire entanglement and across crumbling abandoned trenches brought us upon the Côte plateau. Beyond lay a misty valley flanked by dim, snowy hills, and a vague glimpse of huddled roofs below — the long beleagured city of Verdun. Somewhere out of the mist came the mutter of the guns, sullen and ominous. We stayed only a few minutes and then went back to the car, driving home in time for one to roll up in my blankets and report for first night duty at the Belle sur Couleuvre triage. The afternoon dragged but in the bare whitewashed room. Ambulances drew up at the door unloading their freight of weary, mud-stained soldiers. They came limping in through the creaking door carrying their dangling packs and rifles to sink down dejectedly about the stinking, red-hot stove. Some wore swathes of bandages under their capotes or carried crippled arms in slings. Others hobbled on swollen, bandaged feet. Sometimes the

Brancardiers bore in on stretchers with as "couché" from under muddy blessé blankets. One attendant snapped the breech locks of the rifles seeking cartridges. Another ladled out weak tea. The medecin in charge went about consulting the little tickets tied to each mans coat, prying under checkered shirts, examining tongues. Now and then a brancardier beckoned to a man and quickly jabbed the anti-tetanus hyperdermic into the bared flesh at the waist. At a table a corporal called out names and one by one the men answered, giving regiment number and service class, sometimes consulting their wrist plaques. Slowly the "feuille" would be made up and as load sent off in Almys car or ours to some base hospital at Fleury, Faverolles or Villecourt. Now and then there would be a cheerful, chatty man in the tired group. I talked with one - a grenadier just in from the Bois d'Avocourt beyond Hill 304. He told how he slept in the first line trenches, a hand grenade in each pocket, ready to jump up and throw them at the first warning of an attack from the Boche trenches just across the wire entanglement. He explained the reason for using the stiff-arm overhand throw, like our English cricketers, saying that this way put the weight of the body into it and saved fatigue in continued throwing. He said he could

throw a grenade accurately twenty-five metres, but some men in his battalion could throw forty. Like many other poilus he was sanguine over the end of the war coming within six months. He told me that one night he and his comrades climbed out of their trenches, knee-deep in freezing mud, and lay along the parapet, calling to the Boche to do the same. The Boches readily complied and they spent the night very amicably. After dinner up on the muddy hill I had a call to carry two Boche prisoners and their guard to Souilly. All went merrily with our party and when we arrived at Souilly we all joined in a cup of coffee. I asked the little Boche for a souvenir and he let me cut a button off of his tunic - the Bavarian lion - which I have since had mounted on my briquet.

Rumors of a change of sectors for us were finally confirmed by direct orders to get ready to move from Affeconrt. On the 20th I was assigned as Fowler's orderly on the first car at Jubecourt. It meant our last sight of Eparges - something which I must confess caused me no regret whatsoever. We had a busy night, making four round trips. The officers of Section I were at the chateau arranging to take over the poste when we first arrived. It was

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still light enough to see grim traces in the snows. A number of new holes had pitted each side of the road at "Strafer's Corners", and down at "Cummings Corners" two big fellows had thrown clods over the roadway, spreading great black smudges over the snows from the crater like rims of the holes close by the shattered French ambulance. The slope of 304 was streaked with black where the rain of shells had fallen on the white. Somehow the effect of the shelling seemed intensified by the new setting. We made two runs during the night, and on one of them carried down a lieutenant slightly wounded in the forehead - his fifth wound. He sat between us and chatted all the way in. He told me something that I had been anxious to be sure of for some time. He had been on the same sector since June at positions on 304 and Mort Homme and in the Rarecasse, the valley between. He said that our cars were plainly visible to the Boches from the time we emerged from the Bois de Bethelainville until we reached Montzeville, and again from Strafers Corners to Cummings Corners. The information was not reassuring. Our passengers also told us that the Germans had never been dislodged from the salient on the crest

of 304 that they captured in the attack on December 19th. He told us something of the trench life with its three periods - eight days in the front line, eight in the second, and eight on rest in the Bois de Bethencourville. At some places in the lines the men stand almost elbows to elbows, at others at intervals of thirty metres. The trenches here and there approach the Boche trenches very closely - the distance between two opposing posts, d'ecoute at one point being less than ten metres. Our relief took us up to Ecurie on our fourth run at seven o'clock in the morning in broad daylight. When we came back I mounted the mud guard and looked out over the nose of the ear at the front. Somme as we climbed to Shrapnel Corners. The gloomy bare hill lay under a white mantle of snow. Zigzagging over it went the broad bands of the wire entanglements and the narrower black trench lines and boyaux, sharp cut against the snow. Great smudges of black were spread over the white, spotted with the black dots of the new shell holes. There were places where these smudges and dots followed the trench lines underscoring them in black, with rays of black splashed out beyond them where the fumes had

belched across the snow. The marks of these outthrown spurts told plainly from which side the shell had come and made a kind of graphic map of the zone of fire, French and Boche alike. I had no regrets at seeing my last of the dismal hill, but thanked my lucky stars that our work on that run was over.

If only there were no need for work on auto runs! If only the end could come, as so many dream, before next June! The world is war-weary — but France must win!

Gloriana, Jan. 26, 1917. I have more than a regretful feeling at leaving the work over here, boys, even though my longing to see you overmasters every other thought. I have made some very loyal friendships here in Section 4 that I know will outlast the war. It will seem strange to get back to the ways and cares of normal life, where one does not sleep in one's clothes to keep warm. (I blush to confess to having had mine on continuously for nearly a month). I fear I may hunt for the date stamped in the bread or attempt cutting it with my knife, holding it steadfastly against my breastbone the while. The lack of the acrid red wine - Pinard" - so dear to the heart of every poilu will be no loss, but I shall miss the great bowls of milk, "Pinard Americain" so-called. And I shall go far before I find another cook like

our new "cristot" who lately graced the kitchens of Dumba, the Machiavellian ambassador from Austria at Washington. Since his advent we have had small need to make known our wants at the windows of the "epeeries" in the little village houses where some shrewd old dame dispenses confiture and cigarettes to insistent folks under government supervision. I shall miss the sound of chattering French, even the burred and guttural "Midi". But, thank heaven, I am going home!

When Fowler and I got in to camp from Jubecourt we found it all commotion. Our little bunk rooms were being rapidly stripped and our belongings loaded into the carts. I rather hated to go about dismantling our little cubby but it was soon bare, with the little rusty stove standing lonely watch in the middle. Out on the terrace was piled a heterogeneous assortment of cast-off clothes and equipment, and such odds and ends as brass shell cases and even shells once brought proudly in as souvenirs and the Frenchmen of our camp found rare hunting there.

Next day, January 22nd, we broke camp. Dull booming in from the East Esnes was reported shelling clear over the Bois de Bethelainville

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on the Dombasle side. Some hit the road, wounding men in the regiment of the new division going up to relieve our 64th. Our main effort was first to move the rolling kitchen from its berth and hook it behind the White truck; and then we started out in convoy in groups of six. I brought up the first group, the White rolling at the head with a triumphant trail of smoke streaming from the kitchenette as the cook proceeded with the preparation of our dejeuner. It was abominably cold, but the air was crisp and for the first time in weeks the sun was out setting the snowy fields aglitter under a blue sky. We went through Souilly and took the Grande Route. A leisurely run of an hour or so brought us to glorieux and to the barrack sheds for our "repos". The idea of going to Verdun for a rest struck us all as a little incongruous, but with us the unexpected is expected. We soon had our beds lined up in the big bare rooms, and in a surprisingly short time we found our trestle tables set up in another with a steaming hot luncheon ready, even though we had nearly upset the kitchenette in uncoupling it. After luncheon several of the crews got leave to go into Verdun, and some of the rest of us climbed the hill behind the barracks. Their

time the air was clear and the whole amphitheatre of hills lay spread like a map before us. All around us the smooth white slopes rolled in even undulations, marked here and there with dark tree clumps and capped by half defined mounds of the girdling forts. To the right below us in the valley lay Verdun, the twin square towers of the cathedral standing out sharp and high above the white mound of the Citadel and the dim line of the squat fortification wall dark against the snow. Sweeping to the left in a wide curve flowed the Meuse, the line of poplars along its borders half marking the yellow walls of the quarry. Following with it went the line of the canal. Beyond the group of barrack buildings of Jardin Fontaine at which it stretched the white slope of St. Michel hill, from the quarry at its western extremity by the curve of the canal well to the east beyond Verdun itself, its snowy surface lined with trenches and boyaux, - the northern rampart of the town which held through the year-long Boche attack. Further to the left, across the Meuse from the quarry, the lumpy sides of Charny Hill overhung the water, and still further the even sky-line rose to what we took to be the Fort de Marre. Marre itself lay hidden behind Charny fort, but the buildings of Brax were dimly visible further

towards the river. Beyond, melting into the distance, the hills rose again - Cote de Talu beyond Brasi, Cote de Poivre stained and smutted with far-flung artillery fire, and over above the quarry in front of us the shadowy lines of the heights of Haudremont. Douaumont and Vaux were hidden behind St. Michel. We were looking into the arena of the world's great battle, and as we looked the guns roared sending the echoes reverberating and thundering along the hills. The whine of the shells was plainly audible, and all about from unseen batteries white flame leaped out in lightning flashes. Circling over us and heading away in straight flight for the German lines the aeroplanes hummed - big fighting planes and little reconnoitrers, the tricolor circles plainly visible as they passed overhead before they swept on into almost transparent invisibility except when they flashed like silver in the slanting light. It seemed to us that the firing was probably being directed beyond the Cote de Poivre against the Cote de Talu, the hill still held by the germans. As we looked shells burst across from us by the quarry - Boche arrivés hunting the batteries. It seemed incredible that only a few weeks ago the Germans had been at the very threshold of Verdun.

just over St. Michel - at Douaumont and Vaux - and that they had been hurled back not only from these positions but from the distant Côte de Poivre as well. Coming down the hill again and past our barracks we started on a walk to Jardin Fontaine - Bigelow, Wallace, Fowler, Denison and I. We stopped at the crossroads in Glorieux to watch an aeroplane overhead. It was flying in a circling course leaving a sinuous trail of white vapor that hung in the air like a curious cloud. No one could explain the signal - not even the gendarme sentry in his box there. We turned the corner to the left and climbed over the hill and down into the streets of Jardin Fontaine past the battered brick barracks there. On each side of the road were the ruins of little tawdry villas, some almost intact except for single gaping shell-holes, and bearing fantastic names like "Bonsoyons". Down in the town we passed one house with the corner ripped clean away. The little living rooms with its tawdry furniture was open to the street like a stage-setting. On many doors placards were posted forbidding entry into these wrecked homes on pain of military punishment. We came back to barracks at dusk. The scene in the big wooden rooms was typical. Canteen trunks

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and duffle bags had been unpacked and their contents strewn about, and the boys, wrapped in their heavy coats, were sitting in groups on the camp beds. Little Pidgeon lamps were burning on the shelves around the walls, and the air was blue with tobacco smoke. Suddenly the place shook with the thud of an arrivé. Another landed somewhere near - and another. I thought of the red crosses painted on the roof of an adjoining barrack with an obus hole through one of its arms. Next morning, equipped with cargues and masks according to orders, four or five of us went into Verdun. As we passed the cross road at Belleux (below our barracks) we saw the holes in the street and house walls and the litter of broken stone and plaster made by the shells thrown in during the night before. We passed on along the tree-lined road past the charred ruins of the Ecole des Filles, and after a turns or two came in front of the gate to Verdun set in the black slope of the massive walls that girdle the Citadel. We crossed the moat, stopping on the causeway to look down on the tangle of barbed wire below - silent commentary on the transitory efficiency of the great ditch as a defensive work. We passed the sentry unchallenged and entered Verdun. A well kept road, virtually a boulevard, curved up the hill before us

mounting the little eminence that formed the part of the city girdled with the great walls and called the "citadel." Wire entanglements covered the open spaces everywhere, stretching from curb line to the wattle work at the top of the walls. Little shops and houses were opposite us, all more or less shell-marked. We climbed to an open square with a half razed church tower supporting the iron framework of a wireless plant. Half shattered walls of an empty caserne widened the place and pine trees lined the parapet along the further side. We looked down over the roofs of the city and the Meuse. Climbing down an open stairway we came upon a paved street skirting the huge wall. Tunnel-like openings led into the great fortification - paved and electric-lighted with little narrow-gauge tracks. Poilus were going about busily, camions rumbling by and troops marching. The place, the Citadel, looks impregnable - as well ordered city as hundred feet under solid masonry and natural rock. In there an army could stay in safety with its stores, its ammunition, its bakery, even its "movies". Delaney and I strolled about together. (where we already established.) As we walked the young marechal de logis, his croix ribbon on his breast, told me stories of his part in the battle of the Marne and how his young wife, four

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months after their marriage, made her way from Germany to London and finally to Paris; hiding in fields and wading through swamps. We crossed the Meuse.

Bruieaux - February 1, 1917. - All about us were stone buildings of importance - the theatre and hôtel de ville. The style of architecture was remarkably good with excellent carving over the grey stone portals. The litters of the bombardment had been cleared away but inside the doorways the rooms were choked with heaps of plaster and shattered glass. I noticed much good furniture - richly carved old presses and chairs. All the outer walls carried the pit-marks of the rain of shells. The sight in the main business street was horribly depressing. At a corner stood a little cafe - a sort of bar. The tables and chairs were still in place, deep in dust; and all about was a litter of broken glass and empty bottles. Garish placards advertising different drinks hung askew on the walls, and an automatic music box - half smashed - stood on the counters. Next door an animal store stood, its gilt cages all rusted and tumbled about. In a modiste's windows the wax mannequins lay stripped - a ghastly resemblance to human torsos. I thought of Pompeii; and the suggestion was still stronger in another

street where only brown rubbish heaps and low shattered walls powdered with snow gave indication of the buildings that had been there. At the sidewalk edge little black holes led down into the cellars, now transformed into abris. Surprisingly little of the town, however, has been demolished, and most of the buildings are almost intact. The streets too are busy, though only with military activity. We walked to an old gateway by the river's edge - a mediaeval relic, with twin grey turrets, portcullis and gargoyles, luckily unscathed. In the shadows of it soldiers were working and a uniformed gendarme stood guard. As we mounted the hill to the cathedral we passed a building at a bridge corner. Hanging over the water was a little balcony room, glass enclosed once but with nearly every pane shattered, - the officers' library. Scores of volumes were ranged on the shelves, and books lay open on the tables surrounded by tumbled chairs. All the while we heard the thunders of the guns; and once the rapid firing of a 75 made us look up into the blue where the shrapnel puffs were bursting close about a flying Boche. Going up a narrow street we came out in the little space beside the cathedral wall. About us were grey stone houses that might have been

built under Francois I. The sculptured cathedral wall cut off the sun. A sentry stood at the door, saluting as a general and his party entered. We went on after a furtive consultation with the picks into the octagonal court of the bishop's palace that fronts the twin towers. Here the shells had done their work, smashing the mullioned arches. We made our way through the debris and into a little improvised chapel furnished evidently with fittings from the cathedral. There were some good paintings - one Presentation in the Temple in the style of Titian being especially good - and some stained glass windows, quite intact; but in the adjoining hall a St Jerome ware cut by eclats. We threaded through room after room over rubbish heaps and came to a museum - a room of some pretension filled with stone sarcophagi and Latin tablets. At the foot of the stairway outside, under the marble list of bishops beginning with the fifth century, was a group of portrait busts - a whole galaxy of Napoleon Thirds among them. One little Etruscan head was a sore temptation, but we withstood the primal instinct and didn't loot. A mummied head lying among a group of dusty stuffed animals was not so alluring. The brigadier, I regret to state, afterwards

abducted a stuffed dog. We went back to the cathedral door and were allowed to peek inside. The interior was not remarkable for anything but its size. Shells had knocked a big hole in the roof over the baldacchino, and crumbled stone lay about the nave. The church trappings were stacked haphazard about the columns. Somehow there was nothing of the sadness that hangs about the little shattered village church at Fromereville. The morning, however, spent in the garrison town with a name that unquestionably will go down in history before Waterloo, was full of new impressions and interest for one. But somehow the horror of war was not overwhelming there. It is along the reeking trenches and on the lonely shell-torn roads that war is grimmest. That afternoon just before dusk Eric Fowler and I went for a walk from Glorieux along the Verdun road. I had noticed some 75 shell cases strewn along there and wanted a couple for Lesser to make into a cigarette box. We had acquired our trophies and were sauntering into Glorieux near the cross roads when a shell ripped through the air over us and crashed through the wall of a house in a reeking cloud of black smoke. It was unexpected, to say the least and did not make our passage of the

corner especially inviting, particularly as these "Boche birds" usually fly in covies. We got by without any further untoward incident occurring, however, and Ernie even insisted on paying his respects to the sentry in his wooden box against a wall in that evil place. He showed us a large piece of shell that had pierced his little shelter that morning - which did not make me any more eager to continue the enjoyment of his society. Presently a few of us set out in the Lieutis and Percy's cars to visit our new sectors further to the west of Esnes, in the Argonne. We sped over the frozen road in the bitter cold through Dombasle, Récourt and Parois, until we came to Clermont under the pine covered hillside. The roads were alive with troops and artillery. We pulled into Clermont long enough to pick up a guide and to inspect our future quarters - a barrack occupied by an English ambulance section which we were to replace. We found the men typical middle-aged Britishers, Tubbed and scrubbed. - though heaven knows how they accomplished that commendable result. However, as each has his own mechanic their work can hardly be called arduous. Among them we met the author, Jerome K. Jerome, late

and grizzled, too old to be accepted in the ranks but still "doing his bit." After a brief chat we raced off again through Paris and into the woods up toward the lines. A short run brought us to Camp Denois in the woods, where we inspected dug-outs, and then started back. At a fork in the road two anti-aircraft guns were stationed - 75's mounted on motor trucks. As we came alongside they began firing. We piled out and stood at a point between them. High overhead against the frosty blue sky two Boche planes were flying. The guns - first one for a few shots, and then the other - spat flame, the report beating against our ears with that smacking sound characteristic of the 75. I could feel the ear flaps of my cap strike my cheek at each blast of sound. The barrels of the guns were tilted high, jerking back with the discharge and then smoothly sliding up into position. Between the two guns a group of officers stood at some kind of apparatus, calling range numbers. As gunners seated by each gun pulled the lanyard, and others inserted the shells with time-fuse set and locked the breech. The brass case dropped out after each shot. All around the soaring planes

the cottony puffs appeared, but the Boches got away. It all seemed like a Gargantuan trap-shooting. We next rushed into Jeuxilly - a ruin of desolation - and there followed the Lieut's car back over the route "interdite de jours". He had told us to keep three hundred metres behind, as the Boches could see the road, but he might have spared himself the warning. Lesseps had no inhibitions to fingers at the wheel, and in a few minutes the Delage was just a speck on the road ahead while Perry's little Ford strove frantically to keep up. Changing later with the Lieut I rode home to Glorieux in the Delage and for a while I felt as though I had sprouted wings. That afternoon some of us again climbed over observation hill behind Glorieux. There was a considerable amount of artillery firing. Boche Shrapnel was bursting in vicious red flame over the quarry leaving wreaths of ink black smoke in the twilight airs. At the foot of the quarry a big French piece was firing, its flash white as lightning. And at dusk over on the Cote du Poivre a small gun battery let go so fast that a constant flicker played along the hillside and the report came rolling to us like the beat of a giant drum.

Next morning Delaney asked me to take a walk with him and not knowing our destination I went along. He led me to the acre behind the barracks where the wooden crosses stretch in thick-set lines, marking the graves of the men brought back daily from the trenches. At the far end some fellows were digging a long row of new graves - a ghastly preparedness. As we got near we saw a twisted figure in uniform laid on the snow - a frozen corpse - the blood black on the blue overcoat, the head mercifully covered by a piece of sacking to which a metal number tag was fastened, but the bloody gloved hands clenched upon the breast. I saw things that turned me sick - too horrible to describe here - and could not stay to see the poor dead buried, as they do it here sometimes, without winding sheet or coffin. Again that afternoon Joe Parrott and I climbed the hill drawn by the formation of that great battle panorama. Over from the rive gauche came the continued pound of a tir de barrage and we knew something was doing near the Mont Homme. Next day we learned that the Boches had made a heavy stroke against 304, taking nearly a regiment, and heavily bombarding Verne. A car of Section 1 was hit as it entered the

court of the chateau, but luckily no one was hurt. As Joe and I watched we saw big shells landing near the Fort de Marre, repeatedly shooting up huge columns of black smoke like jets from a volcano. The shell screams and the crash would come to us long afterwards. By this time the discomfort of the frigid, dirty barrack and the proximity had made some of the more adventurous spirits restive, and next day Fowler, Davison, Gooch and Russell started off exploring. They had actually got almost to Brasi when shrapnel began breaking over them and several big shells hit the canal beside them shooting the water up in great jets. They stood not upon the order of their going. Meanwhile I, having berated them for a pack of reckless idiots, virtuously betook myself to my usual distant hilltop for a last look at Verdun. I had scarcely come back to barracks when a shell - the first in weeks - landed on the hill. That night at midnight I heard a big one whine over our shed and burst somewhere in Glorieux. I nudged Eddie and we listened to eight more. Sweet repose! The morning of the 27th found us up at six and busily loading. It was below zero Farenheit and the cold had played havoc with radiators and water jackets in

spite of drain cocks and glycerine mixture. We finally got under way and with many halts, ultimately pulled into Pare court. We parked the cars in the icy square of the village in front of the gray walls facing the old fountains, and solicitously pushed our kitchenette into a barnyard among chickens and strutting turkeys, the cook placidly preparing luncheon meantime. We had hardly finished our meal when I rolled 4-40 out for Camp Darwin, Eric my orderly. We stopped first at the Grange le Bonte, the new quarters of the G. B. D., - a feudal looking little chateau facing a great court of farm buildings. From there we went on to the woods. It was all very quiet and white, but we passed places where the snow surface was pitted with old shell holes and cut by the fret-work patterns of the trenches. The tattered remnants of an artillery screen flapped crazily between us and the distant Boche lines. Then entering the thick woods with the hills about us we climbed up to the little city of dug outs and stopped at the little sunken cabin where the tiny tricolor and red cross fluttered. Quatre Balle and old bravecardier friends welcomed us and led us to our own little abri, a half-sunken cabin just big enough for two bunks, a table and a fireplace. Sun came in through the windows in the

door at the foot of the wattled walls and a fire was cracking in the chimney. We were delighted until we found countless packages of cartridges under our bunks, and read over the door "Depot de Cartouches - 80,000". The cozy arrangement of the little cubby hole offset even this disadvantage, and we even refused to be disheartened when Quatre Balle led us to the little dining shanty and showed us where a shell had knocked off the chimney and peppered the dining wall with neat holes. We soon were at dinner there. It is true there were not enough plates and we established a community interest in the pot as it came from the stove, but everything tasted good. It was very quiet there in the forest. Almost the only sounds were the noise of an occasional waggon or the voices of the soldiers in the dugouts above us. But we were only a few hundred metres from the first line. That evening we had a malade to take to Parecourt. We tried the road through Jouvilly, missed the turn and were off in full cry for Varennes and the Boches when a group of poilus put us right. We ultimately picked up our load at the Jouvilly poste and got them into the Parecourt triage, returning to our Dorian camp for a good sleep and leaving regretfully the next morning. Before we

started we climbed the hill to the dugouts - a cliff dwellers' sort of village - tiers upon tiers of little huts, half cabins, half cave, set into the hillside and heavily reinforced with iron and rock against bombardment. All about us the 75's were cracking spitefully sending their shells over the tree-tops, but we heard no reply from the Boche, unless the distant muffled "Put-put-put" of a mitrailleuse may have come from their trenches. Rarecourt seemed a teeming city after the woods. It is really a very picturesque village with squatty grey houses and archways. The tobacco shop is a peasant room with a huge black fireplace, crane and hob, and two quaint old cupboard beds. To make the picture complete a white capped old dame sits in the chimney place. Troops swarm in the streets, some drilling, some idling about the icy little fountains. Artillerymen drive their guns and caissons up the slippery hill. And from the old church towers with its blue clock dial the quarter hours strike in deep-toned notes. Our barrack is "abourgement froide". Water freezes solid in buckets and bidons, and your breath freezes on your blankets. In consequence we stay there as little as possible and frequent the washerwoman's kitchen

with Marie Louise, the year-old baby, and Julie, the tortoise. There we drink tea around the hearth and listen to our hostess's chatter while she brews more tea and stitches up rents in our uniforms. One of her highest prized possessions after Marie Louise and Julie and the clock is a Boche helmet, and she has many tales to tell of how the Boche carried her off to Jubecourt during the fight at the Ferme Faux Fresne. As the time grows short I value these friendly little scenes - these side-light effects. I thought of that last night when we sat around the table after dinner singing our Section 4 songs and some of the old ones from home. I shall miss the youngsters calling me "Cy" and the rest of their banter. I have grown very fond of them - Eric Fowler with his shock head and infectious laugh; "Denny" with his absurd little moustache and knack of story-telling; Don Moffatt with his "choir boy" face; old Joe Parrott all good nature and French idioms; "Big" with his boy's enthusiasms in spite of his thirty-nine years; Wallace trying to cover his denuded head with a rakish beret; Twitch with his mangy beard; serious minded Russell; Harrington, Gooch, Bolling, Jewett, Dell, Thomas - the "old birds" drawn close

by the things that we have shared in the months together here. The new ones are yet to be proven. I shall miss the quiet talks with Perry over our common interest in the section. I shall miss old Pilot with his fratical face and friendliness; obliging little Sauro; temperamental André; Breen and his souvenirs; fat little Sabatier; unemotional D'Arcy and the Lieut. very much the officers and gentlemen. There have been some happy hours for me with these men scattered through this half year of war, and I find as the time comes to leave them that I have grown closer to them than I realized. Friendship is a very precious thing, little sons.

Paris, February 12, 1917. A trip over icy roads to Bar le Duc in a vain quest for permissionaires, another piquet with nothing at Camp Dernier, and a cold twenty four hours in glacial Rarecourt rounded out the last three days of January. Then I got the Brisseaux piquet and spent a hermit-like day and night in the little shanty assigned me; nursing a smoky coal stove and scribbling. When Denny came to relieve me Russell arrived with a load of maladies and the news of Germany's reply to Wilson - submarine war on everything afloat in the waters

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around France, England and Italy. I could not believe it until I read the papers in camp that night. Next day I was sent out on my last duty as a driver - to the post at Bon Abri. Moffatt had the adjoining post at the Carrefour and we rolled out together to the Grange le Comte for the ravitaillement. There I said good-bye to Pouf, Bouf, Luerzing, Roux, Potey and the other old friends of the G.B.D. with whom we have worked so long - and I hated to leave them. Then Don and I made for the woods, each of us carrying an officer. When we reached the deep abris at the crossroads we found Du Cleryer in charge. He consulted with the officers and then called all his brancardiers into the abri. In a few minutes the little narrow cave was filled with them, their intent faces crowding about the smoking little lamps. Each answered "Present" as his name was called. Then in a businesslike way Du Cleryer told them a gas attack was expected. He ordered every opening covered with sheeting, buckets of water ready, the respirators in place and the chemical solutions ready. Then he issued extra masks. He insisted that I try mine on for him. It was not a happy time for any of us down in

that burrows, but the three of us managed to keep up conversation during our dinners. Then I drove Dr Clergon to other posts where he made the same arrangements. Finally we turned in on the bunks, but no gas came. (As a matter of fact, it took place a day later further to the west, and penetrated several kilometers.) Next day Moffatt and I idled about while he was not engaged in getting the ice out of his radiator. Occasional squads of troops passed on as 75, sliding erratically from one side of the glassy road to the other. A few maladies reported for evacuation. Now and then distant 75's spotted at specks of aircraft. At dusk Denny and Russell rolled in to our relief, and I drove back to Rarecourt, sad regretful to finish my last unloading at the bridge. Next day, February 5, my papers came with my ordre de mouvement for Paris, and with them came the news that we had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany. The possibility of our going to war has saddened me beyond expression. My country! My people! To be plunged into this welter of blood that we call war! May God avert it!

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It was hard to say good-bye to the boys. Perry drove me that night to St. Menehoul. Eric and Denny climbed in, and when Big and Bill Wallace and Don Moffatt saw us off I had a lump in my throat that I couldn't swallow. We found the train waiting in blackness. A few handshakes, and I pulled out in the dark - my six months over.

Fort Harrison, Indiana.
2nd Company, 9th Provisional Training Regt.
August 13, 1917.

I scribbled the last of these pages just after our break with Germany. There followed days of impatient waiting and futile inquiry at the steamship offices while the war cloud swept swiftly westward toward America. Then came our dash through the submarine zone from Bordeaux on the Rochambeau, and finally Billy Russell and I landed in New York early in March.

Do you remember those few happy days that we had together there at Dover and Poughkeepsie? That was the last time that I saw you, boys.

The inevitable declaration of war came soon afterward. I saw only one way clear - to join as

soon as possible, and on May 14th over five thousand of us - from Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia - gathered at Fort Harrison, a young city of brick barracks and acres of wooden cantonments, to begin the three months work of training to be officers in the great new American army. It has been strenuous enough. Driven and advised by unrelenting but kindly army officers under the leadership of General Glenn we have sweltered through the summers, studying, hiking on practice marches under our packs, digging trenches, throwing dummy grenades, learning the new bayonet work, going on silent night maneuvers, paraading before pictorial notables, until three last days have arrived. We have appeared before board after board for examination, and now at last our brief preliminary work is over. Captain Halle has told us of our commissions. To one the responsibility of my captaincy is a heavy one. I think constantly of those boys, now full of eager life, whom someday - soon perhaps - I shall take into the trench lines along those terrible grim battle hills in France - boys each as dear to someone as you are to me. But

we must win, however heavy the cost, giving all that we have in us to give.

I have left these notes just as I wrote them. They are crude enough but they may give you some impression of those days in France better than if I tried to write them over. I hope with all my heart that when you read them the Great War will be nothing more than a memory to us all and that the peace with honor for which we are now fighting will have come to this torn, tortured world.

Lawrence B. Cummings

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