

Two Ambulance Drivers Tell of the War

BREATHING the spirit of France in a recital eloquent in its simplicity C. DeFlorez gives in No. 6 an account of his experiences while detailed as driver of an American ambulance on the Verdun front in the third year of the war.

The indomitable spirit of a nation of heroes is intimately conveyed in these pages from the diary of an ambulance driver. The part that the ambulance plays is but dimly suggested, for the days are spent largely "in repose," in feasting and other diversions; there is much time for reflection. The author's keen senses find poetic expression in his impressions

bombardment occurs shortly after his arrival at St. Nicholas:

"They will come to-night," says a wise old fellow who sits in a doorway smoking his pipe. "He cocks his eye up to the sky in the manner of an old tar. They get the keys of the cellar when my friend shakes his head in his knowing way, for it means a raid."

The forecast proves correct.

"Sitting at a little table at the Pheasants we can see the rockets and the white puffs of the bursting shells over Nancy. It is hard to conceive the magnificence of it all, hard to believe that death comes

old, records his experiences while driving an ambulance on the Champagne and Verdun fronts is noteworthy.

In *Ambulance 464* Mr. Bryan tells us: "I went over, as did many others, with the object of seeing war at first hand, and of getting some excitement, as well as being of some service."

Publicity pays in recruiting volunteers. It was on a poster that Mr. Bryan read: "Volunteers Wanted for American Ambulance Service in France." Six weeks from the date of the pasting of this poster in Erie, Pa., finds him in Paris. Within two weeks of his arrival Section 12 is organized, an ambulance corps manned almost exclusively by American college boys. All the equipment is ready and each one is assigned to a car.

"Mine turned out to be 464, and the name plate on its side read *Sehenectady Ambulance*. It was very kind of the people of *Sehenectady* to donate the machine, but it is certainly a terrible pet name for an automobile to have. Hard enough for some Americans to pronounce, to say nothing of the queer noises the Frenchmen make trying to say it." But the motor proving all right and orders arriving soon after, Section 12 left its headquarters after a grand review and military sendoff.

Arrived at Longueville, after a few days rest for necessary repairs to the car No. 464 has its first evacuation work:

"My first real trip alone was successful. I took the flivver to Bar and from there over the hills to Lisle-en-Rigault. They wanted me to take seven here, and though five is usually our limit I crowded six inside and had one sit up in front with me. Counting myself, this made eight, which is a pretty heavy load for a Ford car."

Moving up nearer the front, "pretty soon we begin to see things we had read about at home. Here were the remains of a village shot to pieces in 1914. Not a soul was left in the place."

With a Ford ambulance for a banquet hall, three bottles of champagne, and every edible from canned chicken to welsh rabbit to furnish forth a feast for five lads fresh from college, "you come near the infinity of fun. But cocoa, lobster, champagne, welsh rabbit, peas and hard-tack don't work too well together; the bunch became more and more uproarious, and the party ended in a rough and tumble contest with lighted lamps for weapons."

The life of an ambulance driver is not all cakes and ale:

"I have finally seen what I came over for, and a lot more besides—war, real



C. DE FLOREZ
Author of "No. 6"



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Author of "Ambulance 464"

of life, even of the joy of living amid scenes of death.

DeFlorez describes with loving detail epicurean feasts accompanied by a weird music of bursting shells. "The nearer the front the higher the life," he declares. Wonderful fellows these French chefs, and with Pinard, Burgundy and champagne to wash down their cookery you forget that the bread is black and the cafe au lait too often cafe au lit.

DeFlorez is commissioned to drive a Fiat: "Our car is No. 6 and has been christened *Marguerite Winston*. First of all M. W. is taken off to the hose to be washed clean of the mud, blood and cooties. We are not yet hardened and shudder at the dark spots on the brancards, on the floor, on the ceiling. God! how it must have spurted as she bumped in and out of the shell holes."

At a farewell dinner at the Hotel Thiers the author-chauffeur and his cronies drink champagne to the health of *Marguerite Winston*, Ambulance No. 6, and dedicate her to the service of humanity and the glory of France and the American donors.

St. Nicholas. A savory rabbit stew prepared by Coquelin, cousin to the other great artist; you have his own word for it. "Thirty-five years as a pastry cook with medals, ribbons and diplomas to attest. Monsieur shall see." But Monsieur is doubtful, for Coquelin (chef) has an infamous reputation; the fellow is always drunk." Then:

"After dinner we strolled off to town for coffee at the Golden Pheasant, frequented by the military, where your officer sips his coffee and the poilu drinks his bock side by side. Why not?" asks DeFlorez. "Will they not be side by side in a grave later on?"

A great honor is conferred upon our author, who is appointed popotier of section 59. "The duties of a popotier are to look after the popote, or mess," involving a morning conference with M. Coquelin, "who decidedly is not all there. A trip to market to bargain with the old ladies in the square for onions and salad, these are the duties of a popotier."

M. DeFlorez's first experience of an air

from the heavens where one sees only stars. One by one the guns cease; in the distance you hear them again; the stillness is extraordinary after so much din. Across the courtyard the tread of weary feet, old women with clanking keys and the wise old man who smokes his pipe in the doorway; when he nods his head in his knowing way the storm is surely over."

M. DeFlorez discusses the war with a poilu at the aviation camp.

"There is no longer any fighting, Monsieur, no battle of the Marne, where out of a company of 200 nine were left; when some went for four days without food or drink. But a faraway look comes into his eyes, as he thinks of his home. Seriously he asks when the Americans are coming, when it will be over." DeFlorez tells him:

"In my opinion it will never end under present conditions of fighting; the resources of men and money are greater than the destruction. The economic collapse of Germany, some great invention, a revolution, labor or socialistic troubles, the complete mastery of the air, thousands of airplanes to fly across the Rhine when the harvests are golden and could be destroyed by incendiary bombs—something of this sort will be necessary."

Ordered to Badonville, DeFlorez hears at first hand tales of German atrocities:

"The old woman in whose house we are quartered owes her life to the fact that when the Germans occupied the town her services were required by a German woman.

"Our versatile midwife manages to get a bottle of Pinard, one cannot grumble. Madame sat down with us and told us many tales of German atrocities; how the Mayor's wife had been shot for looking out of a window; how a little boy who had been sent by a brute of an officer to fetch some water, was shot upon his return, and while still alive was thrown into the fire.

"God damn the Germans! 'God damn' is a prayer," says DeFlorez. Amen!

As an example of young American pluck, fortitude and devoted service to high ideals the narrative in which Julien H. Bryan, a Princeton freshman 17 years

war, stripped of glory. For what chance has man against a shell? You realize how absolutely helpless you are when a load of dead are brought in, some with legs and arms gone, some with heads and trunks mixed together, and quite often you learn there wasn't anything to bring in. People at home think they are making tremendous sacrifices to come over here to do this work, but they are nothing compared to those the simple poilu makes."

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AMBULANCE 464. BY JULIEN H. BRYAN. The Macmillan Company. \$1.50.

Paulownia: Japanese Stories

MUCH has been written concerning the Japanese, who have always been objects of interest to Americans. But English translations from Japanese literature have been rare, so that we really know little of the inner life of Japan. Consequently we find an unusual interest in *Paulownia*, a volume of stories from contemporary Japanese writers, translated by Torao Taketomo, and with a foreword by John Erskine, who recently edited a volume of Lafcadio Hearn's lectures to Japanese students.

The seven stories in the volume are by three writers. The title, *Paulownia*, is the name of a tree from which a lute of especial charm is made, and these stories are given as showing the melody of the Japanese mind.

These are studies in emotions rather than stories of action. They are like Japanese prints, delicately colored, chaste in outline and with a charm that relies on vague suggestion rather than on bold drama. They have the outer reserve together with the inner spiritualism and emotionalism that we mentally associate with the Japanese character.

Mori Ogwai, who is represented by three stories in the volume, is a Surgeon-General in the Japanese army, author of many poems, stories and dramas, and translator of such American authors as Washington Irving and Bret Harte. *Takase Bune* is a sympathetic study of a man convicted of murdering his brother, who struggles vainly with the problem as to whether or not he is guilty. *Hanako* shows Rodin studying a Japanese woman, while *The Pier* gives us an analysis of the emotions of a high born woman bidding farewell to her husband. The wife

would like to wave her handkerchief at her husband, as she sees others doing, but her reserve will not permit it.

"She also grasps the batiste handkerchief which she has brought in her sleeve, but she cannot do such an immodest thing."

The translator tells us that while the general tone of Ogwai's work is white, that of Nagai Kafu is peacock blue and crimson, and that he is essentially a colorist. We see both the sombreness and the brilliance of his color in the sketches by him included in the volume. *The Bill-collecting* shows the experience of a girl employed as a servant in a house of geisha girls, while *Ukiyo* is a series of impressionistic descriptions.

Mr. Taketomo makes this interesting comment concerning the third writer represented here:

"With the Russo-Japanese war, the literature of Japan changes its whole aspect. It was called 'the destruction of vision,' or 'the age of disillusion' and was the proclamation of naturalism.

Amid the current of crude naturalism Shimazaki Toson stood out prominently as an artist."

He is said to clothe intimacy with nature and with life in realism, yet artistic realism. How touching is the story of a lonely, homeless dog, called *A Domestic Animal*, and how moving the repressed grief of the father and mother for their son who is dead in *Tsugaru Strait!*

Mr. Taketomo tells us that these writers are typical stylists of contemporary Japanese literature, and as such they should be read with interest by Americans.

PAULOWNIA. Translations by TORAO TAKETOMO. Duffield & Co. \$1.25.