

# Books for Soldiers! Won't You Buy Some?

WHAT would Uncle Toby think of a public library in an army camp? What would he think of a soldier in Flanders who demanded a book on the nutritive value of foods, or the latest work on hydraulic engineering? Would he swear mightily and affirm that the art of war had gone to the dogs?

Probably. But the reports from overseas indicate that an educated, book-loving army fights with the best on earth, and that the reconstruction problem is going to be much less difficult because of the presence in camps, cantonments and army transports of the world's greatest literature. It is going to be less difficult for the simple reason that, in countless cases, the American soldiers are reading not to amuse themselves merely or to relieve the monotony of camp life, but to educate themselves for their present work and for better jobs after the war. Examination of the "best sellers" in the circulating camp libraries established in this country and overseas makes this clear.

## Give Money, Not Books.

It also makes clear the reason why the association is making a drive for \$3,500,000 instead of a contribution of books, as was originally asked for. It is no more possible to build camp libraries with hit or miss contributions than it would be to build in this fashion a university or a city library. The men in the army are simply an average population, indeed a little superior to the average. The men are young, and they have the curious and voracious minds of youth.

Reports from librarians in widely separated camps reveal that soldiers show more interest in non fiction books than in works of fiction. At the head of the list of books demanded are technical works relating to special branches of army service. In an aviation camp the men are naturally interested in books on flying and flying machines. They want only the latest and best books, just the ones of course that never would be contributed. The same is true of engineers, radio students, gunners, signal men, all branches. They know that extra rating and early transfer across depend largely on study

and they seize on the technical books which will add to their knowledge.

The War Service Committee of the American Library Association did not anticipate this situation. When the basis of the first purchase list was adopted by a committee of New York librarians it comprised about 5,000 titles, of which over one-half were fiction and some were juvenile fiction. At the time the association was accepting gifts of books, and it was assumed that fiction and recreative literature generally would be supplied by gift. Thus the first actual purchase of books was not 5,000 but 500 volumes, largely reference and technical works.

Reports from the camps soon demonstrated the wisdom of the committee's choice. The training camp of the modern army is not merely a place for drill, it is a school. The men study many subjects not included in military technique. The subjects include practically all which are a part of a grammar or high school course, and even those of the first years of college. The problem of text books alone is greater than the Government, the Y. M. C. A. or indeed the Library Association has been able adequately to meet. The extent of the demand may be judged by the recent call from one rather small camp for fifty trigonometries, fifty geometries and seventy algebras.

## Can You Beat This?

The men want besides simple text books many volumes of supplementary reading in all their subjects. They want histories, chemistries, science, economics, geographies, poetry, travel, general literature. The librarian in charge of the Mexican Border Service on a visit to Camp Eagle Pass received requests for books on the metric system, chemistry of gun powder, algebras, Spanish dictionaries, readers, grammars, army paper work, machine guns, Italian books, speakers (readings and recitations), lettering, geometries, Hawies, *Music and Morals*; gas engines, Bernhardt, *Great Britain, Germany's Vassal*, geography of the Philippine Islands.

This is a fairly typical list. The American Library Association aims to supply the men of the army and navy with exactly the books they need, not only for pleasure but for profit. The needs are as various as the departments of service, almost as numerous as the individual sol-

diers and sailors. The man who wanted a book on the nutritive value of foods was a mess sergeant. The soldier who asked for the latest work on hydraulic engineering was seeking an opportunity to better his knowledge of the profession from which he was drawn and to which he hoped to return after the war.

## Love Stories, Yes.

For use at remote outposts camp librarians make up collections of fifty books to be read and renewed by the men. The collections now contain a certain amount of fiction, for all soldiers read some love stories and some read nothing else. But each unit of fifty contains at least one book of poems. Kipling and Robert Service are especially in demand—history, travel, biography, military science and several recent books on the war. No two collections are exactly alike, for the men on outpost duty remain for a month at a time, and books are sometimes their only recreation.

When it comes to men who are working for promotion the camp libraries are hard pressed to furnish enough technical and special subject books. The association engages to get any book that is asked for, and sometimes to facilitate matters it borrows. A hospital librarian, writing from San Francisco, tells of a young aviator who was brought in for an operation. His examination for a commission was only three weeks ahead and he was in a dangerous condition of unrest because of the interruption of his studies. The books he wanted were not in the hospital library, but the librarian applied to the city public library and got them. Five days after the young man left the hospital he successfully passed his examination.

## The Upward Road.

A letter from a grateful soldier at Kelly Field acknowledges the debt he owes to the camp library. "A few weeks ago," he writes, "I passed an examination for the rank of Sergeant, First Class, which examination requires that applicant have a general knowledge of army paper work, nomenclature of aeronautics, photography, internal combustion engines, magnetos, electricity and visual signalling, together with infantry drill. I owe my successful passing of the exams largely to the infor-

mation I received through studying books from the American Library Association camp library."

Going through long lists of books in circulation in camps in this country and abroad one is struck by the general after-the-war preparation. Very few men intend to make the army or navy their permanent profession, and they use their leisure time and time of convalescence in hospitals to fit themselves for better jobs in peace times. A young Lieutenant came to the librarian's desk and asked her to give him some books that would make him a better English scholar. He had not realized until placed in a position of responsibility how slight his knowledge was. "I'll need a better education after the war," he said, "and I'd better begin work now." The librarian furnished the new student with grammars and rhetorics and he went away happy.

"I was a commercial artist before entering the service," writes a soldier from Eberts Field, Arkansas. "I find that on Sundays I now have time for a certain amount of color studying that I never had an opportunity for in civil life." Back numbers of magazines containing the works of Maxfield Parrish and Jules Guerin were what he craved and what he promptly received.

"Have you any books on cost accounting?" the librarian at Camp Custer was asked. "That was my line before coming here. If I go back after we get through this war, I don't want to start in all over again. I must try to keep up with my line while I am working with Uncle Sam."

They are even studying farming in our army. Almost the next applicant after the cost accountant had been given the books he wanted demanded something new and good on the subject of hog raising. "I'm reading up on farming," he told the librarian. "No more indoor work for me when I get through this thing. After Camp Custer the outdoor life is the life for me."

In the subject index of books purchased for army and navy libraries is listed almost every recent book on business and salesmanship. There are books relating to almost every trade and profession and the nucleus of an excellent library. Law books, indeed, are in such lively demand that few camp libraries can as yet keep up with it.

## "The Point of View"

AWFULLY cultured is *The Point of View*, a novel by Martha Gilbert Dickinson Bianchi. One cannot turn a page without being sprinkled by quotations or references from Greek, French, Patagonian and all other cultures, least of all those with which the ordinary reader is likely to be acquainted. The author quotes, the characters quote, in English and in the original. Even a conductor chews gum, since he could not quote, "in quick gulps, short meter, so to perfectly fit in with . . ." Then follow the verses to which the gum chewing would mark the tempo if he knew them.

As for the point of view itself, it is very sophisticated and very aristocratic. The one virtue is to be able to make cultured epigrams on simplicity. The one unpardonable sin is not to be a Jayne or a Myles of Massachusetts. Blue blood will be blue blood, and this is the message in the book.

Mark Jayne, terribly cultured New England writer, and to the uncultured point of view a little more than a high-brow silk stocking dabbler in life, culturedly flirts with Sapphira Myles, whose husband is somewhere or other. Of course Sapphira Myles is a Myles and Jayne is a Jayne. Then the hero goes out to the middle West, where he meets a girl whose father manufactures millions of car wheels and the extent of her culture is Browning. But she is a young, vital girl interested in the lives of others, hence in her own.

So for the sake of suspense Jayne and she come near getting engaged. But Paget Slade is not New England and not so cultured as a Jayne or a Myles. So the hero goes back to Sapphira and quoting his proposal from Aristides or Baudelaire, ends the book.

The reader will find this no reading for midsummer ease. The style is Henry James and the *Smart Set* combined. For instance, Jayne writes to Sapphira of the middle West:

"After all, it is Pike's Peak or Plymouth Rock for me. When had we concourse

with the mean terms of anything? But then I am just in from a dinner or mental pomme de terre doree, washed down in priceless Chateau Lafitte."

In the face of all this culture there is no alternative but to set down to the compositor and not to the author such slips in erudition as spelling the French philosopher's name "Bergsohn," ascribing *How the Waters Came Down at Lodore* to Poe, and the author's description of how the villain "had laid in wait for the girl."

THE POINT OF VIEW. BY MARTHA GILBERT DICKINSON BIANCHI. Duffield & Co. \$1.50.

## "The Third Estate"

IN the illimitable drama of the French Revolution Marjorie Bowen has found the inspiration for her new historical romance, *The Third Estate*. The chief and most sinister character in this book is the Marquis de Sarcey—a brilliant and unscrupulous member of the old régime, who carries all before him with imperious egoism.

To the Marquis becomes betrothed the elder daughter of a wealthy Parisian. She is plain, but M. de Sarcey has need of money. His betrothal does not deter the Marquis from making love to the beautiful younger sister. This brings about a rivalry between the Marquis and the Due de Rochefort, to whom the younger sister is betrothed.

In the prologue to the story the old King is discovered dying of the smallpox in the palace at Versailles. Madame du Barry is sitting at his bedside. She is ordered from the place, for the Archbishop of Paris refuses absolution to the dying monarch until he renounces his paramour. In the story we meet the new King—the ill fated Louis XVI.—his Queen, Marie Antoinette, and the leaders of the Revolution. But the historic characters appear as a mere background for the romance, which has excellent suspense. The ending is tragic.

THE THIRD ESTATE. BY MARJORIE BOWEN. E. P. Dutton Company. \$1.75.

## "Thomas"

IT is a rollicking story, filled with good natured egotism, is *Thomas*. The hero who gives his name to the book relates his adventures while on a vacation with one lunged Susan, a rattle trap car, which, despite age and infirmities, displays a persistency in "getting there" only equalled by Thomas's own.

They are a good team—Thomas and Susan. Both irresponsible, both irrepressible, both given to whimsies and wheezes. No sooner are we off with Thomas (or with Susan) than we misfire, skid, backslide—do everything but go. When all hope has been abandoned Susan's interior economy begins to warm up, she chugs and finally settles down to an amiable purr, and we arrive at our des-

tinuation in a most matter of fact and unexpected manner.

There is many a good laugh in *Thomas* for those who have the "hang" of British vernacular. For this is an English novel. At times the reader is tempted to sneer, but as we get deeper into the language we realize that the author is doing his best.

THOMAS. BY H. B. CRESWELL. Robert M. McBride & Co. \$1.40.

Marjorie Bowen has written a dozen historical romances in the last dozen years, beginning with *The Viper of Milan* and pausing, at present, with *The Third Estate*, which E. P. Dutton & Co. have just put out. She is really Signora Zefferino Emilio Constanza. A young Englishwoman, born Gabrielle Margaret Campbell, she was married to Signore Constanza, a Sicilian, six years ago.

## THE NEAR EAST FROM WITHIN

This astonishing book contains the revelations which the anonymous author, supposedly a highly placed German diplomat, has felt it his duty to the world to make concerning the vast underhand machinations of the Kaiser with regard to the Balkans, Turkey and Egypt during the past twenty years.

The book quickly went out of print, and the public have been unable to obtain copies. The present publishers feel that the time has now come when it is right and just that the reading public should have before them the important information this book offers.

Price \$5.00 Net. Postage Extra. At All Bookstores.

E. P. DUTTON & CO., 681 Fifth Ave., New York

## A Daughter of the Land

is Kate Bates. A big, wholesome American girl who, in spite of a tyrannical father, a starved youth and many mistakes, gains her goal in life. To own a farm and make it produce abundantly, to order her own life and select her own mate are the greatest aims of her life.

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