

A Soldier Poet in France

Verses of Lieut. Charles Divine, Author of "City Ways and Company Streets"

Casuals

By Charles Divine.

They struggled down the highway
Where the whitethorn bushes grow,
And some were whistling, some were laughing,
Some were limping slow;
And all of them had heard the guns
And felt the shrapnel fly.
"Hey, Jack!" one shouted down the road,
"What outfit's going by?"

Lay off that stuff! You got us wrong; we ain't an outfit yet;
We're sort of strolling soldiers that the bulletins forget;
But just the same we've won their ground, by keelo and by mile,
And filled the gaps in thinning lines and shattered rank and file.

We own no dandy regiment, no regiment owns us,
We're military waifs they send to any kind of fuss;
To-day we're luring orphans who to-morrow may be thrown
Among the best battalion of the umpty-seventh's own.

We've come from convalescent camp, from flatfoot farm and ward,
We've passed before examiners, the disability board;
We're A's or B's or C's or D's, as such we got our fates.
The D's—the lucky, helpless boys—will beat us to the States!

Artillery, machine gun crew, marines, doughboys and all,
Oh, why do some march faster, and others barely crawl?
Why, some of us are fit again, for cooties, mud and hell,
And some of us have got a limp where certain bullets fell.

Artillery, machine gun crew, marines, doughboys and tanks,
Who linger picking berries on the bushy wayside banks,
The Red Cross bags you're swinging, is that your only pack?
The less you've got to tote around the less you worry, Jack.

Pierrette, the dark, the laughing maid; Pierrette, with blue-black eyes,
Why are you up so early, when the dawn is in the skies?
Pulling switches, setting signals, in the hut beside the track,
To help papa, the chef de gare, send all the soldiers back.

Baptiste, the Spanish vender, with a shawl around his neck,
What brings you, basket laden, here, and what do you expect?
The troops are going out, they say, there's every kind and rank,
And "I, monsieur, will give them grapes, comme ça, for half a franc."

Artillery, machine gun crew, marines, doughboys, and all,
What cars do you go riding in, and is there dinner call?
They're side door Pullmans, probably, hommes forty, chevaux eight—
I'd rather be the horses, they can eat without a plate.
No blankets nor a mess kit—some fingers and a knife,

'Twill make a pretty story when I come to tell the wife,
Corn Willie's on for breakfast, Corn Willie suppers, too,
And save the old tomato can, when coffee stops are due.

Baptiste is selling nuts. Pierrette is pushing through the crowd,
Pierrette, the dark, the laughing maid; and bells are ringing loud.
The soldiers through the doorway as she runs into the hut.
Pierrette kicks off a wooden shoe to let them crack a nut.

We've never known a home in France,
Nor seen our barracks bag,
We've never had a Colonel
We could sing about or brag,
We've never had addresses
That a fellow's girl could find,
We've never had a home—
Except the one we left behind!

When Private Mugrums Parlay Voos

By Charles Divine.

I can count my francs an' santeems—
If I've got a basket near—
An' I speak a wicked "bon jour,"
But the verbs are awful queer,
An' I lose a lot of pronouns
When I try to talk to you,
For your eyes are so bewitchin'
I forget to parlay voos.

In your pretty little garden,
With the bench beside the wall,
An' the sunshine on the asters,
An' the purple phlox so tall,
I should like to whisper secrets,
But my language goes askew—
With the second person plural
For the more familiar "too."

In your pretty little garden
I could always say "juh tame,"
But it ain't so very subtle,
An' it ain't not quite the same
As "You've got some dandy earrings,"
Or "Your eyes are nice an' brown"—
But my adjectives get manly
Right before a lady noun.

Those infinitives perplex me;
I can say you're "tray jolee,"
But beyond that simple statement
All my tenses don't agree.
I can make the Boche "compreney"
When I meet 'em in a trench,
But the softer things escape me
When I try to yap in French.

In your pretty little garden,
Darn the idioms that dance
On your tongue so sweet and rapid,
Ah, they hold me in a trance!
Though I stutter an' I stammer,
In your garden, on the bench,
Yet my heart is writin' poems
When I talk to you in French.
From the Stars and Stripes.

Psychoneuroses*

By Charles Divine.

The train sped through a tranquil countryside
Where sheep, that day, had grazed across the grass
With easy progress through the autumn sun.
Eight sprawling men lay in the small compartment
And dozed past fitful lurch and waking pain.

The night is grinding through my head,
Flat wheel, jolt and jar,
Banging at my temples hot,
Stinging needles, creaking ear;
Jim's dizzy face, a blot—
And the quiet fields so far!

I know the doctors call us "nuts"—
Oh, yes, I heard them say—
We're off for special treatment . . . well,
I'll tell 'em 'bout the day
Artillery was falling short,
And we pushed in the way.

Eight sprawling men lay in the small compartment,
Who jumped at every sudden roar and whistle
Flung past them by the brutal, leaping night.
The blue-globed lamp was dim and green and ghostly,
And greasy shadows crossed each twisted face.

There's Harry, nerves all gone, all gone—
Was that a station bell?—
His hands are shaking all the time—
I hope they make us well—
He hides his fists inside his coat,
But the trembling pockets tell.

And Jim is worse than him, poor lad,
He can't talk any more,
The shells have left him speechless
And—Good God, don't slam that door!—
The sheep we passed this afternoon,
They never heard of war.

Dick shouts to start a new attack,
He says he's Colonel Dash.
Don't let him grab that can of beef,
He'll break—a sudden crash!
The pounding blackness rushes in
Above the broken sash.

The night rides grinding through my head,
Flat wheel, jolt and jar,
Banging at my temples hot—
And the quiet fields so far!

*"The term 'shell shock' will not be accepted as a diagnosis of disability or death."—Manual of Sick and Wounded Reports, A. E. F.

"Triumph of John Kars"

SOMEbody or other about town who sells office partitions has a clever advertising line, "made by the mile, sold by the foot." This, we cannot help but feel, applies very nicely to the works of Ridgwell Cullum, who seems able to produce an inexhaustible number of Northern and Western stories, all generally of

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a pattern. *The Triumph of John Kars*, just published, is an example.

Many readers will find thrills and excitement sufficient to satisfy them that the story is all a book should be; others will hold that it is merely a mechanically twined yarn. Certainly it shows signs of hasty construction and of shocking neglect after the original manuscript was written. A thorough reading of proofs would have prevented many errors and might have revealed to the author his tendency to ride an unusual word to death.

In respect of the last Mr. Cullum states on page 112 that "The broad river in its bowels was reduced to something like a trickling streamlet," while on page 114 he says "It (the camp) lay in the bowels of a hollow." Again, on page 126, "He was swallowed up by the dark bowels of the woods" and on the following page, "Here, in the bowels of the great pit, he was no longer blinded," &c.

John Kars was one of those supermen one meets too often in novels of the North and far West. He was 35, wealthy from an early gold rush and investments in the city of Leaping Horse and he lived in the north because he loved it. There was no one who could hit the trail or stick to it like John Kars.

Allen Mowbray and Murray McTavish kept the trading post at Fort Mowbray on Snake River. One summer Allen did not return from his trading trip. He was murdered by the treacherous Bell River Indians, far to the North. Hitherto Mowbray had been received by them in a friendly manner. In fact there was a

mystery concerning the reason he went there. That there was treachery involved in his death was apparent to John Kars. He determined to explore it.

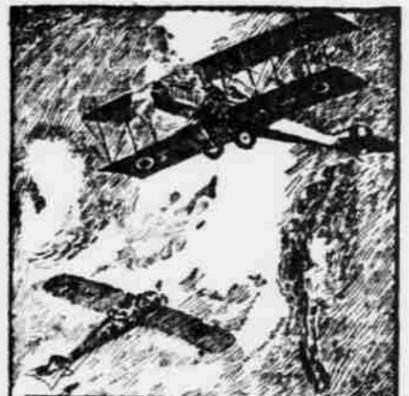
At the fort lived Mrs. Mowbray, her son Alec and daughter Jessie, with McTavish as their protector. Kars made the northern trip and found that the savage Bell River Indians had discovered gold in the bed of the river and had erected a crude but efficient plant for extracting it. This then was the secret they guarded so closely. Kars and his party barely escaped with their lives from the Indian stronghold, but the valiant John determined to return the following summer with a strong outfit to raid the diggings.

He did and many were the exciting things that occurred before, during and after the assault. There was a murder and a sensational trial at Leaping Horse; and then came the exposure of the double dyed, arch-villain who caused Allen Mowbray's death, and sought the ruin of others of the family.

Any one who reads the first chapter can tell that Jessie Mowbray was ready to throw herself at John Kars. Mowbray and Kars leave the north together forever, John rejoicing at the bride he has "won."

The Triumph of John Kars is really a triumph in binding and makeup. It is cloth backed and between unusually heavy covers. The letterpress is attractive and it is illustrated in color.

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