

France Cares for Her Blind Heroes

Special Correspondence of The Star.

PARIS, France, July 12, 1915. HERE are two battle casualty lists in France that never leave the grim confines of the ministry of war. One is voluminous, appalling in extent, filled with thousands upon thousands of thousands of names of "the men who won't come back."

The other, so jealously guarded, is in considerable point of size. The names it bears are numbered merely by the hundreds. Yet, small as it is by comparison with the mighty roll of the dead, it bears a terrible import, for this is the awful list of those who have given most their lives, but their eyes, to France, the men whom the fortunes of war have stricken blind.

Of all the hideous fates that can befall a soldier, none is more blighting, more heart-breaking, more profoundly pathetic, than the loss of sight. Worse than capture and imprisonment, worse than amputation of arm or leg, worse than lifelong disfigurement, even worse, at the outset, than swift death, is the one crowning misfortune that seems capable of robbing a man of fighting man of the indomitable spirit which is his.

And the black lot of the blinded soldier is so instantly arresting, so poignantly provocative of sadness and horror in the hearts of every man and woman who comes face to face with it, that France fears to learn the truth about the hundreds to whose share it has fallen.

So the lists of the blind are never published, but rest in seclusion at the war office, side by side with those of the myriad dead. Only the families and friends of these hapless ones know of their great affliction. The nation as a whole has sufficient sadness without this additional drop being added to its cup of bitterness.

And no one outside official circles can say how many blinded soldiers there are in France today, any more than any one can state exactly how many of France's fighters have fallen in battle since last August. Countless guesses have been hazarded on this score. Some alarmists have imagined that there are as many as six thousand men now scattered through the hospitals and garrisons of the republic who will never see again. Other estimates, more conservative, probably more trustworthy, have it that there are today in France fifteen hundred blind soldiers.

One thing only, however, can be stated with any certainty. The present war is causing more blindness than any previous known conflict. Men who were fighting at long range in the trenches where only the exposed portions of the body are the target, are now in the inevitable result. And where there are head wounds there is blindness.

Approximately half of the cases of blindness in the French army are caused by a bullet passing through the temple and cutting the optic nerve. In former wars, before the small-caliber, steel-jacketed bullet came into use, such a wound spelled death, not blindness. But the modern rifle does its sinister work so cleanly and bores so fine a hole from temple to temple that many of its victims are saved from an unmarked grave on the battlefield only to face a living death in lifelong darkness.

Shrapnel and the high-explosive shell, too, are numbering their victims by the hundreds, and between the work of these and the deadly long-range rifle, the French army has been rendered blind that the country, officially and unofficially, has come face to face with the necessity of taking extraordinary measures to make life bearable for them.

The blinded soldier presents a tragic problem. It is a pitiable plight in which he endures, these days, as if he were in a hospital, he bears finally from the lips of Red Cross nurse or army surgeon that his eyes are gone, and only a few hours or weeks have elapsed since he was numbered among the picked fighting men of his country and was chosen to fill a post in the first-line trenches by virtue of his physical powers, his youth and his self-reliance.

Now he finds himself a groping, helpless, aimless creature, incapable of taking these certain steps for a soldier as a newborn babe, fed with a spoon, hemmed in with walls of utter darkness, isolated from the world except for communication of sound and feeling.

In this hopeless condition that the French government, which has partly undertaken the responsibility of his salvation, finds him when surgeons and nurses have done their part in hastening the healing of his wounds. The first thing the government then does for him is to present him with a pension of \$175 yearly, which, as far as it goes, is very well, for a little more than a living wage in France. A Parisian of the lower middle classes can, with rigid economy, live several times as much on that sum, with the same amount a peasant can very nearly eke out a year's bare existence if he returns to his native village in the provinces.

But the pension, even supposing it were ten times the sum, could only solve half the problem of setting the blind soldier on his feet. And since actually it is quite inadequate, in the out of every ten cases, to furnish the recipient with even the simplest necessities of life, the government could not rest content there. It must go further.

The problem is a great deal more than a mere question of building a roof over the blind soldier's head and putting food in his mouth. If that were the only difficulty the poorhouse would remove it at a stroke. The real question is one of taking several hundred full-grown men whom fortune has broken and re-enslaving them with the courage and the leading from a few men, filling their sunken hearts with hope and training their listless hands to labor. In the situation, the re-education of the men's "morale" and the re-education of their hands and brains.

First attempts to meet the situation were unsuccessful in their issue. When months old and the number of blind men not grown alarming, the government contented itself with equipping for them a special ward in the "National Hospital of the Three Hundred," the venerable asylum for the blind founded by St. Louis, King of France, in the thirteenth century. But there is a reason why blinded soldiers whose salvation is intended should not be lodged in the hospital of the "Three Hundred."



MAKING BASKETS FOR PROVISION MERCHANTS



LACE-MAKING IN THE GARDENS AFTER THE DAYS WORK IN THE SHOPS

CANING CHAIRS AT THE CONVALESCENT HOME FOR BLIND SOLDIERS IN PARIS

Thus far the government had made of action the individual, the varying human factor, finds scant consideration. In dealing with the hundreds of blind soldiers struggling into Paris one by one from the bullet-riddled trenches, the overburdened ministries of war and the interior gathered all into the same inelastic category and extended to all the same strong but impersonal help.

Both the Wife and Daughter of a Secretary of State.

A Unique Distinction for the Wife of the Newly Appointed Secretary — The Daughter of John Watson Foster, Who Held Portfolio of State in President Harrison's Cabinet in 1892. A Woman Well Suited to Her Position, She Is Fond of Flowers and Outdoor Life—Devotes Her Spare Time to the Study of Foreign Languages.

TO be both wife of a Secretary of State and daughter of a Secretary of State is a singular distinction, and it may be claimed by but one American woman—Mrs. Robert Lansing, the wife of President Wilson's newly appointed adviser. Looking back to 1892, we see John Watson Foster occupying the position of Secretary of State in Benjamin Harrison's cabinet and his daughter Eleanor, the young bride of Robert Lansing, residing with him at his Washington home. In 1915 this same Robert Lansing, the unknown lawyer of twenty-three years ago, has risen to the highest diplomatic position in the land, and his wife steps into her place as hostess supreme of the cabinet, bringing with her an almost specialized training for her new position in Washington life. Mrs. Lansing, being "so fathered and so husbanded" is therefore by no means a stranger to Washington society. Her position in the official family will be graced with unusual prestige. In fact, she will enjoy a breath of acquaintance and familiarity not even exceeded by that of her husband. The first lady of the cabinet has not only had rare social experiences, but she has also been so closely associated with the set which she is now expected to lead that one might well believe destiny has given special attention to her guidance.



MRS. ROBERT LANSING. (Copyright, 1915, by Harris & Ewing.)

times, though I did not go as far as Russia with him. I remained in Paris, where I entered school. When we returned to the United States I attended a seminary here in Washington. Then we went to Spain and I lived in Madrid for two years. Upon our return home I entered Smith college, I made my debut in Washington, and in 1890, two years before father became Secretary of State, I married. "Since then I have interested myself particularly in my husband's work. We have no children, and I believe that a husband's profession may be a close bond of sympathy in such a case." It will be a familiar sight in the early mornings of the summer to see Mrs. Lansing drive her husband to his office. She runs her own electric runabout, and is usually accompanied on her morning jaunts by her only pet, a little white Cuban poodle. Besides being an automobilist, for the Lansings have a large car in addition to the electric, Mrs. Lansing plays golf. She admits that she is outwitted by her husband, who, it is said, is a very successful golfer. She is also a devotee of pedestrianism, and makes it a point to get out for a walk each day for an hour or more. This exercise, she claims, is a most successful remedy for those inclined to ennui. Of hobbies Mrs. Lansing claims but one. She is a pronounced anti-suffragist, and willingly lets it be known that she takes a firm stand on this side of the question. She is not a clubwoman, but she is a member of the governing board of the Young Woman's Christian Association, and is active in charitable work in the Church of the Covenant, where she and Mr. Lansing attend, for, like a number of President Wilson's other advisers, they are members of the Presbyterian faith. Mrs. Lansing devotes her study time to foreign languages. She is a linguist of ability, speaking French and Spanish fluently. She reads in these languages to a great extent, and has had enviable conversational practice owing to her residence in Paris and Madrid. Mr. and Mrs. Lansing have traveled



RED CROSS NURSE READING TO THE SOLDIERS

building and grounds of the convalescent home a new wartime society, calling itself "The Friend of the Blind Soldier," as organized under the leadership of M. Rene Valley-Barot, vice president of the famous Pasteur Institute. This society offered its services to the government and requested the privilege of undertaking to insure the individual welfare of each blind soldier in the proposed convalescent home. The society hoped to revive the broken spirits of each man; to train him in one of the several professions open to the blind which he seemed best fitted; to start him in business or secure for him a situation, and to keep a benevolent eye on him all through his life, removing as far as possible every obstacle in his way, and smoothing out his path at every rough turning. The society's startling offer was gladly embraced by the government, and on the same day that the blind soldiers took possession of their new quarters it moved in beside them and commenced its mission of teaching them "the art of being blind."

M. Paul Emard, secretary general of the society, whom the minister of the interior placed in charge of the convalescent home, has already wrought a miracle for his blind dependents, not by scriptural "laying on of hands," but by more modern methods that have to do with psychology and science. In far-away Rumania there is a community of the blind which is significantly named "The Lighted Hearth." Emard, backed by the French government, has been twice to the coast, and are well known in New York state, where they have lived for a few seasons. Fooling Himself. J. F. HARTZ of Detroit, the doyen of the American Surgical Trade Association, said at the fifth annual convention in New York: "The war has killed the price of carbolic acid up to \$1.65 a pound—\$2 before the war at 9 cents a pound. The hospitals that use carbolic now have to be as economical and sparing as old Josh Lee. "Old Josh Lee was a miser, and he breakfasted every morning on oatmeal. To save fuel he cooked his week's supply of oatmeal on Sundays. This supply, by the time Saturday came round, was pretty stiff and tough and hard to down. "One Saturday morning old Josh found his oatmeal particularly unappetizing. It had a crust on it like iron. He took a mouthful of the cold, stiff mixture—then he half rose, thinking he'd have to cook himself some eggs. "But he hated to give in. He hated to waste that oatmeal. So he took out the whisky bottle, poured a generous glass, and setting it before his plate, he said: "Now, Josh, if you eat that oatmeal you'll get this whisky; and if you don't you won't." "The oatmeal was hard to consume, but Josh, with his eye on the whisky, managed it. Then, when the last spoonful was gone, he grinned broadly, poured the whisky back into the bottle again, and said: "Josh, my son, I fooled you that time, you old idiot!"

Just the Same. GASOLINE rates have been cut in the middle west to 8 cents a gallon. Apropos of this cut, an independent dealer of Indianapolis said: "The independents will have to go under if the new cut rate persists. It's a below-cost rate, though the trust claims it's a rate created by slack demand. The trust would have us believe that in making this absurd rate it was as businesslike and logical as the summer girl. "Think of all the luxuries a millionaire husband like me could give you," said a septuagenarian millionaire to a summer girl on a white beach, and he not, and when he finally became a faded workman it finds him a position near his home, or sets him up in a small business in his native city. "Afterward it keeps in constant touch with him through its agents by letter, and should he ever be advanced to lands to tide him over the rainy days. "Other services in like kind it renders him also. He is a busy man, a busy maker, who cannot find a ready market for his product, the society buys his output and disposes of it for him. He is in need of materials to continue his work and fill his orders, the society furnishes them to him gratis. It is nominal price, according to the varying dimensions of his pocketbook. If he be out of a job, the society finds him in a word, at every step in his career it stands sponsor for his success; it is not his enemy, it is his friend, it is his immunity from want, but in helping him—this should be carefully noted—it teaches him also to help himself. It is an independent livelihood and the shame of accepting charity remains upon him, and he respects that. KENNETH PROCTOR LITAUER.