Preston Gibson Tells of Hazardous Trips to Gas-Scourged Trenches of France

DRIVING AT NIGHT WITH SHELL MUSIC NO BOY PLAY

"Awarded French cross and two citations—Preston."

These six cabled words, laden with an implied heroism and battle-gained experience far beyond the proportions of the brief dispatch, are today in prideful possession of the family of Preston Gibson, Washington playwright and noted athlete, who is serving at the French front as volunteer ambulance driver attached to sanitary section 7, co-operating with the French army.

The news of Gibson's decoration and citations "for coolness and bravery displayed in removing wounded after heavy shell fire at St. Quentin and on the Aisne front," reached his relatives in this city through official dispatches from abroad.

Famous at Yale.

The latest American to be honored by the French military, who gave up baseball in the spring of 1902 after pitching thirteen successive wins for Yale, to take up a star left-end career on the Blue's famous football eleven of that year; who tossed that memorable ball to "Gabby" Street (who caught it) from the top of the Washington Monument back in 1912; who relinquished writing, for the while, such play successes as "The Turning Point," "The Secret Way," and "The Vacuum," to devote his energies to the war, enlisted in the cause of democracy and France the 3d of last July.

Then Mr. Gibson became attached to the Norton Harjes escadrille, probably the most distinguished and efficient ambulance corps in France.

Though not with this corps now, the playwright-driver is still with his original section, No. 7.

Letters Which Grip.

The announcement of Gibson's achievements is all but contemporary with some of the most gripping and truth-telling narratives of the struggle sent by him to relatives here that have reached this country privately since the war began.

Concerning the identity and make-up of his division, a trip to the trenches at night, what attended him on the way, his getting and returning the wounded to the base hospital, and of a typically hideous gas attack and an equally typical but beautiful love episode culled from the wounded, he recently wrote as follows to his brother, Richardson Gibson, of 1738 P street northwest.

"We are attached (our sanitary section, thirty men and twenty cars) to a French division and are with the fighting or attacking division of the army, so we are or have been under fire a great deal, and driving at night in the dark is no joke with shells whizzing over your head. We travel with this division, 10,000 men, and do all their evacuating. We are paid (this is returned) and fed by the French army.

In Full View of Foe.

"The first night, ages ago, I was sent to one of our posts de Lecours. It is one-eighth mile from the third line, which is 900 yards from the firing line. We wear helmets and carry two gas masks. This is a very bad gas sector. I left the post a glorious night, and, going up the hill, turned and drove straight toward the trenches—passed the (our) last observation tree and on. There a turn and drove parallel with the lines, hidden from the Boche by a comic camouflage of branches, most of which were blown down. So I was in full view of the German trenches.

"Suddenly a great white light loomed up to the left about 300 yards, and I thought I was finished. But it was a star shell. These are very beautiful, made of silk with four balls at each corner, and have a tiny parachute. They hang in the air and throw light all around. They are used nearly every second by both to see if there is any activity on either side.

Gruesome Scene in Dugout.

"I reached an post de Lecours and went into the dugout most elaborately and beautifully made, connecting with the trenches. Here were literally dripped surgeons and stretchers bearing their soaked in blood heroes, men and boys with great holes in their heads, arms and legs shot through and off—all silent in their suffering.

"An awful hush, just the candle light and the surgeons plowing their way. I soon had my load, couches and one assistant, and started back along the same road to our base hospital, seventeen kilometers. It was dark, and the road was filled with cannon coming up with their supplies, and food and soldiers, etc. This road is not used in daytime; nothing could live on it.

Thousands of Star Shells.

"It was a great sight. Back of me our 75's and 155's were screeching their shells over my head, and in front to the right were thousands of star shells over the trenches and hand grenades and the enemy artillery dropping bombs and shells near the road.

"No one paid any attention to them. I did, the first night, you bet. I learned afterward this was the first trip of any car since a shell tore the bustle off it—Voila! This is the usual night, all night of course. We change about so we get two nights' rest a week. It is thrilling, remarkable, and interesting experience."

"I will now tell you of the first attack and counter attack I saw. We prepared our division for it for about two weeks, sending up gas tanks at night. The night of the attack I was sent to the post to wait. I stood on the top of the dugout and waited with a general and his aide in silence for an hour. All was still, even in the trenches. Just a 75 gun every now and then. The great hush before a storm.

"At 1:15 a. m. I saw (a moonlit night) below me, a mist hurrying toward the Germans. The wind was perfect. It was our gas starting. It went on and on like a great gray veil and seemed to hang over them as they inhaled their death. The wind kept perfect, and as far as I could see to the right and left was this mist of gas.

"Hell" Breaks Loose.

"Thousands of German star shells, like stationary meteors, went up through the gray gas. Then, at 2:15 hell broke loose on the second. Three hundred and fifty guns broke the silence and a sheet of flame poured into the Boche trenches—a double tire de barriage—one in front of their first line and one just back of their third line, so they could neither retreat nor advance while they breathed the gas between.

"Until 6 a. m. this continued, a never-ceasing shelling; star shells, torpedoes, such a frightful, ear-splitting noise.

"My first call was at 6:15. Some of our men had been caught in their own gas. We evacuated 172 in a very short space of time.

"I saw a gas malade; it is terrible. They cannot get their breath and they cough and spit and vomit and spit blood. When I reached the hospital with my first load those on top had vomited blood all over those below and the car reeked with stench. But no murmur or complaint. It is a horrible death. But only four died, we got them to the hospital so efficiently.

"Over the Top."

"The gas was shut off after dawn and the 175's continued all day and into the night when "Comrades, over the top" was given and out they came with bayonets, and hand grenades (no rifles are used any more; they are obsolete except to hold a bayonet). Out, over, through and into the barb wire, cutting, hewing, slashing their way to No. 1 trench and they took it by storm. The Boches were finished by the gas. This continued until 4 a. m. Then our curtain of fire was lifted. * * *

"The Americans will need some training, as the English killed 11,000 of their own men with their own guns. The French are marvelous.

"At 5 a. m. the Boche started a tire de barriage, but the French held on. This lasted all day and they attempted a counter from their second line that night, with hand grenades, so we had our job cut out for us and we worked for nearly ninety hours without a wink of sleep, all of us, and just coffee and bread, and our boots on.

Great Victory for French.

"But the French held and took many prisoners and won a great victory. * * * I went up into the first German line captured; it was a marvel of cement construction, thirty feet deep in places.

"The last fellow I took to the hospital was shot in the side of the head. He was, and is, thank God, a perfect beauty, about twenty-five years old. Wonderful clear skin and hair, and great figure, square shoulders, small waist and fine hands. He lay quite still as I put him in and bolstered up his head with my overcoat. He just looked at me as a dog whose wound you are binding.

"I knew the road quite well and though a stream of great wagons and men were going up as fodder for the men and guns, I went quite fast and carried him into the hospital myself. He lay quite still, a great red blotch on the linen around his head. I leaned over him and whispered: 'You'll be all right now, this is the hospital.' He opened his big brown eyes and looked at the dingy lamp flickering over his head—it was 8 a. m.—and at the nurse and the doctor and me. 'Bon dieu!' he murmured.

Guarded Picture Cheers.

"They then started to undress him, but he did not let them take off his coat. I knew why. So I took the picture case out of his pocket and put it in his hand. He tried to smile. They took off his coat and began to unwind the bandage. They pulled the cloth away and the blood poured. He sat half way up then and said to me: 'You brought me here?' I nodded. 'If I can only see her; you know its France and her, and if you come back—if it had not been for you—' Oh, no, I said; it's just part of my job. I'll come in and see you.

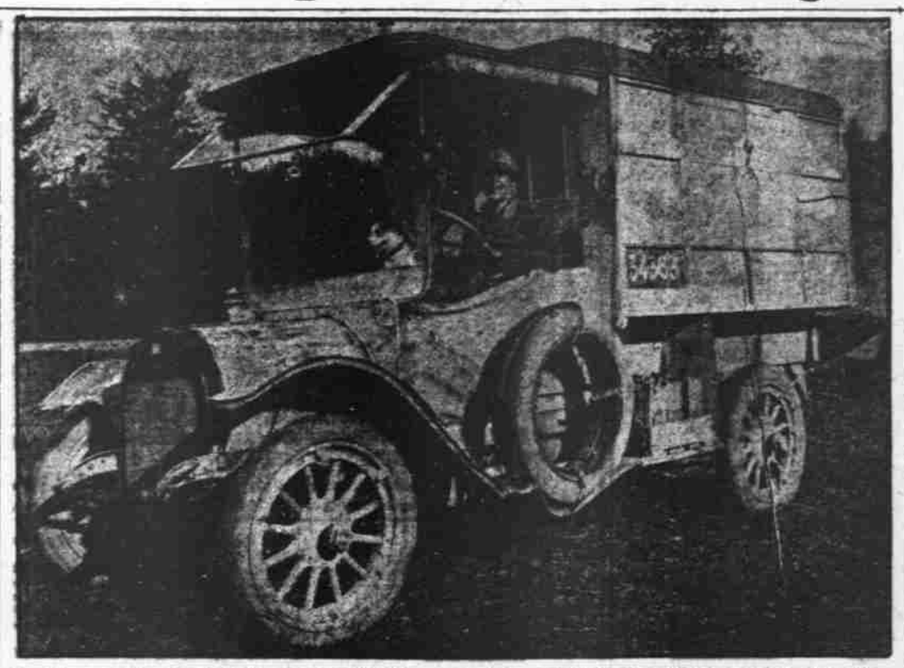
"I did in a few days, one afternoon. I saw her kneeling by his cot holding his hand. I was happy and went forward.

"I am so glad you are going to pull through—that was a bad hole. 'I am going to be all right, and the American who brought me here is coming to see me.'

"I am glad, I said, and went out.

"C'est la Guerre!"

PRESTON GIBSON,
Of Washington, Red Cross ambulance driver on the French front, who has been honored by the French government.



Mr. Gibson at the wheel of his powerful Red Cross ambulance, which he has driven repeatedly into the fighting zones.

LLOYD-GEORGE SEES NEW ERA IN HOUSE'S MISSION

By ED L. KEEN.
(United Press Staff Correspondent.)

LONDON, Dec. 16.—Colonel House's visit to Europe marks a new epoch in world's history, and a new future in conduct of world's affairs, Premier Lloyd George of Great Britain has announced.

Informed of the arrival of the head of the American mission in New York again, the prime minister gave out the following statement for American citizens:

"I am very glad to learn of the safe return of the first great American mission to Europe.

"I say 'the first' because I hope it will be a prelude to many more. For the experience we have gained on this occasion has brought home to me even more strongly than before the paramount importance of ever closer and more constant association between the United States, are free democracies of Europe, and the nations of the British commonwealth—not only in the prosecution of the war, but in the future conduct of the world's affairs.

"The mission which thus has just successfully terminated its labors was, as far as we are concerned, an unqualified success.

"It did not receive a great deal of advertisement at the time, because Colonel House rightly insisted that it be first and last a business affair.

"But the fruits of its labors will be seen by all in time to come. It not only enabled the United States and the allies to colordinate preparations so as to produce maximum military effort in the shortest time against the common enemy, but it brought fresh minds and a new perspective to bear upon the allies' problems.

"Its work culminated in the first meeting of the supreme war council at Versailles—the outward visible sign of new unity, of new vigor in the co-operation of the world's great democracies in the fight for triumph of the ideals they represent.

"To that conference the President could not have sent more sagacious or more useful representatives than Colonel House and the accompanying members of his mission.

"Colonel House indeed proved himself not only a worthy representative of the United States, but he won the friendship and the respect of all European allies."

COL. HOUSE BACK SAYS WAR COUNCIL PROVED A SUCCESS

(Continued from First Page.)

it so desires. The matter of Colonel House making another trip to Europe in the near future is entirely at the disposition of President Wilson

Allies' Morale Splendid.

"The morale among the people in both Great Britain and France is splendid," he said. "Even French pacifists admit that the morale was never better.

"American interests in Europe are almost paramount."

Colonel House visited the American troops and said tonight that they were in the very best of condition, and would be ready to fight when the time comes.

"General Pershing," he said, "has a very difficult task, and is doing it well."

The entire American mission returned with Colonel House, except Commissioners Crosby and Taylor. They will return in the near future.

The inter-allied council, Colonel House said, should really be called the "Allies' Priority Board."

Commends Sims.

House emphasized the fine work being done by Admiral Sims and the American naval forces in co-operation with the British, and paid high tribute to his fellow-delegates on the mission.

The American mission, while in London, lunched with Foreign Minister Balfour, Premier Lloyd George and the King.

CROSBY CHOSEN HEAD OF INTER-ALLIED ECONOMIC COUNCIL FOR WAR PERIOD

Announcement has been received at the Treasury Department that Oscar T. Crosby, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury and a representative of the United States at the inter-allied war conference in Paris, has been chosen president of the Inter-Allied Economic Council for the prosecution of the war, now meeting in London.

Mr. McAdoo, in a formal statement, declares that the organization of this council will mean that effective use will be got out of the credits which the United States has extended to the allies. It is an open secret here that the Treasury Department has been far from satisfied with the lack of co-operation revealed in the uses to which the various allies put the money which they borrowed from the United States. Colonel House was instructed when he went to Paris to make it very plain that if the United States was to continue to furnish not only the raw material for the war, but the money with which it is bought, the United States must have a say in its disposal.

Tasks To Be Allotted.

According to the plan of the inter-allied conference as reported here, the military chiefs of all the nations will decide upon the broad questions of strategy to be employed against Germany. The task of each nation will be allotted to it. The Inter-Allied Economic Council will be charged with allotting to the various nations the task they are to do in landing sufficient supplies on the spot where the military chiefs determine they are needed.

The task of the council will thus be one of great importance. It will have to decide the broad questions of the uses to which all of the ships in the world will be put. It will in reality determine the relative priority of all the shipments that cross the seven seas. It will also determine the financial needs of the various nations and lay out the plans by which they may best be met.

It is believed here that with Mr. Crosby on this board will be associated a representative of the war trade and shipping boards, as these agencies in America, with the Treasury Department, will be charged with carrying out the council's recommendations.

Text of Statement.

Secretary McAdoo in his statement, said:

"I am greatly pleased that such an honor as the selection of Mr. Crosby to the presidency of the inter-allied council should come to the United States and to the Treasury Department.

"It is very gratifying also to know that the plans for the conference have been consummated. As a result of the organization of the council, I am confident that we shall get more effective use of the credits which the United States is extending to the allies.

"A very distinguished honor has been conferred upon Mr. Crosby. I know of no one who, by reason of his ability, loyalty, and general knowledge of the situation is more competent to discharge the duties of the presidency of the council."

Vital Records.

The following births and deaths have been reported to the Health Department during the last twenty-four hours:

Births.

John and Laura Gardner, boy.
Clinton and Pearl Quancer, boy.
Edward H. and Edna M. Tingley, girl.
William T. and Maggie M. King, girl.
Frank and Etta B. Stetson, boy.
Wendelin and Francisco Cassacina, boy.
Otis P. and Beasie Harrison, boy.
James E. and Florence Magruder, boy.
Dennis H. and Sarah R. Thorne, boy.
Jacob H. and Isabel Stieg, girl.
Francis J. and Carrie G. Lucas, boy.
Albert E. and Margaret E. Finlayson, boy.
Hyman and Lillian Goodman, boy.
Wolf and Annie Schaneck, girl.
James C. and Jeane M. Ward, girl.
S. Mace and Effie M. McMillan, girl.
Henry and Lucy Memsen, girl.

Deaths.

Samuel Miller, 44 yrs., Wash. Asy. Hos.
Nettie S. Smithson, 23 yrs., 3246 R st. nw.
William C. Roche, 98 yrs., Soldier's Home.
Robert Carson, 68 yrs., 42 Adams st. nw.
Henry S. Powell, 55 yrs., 2458 18th st. nw.
Virginia Loomis, 4 yrs., Children's Hos.
Franklin N. Robertson, 3 yrs., Children's Hos.
Stephen Ward, 67 yrs., Freedmen's Hos.
William Miles, 43 yrs., Freedman's Hos.
Charles Cox, 45 yrs., Freedman's Hos.
Mary P. Brown, 86 yrs., 1439 Corcoran st. nw.
Mattie Epps, 71 yrs., 1528 33d st. nw.
Laura Herskell, 22 yrs., Tuberculosis Hos.
Hattie H. Turner, 43 yrs., 1343 Wallach pl. nw.

DEATHS

DODGE—On Saturday, December 15th, 1917, at 4:15 p. m., after a long illness, at his residence, 3435 Fourteenth street northwest, JOSEPH LANE, beloved husband of Mary Jane (nee Small), in the sixty-ninth year of his age.
Funeral notice later. *16

WALSKY—On Saturday, December 15, 1917, at 3:30 a. m. at her residence, 3828 Connecticut avenue northwest, ROSA, widow of the late Morris Walsky, beloved mother of Mrs. D. H. Rosen, Zach Walsky, Mrs. B. B. Welchler, of Pittsburgh, Mrs. A. Saks and Mrs. J. Rosenberg.
Notice of funeral later, kindly omit flowers. *16

Last of Oriental Rugs

Like every other household necessity that once used to be made by hand, HANDMADE ORIENTAL RUGS also must give way to machinery-made ones. By the introduction of MODERN METHODS into EASTERN COUNTRIES, OFFERING MORE INDUCEMENTS to the natives, which must follow the war, WEAVING RUGS BY HAND, at a salary of 5 cents per day, will be no more. Excessive export duties, etc., will make Oriental Rugs a thing of the past. You can well be assured of this. Every one well posted to the situation knows this. You have still a chance to secure Genuine Oriental Rugs at prices not much more than they were before the war. Keep your eyes open—buy them whenever you can—ONLY BUY THEM AT RELIABLE STORES.

Remember, this applies to Genuine Oriental Rugs only.

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