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Life on French Hospital Ships at Salonika

ABOARD THE FENCH HOSPITAL SHIP CHARLES ROUX, Harbor of Salonika, Dec. 10.—Quite the most agreeable fate that can overtake an allied soldier in the Balkan campaign is to be ill—or slightly wounded. Not that the hospital facilities of the ancient Turkish city are famous, or even adequate. They are not. But there are four French and one British hospital ship in the roads of Salonika and they constitute by far the most comfortable, not to say the only sanitary, spot in the Balkan Peninsula.

The French have been better prepared from the very outset of the present Balkan campaign in every detail of military organization than their British allies. No better example of the thoroughness of this preparation could be given than the arrangements for caring for the sick and wounded. Long before there was actually any need for it, and simultaneously with the landing of the first contingent of French troops on Greek soil, the French hospital ship Sphinx was lying ready in the harbor at Salonika. As the number of troops disembarked increased, automatically more hospital ships put in an appearance. First the Duguay Trouin, with its sheltered decks and high stern like the poop of a Spanish galleon, all porches and awning and lounging places for the convalescent; next this ship, the Charles Roux, with its operating rooms, its surgical clinics and its complete provision for the care of the more seriously wounded; and finally the Canada—all with full complement of nurses, surgeons, physicians, sisters of charity, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of the aftermath of battle.

In many ways the Charles Roux is the most interesting, especially as it is the principal operating theatre of the floating hospitals of Salonika, and especially as the surgeon-major, Dr. Heitz-Boyer, is one of the best known and most distinguished surgeons in Paris. The ship was converted from one of the larger passenger steamers that in time of peace made the voyage from Marseilles to Algiers. As such, it is roomy enough, for not only have the saloons not required as operating chambers been turned into wards to add to the accommodations of the cabins, but the great broad decks have been glassed in, making the most agreeable of sun-parlors in which cots are set in long rows so that the sick and wounded, in the warmth of the afternoon sun, may lie quiet and look out at the splendid view the Bay of Salonika affords.

View From the Ships.
Here, too, the convalescent, propped up with pillows, sheltered, excellently cared for and competently nursed by volunteer French women who have passed the necessary examinations and had the requisite experience, gather strength against the time when they may go back and "have another go at 'em" as the "poilu" in the next cot to the Associated Press correspondent put it. Under such circumstances the wounded soldier has all the advantages and none of the drawbacks of "the Naples of the Orient," as its inhabitants call Salonika. If his cot is on the south side of the ship, he has before him the new snow-capped crests of the mountains of Kalcinis, those three fingers of land that stretch into the Aegean, with convent-crowned Mount Athos tipping the last finger. Or, to the west, confused with the clouds, he has the peaks of Thessaly—Mount Olympus, the home of the gods of ancient Greece, and beyond, Mount Ossa; and perhaps even, dim in the distance, Mount Pelion, both of mythological fame. The rare and changing beauty of the clouds above these snow-capped heights, the singular coloring of the sunsets are joys to the patients aboard the French hospital ships in no wise lessened by the orders, the noises and the discomforts of life ashore in Salonika.

On the other hand, should the patient be placed on the north side of the ship, the view is no less attractive. Salonika itself, charming from a distance, straggling along the curving shore, mounting the hill behind the town to the walled citadel, that caps its crest—dozens of exquisite, white minarets, like altar candles, proud and slim, their balconies hung with lanterns against the fete of Ramadan—long, uneven rows of mysterious houses, with projecting, latticed balconies; walled and secret gardens, revealing only the lofty monument of a singleypress; barren spots on the peopled hillside, that are cemeteries, the grey-white of their jumbled headstones gleaming in the morning sun.

Below decks, all is ready for any and every operation. Every kind of electric light gives the surgeon all the facilities necessary for searching wounds. Rows of glass cases contain shining instruments, white porcelain tables display shallow glass dishes for sterilizing the instruments, each dish covered with a heavy glass plate to keep out any extraneous substance. Each specialist has his own operating room; in addition to which there is a very complete pharmacy, a biological laboratory, an X-ray apparatus with the necessary facilities for photographing the insides of the patient and a perfectly equipped dark room to develop the photographs. In completion of the picture, there are the silent, efficient little Sisters of Charity, their great white, wing-like head dresses bobbing and nodding as the wearers hurry hither and thither, a chain upon which are hung the keys to the supply closets dangling from their waists; a tin of baked and sterilized bandages under one arm—or a packet of books and magazines destined for some convalescent patient.

All of this is the work of the women of France—the organization known as the "Succor for Wounded Soldiers," whose committee even now is in Salonika looking after arrangements, criticizing, making suggestions and charging themselves with securing from the great hearts of the French women all that may be needed to see that the soldier of the French Republic, however far he may be from home, shall have every proper care and comfort.

Mr. Casey bought a pig in the fall paying seven dollars for it. The pig's feed during the winter cost eleven dollars. In the spring he sold the pig for seventeen dollars.
A neighbor said, "Well, you didn't make much on that transaction, did you?"
"No," said Mr. Casey, "but sure I had the use of the pig all winter."
The man who can drink or let it alone nearly always drinks.
Nothing makes a man forget that he has been jilted as the society of another woman.
Considering the fact that there was no woman in the case, the married life of Adam and Eve was singularly infelicitous.

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GERMANS NEW KIND DEATH-DEALING SHELL

NEW YORK, Dec. 27.—The World prints the following special cable from field headquarters of the French armies in Argonne:

Shells emitting poisoned gases, one breath of which means instant death are the latest novelty displayed by the Germans on the western front. Flung into the French trenches from a distance of two, three or four miles, and bursting with a force as destructive as any high explosive shell of like calibre, they spread their sinister contents about so quickly that men many yards away fall dead before they have time to adjust their respirators and masks.

That, at least, is the idea underlying this newest and foulest of weapons, tests of which, French officers inform me, have been carried out recently under the eyes of the Crown Prince.

That much real, unadulterated news I have been able to extract from the manifold impressions which have poured in upon me during my four days visit to the Argonne section of the front. I may add that, although the use of the new projectile is as yet in the experimental stage, the French general staff already has found means to combat successfully its fiendish ingenuity.

What that means is, one naturally is forbidden to disclose. Even to venture upon a detailed description of the German invention and what has been done to try it out, is taboo. In French eyes, however, its appearance has been greeted with a certain satisfaction, as conclusive evidence of the failure of previous devices for propelling asphyxiating gases.

Its coming, the French argue, demonstrates that the Germans have realized at last the fact of which every French soldier has long been aware, that gas clouds driven forward by the wind are powerless to inflict material damage on troops properly equipped to withstand the fumes.

"We are handicapped in this sort of game," an officer of Gen. Humbert's staff remarked, "because the Boches know we won't compete with them in so loathsome a competition. We leave the gases, the Lusitania and secret warfare on neutral nations to them. Yet, even though they have the field entirely to themselves, they can invent nothing which really benefits them, nothing for which we are not well prepared."

One of the many methods by which the French dispose of this new peril may be mentioned, because it was touched upon in the official communication of last Wednesday in the Argonne sentence: "Between the Argonne and the Meuse, near Bethincourt, our batteries demolished reservoirs of asphyxiating gas."

Standing just behind one of the 120-millimetre (4.7-inch) howitzers in this sector, I saw coursing through the air shells destined to rip asunder those evil storehouses, many miles away. Provided the trajectory be sufficiently high, it is possible to catch sight of the projectile for a second or two after it leaps from the rifling—a tiny black speck slipping through the air.

At the time I didn't know what damage these shells were doing, nor even what they were driving at. I doubt if the gunners themselves were better informed. Crouching in the artificial cave in which artillery nowadays hides from aeroplanes, they could see ahead of them only the bleak, leafless trees of the Forest of the Argonne, and could hear only the monotonous chanting of the numerals by which the distant observer telephonically regulates the fire. Only that impersonal being at the end of the telephone wire has direct knowledge of the hits or misses, and usually he doesn't bother to tell the men serving the gun much about it.

I learned later at headquarters the significance of what I had seen. I learned there, also, that one of the new German shells of 150-millimeter (6-inch) calibre, and perhaps made from the same reservoirs, had instantly killed three "poilus" a short time before without touching them—this is, simply by its hellish fumes.

I learned other things too, which made me realize that, despite the communiqué's terse narrative, what I had witnessed was equivalent to the winning of a fair sized battle. Such is campaigning to-day against the Crown Prince's army in the Argonne.

If there is a part of the French front which has not been described up and down and all around, it is this same Argonne, this hilly woodland which ever has been the bitter battleground of France, which six score years ago saved the new born republic from an Austrian host, and which 15 months ago helped Verdun to save that republic from an even more formidable invader.

We extend the Season's Greetings to every person, and wish each a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

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