

AFTERWARDS.

SOME DREAMS FROM FRANCE.

“A SOUTH Sea island,” said the man in bed—and he said it reflectively, as if he saw his spot—“a South Sea island for me afterwards. Silver sands, blue lagoons—the whole short story—and peace, absolute peace.”

The V.A.D. shifted the angle of the large Japanese umbrella that shielded him from the sun, while she told him of the tea-shop of her dreams.

“Sorry I shan’t be there,” remarked a listener lying on the grass. “I’ll be sailing again up the muddy old Yangtse, watching the sunset from a hammock slung up on the mast.” He puffed his pipe contentedly.

“I know five kids, the jolliest crowd you ever met,” said another dreamer, a white-faced dreamer with a gollywog head of hair, “and these five youngsters and I are going to have the biggest ramp going when this business fizzles out. For one summer at least we’re going to live wild on a beach I know. And then,” he added, “I think I’ll get doorkeeper to an orphan asylum, or something—I’m tired of living with grown-ups.”

One dream invited another to make its bow. The “Waac” Administrator wanted a herb garden—she knew nothing about herbs, but that garden was all planned out in her mind, with cottage complete.

An engineer wanted to farm watercress, long green lanes of it, winding through clear running water. He knew nothing about watercress.

Listening to him was a canteen-worker whose dream was a sun-kissed village on the coast of Sicily, which she first heard of in a cellar during an air raid.

Another man, minus a leg, wanted to go fishing . . . for months, and months.

And he had never fished previously. His companion, a delightful, impecunious optimist, was planning to walk around the globe and to take ten years doing it.

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Dreams flourish in the swift life of to-day. That half of them will never come true matters not to the host who cherish them.

“Afterwards” is the pass word to dreamland—it visions impossible bits of brightness, it lets the maddest, most fantastical fancies live, it gilds the commonplace with glory.