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WRITES FROM OMAHA

A letter has been received from Robert Service, well-known here as "Bunnie," who is now a member of Co. C, 4th Balloon Squadron, and stationed at the time of writing at Fort Omaha, Nebraska. The letter follows:

Received your card and was more than glad to hear from you and to learn that everything is all right and is going nicely with you and the boys.

Every move we made this week goes to prove that it will not be long before we go to France. The first balloon squadron to depart from this country for France left yesterday. We are taking the same steps they went through a month ago.

We have been issued our field kits and moved from the barracks into tents. We have also been getting more drill at the balloon than other squadrons, so I think we may eat our Christmas dinner somewhere out of the United States. The "higher-ups" will not tell us a thing—we can only go by what our comrades went through before us. We may have a month, or it may be three months—we can never tell. It all depends upon how fast our squadron learns the handling of the balloon.

We have already had snow here. I was on guard last Saturday night. It started to snow in the afternoon while we were having balloon drill and kept it up until between 3 and 4 o'clock on Sunday morning. It got pretty cold before morning, but the army overcoats are good for almost any kind of weather. However, coming from Texas here was a big change in climate and it gave a little trouble at first, but I would sooner have the cold than the hot sun and dust. This is not the kind of weather I would choose for camping out, but in the army one has no choice.

One meets men of every distinction and character here. There is a representative from nearly every state in the union. There are six from the Northwest in my company, so I am not alone. This was the first balloon school organized in the United States, and at the present time I think there are only three in this country: One in San Diego, California, and the other in San Antonio, Texas, in addition to this one.

Tomorrow nearly all of the entire four squadrons are invited out to dinner in town. The people in Omaha treat the soldiers fine. They have organized a

club for the benefit of the soldiers, and there are all kinds of accommodations there. The thing that interests me most is the basketball floor, and in the evenings I keep it pretty warm.

Every Sunday the people of Omaha invite a number of the soldiers to church, and then to dinner, and to spend the entire afternoon with them.

A TRAMP'S LECTURE

A tramp asked for a free drink in a saloon. The request was granted and when in the act of drinking the proffered beverage one of the young men present exclaimed: "Make us a speech! It is a poor liquor that doesn't loosen a man's tongue."

The tramp hastily swallowed the drink, and as the liquor coursed through his blood he straightened himself and stood before them with a grace and dignity that all his rags and dirt could not obscure.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I look tonight at you and myself, and it seems to me that I look upon a picture of my lost manhood. This bloated face was once as young and handsome as yours. This shambling figure once walked as proudly as yours. A man in the world of men, I, too, once had a home and friends and a position. I had a wife as beautiful as an artist's dream and I dropped the priceless pearl of her love and honor in the wine cup, Cleopatra-like saw dissolve, and quaffed it down in the brimming draught. I had children as sweet and lovely as the flowers of spring, and I saw them fade and die under the blighting curse of a drunkard father.

I had a home where love lit the flame upon the altar and ministered before it, and I put out the holy fire, and darkness and desolation reigned in its stead. I had aspirations and ambitions that soared as high as the morning star; I broke and bruised their beautiful wings, and at last strangled them that I might be tortured by their cries no more. Today I am a husband without a wife, a father without a child, a tramp with no place to call my home, a man in whom every good impulse is dead—and all swallowed up in the maelstrom of drink."

The tramp ceased speaking. The glass fell from his nerveless fingers and shattered into fragments upon the floor. The swinging doors pushed open and shut again, and when the little group about the bar looked up the tramp was gone.