

Citizen Veteran

BY HARRY B. CRITCHLOW.

NOT LONG ago a veteran of the world war journeyed to a distant city. A festival and celebration were in progress and the veteran found it impossible to obtain lodgings in any of the first-class hotels. At last, after a long but fruitless search he located an institution named after one of the martyred presidents. They called it a hotel.

The veteran registered and was assigned a room. The bed was one that showed the effects of long and constant use. The carpet was dimly worn and faded. There was a bath, but its sides were still adorned with the washings from numerous dirty bodies. The only living things that possibly could feel at home in the place were the little insects that crawled in and out beneath the carpet and up and down behind the washbowl. The veteran complained and brought into play that sort of language which never was out of place in the A. E. F., where no words were present. Then after a time he paused and recalled that four short years previous he would have laid down his entire monthly pay willingly for one night in such a "magnificent" bed.

At least one-third of the time of the men of the A. E. F. was spent in beds of some sort or another, and as a consequence the broad subject is worthy of some consideration.

A well-trained soldier never ceases to long for the sort of sleeping accommodations that were found in his mother's home, but in times of emergency give him one blanket, a shelter-half, an overcoat and his "blacker" and he can make himself fairly comfortable.

A large detachment of men had arrived in France and had been hurried to their training area, where assignments of billets were made. More than a dozen men were assigned to the upstairs of a deserted residence. The windows were broken on and the floor was dirty, but the place was as comfortable as the average French billet ordinarily assigned to enlisted men.

In the number of a dozen were two men who were always together. When one went the other tagged along. They retired at night to the same quarters at the same hour. They were truly "buddies." While their comrades were busy gathering straw and building bunks for themselves the couple unrolled their packs, spread their blankets on the hard board floor, which was warped in places, and then started to acquaint themselves with the little village and its inhabitants. They did not return until long after the dutiful soldier should retire. They removed their clothing, rolled their respective breeches under their heads for pillows, clawed their blankets over them and retired for the night.

When morning came they arose to the sound of mess call, left their blankets as they were and departed. They did not visit the billets until late at night. Their "bed" was never made. Other soldiers would hang their blankets out of the windows for an airing, but not those two; they were satisfied. Then would come inspection days. A hardboiled captain in charge of the detachment would make his rounds through the billets and at last would come to the pile of blankets on the floor in the corner.

"Whose pile of junk is this?" he would inquire with gruff voice.

"That's the home of Sergeant-Major Black and Sergeant John Doe," would be the response.

"Oh, hell! There's no use of trying to make soldiers out of them." The officer would reply. "They don't care where they sleep."

Tired bodies, made so by long hikes, could find a resting place most anywhere. The desire for sleep made the average fatigued soldier utterly lacking in a regard for where he "parked" for the night.

A division was moving to the front under the cover of darkness. Rain had been falling continuously and the marchers were not only tired, but soaked to the skin. They would have been willing to fall by the roadside and let sleep do the rest.

At last they came to a halt and they were ordered to prepare for the night. One doughboy looked around for a bit and then through the darkness he noticed a place which resembled a barn. He made his way to the place and found that it was a stable. Opening the door, he observed a horse lying down in the straw of one of the stalls.

"Just be peaceful, nag, and I'll sleep with you," declared the soldier. He unrolled one blanket, placed it beside the animal and laid down to sleep. The following morning he awakened, rubbed his eyes and observed that his comrade had not slept. He proceeded him in arising and stood munching at a bundle of straw. There was a look of sympathy in the animal's eyes.

It is impossible to picture to those who have not served the sleeping places of the men at the front. Amid the din of bursting shrapnel and the firing of machine guns, tired and aching men could lay themselves down most anywhere and drop off into troubled dreams. The "funk hole" was the most common sleeping place. With entrenching tools a hollow was hastily made in the wet and soggy ground and into this, with his blanket and overcoat wrapped around him, the soldier would throw himself. Later he would arise, cold and stiff, but rested to some extent through the sleep the night had given him.

Abandoned German dugouts often furnished sleeping places. They were at least a protection from the elements. Not always, however, were they a protection from the shells of the enemy, for they were faced in the wrong direction.

Those men who were called upon to serve in Flanders, where the fog hangs low and heavy day and night throughout the fall and winter months, will never forget their experiences. They would retire at night under their blankets, no matter how many the number might be, and awake the following morning to find that the fog had penetrated their coverings and had wet them to the skin.

It was on such mornings and under such conditions that the thoughts of the men turned back thousands of miles across the seas to the comforts of the beds at home.

"If I ever get out of this and get back home in a nice warm bed I'll sleep for two weeks," oftentimes was the fervent declaration of many a man.

Men came to desire but one thing in the way of beds, and that was a protection from the cold and the storm. A cement floor in a bare old French chateau was a "grand" place to sleep. Bodies became accustomed to the hard surface of the floor and the men usually were thinking, "Well, it might be worse."

After a year in France and not during this entire time a night's sleep in a comfortable bed with white linen, six soldiers were assigned to a French home. The room to which they were assigned held one bed, with its usual leather mattress and spotless sheets. The men gambled for the ownership of this prize and by the process of



Lamar Tooser, who is active in American Legion affairs in McMinnville and Yamhill county.

disc, carrying greetings and an invitation from Mayor Edwin J. Brown to Mayor Rolph, urging the latter to be present as an honor guest during the reunion of the famous "Wild West" division in Seattle, August 19 and 20.

California members of the association have arranged a reception and banquet for their chieftain, who will be in San Francisco as an honor guest of the second national convention of the Disabled American Veterans of the World War, according to word received at reunion headquarters here from James I. Hera, secretary of the 21st division association.

Spokane and Tacoma have been stirred to rivalry in arranging the greatest programme of entertainment ever attempted in the northwest. The latter city, stamping ground of the "Powder River—Let 'Er Buck!" boys when the division was in training at Camp Lewis, will have the honor on August 20, on which day a great divisional review will be held on the same ground over which the western combat division marched in a final parade that led eventually to heroic exploits in the Argonne and Lys Scheldt sectors.

Backed by the chamber of commerce and a big citizens' committee, O. W. Schmitz, director of reunion activities, has completed details for a tremendous programme of sports and entertainment features in Seattle on the opening day. Major Bertram Gadsbys, 51st division, will be taken from the latter place in army trucks over the 18 miles of boulevard road to Camp Lewis, according to E. R. Sizer, formerly a captain in the 91st division, who has charge of transportation.

Following the review and election of officers on the afternoon of August 20 the citizens of Tacoma have arranged to stage a monster picnic and old-fashioned barbecue to which all 51st division men, their mothers, wives, sweethearts and friends have been invited.

Six regimental banquets are scheduled to take place in Seattle August 19, to be followed by a spectacular illuminated marine parade, which now has enough entries to make the water pageant six miles long. With assurances that the Pacific fleet will be in Seattle harbor during the reunion and the probability that the battleships will participate in the marine parade, that feature of the reunion is expected to be the greatest of its kind ever staged.

General Chairman Schmitz has announced the appointment of the following committees:

Parade and colors, Jules Edward Markow, F. K. Schroeder; reception, F. S. Dickinson, Ray Dumont; banquets and entertainments, Max Silver, R. F. Scheen; music, James I. St. John; billposting, Charles Smith; automobiles, William O. McKay; badges, A. C. Hinman; Tacoma committee, Dewitt M. Evans, chairman; Major Bertram Gadsbys, divisional review; E. R. Sizer, transportation.

The American Legion national headquarters, co-operating with the French authorities, is requesting every member of the American expeditionary forces, who may have carried a fragment of historic Rheims cathedral in France as a souvenir, to send it back to Rheims. Battered into a mass of debris by German guns, Rheims cathedral, following the armistice, was a mecca for souvenir hunters.

A volume of the La Societe des 40 Hommes et 8 Chevaliers, through the enterprising efforts of J. D. Higley, has been perfected at Heppner for Morrow county.

At a recent meeting of the Sunset legion post of North Bend, plans were laid for handling a big Fourth of July celebration. The parade, a prominent feature of the programme, is being arranged by Asa Casy.

Officers of Ray Johnson post of Redmond are out to get a 100 per cent membership. The post already has had an increase in membership of more than 300 per cent since last year and members are still coming in.

elimination two were declared winners.

The victors looked at the bed and scratched their heads.

"What's the use in drying up those nice clean sheets and pillows?" declared one. "I'm for removing them and using our blankets instead."

It was agreed and the blankets from the packs were used instead of the linen.

With all his experience of the war, his nights in "funk holes" and with the horses and livestock the average veteran today will boycott a hotel where the rooms are not just as he thinks they should be. It is his right to do so.

Scotch whisky was the one thing that appealed to the palate of a certain sergeant-major of a combat division, more than anything else. The outfit had arrived in Liverpool and the sergeant-major with a companion had obtained a pass from the camp at Knotty Ash and had gone into the city.

There they found that it was impossible to buy whisky other than by the drink.

"I'll solve that problem," declared the sergeant-major. "Girl, bring me an empty bottle and 18 rounds of drinks," he called to the barmaid.

The maid looked askance at the American but complied with the request. After the order was repeated several times the bottle was filled and so was the sergeant-major's companion. They sallied forth into the streets to clean up on the British army, when the sergeant-major was picked up by officers and ordered back to camp.

The cab in which he was riding to camp carried a wounded British soldier home on a stretcher. The American did not lose any time in starting a conversation and drew out the "imperial" a story that brought the tears coursing down the face of the sergeant.

The sergeant-major wiped his eyes with a soiled handkerchief and sobbed, but his sadness would not leave him. He wanted to do something for the wounded comrade that was really worth while. He reached into his hip pocket for the quart bottle.

"Here, Tommy," he said, "is my most precious treasure. Take it, it's yours."

The Britisher complied; the American was so insistent.

Still the heart of the sergeant-major called for more benevolence. He owned reached into his inside coat pocket and removed a few hundred francs he had exchanged at the Y. M. C. A. before leaving his native land. He pressed these into the hands of Tommy.

By this time the camp had been reached and the cabman led the sergeant-major inside the guard lines and turned him over to the M. P.'s.

Morning came and the sergeant-major awakened to find that he was fully dressed. There was a letter in his pocket and the entire situation seemed "haywire."

He scratched his head.

"Where's the bottle I saved last night?" he asked himself. Then he began to collect his thoughts. "I sure was a d—n fool to give that to the Tommy."

"Where's my money?" but the question was useless. That was with the bottle.

"Call out the guards," he yelled. "I want a doctor. Run to see if I am really as crazy as I think I am."

The problems that confront the officials of the United States veterans bureau are not easy to solve. Were their problems confined to those of the men who were wounded in the war or became sick and disabled from hardship and exposure, affairs could be administered with comparative ease. However, there is a class of men who would accept compensation from the government for wounds that were never received and for diseases that never were incurred.

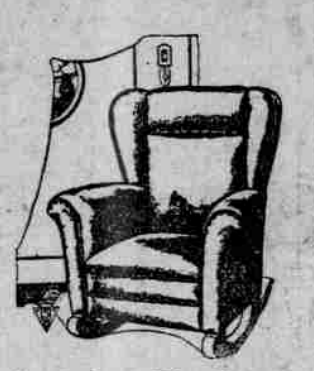
Continually there are men going before the examining boards and making the pretense that they are suffering as a result of war experiences. Examiners find that their complaints are without foundation and the answer to the whole situation is that the men are merely attempting to get on the government payroll.

It is not a difficult task for an experienced examiner to determine whether a veteran has tuberculosis, and a study of the complainant's service record will give a fair idea of whether the disease was incurred in action. It is not a great problem to adjust the complaints of the wounded man, for his scars speak for themselves. It is the man who served three or four months, under conditions no more trying than he is now experiencing, and who now seeks compensation for alleged injuries or diseases, that cause the bureau its difficulties in administration.

The men who would for no just reason attempt to convince the government authorities that they are worthy of compensation are doing a great wrong to those men who are really entitled to compensation. The former monopolize the time of the officials of the bureau and should be expended upon worthy men. Veterans of the world war are in no wise different from other men. There can always be found a few who will attempt to "get by" through trickery. This same class of men was found in every company that saw service during the war. These individuals usually caused the troubles of the company commanders. They will continue to cause trouble as long as their nerve holds out, and they are possessed of an inexhaustible supply of that.

Lieutenant-Governor Coyle, president of the 91st division association, left Seattle last night for San Fran-

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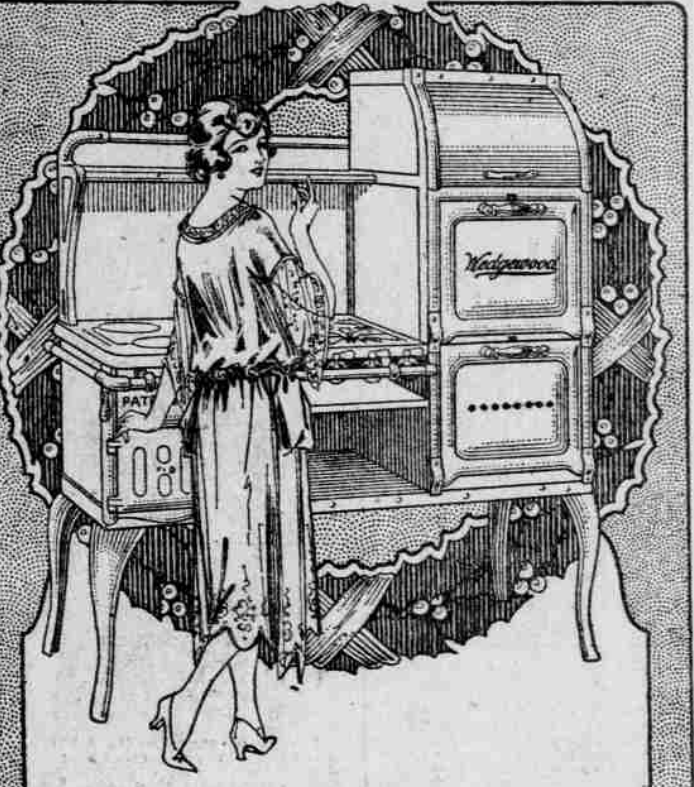


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