BOOK REVIEW

We held a veterans’ reunion the other night—a quiet, meditative affair, marked by the absence of the usual hilarity and clink of glasses. The hour was late, our fellow lodgers had long since retired, and we were considering the wisdom of following their example when our eye chanced upon a worn copy of the Washington University Hatchet of 1918, resurrected a few days before, from a dust-coated trunk in the basement. Rejecting the idea of sleep for the moment, we picked up the book, settled into a comfortable chair, and drifted back to Yesterday.

As we strolled through the ivory-tinted pages, a throng of youthful faces greeted us from group photographs of various fraternities and class societies. Faces of slender lads, in high, starched collars—carefree boys—with no idea that they would shortly leave the peaceful “Quad” for a long sojourn behind the Somme in France. They passed in silent review—dim halftone forms of a spring long past—and each familiar countenance awakened a train of memories.

Monte Lueking was the first—a full length figure in shorts on the title page of track activities—and we met him again with Leland Mitchell in the fraternity section. Lueking and Mitchell—what a wealth of travel and adventure those names conjure. Pals of college, and army days in France, and later, as young doctors, roaming the Balkans in the service of the American Red Cross, they crowded more experience into their brief lives than comes to most men in the proverbial three score years and ten. Monte returned from Europe, obtained a commission in the Medical Corps of the regular army and ended his days beneath an overturned roadster on a Missouri highway. Mitchell, born and reared in an Illinois country town, sleeps in far off Budapest, in a plot of ground donated by the Hungarians in appreciation of his work in Public Health Service.

David Millar was the next to hail us. The future Mayor of University City flashed an infectious grin from the annals of Lock and Chain, Thyrsus, and Sigma Nu. A few weeks after posing with these groups he was speeding over the roads of Normandy on a bicycle. Thyrsus and Lock and Chain also presented Edwin Dakin (of the Poet’s Club) and Sylvester Horn. We found the latter’s name in the cast of “Arms and The Man” and he bobbed up later as a member of the Mandolin Club and Alpha Kappa Delta. Dakin now with a New York publicity firm, aroused considerable controversy with his biography of Mary Baker Eddy a few years ago. Horn entered Yale after the war, but ill-health forced him to transfer his studies to the University of Colorado. He is residing in Denver today.
With Horn in the fraternity photo was Herbert Alvis, whose father once did his able best to teach us the principles of higher mathematics in East St. Louis high school. Herbie, the boy bugler of Unit 21, whose raucous blasts aroused the Norman countryside at regular and poignant intervals during the summer of 1917. Army life in France proved too rugged; he was invalided to the United States and passed away in Denver in 1924. (On a summer evening several years ago we watched a lovely sixteen-year-old girl floating in the spotlight during a dance recital in East St. Louis. She was Herbert's daughter, Allaine, now a sophomore at Oberlin College.)

Turning the corner of another page we almost collided with the boys of Nu Sigma Nu—and who should be among the lot but medical students Jim Costen, Earl Padgett, Monte Lueking, Joseph (Pete) McKee, Leland Mitchell and Bill Gasser. Sanford Withers and George Polk followed with the Chi Zeta Chi group, and as the Phi Beta Pi stalwarts approached we recognized Hugo Muench, Lee Gay, Charlie O'Keefe, Bert Ball and Martin Fardy. As we moved along the wrath-like form of Paul Webb bowed gravely from his station in the Pre-Medical Association. They're scattered far and wide today, these medical students of 1917-1918. Costen, Gay, Webb and O'Keefe are the only ones left in St. Louis. Padgett and McKee are in Kansas City, George Polk is a resident of Independence, Mo., Bert Ball lives in Fort Worth, Texas, Bill Gasser and his brother run a hospital at Loveland, Colorado and Hugo Muench is with the Rockefeller Institute. Withers and Fardy died in 1938.

Our next objective was the Dental School where we lingered briefly with freshmen L. Aubrey Williams and Clarence Koch. As we departed we caught a last glimpse of Koch falling in line with the brothers of Delta Sigma Delta standing solemnly against a background of rock and ivy. Today he is a prominent orthodontist in Little Rock, Ark. Beyond, the old School of Fine Arts peered through the trees and to our surprise, for we had forgotten that particular occasion, we found ourselves posing with a crowd of misguided art students in the sunken gardens east of the building.

It had grown very late by this time. Save for a single patch of light, the apartment house across the way was a tower of darkness; the throb of the city had subsided to a faint murmur, scarcely audible above the nocturnal serenade of the tree frogs. With a yawn we closed the book, prepared for bed and turned out the reading lamp. But the light of other days hovered softly about our pillow as we gradually dropt to sleep.

HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION

As the Unit was maintained in the field "under the same conditions" as British troops, the messing arrangements were necessarily adopted. Five messes were maintained—hospital or patients, officers, nurses, non-commissioned officers, and privates. Rations for patients were drawn as per the English system. A ration (service), was furnished for every person on the strength, and this was supplemented by each group according to its taste and desires. Officers and nurses were allowed monetary equivalent in lieu of rations if they so desired, which was availed of in part by the nurses. Each mess maintained its own kitchens. The unsupplemented British ration was not entirely satisfactory to the Americans and in the case of the privates' mess gave considerable difficulty at times. Nor was the British hospital ration, although of satisfactory balance and quantity, entirely suited to American tastes. As a matter of fact, most of the difficulties which arose in management and administration were attributable to the question of food and rations.

(To be continued)
What adventure, romance and possibilities were conjured up by those headlines of May 17, 1917.

"Base Hospital Unit 21 Leaves for France"

The emotions aroused by those simple services in Christ Church Cathedral, the excitement of entraining two hundred and fifty eager recruits, male and female, the lure of those khaki uniforms, the acme of modernism when a bride left her groom of two hours to go to war—what did they presage—what happened next? Did the glamour endure or did war become monotonous and irksome?

To those of us who were left behind when the original unit departed, life suddenly seemed pointless. How had we missed that adventure? We looked with longing eyes through the iron gates, down the length of rails to the bend which the train had long since turned. How could we join the others? As fast as a taxi could travel we went to Barnes Hospital to inquire about a group of reinforcements. "Sign here," said the recruiting officer.

Our adventure had begun!

In three months our country learned to go to war less publicly. August 19, 1917 thirty nurses, quietly and without demonstration left Union Station hoping for a few hours in New York to ride on a Fifth avenue bus.

For ten long weeks we were guests of the government on Ellis Island. We were quartered in the hospital buildings on Island No. 3, used for contagion in peace-time. We were fed in the Immigrant building on Island No. 1. Our duties were simple. We answered roll-call in the assembly room at nine o'clock in the morning, dashed madly for the 9:30 ferry to the city, scurried about all day and back to the ferry landing in time to catch the midnight boat to the Island. Our passes gave us free passage on any boat open to the public in the bay. The pleasure boats to Sandy Hook and Bear Mountain, the circle tour of Manhattan, the trip to the Statue of Liberty, we rode them all.

Speaking of the Statue of Liberty our Casey called out in the dormitory one morning, "Oh, I can see the Statue of Liberty lying in bed."

The first week we were concerned with uniforms, passports and visas, the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth weeks we explored New York from the Bronx to the Battery. We ate everywhere from the Ritz to the Staten Island Ferry. The memory of the crullers and coffee of the Staten Island Ferry lunch-stand stayed with us for many months. When bread was scarce and hard tack dry we wished many times for just one cruller or a dozen.

*Ruth Page Vornbrock.
At the end of six weeks we had spent all of our money, we had worn out our one suit and two blouses (which we had pressed once a week while we stood behind a curtain in a tailor shop), we were weary unto vexation of sightseeing—even a Fifth avenue bus aroused no interest. Pooling our depleted funds we bought a portable victrola and many records. By day and by night we danced. We gave shows, we gave parties, we even took to knitting. No longer did we dash for the 9:30 ferry. We spent our mornings knitting, our afternoons sleeping, ate the usual early institutional supper at five o’clock, took the 5:30 ferry to the Battery walked endlessly and returned at 7:30.

Uncle Sam tried to teach us squads left, squads right, but we were not apt pupils. Units came and units sailed but St. Louis and Buffalo stayed on and on and on until we decided we were the units God forgot. We longed for the day when the Chief nurse would announce, “No shore leave for the St. Louis unit. Turn in your passes.”

After ten long weeks it came and our boredom was no more. Fifty men and ten officers joined us and we sailed on the Orduna, October 27, 1917, with the Detroit unit, several hundred officers and two thousand men of various services. You understand of course that the officers were men, but never classed as such.

We crossed in a convoy of five boats; the weather was clear until we reached the danger zone and heavy seas kept “Fritz and his tin fishes” in port. We kept ourselves busy with French lessons twice a day, dancing on the top deck with our victrola and dancing by night on B deck. We had life boat drill every day and every day Zimmy was drowned for she never stirred from her cabin from port to port.

Three days out from Liverpool a fleet of mosquito boats met us and escorted us in. For us, the war began there. We saw no submarines but one day at noon we suddenly turned about and went full speed in another direction. Why, where, whence, we never knew. We landed at Liverpool, spent one night, entrained with the Detroit unit and a Detroit officer as escort and went directly to Southampton.

We enjoyed our stay in New York and had a pleasant crossing but we were very serious about it all. Far too serious. We were not exactly going out to preach the gospel, but we seemed to have much the same spirit. Our attitude was not fatalistic but it was subdued, perhaps full of fear though I think not. We longed to be there, to join our unit and to do our bit to help end the war.

(To be continued)

COMMANDER HAMILTON

Salute Commander Hamilton! Marvin Hamilton, twice chief-tain of the Caledonian Society in St. Louis, former president of the Overhill Men’s Club, and secretary of the American Surgical Trade Association in the 5th district, added another office to his list August 12, when the nominating committee of Rouen Post named him to lead the Post for the coming year. Hamilton, gourmet extraordinary, collector of rare pipes, and spinner of appalling yarns, will be supported by the following officers: Willard McQuoid, first vice-commander; Dr. Joseph Larimore, second vice-commander; William Engel, Adjutant; Ritchey Williams, finance officer; William Stack, historian; Frank Depke, chaplain; James Sallee, sergeant-at-arms. Charles Jablonsky will continue as service officer.