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GENERAL 21 IN TRAINING

On Feb. 22, "Pictures," rotogravure section of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, featured members of General Hospital 21 at Fort Benning, Georgia, where they have been preparing for assignment to duty in one of the war zones. The cover carried a photograph in color of an attractive nurse in field uniform and additional pictures of officers and nurses occupied an inside page.

At full strength the Twenty-first will consist of 60 officers, 129 nurses, also commissioned, and 500 enlisted men of the Army Medical Corps. Their function is to staff and maintain a general hospital of 1000 to 2000 beds, behind the zone of combat.

Lieutenant-Colonel Lee D. Cady, commander of General Hospital 21, complimented your Editor by an offer of a commission in the new unit. The latter regrets that circumstances prevented him from taking advantage of the opportunity to be the only veteran of the original Base Hospital 21 to serve with its successor in the second World War.

DING! DING!

Earl Hursey recently bought a discarded street car from the Public Service Company to serve as living quarters for the hired man on Hursey's newly acquired farm in the outskirts of East St. Louis. The car sold for $50 and Earl thought he had picked up a bargain until he learned that it would cost an additional $75 to haul the venerable tram to its new home.

Elmer Bowman, East Side ice magnate, doubts whether the hired man will derive much benefit from the former public carrier over the week-ends. "Knowing Hursey's taste for simple amusement I'll lay odds he'll spend his Saturdays and Sundays playing conductor. What with all those windows, and his boss collecting imaginary fares and ringing bells, the poor farm hand will have about as much privacy as a bum on a park bench."

Arshav Nushan, the School Board's Assistant Supply Commissioner, was under the impression that some city slicker had sold Earl one of the streamlined red cars now in service. He seemed disappointed when I told him the deal was on the up and up. "Frankly," he admitted, "when I heard that Farmer Hursey had bought a street car I figured I might be able to sell him some flower beds in Forest Park. But I guess that's out."

MARCH, 1942
BRING 'EM BACK

There will be many songs inspired by the present conflict but none will be more fitting than the popular English number that swept America during the first World War. It was revived recently during a Red Cross radio program and we hope the nation will again adopt the song whose nostalgic words and music will ever be remembered by those who shared the dramatic days of 1917-18:

"Keep the home fires burning
While your hearts are yearning
Though your lads are far away
They dream of home,
There's a silver lining
Through the dark clouds shining
Turn the dark side inside out
Till the boys come home."

And while we're on the subject of old war songs they'll have to go some to top:

"Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag
And smile, smile, smile.
While you've a Lucifer to light your fag
Smile boys, that's the style.
What's the use of worry, it never was worth while
So pack up your troubles in your old kit bag
And smile, smile, smile.

In case you missed the story in the newspapers, Felix Powell, composer of "Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit Bag," died Feb. 10 of a gunshot wound suffered in a home guard headquarters at Brighton, England.

Powell, who was about 60 years old, wrote the music and his brother, George, the words of what turned into one of the most popular songs of the last war. They had thought their effort was a failure and left it forgotten in a drawer until a music firm offered a prize for a marching song.

"Pack Up Your Troubles" won the award and earned the brothers about $48,800 in royalties.

Dear Comrades:

Each time a copy of the magazine arrives—across the miles I say "thank you." They are most interesting and always I have found some memory revived.

This issue with the personnel listed—is of particular interest. The photograph of the company office brings back many memories of the nearby office occupied by Miss Stimson and me—and later Miss Claiborne. Also the Red Cross room which was next to our office and from which so many packages of socks, woolen caps, sweaters, bandages, etc. were opened and distributed.

Naturally, I have been particularly interested in Retta Snyder's articles. They are good. This time she mentions the trip to Paris in January of 1918. Well do I remember that holiday. The opera season was on and we four indulged in several operas. (Mrs. Hausmann, Misses Love and Hilligass and I). Miss Hilligass had a sore throat all of the time we were there so she did not enjoy the trip but the rest of us did.

If California were not so far away I would plan to be in St. Louis for the reunion. But, being a school nurse in a large high school (3000 students), I must be here in Berkeley until June. Greetings to you all and kindest regards.

Mance Taylor

Berkeley, California
A blustery November night in 1917 was drawing to a close. In that blackest hour that precedes the dawn Sergeant "Pat" Byrns, lantern in hand, was making his final round of inspection through the darkened tent-wards in the medical division of British General Hospital 12 at Rouen. The faint echo of distant guns along the Somme had gradually subsided; all was quiet save the patter of rain on canvas and the occasional creak of a duckboard beneath the sergeant's feet.

As he moved softly between rows of sleeping men, Byrns felt at peace with the world. At six o'clock his nocturnal vigil would be over, and after a leisurely breakfast in the sergeants' mess, he would enjoy a few hours "bunk fatigue" and be off to Rouen in search of untried cafes. With a bit of luck he might find an estaminet where the cognac was unwatered, or better still, a gullible proprietor who could be induced to put a few rounds on the cuff for a "soldat Americaine." So he mused.

Lost in contemplation of the carefree day ahead, he passed down a line of shell shocked wards and was halfway through the last tent when he came to an abrupt halt. His list showed this particular ward to be empty. The carefully made beds were unoccupied, yet he seemed to feel the unseen presence of someone moving about. Raising his lantern he peered cautiously through the gloom but the feeble rays of light revealed only distorted shadows in the canvas walls. Dismissing his suspicion as a figment of the imagination, he turned to leave—but his reassurance was short-lived. As Byrns neared the door the huge shadow of a man flitted across the wall. A fearful hiss pierced the silence. A hand tugged at his shoulder.

With a leap worthy of Nijinsky at his best, the startled sergeant zoomed into the night where a taut tent rope halted his frenzied dash. Sergeant and lantern sprawled in the mud.

A light flashed in the doorway of the tent; he heard a woman speaking. It was night nurse Olive George. "Hawkins, I've been looking for you. Go back to your ward and get in bed." A tinge of amusement tempered the sternness of her voice as she added: "Fancy playing a trick like that on the sergeant. You should be ashamed."

"Sorry, Sister," came the meek reply. "I thought he was Purcell, the orderly. Couldn't sleep—the guns were going again tonight—so I thought I'd 'ave a bit of a game with 'im... But it was worth a quid to see the old boy sail through the tent-flap. Leaped loike a bloomin' kangaroo, 'e did."

FLASH! John Spencer Allen, of Cincinnati, has passed the physical examination for service in the ground forces of the Army Air Corps and expects to receive a commission within the next thirty days.
RECOLLECTIONS OF A WORLD WAR NURSE

By Retta Snyder

Estelle went to sleep and we couldn’t waken her so Olive and I went to town alone and had a time. First we went to the Cathedral to vespers and benediction. It was nice but they didn’t play the big organ and we were disappointed. We went for tea to a little place where we can still get it. You know they aren’t supposed to serve tea any more. Well, we decided to have tea instead of chocolate today. No sugar. We could get no scones so we asked for cakes. Two tiny ones apiece, finis! No more. After tomorrow, the twenty-fifth, we can buy no more cakes anywhere. At once we wanted cherry tarts and could buy absolutely nothing. We made the rounds of the cake shops to find them sold out. At the Normandy, the largest shop here, people were almost tearing each others’ hair to get the few remaining cakes. We were out of luck.

Soon we can buy no chocolate, then it will be plain rations for us. We will have to depend on the folks at home to send us candy to supply our sweets. I would appreciate a three-pound box buried in loaf sugar. We still have some but it will soon be gone. I have told my family not to send sugar alone. It will be pinched on the way. All sorts of candy and cakes are taken from boxes stuffed with packing. That makes me really furious.

On the way home we stopped in a tiny shop for large envelopes; only an old man and woman who spoke no English were there. Really I was surprised how easily it came to say “Avez-vous de envelopes grands?” “Oui, madame, blanche?” “Oui, madame, blanche et grands.” “Non, madame, plus grands, s’il vous plait.” We had quite a “conversation” and on the way home I said to Olive, “If I should go back to that shop and say to the old lady, ‘Will you talk French to me?’ Should I say ‘Parlez-vous Francais a moi?’ or what?” We heard a snicker behind us (we were standing on the front platform) and turned to a French girl. She asked what we wanted to say and said “Voulez-vous parle Francais pour moi?” I think. We didn’t get it quite right for the car made such a noise. Then she asked us if we would like to talk French with a French girl and in return talk English to her. She gave us her name and we agreed to send her word if we wanted to do it. We have to ask Miss Taylor first.

An English officer had been standing behind us and we could see he was bursting to talk even before we started to talk to the French girl. The moon was beautiful and made us a trifle homesick. Finally, I said ala Tommy talk, “I could do with being at home tonight for an hour or so if there was a lemon pie.” The Englishman couldn’t stand it any longer and burst forth, “Have you been here long?” and we talked the rest of the way. A nice chap.

Today is my half day. I came off duty at twelve, ate my lunch, cleaned my two articles of furniture, bureau and shelf, read and tore up my letters, went to the dentist and had a tooth treated, came back and had a good soak in the tub, attired myself in my pajamas and have written unceasingly for two hours. I hope to read a little and study French. We are pegging along and hope some day to have a great light dawn on us and be able to talk fluently. In the meantime we stumble on. If we could talk to French people frequently we would make more progress.

(To be continued)

Plan to attend the 25th Anniversary Reunion of
Base Hospital Unit 21

Dinner
May 15-16, 1942
Cocktail Party